

Central
Bedfordshire
Council
Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands,
Shefford SG17 5TQ



04 March 2014

EXECUTIVE - Tuesday 18 March 2014

Further to the Agenda and papers for the above meeting, previously circulated, please find attached the following:

11. Leisure Strategy Adoption

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Facilities Strategy.

Should you have any queries regarding the above please contact Sandra Hobbs, Committee Services Officer on Tel: 0300 300 5257.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hobbs
Committee Services Officer
email: sandra.hobbs@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

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Leisure Strategy

Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy

Technical Guidance

Final draft for Exec 18 March 2014



Prepared by Neil Allen Associates in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council

Neil Allen Associates Registered Office:

20 Brook Road, Lymm, Cheshire, WA139AH

A limited company, registered in England and Wales no. 616528

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1. Introduction and Background

The Leisure Strategy

- 1.1. Central Bedfordshire Council appointed Neil Allen Associates to produce four of the five chapters that will comprise the Leisure Strategy. Chapter 4: the Physical Activity Strategy is being produced in-house. The chapters are:
 - Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy
 - Chapter 2: Recreation & Open Space Strategy
 - Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy
 - Chapter 4: Physical Activity Strategy
 - Overarching Leisure Strategy
- 1.2. In accordance with Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy have each assessed the current provision of identified leisure facilities across Central Bedfordshire in 2012/13, and further evaluated the respective leisure requirements which result from the planned growth in Central Bedfordshire's population. These chapters comprise the Planning policy guidance. Chapter 4, the Physical Activity Strategy addresses the opportunities for physical activity across Central Bedfordshire and will be supported by a programme of activity delivery.
- 1.3. The Leisure Strategy planning guidance will support the securing of new and improved facility provision via the development management process, identify needs and priorities, address inequalities of provision, inform investment priorities of Central Bedfordshire Council, and seek to ensure that residents of Central Bedfordshire have access to a range of recreation and sporting facilities.
- 1.4. The Leisure Strategy will support Central Bedfordshire Council's responsibility for public health by ensuring sustainable, high quality sport and physical activity infrastructure and opportunities are provided to enable residents to live active lives, prevent ill health, improve overall health & wellbeing, and reduce care costs. The strategy also seeks to ensure that the number of adults taking part in sport and physical activity remains above the national average.

Planning Status

- 1.5. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy have been prepared in accordance with the procedures required for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) but will initially be adopted as Technical Guidance for Development Management purposes.
- 1.6. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 provide facility standards and future facility requirements to be met through the planning process and will form material evidence and policy to inform the Council's emerging Development Strategy. On adoption of the Development Strategy the Council will look to formally adopt the Leisure Strategy Chapters 1, 2 and 3 as a Supplementary Planning Document which will attract more weight in decisions reached on planning applications.
- 1.7. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy are derived from Policy 22 'Leisure and Open Space Provision' in the pre submission Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire 2013, which identifies general requirements for recreation and leisure

provision. The detailed assessment will provide the evidence base and facility requirements to support Policy 22.

- 1.8. Chapter 4: the Physical Activity Strategy will detail Central Bedfordshire Council's strategic approach to the promotion and delivery of physical activity programmes.

Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy

1.9. This document sets out both the evidence base for the Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy and the strategic direction for the provision of indoor sports and leisure facilities in Central Bedfordshire. It has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1.10. This Leisure Facilities Strategy encompasses six types of indoor sport and leisure facilities (detailed in section 4). These have been identified as representing the key facilities required to provide Central Bedfordshire residents with access to a range of indoor sport and leisure facilities and activities which can assist them in leading health and active lives.

Purpose and Functions of Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy

1.11. The primary purpose and function of Chapter 1 is as Technical Guidance which will expand upon and provided guidance on the application of Policy 22 'Leisure and Open Space Provision' in the pre submission Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire 2013.

1.12. It provides the evidence base and policy standards/facility requirements to secure new or improved indoor facility provision as a result of new housing development. It will apply to both new on-site facilities provided within a new housing development site, and developer contributions secured to provide / improve off-site facilities which are required to mitigate the additional demand placed upon them by development.

1.13. In addition, the facility assessment and identification of need in this Chapter can be used by facility providers such as town and parish councils, sports clubs etc. as evidence to assist them in securing external funding to improve/deliver the facilities within their ownership.

Planning Obligations / Community Infrastructure Levy

1.14. When the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council the use of planning obligations in agreements entered into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will be reduced, and the council will only be able to pool contributions from five planning agreements.

1.15. CIL is a charge on new development based on the size and type of new development, which can be used by the council towards infrastructure priorities. The Leisure Strategy will provide the evidence and priorities to support the securing and use of CIL and should be read in conjunction with the Council's CIL policy.

1.16. In response to CIL, the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is currently being reviewed. The SPD sets out the council's approach to seeking obligations to address infrastructure needs. The Leisure Strategy will provide the evidence and priorities to support the SPD and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Planning Obligations Strategy.

The Role of Central Bedfordshire Council

- 1.17. Central Bedfordshire Council's primary role in the provision of indoor sporting facilities is via the provision and application of planning policy to secure new or improved provision / contributions from new development in line with the requirements set out in this document.
- 1.18. The facility requirements identified in Chapter 1 are not intended to be provided directly by Central Bedfordshire Council. Central Bedfordshire Council's role in the provision of indoor sporting facilities is twofold, firstly, via its ownership and ongoing development of the major public leisure centres, and secondly via the securing of new or improved provision / contributions from new development in line with the requirements set out in this document.
- 1.19. Central Bedfordshire Council will support clubs and external providers with guidance on strategy requirements, external funding and the planning process where there is an identified need for the improvement / creation of projects within their ownership.
- 1.20. In developing the Action Plan which will support this document, Central Bedfordshire Council has approved a programme of capital investment for the provision of new / improvement of existing leisure centres within its ownership. In developing the wider Action Plan, Central Bedfordshire Council will consult further with relevant stakeholders and facility providers to establish their delivery priorities. These will be used to inform both the securing of facilities / developer contributions and the release of S106 / CIL funds.

Vision and Objectives

Vision

- 1.21. The vision for Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy is:

'plan and provide a network of high quality, accessible and affordable indoor community sporting and recreation facilities to meet the needs of Central Bedfordshire residents both now and into the future, through the combined efforts of the Council and other providers, and ensure that facilities remain fit for purpose, by refurbishment or replacement, throughout the term of the strategy.'

Objectives

- 1.22. The specific objectives for Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy are:
- To provide a balanced and consistent approach to the provision of indoor sports for all ages and abilities, which takes into account all needs and demands
 - To make appropriate and commensurate provision for the increased demands brought about by new housing development
 - To support the health agenda by making facilities for exercise appropriate and accessible to all
 - To engage hard to reach groups and those not currently taking part in sport

- To sustain and increase where possible participation in indoor sports
- To ensure the number of adults in Central Bedfordshire taking part in sport and physical activity remains above the national average
- To enable a range of sports activities to flourish, including recreational, teaching, coaching, club growth and the development of excellence
- To promote principles of sustainability and good and efficient design
- To guide the investment strategies of Central Bedfordshire Council and other potential providers
- To ensure good management and value for money of Central Bedfordshire Council's facilities
- To ensure that additional facilities for sport contribute toward wider agendas including the economy, social cohesion, and community enjoyment

2. Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy

Scope

- 2.1 The scope of Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy encompasses all built sports facilities which are available to the wider community, including sports halls, swimming pools, health and fitness centres, indoor bowls and tennis, and squash courts. Specialist sports facilities which cater for regional or national level sport are outside the scope of this report, however Central Bedfordshire's role in facilitating such facilities would be considered where it can be accommodated within this report.
- 2.2 To capture the sport and recreation facilities and opportunities offered in the village and community halls in Central Bedfordshire, a separate study is being carried out concurrently and the results will inform the Chapter 1 Leisure Facilities Strategy.

Methodology

- 2.3 Chapter 1 has been prepared by Neil Allen Associates in close association with officers and members of the Central Bedfordshire Council. Comprehensive use has been made in the initial assessment of the variety of strategic planning pools available from Sport England and these are detailed below. Throughout each stage of the process, a range of consultees, including national and local organisations, governing bodies of sport, leisure operators, contractors, users, sports clubs, town and parish councils and others have been invited to comment on current and future leisure requirements at opportunities set out in the Communications Plan.
- 2.4 The Audit and Assessment Report for built leisure facilities and the key findings detailed in the Issues & Options Report result from a combination of site inspections, detailed desk-based research using Sport England and other planning tools, and consultation with leisure operators and managers, together with initial contact with stakeholders.
- 2.5 Extensive use has been made in the initial stages of Sport England's strategic planning tools for sport, as follows:
- **Active Places Power (APP)** – APP is a database containing information on sports facilities throughout England. It includes local authority leisure facilities, as well as commercial and club sites. It was designed as a tool to assist in investment decisions across Government and to help local authorities carry out audits of their sports provision and develop local strategies. It also helps national governing bodies of sport in identifying and planning where they need to improve and invest in facilities for their participants. The site includes tools for detailed analysis, including thematic maps, reports, advanced queries and strategic planning tools, all of which have been utilised in this study. APP models the current situation and can examine the catchments of existing and potential facilities.
 - **Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC)** - the SFC was created by Sport England to help local authorities quantify how much additional demand for the key community sports facilities (swimming pools, sports halls and indoor bowls) is generated by populations of new growth, development and regeneration areas. It is designed to be used to estimate the facility needs of discrete populations, such as sports hall and swimming pool created by a residential development. Its use has several provisos which prevent it being used solely to estimate current and future demand, but it is useful in conjunction with other tools to assess the adequacy of existing provision, and highlight future needs.

- **Facilities Planning Model (FPM)** - the FPM is a computer model which helps to assess the strategic provision of community sports facilities both now and in the future. The model has been developed as a means of assessing requirements for different types of community sports facilities on a local, regional or national scale, helping local authorities determine an adequate level of sports facility provision to meet their local needs and testing 'what if' scenarios in provision and changes in demand. This includes testing the impact of opening, relocating and closing facilities and the impact population changes would have on the needs of the sports facilities. The FPM is the most powerful tool available for estimating future need for facilities of a strategic nature.

Population Forecasting

- 2.6 Population figures used in the strategy were supplied by Central Bedfordshire Council, and other socio economic and demographic data was taken from Sport England's Local Authority Profiles.

3. Context

General Context

3.1 The Central Bedfordshire-specific contextual information supporting Chapter 1 is detailed in the Audit and Assessment Report. The following summarises the main background data and issues that underpin the strategy.

Population

3.2 The main characteristics of the local population at present (2012) are:

- Central Bedfordshire is the largest local authority in the East region, with a population of over 255,000 in 2010
- There is a slightly higher proportion of males than average, although females are still in the majority
- There are more people than average in the 16-19 and 35-49 age groups, and fewer people in the 25-34 age group
- There is more than the national average of pensioners (though fewer than the region)
- There are a very small proportion of non-white residents (4% compared with the national average of 11%)
- There are a smaller proportion of disabled people (7% compared with the national average of 11%).

3.3 The main changes that are estimated to occur to 2022 are:

- The overall population is expected to increase by about 35,000 people to over 290,000, representing a 14% increase over 2010
- There are projected increases in all age groups in absolute terms but wide variations in percentage increases – large increases in the 10-14, 55–64 and 65+ groups, and smaller increases in the 0-4 and the 15-34 groups (the latter being main sport playing age group)
- The number of people in the ‘active’ age groups (i.e. mainly 5-44) is estimated to rise by about 8,000 people, but this only represents a 6% increase compared with the 14% increase in the overall population. The number of people in the ‘inactive’ age groups increases by 21%. It is estimated that by 2022 the number of people within the ‘active’ population is actually less than those who are ‘inactive (47% active/53% inactive compared with 51/49% in 2010)

- The demographic changes alone suggest that (participation and other changes aside) future sports facility provision broadly needs to increase by 6% by 2022 compared with the present, not the 14% increase estimated for the overall population increase
- Conversely the increase in the 'inactive' population means that there is a need to consider other facilities and activities for the ageing population – there will be an additional 27,000 people over 45 and approximately 15,000 between 45 and 74

Other Socio Economic Indicators

- Unemployment (5.8%) is (2011) below the average rate for the region (6.6%) and England (7.5%)
- Adult obesity is about the average, but childhood obesity is significantly lower (14% compared with 19%)
- Life expectancy is about average (79 for men, 82 for women)
- Central Bedfordshire has a low deprivation score (from the Index of Multiple Deprivation) and is ranked in the best 20% of all local authorities in the country in terms of overall deprivation

Participation in Sport

3.4 Data taken from Sport England's latest Active People Survey (2010/11), showing 3 x 30 minutes sessions or more of moderate intensity activity per week, conclude that:

- Broadly similar levels of activity were maintained in Central Bedfordshire between 2005/6 and 2009/11 (22 -22.5%)
- Activity levels in Central Bedfordshire are generally slightly higher than the regional (21.9%) or national average (21.4%)
- Male activity levels (26.9%) are much higher than female (18.1%) and higher than the national average (25.2%)
- Female activity levels are slightly below the national average (18.9%), and have declined slightly since 2005/6

3.5 In terms of the other indicators set out in the Active People Surveys, Central Bedfordshire fares as follows:

- Relatively low levels of volunteering, and some decline since 2007/8
- Low and declining sports club membership
- Low and declining amounts of sports coaching and tuition
- Average but declining levels of organised sporting competition
- Average but growing levels of satisfaction with local sports provision

Market Segmentation

- 3.6 As an extension to the Active People Survey findings, Sport England has analysed the data on the adult English population to produce 19 market segments with distinct sporting behaviours and attitudes.
- 3.7 The five main groups in Central Bedfordshire comprise almost 50% of the local population, and these include three segments with high participation rates and some with low rates, demonstrating the varied population of Central Bedfordshire. There are some geographical variations in distribution, and some areas are more characterised by inactive groups – details of the location, type and distribution of market segments are set out in the Audit and Assessment Report.

Planning Policy Context

- 3.8 The Leisure Facilities Strategy must be considered in the context of other national and local policies and programmes. The development of the Leisure Facilities Strategy has incorporated the principles of the following national and local policies:

- **National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012**
 - The NPPF is a key part of the government's reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible. The framework acts as guidance for local planning authorities, both in drawing up plans and making decisions about planning applications.
 - Section 70 of the NPPF says "To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:
 - plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
 - guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
 - ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and
 - Ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services".
- **Central Bedfordshire Council Emerging Development Strategy**
 - The Development Strategy will be the main planning document for Central Bedfordshire. It will set out the overarching spatial strategy and development principles for the area together with more detailed policies to help determine planning applications.
 - It was anticipated that the plan would be formally adopted in early 2014, however, additional time has been needed to consider the representations made and

implications of new population and household projections. A revised timetable has yet to be agreed but submission is anticipated in the near future. The Development Strategy timetable is:

- “Publication” stage – Jan 2013
- Submission to Secretary of State – To be confirmed
- Examination hearing sessions – To be confirmed
- Draft Inspector’s report – To be confirmed
- Adoption – To be confirmed

- **Central Bedfordshire Council Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Documents (north) 2009 and (south) 2009**

- The Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) set out the Council’s policy for negotiating and securing planning obligations associated with new development.
- The SPD’s give guidance on when and how the Council will enter into planning obligations and the type of facilities and other benefits the Council expects developers to provide. It contains standard charges which may be applied for new developments.
- Planning obligations are primarily intended to make acceptable those developments that would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms. In accordance with national planning policy contained in PPS1, local planning authorities are required to ensure that new development is planned to be sustainable. Where communities continue to grow, many require additional infrastructure, services and facilities such as schools, playspace, bus services, health care etc. to ensure that growth in those communities is fully sustainable.
- The Planning Obligations Strategy Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are being revised and will identify the council’s policy for securing planning obligations from new development to secure the infrastructure needed to mitigate the impact of new development in response to the amended context of the current legislative framework for seeking planning obligations.

- **Central Bedfordshire Council draft Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule**

- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), as set out in the Planning Act 2008, is a new system of charging and collecting developer contributions and is intended to supplement other public sector funding streams to ensure that new community infrastructure (such as schools, health care facilities, etc) can be provided to keep pace with population growth.
- CIL is set locally and will become a standard charge per square metre applied to almost all developments. Social housing, buildings used by charities and buildings into which people do not normally go are exempt. The charge will be imposed at the time planning permission is granted and normally be paid at the commencement of development.

- Whilst CIL will replace Section 106 contributions / Planning Obligations for general types of community infrastructure, Section 106 will still be used for site specific mitigation measures that are required to make a development acceptable (such as a new access road) as well as for affordable housing provision.
- CIL is to be paid according to a Charging Schedule prepared by the Charging Authority. Central Bedfordshire Council's Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule was published on 14 January 2013. The next stage of consultation was planned for Autumn 2013, however, additional time has been required to consider issues raised and the implications of new Government CIL regulations. The Council is therefore currently considering its approach to the introduction and timing of the Community Infrastructure Levy. The estimated timetable for this document is:
 - Consultation on Preliminary Charging Schedule - January 2013
 - Submission of Draft Charging Schedule – To be confirmed
 - Examination - To be confirmed
 - Approval – To be confirmed
- **Central Bedfordshire Healthier Communities Strategy 2010-2031**
 - The strategy will be delivered by the Central Bedfordshire Health Improvement Delivery Partnership in order to realise a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of local people. The partnership is a multi-agency group whose key activities include the promotion of healthier lifestyles, and the provision of help to support people to lead healthier lives and ensure they have access to the high quality services which will enable them to do so.
- **Central Bedfordshire Council Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-31**
 - The strategy was prepared by Central Bedfordshire Together, (Central Bedfordshire Local Strategic Partnership) and is intended to form the basis for all plans and strategies affecting the Council's area. The strategy's vision statement for the area is; "Globally connected, delivering sustainable growth to ensure a green, prosperous and ambitious place for the benefit of all"
 - The strategy comprises two key themes to delivering this vision:
 - creating the condition for economic success and community prosperity
 - raising standards and tackling inequalities
 - There are eight priorities which underpin the key themes:
 - maximising employment opportunities & delivering housing growth to meet the needs of our communities
 - ensuring our local people have the skills to prosper
 - keeping our communities safe
 - nurturing a sense of pride and belonging
 - getting around and caring for a green and clean environment
 - promoting health and reducing health inequalities
 - educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people
 - supporting and caring for an ageing population and those who are most vulnerable

- **Sport England Strategy 2012-17 Creating a Sporting Habit for Life**
 - Strategy and investment to create a sporting legacy by growing participation at grass roots level, particularly among young people

Implications for Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy

3.9 The context and demographic projections detailed in the preceding sections, and their potential implications for future policy have all been considered in the development of the Leisure Facilities Strategy. These key issues can be summarised as follows:

- Central Bedfordshire has a large population with more people in the young adult and middle aged group, but fewer in the 25-34 group and more than the national average of people over 65. This demographic distribution suggests that a wide range of facilities may be required to accommodate different needs of the differing age groups.
- The current population is mainly white and there are low levels of disability.
- The population over the next few years is likely to increase significantly, but the increase particularly in the 50+ group is likely to mean that the 'active population' will increase only slightly. There will be an increasing need to address the demands of an older population for sport and recreation, particularly in respect of supporting healthy lives.
- There are low levels of unemployment and overall deprivation. Areas of relative deprivation are identified and appropriate provision will be targeted at areas of specific need.
- There are no significant health issues and life expectancy is the national average, but nonetheless the need to encourage active and health lives and combat health issues, through sports provision.
- There are slightly higher than average participation rates in sport, but a significant imbalance between female and male activity rates. A main aim will be to redress this imbalance.
- There are low levels of participation in volunteering, club membership, coaching and training and competition, though levels of satisfaction with sports opportunities are increasing. Future sports development should increase the opportunities to improve these levels.
- The population is mixed in terms of its market segments, with three of the main groups having higher than average activity rates. The main groups with low activity rates in sport are not well represented in Central Bedfordshire. Future participation is likely to remain buoyant, but continued analysis and targeting of facilities and services is needed to address the less active groups.

4. Summary of Audit and Assessment

Audit and Assessment

- 4.1 Full details of the audit of built facility provision are set out in the separate Audit and Assessment Report. This provides detailed information on quantity, quality and accessibility of facilities in accordance with the methodologies identified above.
- 4.2 The summary below is set out by facility type. For each facility the baseline 2012 situation is summarised, followed by the 2022 situation which assumes an increase in population but no changes to the current facilities. Using the identified tools from Sport England, 2022 is the latest date for which reliable forecasting is possible.
- 4.3 This is followed by an assessment of future requirements up to 2022 assuming a number of possible facility scenarios tested using the Facilities Planning Model (FPM). The issues identified result from the scenarios which were tested and compared in readiness for the development of the main strategy covering all facility types.

Sports Halls

Overview

- 4.4 In general sports halls in Central Bedfordshire are well located, a high level of demand is met (with the use of halls outside the area), facility quality is variable with many old halls, however, accessibility is good by car although less so on foot. There is a current capacity issue at the main leisure centre sports halls. There is no strong evidence supporting new sports halls, but there is a clear need to increase capacity now and in the future.

Summary of 2012 Situation

- There is no justification for additional sports halls to satisfy the unmet needs of the existing (2012) population in Central Bedfordshire. Supply of halls in CB is below the national average and apparently insufficient to meet locally generated demand, when supply takes into account actual availability and demand reflects comfortable usage of halls without being crowded. Despite this, however, almost all demand from CB residents is met by halls within CB and in surrounding authority areas.
- The main current issue for sports hall provision in Central Bedfordshire is the apparent high use of the 'public' halls at Flitwick, Tiddenfoot, Houghton Regis and Dunstable Leisure Centres, as well as the dual use halls at Biggleswade Recreation Centre and Sandy Sports Centre, which the model estimates are operating well above comfortably full levels. So while there is insufficient demand to justify a new hall to meet unmet demand, consideration should be given to providing additional capacity in the peak period at these or other halls to reduce the pressure on these facilities.
- Biggleswade is the exception to the above as it is the only main town without a 'public' sports hall. The provision of an additional hall here would need to consider the

displacement of demand from other facilities, such as Stratton Upper School, Sandy Sports Centre and Shuttleworth College.

- Some increase in capacity could be achieved by additional access to other 'public' sports halls in Central Bedfordshire, mainly the school halls, such as Alameda Middle School, Redborne Upper School, Manshead Upper School and Vandyke Upper School, and those at Cranfield University and Shuttleworth College. The latter two facilities are not well located to accommodate additional use, being in smaller settlements remote from the main population.
- Increasing capacity at the main 'public' halls may be difficult to achieve without major rebuild or significantly increased opening times (which may be impractical).

Summary of 2022 Situation

- Future need for facilities is dependent on any increase in population. The impact of the increased population is however, mitigated by the ageing of the population, who traditionally have lower activity rates. Supply is still relatively low, and on a crude comparison is insufficient to meet locally generated demand within Central Bedfordshire.
- However, a larger than average level of demand is satisfied in 2022 (including at halls outside the area) and what levels of unmet demand exist are still not in sufficient concentrations to justify the provision of any additional halls in Central Bedfordshire to meet this criterion alone. New halls might be built but they would only succeed in displacing demand from other existing halls nearby. One possible exception might be the Biggleswade area, where there are no 'public' halls to serve one of the main towns.
- The main concern by 2022 remains the high usage of sports halls in Central Bedfordshire, nine (of the 20) of which now exceed their comfortable capacity, and in particular the main 'public' halls in the larger towns, but also the dual use centres in Biggleswade and Sandy and the Robert Bloomfield Middle School hall. So while there is insufficient demand to justify a new hall to meet unmet demand, consideration should be given to providing additional capacity in the peak period at these (or other) halls to reduce the pressure on these facilities.
- At the same time, some halls have reduced throughput, presumably as a result of decreased attractiveness, indicating significant refurbishment may be required. As with the 2012 situation, accessing halls with spare capacity could address capacity but facilities may not be best located to absorb additional usage.

Possible Facility Scenarios 2022

- In order to calculate the hall space required to meet the needs of Central Bedfordshire's growing population to 2022, modelling of four future scenarios has been undertaken to test the impact of changes to hall provision and condition to assess the different impact these changes would have on meeting future demand.
- The four scenarios were based around the 'public' halls and modelled new halls, refurbishment of halls, and closure of some facilities. The findings of these scenarios are considered in more detail in the Audit and Assessment, and refined in the Issues and Options report, to identify preferred options used as a basis for the strategy.

Consultation

4.5 Extensive consultation was undertaken at two stages of the strategy's preparation to test the initial findings of the Audit and Assessment, and help refine the Issues and Options into preferred options. Full details of the consultation can be found in the statement of community involvement.

Consultation 1

Sports clubs, sports governing bodies and town and parish councils highlighted the following issues at the first consultation stage:

- There are considered insufficient halls for community badminton clubs to be accommodated
- School halls do not meet the need for badminton particularly at exam times
- School facilities could be coordinated to accommodate badminton and other specialist facilities throughout the area
- An 8-court specialist centre for badminton in Bedfordshire could be justified, which could be of economical design and cost
- There is a reasonable justification for a 'public' hall in Biggleswade to meet local need for sports hall activities such as badminton
- Stratton School is very amenable to additional community usage, within the constraints of the existing management structure. There is potential to accommodate specialist facilities for particular sports (e.g. indoor cricket)
- The need for local facilities for local people in smaller communities needs addressing
- The school facilities at Harlington Upper School are acknowledged to be inaccessible because of the nature of the school management

Key Issues

4.6 The Audit and Assessment led to the development of a range of issue and options which are set out in more detail in the Issues and Options Report. These form the basis of the preferred options and policies set out in the main strategy below. In summary the key issues are:

- The assessment suggests that although there is relatively low provision, it is difficult to justify any more halls in Central Bedfordshire to meet unmet demand. Evidence shows that the construction of new halls would not achieve a higher proportion of satisfied demand because existing halls are shown to be well located to serve the major settlements and identified growth areas. Equally, improving upon the 8% unmet demand is unlikely to be possible, due to the rural nature of much of Central Bedfordshire.
- Evidence shows that the main 'public' sports halls in Flitwick, Tiddenfoot, Houghton Regis and Dunstable and others are at capacity already and will become more crowded

by 2022, and that additional capacity may already be required to meet this concern in 2012.

- Central Bedfordshire relies on hall provision in neighbouring local authority areas to meet much of its demand.
- School sports halls offer an opportunity for community use. Many schools provide good community access to their sports halls, but some do not. There is a need to improve community access to school halls in the evening and at weekends, and possibly a role for management of community time to be coordinated throughout the area.
- There is the need for a range of halls of various sizes and types to allow all different activities to take place, including competitions, and to permit the development of specialist facilities for particular sports. If all secondary schools have a main sports hall which is available for public use, they could be developed with a different specialist facility in order to improve provision across Central Bedfordshire; however, the strategy does not seek to address the needs of specialist sports which are outside the scope of this report.
- The majority of sports halls (mainly those on school sites but also the main 'public' halls) were built over 30 years ago, and only half of these have been refurbished. There has been very little sports hall construction in Central Bedfordshire in the last 30 years. It can be assumed from this data therefore that the sports hall stock overall is not in prime condition, and is unlikely to be fully fit for purpose far into the future.
- In the current financial climate, the best way of funding new halls or hall improvements needs to be considered.
- The additional population in the new housing areas will significantly increase the demand for sports halls in the future, though not to the same extent as the increase in the population due to the ageing of the population. New provision could take place within the new housing areas, or be more centrally located to meet the demand from both new and existing residential areas.

Consultation 2

4.7 Sports clubs, sports governing bodies, town and parish councils and individuals highlighted the following issues at the second stage of consultation:

- Some concern about the loss of any sports hall in the Dunstable/Houghton Regis area, because of current usage. Facilities at both centres should be improved and extended over the coming years rather than reduced.
- In the light of people trying to lead healthier lives, which include taking part in various forms of sport, it is imperative that no leisure centres should be closed especially when they are already well supported by the general public. It is somewhere for the young to go instead of staying inactive at home or just 'hanging out' with their friends. There is not much else in the way of entertainment for them and the older people would miss the interaction with others in the same age group.
- A joint leisure centre for Dunstable and Houghton Regis is not supported. Dunstable centre is well located for local people. A joint centre could mean classes are difficult to get on to, the pool will be too full in the mornings and no one will get a decent swim,

waiting lists, queues etc. will be longer. Jointly Dunstable and Houghton are too large to be served by one centre. Don't fix what isn't broken.

- The idea of a joint centre for Dunstable and Houghton Regis is not feasible due to the ever increasing population within these two areas and the added problems of transportation and easy access across the towns.
- As a resident of Dunstable and also a member of the HRLCAG and a current user of the leisure centre and a past member who used the swimming pool, Houghton Regis should keep its current leisure centre with the addition of a refurbished swimming pool and also the consideration of a new leisure centre for 2017. With the new proposed Woodside Link and the proposal to build 5,600 new homes in the Houghton Regis area, along with the current developments at the old quarry and the new guided bus way commuter link, it appears to be even more imperative that Houghton Regis has its own leisure centre. Run 3 (see Audit & Assessment Report) are therefore supported in the short term but also Run 4, a new centre in the longer term should be implemented as part of the leisure strategy.

Swimming Pools

Overview

4.8 In general swimming pools in Central Bedfordshire are well located, demand is met (with use of pools outside the area), quality is variable with many old pools, but accessibility is good by car although less so on foot. There is a capacity issue at present at the main leisure centre pools. There is no strong support for new pools, but a need to increase capacity now and in the future.

Summary of 2012 situation

- Unmet demand in Central Bedfordshire is the equivalent in total of about one additional pool over the whole area, but this is spread too thinly to warrant a new pool in any one location that would significantly reduce the unmet demand levels. The location of pools on the edge of and outside CB fulfils an important role in meeting CB's needs, through good accessibility of local residents, and CB residents therefore have ample access to pools. CB therefore currently relies on neighbouring LA areas to meet much of its demand for swimming.
- The main current conclusion for swimming pool provision in Central Bedfordshire appears to be the apparent high use of the Flitwick, Tiddenfoot and Dunstable Leisure Centre pools, which the model estimates are operating well above comfortably full levels. So while there is insufficient demand to justify a new pool to meet unmet demand, additional capacity in the peak period is required at these (or other) pools to reduce the pressure on these facilities.

Summary of 2022 situation

- Future facility need is dependent on any increase in population. The impact of the increased population is however, mitigated by the ageing of the population, who traditionally have lower activity rates. However unmet demand is still not in sufficient concentrations to justify the provision of any additional pools in Central Bedfordshire to meet this criterion alone. New pools might be built but they would only succeed in displacing demand from other existing pools nearby.

- The main concern by 2022 remains the high usage of now all 4 main 'public' pools in the four main towns. Despite a projected reduction in the usage of the Dunstable LC pool in the face of competition from the relative increasing attractiveness of the 'new' Luton Sports Village pools, the 4 main pools are all operating at or near absolute capacity.
- There is some spare capacity at the commercial pools, which meet less community use because of their membership policies and availability. Additional capacity is therefore required to reduce the pressure on these facilities.

Possible Facility Scenarios 2022

- In order to calculate the pool space required to meet the needs of Central Bedfordshire's growing population to 2022, modelling of three future scenarios has been undertaken to test the impact of changes to pool provision and condition to assess the different impact these changes would have on meeting future demand.
- The three scenarios were based around the 'public' pools and modelled new pools, refurbishment of pools, and closure of some facilities. The findings of these scenarios are detailed in the Audit and Assessment Report, and refined in the Issues and Options Report, to identify preferred options used as a basis for the strategy

Consultation

4.9 As with halls, extensive consultation was undertaken at two stages of the strategy's preparation to test the initial findings of the Audit and Assessment, and help refine the Issues and Options into preferred options. Full details of the consultation response can be found in the statement of community involvement.

Consultation 1

4.10 Sports clubs, sports governing bodies and town and parish councils highlighted the following issues at the first consultation stage:

4.11 The Amateur Swimming Association (the governing body for swimming) did not respond to the initial consultation, but the development of new pools or improvement of existing comply with the current strategic aims of the Association and the target for swimming facilities up to 2013.

- Tiddenfoot is considered inadequate to meet all the demands on it, and in particular during the day when there is no community use (the assessments above tend to consider only the peak hours which do not necessarily correspond).
- There is a local desire/aspiration for an additional pool in Leighton Buzzard.
- The recent closure of the pool at Houghton Regis is considered to have had a serious impact on local swimming, particularly on daytime school activity.

Key Issues

4.12 The Audit and Assessment led to the development of a range of issue and options which are set out in more detail in the Issues and Options Report. These form the basis of the preferred options and policies set out in the main strategy below. In summary the key issues are:

- Considering the location, size and availability, the existing pools meet a wide demand for recreational swimming, teaching and/or club activities. Swim clubs and others still experience difficulty of gaining access at their preferred times, particularly in Leighton Buzzard.
- The assessment suggests that although there is relatively low provision, it is difficult to justify any more pools in Central Bedfordshire to meet unmet demand. Evidence shows that the construction of additional pools in new locations would not achieve a higher proportion of satisfied demand because existing pools are shown to be well located to serve the major settlements and identified growth areas. Equally, improving upon the 8% unmet demand is unlikely to be possible, due to the rural nature of much of Central Bedfordshire.
- Evidence shows that the main leisure centre pools in Flitwick, Tiddenfoot and Dunstable are already at capacity and will get more crowded by 2022, and that additional capacity may be required to address this concern.
- Central Bedfordshire does rely on pool provision in neighbouring LA areas to meet much of its demand, including the new 50m pool at Luton Sports Village
- Consultation reveals that the recent closure of Houghton Regis pool highlights a need for additional swimming pool space in this area.
- Consultation reveals some concern in Leighton Buzzard about the adequacy of swimming provision in the town.
- The role of commercial pools at health clubs in meeting the local demand for swimming has some potential and could be considered.
- The current quality of pools is considered good at present, but unlikely to be fit for purpose after 2020. There is an issue of age and functionality with some pools, many of which were built before 1990, although some refurbishment has taken place. Quality improvements will differ according to whether pools are replaced or renewed. By 2022 the existing pools will in some instances be in excess of 40 years old, and without significant investment their condition will have deteriorated to a degree where they are significantly less fit for purpose. This will have a corresponding effect on their attractiveness to users.
- The decline in the used capacity at Dunstable by 2022 (from 100% to 80%) shows that the pool's age and condition mean it has become less attractive to users who will choose to swim elsewhere. Without investment a similar effect may be expected on the other pools.
- In the current financial climate, the best way of funding new pools or pool enhancements needs to be considered.

- The additional population in the new housing areas will significantly increase the demand for swimming in the future. New provision could take place within the new housing areas, or be more centrally located to meet the demand from both these and existing residential areas.

Consultation 2

4.13 Sports clubs, sports governing bodies, town and parish councils and individuals highlighted the following issues at the second stage of consultation:

- As a resident of Dunstable and also a member of the HRLCAG and a current user of the leisure centre and a past member who used the swimming pool Houghton Regis should keep its current leisure centre with the addition of a refurbished swimming pool and also the consideration of a new leisure centre for 2017. With the new proposed Woodside Link and the proposal to build 5,600 new homes in the Houghton Regis area, along with the current developments at the old quarry and the new guided bus way commuter link, it appears to be even more imperative that Houghton Regis has its own leisure centre. Run 3 are therefore supported in the short term but Run 4 should be implemented as part of the leisure strategy.
- There is some support for the proposal is to replace the current Dunstable Leisure Centre.
- HRHCBC supports the immediate re-opening of the existing pool and the need to vary the current contract to include the managing of the pool. This action would achieve additional water space and meet local demand as well as drag back demand from outside the district (as identified in Options and Issues Report). With regards to the medium and long –term development on the existing site of a new leisure centre for Houghton Regis, HRHCBC recommends that the new centre should include a 6 lane swimming pool, 100 plus station gym along with no reduction in the provision and capacity enjoyed in the current facilities. Once the new centre is built then the old facilities be closed and decommissioned.
- Support for the existing pool at Houghton Regis Leisure Centre to be re-opened as soon as possible but the Council should also adopt Run 4 as their Leisure Strategy.
- The closure of the pool in HR has been a significant detriment to the local community. HRLCAG support the immediate re-opening of the existing pool with due consideration being given to varying the current contract to include the managing of the pool. This action would achieve additional water space, meet local demand and drag back demand from outside the district (as identified in Issues and Options Report). HRLCAG support the medium to long-term development on the existing site of a new Houghton Regis Leisure Centre with a 6-lane swimming pool, with no reduction of provision and capacity enjoyed in the current facilities. This will result in the closing of the current facilities following the build of the New Houghton Regis Leisure Centre.
- Some support for the present facilities in the area and how the local residents are making use of them. It would be wonderful for those living in Houghton Regis, and for the local schools, if it were possible to reopen the pool to schools residents and clubs. Pool facilities in the Luton area have undergone several closures during the last year and despite the opening of the 'Inspire' there has been a loss of several of the smaller clubs, (including Luton Youth Canoe Group). Not in favour of the closure of Dunstable and

Houghton Regis and the building of a new joint facility as this will inevitably involve users with extra travelling. People need LOCAL FACILITIES that are easily accessible. Our roads are busy enough without adding vehicles for no good reason. Dunstable Leisure Centre is conveniently placed for residents of Dunstable and the Houghton Regis Leisure Centre is well placed for its local population.

- Need for a pool in Houghton Regis. Also welcome a new facility in the future as part of the future strategy. With this in mind recommend the refurbishment and reopening of the pool at Houghton Regis.
- User of the gym and pool finds the Flitwick Leisure Centre too small, particularly the pool. Swimming is important to health and recommended by the orthopaedic surgeon.

Health and Fitness

Overview

4.14 There is an apparent shortfall of health and fitness facilities in Central Bedfordshire, but good provision in neighbouring areas contributes toward meeting demand. Some additional local provision is justified at present. Future provision needs to be made in accordance with increased demand.

Summary of 2012 Situation

- Evidence shows that there is a significant shortfall of health and fitness stations within Central Bedfordshire of up to 600 stations (a station is a piece of fixed equipment). This general conclusion is mitigated by several factors however:
 - Rest of Study Area (ROSA) has a major surplus of stations when comparing estimated demand with supply, of 1400 stations.
 - The supply of stations in Luton, the LA most closely linked to Central Bedfordshire, has increased recently with additional facilities at Luton Sports Village and Lewsey Park, and average provision here is higher than in CB, although there is still a small deficit in provision here.
 - As with other types of sports facilities, there is an evident export of demand from Central Bedfordshire to neighbouring LA area.
- It is much more likely therefore that if any shortfalls exist in Central Bedfordshire, these are localised, and indeed the operators of the main 'public' leisure centres have highlighted some shortfalls in Leighton Buzzard, Flitwick and Biggleswade. Commercial clubs are likely to be meeting the members' only demand.
- There is therefore some justification for limited additional health and fitness provision, specifically in Flitwick and Leighton Buzzard. Private clubs could provide additional capacity, if access were available for wider community use where applicable.

Future Provision

- Unlike with sports halls and swimming pools, future provision was not assessed using the FPM or other Sport England tools. Future need for facilities is, however, dependent

on any increase in population. The impact of the increased population is mitigated by the ageing of the population, who traditionally have lower activity rates. Even if increased participation in accordance with any local or national targets is not achieved, it is likely that additional stations will be required in the next 10-15 years over and above any planned increases at the present.

- Positive provision for health and fitness should be made particularly in conjunction with new housing development throughout Central Bedfordshire.

Consultation

Consultation 1

4.15 Consultation took place in the same way as for sports halls and swimming pools. Sports clubs, sports governing bodies and town and parish councils highlighted the following issues at the first consultation stage:

- Provision for health and fitness needs to account for participation by young people
- Some public sector operators identify a need for additional stations (commercial managers were reluctant to provide data, and it must be assumed that there is a balance in commercial provision because of market factors)
- Flitwick Leisure Centre already demonstrates a need for more stations at peak times, while Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre managers suggest capacity has been reached.
- Houghton Regis Leisure Centre has upgraded its gym from 15 to 65 stations as part of the modernisation process recently undertaken.
- Saxon Pool & Leisure Centre gym has also been updated but the free weights section is identified as inadequate.

Key Issues

4.16 The Audit and Assessment led to the development of a range of issue and options which are set out in more detail in the Issues and Options Report. These form the basis of the preferred options and policies set out in the main strategy below. In summary the key issues are:

- The assessment has found that health and fitness provision in Central Bedfordshire is well below average. Central Bedfordshire does rely on fitness provision in neighbouring LA areas to meet much of its demand. Additional provision is indicated.
- It is clear that most health and fitness centres are in good condition, only one centre has not been built or refurbished since 2000, and the condition and range of main and ancillary facilities meets current requirements. Quality and condition need to be maintained to keep facilities fit for purpose over the period of the strategy.
- The additional population in the new housing areas will significantly increase the demand for health and fitness centres in the future. New provision could take place within the new housing areas, or be more centrally located to meet the demand from both these and existing built up areas.

- Access to health and fitness centres needs to be equitable for the whole community – there need to be enough health and fitness facilities available on a pay and play basis, and all sections of the population should be catered for, e.g. young people, senior residents, disabled.
- The scale and size of new health and fitness centres will be determined by demand, and the need to make other provision sustainable. Therefore, a new facility is only likely to be built if it is economically viable and sustainable to do so as part of other provision e.g. in conjunction with a new sports hall, swimming pool or AGP.
- The optimum size of health and fitness centres may depend on a range of factors, and there is no ideal number of stations per centre.

Consultation 2

No comments were received specifically on health and fitness facilities.

Squash

Overview

4.17 The current provision for squash is good in Central Bedfordshire, although demand is estimated as higher than the national average. Additional courts are required now and in the future to meet anticipated demand.

Summary of 2012 Situation

- Existing provision per capita across Central Bedfordshire for squash is just below the average for England, while demand is estimated from national participation rates at about 10-20% above the average. Evidence suggests that squash courts and centres are already under some pressure, particularly in the south of the county.
- Comparing supply with estimated demand, it is suggested that there is an existing shortfall of about 3-5 courts to meet current demand. In particular there is a need for venues with at least three courts.
- Quality is generally fair and overall accessibility to existing courts is good.
- Additional squash provision (minimum 3 courts) should therefore be considered either as free standing centres in 1-2 locations or more probably as part of the development of any multi-use leisure centres arising from other sections of this assessment.

Future Provision

4.18 Unlike with sports halls and swimming pools, future provision was not assessed using the FPM or other Sport England tools. Future need for facilities is, however, dependent on any increase in population. The impact of the increased population is mitigated by the ageing of the population, who traditionally have lower activity rates. It is

likely that additional squash courts might be required in the next 10-15 years over and above current increased requirement to meet future demand.

Consultation

Consultation 1

4.19 Consultation took place in the same way as for halls and pools. The governing bodies of squash were consulted and highlighted the following at the first consultation stage:

- There is a lack of squash facilities particularly in the south of the county, and three court venues would be supported. In public venues, clubs should be encouraged to prosper
- There is a need to consider the provision of larger venues with at least 3 courts to satisfy the requirements of the governing body for development programmes.

Key Issues

4.20 The Audit and Assessment led to the development of a range of issue and options which are set out in more detail in the Issues and Options Report. These form the basis of the preferred options and policies set out in the main strategy below. In summary the key issues are:

- The assessment has found that squash provision in Central Bedfordshire is at about the national average, although it is likely that demand is higher. There is some evidence from the governing bodies of a shortfall of courts to meet local demand, including in the adjacent area of Luton, where courts have recently closed.
- Quality and condition are considered to be fair/good, but need to be maintained to keep facilities fit for purpose over the period of the strategy
- The additional population in the new housing areas will significantly increase the demand for squash centres in the future. New provision could take place within the new housing areas, or be more centrally located to meet the demand from both these and existing built up areas.

Consultation 2

No comments were received specifically on squash facilities.

Indoor Bowls

Overview

4.21 The supply of indoor bowls centres in Central Bedfordshire is low but accessibility to other centres in the region is good. A case can be made for additional provision but further feasibility is required.

Summary of 2012 Situation

- There is one indoor bowls centre in Central Bedfordshire with 6 rinks, but a large number of other centres within a 30-minute drive in adjacent LA areas. Existing provision for indoor bowls in the area is very low compared with the county, regional and national averages. The supply/demand balance is also very low, although personal share is above the national average and in line with the local situation, because of the existence of the other local centres outside Central Bedfordshire.
- Almost two thirds of local residents can access a bowls centre within a 20-minute drive. Accessibility by car is good in the south of Central Bedfordshire, but poorer in the northern part where indoor bowls is only available in adjacent LA areas. Quality is broadly good.
- The SFC estimates that at present there is sufficient demand in Central Bedfordshire at normal participation rates for 2.75 centres, or about 16.5 rinks in community use. This compares with current provision of one 6-rink centre. There appears to be a significant shortfall for indoor bowls from this assessment. Due to the poor local provision for indoor bowls in the area, a case can be made for the provision of an additional centre in the central, east or west part of Central Bedfordshire at the present time. The governing body considers however, that local provision is acceptable and that the existing club is being encouraged to increase its membership. At the same time there is some spare capacity at existing clubs and centres, particularly in Luton and Bedford. Nevertheless the location of the existing centre does not meet the needs of the whole of Central Bedfordshire, which relies on neighbouring areas to meet much of its demand. Further research is required to assess whether any of the usage of neighbouring centres might be displaced if an additional or replacement centre is built in Central Bedfordshire.

Future Provision

- As with other facilities, future need is dependent on any increase in population, which is mitigated by the ageing of the population. Conversely an ageing population might offer an opportunity to increase bowls provision. It is likely that additional rink space might be required in the next 10-15 years over and above current increased requirement.

Consultation

Consultation 1

4.22 Consultation took place in the same way as for halls and pools. The governing bodies and local operators were consulted and highlighted the following at the first consultation stage:

- If Dunstable Leisure Centre were to be relocated there is merit in considering a more central location for indoor bowls in Central Bedfordshire.
- There is a need to improve the quality of the existing centre (if retained) to ensure fitness for purpose.
- Two clubs had significant spare capacity for additional members, although they suggested that the future of each facility was not in jeopardy. Membership had dropped over the years as the result of an ageing clientele, the lack of spare leisure time and the inability to attract new younger members.
- Three other clubs were operating at or about capacity, and there was little opportunity to accommodate significant additional usage. The position locally therefore is varied and maybe usage depends as much on management and promotion as underlying strategic issues.

Key Issues

4.23 There is no endorsement from the NGB for additional indoor bowls in Central Bedfordshire at the present, though population changes should be monitored to take into account the future situation up to 2021.

4.24 The Audit and Assessment led to the development of a range of issue and options which are set out in more detail in the Issues and Options Report. These form the basis of the preferred options and policies set out in the main strategy below. In summary the key issues are:

- There is a shortage of indoor bowls in Central Bedfordshire, but local residents have good access to centres in nearby LA areas. The need for one additional centre or more in Central Bedfordshire needs careful consideration to ensure that usage is not displaced from other centres, some of which are not well used.
- The existing centre in Dunstable does not cater for residents from a large part of Central Bedfordshire wishing to play bowls, and locations for new centres elsewhere in the area should be considered, if additional provision is made.
- Overall quality of the existing centre is considered to be good, but the strategy extends into the future when the current facility will be 15 years older. The existing indoor centre needs to be refurbished to ensure that it remains fit for purpose into the future
- The additional population in the new housing areas may significantly increase the demand for indoor bowls in the future. New provision could take place within the new housing areas, or be more centrally located to meet the demand from both these and existing built up areas.
- Indoor bowls is very specialist facility and does not easily allow other sporting usage. However the feasibility of combining additional bowls provision in the future with other

new sports facility development (short mat bowls, outdoor bowls or other sports) should be considered.

- There is a need to explore participation rates and facts relating to the ageing population, in view of the current declining membership of some of the local outdoor bowls centres and clubs

Consultation 2

No comments were available from English Indoor Bowls Association (EIBA).

Indoor Tennis

Overview

4.25 There are no indoor tennis centres in Central Bedfordshire, together with an apparent shortage. Any new provision needs further feasibility to ascertain specific locations and number/s of courts required.

Summary of 2012 Situation

- There are no indoor tennis courts in Central Bedfordshire although there are 5 centres with 13 courts within 30 minutes from the centre of Central Bedfordshire. Potential players in part of the area particularly around Leighton Buzzard are not accommodated.
- On the basis of the average provision in the county/region, there is shortfall of 2-9 courts (compared with the national average the shortfall is 7 courts). Using LTA data on the average court provision required to accommodate demand, there is a shortfall of up to 13 courts.
- Despite the abundance of other centres outside Central Bedfordshire, there is some justification for the provision of indoor tennis at the present time in Central Bedfordshire, in the first instance on one site with 3 courts. Additional feasibility is required to ascertain the total number of new courts required over the strategy period and the best locations within the whole county.

Future Provision

- Unlike with sports halls and swimming pools, future provision was not assessed using the FPM or other Sport England tools. Future need for facilities is, however, dependent on any increase in population. The impact of the increased population is mitigated by the ageing of the population, who traditionally have lower activity rates. However, if increased participation in accordance with SE targets is achieved, it is likely that additional indoor tennis court space will be required in the next 10-15 years.

Consultation

Consultation 1

4.26 Consultation took place in the same way as for halls and pools. The governing bodies and local operators were consulted and highlighted the following at the first consultation stage:

- There is a strong case for indoor tennis facilities in Central Bedfordshire, and the LTA is keen to work with the Central Bedfordshire Council and other NGB's to try and get some indoor facilities within the county.
- There are two possible locations based on the existing clubs in Leighton Buzzard and Flitwick.
- Joint use sites with other sports are acceptable as long as there is a dedicated tennis element on the site. It would make sense to work with the existing outdoor clubs to bring existing players to any potential new centre.
- Any type of structure or surface is acceptable dependent upon budget.
- Consultation with other local operators and clubs confirms that additional indoor courts are required both for casual play and for coaching and teaching of juniors, but that Central Bedfordshire is not necessarily the best location for a new facility in the county.

Key Issues

4.27 The Audit and Assessment led to the development of a range of issue and options which are set out in more detail in the Issues and Options Report. These form the basis of the preferred options and policies set out in the main strategy below. In summary the key issues are:

- There are no indoor tennis facilities in Central Bedfordshire, but local residents can gain access to centres in neighbouring districts, albeit that these centres are not as convenient as other indoor sports facilities. The need to accommodate indoor tennis demands within the area is an issue.
- There is an undoubted need for an indoor tennis centre with at least 3 courts in the county, but preferred locations at other existing clubs, where there is a more developed coaching and teaching infrastructure, outside Central Bedfordshire need consideration.
- The additional population in the new housing areas may significantly increase the demand for indoor tennis in the future. New provision could take place within the new housing areas, or be more centrally located to meet the demand from both these and existing built up areas.
- If a new centre is justified in Central Bedfordshire, the clubs with the best infrastructure are in Flitwick and Leighton Buzzard. It is preferable to link any new such provision with existing outdoor provision for tennis.
- The feasibility of combining limited indoor tennis provision in the future with other new sports facility development on a joint site must be considered. There may be a need for large halls for other sports e.g. netball, and these could be combined.

- The types of surface or structure, which might be appropriate in any new centres, should be considered.

Consultation 2

No comments specifically on indoor tennis were received.

Specialist Facilities

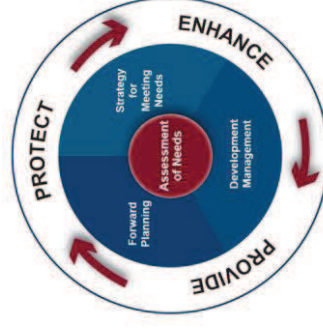
4.28 While it was outside the scope of the strategy to consider specialist facilities for sport, as the brief concentrated on community provision, nevertheless the initial consultation with governing bodies and others identified some specialist facility requirements, which have potential to be incorporated in existing or proposed new community sports halls. The results of these consultations, are set out below, and feed in to the subsequent section on issues and options.

- A need was identified for specialist facilities for gymnastics, but a realisation that this is not always feasible.
- A need was identified to consider the precise requirements of specialist gymnastics provision, either free standing or in conjunction with school or public sports hall.
- The design of new sports halls should consider incorporating gymnastics pit, additional storage and other requirements.
- The specialist needs of particular sports such as archery should be considered in future sports hall provision.
- Sports halls, in particular on school sites, may be appropriate locations for specialist use for indoor cricket and other activities.

5. Leisure Facilities Strategy

Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy - Policies

- 5.1 From the facilities Audit & Assessment evidence, a range of key facility issues and options were identified and refined in the Issues & Options Report. Consultation in November 2012 with Central Bedfordshire Council Members, Town and Parish Councils, sports clubs, sport governing bodies and the public, helped shape the preferred options which form the policies in this strategy. The policies are set out below with a basic action plan setting out priorities and relative timescales.
- 5.2 To help achieve its planning aims Sport England has three planning objectives, which are to seek to protect sports facilities from loss as a result of redevelopment, to enhance existing facilities through improving their quality, accessibility and management and to provide new facilities that are fit for purpose to meet demands for participation now and in the future. The priorities set out policies around protect, provide and enhance.
- 5.3 In order to detail the delivery requirements of the policies identified below, and to prepare CIL and S106 calculations, the next stage in the Leisure Facilities Strategy will be to refine and cost the Action Plan for the first phase of the strategy delivery. The table in section 9 of this strategy sets out the next steps.
- 5.4 The policies below are set out in Central Bedfordshire Council's Placemaking Areas. This is a local term used for planning and implementation purposes during the development of Chapter 1. It divides Central Bedfordshire into broad geographic areas. Although these are not set in policy they can be used to interpret provision and views geographically.



Dunstable & Houghton Regis (DHR) Placemaking Area

Policy	Strategic Priorities	Priority	Short Term: 1-2 years Medium Term: 2-7 years Long Term: 7+ years
DHR 1	<p>Refurbishment and enhancement of Dunstable Leisure Centre; to also incorporate facilities identified in policies DHR 7, 10 and 11 below.</p> <p>Justification - Refurbishment of the existing pool, hall and other facilities at Dunstable Leisure Centre is a medium term priority which will retain the presence of these facilities in the middle of the Dunstable catchment. The condition survey considered that improvement was desirable, and there is much local support for enhancement and retention of separate leisure centres to serve Dunstable and Houghton Regis. Refurbishment will not improve capacity in the area, but will make Dunstable Leisure Centre more attractive for a number of years and would be expected to reduce users travelling to more modern facilities in Luton.</p>	High	Medium
DHR 2	<p>Provision of replacement of public leisure centre for Houghton Regis close to the site of the existing leisure centre, comprising 6 court sports hall, 6 lane 25m swimming pool and a range of other facilities, may also incorporate facilities identified in policies DHR 6, and 7 below.</p> <p>Justification - Construction of a new leisure centre near to the existing centre in Houghton Regis, with a larger pool and similar sized sports hall and other ancillary facilities, will retain choice among people in the Dunstable and HR area, and overcome the problems of lack of capacity if the centre was merely a replacement. This will comprehensively address demand and increase throughput of users at the new facilities. In Houghton Regis in particular this is the best option for meeting demand from residents without cars as the new larger HR pool (and sports hall) has a large walking catchment. This is also essential for helping address the additional demand generated by the</p>	High	Medium/long

	<p>proposed Houghton Regis urban extension which will be sited in close proximity to the leisure centre as this is proposed that the development will meet its indoor sports facility needs. This proposal must also consider the future of the existing centre, which can be demolished or transferred to University, as there may be an impact on supply and demand in the HR area.</p>		
DHR 3	<p>Market test re-opening of Houghton Regis pool in the short term pending longer term on development in HR.</p> <p>Justification - The recent closure of Houghton Regis pool highlights a need for additional swimming pool space in this part of the district, and this is a short term priority, recommended because of current community concerns about lack of swimming provision in Houghton Regis and the evidence showing the nearest pool in Dunstable being at capacity. Subsequent retention will depend on DHR2 and the provision of a new leisure centre and pool in Houghton Regis.</p>	High	Short
General Priorities			
DHR 4	<p>Provision of improved leisure facilities required to protect and maintain the current accessibility, supply and quality of leisure in the Dunstable/Houghton Regis area.</p> <p>Justification – the needs and evidence shows that supply in demand are in balance and facilities and generally well located, but are ageing and need investment. Therefore all existing community facilities are important and wherever possible should be retained and improved where necessary to continue to meet demand.</p>	Medium	Medium to Long
DHR 5	<p>Improve and enhance public access to existing school sports halls in the Dunstable/Houghton Regis area at Manshead and All Saints Academy Schools.</p> <p>Justification - These schools already have existing 4 court halls and offer the most opportunities for improved access and are suitable for additional community use, probably on a club based management type. If through the implementation of the proposals, the priorities change this can be addressed at a later date through monitoring</p>	Medium	Short to Medium

	<i>and review.</i>		
DHR 6	<p>Provision of new and improved health and fitness facilities required to address the shortfall in the current supply, accessibility, and quality of health and fitness facilities in the Dunstable/Houghton Regis area, in conjunction with new and enhanced overall provision (see DHR1 above).</p> <p>Justification - <i>There is an estimated limited shortfall of health and fitness facilities in Dunstable and HR of about 150 stations, mitigated by good supply in Luton. Operators do not highlight a significant shortfall. Limited additional health and fitness stations should therefore be provided in conjunction with the refurbishment of Dunstable LC above.</i></p>	Medium	Medium to Long
DHR 7	<p>Provision of new health and fitness facilities required to meet the needs of new residential development in the Houghton Regis growth area at the new LC in HR.</p> <p>Justification - <i>New residents in the area will increase the demand for health and fitness facilities, and these should be provided in conjunction with a new leisure centre at HR which will meet the needs of the growth area, and on commercial sites where demand is proven. It is likely that up to 100 additional stations may be required across HR and these should form part of any new provision or enhancements.</i></p>	Medium	Medium
DHR 8	<p>Provision of new small health and fitness facilities required to address the shortfall in the current supply, accessibility, and quality of health and fitness facilities in village & community halls in locations where accessibility to large facilities is an issue.</p> <p>Justification - <i>Priorities will be informed by Village & Community Halls assessment and projects will be prioritised which are in identified areas of deficiency and meet the following criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Halls that currently have a badminton court (i.e. sporting value and use) and need improvements (upgrades / refurbishments) to enhance sports use</i> 	Low	Medium to Long

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing halls that do not have facilities but can make a local case for sports provision for informal flexible activity e.g. exercise classes Halls that can make a case for adding new provision e.g. gym or fitness facilities (based on needs identified in the Leisure Strategy) 		
DHR 9	<p>Improve public access to existing or additional education health and fitness facilities in the Dunstable/Houghton Regis area.</p> <p>Justification - There are limited facilities at Central Beds College, and these should be considered for additional community use. Consideration may also be given to the provision of small facilities at All Saints Academy and Manshead School in conjunction with increased community use of the sports halls.</p>	Low	Short to Medium
DHR 10	<p>Retention and enhancement of existing squash facilities to address the shortfall in the current supply, accessibility, and quality of squash in the D/HR area.</p> <p>Justification - There are four existing courts in the area at HR and Dunstable LCs and these should be retained for club and casual use, or redeveloped in the case of a new HR LC.</p>	Medium	Short
DHR 11	<p>Provision of a new squash facility (3 courts) required to meet existing needs and additional requirements of new residential development in the Houghton Regis growth area.</p> <p>Justification - There is already an identified need for additional 3 court facilities in the south of the county, and this should be provided on a free standing site or preferably in conjunction with the new HR LC.</p>	Medium	Long
DHR 12	<p>Refurbishment of indoor bowls centre at Dunstable Leisure Centre.</p> <p>Justification - Despite the poor local provision for indoor bowls, the governing body considers that local provision is acceptable and that the existing club is being encouraged to increase its membership. At the same time there is some spare capacity</p>	Medium	Long

DHR13	<p><i>at existing clubs and centres, particularly in Luton and Bedford. Refurbishment of the centre is a short term priority</i></p>		
	<p>Consideration of provision of additional or replacement new indoor bowls centre in the East, West or centre of Central Bedfordshire</p> <p>Justification - <i>The location of the existing centre in Dunstable does not meet the needs of the whole district, which relies on neighbouring areas to meet much of its demand. Further research is required to assess whether any of the usage of neighbouring centres might be displaced if an additional or replacement centre is built in Central Beds.</i></p>	Low	Long

North Placemaking Area (comprising former East and West areas)

Policy	Strategic Priorities	Priority	Short Term: 1-2 years Medium Term: 2-7 years Long Term: 7+ years
N 1	<p>Provision of replacement public leisure centre for Flitwick close to the site of the existing leisure centre, comprising 4 court sports hall, 8 lane swimming pool to also incorporate facilities identified in policies N4 and N7 below.</p> <p>Justification - <i>The existing facilities at Flitwick LC are at capacity and there is a need to improve them as demonstrated by conditions survey. A replacement leisure centre of the size proposed is cost effective in sports terms and offers a long term solution to demand and cost of maintenance. An 8 lane pool would offer a greater range of usage options and would be better in terms of capacity, as illustrated by the fpm. The proposal would therefore help address capacity issues and reduce export to facilities in other LAs.</i></p>	High	Short
General Priorities			
N 2	<p>Provision of improved leisure facilities required to maintain the current accessibility, supply and quality of leisure in the west of the area.</p> <p>Justification – <i>the needs and evidence shows that supply in demand are in balance and facilities and generally well located, but are ageing and need investment. Therefore all existing community facilities are important and wherever possible should be retained and improved where necessary to continue to meet demand.</i></p>	Medium	Medium to Long

<p>N 3</p>	<p>Improve public access to existing school sports halls in the West area: Redborne School, and Alameda Middle School, Ampthill.</p> <p>Justification - These schools already have existing 4 court halls and offer the most opportunities for improved access and are suitable for additional community use. If through the implementation of the proposals, the priorities change this can be addressed at a later date through monitoring and review.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Short to Medium</p>
<p>N 4</p>	<p>Provision of new and improved health and fitness facilities required to address the shortfall in the current supply, accessibility, and quality of health and fitness facilities in the west of the area.</p> <p>Justification – health and fitness analysis identified large deficiencies, which in the main will be met at the larger CB sites however there remains potential for infill at smaller community /education / village locations (see N5 and N6). There are only two providers of ‘public’ health and fitness stations, and therefore a considerable shortfall of health and fitness facilities in the west of the area of about 150 stations. The main operator of the Flitwick LC has confirmed a need for additional stations. Significant additional health and fitness stations should therefore be provided in conjunction with the new Flitwick LC, and there may also be potential for free standing centres in other locations, subject to local demand and development of village halls (see below).</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium to Long</p>
<p>N 5</p>	<p>Provision of new small health and fitness facilities required to address the shortfall in the current supply, accessibility, and quality of health and fitness facilities in village & community halls in locations where accessibility to large facilities is an issue.</p> <p>Justification - Priorities will be informed by Village & Community Halls assessment and projects will be prioritised which are in identified areas of deficiency and meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halls that currently have a badminton court (i.e. sporting value and use) and need improvements (upgrades / refurbishments) to enhance sports use • Existing halls that do not have facilities but can make a local case for sports 	<p>Low</p>	<p>Medium to Long</p>

	<p>provision for informal flexible activity e.g. exercise classes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Halls that can make a case for adding new provision e.g. gym or fitness facilities (based on needs identified in the Leisure Strategy) 		
N 6	<p>Improve public access to existing school health and fitness facilities in the west of the area.</p> <p>Justification - There is only a very small health suite at Redborne School of all the school locations, and there is some justification in improving and extending local provision here to meet the needs of Ampthill, subject to feasibility.</p>	Low	Short to Medium
N 7	<p>Retention and enhancement of existing squash facilities to address the shortfall in the current supply, accessibility, and quality of squash facilities in the West area, and meet additional demand in the future.</p> <p>Justification - There are six existing courts in the area at Flitwick LC and Cranfield Univ. and these should be retained for club and casual use, or redeveloped in the case of the new Flitwick LC to provide three courts here. Access by the wider community to the Cranfield courts should be improved by negotiation.</p>	Medium	Short
N 8	<p>Consideration of provision of additional or replacement new indoor bowls centre in the East, West or centre of Central Bedfordshire</p> <p>Justification- The location of the existing centre in Dunstable does not meet the needs of the whole district, which relies on neighbouring areas to meet much of its demand. Further research is required to assess whether any of the usage of neighbouring centres might be displaced if an additional or replacement centre is built in Central Beds. Flitwick may be considered an appropriate location for a centrally placed new centre.</p>	Low	
N 9	<p>Provision of new 3 court indoor tennis centre in the Flitwick area.</p> <p>Justification - There are no indoor tennis courts in Central Bedfordshire although there</p>	Medium	Medium to Long

	<p>are 5 centres in neighbouring areas which may meet local need. There is some justification for the provision of indoor tennis at the present time in Central Bedfordshire, in the first instance on one site with 3 courts, and Flitwick is a central location which could service the whole district. Any new proposal should consider an enhancement of the existing Flitwick TC site or a new free standing centre with 3 courts.</p>		
<p>N 10</p>	<p>Refurbishment of Saxon Pool & Leisure Centre pool, provision of new 4 court sports hall.</p> <p>Justification - Biggleswade is the largest town in Central Beds and the main town in the east of the area without a 'public' sports hall and a new 4 court hall would help meet demand in the town, although the provision of an additional hall here would need to consider the displacement of demand from other facilities in the area, such as Stratton Upper School and Sandy Sports and Community Centre. The need relates to the expanding population and local access issues, ensuring a local provision for local people. Refurbishment of the existing pool would also make it more attractive and fit for purpose in the future.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Short</p>
<p>N 11</p>	<p>Support development of joint use leisure facility incorporating a 4 court sports hall at Etonbury School, Stotfold.</p> <p>Justification - A new 4 court sports hall at Etonbury School as part of the redevelopment of the school would meet local demand in the Stotfold and Arlesey area with a local catchment of 15-20,000 (plus significant housing growth expected in this area), though it is likely there would be some displacement of demand from outside Central Beds where it is currently met in Letchworth and Baldock. This would also reduce the need to travel to Letchworth/Baldock to access a facility.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>

	General Priorities		
N 12	<p>Provision of improved leisure facilities required to maintain the current accessibility, supply and quality of leisure in the east of the area.</p> <p><i>Justification – the needs and evidence shows that supply in demand are in balance and facilities and generally well located, but are ageing and need investment. Therefore all existing community facilities are important and wherever possible should be retained and improved where necessary to continue to meet demand.</i></p>	Medium	Medium to Long
N 13	<p>Improve public access to existing school sports halls in the east of the area: Stratton Upper School, Biggleswade, and Robert Bloomfield School, Shefford.</p> <p><i>Justification - These schools already have existing 4 court halls and offer the most opportunities for improved access and are suitable for additional community use. If through the implementation of the proposals, the priorities change this can be addressed at a later date through monitoring and review.</i></p>	Medium	Short to Medium
N 14	<p>Provision of new and improved health and fitness facilities required to address the shortfall in the current supply, accessibility, and quality of health and fitness facilities in the east of the area.</p> <p><i>Justification - There are two main providers of 'public' health and fitness stations, and two commercial centres, in the east of the area. There is no significant shortfall of health and fitness facilities in the area, but the operator of the Saxon Pool has indicated an aspiration to improve and extend its health and fitness facilities. Some additional health and fitness stations should therefore be provided in conjunction with the new Saxon Pool hall and refurbished pool, in accordance with local need.</i></p>	Medium	Medium to Long
N 15	<p>Provision of new small health and fitness facilities required to address the shortfall in the current supply, accessibility, and quality of health and fitness facilities in village &</p>	Low	Medium to Long

	<p>community halls in locations where accessibility to large facilities is an issue.</p> <p>Justification - Priorities will be informed by Village & Community Halls assessment and projects will be prioritised which are in identified areas of deficiency and meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halls that currently have a badminton court (i.e. sporting value and use) and need improvements (upgrades / refurbishments) to enhance sports use • Existing halls that do not have facilities but can make a local case for sports provision for informal flexible activity e.g. exercise classes <p>Halls that can make a case for adding new provision e.g. gym or fitness facilities (based on needs identified in the Leisure Strategy)</p>		
<p>N 16</p>	<p>Improve public access to existing education health and fitness facilities in the east of the area.</p> <p>Justification - There are no school health and fitness facilities in the area, but a small (and currently closed) centre at Shuttleworth College. Consideration should be given to improved community access to the latter, and the feasibility of providing a small centre at Stratton School in conjunction with enhanced usage of the sports hall there. This needs to be assessed in relation to developments at Saxon Pool.</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Short to Medium</p>
<p>N 17</p>	<p>Retention and enhancement of existing squash facilities to address the shortfall in the current supply, accessibility, and quality of squash facilities in the East area, and meet additional demand in the future. Improve public access to other squash facilities in the East area</p> <p>Justification - There are six existing courts in the area at Biggleswade SC and Sandy Sports & Community Centre, and these are considered sufficient to meet demand. Better access to club facilities for the wider community should be sought by negotiation.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Short</p>

<p>N 18</p>	<p>Consideration of provision of additional or replacement new indoor bowls centre in the East, West or centre of Central Bedfordshire</p> <p><i>Justification - The location of the existing centre in Dunstable does not meet the needs of the whole district, which relies on neighbouring areas to meet much of its demand. Further research is required to assess whether any of the usage of neighbouring centres might be displaced if an additional or replacement centre is built in Central Beds.</i></p>	<p>Low</p>	
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Leighton Buzzard & Rural South (LB/RS) Placemaking Area

Policy	Strategic Priorities	Priority	Short Term: 1-2 years Medium Term: 2-7 years Long Term: 7+ years
LB/RS 1	<p>Refurbishment of Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre pool and sports hall.</p> <p>Justification - The refurbishment of Tiddenfoot LC pool and hall is a cost effective way of improving usage in the short term, but their increased attractiveness will mean that throughput increases and capacity is reached. This is likely to be only a short term solution, particularly in view of additional population in the Leighton Buzzard area.</p>	High	Short 2012/13
LB/RS 2	<p>Provision of new 4 court sports hall in Leighton Linslade Growth Area in conjunction with proposed housing development.</p> <p>Justification - In the longer term a new replacement hall in the growth area is justified, because of the relative age of Tiddenfoot and the inability to accommodate use during the day. However the alternative location in the growth area would attract fewer users without access to a car. This proposal would need to consider whether the existing Tiddenfoot hall is retained for more specific club use or similar.</p>	High	Long
LB/RS 3	<p>Provision of replacement 8 lane swimming pool on the Tiddenfoot site in the longer term in conjunction with proposed housing development.</p> <p>Justification - This is an expensive solution, but the opportunity exists to relate better to the growth area around the town and seek developer contributions. Additional water space is provided with an 8 lane pool, but the new pool would operate at relatively low capacity compared with the current pool, in view of the possible effect of a new pool in HR. There is significant local support for additional water space here.</p>	High	Long

General Priorities			
LB/RS 4	<p>Provision of improved leisure facilities required to maintain the current accessibility, supply and quality of leisure in the LB/RS area.</p> <p>Justification – <i>the needs and evidence shows that supply in demand are in balance and facilities and generally well located, but are ageing and need investment. Therefore all existing community facilities are important and wherever possible should be retained and improved where necessary to continue to meet demand.</i></p>	Medium	Medium to Long
LB/RS 5	<p>Improve public access to existing school sports halls in the Leighton Buzzard/Rural South area: Vandyke Schoolland, LinsladeMiddle School</p> <p>Justification - <i>These schools already have existing 3 or 4 court halls and offer the most opportunities for improved access and are suitable for additional community use. If through the implementation of the proposals, the priorities change this can be addressed at a later date through monitoring and review.</i></p>	Medium	Short to Medium
LB/RS 6	<p>Provision of additional health and fitness facilities at Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre to address the shortfall in current supply.</p> <p>Justification - <i>Tiddenfoot currently has a 40 station fitness suite, and the operator has highlighted a shortfall in provision in the area. It is estimated that a further 50 stations might be justified in Leighton Buzzard in the short term.</i></p>	High	Short to Medium
LB/RS 7	<p>Provision of new and improved health and fitness facilities required to address the shortfall in the current and future supply, accessibility, and quality of health and fitness facilities in the LB/RS area.</p> <p>Justification - <i>Apart from Tiddenfoot, the only provision for health and fitness in this sub area is at Energie and Colloseum health clubs with 95 stations. It is estimated that a further 50-100 stations could be justified in this area, in conjunction with the new sports hall and</i></p>	Medium	Medium to Long

	<i>extended pool.</i>		
LB/RS 8	<p>Provision of new small health and fitness facilities required to address the shortfall in the current supply, accessibility, and quality of health and fitness facilities in village & community halls in locations where accessibility to large facilities is an issue.</p> <p>Justification - <i>Priorities will be informed by Village & Community Halls assessment and projects will be prioritised which are in identified areas of deficiency and meet the following criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Halls that currently have a badminton court (i.e. sporting value and use) and need improvements (upgrades / refurbishments) to enhance sports use</i> • <i>Existing halls that do not have facilities but can make a local case for sports provision for informal flexible activity e.g. exercise classes</i> • <i>Halls that can make a case for adding new provision e.g. gym or fitness facilities (based on needs identified in the Leisure Strategy)</i> 	Low	Medium to Long
LB/RS 9	<p>Provision of new and improved squash facilities required to address the shortfall in the current supply, accessibility, and quality of squash facilities in the LB/RS area.</p> <p>Justification - <i>Development should build on the existing infra-structure already in place. There are two existing courts in the area at Tiddenfoot and these should be retained for club and casual use, or redeveloped and extended in the case of the new Leighton Buzzard LC to provide three courts here.</i></p>	Medium	Medium to Long
LB/RS 10	<p>Consideration of provision of additional or replacement new indoor bowls centre in the East, West or centre of Central Bedfordshire</p> <p>Justification - <i>The location of the existing centre in Dunstable does not meet the needs of the whole district, which relies on neighbouring areas to meet much of its demand. Further research is required to assess whether any of the usage of neighbouring centres might be displaced if an additional or replacement centre is built in Central Beds.</i></p>	Low	Long

<p>LB/RS 11</p>	<p>Provision of new 3 court indoor tennis centre in the LB area.</p> <p><i>Justification - There are no indoor tennis courts in Central Bedfordshire although there are 5 centres in neighbouring areas which may meet local need. There is some justification for the provision of indoor tennis at the present time in Central Bedfordshire, on a site with 3 courts, and Leighton Buzzard and Linslade are locations where existing tennis clubs have good membership and infrastructure and could be combined to justify such a centre to meet the needs of the sub area. Feasibility work would be required to consider the most appropriate site and location.</i></p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium to Long</p>
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Specialist Facilities

Specialist facilities are not the priority for this strategy but the following policies are included as being capable of implementation within the overall strategy.

SF1 Identify in consultation with NGBs the sites that provide an existing specialist function and seek to protect and enhance this specialist role, and identify existing or new centres (that are proposed elsewhere in strategy) that could be designed to meet specialist needs where appropriate. NGBs are not often in the situation of being able to meet their own specialist needs for facilities, and the design of existing and proposed halls and other venues should take into account any reasonable specialist facilities so identified. Sport England and NGB technical design guidance should be utilised in the planning and design.

SF 2 Incorporate where appropriate the specialist needs of other indoor sports at existing centres or when developing and designing new sports halls. NGBs are not often in the situation of being able to meet their own specialist needs for facilities, and the design of existing and proposed halls and other venues should take into account any reasonable specialist facilities so identified. Sport England and NGB technical design guidance should be utilised in the planning and design.

- Specialist requirements for archery, badminton and other sports not highlighted in consultation (table tennis, netball, cricket nets or other sports) should be incorporated in a hierarchy of sports halls) in a coordinated manner, particularly on school sites where management would be facilitated.

- Pending more detailed consultation with NGBs in the area, there may be the opportunity to accommodate larger scale specialist facilities in the larger sports halls in Central Bedfordshire, including Cranfield and the other 6 court halls.

SF 3 Implement innovative approaches to the provision of specialist facilities where appropriate.

- Specialist facilities for some sports (e.g. gymnastics centres with pit etc.) could be accommodated at existing unused industrial and other non-sport premises. The biggest challenge is securing planning permission for change of use due to loss of employment. Planning policies should take a flexible approach to conversion of appropriate units to help facilitate this, which is more realistic than a specialist centre being built. Some specialist sports facilities are not compatible with community facilities proposed in this strategy and a more cost effective way of providing these is the adapted use of industrial and other buildings. The strategy needs to take account of these where identified.

6. Delivery of the Strategy

Funding

- 6.1 The delivery of the future leisure facility infrastructure across Central Bedfordshire will, to a large extent, be dependent on capital funding. The following proposals and comments are taken from a separate report produced for the Council in support of its capital planning.
- 6.2 The current financial climate has placed local authority finances under pressure and previous major national funding programmes are no longer available. Some funding opportunities, however, still remain; for example, individual school capital grants have replaced BSF and Sport England now has more clearly defined capital available through its *Places People Play* Legacy funding programme. While the education capital funding programmes will continue to change over time, there will still be a need for investment to take place on school sites during the strategy period and opportunities for joint projects may arise.
- 6.3 The council will seek to use assets innovatively and work on a multi-agency approach to address the facility requirements in the strategy.

The main funding delivery mechanisms for Central Bedfordshire Council and others in delivering the strategy are:

- i. **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 developer contributions:** The Leisure Strategy will secure developer contributions in association with new development to provide or improve infrastructure.
- ii. **Capital Grant funding:** From schools and national agencies such as Sport England, including its Iconic Facilities, Improvement Fund and Inspired Facilities programmes. National Governing Body (NGB) support could also be available to develop specific specialist facilities.
- iii. **Third party funding:** Financing capital through the forecast operational surplus and finance packages as part of the leisure management procurement process or construction contracts. Also, leisure management operators are asked as part of their consideration, to fund developments of health and fitness suites and small refurbishments of existing leisure centre sites.
- iv. **Commercial sector funding:** limited potential for investment from commercial leisure operators such as those who provide health and fitness centre and 5 a-side artificial pitch football centres.
- v. **Council funding:** capital funding allocated to deliver facilities within the council's ownership, and potentially the use of capital receipts from the sale of existing assets.
- vi. **Prudential Borrowing:** or 'invest to save': the local authority may choose to use revenue savings or income from its investment to pay for monies used for capital development, which may be cheaper than an operator can borrow.

- vii. **Education sector:** while the previous sources of funding (including BSF and Primary Schools Programme) have changed and the scale of the education capital programmes have been reduced, the education sector is still likely to be a key funding stream especially for sports halls.

Housing Growth

- 6.4 Over the next 20 years it is planned that Central Bedfordshire will see a growth of 28,700 new homes. In planning for growth Central Bedfordshire Council must ensure that its policy for indoor sports facilities seeks to provide a range of good quality, accessible facilities which support its residents in leading healthy, active lives.
- 6.5 The Leisure Facilities Strategy Action Plan will detail the priorities for new and improved built leisure facilities to be provided in Central Bedfordshire, together with that required in association with new development. Where applicable, particularly on large developments, on-site provision of built leisure facilities will be required. On smaller developments, however, the provision of on-site built leisure facilities is unlikely to be required in which case developer contributions would be sought towards the facility requirements identified in the Action Plan.

Developer Contributions

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 Planning Obligations

- 6.6 Previously local authorities sought and secured developer contributions for physical and social infrastructure through in accordance with Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) which requires contributions to be reasonable and proportionate to the development, and in principle necessary for the development to be acceptable in planning terms.
- 6.7 The legislation covering Section 106 developer contributions has changed and local authorities will only be able to pool a maximum of 5 secured S106 contributions to fund one specific infrastructure project. Projects which relied upon funding from a wide number of tariff-based Planning Obligation contributions will instead need to be secured via the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). S106 agreements will largely be used to secure new or improved infrastructure which is either site-specific or immediately related to the development, e.g. affordable housing, children's play facilities, community centre.
- 6.8 Adoption of CIL is not mandatory however Government regulation requires charging authorities to enter into a two stage consultation process to formally decide what CIL charges are to be introduced prior to adoption.
- 6.9 Central Bedfordshire Council is developing its Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule and carried out initial consultation in January 2013. Central Bedfordshire Council's adoption of CIL has been delayed.
- 6.10 The key to securing and administering funding through CIL will be the development of a robust needs and evidence base in terms of providing further detail and options for delivery. CIL will be a limited resource, and there will be many calls upon this resource to deliver a wide range of infrastructure needs. It is therefore important that clear information is available to enable decision-makers to make informed choices when

allocating these resources at the local level, using resources as efficiently and as effectively as possible when addressing local infrastructure needs arising from development. The Leisure Strategy will provide Central Bedfordshire Council with this evidence base and stand it in good stead to maximise the contribution of future CIL funding to the delivery of leisure infrastructure.

6.11 CIL has three main tests and based on the needs and evidence set out for Central Bedfordshire the following is evident, in terms of likely contributions to leisure through this process.

The table below sets out the community infrastructure levy tests and how they apply to Central Bedfordshire based on the needs and evidence.

Community Infrastructure Levy Tests	
The new provision is necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fpm findings for pools and halls support a refurbishment and re-development strategy and the need to invest in the existing infrastructure to increase capacity. • The needs and evidence clearly sets out that the future facility infrastructure will come under increasing pressure and will struggle to cope with the impact of population growth • Investment will be required to increase the capacity and quality of the existing facility infrastructure to cope with the demands of growth • The needs and evidence clearly illustrates the need to refurbish and redevelop existing stock, with the consideration of new provision in certain areas, in line with the priority projects set out
The new provision is directly related to the development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis clearly shows how any developments in Central Bedfordshire will add to the pressures on infrastructure across the district • Projected population increase matches housing growth projections so needs relate to housing developments
The new provision is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As pools and halls are already ‘nearly full’ future capacity of facilities will be impacted by any developments of whatever scale • All scale of developments will increase the impact on the capacity and quality of provision across each placemaking area

6.12 There are different ways that swimming pool and sports hall needs directly related to housing development can be assessed. Sport England has developed the sports facility calculator (SFC) which projects a scale of need for each facility type based on the projected population change over a defined period. It is demand based and simply setting out what a total population increase will generate in terms of the scale of demand for each facility type based on applying this population increase to current rates and frequencies of sports participation in swimming and hall sports.

6.13 Central Bedfordshire Council has set out the proposed level of housebuilding to take place in the area to 2022 which, in turn, will increase the Central Bedfordshire population over the plan period. In 2012 the total population is x people and by 2022 it is projected to increase to y total population. So an increase of z people (rounded). Application of the Sport England sports facility calculator (SFC) assessment to a population increase of z to identify the scale of sports facility provision it will generate is set out below in the table below.

6.14 As Central Bedfordshire Council has yet to approve its approach to the Community Infrastructure Levy, the Leisure Strategy action plan will identify the requirement to develop the methodology for calculating contributions for CIL and S106 for inclusion in Leisure Strategy when the Council's approach has been decided.

Action Planning

6.15 In order to detail the facility requirements identified in the strategy and prepare CIL and S106 calculations, a costed action plan will be prepared for the first phase of the strategy delivery 2014-2019. The table below sets out the next steps for completion of the Leisure Facilities Strategy.

No	Objective	Target Date
1	Develop a detailed methodology for calculating contributions for CIL and S106 for inclusion in Leisure Strategy Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 Planning Obligations Strategy	Delayed until CBC approach to CIL is determined
2	Develop a fully costed Facilities Action Plan detailing the new and improved facility requirements to meet planning policy objectives	Executive Feb 2013
3	Approval of Central Bedfordshire Council capital expenditure priorities	Executive Feb 2013
4	Delivery of approved Central Bedfordshire Council capital schemes	Ongoing
5	Development of criteria for the release of the Capital Fund for Delivery of the Leisure Strategy	Jan 2014

6.16 In developing the Action Plan which will support this document, Central Bedfordshire Council has approved a programme of capital investment for the provision of new /

improvement of existing leisure centres within its ownership. In developing the wider action plan, Central Bedfordshire Council will consult further with relevant stakeholders and facility providers to establish their delivery priorities. These will be used to inform both the securing of facilities / developer contributions and the release of S106 / CIL funds.

- 6.17 In order to convert the priorities set out in the Action Plan, costs will be calculated utilising the Sport England Toolkit Guidance on Facility Costs at <http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/cost-guidance/facility-costs/>

Appendix 1. Short and Medium Term 2014-2019 Strategic Priorities

Proposal	Action	Timetable	By Whom	Priority	Capital Budget
DHR1 Refurbish Dunstable LC	Planning, design, procurement and construction	Medium, by 2018	CBC	High	£2,300k 2015/16
DHR2 New LC at Houghton Regis	Planning, design, procurement and construction	Medium, by 2018	CBC	High	No budget
DHR3 Market testing reopening of HR pool	Consultation, feasibility, tendering of leisure management contract	Short, by 2014	CBC	High	£150k 2013/14
W1 Replacement public leisure centre for Flitwick	Planning, design, procurement and construction	Short, by 2015	CBC	High	£12,482k 13/14-15/16
E1 Refurbishment of Saxon Pool & Leisure Centre	Planning, design, procurement and construction	Short, by 2015	CBC	High	£1,600k 12/13-13/14
E2 Support development of joint use leisure facility at Etonbury School	Consultation, planning, design, procurement and construction	Medium, by 2018	Etonbury School	Medium	£300k 2013/14
LB/RS1 Refurbish Tiddenfoot LC	Planning, design, procurement and construction	Short, by 2015	CBC	High	£1,400k 12/13-13/14

7. Design Guidance

7.1 New and enhanced sports facilities will be expected to be designed in accordance with the relevant Sport England and (where applicable) National Governing Body (NGB) design guidance in order to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose and of a suitable quality.

The list below provides links to design guidance provided by Sport England and NGB's.

Sport England

This provides a link to the NGB's supported by Sport England, and to the guidance on the respective NGB websites:

<http://www.sportengland.org/our-work/national-work/national-governing-bodies/sports-we-invest-in/>

This provides a link to the NGB Whole Sport Plan Summary Documents, providing information on the respective sports:

<https://public.sportengland.org/b2bengage/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

In addition, Sport England's web site www.sportengland.org contains a range of current guidance documents which provide detailed specifications and information regarding the design of sporting and ancillary facilities. These will be used in conjunction with the NGB guidance above for both new facilities and improvements to existing sites. Where new or improved facilities are to be provided by development these standards will be required as a minimum.

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 This strategy has been produced to enable the development of built sports facilities within Central Bedfordshire to be provided for in a planned and co-ordinated way that meets the needs of the local population and addresses areas of greatest demand.

8.2 In order to ensure that the Leisure Facilities Strategy requirements keep pace with the large amount of growth planned for Central Bedfordshire, a costed Action Plan will be prepared for the next five year period 2014–2019. The Plan will be then reviewed and updated annually. An initial draft of this action plan is contained in Appendix 1.

8.3 A key component of the process of delivering the action plan is the establishment of a steering group, which should be set up by the Council to implement the action plan emerging from the strategy with key stakeholders participating in the steering group as and when necessary and the Council working in partnership with stakeholders to deliver the strategy.

8.4 A full review of the strategy will be undertaken in 2019 in readiness for the 2019-2023 action plan period. In addition to reviewing the achievements of the action plan for the 2014-2019 period, the review will need to assess the full basis of calculating sports facilities requirements for Central Bedfordshire and emerging sporting trends and health issues that will have an impact on this. This will also involve a full reassessment of the following baseline criteria:

- Housing numbers
- Population estimates, both ONS and internal projections
- Full socio-economic and demographic analysis of population projections
- Participation rates (e.g. Active People Surveys) and new sport trend analysis and uptake levels
- Updated facility data including usage, accessibility, affordability, management and facility improvements
- Evolving needs of clubs and governing bodies, and any requirements for major facilities in the area
- Analysis of funding sources and new funding opportunities for the provision/improvement of sports facilities
- Review of growth of emerging sports, their participation rates, facilities available for them and likely facilities necessary for their support and development

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

APP - Active Places Power. Sport England database containing information on sports facilities throughout England, also enabling analysis of data

CB - Central Bedfordshire

CBC - Central Bedfordshire Council

Community use – use of a sports facility by the wider community, either on a pay or play basis or available through block bookings by clubs.

FPM - Facilities Planning Model, Sport England facility modelling system, testing:

Satisfied demand – demand for a specific type of sports facility which is met because local residents can access it within a reasonable travel time by car, public transport or on foot (20 minutes), and there is some spare capacity within the facility

Unmet demand - demand for a facility that is not satisfied

Utilised capacity – the amount of the overall capacity of a facility that the FPM estimates is used

Personal/relative share – the share of the opportunity which people have to use facilities, taking into account the number, size and availability of facilities, and the local population which has access to them

HRLCAG – Houghton Regis Leisure Centre Action Group

HRHCBC – Houghton Regis Hard Core Badminton Club

LA – Local authority

LTA – Lawn Tennis Association

NGB – national governing body of sport

NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework published by the Government in 2011

ONS – Office of National Statistics

PPG17 – Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 published by the Government in 1991 (revised 2002) giving guidance on planning for sport, recreation and open space

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework published by the Government on 27 March 2012, key part of Government reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, to protect the environment and to promote sustainable growth

ROSA - Rest of the study area (comprising the local authority areas adjoining CB)

SFC - Sports Facilities Calculator. Sport England calculation system to assess demand for key community sports facilities

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Leisure Strategy

Chapter 2: Recreation & Open Space Strategy Technical Guidance

Final draft for Executive 18 March 2014



Prepared by Neil Allen Associates in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council

**Neil Allen Associates Registered Office:
20 Brook Road, Lymm, Cheshire, WA139AH**

A limited company, registered in England and Wales no. 616528

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Part 1:

➤ Recreation and Open Space Strategy

1. Introduction and Purpose

The Leisure Strategy

- 1.1 Central Bedfordshire Council appointed Neil Allen Associates to produce four of the five elements which comprise the Leisure Strategy. Chapter 4: the Physical Activity Strategy has being produced in-house. The chapter headings are:
- Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy
 - Chapter 2: Recreation & Open Space Strategy
 - Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy
 - Chapter 4: Physical Activity Strategy
 - Overarching Leisure Strategy
- 1.2 In accordance with Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy have each assessed the current provision of identified leisure facilities across Central Bedfordshire in 2012/13, and further evaluated the respective leisure requirements which result from the planned growth in Central Bedfordshire's population. These chapters comprise the Planning policy guidance. Chapter 4, the Physical Activity Strategy addresses the opportunities for physical activity across Central Bedfordshire and will be supported by a programme of activity delivery.
- 1.3 The Leisure Strategy planning guidance will support the securing of new and improved facility provision via the development management process, identify needs and priorities, address inequalities of provision, inform investment priorities of Central Bedfordshire Council, and seek to ensure that residents of Central Bedfordshire have access to a range of recreation and sporting facilities.
- 1.4 The Leisure Strategy will support Central Bedfordshire Council's responsibility for public health by ensuring sustainable, high quality sport and physical activity infrastructure and opportunities are provided to enable residents to live active lives, prevent ill health, improve overall health & wellbeing, and reduce care costs. The strategy also seeks to ensure that the number of adults taking part in sport and physical activity remains above the national average.

Planning Status

- 1.5 Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy have been prepared in accordance with the procedures required for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) but will initially be adopted as Technical Guidance for Development Management purposes.

- 1.6 Chapters 1, 2 and 3 provide facility standards and future facility requirements to be met through the planning process and will form material evidence and policy to inform the Council's emerging Development Strategy. On adoption of the Development Strategy the Council will look to formally adopt the Leisure Strategy Chapters 1, 2 and 3 as a Supplementary Planning Document which will attract more weight in decisions reached on planning applications.
- 1.7 Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy are derived from Policy 22 'Leisure and Open Space Provision' in the pre submission Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire 2013, which identifies general requirements for recreation and leisure provision. The detailed assessment will provide the evidence base and facility requirements to support Policy 22.
- 1.8 Chapter 4: the Physical Activity Strategy will detail Central Bedfordshire Council's strategic approach to the promotion and delivery of physical activity programmes, but does not form part of the Technical Guidance.

Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy

- 1.9 Chapter 2: the Recreation and Open Space Strategy sets out both the evidence base and the strategic direction for the provision of recreation and open spaces facilities in Central Bedfordshire. It has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and draws upon the principals of the former Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) and its Companion Guide (September 2002), which remains the most up to date policy guidance on the preparation of open space and recreation assessments.

Scope

- 1.10 This Recreation and Open Space Strategy encompasses facilities within nine different typologies of open space (outlined in detail in part 2). These typologies are based upon those set out in PPG17, but have been specifically developed for Central Bedfordshire to reflect the types of open space that are currently available in the area and the functions that these spaces have.
- 1.11 This document sets out the key findings and strategic requirements resulting from the assessment for each of the open space types considered. Provision and key findings for each settlement are summarised in Appendix A: Parish Schedules, and maps prepared as part of this assessment can be found in Appendix B. The document is accompanied by a Geographical Information System (GIS) layer detailing all the site information.

Purpose and Functions of Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy

- 1.12 The primary purpose and function of Chapter 2 is as Technical Guidance which will expand upon and provided guidance on the application of Policy 22 'Leisure and Open Space Provision' in the pre submission Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire 2013.
- 1.13 It provides the evidence base and policy standards/facility requirements to secure new or improved recreational open space provision as a result of new housing development. It

will apply to both new on-site facilities provided within a new housing development site, and developer contributions secured to provide / improve off-site facilities which are required to mitigate the additional demand placed upon them by development.

- 1.14 In addition, the facility assessment and identification of need in this Chapter can be used by facility providers such as town and parish councils, countryside organisations, etc. as evidence to assist them in securing external funding to improve/deliver the facilities within their ownership.

Recreation Assessment

- 1.15 This assessment considers the **recreational function of open space only**. Open space is however, recognised as being part of the wider green infrastructure (GI) network and the principles of this strategy should be integrated with wider policies on biodiversity, minerals planning, climate change and landscape scale conservation.

Reclaimed Sites

- 1.16 While it is recognised that in addition to the types of open space covered in this report, sites reclaimed following minerals and waste extraction also have a role in providing public space although none are currently accessible. These sites and the potential role they may play in the provision of public open space are explored in Appendix G.

Sustainable Drainage Systems

- 1.17 The emerging Central Bedfordshire Council SuDS Approval and Adoption Guide will provide design guidance determining where and in what circumstances it will be appropriate to include a SuDS feature within the typologies of open space detailed in this strategy. The adoption section of this document also provides additional safety information on the provision of SuDS provided in conjunction with children's play facilities.

Planning Obligations / Community Infrastructure Levy

- 1.18 When the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council the use of planning obligations in agreements entered into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will be reduced, and the council will only be able to pool contributions from five planning agreements.
- 1.19 CIL is a charge on new development based on the size and type of new development, which can be used by the council towards infrastructure priorities. The Leisure Strategy will provide the evidence and priorities to support the securing and use of CIL and should be read in conjunction with the Council's CIL policy.
- 1.20 In response to CIL, the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is currently being reviewed. The SPD sets out the council's approach to seeking obligations to address infrastructure needs. The Leisure Strategy will provide the evidence and priorities to support the SPD and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Planning Obligations Strategy.

The Role of Central Bedfordshire Council

- 1.21 Central Bedfordshire Council's primary role in the provision of recreational open space facilities is via the provision and application of planning policy to secure new or improved provision / contributions from new development in line with the requirements set out in this document.
- 1.22 The facility requirements identified in Chapter 2 are not intended to be provided directly by Central Bedfordshire Council. Central Bedfordshire Council's role in the provision of recreation open space facilities is twofold, firstly, via its ownership and ongoing development of some countryside sites and children's play areas, and secondly via the securing of new or improved provision / contributions from new development in line with the requirements set out in this document.
- 1.23 The majority of recreation open space facilities are not owned or managed by Central Bedfordshire Council, consequently the responsibility for delivery of the identified needs remain with the facility owners.
- 1.24 Central Bedfordshire Council will assist asset owners with guidance on strategy requirements, external funding and the planning process where there is an identified need for the improvement / creation of projects within their ownership.
- 1.25 While the Council is unlikely to directly provide open space facilities detailed in Chapter 2, this document will be the key reference point for decision making relating to both existing and future recreation open space facility requirements. To that end, the Council will ensure that investment (s106/CIL/external sources) is targeted where it is needed and where it can have maximum benefit in accordance with the requirements of the strategy.

Aims and Objectives

- 1.26 The principle aim of this document is to provide evidence to support the provision of facilities which ensure that residents of Central Bedfordshire have access to sufficient, well located and good quality recreational open spaces, both now and as the population increases both naturally and as a result of housing growth.

The key aims and objectives of the study are to:

- evaluate the adequacy of open space provision (in terms of accessibility, quantity and quality) to meet current needs in each settlement
- evidence and provide Planning policy which ensures planned growth makes appropriate open space provision to meet future needs
- develop local standards of provision in terms of accessibility, quantity and quality
- ensure that recreation and open spaces meet the needs of all sectors of the population
- maximise the contribution of open spaces to wider agendas, particularly the health agenda considering Central Bedfordshire Council's new responsibility for public health, sustainable transport and economic priorities

- promote the provision of open spaces that are of high quality
- where relevant, guide the investment strategies of Central Bedfordshire Council for facilities in its ownership
- provide evidence to support other facility providers in delivering new or improved facilities
- support good management and value for money

2. Methodology

Planning Policy Guidance

2.1 As outlined in Section One, this study has been undertaken in accordance with the priorities of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It draws upon the guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) and its Companion Guide; while this is no longer adopted planning policy it does provide the most up to date guidance on the preparation of open space assessments.

2.2 The PPG17 Companion Guide indicates that the four guiding principles in undertaking a local assessment are:

- understanding that local needs will vary according to socio-demographic and cultural characteristics
- recognising that the provision of good quality and effective open space relies on effective planning but also on creative design, landscape management and maintenance
- considering that delivering high quality and sustainable open spaces may depend much more on improving and enhancing existing open space rather than new provision
- taking into account that the value of open space will be greater when local needs are met. It is essential to consider the wider benefits that sites generate for people, wildlife and the environment

2.3 The methodology for this assessment builds upon the above principles and has been tailored to the character and nature of Central Bedfordshire. The resulting assessment and strategy;

- identifies and reports the views of residents and key stakeholders in relation to open space provision in Central Bedfordshire
- outlines the current provision of each type of open space in Central Bedfordshire
- sets local standards for the provision of open space
- reports the implications of the local standards across Central Bedfordshire
- outlines the priorities for the future delivery of each type of open space to meet current and future need, taking into account the impact of the proposed population growth

Assessment Methodology

2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights the importance of establishing a detailed needs and evidence base for recreation and open space facilities. Using the guidance set out in the Companion Guide to PPG17 (now succeeded by the NPPF), a five step process has been followed in the preparation of this assessment, specifically:

- Step 1 – Identifying local needs
- Step 2 – Auditing local provision
- Step 3 – Setting benchmarks / standards for provision
- Step 4 – Applying provision standards
- Step 5 – Developing Priorities and informing policies

The same steps have been followed for each type of open space considered within the scope of this document.

Open Space Site Typologies

- 2.5 The nine site typologies assessed in this document and their definitions are set out in Table 2.1. The typologies used are based upon the typology of open spaces proposed by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce (UGSTF) in the PPG17 Companion Guide and adapted to represent the types and functions of recreational open space that are found in Central Bedfordshire. This adaptation is in line with the Companion Guide, which suggests the use of the typology included in the document, or a variation of it. The typologies used were finalised following an extensive programme of consultation, which provided a good understanding of how Central Bedfordshire residents currently use open space.
- 2.6 In accordance with PPG17 guidance, the definition of each typology is based upon the primary purpose of the open space and recreational facility. It is important to note that although many sites are multifaceted, offering a range of facilities and different open space functions; sites have been classified by their primary purpose. Where there is a definitive facility within a larger site (for example, a play area or sports pitch within a park) this site has been subdivided to ensure that the various opportunities offered are all considered. This also ensures that facilities only contribute towards the assessment of their own site-type.
- 2.7 The categorisation of these different open space typologies assumes that there is a hierarchy of open space and that residents expect to be able to access different types of open space. The close proximity of a Countryside Recreation site for example does not negate the requirement for allotments or play provision in a given area. There is however, an interrelationship between some types of open space and residents are willing to travel different distances to reach different spaces. Such decisions are likely to be impacted by many factors, including the size of the site and the facilities available, as well as the perceived quality of the amenity.
- 2.8 These issues are recognised and will be considered where relevant in the typology specific sections.

Table 2.1 – Types of Open Space within Central Bedfordshire

Typology	Description and Examples
Countryside Recreation sites	Large countryside-type sites set aside for a variety of recreational activities, offering a range of formal and informal facilities and activities. They may not fit within formal definitions of country parks, but offer residents the opportunity to experience, appreciate and enjoy the countryside. These are destination sites, to which residents expect to travel (usually by car), which provide a range of facilities.
Urban Parks and Gardens	Public parks in an urban setting that provide a variety of facilities e.g. play area, toilets, tennis courts etc; as well as opportunities for informal recreation. Sites often provide formal community activities / events.
Large Formal Recreation Areas	Large green sites which are easily accessible by local people. These sites generally contain opportunities for formal recreation e.g. children’s play, formal or casual outdoor sports. The majority of these sites are approximately 1ha in size or above.
Informal Recreation Areas	Large green spaces that are natural in character. These sites generally offer informal recreational opportunities such as walking and relaxation and allow visitors to experience the natural environment. As well as offering recreational opportunities, many sites in this category are also important for biodiversity and ecology.
Small Amenity Spaces	Small, local spaces which may enhance the local area and provide some opportunities for casual recreation use e.g. dog walking, as well as landscaping. These sites usually have few or no formal functions.
Children’s Play Spaces	Equipped play areas for children e.g. swings, slides and climbing frames. This includes facilities currently referred to as LEAPs and LEAPS. Further detail will be provided in the relevant sections.
Facilities for Young People	Facilities designed to meet the needs of young people such as youth shelters, skate parks and Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs). This includes facilities currently referred to as children’s play area LEAPs and NEAPS. Further detail is provided in the relevant sections.
Allotments	Site designated for people who wish to grow their own produce.
Cemeteries & Churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.

2.9 As set out above, further guidance is provided in the typology specific sections about how the above categorisations relate to the terms currently being used by Central Bedfordshire Council. The remainder of this section provides further detail on each stage of the five step process followed during the preparation of this assessment.

Step 1 - Identifying Local Needs

2.10 The purpose of Step 1: Identifying Local Need, is to understand local attitudes to existing provision and local expectations for additional or improved provision. These expectations are then used to inform the creation of local standards and the identification of priorities (Step 3).

2.11 The following key tasks were undertaken to provide an understanding of local needs in Central Bedfordshire:

- **Desk based strategic review and policy evaluation** – this included analysis of all available Parish and Neighbourhood Plans, Green Infrastructure Plans (at both district and community level) as well as wider strategic documents (outlined in Section 3). These documents report the findings of significant consultation at a local level and set out key local priorities.
- **Town and Parish Council consultation** – Town and Parish Councils are key providers of open space and as such, have a sound understanding of demand for provision in their area. A questionnaire requesting opinions and information on the perceived adequacy of provision, together with key priorities for improvement and future provision was sent to each Town and Parish Council.
- **Telephone consultation** with a geographically and demographically representative stratified sample of 1000 residents, a detailed telephone survey was undertaken with local residents to ensure that views of the local population were central to the assessment methodology. It sought views on the current provision in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility, together with aspirations for future recreation and open spaces. The number of interviews completed means that the survey is representative of the views of the overall population to a confidence level of +/- 3%. This means that if 60% of the survey respondents answer in a certain way, we can be 97% confident that the response would be between 55% and 65% if the whole of the population had been surveyed. The survey was undertaken by Public Perspectives, a specialist in research and community engagement. The full report of results, including the survey methodology, is included within Appendix C.
- **Consultations with key stakeholders** – early consultation with external stakeholders established visions and aspirations for the Central Bedfordshire area, as well as providing an understanding of work that is currently underway.
- **Consultations with Central Bedfordshire Council officers** were undertaken in order to understand the context in which recreation and open space facilities are provided, as well as to understand delivery priorities and links to other wider agendas.

2.12 The information provided through each of the above activities was combined with data collected in Step 2: Auditing Local Provision, and used to inform the direction of the recommended local standards (Step 3).

Step 2 - Auditing Local Provision

2.13 Step 2: Auditing Local Provision involves the identification of all open spaces in Central Bedfordshire and their categorisation within the nine typologies outlined in Table 2.1.

In order to achieve this, the following work was undertaken:

- Analysis of existing information
- Consultation to verify the identified sites and identify any missing sites
- Site assessments
- GIS mapping

2.14 These processes are outlined below;

- **Analysis of existing information** - Prior to the commencement of this assessment, significant work regarding open space provision had been undertaken by the legacy local authorities. Mid Bedfordshire District Council produced the Recreational Open Space Strategy SPD (ROSS) 2004, together with the Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs Assessment 2008 (PPG17) (Ashley Godfrey Associates 2008). South Bedfordshire District Council produced the draft Luton and South Bedfordshire Green Space Strategy (2010). Both of these documents contained detailed records of existing sites as well as assessments of the quality of provision. The information on existing sites in these documents was compiled to produce an overall record of provision in Central Bedfordshire. The classification of each site was reviewed in order to ensure consistency in approach. In addition a review of other data sources including aerial photography, Town and Parish Council websites and Central Bedfordshire Council records of new provision (including planning applications etc.) were utilised to build a comprehensive picture of current provision.
- **Consultation** - Town and Parish Councils were consulted to help establish an accurate baseline picture of existing sites. This included the distribution of maps illustrating sites identified in the district studies (referenced above). Responding Parish and Town Councils fed back suggested changes / additions and deletions in their area therefore ensuring a more complete picture of supply and demand.
- **Site assessments** - Following the above phases of desk based research, visits were carried out to new sites to verify the typology and the existence of the site, and to evaluate the quality of provision. Sites were evaluated against a matrix enabling comparisons between sites in the same typology and across typologies. The matrix was based on that used in the Mid Bedfordshire PPG17 Assessment (and for that reason, to ensure consistency, sites in South Bedfordshire were also re assessed). Sites were rated against different criteria according to the typology in which they are categorised. Key areas for consideration included:
 - care, cleanliness and maintenance
 - quality of equipment and facilities
 - access to the site
 - wider benefits
 - play value for children's play sites

As well as enabling a cross check of the sites identified, the site assessment process provided an overall quality and accessibility score for each site in addition to ratings for each individual factor. These scores have been translated into percentage scores, enabling ease of comparison. Percentage scores take into account only relevant criteria. For example, where there is no signage, but this would not be expected at a site, it is not taken into account within the overall percentage score.

These quality assessments are used to understand issues with current provision and to inform decisions relating to key priorities for improvement (Stages 3 and 4).

GIS Mapping

2.15 All sites have been recorded on a GIS layer, providing a live record of existing provision, which can be monitored and updated to reflect changes to the stock of provision. The GIS has also been used for analysis purposes (Stage 4).

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the audit, it must be noted that the omission of a site does not necessarily mean that it is not considered to be green space and that policies relating to green space are not applicable. Updating the audit will be an ongoing process and the audit will be constantly refined in response to changes in the open space stock.

Step 3 – Setting Standards for Provision

2.16 Open space policy guidance recognises the importance and impact that open spaces can have on the character and attractiveness of an area. Equally, it understands that the expectations and aspirations people have regarding those space can vary significantly from one area to another. As a result, it concludes that open space priorities are most appropriately defined locally, to address local conditions and needs, rather than in response to national or area-wide criteria.

2.17 In order to establish the adequacy of open space provision and to determine future requirements, guidance requires that local authorities develop locally derived standards including;

- a quantitative component
- a qualitative component
- an accessibility component

2.18 Step 3 of the preparation of this assessment therefore uses the information collated in Step 1 (Assessment of Local Needs) and Step 2 (Audit of Existing Provision) to set local standards for open space in Central Bedfordshire.

2.19 There is no formulaic approach for the creation of standards relating to open space (as use of open space is largely supply led rather than demand led), however the use of information collated during the first two phases of work ensures that standards set are directly representative of specific needs in Central Bedfordshire. They are set giving consideration to the amount, quality and distribution of existing open spaces (Step 2) and how this meets local needs (outlined in Step 1). They set out the requirement for additional / improved provision, based upon the aspirations of the local community and the visions of key stakeholders.

2.20 For each type of open space, standards have been created and applied using an accessibility-led approach, meaning that accessibility is the primary determinant of the adequacy of provision in ensuring local need is met.

2.21 The key phases of the approach to setting standards and the information used are therefore broadly as follows;

- Results from the household survey relating to distances that residents are willing to travel were statistically analysed (including calculation of the mode (most common response) mean (average) and quartile analysis (to understand the spread of responses). This provides an understanding of the distance that residents expect to travel to reach each type of open space and the mode of transport that people are most likely to use, and is statistically robust.
- These findings were considered in the context of other consultations (internal / external stakeholders), issues arising from the household survey (views on amount and quality of provision / issues arising from analysis of the user profile) and issues raised in existing policy documents (for example Green Infrastructure Assessments and Parish Plans) to identify where priorities lie (for example high quality strategic spaces, very local access etc).
- The above information was used to set an appropriate accessibility standard. Based upon this standard, catchment areas were mapped for each open space using the GIS system. This enables the identification of areas where aspirations relating to accessibility are not met. Distances were determined using robust research by the NPFA in numerous areas. Straight line distances are reduced by 40% to allow for the fact that routes to open spaces are not straight-line distances but more complex. Where drive time distances are used, these are calculated to take into account the road network and the speed limits on the road (using a specific drive time software package).
- Again drawing upon the findings of the local needs assessment (including areas where aspirations for new provision are identified) as well as the accessibility standards, quantity standards can then be set. The quantity standards have been calculated to reflect the amount of provision that is needed to ensure that all residents are within the distance set by the accessibility standard for each type of open space. They are based upon the assumption that a gap in accessibility will be filled by a new site of average size (average in terms of current stock of facilities in Central Bedfordshire). The use of the average size of sites in Central Bedfordshire is believed to provide a consistent way of determining facility requirements across each typology. It also reflects the fact that consultation relating to the adequacy of existing provision has been undertaken based upon the current stock of facilities, rather than theoretical guidance. The use of the average size enables the calculation of facility requirements for all typologies, including those where no national standards exist.
- Quality standards are set drawing upon the aspirations expressed through local consultation (notably the household survey, discussions with internal and external stakeholders and existing local and strategic documents).

2.22 To summarise, using the above methodology, standards have therefore been set in the following format:

Accessibility standards – set as a distance threshold for each typology, these are based on residents' expectations regarding the length of time they expect to travel, and the expected mode of transport, to each site typology. This enables the identification of locations that are lacking in provision and supports decision making in relation to new facilities. Without good access, the provision of high quality open space is of limited public value. Given that accessibility standards are set in the form of distance thresholds (i.e. the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of

provision using different modes of transport), application of these standards provides an understanding of the areas where residents do not have appropriate access to facilities. Distances were determined using robust research by the NPFA in numerous areas. Straight line distances are reduced by 40% to allow for the fact that routes to open spaces are not straight-line distances but more complex. Where drive time standards are used, these are calculated taking into account the local road network and the speed limits.

- **Accessibility** is twofold however, and analysis of the qualitative information enables the identification of any site specific concerns relating to accessibility. This includes issues such as signage, cost and equal access for all. Other issues may impact upon accessibility (for example site sensitivity (sites with specific landscape, biodiversity or ecology components may be accessible, however, in order to preserve their unique conditions, access and usage may have to be limited or controlled). Specific issues will be considered where relevant in the typology specific sections.
- **Quantity standards** – ha per 1000 population. This provides an understanding of the current amount of open space and can be used to determine the amount of additional provision that is needed when population growth projections are factored in.
- **Quality standards** – to guide the quality of new and existing open spaces. This enables the identification of sites which currently require improvement, or may require improvement in the future. The quality standard provides a benchmark for current and future provision.

2.23 Guidance will be provided on the application and appropriate use of the local standards in Section 5 as well as the principles that will be applied for the calculation of requirements from new developments which are derived from the standards and the principles outlined in this strategy document.

Stage 4 – Applying Local Standards

2.24 The application of the local standards drives the key priorities for the future provision of recreation and open space facilities. It is the application of standards that enables full analysis of how the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing provision meets current and projected future needs.

2.25 The standards are applied to both the existing situation, and to the projected future situation using population forecasting, including the identified growth areas. The application of standards can be used to determine the requirements for new and improved open space arising through population growth.

2.26 This report considers the issues that arise from the application of local standards both at the current time and in future years, both geographically (placemaking area), at a settlement hierarchy level and individually in each settlement.

It considers;

- Areas where the accessibility standard is not met
- Areas where quantity is below the target level
- Sites that do not meet target quality standards

Step 5 – Developing Strategy and Informing Policies

2.27 The strategy for the future delivery of open spaces is based upon the standards that have been set (Step 3) and the application of these standards (Step 4). These standards and the resulting strategy therefore reflect the aspirations of residents of Central Bedfordshire.

2.28 Building upon the issues raised in the assessment phase, this document sets out the key priorities both in general terms across Central Bedfordshire and also at a settlement specific level. These priorities are derived to reflect issues that arise from the application of standards.

2.29 The key principles of the document will form the policy relating to both the protection of existing space and delivery of new space. Guidance on the requirements relating to new developments will be provided in Section 6.

Geographical Analysis

2.30 The assessment has considered issues arising across Central Bedfordshire as a whole, however, in order to provide a greater level of understanding of the variations across the area, where relevant, analysis has also been undertaken at the following levels:

- **by Placemaking Area** (table 2.2) – A local term previously used for planning implementation and monitoring purposes, which divides Central Bedfordshire into broad geographical areas. Although these are not set in policy they can be used to interpret how provision and views vary geographically
- **by Settlement Hierarchy** (table 2.3) – As set out in planning policy to categorise settlements across Central Bedfordshire. These categories help to evaluate if provision and expectations differ by settlement size and to inform the standards for each typology
- **at Settlement Level** – to detail local accessibility, quantity and quality of provision

For clarity, Table 2.2 shows the wards and parishes that fall within each area Placemaking Area.

Table 2.2 – Placemaking Areas

Placemaking Area	Wards	Town/ Parishes
North	Ampthill	Ampthill, Clophill, Maulden
	Aspley & Woburn	Aspley Guise, Aspley Heath, Battlesden, Eversholt, Husborne Crawley, Milton Bryan, Potsgrove, Woburn
	Barton le Clay	Barton le Clay
	Cranfield and Marston Moretaine	Brogborough, Cranfield, Hulcote & Salford, Lidlington, Marston Moretaine, Millbrook, Ridgmont
	Flitwick	Flitwick, Steppingley
	Toddington	Chalton, Harlington, Sundon, Streatley, Toddington
	Arlesey	Clifton, Henlow, Arlesey, Stondon
	Biggleswade North	Biggleswade
	Biggleswade South	Biggleswade
	Houghton Conquest & Haynes	Haynes. Houghton Conquest
	Northill	Moggerhanger, Northill, Old Warden, Southill
	Potton	Dunton, Edworth, Everton, Eyeworth Potton, Sutton, Tempsford, Wrestlingworth & Cockayne Hatley
	Sandy	Blunham. Sandy
	Shefford	Campton & Chicksands, Meppershall, Shefford
	Silsoe & Shillington	Gravenhurst, Shillington, Silsoe
Stotfold & Langford	Astwick, Langford , Stotfold	
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	Caddington	Caddington, Hyde, Kensworth, Slip End, Studham, Whipsnade
	Eaton Bray	Billington, Eaton Bray, Totternhoe
	Heath and Reach	Chalgrave, Eggington, Heath and Reach, Hockliffe, Stanbridge, Tilsworth
	Leighton Buzzard North	Leighton Linslade
	Leighton Buzzard South	
Linslade		
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Dunstable Central	Dunstable
	Dunstable Icknield	
	Dunstable Manshead	
	Dunstable Northfields	
	Dunstable Watling	
	Houghton Hall	Houghton Regis
	Parkside	
Tithe Farm		

Table 2.3 shows Central Bedfordshire Council’s Settlement Hierarchy and the towns and villages within each hierarchy (emerging Development Strategy Policy 4).

2.31 It should be noted that part way through this study, the East and West Placemaking Areas were amalgamated to form the North Placemaking Area. The telephone survey was carried out prior to this and the analysis therefore refers to findings from the East and West separately.

Table 2.3 – Settlement Hierarchies

Settlement Hierarchy	Settlement
<p>Major Service Centres</p> <p>Major Service Centres provide a focus for employment, shopping and community facilities for the local community and surrounding rural communities</p>	<p>Amphill, Biggleswade, Dunstable, Flitwick, Houghton Regis, Leighton Linlade, Sandy, Wixams</p>
<p>Minor Service Centres</p> <p>Minor service centres are large villages or small towns with a good level of services, possibly including a school, doctor's surgery, a basic retail offer and frequent public transport links</p>	<p>Arlesey, Barton-Le-Clay, Caddington, Cranfield, Marston Moretaine, Potton, Shefford, Stotfold, Toddington</p>
<p>Large Villages</p>	<p>Aspley Guise, Blunham, Clifton, Clophill, Eaton Bray, Fairfield, Harlington, Haynes (main village), Heath and Reach, Henlow, Hockliffe, Houghton Conquest, Langford, Lower Stondon, Maulden, Meppershall, Shillington (including Ends), Silsoe, Slip End, Upper Caldecote, Westoning, Woburn</p>
<p>Small Villages</p>	<p>Aspley Heath, Brogborough, Broom, Campton, Chalton, Dunton, Eversholt, Everton, Flitton, Greenfield, Husborne Crawley, Ickwell, Kensworth, Lidlington, Maulden (Clophill Rd), Millbrook, Moggerhanger, Northill, Old Warden, Pulloxhill, Ridgmont, Salford, Southill, Stanbridge, Streatley, Studham, Sutton, Tempsford, Tilsworth, Totternhoe, Upper Gravenhurst, Upper Shelton, Upper Sundon, Wrestlingworth</p>

Structure of Remaining Sections

2.32 The strategic context for open space and recreation is set out in Section 3.

The facility analysis sections consider each type of open space in turn, outlining;

- Scope and definition
- Strategic and policy context
- Usage profile of existing open spaces (drawing upon the household survey)
- Analysis of local need and the provision of existing open spaces
 - Views and aspirations relating to quantity of provision as well as an evaluation of the actual quantity of provision

- Views and aspirations relating to quality of provision as well as an evaluation of the actual quality of provision
- Issues relating to access to each type of open space
- Creation of local standards
- Application of local standards
- Key priorities and issues to address.

Section 5 summarises the key issues outlined in the study and provides guidance on the application of standards for new development.

3. Context

Introduction

3.1 This section summarises the national and local context in the provision of recreational open space in Central Bedfordshire. It considers:

- Demographic profile of Central Bedfordshire
- Strategic context for open space

Demographic Profile

3.2 As set out in Section 2, detailed analysis has been undertaken relating to the provision of open space in Central Bedfordshire using the following spatial areas as a basis for reference:

- Central Bedfordshire as a whole
- Placemaking areas
- Settlement hierarchy
- Individual settlement

3.3 For clarity, the population data used to represent both current and projected population growth is outlined in this section.

Population Data - Central Bedfordshire

3.4 The population data shown below was originally provided by Central Bedfordshire Council in connection with Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy for the scenario testing undertaken using Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM). The planning horizon for the FPM was 2022, hence for consistency this data has also been used in the development of this document to provide an overall Central Bedfordshire-wide picture. These projections take into account natural population growth and planned housing growth.

Persons aged (years)	2010	2022
0-4	16,130	16,420
5-9	15,210	17,450
10-14	15,500	17,900
15-19	15,340	14,390
20-24	13,510	12,070
25-29	14,690	16,200
30-34	15,280	19,770
35-39	18,490	20,530
40-44	21,270	19,250
45-49	21,300	18,720
50-54	17,780	20,930
55-59	15,470	21,020

60-64	16,160	18,120
65-69	12,100	14,560
70-74	9,710	14,330
75-79	7,500	12,640
80-84	5,240	7,990
85-89	3,140	4,950
90+	1,420	3,320
Total	255,220	290,560

Population by Placemaking Area

3.5 Future projections were calculated by ward up to 2022 and for consistency with other chapters of the Leisure Strategy, these figures have been used to inform analysis of the adequacy of open space. These figures take into account the planned distribution of housing growth, as well as projected natural increases in population.

Table 3.1 summarises the spread of population by Placemaking Area.

Table 3.1 – Population by Placemaking Area

Area	2010	2022
Dunstable	52,140	58,380
Leighton and Rural South	54,070	62,270
North	149,050	169,910
Central Bedfordshire	255,260	290,560

Table 3.1 clearly indicates that the largest population is based in the North Placemaking Area, which is the largest placemaking area geographically. The highest levels of population growth (circa 15%) will however, take place in the Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Area, while lower levels of growth (11%) will be in Dunstable.

Population by Settlement Hierarchy

3.6 In addition to analysis by geographic area, this document also considers the distribution of open spaces by settlement hierarchy and evaluates whether there are differences in the amount and quality of open space (and aspirations for facilities) according to the size of settlement.

3.7 Analysis of provision by settlement hierarchy is not possible using the ward population figures used to evaluate provision geographically across Central Bedfordshire as many of the wards include several settlements all of which fit into different levels of the settlement hierarchy.

3.8 To support analysis by settlement hierarchy, population figures by Parish have been extracted from the 2011 census (Office of National Statistics January 2013). The use of these figures ensures that analysis of provision within Central Bedfordshire is based upon the most up to date data available. Parishes have then been assigned to the settlement hierarchy in which their largest settlement falls. Some Parishes do not contain any settlements that fall within one of the tiers of settlements and these have therefore been

excluded. The different sources of data and the inclusion of only settlements falling within the hierarchy means that figures relating to placemaking area and settlement hierarchy will not match exactly. Table 3.2 summarises the population at each level of the settlement hierarchy.

Table 3.2 – Population by Settlement Hierarchy

Area	2010	2022
Major Service Centres	139,913.3	160,455
Minor Service Centres	49,600	56,600
Large Villages	41,074	44,037
Small Villages	260,434	27,095

Figures for each individual settlement are based upon the population by Parish (2011 census) and specific population projections calculated for the purpose of this assessment (Central Bedfordshire Council 2012/13) and are included in Appendix A. Parish Schedules. They clearly demonstrate that the majority of growth will take place in the major settlements, with relatively high amounts of growth in the minor settlements.

Strategic Context

Key Partners

3.9 This document focuses not only upon the delivery of open spaces owned and managed by the Council, but also on spaces owned and managed by others. Within Central Bedfordshire the majority of open space sites are owned by town and parish councils, countryside organisations, charities and others.

3.10 There are several key partners in the delivery of open space and green infrastructure in Central Bedfordshire. All of the key partners have provided details of the facilities they manage and outlined their current priorities to inform the development of this document.

Some of the many partners are:

- National Trust
- Marston Vale Trust
- Greensand Trust
- Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity
- Sustrans
- Natural England
- The RSPB
- Groundwork Trust
- Wildlife Trust
- Forestry Commission
- Town and Parish Councils
- Chilterns Conservation Board

- 3.11 In addition to the above organisations, voluntary groups have an important role to play in the success of the network of open spaces across Central Bedfordshire. Many sites are managed and maintained by such groups and there is clear evidence that in almost all cases, this local ownership has generated improved quality and created sites that are highly valued by the local community.
- 3.12 Appendix E summarises the primary functions of these organisations. The key priorities of all of these partners have been taken into account where relevant and are reflected within this document. They have formed a key part of the local needs assessment and where relevant, influence the setting of local standards.

National Context – Planning Policy

- 3.13 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes several references to planning for sport, recreation and open space, and highlights the importance of local strategies contributing toward the improvement of health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and delivering sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out clear principles for planning in relation to open space, sport and recreation, bullet 12 indicates that planning should ‘take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.’

Bullet 8 of paragraph 17 states that planning should encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), providing that it is not of high environmental value. The glossary accompanying the framework indicates that recreation grounds and allotments are excluded from the definition of previously developed land.

The NPPF recognises green space as an important part of new development. In particular, Paragraph 58 indicates that:

‘Local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area;
- optimise the potential sites to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities;
- create safe and accessible environments; which are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Similarly, Paragraph 69 also references the importance of providing high quality open space as part of new development. Directly referencing the importance of open space and sport, paragraph 73 of the NPPF states:

'Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. 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. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessment should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.'

Paragraph 74 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
- 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 needs for which clearly outweigh the loss

The NPPF also makes several other references to the importance of sport and recreation facilities, in particular Paragraph 70 which states that to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as sports venues, cultural buildings, and other local services too
- enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments
- guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs
- ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

Further building upon the role of open space in the community, Paragraph 92 of the NPPF gives specific support for community forests stating that 'they offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns, by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife.'

The Localism Bill (published December 2010) seeks to empower neighbourhood communities, and give them real power to shape the way that the areas in which they live develop. Open Space, sport and recreation facilities are central to community life and their profile is therefore likely to increase further. Paragraph 76 and 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework promote the identification of important green spaces by local communities and the protection of these facilities where they are considered to be areas of particular importance. Such sites should be considered for the designation of Local Green Space but must be demonstrably special to a local community and hold particular local recreational significance.

Many Government White Papers also emphasise the importance of planning for open space and the wider contribution that open spaces can make to society. Such papers include:

- Creating growth, cutting carbon: making sustainable local transport happen (2011)
- The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature (2012)

3.14 Current planning policy therefore emphasises the importance of open space in the creation of sustainable communities and advocates high quality design of new spaces as well as the protection of existing spaces.

Wider Environmental Benefits

3.15 While this assessment focuses only upon the recreational uses of open space, it should be noted that the value of open space is not just recreational and that all open spaces are part of a wider green infrastructure network.

Section 11 of the NPPF (Paragraph 109 onwards) highlights the importance of conserving wildlife and biodiversity. While this assessment focuses upon the recreational function of open space, it is recognised that the function of such spaces extends much beyond recreation and this document should therefore be considered in the context of wider Central Bedfordshire policy relating to open space.

The strategic contribution open spaces can make to the wider environment includes:

- defining the local landscape character and providing an appropriate context and setting for built development and infrastructure
- helping to achieve a softer interface between urban and rural environments
- emphasising the presence of particular natural features within the landscape such as river valleys
- supporting habitats and access to nature
- promoting and protecting biodiversity and habitat creation
- mitigating climate change and flood risk.

3.16 As the population of an area grows, the additional pressure placed upon existing infrastructure can negatively impact upon important sites for wildlife including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). It is important that this is taken into account and that additional green space is provided as part of new housing development to mitigate this impact.

Local Context

3.17 As well as meeting national and local priorities, the effective provision of open spaces in Central Bedfordshire contributes to the achievement of many other priorities of both Central Bedfordshire Council and its partners.

Contribution to Strategic Priorities

3.18 Table 3.3 briefly outlines how open space can contribute to the delivery of many of the strategic priorities of Central Bedfordshire Council.

Table 3.3 – Relationship between Open Space and Key Priorities in Central Bedfordshire

Document	Key Priorities	Links
<p>Delivering your Priorities: The Council's Plan for Central Bedfordshire 2012 – 2016</p>	<p>The Council is committed to six key priorities which are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting the countryside and enabling businesses to grow. • Improved educational attainment. • Promote health and well being and protecting the vulnerable. • Better infrastructure • Great universal services • Value for money 	<p>The effective provision, delivery and management of open space can contribute to the achievement of these objectives. In addition, these priorities should influence and shape the strategy for the provision of open space.</p>
<p>Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire 2013</p>	<p>The Development Strategy is the emerging planning policy document that will set the framework for growth across Central Bedfordshire. It will set out how much development (housing, employment, retail etc) the Council needs to plan for and broadly where it should go. It will also set out detailed policies to help determine planning applications.</p> <p>Policies directly linking to open space include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space Development in the Green Belt • Leisure and Open Space provision • Formally Designated Important Open Space • Public Rights of Way • Other Areas of Open Space within Settlements • Local Green Space • Green Infrastructure 	<p>This evidence and assessment of need will underpin policies in the development strategy.</p>

Document	Key Priorities	Links
<p>Sustainable Community Strategy</p>	<p>The Sustainable Community Strategy is based on a shared long-term vision for Central Bedfordshire that has been developed by Central Bedfordshire Together. The vision is to create a 'Globally connected, delivering sustainable growth to ensure a green, prosperous and ambitious place for the benefit of all'.</p> <p>The key strategic priorities of the plan are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising employment opportunities and delivering housing growth to meet the needs of our communities • Ensuring our local people have the skills to prosper • Keeping our communities safe • Nurturing a sense of pride and belonging • Getting around and caring for a green and clean environment • Promoting health and reducing health inequalities • Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people • Supporting and caring for an ageing population and those who are most vulnerable. 	<p>Effective provision of open space can directly contribute to the achievement of this vision and many of the strategic priorities. In particular, open space will be central to the delivery of priorities relating to health, opportunities for young people and the ageing population. In addition, the key priorities of the community strategy should influence the strategy for the provision of open space.</p>
<p>Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan</p>	<p>The Local Transport Plan (LTP) forms a long-term framework for investment in transport infrastructure and services across Central Bedfordshire. It is a statutory requirement of the authority to produce and maintain the Plan, which considers the needs of all forms of transport, particularly walking, cycling, buses, rail and car use. The time period for implementing the LTP covers the period between April 2011 and March 2026 to enable a strategic approach to the delivery of transport schemes and help secure lasting changes in travel behavior.</p> <p>The key objectives in relation to walking are as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of people walking • Improve the quality of the pedestrian environment • Improve the safety of pedestrians • Increase awareness of the benefits of walking <p>The focus of the cycling strategy is as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of people cycling 	<p>The key priorities of the plan should be taken into account when evaluating travel patterns to open spaces and when identifying strategy for existing and new open spaces.</p>

Document	Key Priorities	Links
<p>Central Bedfordshire Economic Development Plan (2011)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the quality of the cycling environment • Improve the safety and perceived safety of cycling • Increase awareness of the benefits of cycling • Increase access to a bicycle <p>The Central Bedfordshire Council Economic Development Plan recognises the key role that rural businesses play in Central Bedfordshire's economy. It aims to safeguard rural employment sites, support rural business diversification and provide development opportunities while striking a balance with the need to protect our countryside. Countryside Access can help to provide the link between the economy and countryside; achieving benefits for both.</p>	<p>The key priorities of the plan can be supported by improving access to the countryside and by the provision of effective recreational open spaces.</p>
<p>Central Bedfordshire Community Engagement Strategy 2013 – 2016</p>	<p>The strategy seeks to drive engagement with individuals and organisations and help communities understand the choices and decisions that are required. It will also manage their expectations about the service levels provided by the public sector in the future.</p> <p>The strategy is based on five key principles, which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving more people more opportunities to influence decisions • Enabling Ward Councillors to be leaders, in and for, their communities • Enhancing the role of Town and Parish Councils • Building the capacity of local people to engage • Ensuring a strategic and joined-up, coordinated partnership approach 	<p>The delivery of open space can embrace the principles of the community engagement strategy</p>

3.19 As well as contributing toward many overarching strategic aims and objectives, this strategy sits alongside several related documents. The key principles of these documents, along with their headline priorities are summarized below. The interrelationship between these documents and this assessment of open space across Central Bedfordshire is also highlighted. Further detail on the issues raised in these documents can be found in Appendix E.

Green Infrastructure

3.20 Green infrastructure (GI) plans identify priority areas for protecting and improving existing green infrastructure and creating new spaces in order to develop a network of multi-functional greenspaces.

GI plans have been developed at a variety of scales across Central Bedfordshire, notably:

- a strategic level plan covering the whole county of Bedfordshire
- district level plans, for Mid Bedfordshire and for Luton and Southern Bedfordshire
- community level plans, developed by many individual towns and parishes across Central Bedfordshire

The district level plans consider green infrastructure within the following components:

- Accessible Greenspace
- Access Routes and connectivity
- Biodiversity
- Historic Environment
- Landscape

Open Space Standards - The relationship between informal recreation and green infrastructure

3.21 'Green Infrastructure' is an umbrella term, covering a network of green spaces incorporating the component elements listed above. The green infrastructure network provides a range of functions, including habitat and species preservation and biodiversity. It may also provide space for informal recreation in the natural environment, and it is in this respect only that green infrastructure is included in this document. This chapter, providing an up to date, thorough assessment of recreational open spaces effectively replaces the accessible greenspace evidence base in the various Green Infrastructure plans.

3.22 The Leisure Strategy Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy assesses the provision of and need for open spaces in terms of their recreational usage and value. Many of these open spaces, particularly Countryside Recreation Sites and Informal Recreation Sites deliver benefits wider than purely recreation, for example, ecological benefits. Indeed for many sites, such as nature reserves, ecological benefits are the primary purpose of the site, with recreation a potential added benefit. Therefore, as part of this strategy, the level of recreational benefit in relation to the ecological sensitivity of the site has been assessed. This enables standards to be set which identify sufficient provision of open spaces for recreation use in order not to damage open space sites with environmental interests.

- 3.23 The standards therefore take into account environmental interests, but the Chapter 2 open space standards do not involve the delivery of the environmental interests themselves. The standards, once adopted, will replace the greenspace component of the strategic Green Infrastructure contributions. This will be reflected in the review of Central Bedfordshire Council's Planning Obligations strategy and approach.
- 3.24 Central Bedfordshire Council has supported the development of green infrastructure plans, which identify priority areas for the protection, enhancement and extension of the green infrastructure network. The Council does not have quantitative or qualitative standards for green infrastructure, nor does it consider it appropriate to develop them. The implementation of the open space standards identified in this strategy will contribute to the delivery of the recreational open space elements of the green infrastructure network.
- 3.25 Local projects set out in the green infrastructure plans are referenced in typology specific sections and set out in the settlement summaries only where relevant. These priorities have formed an important part of the local needs assessment and are taken into account as part of the approach to setting standards. The key strategic priorities of the green infrastructure plans are outlined in Appendix D.

Partnerships involved in green space planning and delivery

3.26 In addition to the local green infrastructure plans, there are several landscape-scale initiatives operating within Central Bedfordshire, specifically:

- The creation of the Forest of Marston Vale
- The Chilterns AONB
- The Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area

These initiatives will encompass the provision and enhancement of green space and the creation of broader green infrastructure, including recreational opportunities. The approach to delivering open space improvements outlined in this strategy is a partnership one. Central Bedfordshire Council is a member of the Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership. This organization brings together a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people who aim to help bring about improvements in their local natural environment. Members include a range of organisations that own and manage green spaces at a range of scales, including the National Trust, RSPB, Greensand Trust, Marston Vale Trust, Chilterns AONB Board, as well as Central Bedfordshire Council. The Local Nature Partnership will play a key role in promoting the delivery of green infrastructure across Central Bedfordshire.

Outdoor Access Improvement Plan – Central Bedfordshire Council (2013)

3.27 The Outdoor Access Improvement Plan (OAIP) sets out how Central Bedfordshire Council will manage access to the countryside over the next 10 years to make Central Bedfordshire a great place to live and work, by:

- providing access to a range of high quality green spaces and the wider countryside through a well maintained Rights of Way network;
- involving local communities in the development and management of the countryside;
- raising public confidence and understanding of countryside access; and

- increasing use and enjoyment of the Central Bedfordshire countryside for fresh air, relaxation, recreation, health and exercise.

The strategy emphasises a desire to ensure that sites are:

- Connecting spaces... Public Rights of Way and Linear Access
- Breathing spaces... Sites and Greenspaces
- Local spaces...Community Involvement and Participation
- Health spaces ...Health and Wellbeing
- Growing spaces...the Countryside and Growth Area

It sets a series of policy statements and includes a detailed action plan which will be revised annually. These policy statements and the key actions in the current action plan have been taken into account in the preparation of the strategic direction of this document.

The principles and priorities of this document will be an important reference point in the annual revision of the OAIP action plan.

Summary

3.28 The key principles of these national and local policy frameworks and strategies are embedded throughout this evidence base and strategy. The key priorities of the local partners are also supported and incorporated where appropriate into this document.

4. Overarching Issues

Introduction

4.1 While the facility analysis sections identify the specific issues for each type of open space through the evaluation of their accessibility, quantity and quality, consultation results highlight a number of overarching issues or principles which relate to all open space types. Many of these relate to the management rather than the provision of sites, however they remain important considerations in the provision of open spaces. The key issues identified are outlined in the remainder of this section but can be summarised as follows:

- Balancing recreational use with biodiversity and conservation
- Financial Sustainability
- Environmental Sustainability
- Connectivity
- Impact of new development
- Partnership working
- Community engagement
- Consistency and individuality
- Balancing quality and quantity
- Understanding the needs of non users

Balancing recreational use with biodiversity – Ensuring that open spaces are multifunctional

4.2 This assessment considers the requirement for open space from a recreational perspective and highlights areas where more provision is required, or where there is potential for improvement or greater usage.

4.3 Consultation, and the review of strategic documents emphasises that it is important to balance recreational need with other priorities including the preservation of biodiversity and heritage. In some instances, recreational use may have a negative impact on the achievement of other objectives and this should be considered during decision making and prioritisation.

4.4 Spaces should therefore be designed to be multi-functional to maximise the benefits that they bring to local residents and to the wider environment. This would include appropriate design to promote nature conservation and biodiversity and the implementation of sensitive management practices.

Financial Sustainability

4.5 There is a need to ensure that open spaces, sport and recreation facilities are designed and managed in a sustainable way which facilitates ongoing and continuous improvement. This is particularly important in some of the more rural settlements, where a higher number of facilities are required to provide localised access for residents.

4.6 During consultation the economic pressures relating to management and maintenance of open spaces were raised and several consultees indicated that sustainability should be a central focus of any strategy (Central Bedfordshire Council, parish councils, external stakeholders). This may include the dual use of sites (for example community use of school sites) as well as consideration of opportunities for income generation at key hub sites with a view to achieving a break-even status in the longer term. The sustainability of sites provided as part of new development, including their long term maintenance to ensure maximum community value should also be secured.

Environmental Sustainability

4.7 It is essential that both changes to existing open spaces and the creation of new open spaces embrace the concept of environmental sustainability in terms of their design, management and maintenance. This may include the reduced use of fuel and pesticides as well as the implementation of sensitive mowing regimes.

Connectivity

4.8 Analysis of Green Infrastructure Plans alongside other strategic documents demonstrates that improvements to connectivity within settlements and between settlements is as important as the provision of local open spaces. The presence of the M1 and A1 as well as railway corridors means that much of the green infrastructure network is truncated. Rights of Way can unlock access to the countryside and for many residents, also wider strategic sites. There are clear aspirations to develop linked networks of open space (demonstrated for example by the Green Wheel concept established in both the Biggleswade Green Infrastructure Plan and the Flitwick Green Infrastructure Plan) as well as the delivery of NCN Route 51 by the Marston Vale Trust, which provides a strategic access link through the Marston Vale connecting major greenspace assets in the area. Future open spaces should be designed with these principles in mind and there is potential to improve connectivity through the careful integration of new developments.

The Impact of New Development

4.9 Consultees raised concerns about the impact of new development and the increasing population on the adequacy of open space. Town and Parish Councils, as well as external consultees highlighted the need to ensure that the open space stock is increased and improved in order to accommodate the needs of new residents. Clear policies relating to design, maintenance requirements and the longer term future of the space were felt to be essential and it was highlighted that new open spaces should enhance the overall stock of provision and not dilute the quality of other spaces.

4.10 As well as raising issues that should be considered within the Leisure Strategy, consultations also revealed several key principles that have proven to be successful in Central Bedfordshire in relation to the delivery of open space and playing fields. These are set out in the paragraphs that follow.

Partnership Working

4.11 There are many examples of strong partnership working across Central Bedfordshire and most recent achievements would not have been possible without the commitment of partners including Central Bedfordshire Council, Town and Parish Councils and members of the Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Consortium. Consultation identified the need to build on the current culture of knowledge sharing and partnership working to ensure that such facilities and spaces can be replicated and that interested parties can learn from the experience of others.

Community Engagement

4.12 Engagement with and between Town and Parish Councils as well as key partners in Bedfordshire has ensured that a local focus is retained and that local community aspirations are met. While there are opportunities to further improve community engagement, it is considered important that this principle is retained and that communication is further tailored.

4.13 Community engagement and the importance of the work of volunteers was also highlighted as crucial to the successful delivery of open spaces. Results achieved by Friends Groups established at many of the large countryside access sites (as well as several more local community resources) demonstrate significant results including improved quality of open spaces, greater community ownership and access to funding streams that would not otherwise be available.

Creating Functional Open Spaces

4.14 Consultation reveals a view that recreational open spaces should be functional. Many issues with anti social behaviour and lack of use of spaces arise because sites are not fit for their intended purpose or do not fit with the aspirations of the local community. As well as re-emphasising the importance of community engagement, this highlights the importance of quality and design as well as quantity of provision.

4.15 Building upon the principle of functionality, opportunities to ensure that spaces are multi-functional should be explored, both in terms of balancing biodiversity with recreation, but also offering a variety of recreational opportunities.

Consistency and Individuality

4.16 There is a need to strive for a consistently high standard of open space and recreation facilities across Central Bedfordshire in terms of the maintenance and types of open space provided whilst maintaining the unique characters of different settlements and the historic and heritage values of specific sites.

Balancing Quality with Quantity

4.17 While access to sufficient open space is important, the quality of the recreational resource and opportunities offered is equally as important. It is essential that linking with sustainability, the need for additional facilities is considered in the context of the expectation that high quality facilities will be provided.

Appropriately located

4.18 The location of sites is as important as the space created, the facilities provided and the access routes to and within the sites. Sites that are not appropriately located will be neither functional nor well used. The location of sites within existing or new neighbourhoods should be considered at the outset of their design. This should take into account flood risk, as well as supervision and access points.

Understanding the needs of non users - use of open spaces

4.19 While the telephone survey reveals use of open spaces to be relatively consistent across geographical boundaries and within different sizes of settlement, there are variations in the use of open spaces between residents of different ethnic groups, of different ages and in different socio-economic groups, specifically:

- With the exception of allotments, younger residents are more likely to visit open spaces than older residents. Notably, households with dependent children, especially young dependent children, are most likely to visit all types of open space
- White British residents are more likely to visit all types of open spaces than members of other ethnic groups
- Residents in higher socio-economic groups are more likely to visit all types of open spaces (except allotments)
- Non-disabled residents are most likely to visit all types of open spaces (except allotments)

4.20 As well as understanding the motivations of those that do use open space, the importance of identifying ways of encouraging residents with lower levels of current use to maximise the value of open spaces. This may be in part due to a lack of awareness of the opportunities available.

Summary - Implications for the Leisure Strategy

4.21 Consultation reveals that the following principles should be embraced in the development of new and improved open spaces, as well as in the management and maintenance of open spaces:

Partnership working

- Detailed and timely community engagement
- The provision of functional open spaces
- The provision of open spaces that are of a consistent standard but maintain individuality and character
- The creation of a network of open spaces that balances appropriate quantities of provision with the aspiration for high quality facilities
- The provision of multi functional open space – balancing recreation with biodiversity
- The management of a network of open space that appeals to people that don't currently use such facilities as well as those that do.

4.22 The above principles are considered central to the management, maintenance and delivery of all types of open space.

5. Summary, Strategic Priorities and Application of the Strategy

Summary

- 5.1 This assessment provides an evidence base relating to recreational open space across Central Bedfordshire and will be used to deliver Planning policy as well as to drive proactive and reactive improvements relating to open spaces.
- 5.2 This document considers the recreational function of open space only. Open space is however recognised as being part of the wider green infrastructure (GI) network and the principles of this strategy should be integrated with wider policies on biodiversity, minerals planning, climate change and landscape scale conservation.
- 5.3 This section draws together the information provided in the facility analysis sections and provides a strategic framework for the delivery of open space through the Planning process. It summarises the standards set in each of the typology specific sections and outlines the processes for the implementation of these standards through the Planning process.

Principles

- 5.4 This document seeks to ensure that the following principles are embedded in the design of all open space provided in Central Bedfordshire:
- **Functional Open Spaces:** sites should be designed with recreational function in mind
 - **Consistency and Individuality:** spaces should be designed and maintained to a consistently high standard. Their design should however maintain the unique character of settlements in which they are based and the historic and heritage values of specific sites.
 - **Balancing Quality with Quantity:** the quality of the recreational resource and the opportunities offered is equally as important as the amount of space provided.
 - **Appropriately located:** The location of sites is as important as the space created, the facilities provided and the access routes to and within the sites. Decisions relating to location should take into account flood risk, as well as supervision and access points and the ability to provide a space that will be functional and of value to local residents.
 - **Balancing recreational use with biodiversity:** ensuring that open spaces are multifunctional: Spaces should be designed to be multi-functional to maximise the benefits that they bring to local residents and to the wider environment. This should include appropriate design to promote nature conservation and biodiversity and the implementation of sensitive management practices as well maximising recreational functionality
 - **Sustainability:** sites should be sustainable and design should include plans for their long term maintenance and management to maximise community value

- **Environmental Sustainability:** changes to existing open spaces and the creation of new open spaces should embrace the concept of environmental sustainability in terms of their design, management and maintenance.
- **Connectivity:** connectivity within settlements and between settlements is as important as the provision of local open spaces. Future open spaces should be designed with these principles in mind and improvements to existing sites should seek to enhance connectivity.

5.5 Design guidance to accompany this document will provide detailed instructions upon how the above principles should be incorporated into each type of open space and provides a detailed understanding of the issues that should be considered. All new open space should also comply with principles in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy.

5.6 In addition to the above guidance principles, Central Bedfordshire Council will also seek to promote:

- **Partnership Working:** the current culture of knowledge sharing and partnership working has seen the successful delivery of many open spaces and ensures that the benefits of open space are maximised. The work of volunteers has clearly demonstrated significant results including improved quality of open spaces, greater community ownership and access to funding streams that would not otherwise be available.
- **Community Engagement:** this ensures that a local focus is retained and that local community aspirations are met. Community engagement should be considered essential in the design of new facilities.

Uses of this Document

5.7 The primary purpose of this document is to provide planning policy for recreational open space facilities, to inform pre-application discussions on proposed development and support the implementation of planning policy and the delivery of facilities associated with development. In addition, it will:

- Provide the evidence base and strategic direction for recreational open space facilities in Central Bedfordshire
- Guide requirements for new, or improvements to existing open space as part of new development
- Support existing open space providers through the planning process – where there is an identified need, planning policy will support the creation of new and improved facilities
- Provide the evidence base and strategic need to support external providers in funding bids for improved facilities
- Ensure that investment (including S106, CIL and external funding) is targeted where it is needed and where it can have maximum benefit

Impact of New Development

Housing Growth

- 5.8 Over the next 20 years it is planned that Central Bedfordshire will see a growth of 28,700 new homes. In planning for growth Central Bedfordshire Council must ensure that its policy for recreational open space facilities seeks to provide a range of good quality, accessible facilities which support its residents in leading healthy, active lives.
- 5.9 This document has assessed the requirements for future provision as well as establishing current needs and aspirations. This has identified that in many parts of Central Bedfordshire current provision is insufficient to meet both current and projected demand. The strategy will secure appropriate facility provision and/or developer contributions from new development to ensure the facility stock meets local needs, now and in the future.
- 5.10 New development generates additional population which in turn increases demand for recreational open space. This assessment has identified that many of the existing facilities in Central Bedfordshire are of poor quality and/or are unable to cope with current or future demand. In addition to new facility provision, the strategy identifies qualitative improvements required to improve existing facilities to enable them to cope with the increased pressure from development.
- 5.11 In order to address the impact of new development and ensure that appropriate facilities / contributions are secured from development, the facility analyses in Part 2 of this document, identify the specific requirements for new and improved provision required to meet the needs of new development and population growth.

Recreation and Open Space Strategy Policy Requirements

- 5.12 The Recreation and Open Space Strategy has assessed current and future facility provision required to meet the needs of Central Bedfordshire's growing population. The following policy statements support the delivery of Policy 22 of the emerging Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

PPS 1. Protection of Existing Facilities

- 5.13 The Council will safeguard existing facilities in line with Paragraph 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework, existing recreation and open space facilities should not be built on unless it meets one of the three tests identified in paragraph 74. If facilities are lost as a result of development, replacement facilities of equal or improved standard are required to meet the continued needs of residents. Replacement facilities must also be located to serve the users of the original facility.
- 5.14 Capital receipts from disposals of playing pitch facilities will be ring-fenced specifically for investment into other open space facilities. To be invested according to the aims of the Strategy.
- 5.15 Planning consent for replacement facilities will include appropriate conditions and / or be subject to a Section 106 agreement or CIL. Developers will also be required to make

contributions towards maintenance and running costs. Contributions will be secured through planning obligations or CIL.

PPS 2. New Development

On-site Provision

5.16 The typology standards in set out in Chapter 2 (Table 5.1) will apply to all new residential development across the whole of Central Bedfordshire. The provision of certain typologies of recreation and open space facilities and developer contributions toward off-site provision may not be sought from some forms of development e.g. Children's Play Space would not be sought in associated with sheltered housing, however, provision or contributions may be sought for only specific facilities which are suited to the intended residents.

5.17 New development must be supported by the delivery of recreation and open space. This provision is to be made on-site in line with the required standards and will be provided as an integral part of new development, planned in at the early stages to meet both the needs arising on and off-site.

5.18 New and enhanced recreation and open space will be expected to be designed in accordance with the relevant Central Bedfordshire Council design guidance in order to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose and of a suitable quality.

Off-site Contributions

5.19 For smaller developments where on-site provision of certain types of recreation and open space may not possible/appropriate, or where existing facilities or planned projects are located within the catchment of the development, contributions will be sought to maintain and enhance existing facilities/identified projects, in lieu of on-site facilities.

PPS 3. Addressing Deficiencies

5.20 The strategy has identified existing and future deficiencies in facility provision to meet the needs of Central Bedfordshire residents. The strategy facility requirements will seek to address these deficiencies by securing the provision of new facilities or contributions from development to provide new or improve existing facilities in areas of need.

5.21 Where appropriate, the provision of new facilities will be prioritized to provide additional sites to increase supply in areas of deficit or housing growth.

PPS 4. Maximising Access to Facilities

5.22 The strategy will seek to ensure that all residents of Central Bedfordshire have good access to a range of high quality recreation and open space. The provision of new facilities or the enhancement of existing facilities will take into consideration the accessibility, quantity, and quality of facilities for residents.

PPS 5. Maximising Investment

5.23 The strategy will seek to maximise investment in new or improved facilities through the prioritisation of projects, partnership working with facility providers, national organisations and other partners to secure external funding for identified priorities. It will also secure S106/CIL contributions from development in accordance with the strategy requirements and utilise those contributions where maximum facility benefit can be achieved.

Local Standards for Recreation and Open Space

5.24 This assessment has sought to understand and define the needs and aspirations of residents of Central Bedfordshire in relation to recreational open space and to identify the actions required to meet both current and future needs, based upon these needs and aspirations.

5.25 To evaluate gaps in existing provision as well as to inform requirements for future open space, standards have therefore been set for each type of open space evaluated as follows;

- **an accessibility component** – distance threshold (catchment for each type of open space)
- **a quantitative component** – quantity of provision per 1000 population
- **a qualitative component** – quality of facilities required for each type of open space

5.26 The application of these standards has been used to identify the adequacy of existing provision to meet current and projected needs. The key principles emerging through the consultation process, building upon the standards set, will also be used to determine requirements from new developments.

5.27 Table 5.1 outlines the standards that have been set for each type of open space and the resulting priorities at a strategic. Full details of issues in each settlement are outlined in the Parish Schedules (Appendix A).

Table 5.1 – Local Standards by Typology

Type of Open Space	Definition	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
Countryside Recreation Sites	Large countryside-type sites set aside for a variety of recreational activities, offering a range of formal and informal facilities and activities.	20 minute drive time	3.19 ha per 1000 population	Appropriate size and location Accessible via safe footpaths and public transport, cycleways Clear boundaries natural space offering a range of habitats and landscapes Clearly defined pathways and cycleways Accessible Appropriate and regular seating Café and / or visitor centre, including toilets and refreshments Information and signage Play equipment Bins Management of dog fouling Secure parking Cycle storage Clear events programme Volunteer opportunities Visible daily staff presence
Urban Parks	Public parks in an urban setting that provide a variety of facilities e.g. play area, toilets, tennis courts etc; as well as opportunities for informal recreation. Sites often provide formal community activities / events.	15 minute walk (720m) 20 minute drive time	0.22 ha per 1000 pop. Major Service Centres only 0.39ha per 1000 pop. (Minor towns where/if required.	Appropriately located Clear boundaries Clearly defined entrances Well maintained and landscaped Ornamental planting Reflecting the character and history of area Clearly defined pathways and cycleways Accessible Variety of opportunities within park Clearly defined surfaced paths

Type of Open Space	Definition	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
Large Formal Recreation Areas	Large green sites which are easily accessible. These sites generally contain opportunities for formal recreation e.g. children's play, casual or formal outdoor sports. The majority of these sites are approximately 1ha in size or above	10 minute walk (480m) for Major Settlements or, 10 minute drive time for small settlements	1.17 ha per 1000 population	Appropriate and regular seating Toilets and refreshments Information and signage Range of Play equipment Appropriate bins and management of dog fouling Sufficient parking Lighting Events programme Volunteer opportunities Visible daily staff presence Sufficiently large to meet demand Appropriately located for local catchment Accessible via safe footpaths Clear boundaries Appropriate for residents of different ages and variety of facilities Clearly defined pathways and cycleways and cycle storage Appropriate and regular seating Information and signage Play equipment Sports facilities Appropriate bins and management of dog fouling Sufficient parking Clear events programme Volunteer opportunities for the local community

Type of Open Space	Definition	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
Informal Recreation Areas	Large green spaces that are natural in character. These sites generally offer informal recreational opportunities such as walking and relaxation and allow visitors to experience the natural environment. As well as offering recreational opportunities, many sites in this category are also important for biodiversity and ecology.	10 minute walk (480m)	2.5 ha per 1000 population	Appropriately located Accessible via safe footpaths Clear boundaries Predominantly natural space Balance between recreation and conservation Links with Public Rights of Way and cycle routes Appropriate and regular seating Information and signage Appropriate bins and management of dog fouling Sufficient parking Volunteer opportunities for the local community
Small Amenity Spaces	Small, local spaces which may enhance the local area and provide some opportunities for casual recreation use e.g. dog walking, as well as landscaping. These sites usually have few, or no formal functions.	5 minute walk (240m)	0.58 ha per 1000 population	Functional space Appropriately located Accessible via safe footpaths Clear boundaries that are locally appropriate Appropriate for residents of different ages Clearly defined pathways to the site Clearly defined paths Appropriate and regular seating Appropriate bins and management of dog fouling
Children's Play Spaces	Equipped play areas for children e.g. swings, slides and climbing frames This includes facilities currently referred to as LEAPs. Further detail will be	10 minute walk time (480m)	0.11ha per 1000 (it should be noted that this includes the activity	Within appropriate distance of target catchment area Accessible via safe footpaths and roads Appropriate location Appropriate boundaries and buffer zone Compliant with DDA and safety audit

Type of Open Space	Definition	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
	provided in the relevant sections.		area only). Additional allowances should be made for appropriate buffer zones in line with guidance	Bespoke design to suit location Age appropriate play facilities Range of play opportunities offering high play value Formal play equipment and safety surfacing Clear signage Fencing, seating and bins
Provision for Young People	Facilities designed to meet the needs of young people such as youth shelters, skate parks and Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs). This includes facilities currently referred to as LEAPs and LEAPS. Further detail will be provided in the relevant sections.	10 minute walk time (480m)	0.043ha per 1000 population (it should be noted that this includes the activity area only). Additional allowances should be made for appropriate buffer zones	Serving target catchment and appropriately located Accessible via safe footpaths and roads Accessible by bike (and with areas for cycle storage) Appropriate boundaries and buffer zone Compliant with DDA and safety audits Bespoke design to suit location Appropriate seating, fencing and bins Signage Lighting (if appropriate) Age appropriate facilities Any formal play equipment and safety surfacing compliant with British Standards
Allotments	Site designated for people who wish to grow their own produce.	10 minute walk time (480m)	0.37 ha per 1000 population (15 plots)	Appropriately located for local catchment Accessible via safe footpaths and roads Clear boundaries Clearly defined pathways Appropriate fencing and gates

Type of Open Space	Definition	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
				<p>Appropriately sized. At least one car parking space per 10 plots provided. Hard surfaced parking area Space for up to one shed per plot Mains water Toilet and washing facilities Sustainable technologies Communal garden Clear signage Seating and lighting at entrance/s</p>
Cemeteries and Churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.	n/a	2.03 burial plots per 1000 population	<p>Appropriately located for local catchment Accessible Clear boundaries Clear entrance Clearly defined pathways Gates should comply with DDA Regular cut (at least 7 times per year) Removal of grass cuttings from site Management of gravestones and headstones Sensitive management Sufficient car parking Water Supply Clear signage Regular and appropriate seating</p>

5.28 The key priorities arising from the application of the standards, as well as the assessment of local need and their implications for future requirements are summarised by typology in Table 5.2. Full background can be found in facility analysis sections.

Table 5.2 – Strategic Priorities for open space delivery

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
<p>Countryside Recreation Sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usage figures demonstrate that existing countryside recreation sites are an important recreational resource – there is therefore a need to retain existing sites There are opportunities to increase the usage of existing (and new sites) by addressing identified barriers (access routes) and attracting new user groups (current low usage by residents of none white ethnic origin, disabled users and older residents) Analysis suggests that residents expect to be within a 20 minute drivetime of a countryside recreation site –residents of several areas are currently outside of this target catchment. Longer term, linking with the Central Bedfordshire Transport Plan, the goal is to ensure that all countryside recreation sites are accessible by more sustainable modes of travel. Recreation is just one element of the function of a countryside recreation site and there is a need to balance biodiversity and conservation with public access. All existing sites have designations which constrain the number of visitors that can be accommodated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the clearly evidenced value of countryside recreation sites to both residents and wildlife, promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Plan Seek to ensure that all residents are within a 20 minute drivetime of countryside recreation sites (although countryside recreation sites with high ecological sensitivity are only able to serve residents within a 10 minute catchment and this should be taken into account). Work with communities to ensure that all countryside recreation sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. Create a network of green linkages with countryside recreation sites as the hub facilitating access on foot and by cycle as well as by car and public transport Ensure that the impact of population growth on countryside recreation sites is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and / or S106. Where provision is sufficient in quantitative and access terms, contributions should be required towards the management, maintenance and qualitative improvements of existing sites Create site specific development plans considering both recreational capacity and conservation targets

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the quality of existing countryside recreation sites is rated as good, there are high aspirations for the type of facilities provided and the key features of a countryside recreation site. Sites require ongoing maintenance and improvement and some sites need upgrading if they are to meet aspirations Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for countryside recreation sites and a consequent increase in visitor numbers. Some sites are already at visitor capacity and others also have sensitivities that will be approached as visitor numbers increase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to widen the use of countryside recreation sites through effective marketing and promotion as well as events
Urban Parks and Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are opportunities to increase the usage of parks and open spaces through the provision of more formal parks. The telephone survey indicates that these are desirable facilities Residents expect to be able to reach an urban park within a 15 minute walk time in the Major and minor service centres and provision is therefore anticipated to be local. New facilities are required in most settlements if this aspiration is to be achieved Several Town and Parish Councils highlight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the clearly evidenced strategic role of these sites, promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Plan Seek to ensure that at least one urban park is provided in each Major Service Centre. Location should be tailored to ensure that the majority of residents in these settlements are within a 15 minute walk time of parks. This will involve the provision of several additional parks (or the upgrade of existing large recreation areas) Work with communities to ensure that all parks meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section Create a network of green linkages to each urban park

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>opportunities to upgrade existing recreation areas to create formal parks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population growth is likely to see a further increase in demand Quality improvements are required to existing facilities if high aspirations for the type of facility met. 	<p>facilitating access on foot and by cycle (for local residents) as well as by car and public transport for those coming from further afield)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the impact of population growth on urban parks is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions. Where quantity and access to parks are already sufficient, contributions should be required towards the improvements of the quality of existing parks.
Large Formal Recreation Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usage figures demonstrate that large recreation areas are used by a higher proportion of the population than any other type of open space and they therefore represent a valuable resource The location of sites is one of the key determinants of use and consultation suggests that residents expect to be within a 10 minute walk time of a large recreation area – the local standard has therefore been set at a 10 minute walk time For formal recreation areas, in most settlements improvements to the quality of existing sites are considered to be as if not more important than the creation of additional sites. In some areas however, residents are outside of the catchment for sites and there is a need for new areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy seek to ensure that all residents are within a 10 minute walktime of a formal recreation area. Where residents are within a 10 minute walk time of an urban park, as higher order facilities, this negates the requirement for additional large recreation areas ensure that the impact of population growth on recreation areas is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring development to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through on-site provision of facilities, CIL and planning contributions. Where quantity and accessibility standards are already met, contributions should be made towards the management, maintenance and improvement of existing facilities work with communities and partners to ensure that all sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>Residents and providers place a particular value on quality of facilities and it is important that this is taken into account</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the quality of existing sites is largely good, there are high aspirations for the type and quality of facilities provided at large formal recreation spaces and a need for a particular focus on improving the quality of facilities in many areas • Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for this type of facility and a consequent increase in visitor numbers 	<p>quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. Prioritise qualitative improvements over additional spaces where residents are already within the appropriate catchment of a space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitate access routes from nearby settlements to these sites, including safe footpaths and cycling opportunities
Informal Recreation Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage figures demonstrate that large recreation areas are used by a higher proportion of the population than any other type of open space and they therefore represent a valuable resource • The location of sites is one of the key determinants of use and consultation suggests that residents expect to be within a 10 minute walk time of a large recreation area. The ecological sensitivity of many of these sites however means that in reality sites serve a much smaller catchment as the number of visitors that they can adequately accommodate without detrimental impact is reduced (by 50% for those with high sensitivity and by 25% for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy • promote access to informal space within a 10 minute walktime of at least one recreation area. Where residents are within a 10 minute walk time of a countryside recreation site, this negates the need for additional informal recreation area. Where sites are highly ecological sensitive, they have a reduced catchment and this should be taken into account when evaluating the need for new open space • ensure that the impact of population growth on Informal recreation areas is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring development to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through on-site provision of facilities, CIL and planning contributions. The impact of increased visitor numbers on informal sites

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>those of medium sensitivity)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some settlements improvements to the quality of existing sites are considered to be as if not more important than the creation of additional sites. In many areas however, residents are outside of the catchment for sites and there is a need for new areas. New informal spaces are a particular priority of many of the Local Green Infrastructure Plans While it is essential that biodiversity is balanced with recreational uses, some improvements are needed at some sites to enhance the recreational experience and in particular a need to ensure that all sites are attractive and welcoming to the user. Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for this type of facility and a consequent increase in visitor numbers. 	<p>(particularly those with primary or secondary conservation functions) should also be carefully monitored and accessibility should be used as the primary determinant of additional need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with communities and partners to ensure that all sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. Prioritise qualitative improvements over additional spaces where residents are already within the appropriate catchment of a space; facilitate access routes from nearby settlements to these sites, including safe footpaths and cycling opportunities;
Small Amenity Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usage figures demonstrate that large recreation areas are frequently used, and in particular by residents of non white ethnic origin. They are important sites, particularly in the smaller villages The location of sites is one of the main determinants of use and almost all residents expect to walk to a facility. Sites are expected to be local to the home (within 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy Work with communities to ensure that all sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. Sites should be functional and appropriately located Seek to ensure that all residents are within a 5 minute walktime of at least one open space (either a small

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>5 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site visits reveal that the quality of small amenity spaces is lower than some other types of space and Parish / Town Councils confirm this viewpoint. There are concerns about the functionality of sites and issues raised about the impact that poor quality and poorly managed sites can have on the local community. Consultation and strategic documents highlight that these issues are of lower priority than those raised in relation to some other types of space Population growth may see an increase in usage of these types of space and a requirement for additional spaces, particularly if all residents are to be within 400m of a proposed site. The quality of spaces is however as important as the amount of space, and there is a strong interrelationship between quality, quantity and function. 	<p>amenity space or a larger recreation area). Sites should meet with minimum size criteria to ensure that they have a functional recreation purpose. New small amenity spaces should not be required where residents are within the catchment of a larger formal recreation area / countryside recreation site / urban park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the impact of population growth on usage of these spaces is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions. Review the function of existing amenity spaces where sites serve overlapping catchments and are of poor quality.
Children's Play Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play spaces are important facilities for those with dependents. Use is strongly influenced by location, as well as the safety of facilities. Levels of use by residents with disabilities, as well as those of none white ethnic minority is lower and there is also a lack of awareness of facilities available, particularly in residents aged 18 to 34 (who 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is therefore recommended that key principles for the delivery of children's play areas across Central Bedfordshire are set as follows: promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy to promote the strategic distribution of high quality play

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>are likely to have dependents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are concerns relating to the quality of existing facilities and many sites are ageing and in need of upgrading. Added to this, there is a significant range in the play value offered at different sites. There are expectations that high quality facilities will be provided. Site visits reveal particular concerns with the quality of facilities in small settlements, many of whom are struggling with maintenance requirements Residents expect to find play areas local to their home and evidence suggests within a 10 minute walk time. Some residents must travel further than 10 minutes to reach current provision. Fewer high quality facilities will better meet the needs of residents than multiple small but dysfunctional sites but local provision remains relatively important for residents Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for play areas and a consequent increase in visitor numbers. New areas of housing development will also require new play facilities to ensure that residents have local access to play. As set out above, there is a need to balance quality with quantity 	<p>facilities, seek to ensure that all residents are within a 10 minute walk time catchment of at least one local play area. This should apply to all settlement types. Sites should be of high quality, cater for all age groups and offer a range of play opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> maximise access to a destination play area through the inclusion of these facilities at strategic locations – i.e. country parks, urban parks work with providers and communities to ensure that all play areas meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. This should include the creation of safe access routes to reach play areas. Linking with the quality criteria, sites should be tailored to the character of the area (for example natural play may be appropriate in some settings rather than formal equipment); review the distribution of play areas in areas that have overlapping catchments and work with site providers to consider decommissioning sites that are no longer meeting demand (investing instead in larger nearby facilities) ensure that the impact of population growth on play areas is addressed through policy requiring developers to provide appropriate on-site children's play space facilities within the accessibility, quantity and quality standards as set out above. Where new development is not within the catchment of existing facilities, new sites should be strategically planned (taking into account the aspirations for fewer and high quality facilities) ensure that where appropriate the impact of population

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
Provision for Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are clear concerns relating to the amount of existing facilities and there is identified unmet demand in almost every settlement. Most residents are further than a 10 minute walk time (the level which consultation identified as being acceptable). Fewer high quality facilities will better meet the needs of residents than multiple small but dysfunctional sites but local access to facilities is important Use of facilities for young people is strongly influenced by location as well as the type of facilities provided. There is a need for innovative facilities that are tailored to the target group if provision is to successfully address needs The quality of sites is varying and consultation suggests that provision does not meet local need Population growth (particularly in this age group) is likely to see an increase in 	<p>growth on play areas is addressed through policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase the access to and sustainability of play provision and address concerns over the management of facilities, support partnership working between Town and Parish Councils and other local organisations including schools
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy To promote the strategic distribution of high quality facilities for young people, seek to ensure that all residents in major and minor service centres are within a 10 minute walk time catchment of at least one facility for young people. These sites should function as strategic sites that promote a range of different skills and interests Support tailored provision in large and small villages where there is clear evidence of demand and long term sustainability Maximise access to facilities for young people in Large Villages and Small Villages through the inclusion of these facilities at strategic locations in Major and Minor Service Centres, as well as in countryside recreation sites Work with providers and communities to ensure that all sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. This should include the creation of safe access routes to reach sites ensure that the impact of population growth on facilities for

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>demand for such facilities and a consequent increase in visitor numbers</p>	<p>young people is addressed through policy requiring developers to provide appropriate on-site facilities within the accessibility, quantity and quality standards as set out above. Where new development is not within the catchment of existing facilities, new sites should be provided using figures outlined in this document</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that where appropriate the impact of population growth on facilities for young people is addressed through policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions
<p>Allotments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allotments are currently well used however some sites are under threat of development and there are concerns about the long term sustainability of key sites There are opportunities to increase the usage of existing (and new sites) by attracting new user groups (significant interest in allotments by residents of non-white ethnic origin and those with disabilities) Allotments are expected to be local to the home (within 10 minutes walk). There are several small and large settlements without any allotments and all Minor and Major Service Centres have areas where residents are outside of this catchment. Many Parish Councils in areas without allotments have received requests to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that policy protects statutory allotments from development, and supports the retention of all existing sites where demand is identified. Where existing sites are lost to development, replacements should be sought where there is evidence of ongoing demand seek to ensure that all residents are within a 10 minute drivetime of allotments investigate opportunities for new provision in areas where there are no existing allotment sites or where the amount of residents that can access a site is already maximised. This may include the provision of temporary allotments promote the implementation of management practices designed to maximise the number of residents that can be accommodated at each site in a bid to reduce waiting lists. These may include the provision of half plots and / or starter plots and restrictions on the number of plots that each resident can rent

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>provide them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added to this, analysis of current demand highlights that there are waiting lists at numerous sites and there is a need to provide additional allotment plots to meet immediate needs Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for allotments and there are concerns that the stock is already at capacity There are limited issues with the quality of allotments currently and on the whole, improvements to the amount of plots are considered to be more important. Some site specific improvements are however required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with providers to ensure that all allotment sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section; and ensure that the impact of population growth on demand for allotments is addressed through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to provide allotments on larger developments and to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of existing provision through CIL and developer contributions. Demand for allotments is equivalent to at least 15 plots per 1000 population / 0.37 ha per 1000 population
Cemeteries and Churchyards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> current projections indicate that death rates are likely to increase by 2035 and there will be higher requirements for burial space. The projected population growth will further see the number of burials per annum increase there is a strong emphasis on the provision of local burial space in Central Bedfordshire and as a consequence, almost all settlements have cemeteries and / or churchyards several existing sites are approaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy address capacity issues at existing burial sites through the provision of extensions and / or new spaces where these are identified as being required and the allocation of appropriate land to facilitate this. It is anticipated that between 2 and 2.3 burial spaces will be required per annum per 1000 population ensure that the impact of population growth on demand for cemeteries is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>capacity and new space will be required to accommodate ongoing and increasing demand; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality of facilities is important and while most sites are well maintained, there is a requirement to improve some sites and to retain appropriate maintenance regimes in other areas 	<p>developer contributions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing maintenance of existing sites and improvement of some sites to ensure that minimum standards are met; and maximise access routes to large cemeteries that serve residents in more than one settlement. This should include public transport and cycle routes as well as access by car

Application of the Standards

5.29 The standards will be applied to development as follows.

Accessibility standards: The application of accessibility standards will be used as the primary means of determining where more provision is required to ensure all residents have access facilities within the recommended distance threshold. Areas where residents are outside the recommended catchment of one or more types of open space will be considered deficient in provision.

Quantity standards: will be used as a guide when determining the adequacy of existing provision or requirement for new provision. This is because:

- Areas where the quantity of open space is above the recommended minimum standard may still require additional open space if sites are not well distributed and there are accessibility deficiencies, and;
- Areas where there are no accessibility deficiencies may still exhibit quantitative deficiencies if sites are small in size and therefore limited in capacity to serve the resident population

It should be noted that standards represent a minimum level of need only. Open space in areas above the minimum standards of provision is not automatically considered to represent surplus provision.

Quality standards: will identify where improvements to the quality of existing open spaces will be of benefit and are required to meet local standards. The quality of existing open spaces (and those newly provided) is as important as the amount of space provided.

Based upon the above principles, schedules have been prepared for each town and parish in Central Bedfordshire. These schedules are set out in Appendix A and provide a detailed breakdown of shortfalls and surpluses in each parish, gaps in the existing facility stock and areas where qualitative improvements are required.

Table 5.3 summarises the requirements identified for new and improved provision.

Table 5.3 – New and Improved Provision

Type of Open Space	Protect	New Provision	Enhance
Countryside Recreation Areas	All existing sites	<p>Short Term - New sites to meet current deficiencies – suggested locations – Biggleswade /Sandy (linking with Green Wheel proposals), Flitwick, Arlesey / Stotfold, Barton le Clay</p> <p>Ongoing – supporting the creation of new sites, where feasible, extension of existing sites to meet increasing demand from population growth</p>	<p>Tiddenfoot Waterside Park / Aspley Woods / Sundon Hills Country Park – baseline facilities</p> <p>All sites in line with target quality criteria</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to use existing facilities.</p>
Urban Parks	All existing sites	<p>Short Term – Major and Minor Service Centres – key priorities Leighton Buzzard (new site) Biggleswade (potential to upgrade Franklin Recreation Ground and / or create new linear park), Flitwick (potential to upgrade existing site and or create new site), Sandy (potential to upgrade existing site and / or create new site). New provision should take into account current and projected requirements based upon population growth.</p> <p>Longer term - potential to provide additional sites in minor service centres.</p>	<p>Houghton Hall Park</p> <p>Existing and new sites in line with target quality criteria</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to use existing facilities.</p>
Formal Recreation Areas	All Existing Sites	<p>Areas without access or with limited access to formal recreation areas. These include;</p> <p>Cranfield Langford</p>	<p>In the majority of areas, qualitative improvements should be the key priority. Evidence suggests that high quality sites are highly valued.</p> <p>Priority for improvement should be given to high value sites – sites serving unique catchment areas but are of poor</p>

Type of Open Space	Protect	New Provision	Enhance
		<p>Potton Silsoe Stanbridge Amphill Barton – le – Clay Dunstable Marston Moretaine Shefford</p> <p>Note: all of the above highlight need within strategic documents and / or Parish plans. In addition, areas where large deficiencies have been identified, including Leighton Buzzard, Dunstable, Flitwick, Amphill, Biggleswade, Cranfield, Sandy, Caddington and Shefford.</p> <p>Areas of new development where incoming residents will create quantitative deficiency and / or are outside of catchment for existing open spaces.</p>	<p>quality Areas which contain clusters of poor quality provision should also be prioritised</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where additional residents will place additional pressure on existing facilities.</p>
Informal Recreation Space	All existing sites	<p>Areas without access or with limited access to informal recreation areas. Most settlements in Central Bedfordshire have issues with existing access, but the following also have either large quantitative deficiencies and/ or expressed need in Green Infrastructure assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leighton Buzzard • Dunstable 	<p>New provision and / or improved access will be needed in all areas where provision is currently lacking either in quantitative or qualitative terms.</p> <p>New provision should also be considered where sites are particularly ecologically sensitive and therefore have a limited visitor capacity. Settlements that are particularly impacted in this manner are; Amphill</p>

Type of Open Space	Protect	New Provision	Enhance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houghton Regis • Stofold • Toddington • Chalton • Harlington • Henlow • Kensworth • Meppershall • Stanbridge 	<p>Arlesey Biggleswade (also already area of high quantitative deficiency)</p>
Small Amenity Spaces	All existing sites	<p>Areas without access or with limited access to small amenity spaces – most settlements, but key deficiencies in Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Stofold, Flitwick, Biggleswade, Potton, Arlesey and Toddington.</p> <p>Areas of new development where incoming residents will create quantitative deficiency and / or are outside of catchment for existing open spaces.</p>	<p>Quality of amenity spaces as if not more important than additional sites. Priority given to high value sites – sites serving unique catchment areas but are of poor quality</p> <p>Areas which contain clusters of poor quality provision</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to use existing facilities.</p>
Children's Play Spaces	All existing sites that do not have overlapping catchments	<p>Local Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities – Blunham, Aspley Heath, Old Warden, Salford, Leighton Buzzard (Linslade ward) Dunstable (Wating ward) Sandy, Flitwick, Stofold / Fairfield Shefford, Maulden, Northill and Broom, Langford, Clifton, Harlington, Westoning. • On-site facilities within new housing development when outside catchment of existing facilities. Off- 	<p>All facilities against standards set.</p> <p>Identified requirements including facilities in the following settlements (identified through consultation and site visits)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amphill, Biggleswade, Flitwick, Houghton Regis, Marston Moretaine, Stofold, Henlow, Maulden, Shillington, Slip End, Brogborough, Southill, Tilsworth, Totternhoe, Upper Gravenhurst, Upper Shelton, Eaton Bray.

Type of Open Space	Protect	New Provision	Enhance
		<p>site contributions to improve existing facilities when within catchment of existing.</p> <p>Destination Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandy • Caddington • Shefford • Countryside recreation sites and urban parks <p>Areas of new development where incoming residents will create quantitative deficiency and / or are outside of catchment for existing open spaces.</p>	<p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to increase use of existing facilities.</p>
Facilities for Young People	<p>All existing sites, except where there is clear evidence of limited use</p>	<p>Key Priority – addressing gaps in provision in Major and Minor Service Centres, in particular focusing upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cranfield • Shefford • Amphill • Stotfold • Sandy • Flitwick • Leighton Buzzard • Biggleswade • Houghton Regis • Dunstable <p>Longer term: all other areas of identified need, where meeting criteria of recommendations above.</p>	<p>All facilities against standards set. Provision of new facilities is considered to be of higher priority than improvement of existing sites.</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents will use existing facilities.</p>

Type of Open Space	Protect	New Provision	Enhance
Allotments	All existing sites. Sites in Dunstable and Sandy currently anticipated to be lost and should be replaced	<p>There is strong need to ensure that all facilities are tailored to the needs and aspirations of the local community and are developed in conjunction with residents (See Section 4, Strategy Principles).</p> <p>Areas of new development where incoming residents will create a quantitative shortfall in provision or will be outside of the target accessibility catchments.</p> <p>Potential options for the delivery of new allotments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of landowners willing to use their land to meet current demand for allotments (several landowners have approached the Council for this reason) • conversion of other types of open space • allocation of allotments within school sites which can function as community allotments as well as educational tools for pupils, or the provision of community growing gardens within public parks and open spaces • alternative means of providing allotments, such as the use of private gardens (through a community scheme that matches garden owners with potential allotment plot holders) 	<p>All sites in line with target quality criteria</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to use existing facilities. This may also include the provision of additional land/plots.</p>

Type of Open Space	Protect	New Provision	Enhance
Cemeteries and Churchyards	All existing sites	<p>Priority areas are: Houghton Regis. Cranfield, Shefford. Blunham, Stondon, Campton, Dunton, Northill, Ridgmont, Wrestlingworth</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already at capacity and where demand is sufficient to warrant new allotments.</p>	
		<p>Shefford (Campton Road has 2 years remaining). Land has been retained for extension in conjunction with Campton Parish), Sandy (Potton Road nearing capacity – extension to be provided on allotments during 2014 – allotment site will close at the end of 2013 to facilitate this. The other site in Sandy is already full), Marston Moretaine (less than 10 plots remain. New site under construction currently), Everton – approaching capacity. Proposals for extension under discussion.</p> <p>Projected Shortfalls:</p> <p>Flitwick (only 2 years capacity remains), Houghton Regis (only 8 / 9 years capacity remaining), Cranfield – cemetery requires extension but request to purchase land refused), Haynes (only 20 plots remaining) Heath and Reach (capacity for 15 years), Langford – approaching capacity and identified need for cemetery extension, Meppershall – approaching capacity.</p>	All sites

Providing Open Space in New Development

- 5.29 New housing developments generate additional population which in turn creates a need and demand for recreational open space facilities. This need can be met via the creation of new recreation open spaces, or through quantitative and qualitative improvements to existing spaces to enable them to cope with the increased pressure placed upon them pressure by development.
- 5.30 New development should therefore, in the first instance make appropriate on-site open space provision in accordance with the standards set out in this document. On-site provision must be incorporated at an early stage in the design process and considered as an important and integral part of new development.
- 5.31 Where on-site provision is not appropriate, developer contributions will be sought toward the provision of new facilities, or the quantitative or qualitative improvement of existing facilities which can address the open space needs of the development.
- 5.32 Open space on new developments should be:
- sustainable
 - functional
 - provide an appropriate balance between quality and quantity
 - integrated with local neighbourhoods, but providing sufficient open space within it to provide for the new residents
 - accessible – accessibility will be considered to be the primary determinant of open space requirements

Calculating the Contribution from Development

- 5.33 In order to ensure that contributions sought from new development toward facility provision are fair and commensurate with the development, the contributions must be assessed using the statutory tests for the use of S106 planning obligations:
- “Necessary to make development acceptable in planning terms
 - Directly related to the development; and
 - Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development”
- 5.34 The following process explains how requirements will be determined. It should be noted that to ensure that the new open space provided meets with the principles of this leisure strategy:
- 5.35 Provision can be grouped together in one location to aid design and functionality, but should still offer a range of different recreational opportunities
- 5.36 The provision of SUDS (sustainable urban drainage systems) cannot be considered to count towards recreational open space provision, unless recreation is

the primary purpose of the site area and the SUDs is a secondary function of the space

5.37 All other factors identified at the beginning of this section should be taken into account.

Amount of Open Space Required

5.38 To ensure that a developer is only required to contribute in line with the impact of his development, the local quantity standards will be used to determine the need for open space on new development.

5.39 The local standards for each type of open space and the occupancy rates/density of the development, will be used to determine the amount of each type of open space required. Open space should then be designed to ensure that it provides maximum value and flexibility and is tailored to the needs of the local community.

5.40 The following calculation will be used to identify the open space requirement of new development.

Calculation to be performed	Number of new residents in the development	X	Open Space Need
Data Required	Number of dwellings to be provided x 2.4 (to establish number of people)	X	Local Quantity Standard (to be applied for each type of open space).

5.41 New developments impact on all types of open space and therefore requirements for each type of open space considered in this document will be evaluated.

5.42 For simplicity and to maximise flexibility, open space requirements will be grouped as follows:

- Strategic sites
- Informal recreation
- Local recreation
- Play facilities for children and young people
- Allotments

5.43 In order to promote the strategic distribution of facilities and the co-location of facilities as well as to minimise the provision of smaller sites with limited use, the specific requirements for new provision will be flexible within these groupings.

5.44 The rationale for the groupings outlines is summarised in Table 5.4

Table 5.4 – Open Space Requirements in New Developments

Type of Open Space	Category	Existing Local Standard	Total Requirement	Justification for grouping
Countryside Recreation	Strategic Sites	3.19	3.58	Both types of open space are strategic open spaces and contributions are likely to be required off site (unless in exceptional circumstances in the case of very large developments)
Urban Parks		0.39		
Informal Recreation Areas	Informal Recreation	2.5	2.5	Open space
Large Formal Recreation Areas	Local Recreation	1.17	1.75	Both types of formal recreation space have similar functions. The provision of large recreation areas within local catchments also serves as small amenity space.
Small Amenity Spaces		0.58		
Facilities for Children	Facilities for Children and Young People	0.11	0.153	Facilities to be located together providing for all age ranges. (It should be noted that this includes the activity area only). Additional allowances should be made for appropriate buffer zones
Facilities for Young People		0.043		
Allotments	Allotments	0.37	0.37	Specific facility requirement

5.45 Requirements for contributions will then be determined using the overall standards and the size of the new development.

Table 5.4 sets out an example of the implications for a development of 300 dwellings.

Table 5.4 – Example Size Requirements

Category	Standard Per 1000 Population (ha)	Standard Per Person (Standard per 1000 / 1000) (ha)	Number of Dwellings	Number of People in Development (Number of dwellings x 2.4)	Open Space Requirement (People in Development X Standard Per Person) (Ha)
Strategic Sites	3.58	0.00358	300	720	2.5776

Informal Recreation	2.5	0.0025	300	720	1.8
Local Recreation	1.75	0.00175	300	720	1.26
Facilities for Children and Young People	0.153	0.000153	300	720	0.11016
Allotments	0.37	0.00037	300	720	0.2664

5.46 All contributions will be based upon requirements using the above calculations whether for on-site provision or off-site developer contributions.

On Site Provision

5.47 On-site provision will not be required where the requirements from the development mean that the resulting open space would be too small to be of benefit.

5.48 On-site provision will not usually be required where the requirements are below the following thresholds:

- Informal open space – 0.4 ha
- Local open space – 0.2ha. A large formal recreation area should be provided where the requirements in the informal open space category exceed 1ha. Below this level, small amenity spaces will be required. Residents should have access to amenity spaces within 5 minutes of their home.
- Allotments – 0.25ha.

5.49 For most developments, it is likely that a mix of on-site provision and off-site contributions will be required.

5.50 On-site provision will be based upon the local standards set and will always be required on developments that are sufficiently large and / or located in an area of existing deficiency. Provision of all types of open space will be required, and even if located on the same site, space of the appropriate size is required. For example, children’s play space must be provided in addition to the local recreation area. It may be appropriate to locate playing pitches on the site of a large recreation area if the provision of these pitches is in line with the playing pitch assessment (Chapter 3).

5.51 Central Bedfordshire Council will seek to balance the requirements to provide high quality facilities with good access and will look to ensure that new developments contain the facilities that they require and that they do not negatively impact upon existing open spaces in the vicinity.

5.52 As the strategy highlights the importance of local provision, the Council will therefore require:

- A facility for children and young people to be provided in all developments of 100 dwellings or more
- At least some on site open space should be provided in all developments of at least 50 houses (local open space).
- Informal open space may also be required on-site, depending upon the size and the location of the development and provision in the surrounding area

5.53 Where a type of open space is to be provided on-site, the appropriate ownership, management and maintenance requirements must be met in accordance with the adoption procedures in this document (Appendix G.). Ongoing management arrangements will be secured via S106 agreement or planning condition, including details of the management regime and the commuted maintenance sum required.

5.54 The space/s provided should meet with the recommended quality criteria set out in the design guidance.

Off Site Contributions

5.55 Where existing provision is already adequate (i.e. the development is within the catchment of existing open space and there is sufficient provision to accommodate the additional demand that will be generated) off site financial contributions will be required instead towards improvements to the quality of provision. Contributions will always be targeted towards sites that are within the catchment area of the proposed development (determined by the accessibility standards) and improvements will be informed by the relevant Parish Schedule. The level of contribution will be determined by the impact of the development as set out above.

5.56 With the exception of very large developments, on-site provision of strategic facilities i.e. countryside recreation sites and urban parks, will not be required and contributions will always be requested towards off-site provision.

6. Delivery of the Strategy

6.1 The recreation open space facilities assessment provides the evidence base relating to the supply / demand of facilities across Central Bedfordshire. It has been created to support planning policy as well as to drive proactive and reactive improvements in open space provision. It should therefore be used to inform decision making relating to recreation and open space facilities.

6.2 The NPPF focuses on the delivery of specific facility needs; this needs assessment has therefore concluded with an understanding of the surpluses and deficiencies across Central Bedfordshire, and has listed areas where there is a need to improve the open space infrastructure either through protection, enhancement or new provision. This information will be used to inform the development of a Chapter 2 action plan for delivery in consultation with key partners.

Principles

6.3 The strategic priorities and area / site specific priorities, detailed in Part 2 of this document, have been developed following an extensive assessment of current and projected need. The following principles have been identified as key priorities in the delivery of the facilities:

- **Quality of facilities is as important as the amount of provision** – the strategy seeks to ensure that Central Bedfordshire contains the right amount of facilities, of the right quality and in the right place. It promotes the protection of current provision and the creation of facilities that are fit for purpose
- **The creation of multi-function sites is supported** – recognising the benefits and long term sustainability of sites providing for multiple activities, where appropriate the co-location of facilities should be supported
- **Sustainability of provision is essential** – all recommendations seek to deliver new and improved facilities in a sustainable manner

Action Planning

6.4 Following adoption of the Leisure Strategy by the Council's Executive an action plan for Chapter 2 will be developed. In preparing the action plan, Central Bedfordshire Council will consult further with relevant stakeholders and facility providers to establish their delivery priorities.

6.5 The majority of recreation and open space facilities are owned and managed by town and parish councils, countryside organisations, charities, etc. the action plan must therefore reflect the views of the asset owners as well as identifying the deliverability of the proposed projects.

6.6 Central Bedfordshire Council will work with a range of partners including Town and Parish Councils, countryside organisations and asset owners to prioritise new and enhancement projects in accordance with the strategy requirements and support a coordinated approach to facility provision and management.

6.7 The action plan will seek to prioritise projects in accordance with the following priorities:

Ensuring that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand

Ensure that facilities are of appropriate quality to meet the needs of users

Promote increases in physical activity

6.8 The action plan will set out the priority actions required to address the needs set out in Chapter 2, and will identify the resource implications.

6.9 The action plan will be used to inform both the securing of on-site recreation and open space facilities and developer contributions resulting from new development. In addition, the action plan will inform the release of CIL and S106 funds.

Funding and Implementation

6.10 Given the potential level of funding required to deliver the requirements of this strategy, it is likely that investment will only be achieved through a combination of opportunities and funding sources. The council will therefore seek to use assets innovatively and work on a multi-agency approach to address the facility requirements in the strategy.

The main funding delivery mechanisms for Central Bedfordshire Council and others in delivering the strategy are:

- i. **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 developer contributions:** The Leisure Strategy will secure developer contributions in association with new development to provide or improve infrastructure.
- ii. **Capital Grant funding:** From schools and national agencies such as Sport England, including its Iconic Facilities, Improvement Fund and Inspired Facilities programmes. National Governing Body (NGB) support could also be available to develop specific specialist facilities.
- iii. **Third party funding:** Financing capital through the forecast operational surplus and finance packages as part of the leisure management procurement process or construction contracts. Also, leisure management operators are asked as part of their consideration, to fund developments of health and fitness suites and small refurbishments of existing leisure centre sites.
- iv. **Commercial sector funding:** limited potential for investment from commercial leisure operators such as those who provide health and fitness centre and 5 a-side artificial pitch football centres.
- v. **Council funding:** capital funding allocated to deliver facilities within the council's ownership, and potentially the use of capital receipts from the sale of existing assets.

- vi. **Prudential Borrowing:** or 'invest to save': the local authority may choose to use revenue savings or income from its investment to pay for monies used for capital development, which may be cheaper than an operator can borrow.
- vii. **Education sector:** while the previous sources of funding (including BSF and Primary Schools Programme) have changed and the scale of the education capital programmes have been reduced, the education sector is still likely to be a key funding stream especially for sports halls.

Partnership Working

6.11 Central Bedfordshire Council recognises that it currently plays a limited role in the direct provision of recreation and open space facilities, the strategy therefore seeks to bring together key partners in the delivery of these facilities to ensure that available funding is maximised for the benefit of facility provision and community use.

6.12 The leisure strategy will promote:

- Partnership working and knowledge sharing
- Community involvement

Facility Criteria and Design Guidance

6.13 All new and enhanced open space facilities must be designed in accordance with the emerging Central Bedfordshire Council Design Guide and with the design guidance which accompanies this document.

Sustainable Drainage

6.14 The emerging Central Bedfordshire Council SuDS Approval and Adoption Guide will provide design guidance determining where and in what circumstances it will be appropriate to include a SuDS feature within the typologies of open space detailed in this strategy. The adoption section of this document (Appendix G.) also provides additional safety information on the provision of SuDS provided in conjunction with children's play facilities.

7. Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 This strategy has been produced to enable open spaces within Central Bedfordshire to be provided for in a planned and co-ordinated way and to ensure that provision meets the needs of the local population. It highlights the gaps in the existing facility stock and identifies areas where new provision will be required to meet future demand. It also provides guidance on the creation of open space in new developments.
- 7.2 In order to ensure that the Leisure Strategy requirements keep pace with the large amount of growth planned for Central Bedfordshire, a costed action plan will be prepared for the period 2014–2019. The Plan will be then reviewed and updated annually.
- 7.3 A key component of the process of delivering the action plan is the establishment of a steering group, which the council will establish to implement the action plan emerging from the strategy, with key stakeholders participating in the steering group as and when necessary and the Council working in partnership with stakeholders to deliver the strategy.
- 7.4 A full review of the strategy will be undertaken in 2019 in readiness for the 2019-2023 action plan period. In addition to reviewing the achievements of the action plan for the 2014-2019 period, the review will assess the full basis of calculating recreation open space requirements for Central Bedfordshire and emerging issues that impact upon it. This will also involve a full reassessment of the following baseline criteria:
- Housing numbers
 - Population estimates, both ONS and internal projections
 - Full socio-economic and demographic analysis of population projections
 - Updated open space stock
 - Local resident consultation
 - Analysis of funding sources and new funding opportunities for the provision/improvement of facilities

In addition, the following measures will be taken to ensure the data in this document is current, appropriately monitored and available to the development industry and other users:

- Central Bedfordshire Council will manage and maintain a corporate GIS system reflecting changes to the open space stock and new developments that have taken place
- the Parish Schedules will updated on an annual basis
- a working group will be set up to identify additional priorities and draw on the data collated as part of the above two actions to ensure the strategy remains relevant and current;
- the amount of funding for open space delivered in association with new development will be monitored through the Planning Divisions AMR (Annual Monitoring Report)

Part 2:

➤ Facility Analysis

5. Countryside Recreation Sites

Introduction

5.1 This section sets out the assessment relating to Countryside Recreation Sites in Central Bedfordshire. It is structured as follows:

- Definition and Context
- Usage Profile
- Existing Provision – Quality, Quantity and Accessibility - and Aspirations
- Summary – Issues to Address
- Implications and recommendations

Definition

5.2 The Countryside Act (1968) placed a duty on the then Countryside Commission to provide and improve facilities for the enjoyment of the countryside, to enhance and conserve the countryside and secure public access to the countryside for recreational purposes. The Act stated that countryside recreation sites and picnic sites were already in existence, but that their numbers were inadequate to meet demand at that time, and made provision to increase the amount of these types of sites.

5.3 The original criteria for country parks set out in the Countryside Act (1968) are that to be recognised by the Countryside Commission a country park must be:

- a) readily accessible for motor vehicles and pedestrians
- b) provided with an adequate range of facilities, including as a minimum, parking, containing facilities, lavatories, either within or adjacent to the park, and a supervisory service.

5.4 The countryside commission considered a country park to be not less than 25 acres in extent.

5.5 This assessment does not focus exclusively on formal country parks, but instead includes large strategic sites that offer countryside recreation.

5.6 For the purposes of this study, countryside recreation sites have been defined as follows:

“Large countryside-type sites set aside for a variety of recreational activities, offering a range of formal and informal facilities and activities. They may not fit within formal definitions of country parks, but offer residents the opportunity to experience, appreciate and enjoy the countryside. These are destination sites, to which residents expect to travel (usually by car), which provide a range of facilities”

5.7 The following sites have therefore been included within the countryside recreation sites typology:

- Ampthill Park
- Aspley Woods
- Dunstable Downs
- Rushmere Park
- Sundon Hills Country Park
- Tiddenfoot Waterside Park
- The Lodge RSPB Reserve, Sandy
- Millennium Country Park - Marston Moretaine

Context

5.8 Countryside recreation sites are a key part of the wider network of countryside and open spaces and are managed for countryside recreation.

5.9 As set out in Section 2, open spaces offer a variety of functions and benefits. As well as providing a wide range of opportunities for recreation, countryside recreation sites also have a role to play in enhancing health and supporting education as well as providing a link to the countryside. At the same time, many of the countryside recreation sites in Central Bedfordshire are important places for biodiversity and conservation and as such have a dual purpose. This will be returned to later.

5.10 The provision of countryside recreation sites contributes towards the achievement of many national and local aims and objectives set out in Section 3. Countryside recreation sites are a legacy of the 1968 Countryside Act and there are now more than 400 sites that are classified as country parks across England. Natural England recognises country parks as significant sites in the network of accessible countryside across Britain so when the Rural White Paper (2000) revealed that such sites were in decline, a review was commissioned by Natural England (at the time called the Countryside Agency) termed Towards a Country Park Renaissance. This review considered:

- how country parks developed in the years since their inception
- the size and distribution of existing country parks
- the major issues facing service providers
- the contemporary relevance of country parks and how they relate to current and planned initiatives

5.11 The review included a series of recommendations around the key areas of:

- the inclusion of country parks in local authority parks and greenspace strategies
- the continuity and enhancement of the country park image
- incentives that encourage the participation of all country parks
- the development of a shared vision
- the town and countryside interface
- the development of a set of eight core activities
- development of a set of minimum quality/service standards
- issues concerning 'people' as well as 'place'
- meeting the social agendas of other organisations
- the requirement for additional marketing and promotional support
- the establishment of a delivery group

5.12 The average size of country parks/countryside recreation sites evaluated in this review was circa 130 hectares.

5.13 More locally, countryside recreation sites are considered to be a key component of the accessible greenspace across the region. Many of the sites (and potential country parks) in Central Bedfordshire are owned and managed by Central Bedfordshire Council and their role and priorities associated with these sites is considered in the Outdoor Access Improvement Plan (Central Bedfordshire Council 2013).

5.14 The Outdoor Access Improvement Plan defines country parks as strategic sites that are over 60ha or 'Country Park' level or aspiring to be at the country park level. These are usually large sites with a range of facilities and attract people from a wide catchment and often have high visitor figures'. The Outdoor Access Improvement Plan highlights that country parks (and other publicly managed accessible spaces) are just one way in which residents of Central Bedfordshire can enjoy access to the countryside.

5.15 The Outdoor Access Improvement Plan identifies several country parks amongst the most frequently visited sites in Central Bedfordshire and indicates that Dunstable Downs is visited more frequently than any other site in the area. Stockgrove Country Park, Marston Millennium Country Park, Sundon Hills Country Park and Ampthill Park also feature within the top most commonly visited sites. Section 3 summarised the strategic priorities of the Outdoor Access Improvement Plan, all of which relate to country parks as part of the stock of facilities managed by the Central Bedfordshire Council Countryside Access Service. Access to country parks is highlighted as particularly important and these sites are seen to have a vital role as strategic hubs.

5.16 More specifically, the Green Infrastructure plans (both regional documents and local village plans) outlined in Section 3, highlight several strategic priorities relating to country parks. These will be referred to and considered later in this section, but in brief include:

- creation of the forest of Marston Vale and enhancement of the associated Forest Centre and Millennium Country Park
- development of a green wheel around Sandy
- creation of a green wheel around Biggleswade (potentially to include a country park)
- creation of a country park in Flitwick
- enhancement of visitor management at Aspley Woods
- creation of a country park at Clophill Lakes
- development of new areas and improvement of existing resources at Rushmere Country Park

Steps 1 and 2 – Evaluation of Local Needs and Audit of Existing Provision

5.17 A household survey of 1000 residents of Central Bedfordshire was carried out to establish a baseline of views regarding current and future provision of the range of open space types detailed in this study. As well as providing an understanding of views and aspirations relating to current provision, the survey also enables evaluation of the current user profile of each type of open space.

Household Survey Responses

Usage Profile

5.18 17% of respondents to the telephone survey visit countryside recreation sites at least once per week and a further 23% use these sites at least once per month. 36% of respondents never visit countryside recreation sites. This indicates that while the proportion of residents who do actually visit countryside recreation sites is higher than all other types of open space (with the exception of large recreational areas), visits are made less frequently than to some more local facilities. Countryside recreation sites may therefore have a different role to play than other types of open space, for many residents they act as a destination facility rather than a site that is visited every day.

5.19 The Outdoor Access Improvement Plan (Central Bedfordshire 2013) cites research undertaken in 2003 which indicates that 83% of residents use countryside recreation sites, and that 20% visit at least once per month. A comparison between this research and that undertaken specifically for this strategy suggests that while the frequency of visits for those using countryside recreation sites has increased, a higher proportion of residents now do not visit countryside recreation sites than in 2003.

5.20 Analysing this further, the telephone survey suggests that:

- younger residents are more likely to visit countryside recreation sites than older residents. 79% of those aged 18-34 visit countryside recreation sites at least once per year compared to 62% aged 35 – 54 and 56% for those aged over 55. Those older residents that do use countryside recreation sites are more likely to use them more frequently than younger residents. 7% of residents aged over 55 visit countryside recreation sites daily
- residents with a disability visit countryside recreation sites less frequently – just 6% visit weekly or more (compared to 19% of those without a disability) and 56% never visit a countryside recreation site
- residents with dependent children aged under 8 are the most likely to use a countryside recreation site – just 23% never visit a site compared to 36% of residents overall. Interestingly, 43% of residents with dependents aged 9 – 13 and 55% of those with dependents aged 14 – 18 never visit countryside recreation sites. The frequency of visits is highest between those who do not have dependents and those who have children aged below 9
- 51% of residents of non white British origin do not use countryside recreation sites compared to 34% of white British residents

Usage by Placemaking Area

5.21 The household survey reveals that there are few variations between the usage patterns in different parts of Central Bedfordshire. It is notable that residents in Leighton Buzzard and Rural South visit countryside recreation sites much more frequently than those in other areas (31% at least once per week compared to 8% in Dunstable and Houghton Regis, 9% in the east and 25% in West Central Bedfordshire). Only 20% of residents in Leighton Buzzard and Rural South indicate that they have a lack of interest in countryside recreation sites, again a much lower percentage than in other areas.

Usage by Settlement Hierarchy

5.22 The household survey indicates that there is little difference between use of countryside recreation sites by people living in different settlement hierarchies. The proportion of residents

in each of the settlement hierarchies that visit countryside recreation sites is relatively similar, although a higher proportion of residents (50%) in the minor service centres never visit countryside recreation sites. Level of use is highest in the large villages and it is also these residents that use countryside recreation sites most frequently.

Reasons for Visiting Countryside recreation sites

5.23 The household survey reveals that the main reasons for visiting countryside recreation sites are:

- Walk and exercise (54%)
- To relax (42%)
- For children to play (24%)
- Dog walking (18%)
- Peace and tranquility (7%)

5.24 Research undertaken as part of the Outdoor Access Improvement Plan highlights similar reasons for residents using the countryside, with walking being the most popular activity.

Reasons for Visiting Countryside recreation sites by Placemaking Area

5.25 Reasons for use are the same in all geographic areas according to the household survey. The only exception to this is in Dunstable and Houghton Regis, where almost 50% of residents using countryside recreation sites do so for children's play, a much higher proportion than in any other area.

Reasons for Visiting Countryside recreation sites by Settlement Hierarchy

5.26 There are no variations in the reasons for visiting countryside recreation sites at different levels of the settlement hierarchy according to the household survey.

Barriers to Use

5.27 Analysis of the barriers to use of different types of open space indicates that there are higher levels of interest in countryside recreation sites than in most other types of open space. The key barriers to use are lack of time (35%), difficult to get to (17%), lack of interest (15%) and no local facility (10%).

5.28 There are a few small differences in the importance of different barriers to use, specifically:

- Younger residents are more likely to highlight issues with accessing countryside recreation sites than older residents. This is also true of residents who would consider themselves to have a disability
- There is a particularly high lack of interest amongst residents of ethnic origin (38% not interested in countryside recreation sites compared to just 12% of white British residents). Location is also more important to those of non white ethnic origin
- Lack of time is the main reason attributed to lower levels of use by those with dependents aged between 9 and 18

Barriers to Use of Countryside recreation sites by Placemaking Area

5.29 There are no clear differences in barriers to use by placemaking area according to the household survey. The only exception to this is in Leighton Buzzard, where a significantly lower proportion of residents highlight issues accessing countryside recreation sites than in other areas. It is in this area where the highest levels of use are exhibited.

Barriers to Use of Countryside recreation sites by Settlement Hierarchy

5.30 The household survey indicates that the barriers to use are the same in all settlements, although the location and challenges of reaching a countryside recreation site are more of a barrier in the major and Minor Service Centres.

Current Provision and Views on Current Provision

Quantity

5.31 Overall, 680 hectares is dedicated to countryside recreation sites in Central Bedfordshire. The average size of a countryside recreation site is 97 hectares, but sites range from 13 hectares (Tiddenfoot Waterside Park) to 230 hectares (Stockgrove / Rushmere Country Park). The stock of facilities includes the following sites:

- Ampthill Park - is owned by Ampthill Town Council assisted by the Greensand Trust. The area includes a county wildlife site as well as a section of the Greensand Ridge Walk
- Aspley Woods - is one of the largest areas of woodland in Bedfordshire. It is managed by Central Bedfordshire Council and public access is allowed in through an agreement between Central Bedfordshire Council, Milton Keynes Council and the Bedford Estates
- Dunstable Downs - is in partnership with the National Trust and includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The site contains The Chilterns Gateway Centre and has several circular walks and a picnic area.
- Rushmere Country Park - Rushmere Country Park is located on the Greensand Ridge and includes woodland, heath and meadow. It is 2 miles from the centre of Leighton Linlode. This site is managed by a partnership of The Greensand Trust and Central Bedfordshire Council. The overall vision for the site is a creation of an attractive and accessible public open space that balances recreational needs and activities with the needs of the sensitive natural and historic environment areas and features
- Sundon Hills Country Park - is managed by Central Bedfordshire Council in partnership with the National Trust. The site is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest and has important biodiversity values. It is located within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and includes a car park and a small picnic area
- Tiddenfoot Waterside Park - is owned by Central Bedfordshire Council and managed in partnership with the Greensand Trust. The space is a former sand quarry that now functions as a recreational space and includes surfaced paths for walking and cycling. The site is also a haven for wildlife and includes areas of woodland with restricted / private access and fishing lakes (managed by Leighton Buzzard Angling Club)

- The Lodge RSPB Reserve, Sandy – is managed by the RSPB and is located on the Greensand Ridge. It is a heathland nature reserve containing managed gardens, 5 miles of walking trails and a hide from which to watch a range of woodland birds. The site also includes a picnic area and shop. The RSPB is a nationally recognised organisation which attracts visitors from across the country as well as from the local area.
- Forest Centre & Millennium Country Park - is owned and managed by the Marston Vale Trust. It is the 'flagship' site in the Marston Vale and serves as an outdoor access / recreation hub for the surrounding area. It comprises woodland, wetlands (including a Wetlands Nature Reserve), grassland, lakes and 12km of paths and cycleways, including a section of NCN Route 51. The park provides the setting for the Forest Centre, a purpose built major visitor centre which serves as the headquarters for the Trust and is operated as a social enterprise. It provides a lakeside café, exhibition, conference facilities, sensory wildlife garden, children's play area and gift shop. The facility has held a green flag award since 2007 and is accredited under the Natural England scheme for Country Parks.

5.32 Table 5.1 summarises the amount of space dedicated to countryside recreation sites across Central Bedfordshire. It indicates that population growth will see the amount of space per 1000 population decrease from 2.67 ha to 2.34 ha.

Table 5.1 – Countryside recreation sites across Central Bedfordshire

Facility Type	Number of Sites	Total Provision (ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (future)
Countryside recreation sites	8	680.60	2.67	2.34

5.33 Table 5.2 summarises the distribution of countryside recreation sites by placemaking area. **This table should be treated as indicative only, as sites have been classified in the area in which the centroid of the site falls.** The size of countryside recreation sites means that in reality, several sites are spread across one or more of the placemaking areas. This will be considered later in this section in relation to accessibility.

5.34 Table 5.2 suggests that there are no countryside recreation sites located within the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area (primarily as this is an urban area although it must be noted that geographically, part of Dunstable Downs is actually in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area although the centroid is not) and that provision is divided between the North and Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South. The geographical scale of the North area means that countryside recreation sites are well spread out, while in contrast, there is a particular cluster of countryside recreation sites around the Leighton Buzzard area. When taking into account the size of the population, provision in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South is almost double that of the North (5.45 hectares per 1000 population compared to 2.59 hectares).

Table 5.2 – Countryside recreation sites by Placemaking Area

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision	Sites	Hectares per 1000 Population	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	0	0	N/A	0	0
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	4	294.55	Rushmere Country Park, Tiddenfoot Waterside Park, Dunstable Downs, Aspley Woods	5.45	4.73
North	4	386.06	Amphill Park, Sundon Hills Country Park, Forest Centre & Millennium Country Park, The Lodge	2.59	2.27
Central Bedfordshire Totals	8	680.61		2.67	2.34

5.35 The nature of countryside recreation sites means that it is not really appropriate to consider location by settlement hierarchy as by definition, they are located in the countryside and outside of the main urban areas. It should however be noted that most of the sites are located in close proximity to settlements and in many cases, to large settlements, specifically:

- Tiddenfoot Waterside Park - Leighton Buzzard (Major Service Centre)
- Amphill Park - Amphill (Major Service Centre)
- The Lodge - Sandy (Major Service Centre)
- Forest Centre & Millennium Country Park - Marston Moretaine (Minor Service Centre)
- Aspley Woods – Aspley Heath (small village) also partly in Aspley Guise
- Stockgrove Country Park - Heath and Reach (Large Village)
- Sundon Hills Country Park – Harlington (Large Village)but primarily in Sundon
- Dunstable Downs – Totternhoe (Small Village) but also partly in Dunstable

Quantity of Provision – Consultation Responses

5.36 The following summaries the views obtained during the consultation types listed.

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

5.37 While consultation reveals overall satisfaction with the amount of countryside recreation sites, as demonstrated earlier, the creation of new countryside recreation sites is an important priority of several of the local Green Infrastructure studies.

5.38 Specifically with regards quantity, the review of Green Infrastructure Assessments, Town and Parish Council responses and available Town and Parish plans highlights the following priorities;

- Extension to Ampthill Country Park (GI study)
- Biggleswade – new country Park (GI / Parish consultation)
- Flitwick – new country park (GI / Parish consultation)
- Arlesey – new country park in Blue Lagoon (GI)
- Marston Moretaine – extension of Forest Centre & Millennium Country Park to include Rookery Pits North (GI). It should be noted that there are several planning policy constraints associated with the use of this site. This will be addressed in appendix G (minerals and waste)

Household Survey

5.39 With regards the quantity of countryside recreation sites, the household survey reveals that:

- overall, there is a strong perception that the amount of countryside recreation sites is sufficient. 71% consider there to be about the right amount of facilities and a further 8% think that there are too many
- just 17% of the population believe there is a need for more countryside recreation sites and a further 4% think there are nearly enough. With regards quantity, this represents the highest levels of satisfaction of all types of open space

5.40 Overall therefore, the headline findings of residents' views indicate that there are enough countryside recreation sites. There are few differences in opinion between different segments of the population, with the only significant difference being that a higher proportion of residents of non-white ethnic origin consider there to be insufficient countryside recreation sites than residents of white background. This is perhaps surprising, as analysis of current usage patterns demonstrates that residents in this group visit countryside recreation sites less frequently. It may however reflect the aspirations of this group to have local access to such sites.

Views on Quantity of Countryside recreation sites by Placemaking Area

5.41 Despite the skew of countryside recreation sites towards the Leighton Buzzard and Rural South area, the household survey demonstrates that there is little variation in perception between the placemaking areas and that overall in each area residents are satisfied with the amount of countryside recreation sites provided.

5.42 It is noticeable however that satisfaction levels are lower in the east (part of the North Placemaking area) than in other parts of Central Bedfordshire. In this area, 24% of residents consider there to be not enough countryside recreation sites and a further 4% think that there are only nearly enough. While overall there is a good distribution of countryside recreation sites in the north, only one of the four sites (The Lodge, Sandy) is located to the east of the northern region and access for these residents is therefore more limited.

Views on Quantity of Countryside recreation sites by Settlement Hierarchy

5.43 Views on the quantity of countryside recreation sites are similar regardless of the settlement hierarchy in which residents live. The only slight pattern evident is that a slightly higher proportion of residents living in the Major Service Centres and in the small villages consider there to be not enough countryside recreation sites than in other areas. This may

reflect challenges in accessing facilities. Similarly, it was revealed earlier in this section that residents in the minor service centres were less likely to visit countryside recreation sites. This may again be associated with the location of these sites, only one of which is in close proximity to a minor service centre.

Views on Quantity of Countryside recreation sites - Town and Parish Councils

5.44 Reflecting the findings of the household survey, 65% of responding Parish and Town Councils believe that there are sufficient countryside recreation sites in Central Bedfordshire. The majority of those that identify there to be a requirement for more cite the distance that their residents have to travel to reach such a facility as being the reason for this. The majority of those believing there to be insufficient provision are Towns / Parishes located around Biggleswade (including Biggleswade Town Council).

Current Provision

Quality

5.45 The quality of countryside recreation sites was evaluated using an assessment matrix..

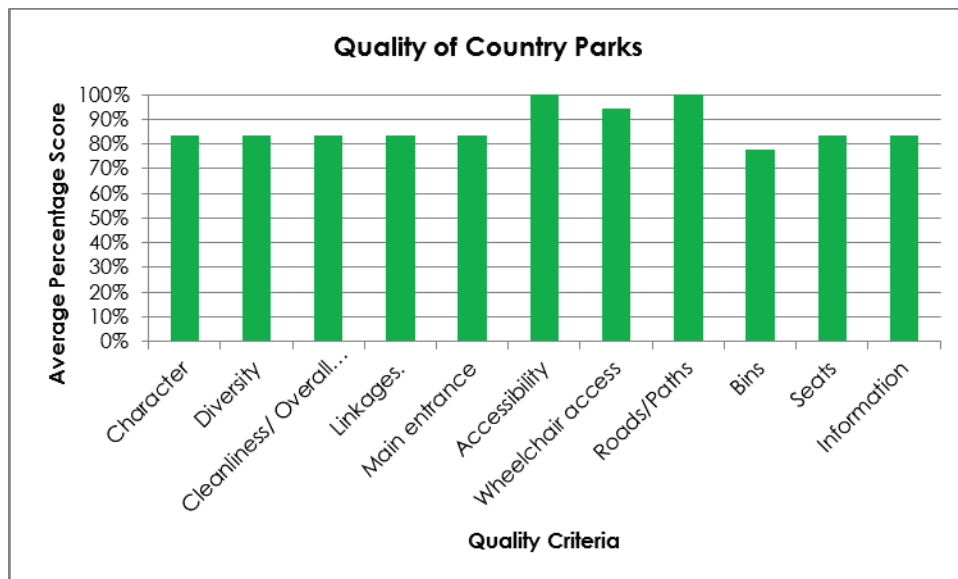
5.46 Site visits reflect these findings, indicating that in general, the countryside recreation sites across Central Bedfordshire are pleasant places to be, are well maintained and offer a variety of facilities including play. Most function as a family destination and include parking and toilet facilities. Facilities include;

- Ampthill Park – includes a café, parking and toilet facilities
- Rushmere Country Park – includes café / picnic area, toilets and parking
- Forest Centre & Millennium Country Park – has visitor centre / café, toilets and parking. Links also being created to nearby rail station
- Dunstable Downs – café / shop / toilets / picnic area / parking
- The Lodge – picnic area / toilets / car parking / shop and refreshments
- Sundon Hills Country Park – picnic areas and parking
- Aspley Woods – car parking

5.47 Very few concerns are raised through site assessments in relation to the quality of countryside recreation sites and indeed site visits confirm that these spaces are overall the highest quality facilities in Central Bedfordshire. Reflecting this, the Forest Centre & Millennium Country Park has achieved the Natural England Country Parks accreditation, a measure of site quality.

5.48 Chart 5.1 illustrates the average quality scores achieved for each factor rated during site assessments. Reflecting the overall positive perception of countryside recreation sites, it indicates that the average scores for most factors are high. The key areas for improvement are linkages, seating and information and the provision of bins was the most poorly rated factor. Dog fouling was also identified as an issue at several sites and there is a need to improve wheelchair access in some areas. Site visits confirm that countryside recreation sites are amongst the highest quality sites in Central Bedfordshire.

Chart 5.1 - Quality of Countryside recreation sites



Quality of Provision – Consultation Responses

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

5.49 The review of Green Infrastructure assessments, Town and Parish Council responses and available Town and Parish plans reveals relatively few issues relating to the quality of countryside recreation sites. Key improvements identified are:

- improvement to disabled access routes – Amptill Country Park (GI study)
- Aspley Woods – importance of increased resources (Aspley Guise GI)

5.50 The Outdoor Access Improvement Plan also identifies a series of key actions relating to the quality of countryside access sites, which include countryside recreation sites. These will be updated annually, but include;

- All Level 1 and 2 Countryside sites will have an up to date management and development plan. The local community will be involved in the development of these plans and information will be accessible to them on the plans and their implementation
- All Level 3 and 4 Countryside sites will have an up to date management plan/ statement. The local community will be involved in the development of these plans and information will be accessible to them on the plans and their implementation
- Welcome signage and/or interpretation will familiarise people with the site, its management, who is responsible and will encourage people to explore and discover
- Develop a new initiative to target Dog fouling, dog control and on site litter

- Enhance existing and create new facilities on site, e.g. trails, litter/waste bins, toilets, play facilities, public art, car parking, visitor centres to cater for increased use - in line with Leisure strategy standards and user / nonuser demands

The Green Flag Award

5.51 The Green Flag (managed by the Civic Trust) is recognised as an important national standard for country parks. This award recognises the quality of individual open space sites and is often associated with formal urban parks, although it can relate equally to all types of formal and informal open space. Marston Vale Trust has been achieved this award for the Forest Centre & Millenium Country Park.

5.52 The Green Flag criteria seek to promote best practice management principles, including community involvement, meeting with the localism agenda. The key criteria involved in the attainment of the Green Flag award are:

- A welcoming place – including signage and safe access for all. Site visits highlighted issues with some footpaths and routes through sites, although this feature was more highly rated by current users
- Healthy, safe and secure – providing safe equipment, addressing dog fouling, appropriate provision of toilets etc. The safety of sites in Central Bedfordshire was not highlighted as an issue specific to parks, however the site infrastructure, including toilets, were highlighted as both areas of concern and important in terms of aspirations for future provision. Furthermore, infrastructure was also viewed as an essential component of a successful park
- Clean and well maintained – appropriate attention should be given to litter and vandalism management and the maintenance of the grounds. Cleanliness and maintenance was viewed as one of the areas with potential for improvement during site assessments, but was highlighted as essential throughout consultation relating to all types of open space in Central Bedfordshire
- Sustainability - Methods used in maintaining the park/green space and its facilities should be environmentally sound, relying on best practices. This may include recycling and minimising the use of pesticides. As well as using sustainable management practices, Friends Groups can play an important role in ensuring the long term sustainability of parks by providing invaluable volunteer support and increasing revenue at parks, by holding events at parks, for example.
- Conservation and heritage - Particular attention should be paid to the conservation and appropriate management of Natural features, buildings and structural features. Many consultees highlighted the importance of retaining the individual character of open spaces and building upon the history of the area (Section 3).
- Community involvement - the management of sites should actively involve members of the community, and the site should provide appropriate levels of recreational facilities for all sectors of the community. Again this was highlighted as a key issue by many consultees (Section 3) and it was highlighted that this one of the current successes at many sites across Central Bedfordshire.

- Marketing - A marketing strategy should be in place, which is in practice and regularly reviewed. This should include good provision of information to users and the site should be promoted as a community resource.
- Management - A management plan or strategy should be in place to address all of the above criteria.

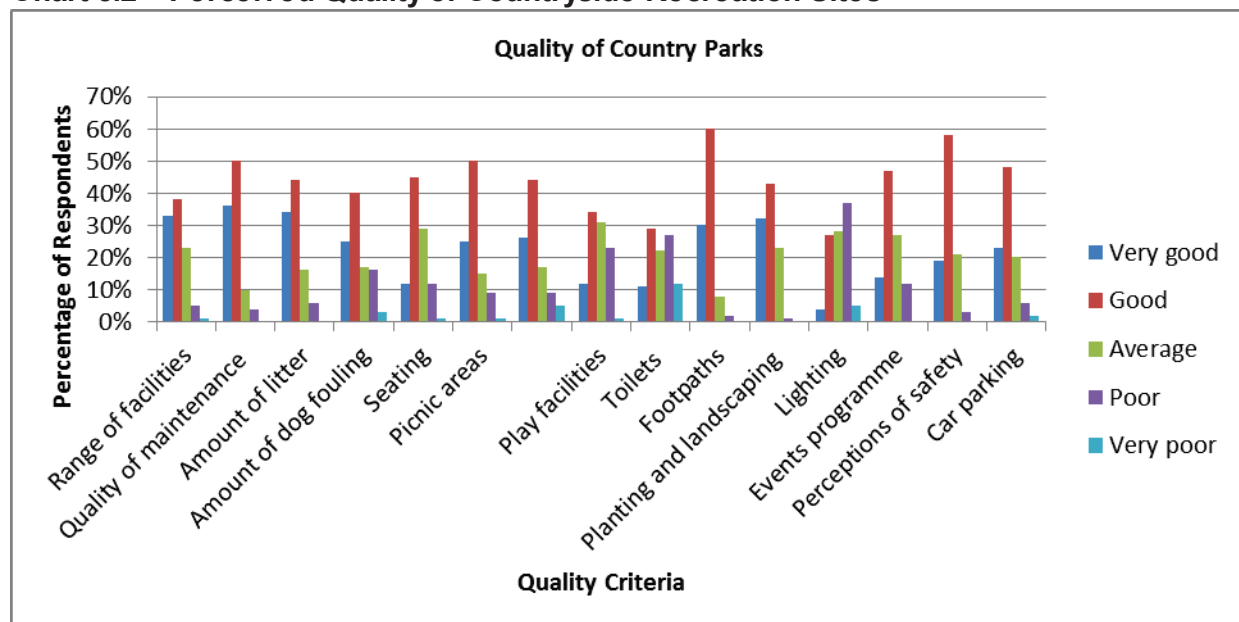
Household Survey

5.53 The telephone survey indicates that 87% of residents in Central Bedfordshire consider the quality of countryside recreation sites to be good or very good, ranking them the highest quality open spaces in the area. There is very little variation in this perception across all segments of the population.

5.54 Chart 5.2 summarises the views of residents in relation to countryside recreation sites. It clearly reflects the overall positive viewpoint and indicates that for each feature (with the exception of lighting) the most common response is good. In particular, footpaths (90% good or very good) quality of maintenance (86% good or very good) amount of litter (78% good or very good) perception of safety (77% good or very good) planning and landscaping (75% good or very good) and picnic areas (75% good or very good) were all considered positively.

5.55 The key areas for improvement were highlighted as lighting, toilets, play facilities, seating, events programme and the amount of dog fouling.

Chart 5.2 – Perceived Quality of Countryside Recreation Sites



5.56 Reflecting many of the above comments made, consultation undertaken as part of the Outdoor Access Improvement Plan indicates that the key areas for improvement are seen as:

- Improved management of dog fouling and control
- Improved information, both generic and audience targeted
- Appropriate signage and way marking

- Public transport provision at an affordable cost
- Signed and secure car parking facilities
- Organised walks/events; picnicking facilities
- Accessibility for buggies and wheelchairs
- Increased volunteering opportunities

Views on Quality of Countryside Recreation Sites by Placemaking Area

5.57 There are a few noticeable differences in perception of the quality of facilities between residents in different Placemaking Areas. While there are some variations in the proportions of residents rating different factors very good and good, there is a consistent consensus across all different Placemaking Areas. The only clear noticeable difference is that in general, residents in the east rate most factors marginally lower, in particular the range of facilities provided. This is perhaps reflective of the park in this area (The RSPB site, Sandy) which offers more limited facilities in terms of children’s play etc, than other countryside recreation sites and may also be influenced by the negativity surrounding the amount of countryside recreation sites in Central Bedfordshire.

Views on Quality of Countryside Recreation Sites by Settlement Hierarchy

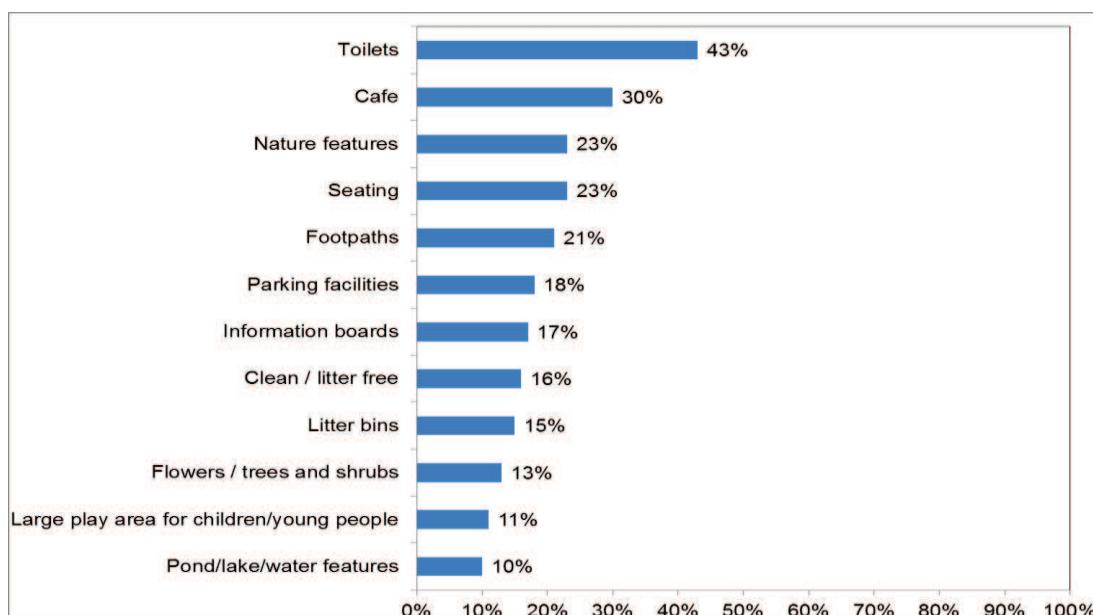
5.58 There are no clear variations between settlement hierarchies.

Quality of Countryside Recreation Sites – Aspirations

Household Survey

5.59 Chart 5.3 illustrates the factors that residents of Central Bedfordshire consider most important in the provision of a countryside recreation site. It is noticeable that particular emphasis is given to the provision of toilets, a café, natural features and seating. Toilets and seating were both highlighted as being amongst the areas that are most in need of improvement.

Chart 5.3 – Aspirations of Residents (Countryside recreation sites)



Parish and Town Councils

5.60 Reflecting the findings of the household survey, Town and Parish Councils hold positive views of the quality of countryside recreation sites. All respondents to the survey rated the quality of these facilities as average or above and 93% considered quality to be good. Many refer to the range of facilities that are provided.

Role of Countryside Recreation Sites in Meeting Biodiversity and Conservation Priorities

5.61 While this assessment considers the requirement for open spaces from a recreational perspective, it is important to note that the role of countryside recreation sites from a wildlife and conservation perspective is as important as the role of these sites in meeting recreational need. The increasing population is likely to result in an increase in recreational activities of residents, putting pressure on all sites to sustain higher visitor numbers and this is something that the Outdoor Access Improvement Plan identifies as a key issue.

5.62 Several consultees highlight the importance of balancing recreational need with conservation as well as the importance of taking into account the capacity of a site to meet the needs of visitors. Increasing population numbers within Central Bedfordshire are likely to result in an increase in visitor numbers (assuming that the same proportion of residents use countryside recreation sites) and this will need to be taken into account when considering the adequacy of provision in quantitative terms. There is a relationship between the sensitivity of sites and their capacity to provide recreational benefits.

5.63 The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough has developed a model to predict the sensitivity of sites (A Model to Predict Wildlife Site Sensitivity to Visitor Pressure, February 2011 Bedfordshire and Luton Wildlife Working Group). While it is not possible to apply this model to all sites within Central Bedfordshire, some Countryside recreation sites have already been assessed for their sensitivity. Using this information as a guide, a desk based assessment of the sensitivity of these Countryside recreation sites has been carried out. This is a desk based assessment, drawing on existing information on sites that have been assessed for their sensitivity, professional knowledge of the sites, information about their designations, the area of the site that is designated, and the total site area.

5.64 On this basis, sites have been categorized as high, medium or low sensitivity, depending on whether they are very vulnerable to recreation pressures, moderately vulnerable to recreation pressures, or primarily a recreational asset with limited ecological sensitivity and vulnerability to recreation pressures.

5.65 It is important to note that many of the above sites are zoned – i.e. there are sections that are designed for recreation and other areas that are dedicated for wildlife. This allows a recreational function alongside the wider benefits that the site brings.

Sensitivity Weighting

5.66 In order to ensure that the ecological value of countryside recreation sites is taken into account, further work was therefore undertaken by Central Bedfordshire Council at a site specific level to determine the ecological sensitivity of each site. Sites were categorized into one of the following classifications:

- High Sensitivity
- Medium Sensitivity
- Low Sensitivity

5.67 The following ratings were established for countryside recreation sites and these have been taken into account in the application of local standards later in this section:

- Dunstable Downs - high
- Sundon Hills Country Park - high
- Tiddenfoot Waterside Park - high
- Stockgrove Country Park - high
- Ampthill Park - high
- The Lodge - high
- Forest Centre & Millennium Country Park – medium
- Aspley Woods - high

Accessibility

5.68 For recreational purposes, access to open space is as important as the quality of provision and in particular, for countryside recreation sites, where challenges accessing sites has arisen as one of the key barriers to use.

5.69 Table 5.3 summarises the mode of transport that residents in Central Bedfordshire expect to use to reach a countryside recreation site and the type of transport that visitors actually do use.

Table 5.3 – Mode of Travel

Expected vs Actual	Walk	Cycle	Public Transport	Car
Expected	25%	8%	1%	66%
Actual	18%	1%	2%	79%

5.70 Table 5.3 demonstrates that on the whole, in contrast with most other types of open space, residents expect to travel by car to reach a countryside recreation site and just 25% would walk to a countryside recreation site. When considering current users, while car is the most common means of reaching the destination, 18% do walk to their nearest countryside recreation site – this indicates that as well as attracting visitors from further afield, countryside recreation sites are also important recreational resources for those living close to them.

5.71 Further analysis of responses from the household survey reveals that:

- there are no clear differences in the views of users and non users

- expectations are broadly similar across all demographic groups. It is however clear that older residents have a greater reliance on the car (75% of residents aged 55 plus would expect to travel by car, compared to 58% aged 18 – 34). Younger residents place a higher emphasis on travelling to a countryside recreation site on foot suggesting that there is more of an expectation that facilities will be local to the home.
- for residents with dependents, the importance of access by bike increases. 20% of those with dependents aged 9 -13 would expect to cycle (and 11% with children aged below 9, 12% aged 14 – 18) compared to 4% of those without children

5.72 Perhaps reflecting the distribution of existing countryside recreation sites, a higher proportion of residents in the Minor Service Centres indicated that they would expect to travel by car, while a larger quantity of residents in the larger villages would travel on foot. Also potentially related to the distribution of countryside recreation sites (there is only one site in the east of Central Bedfordshire) 78% of residents in the East would travel by car, which is almost 20% higher than in any other area. Just 12% of respondents in this area would expect to travel on foot. Views are consistent in the other three areas.

5.73 While consultation demonstrates that residents expect to travel by car to reach a country park, the Central Bedfordshire Transport Plan, as well as many external agencies, seeks to reduce the reliance on the car and promote sustainable transport links. This includes the creation of public transport and cycle links. The expectation that facilities will be accessed by car is perhaps reflective of the current constraints of using more sustainable transport modes to access facilities.

Importance of Accessibility to Countryside Recreation Sites in Green Infrastructure Plans

5.74 In addition to ensuring that residents have access to countryside recreation sites within appropriate distances, many of the GI plans also emphasise the importance of linkages to these sites – by cycleway and the rights of way network. This reflects the goal of ensuring that facilities are accessible by more sustainable modes of transport. Specific priorities referenced are detailed in Appendix A. settlement summaries.

Steps 3 and 4 – Setting and Applying Local Standards

5.75 In order to deliver a successful and varied network of open spaces consideration of quality, quantity and accessibility factors is required.

5.76 To develop provision requirements which are responsive to local needs, the findings of the facility audit and consultation can be used to inform the creation of quality, quantity and accessibility standards for each type of open space.

5.77 The findings of the local needs assessment, alongside the baseline audit of existing provision have therefore been used to determine local standards for the provision of countryside recreation sites. Existing provision can then be measured against these standards to identify the requirement for new and improved facilities.

5.78 The approach taken to setting standards is explained in Section 2. The data used to set each standard for countryside recreation sites is outlined below.

Accessibility

Setting Accessibility Standards

5.79 Accessibility is a key determinant of the success of countryside recreation sites as evidence suggests that location is one of the main barriers to use. Usage is highest in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South which coincides with the highest quantities of local provision. It is therefore essential to understand the distance that residents expect to travel and the mode of transport that they will use to reach each type of open space. The household survey provides a robust way of analysing these expectations.

5.80 The survey data demonstrates that there is a strong expectation that residents will travel by car to reach a countryside recreation site (64%). It is important however to note that a relatively large group of residents travel on foot and that bike is also an important access means.

5.81 Table 5.4 uses raw data collated in the household survey, to evaluate the amount of time residents expect to travel to reach a countryside recreation site.

5.82 To fully understand the spread of responses (and therefore the expectations of all residents), it categorises responses into quartiles. Each quartile represents 25% of the respondents. Quartile 1 is equivalent to the 25% of residents with the highest aspirations, or those that would be willing to travel the shortest distance to reach a countryside recreation site. PPG17 indicates that a local standard should be set using quartiles, and at a point which reflects the expectations of 75% of the population.

Table 5.4 – Travel Expectations – Countryside recreation sites (calculated from the Household Telephone Survey)

Mode of Transport	Walk				Car			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Central Bedfordshire	6	10	15	60	15	20	30	70
Major	5	5	12	30	15	20	30	45
Minor	10	15	15	60	15	20	30	70
Large	10	15	30	30	15	30	30	60
Small	5	5	10	15	20	20	30	60

Table 5.4 reveals the following key findings in relation to accessibility expectations

Walking

5.83 Only a relatively small proportion of the population overall expect to walk to a countryside recreation site. Of those that do, 25% would be willing to walk just 6 minutes or less. The maximum expected travel time is 80 minutes. 25% of residents in the major and minor settlements are willing to walk up to 10 minutes

- The modal response for that wish to walk is 10 minutes

5.84 This suggests that overall, given that most residents expect to walk relatively short distances to a countryside recreation site, only those with a site in particularly close proximity to their home are likely to do so.

Car

- views on the distance that residents are willing to travel to reach a countryside recreation site are relatively consistent, with the maximum travel time expected being 70 minutes
- 25% of residents (Quartile 1) across Central Bedfordshire would only be willing to drive up to 15 minutes to reach a country park. With the exception of the smaller villages (where residents are willing to travel up to 20 minutes) this is common to all settlement hierarchies. This means that 75% of residents are willing to travel for 15 minutes or more; and
- the modal response (i.e. the most common response given) was that a countryside recreation site should be within 20 minutes drive of the home while the average was 23 minutes. The median response (quartile 2) is also 20 minutes

5.85 This suggests that a 15 – 20 minute drive time is broadly acceptable to 75% of residents.

5.86 It should however be noted that while car is currently the most frequently used mode of transport for accessing country parks (as well as the option that most residents expect to use), the Central Bedfordshire Transport Plan seeks to prioritise access by more sustainable modes of transport. To ensure deliverability in the short term, the strategy uses a drive time standard, however the long term goal is to ensure that all countryside recreation sites are accessible by more sustainable modes of travel.

5.87 The recommended accessibility standard, and justification for this standard, is set out below.

Accessibility

Country Parks - Accessibility Standard
20 minute drive time (car or public transport) Long term – 20 minute travel time (public transport / cycle)
Justification
The findings of the consultation demonstrate that 64% of residents expect to travel to a countryside recreation site by car. These expectations are common across all settlement hierarchies. It is important to note however that access on foot is also important and that for those with dependents, there is an expectation that facilities will be accessible by bike.
In all areas, the average and most common responses are similar (20 and 23 minutes respectively) and statistical analysis demonstrates that 75% of users are willing to travel at least 20 minutes by car.
To ensure that the standard is based upon realistic and achievable aspirations, a 20 minutes drive time has therefore been used as a standard. This standard takes into account the

expectations of residents in terms of quality and quantity as well by promoting the provision of easily accessible, high quality space.

While a drive time has been set to ensure deliverability, the focus will remain upon the achievement of the aspirations of the Central Bedfordshire Transport Plan, which seek to ensure that these facilities are accessible by sustainable modes of transport.

Application of the Accessibility Standard

5.88 The application of this standard is illustrated in Appendix B. It indicates that overall, the majority of residents within Central Bedfordshire have access to a countryside recreation site within the target of a 20 minute drivetime.

5.89 Reflecting the findings of consultations and other strategic documents, it is the east of the north Placemaking Area which has more limited access, most notably around the Biggleswade area. The following settlements are currently outside of a 20 minute drive time from a countryside recreation site;

By Placemaking Area:

- Dunstable and Houghton Regis - none, well served by Dunstable Downs
- Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South - well served by Tiddenfoot Waterside Park and within 20 minutes of Rushmere Country Park
- North - Biggleswade, Pottton, Stotfold, Arlesey, Shefford, Barton Le Clay, Langford, Henlow, Clifton, Stondon, Meppershall, Shillington, Small Villages – Tempsford, Everton, Wrestlingworth, Dunton, Northill, Old Warden, Streatley and South Hill.

By Settlement Hierarchy:

- Major Service Centres - Biggleswade
- Minor Service Centres – Pottton, Stotfold, Arlesey, Shefford, Barton Le Clay
- Large Villages – Langford, Henlow, Clifton, Stondon, Meppershall, Shillington
- Small Villages – Tempsford, Everton, Wrestlingworth, Dunton, Northill, Old Warden, Streatley and South Hill.

5.90 At least one to two strategically located facilities would be required to provide access to residents in the above settlements to meet both current and future need.

Impact of Ecological Sensitivity on Accessibility of Countryside Recreation Sites

5.91 The deficiencies identified on previous pages do not however take into account the ecological and biodiversity functions of existing open spaces or acknowledge that many of the sites in this typology contain areas dedicated to biodiversity and conservation, including national and local designations such as SSSI and County Wildlife Sites (CWS).

5.92 As outlined earlier in this section, the use of these spaces for recreational purposes can have an adverse impact upon their ecological and biodiversity functions and as such, the capacity of these sites to sustain visitors is more limited.

5.93 To take this into account and to represent the reduced recreational capacity of a site, the catchment area of those sites that are ecologically significant has therefore been amended as follows:

- Sites of high ecological and biodiversity sensitivity – catchment area reduced by 50%
- Sites of medium ecological and biodiversity sensitivity – catchment area reduced by 25%
- Sites of low ecological and biodiversity sensitivity – catchment remains as recommended standard
- For countryside recreation sites, this means that although residents are willing to travel up to 20 minutes to reach a countryside recreation site:
- Sites of high ecological sensitivity are considered only able to serve residents within a 10 minute drive-time
- Sites of medium ecological sensitivity have a catchment area of 15 minutes drive-time
- Sites with low ecological sensitivity have a 20 minute catchment area

5.94 The impact of consideration of the level of ecological sensitivity of each site on the application standard is illustrated in maps in Appendix B. It can be seen that a much higher amount of residents are outside of the catchment area for a countryside recreation site and that to successfully balance the recreational function of countryside recreation sites with biodiversity and ecology, more countryside recreation sites are required. The reduction in catchment areas due to ecological sensitivities mean that there are particular gaps in the north of Central Bedfordshire around the larger towns of Biggleswade and Sandy, Stotfold and Arlesey, Flitwick and Shefford.

5.95 While existing sites are highly ecologically sensitive, it is extremely unlikely that newly created sites will be as sensitive, at least whilst they become established. If new sites are not considered to be ecologically sensitive (and therefore have the full 20 minute catchment area), 2 to 3 additional sites would be required to meet demand. There is also a small area north of Dunstable and Houghton Regis (Barton le Clay) where there is a lack of access to countryside recreation sites.

Quantity

Setting Quantity Standards

5.96 As set out earlier in this section, there are currently 680 hectares of land dedicated to the provision of countryside recreation sites in Central Bedfordshire.

5.97 Consultation demonstrates that overall, there are few concerns with regards the amount of countryside recreation sites provided and indeed public satisfaction is highest of all types of open space. The lowest levels of provision are however found in the east of the north placemaking area and it is in this area where public satisfaction is also low.

5.98 Town and Parish Council consultation also revealed demand for new countryside recreation sites in the North of Central Bedfordshire, particularly in the eastern part of the North placemaking area. These aspirations are also reflected within adopted local strategic documents (Local Green Infrastructure Assessments, Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure

Assessment) as well as many of the local green infrastructure assessments. There is therefore clear aspiration for additional country parks.

5.99 Application of the accessibility standard supports these concerns, highlighting that residents in the eastern part of Central Bedfordshire are outside of this catchment and it can therefore be concluded that additional sites are required in this area. When taking into account the overlap in function of countryside recreation sites between recreation and conservation (as well as the variation in size of these sites), it is clear that more sites are required if recreational usage is not to have a detrimental impact upon the other functions of existing sites. By way of illustration, The RSPB Lodge, Sandy, which is the main countryside recreation site in the east area (the part of Central Bedfordshire most lacking in countryside recreation sites), has limited visitor capacity due to environmental and conservation sensitivities.

5.100 Application of the reduced accessibility catchments indicate that an additional 2 - 3 countryside recreation sites are required to meet baseline requirements and to ensure that a balance between recreation and biodiversity is achieved.

5.101 Table 5.5 takes this into account and summarises the baseline level of demand for countryside recreation sites across Central Bedfordshire.

5.102 To reflect the fact that new sites are not considered to be ecologically sensitive, (and therefore have double the catchment of an existing site), Table 5.5 assumes that additional countryside recreation sites will be smaller than the average of those currently in existence (90ha). For the purposes of the calculation of the standard, new sites are therefore considered to be equivalent to 45ha (50% of the size of the normal site).

Table 5.5 – Baseline Quantity Requirements

Area	Current Provision	Required provision to meet catchment, taking into account ecological sensitivities of countryside recreation sites	Minimum Requirement
Central Bedfordshire	8 sites – 680 ha	Three additional sites to address accessibility issues in and around Biggleswade, Sandy, Flitwick, Arlesey, Stotfold, Barton le Clay.	815 ha (assumes countryside recreation site is 45 ha)

5.103 This requirement for an additional countryside recreation site means that a total of 815 ha would be required to meet current needs. This equates to the need to provide the equivalent of 3.19 ha of countryside recreation sites per 1000 population.

Countryside Recreation Sites - Quantity Standard
3.19ha per 1000 population
Justification
This figure represents the minimum requirement for countryside recreation sites in Central Bedfordshire if all residents were to be located within a 20 minute drivetime of a countryside recreation sites.

Application of the Quantity Standard

5.104 Table 5.6 illustrates the shortfalls and surpluses of the quantity standard. Due to the nature of countryside recreation sites and the wide catchment that they serve, these figures are provided at authority wide level and should be treated as indicative only. The size of countryside recreation sites and the willingness of residents to travel means that it is not appropriate to apply this standard at a settlement level, as countryside recreation sites would not be excepted in every settlement and indeed the characteristics of each countryside recreation site will be different.

5.105 Figures however demonstrate that there is a shortfall in provision to meet demand currently (and even more so when taking into account the impact of recreational usage on biodiversity) and that this shortfall will increase as the population grows and visitor numbers increase.

Table 5.6 - Shortfalls of Countryside recreation sites

Current Provision	Required Provision	Current Shortfall / Surplus	Future shortfall / surplus
680ha / 2.67ha per 1000 population	815ha / 3.19 ha per 1000 population	135 ha	246ha

As demonstrated above, population growth will see the requirement for countryside recreation sites increase by 111 hectares.

Quality

Setting Quality Standards

5.106 Quality is as important as the amount of each type of open space. Local consultations have enabled the identification of issues viewed as important to residents, as well as aspirations that they have in relation to the type of spaces that they would like to see provided. Supporting this, site visits have provided an overview of the quality of countryside recreation sites and reflected many of the views of local residents. The key issues raised through each of these means highlight similar issues and are also reflected in the priorities of the Outdoor Access and Improvement Plan.

5.107 Following the Government review of country parks, a country parks accreditation scheme was also developed. This scheme focuses on the core functions and services that it is believed a country park should offer, which in brief are:

- Area – site should be at least 10hectares and should have an identifiable boundary
- Access – site should be readily accessible, free of charge, comply with DDA and other regulations and ideally should contain other facilities to support accessibility
- Character – should be predominantly natural / semi natural and less than 5% of the total area should be buildings
- Facilities – should include paths and toilets. Other opportunities should also be considered including visitor centres, play facilities, catering equipment, cycle and horse tracks and art sculptures
- Links to local communities and neighbourhoods – should be easily accessible for local market
- Links to wider countryside – should have clear links with the Public Right of Way Network
- Management – should include a daily staff presence and a management plan

5.108 Activities – suitable for public and educational user, potentially with a clear programme of events, walks and activities

- Information and interpretation – should include clear signage and information for visitors.

The full criteria can be found at http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/CH3%20-%20Criteria%20Checklist%20-%20240409_tcm6-11152.pdf. These criteria can also be used to inform decision making relating to countryside recreation sites in Central Bedfordshire.

5.109 This information can be used to identify the key components of each type of open space in relation to quality and to set a quality standard that should be used as a basis for improving existing spaces as well as the creation of new spaces.

5.110 The quality standard for countryside recreation sites is set out below. Further detail can be found in the Design Guidance.

Country Parks - Quality Standard	
Size and Location	Sufficiently large to meet demand (national standards suggest at least 10ha) Appropriately located for local catchment (within 20m drivetime of target residents) Accessible via safe footpaths and roads Clear boundaries that are locally appropriate and promote security
Character	Predominantly natural space ideally offering a range of habitats and landscapes Less than 5% total building area
Access	Clearly defined pathways and cycleways Public transport provision Links with Public Rights of Way and cycle routes into wider countryside Compliant with DDA – access audit in place Accessible for wheelchairs and pushchairs
Facilities	Clearly defined paths and cycle routes Appropriate and regular seating Café and / or visitor centre, including toilets and refreshments Information and signage both to and within the site as well as at the main entrance, including interpretation boards and way marking Play equipment (linking with requirements identified in Section 10 – this may include natural play) Appropriate bins Management of dog fouling Secure parking that is clearly signed Cycle storage
Activities	Clear events programme Volunteer opportunities for the local community (linked with section 4) Visible daily staff presence

5.111 In addition, drawing on the findings of strategic consultations and national best practice it is also desirable for the following to be in place;

- Transport plan or policy for the site
- Management and promotion of the sites conservation interest
- Outreach and marketing programme to engage and involve local residents

Application of the Quality Standards

5.112 The quality of existing countryside recreation sites is high and many of the above criteria are met for each site. It is particularly notable however that Sundon Hills Country Park and Tiddenfoot Waterside Park do not currently meet many of the infrastructure requirements (including toilets and café) that are considered important to residents. Aspley Woods is also highlighted as lacking in infrastructure.

Summary – Issues Identified

Usage

5.113 Usage of countryside recreation sites is high and as a consequence they represent a valuable recreational resource – only 36% of the population never visit countryside recreation sites.

5.114 Visits to these sites are however less frequent than to other open space and for many, countryside recreation sites act as a destination facility rather than a site that is visited every day. The function of these sites as destinations means that there are higher expectations with regards the facilities that are provided. Younger residents and those with families are most likely to visit countryside recreation sites. While fewer older residents visit these sites, those that do use them more regularly than other visitors.

5.115 Walking, exercise and play are the most common reasons for visiting a countryside recreation site and issues with accessing sites and proximity to the home are the key barriers to usage. Notably, while there is an acceptance that residents will travel by car to reach a countryside recreation site, many residents harbour aspirations to reach these facilities by bike.

Quantity and Accessibility

5.116 There are eight countryside recreation sites in Central Bedfordshire all of which are large sites containing a variety of facilities. Consultation reveals few concerns with regards the amount of countryside recreation sites, with the only area where a requirement for new facilities was expressed was to the east of the North Placemaking area (Town and Parish Council Survey / Telephone Survey / Green Infrastructure Studies).

5.117 Reflecting this, countryside recreation sites are largely distributed around the south of Central Bedfordshire, in particular in close proximity to Leighton Buzzard and Rural South (and it is in this area where residents use facilities most frequently). The majority of the remaining sites are situated in the north west of Central Bedfordshire, with only the RSPB Lodge (Sandy) located in the east.

5.118 Analysis of survey responses demonstrates that residents are willing to travel between 15 and 20 minutes to reach a countryside recreation site. Reflecting consultation, application of a standard of a 20 minute drivetime indicates that residents in Biggleswade, Potton, Stotfold, Arlesey, Shefford, Barton Le Clay, Langford, Henlow, Clifton, Stondon, Meppershall, Shillington, Tempsford, Everton, Wrestlingworth, Dunton, Northill, Old Warden, Streatley and South Hill must travel further than this.

5.119 Countryside recreation sites are however highly environmentally sensitive and have a dual biodiversity function. As such, there is a finite impact on the amount of recreational visitors that they are able to sustain without adverse impact. To reflect this, the drivetime of sites with high ecological impact has been reduced (by 50%). This exacerbates the deficiencies in the above settlements, further emphasising the requirement for additional countryside recreation sites.

5.120 Echoing the priorities of several key strategic documents, more countryside recreation sites are therefore required to meet existing and future demand. Baseline calculations suggest

that a minimum of 3.19 ha countryside recreation sites are required per 1000 population and indicate that circa 3 additional parks are required to meet current demand and population growth will further exacerbate this requirement.

Quality

5.121 Both site visits and user perceptions reflect positively upon the quality of countryside recreation sites (rating them most positively of all types of open space) and the facilities provided. The key issues identified include dog fouling, signage, footpath quality, linkages, seating and bins as well as aspirations for visitor facilities (e.g. toilets) at each site. Public consultation also revealed an aspiration to increase the amount and range of activities available.

To meet with key public aspirations, some improvements are also required to existing sites.

5.122 While recreational use of countryside recreation sites is important, it is also necessary to recognise and understand the capacity of sites, particularly given that the primary purpose of Rushmere Country Park and Tiddenfoot Waterside Park is conservation and both Dunstable Downs and Sundon Hills Country Park contain areas of SSSI. Ampthill Park is already considered to be at capacity and the RSPB Lodge, Sandy, also contains sensitive habitats.

Step 5 – Developing Priorities

Key Issues to Address

5.123 The above analysis indicates that the Recreation and Open Space Strategy needs to address the following issues relating to countryside recreation sites:

- Usage figures demonstrate that existing countryside recreation sites are an important recreational resource – there is therefore a need to retain existing sites
- There are opportunities to increase the usage of existing (and new sites) by addressing identified barriers (access routes) and attracting new user groups (current low usage by residents of non white ethnic origin, disabled users and older residents)
- Analysis suggests that residents expect to be within a 20 minute drivetime of a countryside recreation site –residents of several areas are currently outside of this target catchment. Longer term, linking with the Central Bedfordshire Transport Plan, the goal is to ensure that all countryside recreation sites are accessible by more sustainable modes of travel.
- Recreation is just one element of the function of a countryside recreation site and there is a need to balance biodiversity and conservation with public access. All existing sites have designations which constrain the number of visitors that can be accommodated
- While the quality of existing countryside recreation sites is rated as good, there are high aspirations for the type of facilities provided and the key features of a countryside recreation site. Sites require ongoing maintenance and improvement and some sites need upgrading if they are to meet aspirations

- Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for countryside recreation sites and a consequent increase in visitor numbers. Some sites are already at visitor capacity and others also have sensitivities that will be approached as visitor numbers increase.

Recreation and Open Space Strategy - Outcomes and Key Priorities

5.124 Building upon the above, the recommendations set out below would help to deliver the following outcomes:

- Ensure that all residents have appropriate access to countryside recreation sites
- Facilitate access routes to countryside recreation sites
- Attract users from all sectors of the population
- Meet user aspirations relating to quality of provision as well as local priorities and national objectives
- Maintain a balance between the recreational function of these sites and biodiversity and conservation features.

Key Priorities

5.125 It is therefore recommended that key priorities for the delivery of countryside recreation sites across Central Bedfordshire are as follows;

- Given the clearly evidenced value of countryside recreation sites to both residents and wildlife, promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Plan
- Seek to ensure that all residents are within a 20 minute drivetime of countryside recreation sites (although countryside recreation sites with high ecological sensitivity are only able to serve residents within a 10 minute catchment and this should be taken into account).
- Work with communities to ensure that all countryside recreation sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section.
- Create a network of green linkages with countryside recreation sites as the hub facilitating access on foot and by cycle as well as by car and public transport
- Ensure that the impact of population growth on countryside recreation sites is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and / or S106. Where provision is sufficient in quantitative and access terms, contributions should be required towards the management, maintenance and qualitative improvements of existing sites
- Create site specific development plans considering both recreational capacity and conservation targets
- Seek to widen the use of countryside recreation sites through effective marketing and promotion as well as events
- Manage countryside recreation sites as a destination facility

Site / Area Specific Implications

Table 5.7 below summarises the likely site / area specific implications of the above recommendations.

Table 5.7 – Site Specific Priorities to Address Issues and Recommendations

Protect
All existing sites
New provision
Short Term - New sites to meet current deficiencies – suggested locations – Biggleswade /Sandy (linking with Green Wheel proposals), Flitwick, Arlesey / Stotfold, Barton le Clay
Ongoing – supporting the creation of new sites, where feasible, extension of existing sites to meet increasing demand from population growth
Quality Enhancements
Tiddenfoot Waterside Park / Aspley Woods / Sundon Hills Country Park – baseline facilities All sites in line with target quality criteria
Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to use existing facilities.

6. Urban Parks

Introduction

6.1 This section sets out the assessment relating to urban parks in Central Bedfordshire. It is structured as follows:

- Context and Definition
- Usage Profile
- Existing Provision – Quality, Quantity and Accessibility - and Aspirations
- Summary – Issues to Address
- Implications and recommendations

Definition and Context

6.2 For the purposes of this study, urban parks have been defined as follows:

“Public parks or gardens in an urban setting that provide a variety of facilities e.g. play area, toilets, tennis courts etc; as well as opportunities for informal recreation”. These spaces provide a wide range and high standard of complimentary facilities of interest to visitors and may include facilities for children and young people and / or outdoor sports facilities as well as often being the venue for community events”

6.3 Urban parks are considered to be more formal sites than larger recreation areas, and may include cafes / refreshments. They are frequently the central point for events in the town and may draw upon the historical character of the area.

6.4 It must be noted that this type of space overlaps significantly with the categorisation of large recreation areas, particularly where sites perhaps function as an urban park but do not necessarily have the facilities that would be expected of such a park. In this instance, sites have been included within the large recreation areas typology, but their current (and potential) role will also be taken into account in the analysis of urban parks.

6.5 For classification purposes, the different facilities within parks have been separated according to the typology under which they most appropriately fall. Large green areas, footpaths, lakes and less dense woodland will provide the park area (total hectares) and the other facilities will be calculated separately under their own typology classification. This ensures that open space is not counted twice within this study.

6.6 As set out in section 3, the benefits of parks extend far wider than recreation. Parks provide a sense of place for the local community, help to address social inclusion issues within wider society and also provide structural and landscaping benefits. Furthermore, parks are often havens for wildlife and the promotion of biodiversity.

6.7 Specifically with regards parks, Urban Green Nation – Building the evidence base (Cabe Space 2010) concludes that:

- 9 out of 10 people use parks and green spaces and value them

- satisfaction with local parks is linked to satisfaction with the Council
- the provision of parks is worse in the deprived areas in comparison to the affluent areas
- people from ethnic minority groups tend to use less local green space and believe that it is of poorer quality
- the higher quality the space, the more likely it is to be used

Steps 1 and 2 – Evaluation of Local Needs and Audit of Existing Provision

Usage Profile

6.8 A household survey of 1000 residents of Central Bedfordshire was carried out to establish a baseline of views regarding current and future provision of the range of open space types detailed in this study. As well as providing an understanding of views and aspirations relating to current provision, the survey also enables evaluation of the current user profile of each type of open space.

Usage

6.9 13% of respondents to the telephone survey visit urban parks at least once weekly and just a further 18% use facilities at least once per month. Although this means that urban parks are on the whole visited less frequently than all other types of open space in Central Bedfordshire, the number of people that never visit parks (41% visit less than once per year or never) is lower than for some other types of open space. When evaluating the views of different demographic groups, there are some interesting differences in user patterns, specifically;

- a higher proportion of white British residents use urban parks than non white British residents – (61% of white British residents visit at least once per year compared to 47%). Proportions of residents that visit frequently however are very similar
- residents with dependents are more likely to visit urban parks, unless these dependents are between 14 and 18 (62% in this category never visit an urban park). Just 8% of residents with children under 8 and 32% with children aged between 9 and 13 never visit a park. This compares to 45% without children; and
- use of urban parks also varies by age, with those in the 18 – 34 category most likely to visit a park (just 25% never visit a park). 56% of residents aged over 55 never visit a park. A higher proportion of people aged between 35 and 54 visit parks more frequently than those in other age groups (39% in this age group never visit at all)

Usage of Urban Parks by Placemaking Area

6.10 The variation in use of urban parks is perhaps the most apparent of all types of open space. Frequent usage of such spaces is evident in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard and Rural South (both 15% weekly or more) while few residents in the other areas regularly visit urban parks (1% in East and 3% in West Central Bedfordshire). Despite this, the amount of residents that never visit urban parks is more evenly balanced (56% in the West, 51% Dunstable and Houghton Regis, 49% in the East and 39% in Leighton Buzzard and Rural South). The reasons for using facilities are common across all areas (to a greater or lesser extent).

Usage of Urban Parks by Settlement Hierarchy

6.11 Like in the different geographic areas there is a higher degree of variation in usage patterns according to the size of settlement than in most types of open space. Regular usage is highest in the minor service centres (21% at least weekly, followed by 13% in the large villages and 11% in the major service centres). There is little use of these facilities by residents in small villages and 80% never visit urban parks at all. 43% of residents in the Major Service Centres and 30% of residents in the Minor Service Centres never visit parks. Just 26% of residents in the large villages never visit parks. These patterns do not reflect the distribution of parks and this will be returned to later.

Reasons for Visiting Urban Parks

6.12 Respondents that use urban parks indicate that the main reasons for doing so are:

- Walk and exercise (43%)
- To relax (38%)
- Children play (33%)
- Dog walking (15%)

Reasons for Visiting Urban Parks by Placemaking Area

6.13 There is a much greater emphasis on visiting the urban parks to attend events in Dunstable and Houghton Regis than in other parts of Central Bedfordshire.

Reasons for Visiting Urban Parks by Settlement Hierarchy

6.14 There are few clear variations in the reasons for visiting urban parks between residents in different settlement hierarchies, with the emphasis on walking / exercise and relaxation. It is however apparent that a higher proportion of those in smaller villages visit for events than other areas – this is perhaps reflective of the less frequent usage patterns in this settlement hierarchy.

Barriers to Use of Urban Parks

6.15 A lack of time (25%) and interest (21%) are the main barriers to use across Central Bedfordshire, although 12% indicate that urban parks are difficult to get to while 10% suggest that it is a lack of local facilities that prevents them from using a site. This may be impacted upon by the distribution of urban parks, which will be returned to later in this section.

6.16 Analysis of use across the different segments of population reveals little variation in reasons for visiting, with the only notable differences being:

- 15% of residents of non white ethnic origin cite the quality of urban parks as a reason for not visiting these sites. No white British residents raise this concern. 15% of non white British residents also indicate that they are not aware of the location of facilities (compared to 0% of white British) and 25% suggest that there are no local facilities (10% across Central Bedfordshire as a whole); and
- for those with dependents aged between 14 and 18, the lack of local facility is more commonly raised as a barrier than for those with no children or younger children. There are no other clear differences in opinion.

Barriers to Use of Urban Parks by Placemaking Area

6.17 The barriers to use are largely the same in each area of Central Bedfordshire (lack of time / interest) however it is clear that in Leighton Buzzard and Rural South there is a perception that there are no local urban parks (25% highlight this as a barrier) and that facilities are difficult to access (17%). These barriers are much higher than in other geographic areas.

Barriers to Use of Urban Parks by Settlement Hierarchy

6.18 It is clear that the distribution of urban parks is a much greater barrier to use in the large and small villages than in the bigger settlements, with 25% of residents in the large villages and 10% in the small villages indicating that they have difficulties accessing sites. 25% of residents in the large villages and 40% of those in small villages suggest that they have no local facilities.

Current Provision

Quantity

6.19 The classification of parks across Central Bedfordshire is the subject of much debate. While some sites are perceived to function as such, it is questionable whether they have any more facilities or have a greater function than other larger recreation areas.

6.20 Only sites within urban areas have been considered to be potential urban parks and only sites which are considered to be a formal focal point of the settlement, or to be considered as a garden have been categorised as such. For the purposes of this assessment, the following sites are considered to be formal urban parks and gardens:

- Houghton Hall Park – Houghton Regis
- Grove House Gardens – Dunstable
- Priory Gardens – Dunstable
- Mentmore Memorial Gardens – Leighton Buzzard

6.21 In reality, only Houghton Hall Park is a formal urban park, with the remaining three sites best described as formal gardens. Within Leighton Buzzard, although the Mentmore Memorial Gardens function as gardens have been included in this site, The Town Council are seeking to install Parson's Close Recreation Ground as the higher order recreation facility.

6.22 The above sites total circa 20 hectares. Of this, Houghton Hall Park makes up 17 hectares. The remaining three sites are much smaller, with Mentmore Memorial Gardens being only 0.25 hectares in size and the other two sites just over 1ha.

6.23 In addition, several sites have been identified by Town / Parish Councils and / or residents (through the household survey) as functioning as urban parks (perhaps because they host local events for example) although they do not have the facilities or status to be formally seen as such. Such sites include;

- Mentmore Recreation Ground (adjacent to Memorial Gardens and classified as a larger recreation area)
- Parsons Close Recreation Ground – Leighton Buzzard
- Franklin Gardens – Biggleswade (classified as a larger recreation area); and
- Ampthill Park – Ampthill (classified as a countryside recreation site)

6.24 While these sites are included in calculations relating to other typologies, it is important to note their function within this urban parks category and their potential to become urban parks longer term.

Table 6.1 summarises the distribution of urban parks by placemaking area.

Table 6.1 – Distribution of Urban Parks by Placemaking Area

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision	Hectares per 1000 Population	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Perception of Residents
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	3	20.38755	0.39	0.35	35% not enough
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	1	1.93	0.036	0.03	34% not enough
North	0	0	0	0	48% not enough (east) and 35% not enough (west)
Central Bedfordshire		20.64	0.08	0.07	39% not enough

Table 6.2 summarises the distribution of urban parks by settlement hierarchy.

Table 6.2 – Distribution of Urban Parks by Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement Hierarchy	Number of Sites	Total Provision	Hectares per 1000 Population	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Perception of Residents
Major Service Centres	4	20.64	0.15	0.13	40% not enough
Minor Service Centres	0	0	0.00	0.00	49% not enough
Large Villages	0	0	0.00	0.00	29% not enough
Small Villages	0	0	0.00	0.00	37% not enough

Quantity of Urban Parks – Key Issues

6.25 Tables 6.1 – 6.2 illustrate the following key issues regarding the number, type and size distribution of urban parks:

- all sites classified as urban parks are located in the south of Central Bedfordshire. As set out earlier in this section, in reality, the majority of land classified under this typology is at Houghton Hall Park (Houghton Regis). It indicates that if no additional parks are

provided, the amount of hectares per 1000 population will decline from 0.08 to 0.07 hectares per 1000 population

- all urban parks are located within the Major Service Centres and there is no provision outside of these areas. All of the sites potentially fulfilling a role as an urban park are also located in the Major Service Centres. Provision in the major service centres is currently equivalent to 0.15 ha per 1000 however this will decrease to 0.13 ha per 1000 as a result of population growth

Consultation Responses – Quantity of Urban Parks

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

6.26 The review of Green Infrastructure Assessments, Town and Parish Council responses and available Town and Parish plans reveal the creation of more urban parks to be a key priority for many of the larger settlements, with the potential for new parks identified in both Major and Minor Service Centres. Specific areas for further investigation identified in relation to the provision of new parks include:

- creation of linear park east of Biggleswade (GI)
- demand for formal park – Flitwick (Town Plan)
- Arlesey – recreation opportunities at landfill site – potential to include creation of park (GI)
- Marston Moretaine - Shortfall of formal parks (GI)
- Potton – demand for formal community garden (possibly on part of Henry Smith Playing Fields (GI)
- Shefford – need for public parkland, in particular area north of Bedford Road (GI)

6.27 In addition, opportunities to upgrade existing recreation areas to create formal parks are also highlighted, specifically:

- upgrade of Franklin Gardens (Parish Consultation)
- formal planting at Mentmore Gardens and Page Park, Leighton Buzzard (Town Council Consultation). Lighting, seating and security also a priority. Ongoing management and maintenance of Parsons Close Recreation Ground.

Household Survey

6.28 The household survey reveals that despite relatively limited provision, views on the amount of parks are evenly split, with 50% of residents considering provision to be sufficient (8% more than enough and 42% about right) and 50% believing that more are required (11% indicate that there are nearly enough parks while 39% suggest that there are not enough facilities).

6.29 Overall therefore, there is no clear direction on the adequacy of urban parks in terms of quantity. There are however some interesting variations in views between different sectors of the population, which reveal that there is a correlation between levels of use and perception of the adequacy of urban parks. In particular;

- a higher proportion of older residents think that quantity is sufficient. 38% of residents over 55 think more parks are required compared to 52% of residents aged 18 – 34. This links with the identified usage patterns which suggest that older residents use parks less

- there are no clear differences between the views of white and non white British residents, although almost 25% of non white British residents have no opinion. This may link to the lack of awareness of the location of parks which was identified earlier in this section as a key barrier to usage; and
- 70% of residents with children aged below 8 think there are not enough urban parks. This compares with just 39% of residents without dependents. Over 50% of residents with children aged between 9 and 13 also think that more urban parks are required

Views on the Quantity of Urban Parks by Placemaking Area

6.30 Despite the skewed distribution of provision, the household survey demonstrates that on the whole, the divided opinion on the amount of urban parks is evident in all parts of Central Bedfordshire. The proportion of residents in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south that consider there to be enough facilities is however significantly above average (58% enough or more than enough) while there are higher levels of dissatisfaction in East Central Bedfordshire. Interestingly the higher levels of satisfaction in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south correspond with higher proportions of the population visiting urban parks. The eastern area is particularly lacking in formal parks compared to other areas, which correlates with the dissatisfaction in overall quantities of provision.

Views on the Quantity of Urban Parks by Settlement Hierarchy

6.31 Despite the uneven distribution of parks, there are no clear variations in opinion on the quantity between residents at different levels of the settlement hierarchy (although it should be noted that a higher number of residents in the large and small villages have no opinion). Levels of dissatisfaction are highest in the minor service centres, where almost half of those residents with an opinion felt there to be insufficient parks.

6.32 While there are few differences in the overall views on amount of facilities by settlement hierarchy, analysis earlier in this section however reported differences between usage of facilities by settlement. Residents in the small and large villages indicated that they have difficulties accessing these facilities and report visiting them primarily for play and events – this suggests that urban parks are used as a destination for a day out when they are not local to the home.

Views on Quantity - Parish and Town Councils

6.33 Relatively few Parish Councils expect to find urban parks within their settlement. As a result, 60% were happy with the amount of urban parks provided. 40% however indicated that there are not enough urban parks and many of these were larger settlements, including Biggleswade, Houghton Regis, Shefford and Flitwick – all major / minor service centres. Opportunities to upgrade existing sites were identified by many of these towns.

Current Provision

Quality

6.34 The quality and value of urban parks were assessed using a quality assessment matrix and this is provided in Appendix B.

6.35 All of the sites categorised as urban parks were perceived to be important within the urban setting and most exhibited well maintained ornamental flower beds which added to the attractiveness of the sites. Site visits revealed the quality to be high, with the range of scores achieved being between 76% and 89%.

6.36 Notably, the largest site, Houghton Hall Park, achieved the lowest quality scores. While the remaining three sites were considered to be highly maintained, several flower beds, paths and borders in Houghton Hall Park were identified as being in need of repair.

6.37 Table 6.3 illustrates the average quality scores achieved for each factor rated during site assessments. It highlights that almost all of the lower scores achieved relate to maintenance issues, rather than the structure of the site and / or their value to the community. It must be noted however that much of this relates to the issues identified at Houghton Hall Park (as well as concerns with litter at Grove House Gardens).

Table 6.3 – Quality of Urban Parks

Criteria	Average Score
Layout	100%
Balance and Setting	96%
Relationship	100%
Integrity	100%
Safety	100%
Linkages	96%
Main Entrance	100%
Wheelchair access	93%
Boundaries (including hedges, gates etc)	87%
Roads and Paths	76%
Planted Areas (trees, shrubs, bedding etc)	84%
Grass Areas	80%
Facilities: Bins	80%
Facilities: Seats – Condition	90%
Facilities: Seats – Adequacy	87%
Facilities: Toilets	100%
Facilities: Parking	87%
Facilities: Lighting	87%
Facilities: Information	90%
Cleanliness	84%

Consultation Responses – Views on the Quality of Urban Parks

Household Survey

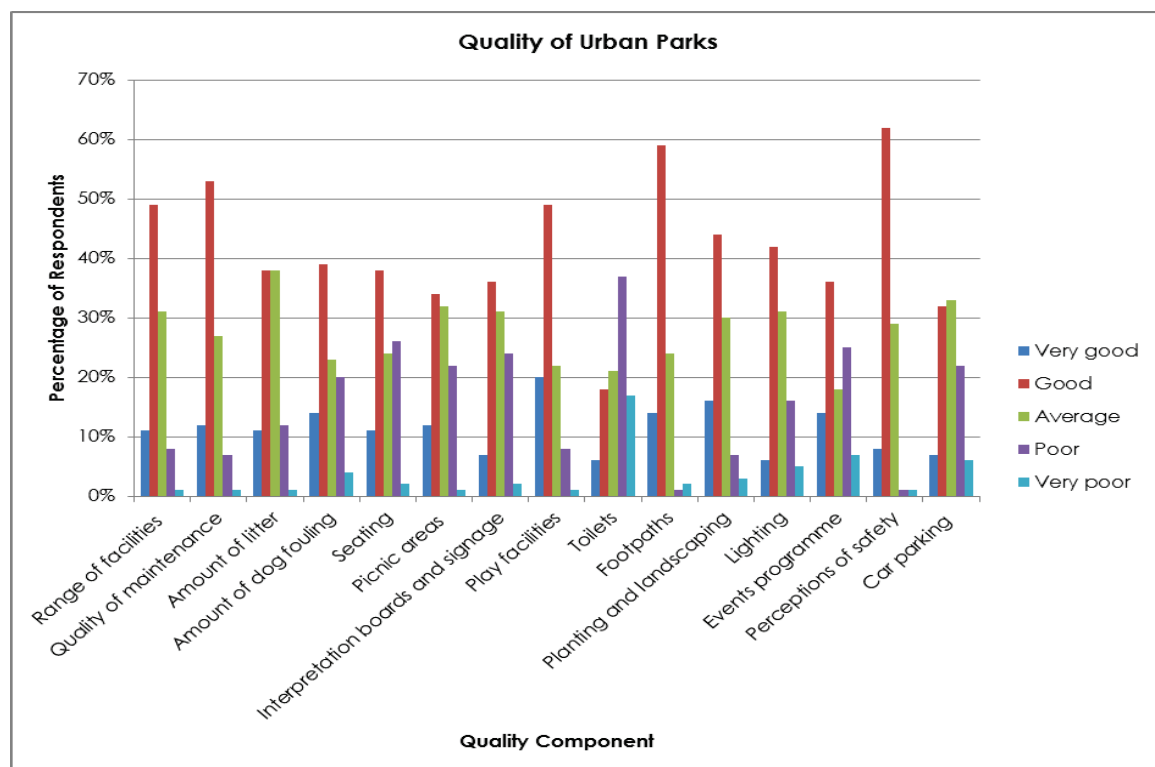
6.38 Reflecting the high quality identified in site visits, the telephone survey indicates that the quality of urban parks is considered favourably. 72% of respondents rate these spaces as good or very good and only 9% consider them poor or very poor. Very few residents highlighted the quality of facilities as a barrier to use, further emphasising this point.

6.39 There are few clear differences in perceived quality between different sectors of the population. Although fewer residents aged over 55 + and non white British residents rate parks as good or better, it must be noted that a higher proportion of these residents have no opinion (probably as they do not use the facilities) and this is therefore balanced out.

6.40 Chart 6.1 (which considers the views just of those that use facilities) outlines the perceived quality of key components of an urban park. It reveals that with the exception of toilets and car parking (which are rated more negatively), the most common response for each component is good. The areas where the highest levels of satisfaction are recorded are as follows;

- Footpaths (73% good or very good)
- Perceptions of safety (70% good or very good)
- Play facilities (69% good or very good)
- Quality of maintenance (65% good or very good)
- Planting and landscaping (60% good or very good)
- Range of facilities (60% good or very good)

Chart 6.1 – Perceptions of Quality Factors for Urban Parks



Areas where the highest levels of dissatisfaction are evident are:

- interpretation boards and signage (26% poor or very poor)
- car parking (28% poor or very poor)
- seating (28% poor or very poor)
- events programme (32% poor or very poor); and
- toilets (54% poor or very poor)

6.41 Interestingly, when comparing the expectations of residents with the issues identified during site visits, there are some clear differences. While users are relatively satisfied with maintenance, footpaths etc, these elements achieved lower scores in the site visits (although as already noted this was skewed by Houghton Hall Park). Seating and toilets were however also rated lower, reflecting the perceptions of users of facilities. There is also scope to improve parking.

6.42 It is notable when looking at the specific views of residents in different sectors of the population that:

- residents with dependents are less positive in relation to some of the above factors, in particular picnic tables, interpretation and signage boards and the events programme. 52% of residents with children aged 9 – 13 indicate that the events programme is poor or very poor (19% in total). 21% of residents with children aged 9 – 13 believe that the range of facilities is poor. Residents over the age of 55 are most positive about the events programme
- there are few differences in overall opinion between residents of different ages in relation to the quality components although for each features, older residents are largely more positive; and
- residents of none white British origin are clearly less positive in relation to the range of facilities, site maintenance, seating and toilets than residents of white British origin

Views on Quality of Urban Parks by Placemaking Areas

6.43 Consultation reveals that perceptions of quality are particularly varied in the north placemaking area. Residents in the west (part of the north placemaking area) are most positive about parks despite a lack of provision but those in the east are very negative - 65% of people rating the quality of urban parks as poor or very poor live in the East placemaking area. It is possible that this is attributable to the issue identified earlier in this section – the definition of parks. Several sites in the east, including Franklin Gardens (Biggleswade) and Sunderland Road Recreation Ground (Sandy) are often viewed by residents as parks, but in reality do not provide the same setting as the more formal urban parks identified in this section and do not meet expectations of a facility within this categorization.

6.44 Consultation demonstrates that there are no clear issues in relation to the quality factors in each Placemaking Area. Instead, there is an overall pattern where residents in Leighton Buzzard and Rural South and West Central Bedfordshire are more positive about each factor than in other areas. Residents are particularly negative about litter and seating in the east. As already indicated, this is likely to be impacted upon by the distribution of parks and the perceived function of some larger recreation areas as parks.

Views on Quality Urban Parks by Settlement Hierarchy

6.45 Like the placemaking areas, again the perceived quality of urban parks by settlement hierarchy has little regard to the distribution of these facilities. More residents at all levels of the settlement hierarchy consider the quality of urban parks to be good or very good than any other

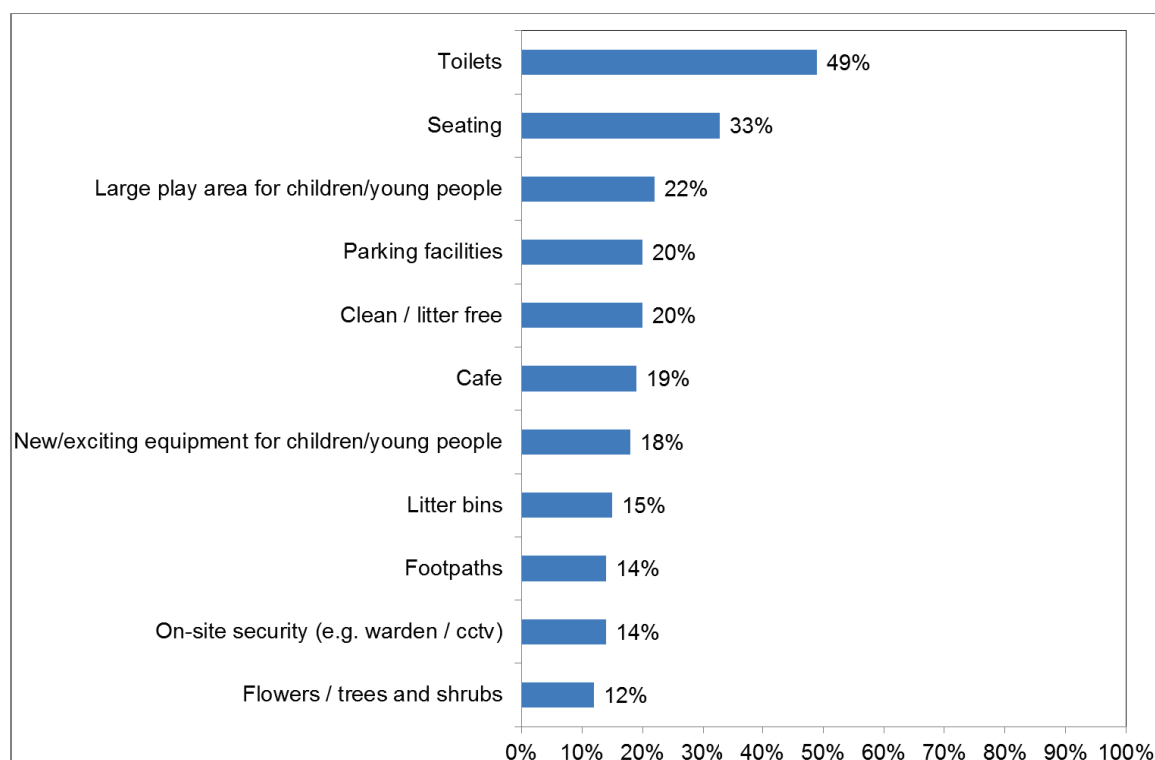
rating. Positivity is lowest in the minor service centres where 54% rate quality good or very good and the highest proportion of residents consider quality to be poor or very poor. Positivity regarding the amount of parks was also lowest in the minor service centres, suggesting that there are greater expectations than are being delivered currently. Again, it is possible that views on larger recreation areas are impacting upon this analysis.

6.46 There are few variations in overall opinion on specific features of urban parks by settlement hierarchy, although for the majority of components, residents in the Minor Service Centres exhibit the highest levels of dissatisfaction.

Quality of Urban Parks - Aspirations

6.47 Chart 6.2 illustrates the factors that residents of Central Bedfordshire consider most important in the provision of urban parks. It is noticeable that it is considered particularly important that an urban park contains a variety of features. Most of the current sites do not provide this level of facility, and function largely as gardens within the town centre setting. Flowers and ornamental planting, a key component of all of the sites considered as urban parks, feature relatively low on the list of aspirations.

Chart 6.2 – Aspirations of Local Residents relating to Urban Parks



Views on Quality of Urban Parks - Parish and Town Councils

6.48 The majority of Town and Parish Councils had no opinion on the quality of urban parks as none are provided within their locality. For those that do, opinions are evenly split between average and good.

6.49 Biggleswade Town Council were the only respondent to consider urban parks to be poor, however they highlight an opportunity to improve Franklin Gardens to ensure that it

becomes a high quality park. Again, this reflects the overlap in function between parks and larger recreation areas. Similarly, as set out earlier, opportunities to upgrade sites in Leighton Linslade are also identified.

6.50 No issues relating to the quality of existing urban parks are identified within GI plans or Parish Plans. Consultation however reveals the need to improve some elements of facilities at Houghton Hall Park (reflecting the findings of site visits) as well as to address anti-social behavior. Improvements to Houghton Hall Park are also identified as a key action within the Outdoor Access Improvement Strategy (Central Bedfordshire 2013).

Accessibility

6.51 Using upon data collected through the telephone survey, Table 6.4 summarises the mode of transport that residents in Central Bedfordshire expect to use to reach an urban park and the type of transport that users actually do use.

Table 6.4 – Mode of Travel

Expected vs Actual	Walk	Cycle	Public Transport	Car
Expected	57%	4%	6%	33%
Actual	48%	1%	3%	48%

6.52 It demonstrates that there is a split in opinion as to the expected mode of travel to reach an urban park. Across Central Bedfordshire as a whole, 57% would expect to travel on foot, while 33% would use their car. This suggests that the majority of residents expect parks to be in relatively close proximity to their home.

Accessibility of Urban Parks by Placemaking Area

6.53 A higher proportion of residents in East Central Bedfordshire (North Placemaking area) and Dunstable and Houghton Regis expect urban parks to be within walking distance (58% and 62% respectively) than in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south.

Accessibility of Urban Parks by Settlement Hierarchy

6.54 While 58% of residents in the Major Service Centres and 62% of residents in the Minor Service Centres expect to walk to an urban park, this decreases to just 42% and 22% in the large villages and smaller villages. It is clear therefore that the majority of residents in the large and small settlements do not necessarily expect urban parks to be provided within their village. This is also supported by the Town and Parish Council survey which indicates that the majority of Parish Councils would not expect to find urban parks within their village.

Expectations are broadly similar across all socio – economic and demographic groups.

Steps 3 and 4 – Setting and Applying Local Standards

6.55 In order to deliver a successful and varied network of open spaces consideration of quality, quantity and accessibility factors is required.

6.56 To develop provision requirements which are responsive to local needs, the findings of the facility audit and consultation can be used to inform the creation of quality, quantity and accessibility standards for each type of open space.

6.57 The findings of the local needs assessment, alongside the baseline audit of existing provision have therefore been used to determine local standards for the provision of large recreation areas. Existing provision can then be measured against these benchmarks to identify the requirement for new and improved facilities.

6.58 The approach taken to setting standards is explained in Section 2. The data used to set each standard for large recreation areas is outlined below.

Accessibility

Setting Accessibility Standards

6.59 As outlined in Section 2, standards are set using an accessibility led approach. It is therefore essential to understand the distance that residents expect to travel and the mode of transport that they will use to get there. The household survey provides a robust way of analysing these expectations.

6.60 Analysis of aspirations set out earlier in this section demonstrates that views are split between the appropriate modes of travel to reach an urban park. The most definitive split is between the opinions of residents living in the major and Minor Service Centres (where a higher proportion would expect to walk) and the larger and smaller villages (where there is an emphasis on other modes of travel).

6.61 Table 6.5 uses the raw data collated in the telephone survey to evaluate the amount of time residents expect to travel to reach an urban park in each of the settlement hierarchies. It categorises responses into quartiles. Each quartile represents 25% of the respondents. Quartile 1 is equivalent to the 25% of residents with the highest aspirations, or those that would be willing to travel the shortest distance to reach an urban park. PPG17 indicates that a local standard should be set using quartiles, and at a point which reflects the expectations of 75% of the population.

Table 6.5 – Travel Expectations – Urban Parks (Calculated from the Telephone Survey)

Mode of Transport	Walk				Car			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Central Bedfordshire	10	15	20	60	10	15	20	120
Major	10	10	10	60	10	15	20	45
Minor	10	15	20	35	10	15	16	40
Large	10	15	20	30	15	23	30	120
Small	15	15	15	30	15	20	20	45

Table 6.5 reveals that:

Walking

- 25% of residents across Central Bedfordshire would only be willing to walk up to 10 minutes to reach an urban park (quartile 1). With the exception of the smaller villages (15 minutes) this is common to all settlement hierarchies. This means that the remaining 75% of residents would be willing to travel further than 10 minutes. The maximum distance residents were willing to travel was 60 minutes
- This suggests that a 15 minute walk time to reach an urban park is broadly acceptable to 75% of the population

Car

- for those who would travel by car, there is similar evidence - 25% of residents are willing to travel for up to just 10 minutes (quartile 1), (although in the smaller villages and large villages this figure is 15 minutes). The remaining 75% are therefore willing to travel for at least 15 minutes; and
- for residents in the Major and Minor Service Centres, where the majority would expect to walk to an urban park, 25% would only be willing to walk up to 10 – 15 minutes. 75% of residents in the Small Villages and Large Villages (where a higher proportion would drive) will drive more than 15 minutes.

6.62 This suggests that overall, a 15 minute drive time to reach an urban park is broadly acceptable to 75% of the population. Those living in the Small Villages and Large Villages are willing to travel further, up to 20 minutes.

6.63 It is however notable however that there are some variations in expectation according to settlement size:

- residents in larger settlements expect to find urban parks in relatively close proximity to the home
- residents of large villages and smaller villages may be willing to travel further to a urban parks

6.64 It is also important to take into account the views arising from other consultations. It was clear that urban parks are not expected (or sustainable) in every settlement (reflecting the split in expectations between Major and Minor settlements evident in the household survey) although these spaces are still used and valued by residents in settlements of all sizes. It is important that this is taken into account in the planning of new facilities.

6.65 The recommended local accessibility standard and justification for this standard is set out below.

Accessibility

Urban Parks - Accessibility Standard
15 minute walk time (720m) and 20 minute drive time.
Justification
<p>The findings of the consultation demonstrate that there is a split in expectation according to the size of the settlement. While those in the Major and Minor Service Centres expect to find parks within walking distance, residents in the Large and Small villages expect to travel further afield.</p> <p>In the Major and Minor Service Centres, analysis demonstrates that at least 75% of users are willing to travel at least 10 minutes on foot to an urban park. The same analysis indicates that at least 75% of residents are willing to travel by car for up to 20 minutes in the Smaller and Large Villages.</p>

Application of the Accessibility Standard

6.66 The application of this standard is illustrated in maps contained in Appendix B.

6.67 It indicates that aspirations to find a local park within a 720m walk of home in Major and Minor Service Centres are met in very few locations. When taking into account only those sites formally classified as urban parks, the distribution of parks means that only residents in some parts of Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard and Rural South are able to reach a facility categorised as a park (and in reality, the facilities in Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard are just small gardens).

6.68 Residents in the Major Service Centres of Biggleswade, Ampthill, Flitwick, Sandy and Wixams are outside of the catchment of an urban park and to achieve this standard, at least one park would be required centrally in each urban area (either by upgrading an existing site or creating a new park). Residents in all minor service centres are also outside the catchment of a facility.

6.69 Biggleswade, Flitwick Sandy and Ampthill all contain sites classified as larger recreation areas (formal – Biggleswade and Sandy and informal – Flitwick) and countryside recreation sites that to an extent fulfil the role of an urban park.

6.70 Similarly, residents in the Large and Small Villages expect to travel by car for 10 – 20 minutes to reach a park. The location of these sites in the south of Central Bedfordshire means that some residents living in the North must travel further if they wish to access one of the parks within Central Bedfordshire. It must be noted however, that many residents of Central Bedfordshire are able to access parks in neighbouring authorities, specifically Bedford Park (Bedford) and Campbell Park (Milton Keynes).

6.71 Section 7 will consider the role of large recreation areas that are currently functioning as parks and the impact that they have on meeting the needs of residents.

Setting Quantity Standards

6.72 Consultation reveals that there is a split in opinion with regards the amount of urban parks. It is however clearly demonstrated that residents in the Major Service Centres in

particular expect to find parks in close proximity to their home and that these aspirations are not currently met.

6.73 To inform further analysis, Table 6.6 considers the amount of space that would be required to meet current need, assuming that a minimum of one park is provided in each of the Major Service Centres and that this park is a minimum of 5 hectares.

Table 6.6 - Baseline Requirement for Urban Parks

Settlement Hierarchy	Current Provision (number of sites)	Current provision (hectares)	Requirement for additional parks	Total requirement for parks
Major Service Centres	4	20.64	Biggleswade / Ampthill / Flitwick / Sandy / Wixams - 25hectares	40.64
Minor Service Centres	0	0		
Large Villages	0	0	0	
Small Villages	0	0	0	
TOTAL	4	20.64		45.64

6.74 A total minimum requirement of 45.64 hectares would therefore be needed to provide at least one park in each of the major service centres.

6.75 This equates to a figure of 0.18ha per 1000 population based upon the current population. This takes into account residents living at all levels of the settlement hierarchy, even though it assumes that urban parks would only be located within Major Service Centres. This is because analysis of expectations (and current patterns of use) suggest that residents in Small and Large Villages will travel up to 20 minutes to use parks and that they function as a destination. These facilities are therefore serving all residents.

6.76 Given that both Dunstable and Houghton Regis contain only small gardens, it could be considered that further parks should be required in these settlements. Two further 5ha parks would require provision of 0.22ha per 1000 population.

6.77 A further 45ha would be required if urban parks were also to be provided in Minor Service Centres (0.39) ha per 1000 population.

6.78 While this provides an indication of the land requirements for the provision of parks, the delivery of such a facility in each of the Major Service Centres is likely to be possible by upgrading existing sites, rather than the creation of new facilities. Sites in Sandy, Flitwick and Leighton Buzzard are above the 5ha threshold, while in other areas they would fall below.

6.79 Based upon the above calculations, the quantity standard for urban parks is set out below.

Quantity

Urban Parks - Quantity Standard
0.22 ha per 1000 population (provision in Major Service Centres only)– 0.39 ha per population (provision in Major and Minor Service Centres).
Justification
This figure represents the minimum requirement for urban parks in Central Bedfordshire. It has been derived through the calculation of the amount of land dedicated to existing urban parks as well as the assumption that a park of at least 5ha would be provided in each of the urban areas (to meet with aspirations identified relating to accessibility and distance thresholds).

Application of the Quantity Standard

6.80 As this figure assumes that provision is only required in Major Service Centres, it is not appropriate to apply it at all levels of the settlement hierarchy to determine shortfalls and surpluses (although these facilities remain used and valued by residents in all sizes of settlement).

6.81 To provide an indication of the location of surpluses and deficiencies, Table 6.7 outlines the adequacy of provision against the figure of 0.22 ha per 1000 population by Placemaking Area. This should be considered indicative only as the figure is in reality more useful to project the needs of new populations, rather than to identify current shortfalls.

6.82 Table 6.7 overleaf clearly demonstrates however that in addition to the shortfalls in space required to meet current provision, future population growth will generate demand for an additional 7 hectares of parkland. This represents one to two additional parks in total.

Table 6.7 – Shortfalls and Surpluses by Placemaking Area.

Area	Current Provision	Amount Required (Current Needs)	Amount Required (Future Needs)	Current Shortfall / Surplus	Future shortfall / surplus
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	20.38755	11.4708	12.8436	8.91675	7.54395
Leighton Linslade and South	1.93	11.8954	13.6994	-9.9654	-11.7694
North	0	32.791	37.3802	-32.791	-37.3802
TOTAL		56.1572	63.9232	-56.1572	-63.9232

6.83 As table 6.7 demonstrates, the largest shortfalls are located within Leighton Linslade and the South and the North areas. The amount of urban parks in Dunstable and Houghton

Regis exceeds the minimum standards due the large size of Houghton Hall Park (Houghton Regis).

Application of Quantity Standard by Settlement

6.84 Unsurprisingly, the settlements with the largest deficiencies are those that do not have any urban parks) or in the case of Leighton Buzzard, only a small park. Many of these areas will also see significant growth in future years and will therefore remain the areas most deficient in parks, specifically:

- Leighton Buzzard (current requirement 14.6 hectares, which will increase to 17.47 hectares)
- Biggleswade (current requirement of 6.4 hectares which will increase to 8.2 hectares)
- Sandy (limited population growth will see demand remain around 4.56 hectares)
- Flitwick (demand equivalent to 5 hectares and population growth will be relatively limited, meaning that it will remain at this level)

Quality

Setting Quality Standards

6.85 Quality is as important as the amount of each type of open space and in particular for urban parks, consultations suggest that it is the quality of the facility is a key determinant of whether a site is perceived to be an urban park.

6.86 Local consultations have enabled the identification of issues viewed as important to residents, as well as aspirations that they have in relation to the type of spaces that they would like to see provided. This input can then be used to identify issues that are important to measure both improvements needed to existing parks and to guide the design of new parks.

6.87 Like for countryside recreation sites, The Green Flag (managed by the Civic Trust) is recognised as an important national standard for urban parks. This award recognises the quality of individual open space sites and is often associated with formal urban parks, although it can relate equally to all types of formal and Informal recreation areas.

6.88 Achievement of a Green Flag award can raise the profile of a park and increase the number of visitors to the site. Research undertaken (www.greenspace.org) indicates that tourists make a special effort to visit award winning parks. The achievement of such an award also demonstrates best value, and can help lever external funding through improvement grants that award winners are eligible to apply for. The Green Flag criteria seek to promote best practice management principles, including community involvement, meeting with the localism agenda.

6.89 The key criteria involved in the attainment of the Green Flag award are:

- a welcoming place – including signage and safe access for all. Site visits highlighted issues with some footpaths and routes through sites, although this feature was more highly rated by current users;
- healthy, safe and secure – providing safe equipment, addressing dog fouling, appropriate provision of toilets etc. The safety of sites in Central Bedfordshire was not highlighted as an issue specific to parks, however the site infrastructure, including

toilets, were highlighted as both areas of concern and important in terms of aspirations for future provision. Furthermore, infrastructure was also viewed as an essential component of a successful park;

- clean and well maintained – appropriate attention should be given to litter and vandalism management and the maintenance of the areas. Cleanliness and maintenance was viewed as one of the areas with potential for improvement during site assessments, but was highlighted as essential throughout consultation relating to all types of open space in Central Bedfordshire;
- sustainability - Methods used in maintaining the park/green space and its facilities should be environmentally sound, relying on best practices. This may include recycling and minimising the use of pesticides. As well as using sustainable management practices, Friends Groups can play an important role in ensuring the long term sustainability of parks by providing invaluable volunteer support and increasing revenue at parks, by holding events at parks, for example;
- conservation and heritage - Particular attention should be paid to the conservation and appropriate management of Natural features, buildings and structural features. Many consultees highlighted the importance of retaining the individual character of open spaces and building upon the history of the area (Section 3);
- community involvement - the management of sites should actively involve members of the community, and the site should provide appropriate levels of recreational facilities for all sectors of the community. Again this was highlighted as a key issue by many consultees (Section 3) and it was highlighted that this one of the current successes at many sites across Central Bedfordshire;
- marketing - a marketing strategy should be in place, which is in practice and regularly reviewed. This should include good provision of information to users and the site should be promoted as a community resource; and
- management - a management plan or strategy should be in place to address all of the above criteria.

6.90 The recommended quality standard is set out overleaf, and draws upon the key findings of consultation and site visits, as well as the principles of best practice guidance outlined above. Further detail can be found in the Design Guidance.

Urban Parks - Quality Standard	
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice indicate that new and existing urban parks should meet with the following criteria;	
Size and Location	At least 5ha in size Appropriately located for local catchment (within 480m of target residents) Accessible via safe footpaths and roads Clear boundaries that are locally appropriate and promote security
Character	Less than 5% total building area Clearly defined entrances Well maintained and landscaped Ornamental planting Reflecting the character and history of the local area
Access	Clearly defined pathways and cycleways Compliant with DDA – access audit in place
Facilities	Variety of opportunities within park Clearly defined surfaced paths Appropriate and regular seating Toilets Refreshments Information and signage both to and within the site as well as at the main entrance, including interpretation boards Range of Play equipment (linking with requirements identified in Section 9 and 10) Appropriate bins Management of dog fouling Sufficient parking Lighting
Activities	Clear events programme (with events suitable for young and old) Volunteer opportunities for the local community (linked with section 3) Visible daily staff presence

6.91 In addition, drawing on the findings of consultations and national best practice it is also desirable for the following to be in place;

- transport plan or policy for the site; and
- outreach and marketing programme to engage and involve local residents

Application of Quality Standards

6.92 The existing urban parks demonstrate a variety of characteristics, but do not meet all of the criteria above. It is however important to take into account the character of the area and the facilities that are therefore required. Three of the four sites fall below the size criteria for urban parks and function more as ornamental gardens, although they are important within the setting of the settlement in which they are based. The full range of facilities at these sites is therefore likely to be unsuitable. Key priorities may include;

- Houghton Hall Park – footpaths / planting / landscaping /toilets / refreshments
- Priory Gardens – Bins, parking, play
- Grove House Gardens – Bins
- Mentmore Memorial Gardens – potential extension to include Mentmore Memorial Park to enable provision of play opportunities. Bins, site infrastructure.

Summary – Key Issues

Usage

The category of urban parks overlaps significantly with spaces included within larger recreation areas, particularly where sites perhaps function as an urban park but do not necessarily have the facilities that would be expected. Just Houghton Hall Park (Houghton Regis) can be classified as a formal park in Central Bedfordshire. There are an additional three gardens (one in Leighton Buzzard and two in Dunstable) that also have similar functions.

13% of respondents to the telephone survey visit urban parks at least once weekly and just a further 18% use facilities at least once per month. Although this means that urban parks are on the whole visited less frequently than all other types of open space in Central Bedfordshire (reflecting the limited numbers of sites) the number of people that never visit parks (41% visit less than once per year or never) is lower than for some other types of open space. Analysis of use demonstrates that there are differences between different sectors of the population, with those with dependents, younger residents and white British residents more likely to use a park than other groups.

More so than for other sites, a lack of local facilities and difficulties accessing urban parks are amongst the key barriers to use of these facilities. Particularly for those in small and large villages, the main motivations for visiting include events and play, suggesting that urban parks are viewed as a destination.

Quality, Quantity and Accessibility

The distribution of parks impacts upon usage patterns – all urban parks are situated within the Major Service Centres. The clear implication of this is that residents in the Minor Service Centres and villages must travel to reach facilities. Despite this, there are no real differences in the views of residents on the amount of parks, with a clear split between those that consider there to be enough and those that do not. Geographically however it is clear that there are perceived to be some gaps in provision, with several Town Councils suggesting that there are not enough parks but highlighting opportunities to upgrade existing facilities to improve access to such sites. There is an expectation that urban parks will be provided in the major service centres and to a lower degree (public expectation) in the minor service centres. Evidence suggests that residents in the major service centres and minor service centres expect to find an urban park within 15 minutes walk of their home, while those in large and small villages are willing to travel up to 20 minutes by car.

Analysis of baseline provision requirements suggest that between 0.22 ha per 1000 population (if parks are only provided in Major Service Centres) and 0.39ha per 1000 population (if parks are also provided in Minor Service Centres) is required. Given that it is likely that much of this requirement can be delivered through the upgrade of existing urban parks, these figures provide a broad indication of need only. Population growth will however generate demand for an additional 6 – 7 hectares of parkland, focused in the Major Service Centres. There are particular deficiencies in provision in Leighton Buzzard (where population growth will see demand increase by almost 3 hectares), Biggleswade, Sandy and Flitwick and it is in these areas where

the largest deficiencies will also remain in future years.

The quality of urban parks is considered favourably. 72% of respondents rate these spaces as good or very good and only 9% indicate that they are poor or very poor. Very few residents highlighted the quality of facilities as a barrier to use, further emphasising this point. Key areas for improvement were however identified, including seating, events programme and toilets. Site visits highlighted that while gardens were in general positively rated, some improvements to Houghton Hall Park were desirable.

Step 5 – Identifying Priorities

Key Issues to Address

6.93 The above analysis therefore indicates that the Recreation and Open Space Strategy needs to address the following issues relating to urban parks;

- There are opportunities to increase the usage of parks and open spaces through the provision of more formal parks. The telephone survey indicates that these are desirable facilities
- Residents expect to be able to reach an urban park within a 15 minute walk time in the Major and minor service centres and provision is therefore anticipated to be local. New facilities are required in most settlements if this aspiration is to be achieved
- Several Town and Parish Councils highlight opportunities to upgrade existing recreation areas to create formal parks
- Population growth is likely to see a further increase in demand
- Quality improvements are required to existing facilities if high aspirations for the type of facility met.

Recreation and Open Space Strategy Outcomes and Key Priorities

6.94 Building upon the above, the recommendations set out below would help to deliver the following outcomes:

- ensure that residents have local access to urban parks within major service centres
- maximise access to residents outside of major service centres to formal parks
- attract users from all sectors of the population; and
- meet user aspirations relating to quality of provision as well as local priorities and national objectives

Key Priorities

6.95 It is therefore recommended that key priorities for the delivery of urban parks across Central Bedfordshire are as follows:

- Given the clearly evidenced strategic role of these sites, promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Plan
- Seek to ensure that at least one urban park is provided in each Major Service Centre. Location should be tailored to ensure that the majority of residents in these settlements are within a 15 minute walk time of parks. This will involve the provision of several additional parks (or the upgrade of existing large recreation areas)

- Work with communities to ensure that all parks meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section
- Create a network of green linkages to each urban park facilitating access on foot and by cycle (for local residents) as well as by car and public transport for those coming from further afield)
- Ensure that the impact of population growth on urban parks is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions. Where quantity and access to parks are already sufficient, contributions should be required towards the improvements of the quality of existing parks.

Site / Area Specific Implications

6.96 Table 6.8 below summarises the likely site / area specific implications of the above recommendations.

Table 6.8 – Site Specific Priorities to Address Issues and Recommendations

Protect
All existing sites
New provision
Short Term – Major and Minor Service Centres – key priorities Leighton Buzzard (new site) Biggleswade (potential to upgrade Franklin Recreation Ground and / or create new linear park), Flitwick (potential to upgrade existing site and or create new site), Sandy (potential to upgrade existing site and / or create new site). New provision should take into account current and projected requirements based upon population growth.
Longer term - potential to provide additional sites in minor service centres.
Quality Enhancements
Houghton Hall Park Existing and new sites in line with target quality criteria Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to use existing facilities.

7. Large Formal Recreation Areas

Introduction

7.1 This section sets out the assessment relating to large formal recreation areas in Central Bedfordshire. It is structured as follows:

- Context and Definition
- Usage Profile
- Existing Provision – Quality, Quantity and Accessibility - and Aspirations
- Summary – Issues to Address
- Implications and recommendations

Context and Definition

7.2 Large recreation areas are designed primarily for the purposes of recreation. Sites may also however provide a sense of place for the local community, help to address social inclusion issues within wider society and also provide structural and landscaping benefits. Some sites may also have wider ecological and environmental functions.

7.3 For the purposes of this study, large recreation areas have been defined as follows:

“large green sites which are easily accessible containing opportunities for casual and / or formal recreation for example dog walking, children’s play, casual or formal outdoor sports. (most sites are circa 1ha or above). “

7.4 Responses to the household survey and wider consultation did, however, identify different expectations of usage and provision between Formal and Informal Recreation Areas. To accurately capture the different primary functions of large recreation sites in Central Bedfordshire, and to identify those sites whose primary function is ecological rather than recreational, this category has been subdivided into:

Type 1: Large Formal Recreation Areas

- Large sites that contain formal recreation opportunities, for example sports pitches and play facilities. These sites will be maintained and managed primarily for formal recreation.

Type 2: Informal Recreation Areas

- Sites are primarily used for informal recreation opportunities. They are likely to be more natural in character and contain fewer formal facilities. This categorisation includes woodlands and commons. These spaces could also provide some complimentary facilities such as children and young people’s facilities and/or outdoor sports facilities.

7.5 It should be noted that the availability of one type of recreation space does not necessarily negate demand for others.

This section considers the adequacy of Large Formal Recreation Areas only. Informal recreation areas are considered in Section 8.

7.6 Facilities within Large Formal Recreation Areas have been categorised under the most appropriate typology. Large green areas and footpaths will provide the total size of the recreation area (hectares) and the other facilities (including play areas) will be calculated separately under their own typology. This ensures that open space is not counted twice within this study. The site will however be considered as a whole entity and the resources that it offers holistically will be taken into account during analysis.

7.7 It should also be noted that there is an interrelationship between urban parks and large formal recreation areas, with both types of space fulfilling some similar functions. As an urban park is a higher order facility (i.e. contains more facilities) than a formal recreation area, in areas where residents are within appropriate distances of an urban park, additional formal recreation areas will not be required. This will be returned to later in this section.

7.8 The remainder of this section presents the findings of the local needs assessment and the audit of provision and presents a summary of the usage, quality, quantity and accessibility of facilities for large formal recreation areas across Central Bedfordshire.

7.9 The key issues arising from the evaluation of local needs and audit of existing provision, as well as the creation and application of local standards are summarised at the end of this section.

Steps 1 and 2 – Evaluation of Local Needs and Audit of Existing Provision

Usage Profile

7.10 A household survey of 1000 residents of Central Bedfordshire was carried out to establish a baseline of views regarding current and future provision of the range of open space types detailed in this study. As well as providing an understanding of views and aspirations relating to current provision, the survey also enables evaluation of the current user profile of each type of open space. *Consultation did not differentiate between the subdivided Large Recreation Area typology and therefore relates to both formal and informal large recreation areas.*

Household Survey Responses

Usage

7.11 26% of respondents to the survey visit large recreation areas at least once weekly and a further 22% use these spaces at least once per month. This makes this type of open space one of the most frequently visited across Central Bedfordshire. 35% of residents never visit a large recreation area meaning that these spaces serve the highest proportion of residents of all types of open space in the area.

7.12 Use of large recreation areas varies more between different demographic groups than most other types of open space, in particular:

- more than half of residents aged over 55 (56%) never visit large recreation areas, whereas just 10% of those aged 18 and 34 never visit. Those aged 35 to 54 visit most

frequently with 37% visiting once per week or more. This compares to 18% of residents aged 18 – 34 and 20% of those aged over 55

- unlike other types of open space, male residents visit large recreation areas much more frequently than females. 46% of females never visit a large recreation area (23% of males) while 35% of males visit weekly or more regularly (19% of females)
- residents with a disability are less likely to visit a large recreation area. Just 10% visit weekly (compared to 29%) and 45% never use these sites
- like all other types of open space (except allotments), residents with dependents below aged 14 are more likely to use large recreation areas than those without. Unlike other types of open space, residents with children aged between 9 and 13 are more likely to visit (38% weekly) than those with children under 8 (20% weekly).
- there is little difference in use between white British residents and non white British residents. A slightly higher proportion of residents of non white British origin never use large recreation areas.

Usage of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Areas

7.13 The survey indicates similarities in the use of large recreation areas in the different Placemaking Areas of Central Bedfordshire. The proportion of residents that never use such spaces is slightly higher in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and the West (part of the North placemaking area). These spaces are used most frequently in the West (31% weekly or more often); 20% of residents in Dunstable and Houghton Regis, 24% in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South, and 29% of residents in the East use these spaces weekly.

Usage Large Formal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

7.14 There are few differences between the usage of large recreation areas at different levels of the settlement hierarchy. 71% of residents in large villages use large recreation areas at least once per year compared to 58% in the small villages, 64% in major settlements and 65% in minor settlements. This demonstrates that these spaces are important resources in settlements of all sizes.

Reasons for visiting Large Formal Recreation Areas

7.15 Reasons for visiting large recreation areas are perhaps more varied than some other types of open space. Respondents indicate that the main reasons for visiting are:

- To relax (33%)
- Walk and exercise (32%)
- Children play (28%)
- Dog walking (14%)
- Sports (13%)
- Events (8%)

7.16 Like most other types of open space, a lack of time (30%) and interest (20%) are the main barriers to use. The next most common reasons are difficulties in accessing sites (11%), a lack of local spaces (4%) and a lack of facilities (3%). 1% indicate that disabled access is a concern to them.

7.17 Analysis of use across the different segments of population reveals little variation in reasons for visiting large recreation areas despite the differences in user patterns. Analysis concludes that:

- men are more likely to use these spaces to play sport and relax whilst women use them for play (perhaps with children) and to relax
- the proportion of residents using large recreation areas for walking and exercise increases with age. More residents in younger age groups use these spaces to relax

7.18 As the population of Central Bedfordshire ages, these types of space may therefore become more important.

Reasons for Visiting Large Formal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Areas

7.19 Reasons for visiting spaces are the same in all areas, although use in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South is often for events, whereas in Dunstable and Houghton Regis they are more often used for exercise. Few residents in Leighton Buzzard expect to use large recreation areas for sport.

Reasons for Visiting Large Formal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

7.20 The reasons for use in each of the three settlement hierarchies are the same, although these spaces are used particularly for play in the Minor Service Centres and for sports in the Major Service Centres.

Barriers to Use

7.21 Lack of interest and a lack of time are the main barriers to use of large recreation areas across Central Bedfordshire. The most commonly referenced other barrier is a perceived lack of local spaces.

Barriers to Use of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Areas

7.22 The barriers to use remain consistent across all placemaking areas. There is however a greater degree of concern around the provision of local spaces and difficulties in accessing sites in the Leighton Buzzard and Rural South than in all other parts.

Barriers to Use of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

7.23 Barriers to use are also the same in each settlement hierarchy. The most notable exception to this is that 19% of residents in Large Villages highlight the lack of a local facility as a barrier to use, and 25% indicate that these spaces are difficult to get to. Almost all residents highlighting this as an issue are based within the Large Villages.

Current Provision and Views on Current Provision

Quantity

7.24 The audit reveals that 238 hectares is dedicated to Large Formal Recreation Areas in Central Bedfordshire.

7.25 Table 7.1 summarises the number, size distribution and total land dedicated to these spaces and sets out the current and future provision in terms of ‘hectares per 1000 population’. The calculation excludes land that is covered in other typologies (for example play areas or sports facilities).

Table 7.1 Size Distribution of Large Formal Recreation Areas

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (2022)	Average Site Size (Ha)
Formal Recreation Areas	106	239.3	0.94	0.82	2.3

Table 7.2 summarises the amount of large formal recreation areas by Placemaking Area and indicates that the total provision is relatively consistent.

Table 7.2 Size Distribution of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Area

Place-making Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision	Hectares per 1000 Population	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Perception of Residents
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	19.0	50.2	0.96	0.86	31% not enough
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	19.0	47.2	0.87	0.76	24% not enough
North	68.0	141.9	0.95	0.84	26% not enough (east) and 20% not enough (West)

7.26 In order to evaluate whether there are any differences in the distribution of large formal recreation areas according to the size of the settlement, Table 7.3 summarises the distribution of these facilities by settlement hierarchy.

Table 7.3 Size Distribution of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

Hierarchy Type	Site Type	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (future – 2022)	Average Site Size (Ha)	Perception of Residents
Major Service Centres	Formal	43	104.3	0.75	0.65	2.4	23% not enough
Minor Service Centres	Formal	17	42.3	0.85	0.75	2.5	38% not enough
Large Villages	Formal	27	59.1057	1.44	1.34	2.2	13% not enough
Small Villages	Formal	18	32.1	1.23	1.18	1.8	35% not enough

Quantity of Provision - Key Issues

7.27 Tables 7.1 -7.3 illustrate the following key issues regarding the number, type and size distribution of large formal recreation areas:

- the size distribution of Formal Recreation Areas ranges from 0.87ha – 0.96ha per 1000 population meaning that provision is geographically relatively even
- provision is highest in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and lowest in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South placemaking areas
- the amount of formal recreation space varies by settlement hierarchy, but there are no clear patterns in the distribution of such spaces, with provision in the major service centres, minor service centres and small villages all relatively consistent (in terms of hectares per 1000 population), but the amount of land dedicated to large formal areas in the large villages being significantly higher. The average size of these spaces is consistent across the three largest tiers of the settlement hierarchy, but sites are generally smaller in the villages
- the future population growth sees provision per 1000 population decrease significantly. This is particularly apparent in the major and minor settlements, where the highest levels of growth will occur.

Quantity of Provision – Consultation Responses

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

7.28 A review of the priorities of Green Infrastructure studies and Parish Plans reveals that in the majority of areas, improvements to existing large formal recreation areas are prioritised over new facilities. Reflecting the satisfaction with existing levels of provision, relatively few plans identify a requirement for new provision.

7.29 The key priorities included in current documents in relation to the amount of informal recreation areas are set out below. This list includes views provided as part of Town and Parish Council consultation, as well as those set out in adopted policy documents;

- Biggleswade - Requirement to increase publically accessible open space to west and south of Biggleswade (GI) – Biggleswade Green Wheel
- Sandy – new landscaped green space for recreation (GI)
- Extension of Recreation Ground at Arlesey (including provision of additional facilities and gardens) GI
- Pottton – increase community parkland (GI) and provide more recreational amenities
- Haynes – new facilities required (Parish)
- Henlow – new community park – GI
- Langford – extension of existing playing fields (GI)
- Lower Stondon – creation of new spaces (parish Plan)
- Westoning – lack of recreation space (Parish Plan)
- Chalton – extension of larger recreation ground (GI)
- Kensworth – expansion of recreation ground (GI)
- Streatley – expansion of recreation ground (GI)
- Wrestlingworth – Parish Plan highlighted a need. Parish seeking to lease land Informal Recreation Areas.

Household Survey Responses

7.30 The household survey demonstrates an overall view that there are enough large recreation areas (64%) and 5% believe there are too many. 25% consider there to be not enough, while a further 6% feel there are only nearly enough. Satisfaction with provision is therefore higher than most types of open space in Central Bedfordshire and there are no clear differences in views between residents of different sectors of the population.

Views on Quantity of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Areas

7.31 The household survey indicates that views on the amount of provision are also relatively evenly matched although residents in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and the East are slightly less satisfied with the amount of spaces. When taking into account both formal and informal recreation spaces it is in this area where levels of provision are lowest.

7.32 Interestingly, despite higher levels of dissatisfaction with quantity in the East (part of the north placemaking area), 63% of sites in the North placemaking area are located in the East and almost the same proportion of hectares of large formal recreation areas. This may suggest that there are other issues affecting the views of residents in this area. As noted previously, the household survey grouped together views on formal and informal recreation areas.

Views on Quantity of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

7.33 Despite the variations in the amount of provision, analysis of the household survey demonstrates that there are no clear variations in opinion on the quantity of large recreation areas between residents at different levels of the settlement hierarchy. Residents in the minor service centres and small villages are slightly more dissatisfied with a higher proportion of residents indicating that there are not enough or only nearly enough. It is in these settlements where analysis of barriers to use demonstrated that there is perception that there is a lack of local open spaces and that these sites are difficult to access.

7.34 Notably however, the proportion of residents believing provision to be about right is highest in the large villages, where combined provision is also highest.

Views on Quantity - Town and Parish Councils

7.35 Town and Parish Councils demonstrate positive perceptions in relation to the amount of large recreation areas than respondents to the household survey and 75% consider there to be enough of these areas.

7.36 The majority of Towns / Parishes operate an area fitting within the description of a formal recreation area. Interestingly, many of those who indicate that provision is insufficient qualify this by stating that the quality of existing facilities are poor – this suggests that qualitative improvements are perhaps of greater significance in most areas than the provision of additional space. The impact of population growth on existing sites was however raised and it was indicated that new space may be required to serve the needs of residents moving into the area when large quantities of development was taking place. Just five responding Town and Parish Councils indicated that they would prioritise the provision of additional recreation space over the improvement of existing sites. The importance of these sites is however clear, with 16% of respondents identifying large recreation areas as their top priority for improvement.

Current Provision

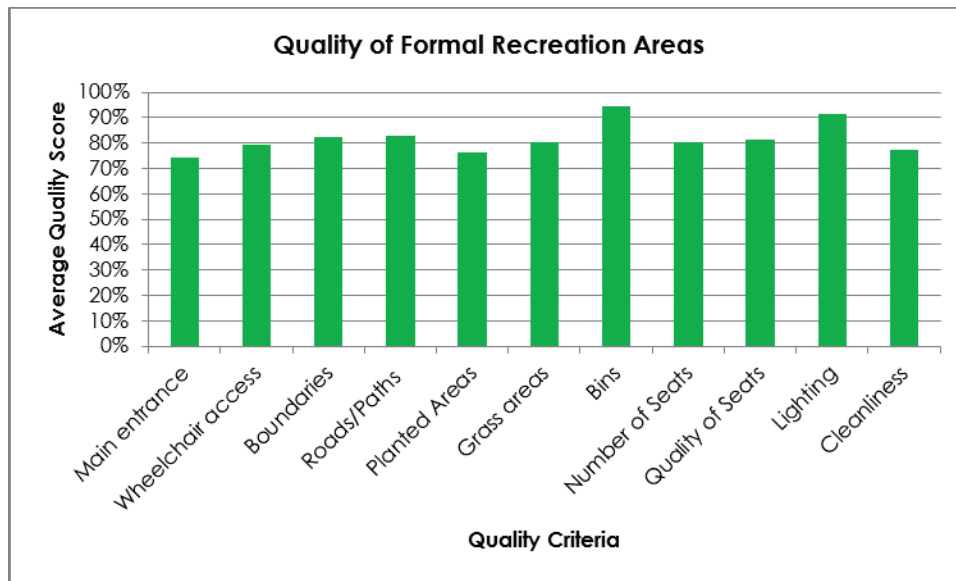
Quality

7.37 The quality of large formal recreation areas was evaluated using an assessment matrix. This is provided in Appendix D.

7.38 Assessments of formal recreation areas are particularly difficult as the components of these recreation areas (i.e. pitches, sports facilities, play equipment and facilities for teenagers) are evaluated in different sections of this report. The site assessments undertaken for formal recreation areas consider the function of the site as a whole.

7.39 Site visits reveal that the quality of facilities is varying, with an average score of 60%. Overall scores range from 16% to 95% indicating that there are some very poor sites as well as examples of very good facilities. The average quality scores achieved for each of the quality criteria are summarised in Chart 7.1. It indicates that like some other types of open space, cleanliness is the most poorly scoring feature. There is also scope to improve the main entrance and planting. In contrast, the amount of bins is high and many sites are also well lit.

Chart 7.1 – Quality of Large Formal Recreation Areas



7.40 Further review of the facilities provided at large formal recreation areas demonstrates that sites in the smaller settlements generally offer fewer facilities. Those in the Major Service Centres are more likely to contain a full variety of facilities including sports provision and facilities for children and teenagers.

Placemaking Areas and Settlement Hierarchy

7.41 Site visits do not reveal any clear differences in quality between facilities in different areas of Central Bedfordshire or settlements of different sizes.

Quality of Provision – Consultation Responses

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

7.42 While consultations provide an overview of the quality issues experienced, as well as components that are important in the provision of recreation areas, reviews of the existing Green Infrastructure Studies, Parish Plans and detailed consultation provide a more in depth understanding of site specific priorities related to both formal and informal recreation areas. Sites specifically referenced as requiring improvement are set out below. As identified earlier in this section, the majority of qualitative improvements relate to formal recreation areas, while the creation of new informal recreation spaces takes higher priority than improvement of these sites.

7.43 The key priorities included in current documents in relation to the quality of larger recreation areas are set out below. This list includes views provided as part of Town and Parish Council consultation, as well as those set out in adopted policy documents;

- Improvement of sites through provision of new facilities (in particular Fairfield Road) – Biggleswade (Parish Consultation)
- Restoration of Lakes Recreation Ground, Biggleswade (GI study)
- Improvement of facilities at recreation grounds in Arlesey (GI)
- Potton – more recreational amenities on sites (GI)
- Blunham – require floodlighting and upgrade of riverside area (Parish Council)
- Clophill – improved security and amenities at recreation ground (Parish Plan)

- Haynes – require improvements to paths (Parish)
- Heath and Reach – upgrade Thrift Recreation Ground (Parish)
- Houghton Conquest – sports facilities poor (Parish)
- Lower Stondon – improvement of existing spaces (Parish Plan)
- Silsoe – improved recreation area needed (Parish Plan and GI)
- Totternhoe – recreation ground requires improvement to ensure it can also fulfil village green function (GI)

Household Survey Responses

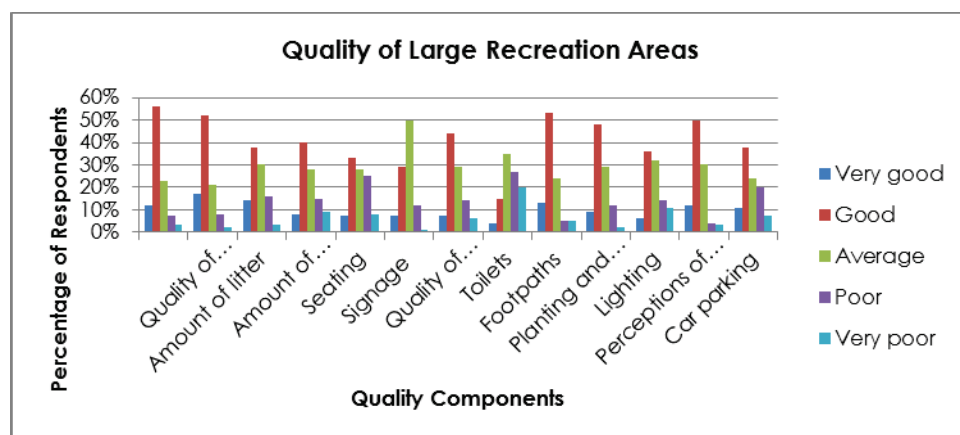
7.44 The household survey indicates that the quality of large recreation areas is viewed positively. 64% of respondents rate these spaces as good or very good and only 5% indicate that they are poor or very poor. Very few residents highlighted the quality of facilities as a barrier to use, further emphasising this point. As already emphasised, views on formal and Informal recreation areas were combined during the household survey.

7.45 There are few clear differences in perceived quality between different sectors of the population. It must be noted however, that the majority of residents who consider spaces to be poor are in the older age groups.

7.46 Chart 7.3 which considers the only the views of those who use large recreation areas, evaluates the perceived quality of key components of a large recreation area. It reveals that with the exception of toilets and signage (which are rated more negatively), the most common response for each component is good. The areas where the highest levels of satisfaction are recorded are as follows;

- Quality of maintenance (69% good or very good)
- Footpaths (66% good or very good)
- Perceptions of safety (62% good or very good)
- Landscaping and planting (57% good or very good)

Chart 7.3 – Survey results for Quality Factors for Larger Recreation Areas



Areas where the highest levels of dissatisfaction are evident are:

- toilets(47% poor or very poor)
- seating (33% poor or very poor)

- car parking (27% poor or very poor)
- lighting (25% poor or very poor)
- dog fouling (24% poor or very poor)

7.47 It must be noted that there are higher levels of dissatisfaction exhibited in relation to many of these components than for many of the other types of open space. In addition:

- for all aspects of large recreation areas, residents aged between 34 and 54 are significantly more negative than those in other age groups (for all components except the amount of dog fouling)
- residents of white British origin are far more positive than those of non white ethnic origin for almost all components of a large recreation area with much higher proportions of the population rating different components as average or poor. The only real exception is footpaths; and
- there are no clear differences between those that would consider themselves to have a disability and those that do not
- residents with dependents do not rate the quality of facilities as highly as those without. Those with children aged between 9 – 13 (the age group that use facilities most frequently) are most negative. The range of facilities provided emerges as a particular issue for those with dependents aged 14 – 18

Views on Quality of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Areas

7.48 The survey demonstrates that the overall perceptions are similar across all parts of Central Bedfordshire. While residents in the west of Central Bedfordshire are generally more positive about the quality of their open spaces, all residents considering large recreation areas to be poor are also situated within this area. Leighton Buzzard and Rural South is however the area where the highest proportion of residents gave negative responses.

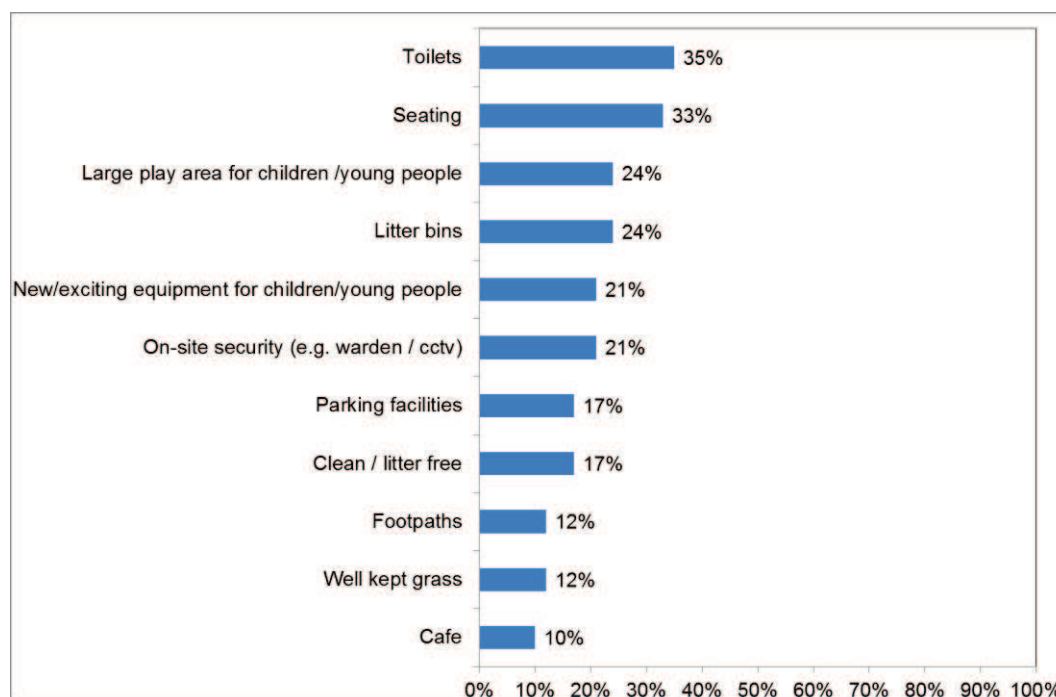
Views on Quality of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

7.49 There are few variations in overall opinions of quality by settlement hierarchy. Fewer residents in the small villages and large villages consider the quality of provision to be good, and most of those indicating that these spaces are of poor quality are based in the small villages or large villages. The majority of comments made to support the views provided suggest that this can largely be attributed to the quality of formal recreation areas rather than more informal sites.

Quality of Large Formal Recreation Areas– Aspirations

7.50 Chart 7.4 illustrates the survey results identifying the factors that residents consider most important in the provision of high quality large recreation areas. Seating and the inclusion of basic facilities are the factors that are considered to be most important. It should be noted that aspirations for large recreation areas consider both formal and informal recreation spaces.

Chart 7.4 Residents' views on quality



Town and Parish Councils

7.51 The quality of larger recreation areas was one of the most widely referenced issues in the Town and Parish Council survey. On the whole, existing provision was viewed positively, with 30% considering facilities to be average and 60% good. The remainder were rated as poor. The key areas of concern or for improvement highlighted were:

- maintenance issues
- dog fouling and litter
- the need to provide a wider variety of facilities and / or equipment at the site (this links to analysis in other typologies)

7.52 Interestingly, just five Towns/Parish Councils prioritised additional provision over the improvement of existing sites. Those indicating that the need for additional larger recreation areas was greater than improvement of current facilities were Leighton Linlade Town Council, Houghton Regis Town Council, Heath and Reach Parish Council, Flitton and Greenfield Parish Council and Wrestlingworth and Cockayne Hatley Parish Council.

7.53 Larger recreation areas are evidently important to the communities of Central Bedfordshire. Six Towns / Parishes identified investment into larger recreation areas as their highest open space related priority (Flitwick Town Council, Houghton Conquest Parish Council, Eggington Parish Council, Leighton Linlade Town Council, Houghton Regis Town Council and Eversholt Parish Council) and a further five Towns / Parishes identified this type of open space as being within their top three priorities.

Accessibility

7.54 Appropriate access to open space and recreation facilities is as important as the quality of those facilities. Table 7.4 summarises the mode of transport that residents in Central Bedfordshire expect to use, and actually use, to reach a large recreation area.

Table 7.4 – Mode of Travel

Expected vs Actual	Walk	Cycle	Public Transport	Car
Expected	73%	2%	4%	21%
Actual	69%	1%	3%	27%

7.55 Table 7.4 highlights an expectation that residents will have a large recreation area within walking distance from their home. Analysis of actual usage patterns (through the household survey) indicates that this is delivered in most areas.

7.56 Further analysis suggests that this varies slightly by placemaking area and settlement hierarchy specifically:

Accessibility of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Area

- there are different expectations in each of the placemaking areas. Spaces are expected within walking distance in Dunstable and Houghton Regis (78%) and East Central Bedfordshire (77%) (part of the North placemaking area). In the west (again part of the north placemaking area) 65% would expect to travel on foot, while this drops to 53% in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South; and

Accessibility of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

- there is much more limited variation across the different tiers of the settlement hierarchy, with the overarching expectation at all levels except small villages being that large recreation areas are within walking distance. A higher proportion of those living in small villages would expect to travel by car

Steps 3 and 4 - Setting and Applying Local Standards

7.57 In order to deliver a successful and varied network of open spaces consideration of quality, quantity and accessibility factors is required.

7.58 To develop provision requirements which are responsive to local needs, the findings of the facility audit and consultation can be used to inform the creation of quality, quantity and accessibility standards for each type of open space.

7.59 The findings of the local needs assessment, alongside the baseline audit of existing provision have therefore been used to determine local standards for the provision of large formal recreation areas. Existing provision can then be measured against these benchmark standards to identify the requirement for new and improved facilities.

7.60 The approach taken to setting standards is explained in Section 2. The data used to set each standard for large formal recreation areas is outlined below.

Accessibility

Setting Accessibility Standards

7.61 As outlined in Section 2, standards are set using an accessibility led approach. It is therefore essential to understand the distance that residents expect to travel and the mode of transport that they will use to reach each type of open space there. The household survey provides a robust way of analysing these expectations.

7.62 The survey data demonstrates that there is a strong consensus that large recreation areas should be within walking distance of the home, although for residents in the smaller settlements, a high proportion of the population are willing to travel by car.

7.63 To consider how large formal recreation areas fit into aspirations for the open space network in Central Bedfordshire, Table 7.5 uses the raw data collated in the household survey to evaluate the amount of time residents expect to travel to reach a large recreation area in each of the settlement hierarchies.

7.64 To fully understand the spread of responses (and therefore the expectations of all residents), it categorises responses into quartiles. Each quartile represents 25% of the respondents. Quartile 1 is equivalent to the 25% of residents with the highest aspirations, or those that would be willing to travel the shortest distance to reach a recreation area. PPG17 indicates that a local standard should be set using quartiles, and at a point which reflects the expectations of 75% of the population.

Table 7.5 – Travel Expectations - Large Recreation Areas (From telephone survey)

Mode of Transport	Walk					Car			
	Quartile 1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4
Central Bedfordshire	9	10	15	70	10	15	20	90	
Major	5	10	15	30	10	12.5	15	30	
Minor	10	10	15	70	10	10	30	90	
Large	10	10	15	60	10	15	20	60	
Small	5	10	10	30	10	15	20	45	

Table 7.5 reveals the following key findings of residents' accessibility expectations:

Walking:

- 25% of residents across Central Bedfordshire would only be willing to walk up to 9 minutes to reach a large recreation area (quartile 1)
- 25% of residents in the major service centres and small villages are only willing to walk up to 5 minutes (quartile 1). Across Central Bedfordshire as a whole, the remaining 75% are willing to travel for more than 9 minutes and the maximum value is 70 minutes
- the average expected walking time is 14 minutes while the modal response (most common response) is 10 minutes

7.65 This suggests that a 10 minute walk time to reach a large recreation area is broadly acceptable to 75% of the population.

Car:

- for those that would expect to drive, 25% would only be willing to drive up to 10 minutes (quartile 1) while the remaining 75% would travel for at least 10 minutes
- the average expected drive time is 16 minutes, while the mode (most common response) is 10 minutes

7.66 This suggests that a 10 minute drive time to reach a large formal recreation area is broadly acceptable to 75% of the population.

7.67 It is notable however, that there are some variations in expectation according to settlement size:

- residents in larger settlements expect to find large recreation areas in relatively close proximity to the home
- residents of large villages and smaller villages may be willing to travel further to a large recreation space

7.68 It is also important to take into account the views arising from other consultations. While overall residents in small and larger villages are willing to travel further, a lack of local facilities was highlighted as a particular barrier to use in the large villages in the household survey, and Town and Parish Councils also emphasise the importance of local provision of large recreation areas.

7.69 Statistical data therefore suggests that 75% of residents will travel up to 10 minutes to reach a large formal recreation area and other consultation confirms that this is an appropriate distance for the local standard to be set at.

7.70 The recommended local accessibility standard and justification for this standard is set out below.

Accessibility

Large Recreation Areas - Accessibility Standard
10 minute walk time (480m) in Major and Minor settlements as well as in Large Villages and 10 minute drive time in Small Villages
Justification
The findings of the consultation demonstrate that there is a split in expectation according to the size of the settlement. While those in the Major and Minor Service Centres expect to find large recreation areas within walking distance, some residents in the Large and Small Villages are willing to travel further afield.
In the Major and Minor Service Centres, analysis demonstrates that at least 75% of users are willing to travel at least 10 minutes on foot to a large recreation area. For residents in the Large and Small Villages, a drive of 10 – 15 minutes is acceptable.

It must be noted however, that a key barrier to use in the large villages is lack of local facilities. The amount of people willing to travel by car is also lower than the amount that would expect to walk. To take this into account, the walk time standard also best reflects the needs and aspirations of those living in large villages.

For smaller villages, while a high proportion of residents still expect to walk to a large recreation area and it is acknowledged that this is the case, to maintain quality (which was highlighted as being a particular issue by residents in these areas) a drivetime standard is acceptable, although access is on foot (and therefore localised provision is desirable).

Application of the Accessibility Standard

7.71 The application of this benchmark is illustrated in maps contained in Appendix B. It is clear from these maps that most large formal recreation grounds are centrally located.

7.72 As outlined earlier, urban parks have similar functions to large formal recreation areas. As higher order facilities (i.e. larger sites providing a greater range of opportunities), these sites negate the need for large formal recreation areas for residents who are within a 10 minute walk time (the local standard for large formal recreation areas) of one of these sites i.e. additional recreation areas will not be required to serve residents living within 10 minutes walk of an urban park.

7.73 Table 7.6 summarises the distribution of formal recreation areas and highlights where residents are outside of the catchment for these spaces. It also provides detail of where needs relating to the improvement of existing spaces and / or the creation of new spaces have been expressed (building upon data set out earlier in this section). While many areas seeking to improve the amount of space currently have limited access to such sites, some projects identified are in areas where access is already relatively high.

Table 7.6 – Access to Large Formal Recreation Areas

Settlement Hierarchy	Settlement Name	Current position		Comments	Issues Raised Through Consultation		
		Access to Large Formal Recreation Areas			Quality Issues Raised	Aspiration for Additional Large Formal Recreation Areas	
Major	Biggleswade	Yes		Good access to large formal recreation areas for the majority of residents	Yes (formal and Informal)	Yes	
Small	Brogborough	No		No large formal recreation areas			
Small	Chalton	No		No access to large formal recreation areas		yes	
Large	Clifton	Yes		Most residents able to access large formal recreation areas although there is a small gap to the west.			
Large	Clophill	Yes		Clophill Playing Field. More limited provision to the east of the settlement	Yes		
Minor	Cranfield	Some deficiencies		High Street Recreation Area located centrally - residents both east and west outside of catchment to large formal recreation area.			
Major	Flitwick	Yes		Even distribution of large formal recreation areas with no clear deficiencies, although perhaps lower levels of provision in north west and north east.			
Large	Harlington	Yes		Most residents within catchment of large formal recreation areas	Yes		
Large	Henlow	Yes		Good local large formal recreation areas. Lack of access in area south of RAF Henlow			
Large	Houghton Conquest	Yes		Large Formal Recreation area centrally located	Yes		

Settlement Hierarchy		Current position		Issues Raised Through Consultation		
		Settlement Name	Access to Large Formal Recreation Areas	Comments	Quality Issues Raised	Aspiration for Additional Large Formal Recreation Areas
Small	Kensworth	Yes	Most residents able to access large formal recreation areas			Yes
Minor	Langford	Some deficiencies	Good large formal recreation areas but located largely to the north of the settlement.			Yes
Large	Meppershall	Yes	Most residents within catchment. Small gap in accessibility to the south			
Minor	Potton	Some deficiencies	Some residents outside of catchment for large formal recreation areas.	Yes		Yes
Large	Silsoe	No	No large formal recreation areas	Yes (and quantity)		Yes
Small	Stanbridge	No	No large formal recreation areas provided			
Small	Streatley	Yes	Large formal recreation area located centrally - all residents within catchment			yes
Large	Blunham	Yes	Good access to existing provision	Yes (and quantity)		
Major	Amphill	More limited	Most areas lacking in large formal recreation areas. Amphill Park provides resources for residents in this area but does not function as formal park			
Minor	Arlesey	No	Lack of large formal recreation areas overall, some small shortfalls in south	Yes		Yes
Large	Aspley Guise	No	No access to large formal recreation areas in catchment			
Small	Aspley Heath	No	No access to large formal recreation areas in catchment			

Settlement Hierarchy		Current position		Issues Raised Through Consultation		
		Settlement Name	Access to Large Formal Recreation Areas	Comments	Quality Issues Raised	Aspiration for Additional Large Formal Recreation Areas
Minor	Barton Le Clay	Some deficiencies	Gaps in provision of large formal recreation areas to north and south.			
Minor	Caddington	No	All residents outside of catchment to large formal open space.			
Small	Campton and Chicksands	No	No large formal recreation areas			
Major	Dunstable	Some deficiencies	Lack of access to large formal recreation areas in Watling ward.			
Small	Dunton	Yes	Large Formal Recreation area located to the north of the settlement - some residents to the south outside of catchment.			
Large	Eaton Bray	Yes	Most residents within catchment of large formal recreation areas.			
Small	Eversholt	Yes	Large formal recreation area in north of settlement.			
Small	Everton	Yes	Good access - Everton Recreation Ground.			
Minor	Fairfield	Yes	Centrally located large formal recreation area			
Small	Flitton	Yes	Provision located between Flitton and Greenfield - access for some residents is further than the target catchment			
Small	Gravenhurst	Yes	Most residents within catchment of large formal recreation area.			
Small	Greenfield	Yes	Provision located between Flitton and Greenfield - access for some residents is further than the target catchment			

Settlement Hierarchy	Settlement Name	Current position		Comments	Issues Raised Through Consultation		
		Access to Large Formal Recreation Areas	Quality Issues Raised		Aspiration for Additional Large Formal Recreation Areas		
Small	Haynes	Yes		Site located on the eastern side of the settlement although within the recommended catchment of almost all residents.	Yes	Yes	
Large	Heath and Reach	Yes		Thrift Road Recreation Ground means that there is good access for the majority of residents. The location of this site to the west of the village however means that access is more difficult in the north and east.	Yes		
Large	Hockliffe	Yes		Hockliffe Recreation Ground serves all residents.			
Major	Houghton Regis	Yes		Lack of access in Houghton Hall ward although largely negated by location of Houghton Hall Park.			
Small	Husborne Crawley	No		No large formal recreation areas provided			
Major	Leighton Buzzard	Some deficiencies		Some deficiencies in south Leighton Buzzard and South Linslade.			
Small	Lidlington	Yes		Most residents within catchment of large formal recreation areas.			
Minor	Marston Moretaine	Some deficiencies		Main recreation area located to far east of settlement - gap in access to west.			
Large	Maulden	Yes		Some large formal recreation areas			
Small	Millbrook	Yes		Large formal Recreation area located centrally - most residents are able to access facilities. Access to east of settlement			
Small	Moggerhanger	Yes		Large formal recreation area located to north of settlement, but most residents within distance,			

Settlement Hierarchy	Settlement Name	Current position		Issues Raised Through Consultation	
		Access to Large Formal Recreation Areas	Comments	Quality Issues Raised	Aspiration for Additional Large Formal Recreation Areas
				although A603 bisects village.	
Small	Northill	No		No large formal recreation area	
Small	Old Warden	No		No large formal recreation spaces	
Small	Pulloxhill	Yes		Most residents within catchment of large formal recreation areas	
Small	Ridgmont	No		No large formal recreation area	
Small	Salford	No		No large formal recreation area	
Major	Sandy	Yes		Good level of access to facilities, some small gaps in provision to the south.	
Minor	Shefford	Limited		Access to large formal recreation areas limited in West Shefford	
Large	Shillington	Yes		Most residents within catchment of large formal recreation areas, only those at the extremes of the settlement are not.	
Large	Slip End	Yes		Site located to north of settlement but most residents within recommended distance threshold.	
Small	Southill	Yes		All residents in catchment of large formal recreation areas	
Small	Stondon	Yes		Most residents within catchment area of large formal recreation area, although some gaps in accessibility towards extremes of settlement.	Yes

Settlement Hierarchy		Current position		Issues Raised Through Consultation		
Settlement Name	Settlement Name	Access to Large Formal Recreation Areas	Comments	Quality Issues Raised	Aspiration for Additional Large Formal Recreation Areas	
Minor	Stotfold	Yes	Most residents within catchment of large formal recreation areas.			
Small	Studham	No	No large formal recreation areas			
Small	Sundon	Yes	Most residents within catchment of large formal recreation area.			
Small	Sutton	Yes	Recreation area on High Street is accessible to most residents.			
Small	Tempsford	No	No provision - all residents outside catchment			
Small	Tilsworth	Yes	Good access to Tilsworth Recreation Ground, although site is not located centrally within settlement			
Minor	Toddington	Yes	Good network of large formal recreation areas			
Small	Totternhoe	Yes	Site located to east and at the end of the settlement. Due to the linear nature of Totternhoe, some residents outside the catchment.	Yes		
Small	Upper Caldecote	Yes	Good access to large formal recreation area			
Large	Westoning	Yes	Large Formal Recreation area located to the east of the settlement - small deficiencies in the west.		yes	
Large	Woburn	Yes	Good distribution, all residents within catchment of large formal recreation areas.			
Small	Wrestlingworth	No	No provision - all residents outside catchment			

Quantity

Setting Quantity Standards

7.74 Overall, consultation demonstrates satisfaction with the amount of sites provided and for formal recreation areas, the majority of emphasis is placed on improvements to the quality of sites rather than the provision of additional facilities. There is, however, evidence of unmet demand for large formal recreation areas in a small number of settlements.

7.75 Reflecting this, application of the accessibility standard indicates that there are some areas where residents are outside of the catchment area for facilities.

7.76 It is clear that there is a widespread distribution of these sites. Table 7.6 reveals that circa 26 additional sites are required to meet target accessibility standard (including small villages). Based upon an average site size of 2.3 ha, the provision of these additional sites would require an additional 59.8 hectares of large formal recreation space across Central Bedfordshire.

This equates to a total requirement of 298.7 ha to meet current demand (equivalent to 1.17ha per 1000 population).

7.77 The recommended local quantity standard and justification for this standard is set out below.

Quantity

Large Recreation Areas - Quantity Standard
Formal Recreation Spaces – 1.17ha per 1000 population
Justification
This figure represents the minimum requirement for recreation areas in Central Bedfordshire if all residents were to be located within a 10 minute walk time of a large formal recreation area.

Application of the Quantity Standard

7.78 Table 7.7 illustrates the application of this standard in the placemaking areas outlining both current and projected future deficiencies while Table 7.8 summarises the application of the standard in each of the settlement hierarchies. It must be noted that these provide a broad indication only as quantity standards should really be considered at a local level in conjunction with accessibility.

Table 7.7 – Indicative shortfalls and surpluses of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Area

Area	Required (Current)	Required (Future)	Shortfall / Surplus (Current)	Shortfall / Surplus (Future)
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	61.0038	68.3046	-10.8	-18.1
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	63.2619	72.8559	-16.1	-25.7
North	174.3885	198.7947	-32.5	-56.9
Central Bedfordshire	298.6542	339.9552	-59.4	-100.7

Table 7.8 - Indicative shortfalls and surpluses of Large Formal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement Hierarchy	Required (Current)	Required (Future)	Shortfall / Surplus (Current)	Shortfall / Surplus (Future)
Major Settlements	163.7	187.7	-59.4	-83.4
Minor Settlements	58.0	66.2	-15.7	-23.9
Large Villages	48.1	51.5	9.1	5.7
Small Villages	30.5	31.7	1.6	0.4

7.79 As Table 7.8 indicates there are significant implications arising from the projected population growth, with an additional 37 hectares of formal recreation space being required to meet future needs, based upon population projections. The majority of this additional requirement is found in the major settlements, with shortfalls currently equating to 50 hectares but increasing by almost 24 hectares as a result of population growth. The implications of growth are much more limited in the large villages (3.4ha) and small villages (1.2ha).

7.80 Application of the indicative quantity standard of 1.17ha per 1000 population at settlement level indicates that shortfalls are currently highest in the following settlements:

- Leighton Buzzard
- Dunstable
- Flitwick

- Ampthill
- Biggleswade
- Cranfield
- Sandy
- Caddington
- Shefford
- Arlesey
- Aspley Guise
- Barton-le-Clay
- Silsoe

7.81 The highest impact of population growth will be experienced in the following settlements (all have existing deficiencies):

- Leighton Buzzard (additional 8 hectares required)
- Houghton Regis (additional 6 hectares required)
- Biggleswade (additional 4.5 hectares required)
- Marston Moretaine (additional 2.5 hectares required)
- Ampthill (additional 2 hectares required)

7.82 By 2022, the following additional settlements will have deficiencies of greater than 1ha:

- Leighton Buzzard
- Biggleswade
- Dunstable
- Flitwick
- Ampthill
- Houghton Regis
- Cranfield
- Caddington
- Arlesey
- Sandy
- Marston Moretaine
- Shefford
- Silsoe
- Aspley Heath
- Barton-le-Clay
- Clophill
- Campton & Chicksands
- Chalton
- Streatley
- Clifton

7.83 Notably, while there is currently sufficient provision to meet the local standard in Potton, Houghton Conquest and Streatley, population growth will cause a small shortfall in each of these areas in future years. All areas with existing deficiencies will continue to have deficiencies by 2022.

7.84 Full detail of all settlements with deficiencies is provided in Appendix A. The application of quantity standards should be considered in conjunction with accessibility standards to determine where new provision is required.

Quality

Setting Quality Standards

7.85 Local consultations have enabled the identification of issues viewed as important to residents, as well as their aspirations in relation to the type of spaces that they would like to see provided. Supporting this, site visits have provided an overview of the quality of recreation areas.

7.86 For formal recreation spaces, on the whole, improvements to the quality of provision were seen as a greater priority by consultees than the creation of additional recreation spaces (although new provision is required in some areas). Section 5 also highlights the opportunity to upgrade several existing large formal recreation spaces with a view to creating formal urban parks.

7.87 This information can be used to identify the key components of each type of open space in relation to quality and to set a quality standard that should be used as a basis for improving existing spaces as well as the creation of new spaces.

7.88 The quality standard for formal recreation spaces is set out overleaf. Further detail can be found in the Design Guidance.

Quality

Quality Standard – Large Formal Recreation Areas

Local consultation, national guidance and best practice indicate that new and existing large formal recreation areas should meet with the following criteria;

Quality Requirements – Large Formal Recreation Areas	
Size and Location	Sufficiently large to meet demand (at least 1ha) Appropriately located for local catchment (within 10 minute walk time of target residents) Accessible via safe footpaths Clear boundaries that are locally appropriate and promote security
Character	Formal recreation area containing a variety of facilities Appropriate for residents of different ages
Access	Clearly defined pathways and cycleways and cycle storage Compliant with DDA
Facilities	Clearly defined paths Appropriate and regular seating Information and signage at main entrance and at areas requiring safety information Play equipment (linking with requirements identified in Section 9 – this may include natural play) Sports facilities (requirements outlined further within Playing Pitch Assessment – under separate cover) Appropriate bins Management of dog fouling Sufficient parking
Activities	Clear events programme Volunteer opportunities for the local community

Application of Quality Standard

7.89 Several large formal recreation areas fall below the level where all factors are considered to be acceptable or above on the site visits matrix (66%). Quality improvements required are included within Appendix A.

Summary – Issues Identified

Usage

26% of respondents to the telephone survey visit large recreation areas at least once per week and a further 22% use these spaces at least once per month. This makes this type of open space one of the most frequently visited across Central Bedfordshire. Just 35% of residents never visit a large recreation area meaning that these spaces serve the highest proportion of residents of all types of open space in the area.

Use of large recreation areas varies more between different demographic groups than most

other types of open space. In particular, usage by residents over the age of 55 is relatively low and residents with a disability are also less likely to use a large recreation area. Residents with dependents are far more likely to visit such a site than others. While relaxation, walking and exercise, play, sports and events are the main reasons for visiting large recreation areas, other than time and interest, the most common barriers to use are lack of local spaces and difficulties accessing sites. Residents in Leighton Buzzard and the rural South and those in large villages highlight greater concerns about accessing these spaces than in other areas. Removal of barriers to access is likely to increase the overall usage of these spaces.

Quantity, Quality and Accessibility

There are 239 hectares of land dedicated to large formal recreation areas. There are no clear patterns in the distribution of these spaces between different geographical areas of different settlement hierarchies.

The household survey demonstrates an overall view that there are enough large recreation areas (64%) meaning that satisfaction is higher than most types of open space in Central Bedfordshire and there are no clear differences in views between residents of different sectors of the population. Reflecting this satisfaction, few issues are raised with regards the quantity of large formal recreation areas in Green Infrastructure documents and Parish Plans, or through other modes of consultation.

Like the quantity of provision, overall, the quality of formal recreation areas is viewed positively although opportunities for improvement are identified, including cleanliness and maintenance, improvement to the type and range of facilities provided and seating, dog fouling is also identified as a key issue at these sites. There are no clear variations in views or actual quality by area or settlement hierarchy. Consultation with Town and Parish Councils, as well as a review of green infrastructure studies highlights a clear emphasis on improvements to the quality of spaces rather than the amount of provision – only five responding Town and Parish Councils indicate that they would prioritise new facilities over improvements to existing sites. These documents also highlight the importance of respecting the balance between recreation and conservation.

Like many other types of open space, residents of Central Bedfordshire expect to find large recreation areas in close proximity to the home. With the exception of small villages, residents in all tiers of the settlement hierarchy would expect to find a large recreation area within walking distance of the home (circa 10 minutes). A local standard has therefore been set at a 10 minute catchment area.

Application of this accessibility standard demonstrates that formal recreation spaces tend to be located within settlements. Circa 26 additional spaces are required to meet the accessibility standard of a 10 minute walk time. Based upon this, the total requirement for provision (quantity standard) of large formal recreation areas across Central Bedfordshire is therefore 1.17ha per 1000 population.

Application of this standard demonstrates that while many areas meet this standard currently, population growth will have a significant impact on the demand for large recreation spaces, with 20 settlements having deficiencies of over 1ha by 2022. Notably, while there is currently sufficient provision to meet the local standard in Potton, Houghton Conquest and Streatley, population growth will cause a small shortfall in each of these areas in future years. All areas with existing deficiencies will continue to have deficiencies by 2021.

The use of the quality standard to guide improvements to existing sites is also of central importance for large recreation areas, given the priority placed in consultations on improving these sites.

Step 5 – Identifying Priorities

Key Issues to Address

7.90 The above analysis therefore indicates that the Recreation and Open Space Strategy needs to address the following issues relating to large formal recreation areas:

- Usage figures demonstrate that large recreation areas are used by a higher proportion of the population than any other type of open space and they therefore represent a valuable resource
- The location of sites is one of the key determinants of use and consultation suggests that residents expect to be within a 10 minute walk time of a large recreation area – the local standard has therefore been set at a 10 minute walk time
- For formal recreation areas, in most settlements improvements to the quality of existing sites are considered to be as if not more important than the creation of additional sites. In some areas however, residents are outside of the catchment for sites and there is a need for new areas. Residents and providers place a particular value on quality of facilities and it is important that this is taken into account
- While the quality of existing sites is largely good, there are high aspirations for the type and quality of facilities provided at large formal recreation spaces and a need for a particular focus on improving the quality of facilities in many areas
- Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for this type of facility and a consequent increase in visitor numbers

Recreation and Open Space Strategy Outcomes and Key Priorities

7.91 Building upon the above, the recommendations set out below would help to deliver the following outcomes:

- ensure that all residents have appropriate access to large recreation spaces
- attract users from all sectors of the population;
- meet user aspirations relating to quality of provision as well as local priorities and national objectives and promote the provision of a strategic network of high quality large recreation areas; and
- maintain a balance between the recreational function of these sites and biodiversity and conservation features.

Key Priorities

7.92 It is therefore recommended that key priorities for the delivery of large formal recreation areas across Central Bedfordshire are as follows:

- promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy
- seek to ensure that all residents are within a 10 minute walktime of a formal recreation area. Where residents are within a 10 minute walk time of an urban park, as higher order facilities, this negates the requirement for additional large recreation areas
- ensure that the impact of population growth on recreation areas is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring development to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through on-site provision of facilities, CIL and planning contributions. Where quantity and accessibility standards are already met, contributions should be made towards the management, maintenance and improvement of existing facilities
- work with communities and partners to ensure that all sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. Prioritise qualitative improvements over additional spaces where residents are already within the appropriate catchment of a space
- facilitate access routes from nearby settlements to these sites, including safe footpaths and cycling opportunities

Site / Area Specific Implications

7.93 Table 7.9 summarises the likely site / area specific implications of the above recommendations.

Table 7.9 – Site Specific Priorities to Address Issues and Recommendations

Protect
All existing sites
New provision
Areas without access or with limited access to formal recreation areas. These include;
Cranfield
Langford
Potton
Silsoe
Stanbridge
Amphill
Barton – le – Clay
Dunstable
Marston Moretaine
Shefford
Note: all of the above highlight need within strategic documents and / or Parish plans. In addition, areas where large deficiencies have been identified, including Leighton Buzzard, Dunstable, Flitwick, Amphill, Biggleswade, ,Cranfield, Sandy, Caddington and Shefford.

Areas of new development where incoming residents will create quantitative deficiency and / or are outside of catchment for existing open spaces.

Quality Enhancements

In the majority of areas, qualitative improvements should be the key priority. Evidence suggests that high quality sites are highly valued.

Priority for improvement should be given to high value sites – sites serving unique catchment areas but are of poor quality

Areas which contain clusters of poor quality provision should also be prioritised

Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where additional residents will place additional pressure on existing facilities.

8. Informal Recreation Areas

Introduction

8.1 This section sets out the assessment relating to informal recreation areas in Central Bedfordshire. It is structured as follows:

- Context and Definition
- Usage Profile
- Existing Provision – Quality, Quantity and Accessibility - and Aspirations
- Summary – Issues to Address
- Implications and recommendations.

Context and Definition

8.2 As set out in Section 7, large recreation areas are sites primarily designed for the purposes of recreation. Sites may also however provide a sense of place for the local community, help to address social inclusion issues within wider society and also provide structural and landscaping benefits. Some sites may also have wider ecological and environmental functions.

8.3 Responses to the household survey and wider consultation identified different expectations of usage and provision between Formal and Informal Recreation Areas. To accurately capture the different primary functions of large recreation sites in Central Bedfordshire, and to identify those sites whose primary function is ecological rather than recreational, this category has been subdivided into:

Type 1: Large Formal Recreation Areas

- **Large sites that contain formal recreation opportunities, for example sports pitches and play facilities. These sites will be maintained and managed primarily for formal recreation.**

Type 2: Informal recreation areas

- **Sites that provide informal recreation opportunities. They are likely to be more natural in character and contain fewer formal facilities. This categorisation includes woodlands and commons. These spaces may include some complimentary facilities such as children and young people's facilities but allow people to experience the natural environment.**

8.4 It should be noted that the availability of one type of recreation space does not necessarily negate demand for others.

8.5 For the purposes of this study, informal recreation areas have therefore been defined as follows:

“Large green spaces that are natural in character. These sites generally offer informal recreational opportunities such as walking and relaxation and allow visitors to experience the natural environment. As well as offering recreational opportunities, many sites in this category are also important for biodiversity and ecology. “

8.6 The sites included within this category are perhaps more varied than those in any other. The similarities between them lie in their informal nature and their natural properties. They may however present a mix of different opportunities and include sites of many different characters including woodland, common land and heathland. While many are similar to countryside sites, they are generally smaller in scale and more likely to serve local populations only. They are however particularly important in offering more informal and natural recreational opportunities.

8.7 Where sites contain a variety of facilities, these have been categorised under the most appropriate typology. Large green areas and footpaths will provide the total size of the recreation area (hectares) and any other facilities (including play space) will be calculated separately under their own typology. This ensures that open space is not counted twice within this study. The site will however be considered as a whole entity and the resources that it offers holistically will be taken into account during analysis.

8.8 This section considers the adequacy of informal recreation areas only. The adequacy of large formal recreation areas is considered in Section 7.

8.9 It should be noted that while this section evaluates only the recreational opportunities that these sites provide, as well as providing opportunities for recreation, many informal recreation areas have much wider ecological and biodiversity functions and many have been awarded national and local designations (SSSI, CSW) etc. Their importance in terms of wider biodiversity and conservation should not be underestimated and the findings of this assessment should be considered in conjunction with other studies evaluating these properties.

8.10 The remainder of this section presents the findings of the local needs assessment and the audit of provision and presents a summary of the usage, quality, quantity and accessibility of facilities for informal recreation areas across Central Bedfordshire.

8.11 The key issues arising from the evaluation of local needs and audit of existing provision, as well as the creation and application of local standards are summarised at the end of this section.

Steps 1 and 2 – Evaluation of Local Needs and Audit of Existing Provision

Usage Profile

8.12 A household survey of 1000 residents of Central Bedfordshire was carried out to establish a baseline of views regarding current and future provision of the range of open space types detailed in this study. As well as providing an understanding of views and aspirations relating to current provision, the survey also enables evaluation of the current user profile of each type of open space. ***Consultation did not differentiate between the subdivided Large Recreation Area typology and therefore relates to both formal and informal large recreation areas.***

Household Survey Responses

Usage

8.13 26% of respondents to the survey visit large recreation areas at least once weekly and a further 22% use these spaces at least once per month. This makes this type of open space one of the most frequently visited across Central Bedfordshire. Just 35% of residents never visit a large recreation area meaning that these spaces serve the highest proportion of residents of all types of open space in the area.

8.14 Use of large recreation areas varies more between different demographic groups than most other types of open space, in particular:

- more than half of residents aged over 55 (56%) never visit large recreation areas, whereas just 10% of those aged 18 and 34 never visit. Those aged 35 to 54 visit most frequently with 37% visiting once per week or more. This compares to 18% of residents aged 18 – 34 and 20% of those aged over 55
- unlike other types of open space, male residents visit large recreation areas much more frequently than females. 46% of females never visit a large recreation area (23% of males) while 35% of males visit weekly or more regularly (19% of females)
- residents with a disability are less likely to visit a large recreation area. Just 10% visit weekly (compared to 29%) and 45% never use these sites
- like all other types of open space (except allotments), residents with dependents below aged 14 are more likely to use large recreation areas than those without. Unlike other types of open space, residents with children aged between 9 and 13 are more likely to visit (38% weekly) than those with children under 8 (20% weekly).
- there is little difference in use between white British residents and non white British residents. A slightly higher proportion of residents of non white British origin never use large recreation areas.

Use of Informal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Areas

8.15 The survey indicates similarities in the use of large recreation areas in the different Placemaking Areas of Central Bedfordshire. The proportion of residents that never use such spaces is slightly higher in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and the West (part of the North placemaking area). These spaces are used most frequently in the West (31% weekly or more often); 20% of residents in Dunstable and Houghton Regis, 24% in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South, and 29% of residents in the East use these spaces weekly.

Use of Informal Recreation Areas Settlement Hierarchy

8.16 There are few differences between the usage of large recreation areas at different levels of the settlement hierarchy. 71% of residents in large villages use large recreation areas at least once per year compared to 58% in the small villages, 64% in major settlements and 65% in minor settlements. This demonstrates that these spaces are important resources in settlements of all sizes.

Reasons for visiting Informal Recreation Areas

8.17 Reasons for visiting large recreation areas are perhaps more varied than some other types of open space. Respondents indicate that the main reasons for visiting are:

- To relax (33%)
- Walk and exercise (32%)
- Children play (28%)
- Dog walking (14%)
- Sports (13%)
- Events (8%)

8.18 Like most other types of open space, a lack of time (30%) and interest (20%) are the main barriers to use. The next most common reasons are difficulties in accessing sites (11%), a lack of local spaces (4%) and a lack of facilities (3%). 1% indicate that disabled access is a concern to them.

8.19 Analysis of use across the different segments of population reveals little variation in reasons for visiting large recreation areas despite the differences in user patterns. Analysis concludes that:

- men are more likely to use these spaces to play sport and relax whilst women use them for play (perhaps with children) and to relax
- the proportion of residents using large recreation areas for walking and exercise increases with age. More residents in younger age groups use these spaces to relax

8.20 As the population of Central Bedfordshire ages, these types of space may therefore become more important. It should be noted that as already referenced, formal and informal recreation areas were grouped together for the purposes of consultation and reasons for use may be influenced by this.

Reasons for Visiting Informal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Areas

8.21 Reasons for visiting spaces are the same in all areas, although use in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South is often for events, whereas in Dunstable and Houghton Regis they are more often used for exercise. Few residents in Leighton Buzzard expect to use large recreation areas for sport.

Reasons for Visiting Informal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

8.22 The reasons for use in each of the three settlement hierarchies are the same, although these spaces are used particularly for play in the Minor Service Centres and for sports in the Major Service Centres.

Barriers to use

8.23 Lack of interest and a lack of time are the main barriers to use of large recreation areas across Central Bedfordshire. The most commonly referenced other barrier is a perceived lack of local spaces.

Barriers to Use of Informal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Areas

8.24 The barriers to use remain consistent across all placemaking areas. There is however a greater degree of concern around the provision of local spaces and difficulties in accessing sites in the Leighton Buzzard and Rural South than in all other parts.

Barriers to Use of Informal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

8.25 Barriers to use are also the same in each settlement hierarchy. The most notable exception to this is that 19% of residents in Large Villages highlight the lack of a local facility as a barrier to use, and 25% indicate that these spaces are difficult to get to. Almost all residents highlighting this as an issue are based within the Large Villages.

Current Provision and Views on Current Provision

Quantity

8.26 The audit reveals that 1801 hectares is dedicated to informal recreation areas in Central Bedfordshire.

8.27 Table 8.1 summarises the number, size distribution and total land dedicated to these spaces and sets out the current and future provision in terms of 'hectares per 1000 population'. The calculation excludes land that is covered in other typologies (for example play areas)

Table 8.1 Size Distribution of Informal Recreation Areas

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)	Total Provision (Ha) Excluding Sites over 20ha	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)
Informal Recreation Areas	119	1801.8	7.1	6.2	15.1	455.4	1.8	1.6

8.28 Table 8.2 summarises the amount of informal recreation areas by Placemaking Area and indicates that the total provision is inconsistent, with much larger quantities of informal recreation areas in the north of Central Bedfordshire.

Table 8.2 Size Distribution by Placemaking Area

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)	Total Provision (Ha) Excluding Sites over 20ha	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	4	11.9	0.2	0.2	3.0	11.9	0.2	0.2

Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	15	282.8	5.2	4.5	18.9	82.1	1.5	1.3
North	100	1507.1	10.1	8.9	15.1	375.0	2.5	2.2
Central Bedfordshire	119	1801.8	7.1	6.2	15.1	469.1	1.8	1.6

8.29 In order to evaluate whether there are any differences in the distribution of informal recreation areas according to the size of the settlement, Table 8.3 summarises the distribution of these sites by settlement hierarchy.

Table 8.3 Size Distribution by Settlement Hierarchy

Area		Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)	Perception of Residents
Major Settlements	Informal	36	346.16	2.47	2.16	9.5	23% not enough
Minor Settlements	Informal	27	354.11265	7.14	6.26	11.1	38% not enough
Large Villages	Informal	29	501.4	12.21	11.39	13.7	13% not enough
Small Villages	Informal	25	586.787	22.53	21.66	19.4	35% not enough

Quantity of Provision - Key Issues

8.30 Tables 8.1 -8.3 illustrate the following key issues regarding the number, type and size distribution of informal recreation areas:

- there are 119 informal recreation areas across Central Bedfordshire meaning that 1801 hectares of land is dedicated to informal recreation opportunities. This is a much higher amount of land than is allocated to formal large recreation areas
- there are several sites that are over 20ha in size. Excluding these sites, provision decreases from 5.6ha per 1000 population to 1.8 ha per 1000 population
- provision is highest in the North placemaking area and lowest in Dunstable and Houghton Regis
- when reviewing the distribution of informal recreation areas by settlement size, a clear pattern emerges. The amount of informal recreation areas per 1000 population increases as the size of settlement becomes smaller, so perhaps reflecting the characteristics of the settlements, the Major and Minor Service Centres have lower

provision of informal recreation areas. This pattern remains even when excluding sites exceeding 20ha in size

- the projected population increases will see the provision per 1000 population decrease significantly, particularly in the Major and Minor Service Centres

Quantity of Provision – Consultation Responses

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

8.31 A review of the priorities of Green Infrastructure studies and Parish Plans reveals that in the majority of areas, improvements to existing large formal recreation areas are prioritised over new facilities. Reflecting the satisfaction with existing levels of provision, relatively few plans identify a requirement for new provision.

8.32 The key priorities included in current documents in relation to the amount of larger recreation areas are set out below. This list includes views provided as part of Town and Parish Council consultation, as well as those set out in adopted policy documents;

- Biggleswade - Requirement to increase publically accessible open space to west and south of Biggleswade (GI) – Biggleswade Green Wheel
- Flitwick – aspirations for recreational open space (GI) through protection of existing woodland and enhancement of new – creation of green wheel
- Cranfield – new community woodland (Rectory Wood) to link Cranwell to Marston Thrift (GI)
- Pottton – aspiration to create community woodland beside Pottton Brook (GI)
- Stotfold – Mill Green Nature Reserve is well used. GI plan prioritises extension of this site and creation of further community woodland (GI)
- Clifton – new accessible woodland (west of Stockbridge Farm) – GI
- Harlington – new accessible woodland (GI)
- Langford - Creation of new woodlands (east of railway and wetlands) GI
- Meppershall – creation of additional Informal recreation areas / wildlife resources (GI)
- Silsoe – creation of new community woodland (GI) and acquisition of land for wildlife meadow (GI)
- Brogborough – potential new woodland on former landfill site(GI)
- Chalton – additional woodland and extension of Fancott Wood and Meadow
- Kensworth – creation of informal meadows and community woodland (GI)
- Streatley – expansion of woodland sites.

8.33 In addition to the above identified opportunities for new sites, several GI plans also highlight sites that currently have limited public access but where there may be opportunities to explore greater recreational use of the area. Identified sites include;

- Improve access to Stratton Moat, Biggleswade (GI)
- Provide public access to Cox Hill (Sandy GI)
- Improve access to Etonbury Wood (Arlesey GI)
- Retain access to Arlesey Common (Arlesey GI)
- Improve access to Chicksands Wood and Sandy Hills Nature Reserve (Clophill GI)
- Henlow – secure access to Poppy Lakes and extend Millennium Meadow (GI)
- Houghton Conquest – create public access to existing woodlands (GI)
- Stanbridge – Negotiation of access to Stanbridge Woods (GI)

- Streatley – promotion of public access to Holt Wood and Fernhill Wood (GI).

8.34 In addition to the local green infrastructure plans, there are several landscape – scale initiatives operating within Central Bedfordshire, specifically;

- The creation of the Forest of Marston Vale
- The Chilterns AONB
- The Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area.

8.35 These initiatives will encompass the provision and enhancement of green space and the creation of broader green infrastructure, including recreational opportunities.

Household Survey Responses

8.36 The household survey demonstrates an overall view that there are enough large recreation areas (64%) and 5% believe there are too many. 25% consider there to be not enough, while a further 6% feel there are only nearly enough. Satisfaction with provision is therefore higher than most types of open space in Central Bedfordshire and there are no clear differences in views between residents of different sectors of the population. As noted previously, the household survey grouped together views on formal and informal recreation areas.

Views on Quantity of Informal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Areas

8.37 The household survey indicates that views on the amount of provision are also relatively evenly matched although residents in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and the East are slightly less satisfied with the amount of spaces. When taking into account both formal and informal recreation areas it is in this area where levels of provision are lowest.

8.38 Interestingly, despite higher levels of dissatisfaction with quantity in the East (part of the north placemaking area), 63% of sites in the North placemaking area are located in the East and almost the same proportion of hectares of large formal recreation areas. This may suggest that there are other issues affecting the views of residents in this area.

Views on Quantity of Informal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

8.39 Despite the variations in the amount of provision, analysis of the household survey demonstrates that there are no clear variations in opinion on the quantity of large recreation areas between residents at different levels of the settlement hierarchy. Residents in the minor service centres and small villages are slightly more dissatisfied with a higher proportion of residents indicating that there are not enough or only nearly enough. It is in these settlements where analysis of barriers to use demonstrated that there is perception that there is a lack of local open spaces and that these sites are difficult to access.

8.40 Notably however, the proportion of residents believing provision to be about right is highest in the large villages, where combined provision is also highest.

Views on Quantity of Informal Recreation Areas - Town and Parish Councils

8.41 Town and Parish Councils demonstrate positive perceptions in relation to the amount of large recreation areas than respondents to the household survey and 75% consider there to be enough of these areas.

8.42 The majority of Towns and Parishes operate an area fitting within the description of a formal recreation area and most commented upon the adequacy of formal recreation space rather than informal spaces.

8.43 The impact of population growth on existing sites was however raised and it was indicated that new space may be required to serve the needs of new residents resulting of development. Just five responding Town and Parish Councils indicated that they would prioritise the provision of additional recreation space over the improvement of existing sites. The importance of these sites is however clear, with 16% of respondents identifying large recreation areas as their top priority for improvement.

Current Provision

Quality

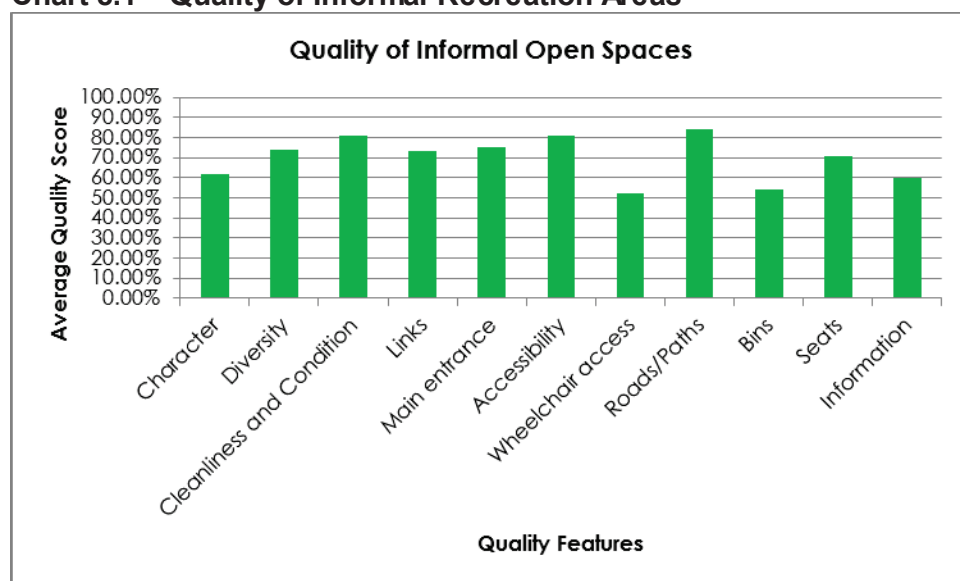
Existing Provision

8.44 The quality of informal recreation areas was evaluated using an assessment matrix.

8.45 The average score achieved for informal recreation areas was 61%. Chart 8.1 summarises the average score for each of the key features measured and indicates that many of the areas against which sites score more poorly are those generally associated with more formal recreation spaces. Many sites are natural with few specific facilities and indeed in some instances, the provision of recreational facilities may conflict with other functions of the site. Site assessments for these types of open space should therefore be treated as indicative only.

8.46 Wheelchair access is also poor, which is likely to be reflective of the characteristics of this type of open space, which by very definition is natural.

Chart 8.1 – Quality of Informal Recreation Areas



8.47 Site specific comments made during visits provide a more detailed understanding of the quality of informal recreation areas, indicating that:

- most of the larger sites achieve high site visit scores and have basic facilities facilitating recreation, including parking, signage and clearly defined footpaths
- in contrast, some smaller sites are described as less well maintained (in many instances reflecting an emphasis on the promotion of biodiversity and conservation) and perhaps lacking in formal recreational function
- although not featured in the site assessment matrix, it is clear that dog fouling is a particular issue at more informal sites, with several incidences identified and the need to include bins suggested; and
- some opportunities to provide seating were also identified.

8.48 It should be noted that in addition to evaluating the recreational function of informal spaces, the wider value of these sites was also measured, taking into account features such as the character of the site, the sustainability, health benefits and value for nature. The average score achieved for value was 75%, highlighting the important role that such sites play both in recreation, but also their wider benefits, particularly those linked with biodiversity and conservation.

Placemaking Areas and Settlement Hierarchy

8.49 Site visits do not reveal any clear differences in quality between facilities in different areas of Central Bedfordshire or settlements of different sizes.

Quality of Provision – Consultation Responses

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

8.50 While consultations provide an overview of the quality issues experienced, as well as components that are important in the provision of recreation areas, reviews of the existing Green Infrastructure Studies, Parish Plans and detailed consultation provide a more in depth understanding of site specific priorities related to both formal and informal recreation areas. Sites specifically referenced as requiring improvement are set out below. As identified earlier in this section, the majority of qualitative improvements relate to formal recreation areas, while the creation of new informal recreation areas takes higher priority than improvement of these sites.

8.51 The key priorities included in current documents in relation to the quality of larger recreation areas are set out below. This list includes views provided as part of Town and Parish Council consultation, as well as those set out in adopted policy documents:

- Improvement to Biggleswade Common (GI)
- Clophill – requirement for increase in facilities at Lakes area (Parish Plan)
- Harlington – improve existing woodland (GI)
- Totternhoe – site specific priorities, for example handrails (GI)

Household Survey Responses

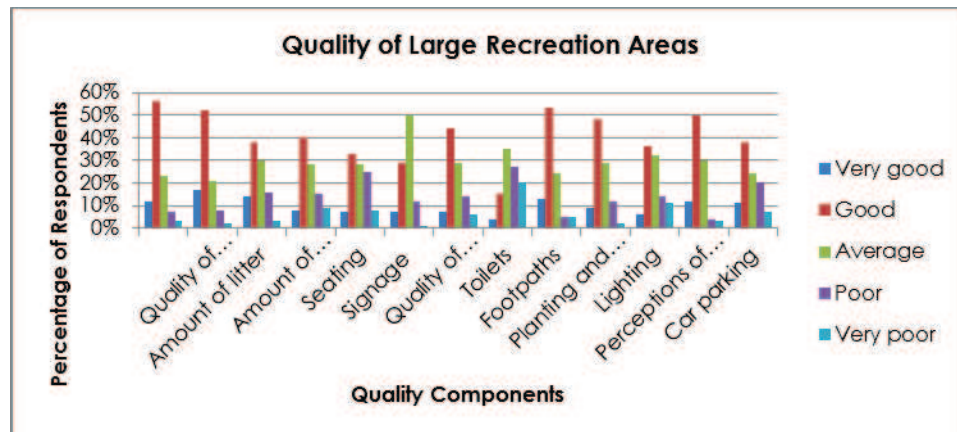
8.52 The household survey indicates that the quality of large recreation areas is viewed positively. 64% of respondents rate these spaces as good or very good and only 5% indicate that they are poor or very poor. Very few residents highlighted the quality of facilities as a barrier to use, further emphasising this point. As already emphasised, views on formal and Informal recreation areas were combined during the household survey.

8.53 There are few clear differences in perceived quality between different sectors of the population. It must be noted however, that the majority of residents who consider spaces to be poor are in the older age groups.

8.54 Chart 8.2 which considers the only the views of those who use large recreation areas, evaluates the perceived quality of key components of a large recreation area. It reveals that with the exception of toilets and signage (which are rated more negatively), the most common response for each component is good. The areas where the highest levels of satisfaction are recorded are as follows:

- Quality of maintenance (69% good or very good)
- Footpaths (66% good or very good)
- Perceptions of safety (62% good or very good)
- Landscaping and planting (57% good or very good)

Chart 8.2 – Survey results for Quality Factors for Large Recreation Areas



Areas where the highest levels of dissatisfaction are evident are:

- toilets (47% poor or very poor)
- seating (33% poor or very poor)
- car parking (27% poor or very poor)
- lighting (25% poor or very poor); and
- dog fouling (24% poor or very poor)

8.55 It must be noted that there are higher levels of dissatisfaction exhibited in relation to many of these components than for many of the other types of open space. In addition:

- for all aspects of large recreation areas, residents aged between 34 and 54 are significantly more negative than those in other age groups (for all components except the amount of dog fouling)
- residents of white British origin are far more positive than those of non white ethnic origin for almost all components of a large recreation area with much higher proportions of the population rating different components as average or poor. The only real exception is footpaths; and
- there are no clear differences between those that would consider themselves to have a disability and those that do not
- residents with dependents do not rate the quality of facilities as highly as those without. Those with children aged between 9 – 13 (the age group that use facilities most frequently) are most negative. The range of facilities provided emerges as a particular issue for those with dependents aged 14 – 18

Views on Quality of Informal Recreation Areas by Placemaking Areas

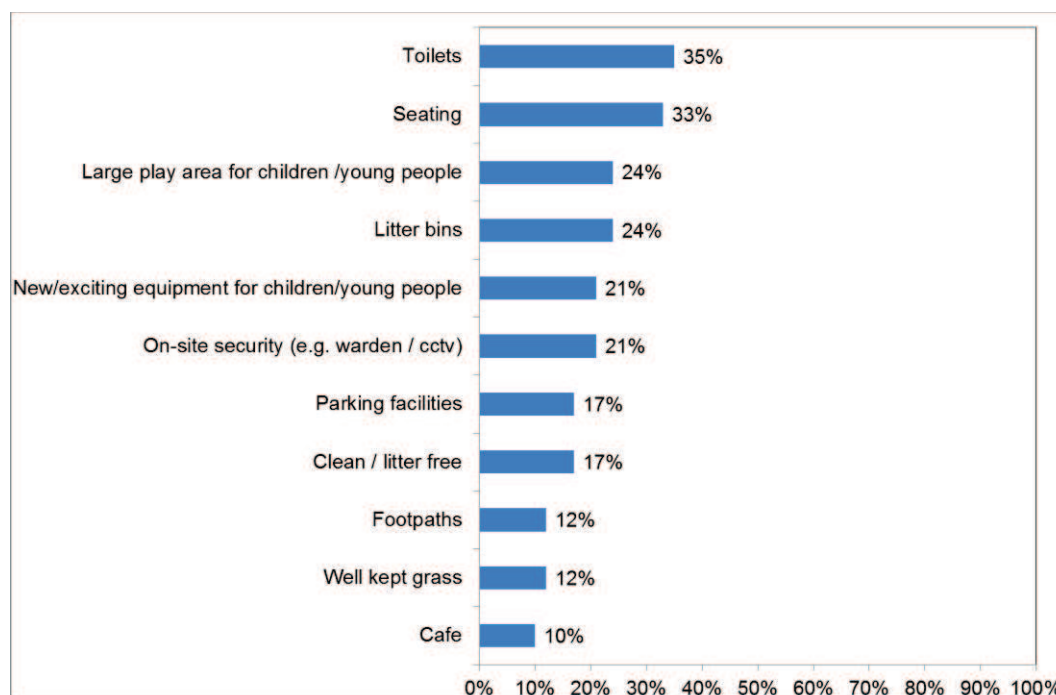
8.56 The survey demonstrates that the overall perceptions are similar across all parts of Central Bedfordshire. While residents in the west of Central Bedfordshire are generally more positive about the quality of their open spaces, all residents considering large recreation areas to be poor are also situated within this area. Leighton Buzzard and Rural South is however the area where the highest proportion of residents gave negative responses.

Views on Quality of Informal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

8.57 There are few variations in overall opinions of quality by settlement hierarchy. Fewer residents in the small villages and large villages consider the quality of provision to be good, and most of those indicating that these spaces are of poor quality are based in the small villages or large villages. The majority of comments made to support the views provided suggest that this can largely be attributed to the quality of formal recreation areas rather than more informal sites.

Quality of Provision – Aspirations

8.58 Chart 8.3 illustrates the survey results identifying the factors that residents consider most important in the provision of high quality large recreation areas. Seating and the inclusion of basic facilities are the factors that are considered to be most important. It should be noted that aspirations for large recreation areas consider both formal and informal recreation areas.



Views on Quality of Informal Recreation Areas by - Town and Parish Councils

8.59 The quality of larger recreation areas was one of the most widely referenced issues in the Town and Parish Council survey. On the whole, existing provision was viewed positively, with 30% considering facilities to be average and 60% good. The remainder were rated as poor. The key areas of concern or for improvement highlighted were:

- maintenance issues
- dog fouling and litter
- the need to provide a wider variety of facilities and / or equipment at the site (this links to analysis in other typologies)

8.60 Interestingly, just five Towns / Parishes prioritised the need for additional provision over the improvement of existing sites. Those indicating that the need for additional larger recreation areas was greater than improvement of current facilities were Leighton Linlade Town Council, Houghton Regis Town Council, Heath and Reach Parish Council, Flitton and Greenfield Parish Council and Wrestlingworth and Cockayne Hatley Parish Council.

8.61 Larger recreation areas are evidently important to the communities of Central Bedfordshire. Six Towns / Parishes identified investment into larger recreation areas as their highest open space related priority (Flitwick Town Council, Houghton Conquest Parish Council, Eggington Parish Council, Leighton Linlade Town Council, Houghton Regis Town Council and Eversholt Parish Council) and a further five Towns / Parishes identified this type of open space as being within their top three priorities.

Balance between Recreation Use and Biodiversity and Conservation Priorities

8.62 While this assessment considers the requirement for open spaces from a recreational perspective, it is important to note that like countryside recreation sites, many of the informal recreational open spaces are as important from a wildlife and conservation perspective as they are in meeting recreational need. The range of sites included within this typology is diverse and most are multifunctional. As a result, and perhaps more so than for many other types of open space, consultees highlight the importance of balancing recreational need with conservation as well as the need to take into account the capacity of a site to accommodate visitors.

8.63 The increasing population is likely to result in growth in the recreational activities of residents, putting pressure on all sites. This is perhaps of greater significance for sites that have dual function in terms of both recreational value and conservation.

8.64 There is a need to ensure that sites of high biodiversity value are protected from the increasing recreational pressure they will experience in the coming years. The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough has developed a model to predict the sensitivity of sites (A Model to Predict Wildlife Site Sensitivity to Visitor Pressure, February 2011 Bedfordshire and Luton Wildlife Working Group). While it is not possible to apply this model to all sites within Central Bedfordshire, some Countryside recreation sites have already been assessed for their sensitivity. Using this information as a guide, a desk based assessment of the sensitivity of these Countryside recreation sites has been carried out. This is a desk based assessment, drawing on existing information on sites that have been assessed for their sensitivity, professional knowledge of the sites, information about their designations, the area of the site that is designated, and the total site area.

8.65 On this basis, sites have been categorized as high, medium or low sensitivity, depending on whether they are very vulnerable to recreation pressures, moderately vulnerable to recreation pressures, or primarily a recreational asset with limited ecological sensitivity and vulnerability to recreation pressures.

8.66 Table 8.4 summarises the sites that are considered to be of high or medium ecological sensitivity. Reflecting their status of providing habitats of national and local importance, many sites also have national and local designations. These are also detailed in Table 8.4.

Table 8.4 – Sites of Ecological Sensitivity

Name	Parish	Site Status/ Classification	Classification
Lancot Meadow	Dunstable	WTNR CWS	high
Blow's Downs	Caddington	WTNR, CWS, SSSI	high
Cottage Bottom Field	Caddington	LNR, CWS	high
Sewell Cutting	Houghton Regis	WTNR, CWS	high
Totternhoe Knolls	Totternhoe	WTNR, LNR, SSSI, CWS	high
Smithcombe Hill	Streatley	NT C.PARK, LGS, CWS, SSSI	high
Stanbridge Meadows	Leighton Linlade	LNR, CWS	high
Mill Nature Reserve	Stotfold	LNR, CWS	high
Biggleswade Common	Biggleswade	CWS, LGS	high
Rowney Warren	Southill	CWS	high
Potton Wood	Potton	SSSI, CWS	high
Glebe Meadows WT Reserve	Arlesey	WTNR	high
Arlesey Old Moat WT Reserve	Arlesey	WTNR	high
Knocking Hoe	Shillington	NNR, SSSI, CWS	high
Pegsdon Hills	Shillington	WTNR, SSSI, CWS	high
Rushymeade	Pulloxhill	CWS	high
Westminster Pond Field	Amphill	none	high
Cooper's Hill Nature Reserve	Amphill	WTNR, LNR, SSSI, CWS	high
Flitwick Moor NR	Flitwick	WTNR, SSSI, CWS	high
Amenity Area / Studham Common	Studham	CWS	high
Maulden Church Meadow	Maulden	SSSI, LNR, CWS	high
Maulden Wood	Maulden	SSSI, CWS	high
Deadman's Hill	Maulden	None GST office?	high
The Riddy	Sandy	LNR	high
Warren Villas WT Nature Reserve	Northill	WTNR, CWS	high
King's Wood and Glebe Meadows	Houghton Conquest	SSSI, LNR, CWS	high
Avery's Garage	Leighton Linlade	None	medium
Heath Wood and Meadow	Leighton Linlade	CWS	medium
Linslade Wood	Leighton Linlade	CWS	medium
Harlington Parish Spinney	Harlington	none	medium
Fairfield Community orchard	Fairfield	CWS	medium
Mallards Walk	Biggleswade	none	medium
Stratton Moat View Point / Stratton Moat	Biggleswade	none	medium
South of Dunton Lane	Biggleswade	CWS	medium
Ickwell Green	Northill	None / village	medium
Stanford Wood	Southill	CWS	medium

Name	Parish	Site Status/ Classification	Classification
Floodplain & Millennium Green	Stotfold	? none	medium
The Hermitage	Arlesey	? none	medium
Polehanger Farm Woodlands	Meppershall	? none	medium
Campton Plantation	Campton & Chicksands	CWS	medium
Rectory Wood	Cranfield	None	medium
Woodland in Moggerhanger Park	Moggerhanger	CWS	medium
Blunham Railway Track	Moggerhanger	CWS	medium
Cut throat Meadow	Amphill/Maulden	CWS	medium
Henlow Common & Langford Meadow LNR	Langford	LNR, CWS	medium
Langford Riverside	Langford	CWS	medium
Holcot Woods	Hulcote & Salford	WTR, CWS	medium
Flitwick Manor Park	Flitwick	CWS	medium
Flitwick Wood	Flitwick	LNR, CWS	medium
Unnamed	Flitton & Greenfield	?	medium
Flitton Moor	Flitton & Greenfield	LNR, CWS	medium
Whipsnade Heath	Whipsnade	CWS	medium
Duck End Nature Reserve	Maulden	LNR, CWS	medium
The Pinnacle	Sandy	LGS, CWS	medium
Mill Meadows	Sandy	None	medium
Sundon Landfill Site	Sundon	None?	medium
Barton Gravel Pit	Barton	None?	medium
Adjacent to Henlow Common & Langford Meadow LNR	Langford	LNR, CWS	medium
Langford Meadow	Langford	CWS	medium
Bury Orchard	Harlington	none	medium

Accessibility

8.67 Appropriate access to open space and recreation facilities is as important as the quality of those facilities. Table 8.5 summarises the mode of transport that residents in Central Bedfordshire expect to use, and actually use, to reach a large recreation area.

Table 8.5 – Mode of Travel

Expected vs Actual	Walk	Cycle	Public Transport	Car
Expected	73%	2%	4%	21%
Actual	69%	1%	3%	27%

8.68 Table 8.5 highlights an expectation that residents will have a large recreation area within walking distance from their home. Analysis of actual usage patterns (through the household survey) indicates that this is delivered in most areas.

8.69 Further analysis suggests that this varies slightly by placemaking area and settlement hierarchy specifically:

Accessibility by Placemaking Area

- there are different expectations in each of the placemaking areas. Spaces are expected within walking distance in Dunstable and Houghton Regis (78%) and East Central Bedfordshire (77%) (part of the North placemaking area). In the west (again part of the north placemaking area) 65% would expect to travel on foot, while this drops to 53% in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South

Accessibility by Settlement Hierarchy

- there is much more limited variation across the different tiers of the settlement hierarchy, with the overarching expectation at all levels except small villages being that large recreation areas are within walking distance. A higher proportion of those living in small villages would expect to travel by car.

Steps 3 and 4 - Setting and Applying Local Standards

8.70 In order to deliver a successful and varied network of open spaces consideration of quality, quantity and accessibility factors is required.

8.71 To develop provision requirements which are responsive to local needs, the findings of the facility audit and consultation can be used to inform the creation of quality, quantity and accessibility standards for each type of open space. Access is particularly important for Informal recreation areas, as many of these sites are located on the edge of settlement boundaries rather than centrally.

8.72 The findings of the local needs assessment, alongside the baseline audit of existing provision have therefore been used to determine local standards for the provision of informal recreation areas. Existing provision can then be measured against these benchmark standards to identify the requirement for new and improved facilities.

8.73 The approach taken to setting standards is explained in Section 2. The data used to set each standard for informal recreation areas is outlined below.

Accessibility

Setting Accessibility Standards

8.74 As outlined in Section 2, standards are set using an accessibility led approach. It is therefore essential to understand the distance that residents expect to travel and the mode of transport that they will use to reach each type of open space there. The household survey provides a robust way of analysing these expectations.

8.75 The survey data demonstrates that there is a strong consensus that large recreation areas should be within walking distance of the home, although for residents in the smaller settlements, a high proportion of the population are willing to travel by car.

8.76 To consider how informal recreation areas fit into aspirations for the open space network in Central Bedfordshire, Table 8.6 uses the raw data collated in the household survey to evaluate the amount of time residents expect to travel to reach a large recreation area in each of the settlement hierarchies.

8.77 To fully understand the spread of responses (and therefore the expectations of all residents), it categorises responses into quartiles. Each quartile represents 25% of the respondents. Quartile 1 is equivalent to the 25% of residents with the highest aspirations, or those that would be willing to travel the shortest distance to reach a recreation area. PPG17 indicates that a local standard should be set using quartiles, and at a point which reflects the expectations of 75% of the population.

Table 8.6 – Travel Expectations - Large Recreation Areas (from household telephone survey)

Mode of Transport	Walk					Car			
	1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4
Central Bedfordshire	9	10	15	70	10	15	20	90	
Major	5	10	15	30	10	12.5	15	30	
Minor	10	10	15	70	10	10	30	90	
Large	10	10	15	60	10	15	20	60	
Small	5	10	10	30	10	15	20	45	

Table 8.6 reveals the following key findings of residents' accessibility expectations:

Walking:

- 25% of residents across Central Bedfordshire would only be willing to walk up to 9 minutes to reach a large recreation area (quartile 1)
- 25% of residents in the major service centres and small villages are only willing to walk up to 5 minutes (quartile 1). Across Central Bedfordshire as a whole, the remaining 75% are willing to travel for more than 9 minutes and the maximum value is 70 minutes
- the average expected walking time is 14 minutes while the modal response (most common response) is 10 minutes
- This suggests that a 10 minute walk time to reach a large recreation area is broadly acceptable to 75% of the population.

Car:

- for those that would expect to drive, 25% would only be willing to drive up to 10 minutes (quartile 1) while the remaining 75% would travel for at least 10 minutes

- the average expected drive time is 16 minutes, while the mode (most common response) is 10 minutes

8.78 This suggests that a 10 minute drive time to reach a large recreation area is broadly acceptable to 75% of the population.

8.79 It is notable however, that there are some variations in expectation according to settlement size:

- residents in larger settlements expect to find large recreation areas in relatively close proximity to the home
- residents of large villages and smaller villages may be willing to travel further to a large recreation space.

8.80 It is also important to take into account the views arising from other consultations. While overall residents in small and larger villages are willing to travel further, a lack of local facilities was highlighted as a particular barrier to use in the Large Villages in the household survey, and Town and Parish Councils also emphasise the importance of local provision of large recreation areas.

8.81 Statistical data therefore suggests that 75% of residents will travel up to 10 minutes to reach a large recreation area and other consultation confirms that this is an appropriate distance for the local standard to be set at. Informal recreation areas emerged as particularly important to local communities through the review of local Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans.

8.82 Building upon the localised data collated, the Woodland Trust and Natural England also set accessibility targets which are relevant to the informal recreation area category. These are summarised below.

Woodland Trust

8.83 The Woodland Trust argues that it is important that there are sufficient woods close to where people live. In a survey undertaken as part of the 'Space for People' project, 85 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that 'more woods in urban areas would help them to stay in touch with nature'.

To this end the Trust has developed the 'Woodland Access Standard', which aspires:

- that no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2 hectares in size; and
- that there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20 hectares within 4 kilometres (8 kilometres round-trip) of people's homes.
- Natural England

8.84 Natural England promotes the use of the Access to Natural Green Space (Angst) standard, which recommends the provision of;

- at least 2 hectares of accessible natural greenspace per 1,000 people based on no-one living more than:
- 300m from nearest natural greenspace
- 2km from a site of 20 ha or above

- 5km from a site of 100 ha
- And 10km from a site of 500 ha.

8.85 Analysis undertaken by Natural England for Bedfordshire indicates that access to natural greenspace across Bedfordshire as a whole against the standards is comparatively high with 93.7% of the population within 2km of a site 20ha or more and 31.7% within 300m of a site of 2ha in size. Access in Central Bedfordshire is slightly lower, particularly to more local open space, where only 26.5% have access to a space within the target of 300m.

8.86 The typologies used in this analysis do not directly correlate with the classifications used in the Natural England categorization and it is recognised that based upon the above, sites can be considered to have different catchment areas according to their size. Similarly, the categories used in this assessment do not separate woodland, meaning that it is not possible to apply these standards specifically.

8.87 As highlighted, levels of expectation expressed locally are slightly lower than the standards set by Natural England, which seek to ensure that residents are within 300m (5 minutes walk) of their nearest natural greenspace. These standards should however continue to serve as important targets for the development of natural open spaces across Central Bedfordshire. Recognising the importance of the creation of new open informal open spaces, the local standard will however be applied to new development to ensure deliverability.

8.88 The recommended local accessibility standard and justification for this standard is set out below.

Accessibility

Informal Recreation Areas - Accessibility Standard	
10 minute walk time (480m)	
Justification	
<p>The findings of the consultation demonstrate that there is a split in expectation according to the size of the settlement. While those in the Major and Minor Service Centres expect to find large recreation areas within walking distance, some residents in the Large and Small Villages are willing to travel further afield, although in reality, for informal space, it is in these areas where informal recreation spaces are more likely to be found. A 10 minute walk time distance is reflective of the overall views of residents of Central Bedfordshire based upon the findings of the household survey.</p> <p>Supporting this, local green infrastructure studies highlight the importance of access to Informal recreation areas and many prioritise the creation of new spaces local to the settlement.</p>	

Application of the Accessibility Standard

8.89 The application of this standard is illustrated in maps contained in Appendix B. It is clear that in the majority of cases, Informal recreation areas are situated on the periphery of towns and villages (sometimes outside of walking distance for the majority of residents in the settlement).

8.90 It should be noted that as outlined earlier, large informal recreation spaces have similar functions to countryside recreation sites. As higher order facilities (i.e. larger sites providing a

greater range of opportunities), Countryside recreation sites negate the need for informal recreation areas for residents who are within a 10 minute walk time (the local standard for informal recreation areas) of one of these sites i.e. additional informal recreation areas will not be required to serve residents living within 10 minutes walk of a countryside recreation site.

8.91 Table 8.7 summarises the distribution of informal recreation areas and highlights where residents are outside of the catchment for these spaces. It also provides detail of where needs relating to the improvement of existing spaces and / or the creation of new spaces have been expressed (building upon data set out earlier in this section). While many areas seeking to improve the amount of space currently have limited access to such sites, some projects identified are in areas where access is already relatively high.

Table 8.7 – Access to Informal Recreation Areas

Hierarchy		Settlement	Access to informal recreation areas	Detail	Quality Issues Raised	Additional Informal/Improved Access
					Yes (formal and Informal)	yes
Major	Biggleswade	Yes	Reasonable access to informal recreation areas		yes	
Small	Brogborough	Yes	Access to informal space to north of village		yes	
Small	Chalton	No	No access to informal recreation areas in catchment although Fancott Wood within a mile of settlement		yes	
Large	Clifton	Limited	Most residents able to access formal recreation areas although there is a small gap to the west. Limited access to informal spaces		yes	
Large	Clophill	Adjacent to settlement	Maulden Wood located immediately to the east of the settlement	Yes	yes	
Minor	Cranfield	Yes	Informal recreation areas located to the east of the settlement. More limited access for residents in the west		yes	
Major	Flitwick	Yes	Good access to informal spaces particularly to the west		yes	
Large	Harlington	No	Some access to informal spaces	Yes	yes	
Large	Henlow	No	Lack of informal recreation areas		yes	
Large	Houghton Conquest	Yes	Several informal sites provide good space overall	Yes	yes	

Hierarchy		Settlement	Access to informal recreation areas	Detail	Quality Issues Raised	Additional Informal/Improved Access
Small	Kensworth	No	Limited access to informal space		yes	
Minor	Langford	Yes	Good network of informal recreation areas		yes	
Large	Meppershall	No	Limited access to informal spaces		yes	
Minor	Potton	Some deficiencies	Informal space located to far east of Potton.	Yes	yes	
Large	Silsoe	Yes	Some informal space to the east of the settlement	Yes (and quantity)	yes	
Small	Stanbridge	No	No informal recreation areas provided		yes	
Small	Streatley	Yes	Most able to access informal recreation areas		yes	
Large	Blunham	No	No access to informal recreation areas in catchment		Yes (and quantity)	
Major	Amphill	Yes	Good distribution of informal recreation areas. Amphill Park provides resources for residents in this area and negates the need for informal recreation areas in parts of the town within a 10 minute walk of Amphill Park.			
Minor	Arlesey	Yes	Good distribution of informal space	Yes		
Large	Aspley Guise	No	No access to informal recreation areas in catchment			
Small	Aspley Heath	No	No access to informal recreation areas in catchment			

Hierarchy	Settlement	Access to informal recreation areas	Detail	Quality Issues Raised	Additional Informal/ Improved Access
Minor	Barton Le Clay	Some deficiencies	Informal recreation areas serve residents in east and west		
Minor	Caddington	Limited	Two informal spaces to the north of the village mean that some residents have some limited access to local space.		
Small	Campton and Chicksands	Yes	Access to informal spaces to east of village. Campton and Chicksands Wood also in vicinity.		
Major	Dunstable	No	Sparse distribution of informal recreation areas. Some residents to the west are within a 10 minute walk of Dunstable Downs and additional informal recreation areas would not be required to meet needs of these residents.		
Small	Dunton	No	Lack of Informal recreation areas		
Large	Eaton Bray	No	No informal space within immediate catchment of settlement		
Small	Eversholt	No	No access within settlement to informal recreation areas		
Small	Everton	No	No local access to informal spaces		
Minor	Fairfield	Yes	Most residents within walking distance of informal recreation area		
Small	Flitton	No	Provision located between Flitton and Greenfield - access for some residents is further than the target catchment		
Small	Gravenhurst	No	No informal space within settlement		
Small	Greenfield	No	Provision located between Flitton and Greenfield - access for some residents is further than the target catchment		

Hierarchy		Settlement	Access to informal recreation areas	Detail	Quality Issues Raised	Additional Informal/Improved Access
Small	Haynes	Yes	Some residents have access to informal recreation areas	Yes		
Large	Heath and Reach	No	There is no local informal recreation areas.	Yes		
Large	Hockliffe	No	No access to informal recreation area			
Major	Houghton Regis	No	Informal recreation areas is sparse			
Small	Husborne Crawley	No	No informal recreation areas provided			
Major	Leighton Buzzard	No	Informal recreation areas sparse			
Small	Lidlington	Yes	Good distribution of informal space			
Minor	Marston Moretaine	Yes	Even distribution of informal space that is accessible to most residents. Some residents in close proximity to Forest Centre & Millennium Country Park, which negates requirement for additional informal recreation areas			
Large	Maulden	Yes	Even distribution of informal spaces. Most residents within catchment of informal space			
Small	Millbrook	Yes				
Small	Moggerhanger	No	Limited local access to informal recreation areas			
Small	Northill	Yes	Several informal recreation areas			

Hierarchy	Settlement	Access to informal recreation areas	Detail	Quality Issues Raised	Additional Informal/ Improved Access
Small	Old Warden	Yes	Swiss Garden (currently closed for renovation) provides access to an area of informal recreation (although it must be noted that there is a fee).		
Small	Pulloxhill	No	Most residents within catchment of informal space		
Small	Ridgmont	No	No Informal recreation areas provided		
Small	Salford	No	No Informal recreation areas provided		
Major	Sandy	Yes	Some access to Informal recreation areas and small amenity spaces)		
Minor	Shefford	Yes	Good access throughout to informal recreation areas.		
Large	Shillington	No	No access to informal space		
Large	Slip End	No	No informal space within vicinity of settlement		
Small	Southill	No	No access to informal space		
Small	Stondon	No	No local access to informal recreation areas	Yes	
Minor	Stotfold	No	No local access to informal recreation areas		
Small	Studham	Yes	Studham Common located to south of the village - many residents within catchment of this amenity.		

Hierarchy	Settlement	Access to informal recreation areas	Detail	Quality Issues Raised	Additional Informal/Improved Access
Small	Sundon	Yes	Informal recreation areas provided to the north. In close proximity to Sundon Hills Country Park		
Small	Sutton	No	No access within walking distance to informal spaces		
Small	Tempsford	No	No provision - all residents outside catchment		
Small	Tilsworth	No	No access to Informal recreation areas within settlement		
Minor	Toddington	No	No access to Informal recreation areas within settlement		
Small	Tottermoe	Yes	Due to the linear nature of Tottermhoe, some residents outside the catchment. Good access to Tottermhoe Knolls	Yes	
Small	Upper Caldecote	No	Limited access to informal recreation area		
Large	Westoning	No	No informal space within catchment		
Large	Woburn	No	No access to informal spaces		
Small	Wrestlingworth	No	No provision - all residents outside catchment		

Impact of Ecological Sensitivity on Access to Informal Recreation Areas

8.92 The deficiencies identified on previous pages do not however take into account the ecological and biodiversity functions of existing open spaces.

8.93 As outlined earlier in this section, some of these informal recreation areas have a primary purpose of ecological conservation, and are vulnerable to recreation pressures, while still being valued for their ability to provide quite recreation spaces, and contact with nature. As such, the sites are valued from a recreational point of view, but their capacity to sustain visitors is more limited. Sites have been categorized as high, medium or low sensitivity, depending on whether they are very vulnerable to recreation pressures, moderately vulnerable to recreation pressures, or primarily a recreational asset with limited ecological sensitivity and vulnerability to recreation pressures.

8.94 To acknowledge this, and to represent the reduced recreational capacity of a site, the catchment area of those sites that are ecologically significant can be amended as follows:

- Sites of high ecological and biodiversity sensitivity – catchment area reduced by 50%
- Sites of medium ecological and biodiversity sensitivity – catchment area reduced by 25%
- Sites of low ecological and biodiversity sensitivity – catchment remains as recommended standard.

8.95 For informal recreation areas, this means that although residents are willing to travel up to 10 minutes to reach a site;

- Sites of high ecological sensitivity are considered only able to serve residents within a 5 minute walktime
- Sites of medium ecological sensitivity have a catchment area of 7.5 minutes drivetime
- Sites with low ecological sensitivity have a 10 minute catchment area

8.96 The impact of consideration of the level of ecological sensitivity of each site on the application standard is illustrated in Appendix B. It can be seen that a much higher amount of residents are outside of the catchment area for Informal recreation areas and that to successfully balance the recreational function of countryside sites with biodiversity and ecology, more Informal recreation areas are required. There are particular implications of the reduced catchment area in;

- Ampthill (2 sites highly sensitive and one medium sensitivity)
 - Arlesey (2 sites highly sensitive and one medium sensitivity)
 - Biggleswade (1 site highly sensitive and three sites of medium sensitivity)
 - Flitwick (2 sites of medium sensitivity and one highly sensitive)
 - Langford (4 sites considered highly sensitive)
 - Leighton Buzzard (one site highly sensitive and 3 medium sensitivity)
 - Maulden (three sites highly sensitive and one medium sensitivity)
 - Sandy (one site highly sensitive and 2 sites medium sensitivity)
- It is also important to note that in the following areas, all current informal space is very ecologically sensitive and therefore has a limited capacity to sustain

visitors:

- Caddington (both sites highly sensitive)
- Dunstable (only site highly sensitive, although it should be noted that residents are also close to Dunstable Downs)
- Houghton Regis (only site highly sensitive)
- Langford (all sites medium sensitivity)
- Maulden (three of four sites highly sensitive)
- Potton (only site highly sensitive)
- Sandy (all sites high or medium sensitivity)
- Shillington (both sites highly sensitive)
- Southill (both sites of medium / high sensitivity)
- Streatley (only site highly sensitive)
- Studham (only site highly sensitive)
- Totternhoe (only site highly sensitive)

Quantity

Setting Quantity Standards

8.97 Overall, consultation demonstrates satisfaction with the amount of sites provided. More specifically however with regards informal recreation areas, many strategic documents and community exercises demonstrate an aspiration for additional sites. This is also in line with Natural England and Woodland Trust priorities, which suggest that more spaces are required to meet targets.

8.98 Reflecting this, application of the accessibility standard indicates that there are numerous settlements where residents are outside of the catchment area of spaces and these catchments are further reduced when taking into account the impact of ecological sensitivity on visitor capacity.

8.99 For informal spaces, it is much more difficult to accurately project need, in particular because such sites are frequently opportunity led and are created from natural settings, rather than made environments.

8.100 While current provision is equal to circa 1800 hectares, this is skewed significantly by several large sites of over 20 hectares and above. As it is not expected that such sites would be replicated locally in all areas, these should be excluded, leaving 468 hectares of space dedicated to informal recreation.

8.101 Natural England standards and Woodland Trust standards both support the need to increase the amount of accessible natural / informal space in the area. Natural England Standards seek to ensure that at least 2ha of accessible natural space is provided per 1000 population. It is clear that this is just above levels currently evident in Central Bedfordshire (1.7ha per 1000 population of informal space).

8.102 Table 8.7 demonstrates that there are 40 settlements that do not currently have access to any informal spaces within 10 minutes walktime and furthermore, residents of many settlements with some informal space are also outside the catchment. Added to this, analysis

indicates that there are numerous sites that are ecologically sensitive and where the catchment area is reduced as a consequence.

8.103 Assuming the average size of an informal space (based on the Central Bedfordshire average) to be 4.4ha, and that each settlement (in the settlement hierarchy) without any existing provision requires one site, a total of 644.7 hectares would be required (equivalent to 2.5 ha per 1000 population). This is slightly higher than the target set by Natural England (perhaps due to the rural nature of some parts of Central Bedfordshire and the need to provide additional spaces to meet accessibility targets).

8.104 This standard provides an indication of the minimum requirement for provision, as it assumes that all sites are able to function at 100% capacity (assessment of the ecological value of sites has shown that this is not the case) and also assumes that just one site per settlement is sufficient.

This equates to a total requirement of 640 ha to meet current demand (equivalent to 2.5 per 1000 population)

8.105 The recommended local quantity standard and justification for this standard is set out below.

Quantity

Informal Recreation Areas - Quantity Standard
Informal recreation areas – 2.5 ha per 1000 population
Justification
This figure represents the minimum requirement for informal recreation areas in Central Bedfordshire if all residents were to be located within a 10 minute walktime of a formal recreation area. This is a minimum standard, as in reality, it is essential that the ecological sensitivity of existing sites, and the subsequent impact on their visitor capacity is taken into account.

Application of the Quantity Standard

8.106 Table 8.8 illustrates the application of this standard in each of the settlement hierarchies. It must be noted that this provides a broad indication only as quantity standards should really be considered at a local level in conjunction with accessibility and used to determine the impact of new provision rather than the adequacy of the amount of existing informal space.

8.107 The application of this standard excludes sites of 20ha or above, although they should be taken into account when considering overall adequacy of facilities.

Table 8.8 – Indicative shortfalls and surpluses of Informal Recreation Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

Area	Required (Current)	Required (Future)	Shortfall / Surplus (Current)	Shortfall / Surplus (Future)
Major Service Centres	330.2	378.7	-318.3	-366.8
Minor Service Centres	117.1	133.6	161.3	144.8
Large Villages	96.9	103.9	248.8	241.8
Small Villages	61.5	63.9	364.5	362.1

8.108 It is clear that there are particular shortfalls in the major settlements, perhaps understandably as this type of space is less likely to naturally occur in urban areas.

8.109 Analysis of the adequacy of provision in each settlement provides a much closer understanding of the provision that is available and the largest deficiencies are currently in the following settlements:

- Dunstable
- Leighton Buzzard
- Houghton Regis
- Sandy
- Potton (although provision is sufficient when taking into account Potton Wood)
- Toddington
- Marston Moretaine
- Biggleswade (although provision is sufficient when taking into account Biggleswade Common)

8.110 Again considering only sites below 20ha, population growth will see the largest shortfalls in provision in the following settlements;

- Leighton Buzzard
- Dunstable
- Houghton Regis
- Biggleswade
- Sandy
- Marston Moretaine
- Flitwick
- Stotfold
- Potton

Quality

Setting Quality Standards

8.111 Local consultations have enabled the identification of issues viewed as important to residents, as well as their aspirations in relation to the type of spaces that they would like to see provided. Supporting this, site visits have provided an overview of the quality of recreation areas.

8.112 For informal spaces, it is clear that a greater balance between improvements to the quality of spaces and the creation of new spaces (or access to inaccessible sites).

8.113 Information collated can be used to identify the key components of each type of open space in relation to quality and to set a quality standard that should be used as a basis for improving existing spaces as well as the creation of new spaces. The quality standard for informal recreation areas is set out below.

Informal Recreation Areas - Quality Standard	
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice indicate that new and existing informal recreation areas should meet with the following criteria;	
Size and Location	Appropriately located for local catchment (within 10 minute walk time of target residents) Accessible via safe footpaths Clear boundaries that are locally appropriate and promote security
Character	Predominantly natural space Balance between recreation and conservation
Access	Clearly defined pathways Links with Public Rights of Way and cycle routes Compliant with DDA – access audit in place
Facilities	Clearly defined paths Appropriate and regular seating Information and signage both to and within the site as well as at the main entrance, including interpretation boards Appropriate bins Management of dog fouling Sufficient parking
Activities	Volunteer opportunities for the local community (linked with section 4)

Application of Quality Standard

8.114 Several informal recreation areas fall below the level where all factors are considered to be acceptable or above on the site visits matrix (66%). Quality improvements required are included within Appendix A.

Summary – Issues Identified

Usage

26% of respondents to the telephone survey visit large recreation areas at least once per week and a further 22% use these spaces at least once per month. This makes this type of open space one of the most frequently visited across Central Bedfordshire. Just 35% of residents never visit a large recreation area meaning that these spaces serve the highest proportion of residents of all types of open space in the area.

Use of large recreation areas varies more between different demographic groups than most other types of open space. In particular, usage by residents over the age of 55 is relatively low and residents with a disability are also less likely to use a large recreation area. Residents with dependents are far more likely to visit such a site than others. While relaxation, walking and exercise, play, sports and events are the main reasons for visiting large recreation areas, other than time and interest, the most common barriers to use are lack of local spaces and difficulties accessing sites. Residents in Leighton Buzzard and the rural South and those in large villages highlight greater concerns about accessing these spaces than in other areas. Removal of barriers to access is likely to increase the overall usage of these spaces.

Quantity and Quality

There are circa 1800 hectares of land dedicated to informal recreation areas. This is a large amount of space, influenced by the size of sites as there are several informal recreation areas over 20ha in size. These sites are more abundant in the north of Central Bedfordshire and in smaller settlements and spaces are quite unevenly distributed.

The household survey demonstrates an overall view that there are enough large recreation areas (64%) meaning that satisfaction is higher than most types of open space in Central Bedfordshire and there are no clear differences in views between residents of different sectors of the population. Despite this, many local green infrastructure studies prioritise the creation of new (and improvement of existing) informal recreation areas.

Like the quantity of provision, overall, the quality of informal recreation areas is viewed positively although opportunities for improvement are identified, including cleanliness and maintenance and seating. Dog fouling is also identified as a key issue at these sites. There are no clear variations in views or actual quality by area or settlement hierarchy. Consultation with Town and Parish Councils, as well as a review of green infrastructure studies highlights a clear emphasis on improvements to amount of these types of space, as well as some improvements to the quality of existing provision.

Like many other types of open space, residents of Central Bedfordshire expect to find large recreation areas in close proximity to the home. With the exception of small villages, residents in all tiers of the settlement hierarchy would expect to find a large recreation area within walking distance of the home (circa 10 minutes). A local standard has therefore been set at a 10 minute catchment area. The ecological sensitivity of many of these sites however has an impact on the number of visitors that can be sustained without detrimental impact on biodiversity, and those sites with high sensitivity in reality have a reduced catchment (5 minutes) and those with a medium sensitivity able to serve only residents within a 7.5 minute catchment.

Application of this accessibility standard demonstrates that informal recreation areas tend to be located on the edge of the settlement and at least 40 settlements do not have access to any informal recreation areas. To ensure that each settlement contains at least one space, the minimum requirement for provision (quantity standard) of large informal formal recreation areas

across Central Bedfordshire is therefore 2.5 per 1000 population.

Application of this standard demonstrates that while many areas meet this standard currently, population growth will have a significant impact on the demand for large recreation spaces, with further deficiencies by 2022.

The use of the quality standard to guide improvements to existing sites is also of central importance for informal recreation areas, but the provision of new spaces to meet local needs is equally as important.

Step 5 – Identifying Priorities

Key Issues to Address

8.115 The above analysis therefore indicates that the Recreation and Open Space Strategy needs to address the following issues relating to informal recreation areas:

- Usage figures demonstrate that large recreation areas are used by a higher proportion of the population than any other type of open space and they therefore represent a valuable resource
- The location of sites is one of the key determinants of use and consultation suggests that residents expect to be within a 10 minute walk time of a large recreation area. The ecological sensitivity of many of these sites however means that in reality sites serve a much smaller catchment as the number of visitors that they can adequately accommodate without detrimental impact is reduced (by 50% for those with high sensitivity and by 25% for those of medium sensitivity)
- In some settlements improvements to the quality of existing sites are considered to be as if not more important than the creation of additional sites. In many areas however, residents are outside of the catchment for sites and there is a need for new areas. New informal spaces are a particular priority of many of the Local Green Infrastructure Plans
- While it is essential that biodiversity is balanced with recreational uses, some improvements are needed at some sites to enhance the recreational experience and in particular a need to ensure that all sites are attractive and welcoming to the user.
- Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for this type of facility and a consequent increase in visitor numbers.

Recreation and Open Space Strategy Outcomes and Key Priorities

8.116 Building upon the above, the recommendations set out below would help to deliver the following outcomes:

- ensure that all residents have appropriate access to informal recreation areas
- attract users from all sectors of the population
- meet user aspirations relating to quality of provision as well as local priorities and national objectives and promote the provision of a strategic network of high quality informal recreation areas; and
- maintain a balance between the recreational function of these sites and biodiversity and conservation features

Key Priorities

8.117 It is therefore recommended that key priorities for the delivery of informal recreation areas across Central Bedfordshire are as follows:

- promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy
- promote access to informal space within a 10 minute walktime of at least one recreation area. Where residents are within a 10 minute walk time of a countryside recreation site, this negates the need for additional informal recreation area. Where sites are highly ecological sensitive, they have a reduced catchment and this should be taken into account when evaluating the need for new open space
- ensure that the impact of population growth on Informal recreation areas is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring development to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through on-site provision of facilities, CIL and planning contributions. The impact of increased visitor numbers on informal sites (particularly those with primary or secondary conservation functions) should also be carefully monitored and accessibility should be used as the primary determinant of additional need.
- work with communities and partners to ensure that all sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. Prioritise qualitative improvements over additional spaces where residents are already within the appropriate catchment of a space;
- facilitate access routes from nearby settlements to these sites, including safe footpaths and cycling opportunities;

Site / Area Specific Implications

Table 8.9 summarises the likely site / area specific implications of the above recommendations.

Table 8.9 – Site Specific Priorities to Address Issues and Recommendations

Protect
All existing sites
New provision
<p>Areas without access or with limited access to informal recreation areas. Most settlements in Central Bedfordshire have issues with existing access, but the following also have either large quantitative deficiencies and/ or expressed need in Green Infrastructure assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leighton Buzzard • Dunstable • Houghton Regis • Stotfold • Toddington • Chalton • Harlington • Henlow

- Kensworth
- Meppershall
- Stanbridge

New provision and / or improved access will be needed in all areas where provision is currently lacking either in quantitative or qualitative terms.

New provision should also be considered where sites are particularly ecologically sensitive and therefore have a limited visitor capacity. Settlements that are particularly impacted in this manner are;

Ampthill

Arlesey

Biggleswade (also already area of high quantitative deficiency)

Flitwick (also already area of high quantitative deficiency)

Langford

Leighton Buzzard(also already area of high quantitative deficiency)

Maulden (also already area of high quantitative deficiency)

Sandy (also already area of high quantitative deficiency)

Caddington

Dunstable (also already area of high quantitative deficiency)

Houghton Regis (also already area of high quantitative deficiency)

Caddington.

Areas of new development where incoming residents will create quantitative deficiency and / or are outside of catchment for existing open spaces.

Quality Enhancements

As well as increasing the amount of Informal recreation areas, qualitative improvements in areas where there are already informal recreation spaces should be prioritised. Evidence suggests that high quality sites are highly valued but in some instances, there is a need to improve their recreational function while respecting ecological and biodiversity priorities.

- Priority for improvement should be given to high value sites – sites serving unique catchment areas but are of poor recreational quality
- Areas which contain clusters of poor quality provision
- Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where additional residents will place additional pressure on existing facilities.

9. Small Amenity Spaces

Introduction

9.1 This section sets out the assessment relating to small amenity spaces in Central Bedfordshire. It is structured as follows:

- Context and Definition
- Usage Profile
- Existing Provision – Quality, Quantity and Accessibility - and Aspirations
- Summary – Issues to Address
- Implications and recommendations

Context and Definition

9.2 For the purposes of this study, small amenity spaces have been defined as follows:

“small, local spaces which may enhance the local area and provide some opportunities for casual recreation use, e.g. dog walking, casual play.”

9.3 These spaces are therefore likely to contain fewer facilities than other larger types of informal space including large formal recreation areas and informal informal recreation areas, urban parks and countryside recreation sites. Like for these other types of space however, if a specific type of facility is provided within the small recreation space (for example a play area) this has been categorised separately to ensure that no double counting of site area takes place. Almost all sites classified within this section feature just a small grassed area.

9.4 This section presents the findings of the local needs and assessment and the audit of provision and presents a summary of the usage, quality, quantity and accessibility of small amenity spaces across Central Bedfordshire.

Steps 1 and 2 – Evaluation of Local Needs and Audit of Existing Provision

Usage Profile

9.5 A household survey of 1000 residents of Central Bedfordshire was carried out to establish a baseline of views regarding current and future provision of the range of open spaces types detailed in the study. As well as providing an understanding of views and aspirations relating to current provision, the survey also enables evaluation of the current user profile of each type of open space.

Household Survey Responses

9.6 27% of respondents to the telephone survey visit small amenity spaces at least once weekly and a further 14% use these spaces at least once per month. This makes this type of open space one of the most frequently visited and more users visit small amenity spaces daily than any other type of open space. Despite this, 49% of residents never use a small amenity spaces. Use is predominantly consistent across different demographic groups although it is noticeable that;

- non white British residents use small amenity spaces significantly more frequently than white British residents (46% visit weekly or more compared to 25%). A similar proportion of residents of white and non white British origin never visit these spaces;
- a slightly higher proportion of older residents never visit small amenity areas although frequency of use is higher in those that do than younger age groups;
- residents with a disability are less likely to visit a small amenity space. Just 9% visit weekly (compared to 30%) and 67% never use these sites; and
- like all other types of open space (except allotments), residents with dependents are more likely to use large recreation areas than those without. Residents with dependents aged below 8 are most likely to use these spaces, with 49% visiting weekly (compared to 25% overall) and just 24% never using them.

Usage of Small Amenity Areas by Placemaking Areas

9.7 There is little variation in use of small amenity spaces in the different placemaking areas of Central Bedfordshire. The proportion of residents that never visit such space and actual usage figures are the same in all areas.

Usage of Small Amenity Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

9.8 Like in the different geographic areas, there are few variations between the different settlement hierarchies in use of small amenity spaces. Residents in small villages use these spaces more frequently than any other (34% weekly or more) and use is notably lower in Major Service Centres (14% weekly or more frequently). Use across the remaining settlement hierarchies is similar.

Reasons for Visiting Small Amenity Areas

9.9 Reasons for visiting small amenity areas are similar to those for all other types of space, although these sites are particularly important for play. Across Central Bedfordshire, residents visit these spaces for;

- Play (39%)
- Walk and exercise (39%)
- Relax (34%)
- Peace and tranquillity (3%).

Reasons for Visiting Small Amenity Spaces by Placemaking Area

9.10 The reasons for visiting small amenity spaces are the same in each of the Placemaking areas.

Reasons for Visiting Small Amenity Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

9.11 The reasons for use in each of the settlement hierarchies are the same, although a particularly high proportion of residents in the small villages indicate that they use these spaces to walk and exercise.

Barriers to Use

9.12 A lack of time (27%) and interest (23%) are the main barriers to the use of small amenity spaces. Few other issues are identified with a lack of facilities (4%) and a lack of local facilities (3%) being the next most common answers.

9.13 There are also few variations in perceived barriers between different segments of the population, although a higher proportion of residents with a disability indicated that a difficulty in accessing these spaces prevents them from visiting. It is also noticeable that a lack of interest is much more evident in those without dependents while those with dependents suffer from time pressures. Residents with children are more likely to highlight a lack of awareness.

Barriers to Use of Small Amenity Areas by Placemaking Area

9.14 The barriers to use are consistent across all parts of Central Bedfordshire. It is however apparent that there is a greater degree of concern around the lack of provision in the Leighton Buzzard and rural south (and to a degree in the west area) than in other parts. A significantly higher proportion of residents in Dunstable and Houghton Regis have no interest in these spaces than in other parts of Central Bedfordshire.

Barriers to Use of Small Amenity Areas by Settlement Hierarchy

9.15 Barriers to use are also the same in each settlement hierarchy. It is clear however that a higher proportion of residents in the Major and Minor Service Centres are not interested in these spaces than in the large and small villages.

Current Provision and Views on Current Provision

Quantity

9.16 The audit reveals that over 140 hectares is dedicated to small amenity spaces in Central Bedfordshire.

9.17 Table 9.1 summarises the distribution of the existing small amenity spaces across Central Bedfordshire.

Table 9.1 – Size Distribution of Small Amenity Areas across Central Bedfordshire

Area	No. of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)	Number of Sites Above 0.2ha	Total Provision (Ha) Excluding Sites under 0.2ha	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)
Central Bedfordshire	295	140.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	111	123.4	0.5	0.4	1.1

Table 9.2 summarises the distribution of small amenity spaces by placemaking area.

Table 9.2 – Size Distribution of Small Amenity Spaces by Placemaking Area

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)	Number of Sites Above 0.2ha	Total Provision (Ha) Excluding Sites over 20ha	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	34	30.8	0.6	0.5	0.9	16	28.8	0.6	0.5	1.8
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	38	34.5	0.6	0.6	0.9	18	32.2	0.6	0.5	1.8
North	223	75.4	0.5	0.4	0.3	77	62.4	0.4	0.4	0.8
Central Bedfordshire	295	140.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	111	123.4	0.5	0.4	1.1

Table 9.2 confirms that provision is relatively consistent across different placemaking areas in Central Bedfordshire.

9.18 In order to evaluate whether there are any differences in the distribution of small amenity spaces according to the size of the settlement, Table 9.3 summarises the distribution of these facilities by settlement hierarchy.

Table 9.3 – Distribution of Small Amenity Spaces by Settlement Hierarchy

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)	Total Provision (Hectares) (sites above 0.2ha)	Hectares per 1000 population (above 0.2ha) Current	Hectares per 1000 population (above 0.2ha) Future
Major Service Centres	146	70.1	0.50	0.44	0.5	146	61.24	0.44
Minor Service Centres	54	19.5	0.39	0.34	0.4	54	17.2	0.35
Large Villages	52	23.1	0.56	0.52	0.4	52	19.4	0.47
Small Villages	39	17.3	0.66	0.64	0.4	39	14.9	0.57

Quantity of Provision – Key Issues

9.19 Tables 9.1 – 9.3 illustrate the following key issues regarding the number, type and size distribution of small amenity spaces:

- 17ha is dedicated to sites of 0.2ha and below, while the majority of sites are above this threshold.
- If no additional small amenity spaces are provided, population growth will see provision decrease from 0.5ha per 1000 population to 0.4ha per 1000.
- There is little variation in provision across different geographical areas, with the amount of small amenity spaces provided ranging from 0.5ha per 1000 (north) to 0.6 ha (both other areas and Central Bedfordshire as a whole). It should be noted however that within the north area, 43% of provision is located in the east, meaning that provision is slightly skewed towards the west. The average site size is substantially larger in the south of Central Bedfordshire than in the north.
- Smaller settlements (large villages and small villages) have a higher level of provision per 1000 population than major and minor settlements. The average size of sites is however relatively consistent in settlements of all sizes and sites below 0.2ha are also dispersed across the settlement hierarchy
- Population growth will have a significant impact upon the amount of provision per 1000 population. This is particularly evident in the major and minor settlements.

Quantity of Small Amenity Spaces– Consultation Responses

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

9.20 A review of the priorities of Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans reveals that small amenity spaces are of lower priority for many than other types of open space. Furthermore, the majority of expressed needs relate to the improvement of existing facilities rather than the creation of new sites.

9.21 The key priorities included in current documents in relation to the amount of small amenity spaces are set out below. This list includes views provided as part of Town and Parish Council consultation, as well as those set out in adopted policy documents.

- New public open space around Houghton House (Ampthill GI)
- Creation of new space (Chequers Farm) in Clifton – GI
- Harlington Parish identified gap in provision for older residents – actively trying to secure new amenity spaces (Parish Consultation)
- Henlow – new pocket park(GI)
- Ickwell – Parish plan identifies demand for more public open spaces
- Upper Shelton – requirement for additional space (GI)

Household Survey Responses

9.22 The household survey demonstrates that there is an overall view that there are enough small amenity spaces, with 53% stating that there are enough of these spaces and 7% believing there are too many. 31% consider there to be not enough, while a further 9% suggest that there are only nearly enough. While this means that perceptions are less conclusive than some other types of open space, it does demonstrate overall satisfaction.

9.23 There are few clear differences in views between residents of different sectors of the population. It is however notable that while the majority believe there to be sufficient small amenity spaces, residents with dependents aged below 8 believe there to be a need for more provision (56% state that there is not enough or only nearly enough of these spaces). Younger residents in the 18 – 34 bracket are more likely to indicate that more spaces are required than older residents.

Views on Quantity of Small Amenity Spaces by Placemaking Area

9.24 The household survey demonstrates that there is little variation in opinion on the adequacy of existing small amenity spaces across Central Bedfordshire with the exception of in Dunstable and Houghton Regis. 56% of residents in this area believe that there is a need for more small amenity spaces. This is perhaps slightly surprising as it is also in this area where the highest proportion of residents have no interest in this type of open space. Provision in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area is equivalent to that in other areas in terms of quantity, suggesting that there may be other reasons for dissatisfaction of residents. The average size of spaces is also consistent with the Leighton Buzzard and Rural South area.

Views on Quantity of Small Amenity Spaces by Settlement Hierarchy

9.25 Analysis of the household survey demonstrates that there is a distinction between opinions at different levels of the settlement hierarchy. Residents in the major and minor service centres are slightly more dissatisfied with a higher proportion of residents indicating that there are not enough or only nearly enough small amenity spaces. Residents in the small villages and large villages are happier with the amount of provision. At all levels of the settlement hierarchy, more than 50% of residents are happy with the amount of small amenity spaces provided.

9.26 Reflecting these views, the amount of spaces per 1000 population is lower in the major and Minor Service Centres than in the large and small villages.

Town and Parish Councils

9.27 Analysis of responses to the Town and Parish Council survey demonstrate more conclusively that there is considered to be sufficient provision. 65% indicate that there are

enough small amenity areas and only 25% suggest that more are required. There are however mixed views hidden behind these responses, as some respondents caveat their perceptions by indicating that there are not enough spaces of sufficient quality and concerns over the value of very small spaces are also raised. Two Parishes indicate that there are no such spaces within their area.

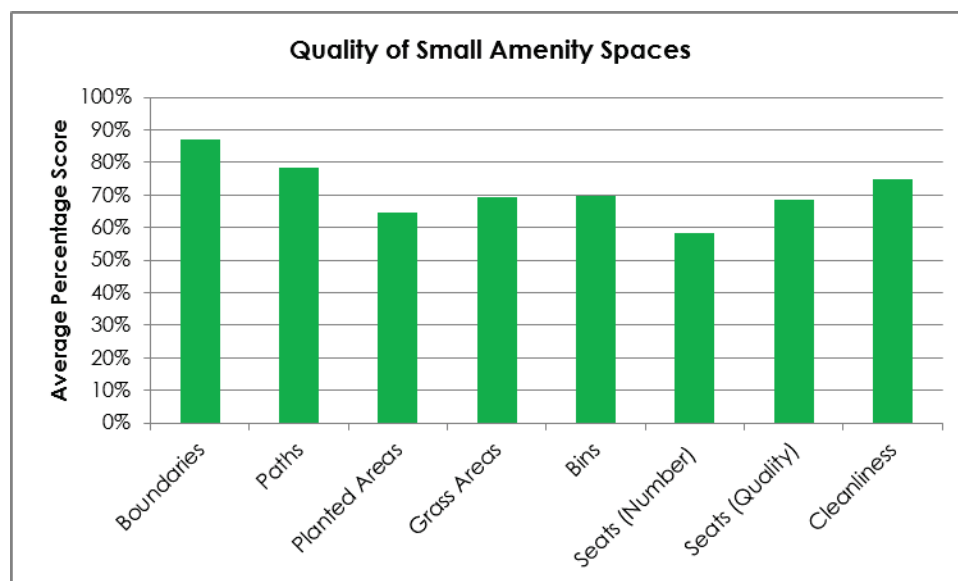
Current Provision

Quality

9.28 The quality and value of small amenity spaces were assessed using a quality assessment matrix. Visits revealed that the average quality score achieved by small amenity spaces was 51.4%, meaning that they are amongst the lowest quality spaces in Central Bedfordshire.

9.29 Chart 9.1 summarises the findings of site visits and highlights that the lowest scoring feature is the amount of benches and the condition of planted areas also requires improvement. In contrast, site boundaries achieve the highest scores and the condition of paths is also comparatively positively rated.

Chart 8.1 – Quality of Small Amenity Spaces



Quality of Small Amenity Spaces Sites by Placemaking Areas

9.30 Table 9.4 summarises the scores attributed to different features of small amenity spaces during site visits by placemaking area. It notes that the overall quality of facilities is highest in the north and lowest in Dunstable and Houghton Regis.

9.31 It is clear that the overall quality scores achieved in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south are relatively low. When examining the scores in detail that many individual features are ranked relatively highly in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south. This suggests that sites in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south lack the basic provision (and therefore achieve a lower overall score) but those that do have facilities (for example seating) are well maintained and of good quality.

Table 9.4 – Quality of Small Amenity Spaces by Placemaking Area

Placemaking Area	Boundaries	Paths	Planted Areas	Grass Areas	Bins	Seats (Number)	Seats (Quality)	Cleanliness	Total Score
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	75%	67%	70%	67%	92%	0%	0%	70%	37%
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	89%	90%	87%	76%	93%	92%	75%	79%	44%
North	88%	79%	62%	68%	66%	56%	68%	75%	54%

Quality of Sites by Settlement Hierarchy

9.32 Table 9.5 summarises the scores attributed to different features of small amenity spaces during site visits by Settlement Hierarchy. It indicates that there is little difference in the quality of sites across settlements of different sizes. It is however clear that overall, the quality is marginally lower in the Major Service Centres. The provision of seating is notably better in the villages and for many elements, sites in the large villages achieve the highest scores.

Table 9.5 – Quality of Small Amenity Spaces by Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement Hierarchy	Boundaries	Paths	Planted Areas	Grass Areas	Bins	Seats (Number)	Seats (Quality)	Cleanlines	Overall Quality Core
Major	84%	79%	62%	67%	83%	58%	61%	72%	48%
Minor	86%	80%	67%	73%	51%	48%	79%	76%	56%
Large	92%	80%	67%	70%	83%	73%	64%	78%	54%
Small	93%	69%	68%	74%	69%	64%	72%	81%	57%

Quality of Provision – Consultation Responses

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

9.33 While consultations provide an overview of the quality issues experienced, as well as components that are important in the provision of small amenity spaces, reviews of the existing Green infrastructure studies, Parish plans and detailed consultation provide a more in depth understanding of site specific priorities related to small amenity spaces. Areas / sites specifically referenced as requiring improvement are set out below;

- Potential to improve quality significantly – Houghton Regis (Town Council)
- Cranfield Pocket poorly used and requires improvements. Opportunities also to upgrade village greens (GI plan)
- Aspley Guise amenity spaces – recently upgraded and improved (Parish Council)
- Harlington – requirement to upgrade village pond area
- Silsoe –improvements to village green (Parish Plan and GI)
- Upper Caldecote – small amenity space suffers from antisocial behaviour (Parish)
- Dunton – Parish plan seeks to make better use of existing space
- Ridgmont – Parish Plan seeks to establish new village green
- Wrestlingworth – need to improve facility (Parish Plan)

Household Survey Response

9.34 The telephone survey confirms that the quality of small amenity areas is viewed positively. 65% of respondents rate these spaces as good or very good and only 10% consider them to be poor or very poor. Very few residents highlighted the quality of facilities as a barrier to use, further emphasising this point.

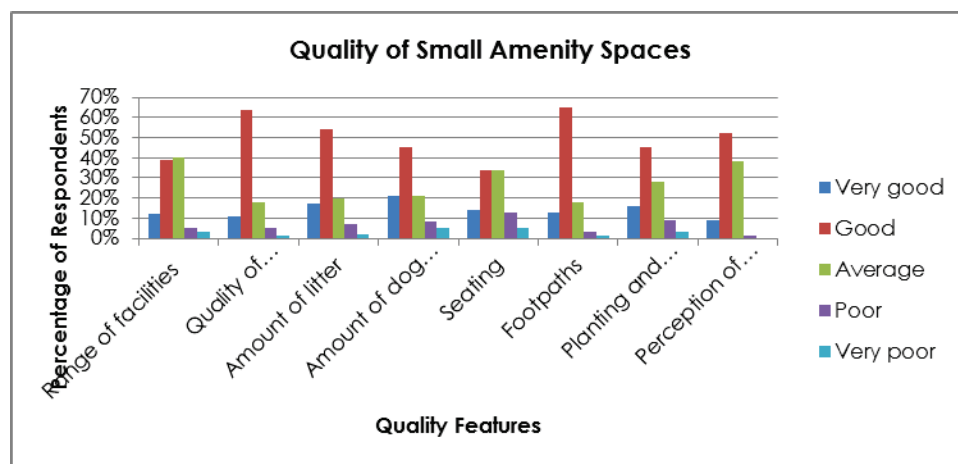
9.35 There are few clear differences in perceived quality between different sectors of the population. It must however be noted that a higher proportion of residents of non white British origin (a group that use these spaces frequently) consider these spaces to be of poor quality.

9.36 Chart 9.2 (which considers the views just of those that use facilities) evaluates the perceived quality of key components of a small amenity space. It reveals that with the exception of toilets and signage (which are rated more negatively), the most common response for each component is good.

9.37 The areas where the highest levels of satisfaction are recorded are as follows:

- Quality of maintenance (75% good or very good)
- Amount of Litter (71% good or very good)
- Amount of dog fouling (66% good or very good)

Chart 9.2 – Perceptions of Quality Factors for Small Amenity Spaces



9.38 Areas where the highest levels of dissatisfaction are evident are:

- Seating (18% poor or very poor)
- Planting and Landscaping (13% poor or very poor)
- Dog fouling (12% poor or very poor)

9.39 It must be noted that whilst these are the areas of highest dissatisfaction in relation to small amenity spaces, these are relatively low proportions of the population. There are few clear differences in terms of the views of different sectors of the population although in general, it is those with dependents that have raised issues around seating. Residents of non white ethnic origin, many of whom regularly use this type of open space, are positive about all aspects of these facilities with the exception of seating and the range of facilities provided, which are rated poorly.

9.40 The above features are reflected in the site visits, with the amount of seating provided being the most lowly rated feature and planting and landscaping the second. Quality assessments therefore reinforce the findings of the consultations.

Placemaking Area

9.41 The household survey reveals that the overall perceptions are similar across all parts of Central Bedfordshire. The most positive views are found in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south while these spaces are perceived much more negatively in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area (where actual quality is lowest). It is also noticeable that views in West Central Bedfordshire are more polarized than for some other typologies (in particular in relation to maintenance and seating) and perceptions in Dunstable and Houghton Regis are also lower primarily with regards the range of facilities provided at these sites.

Settlement Hierarchy

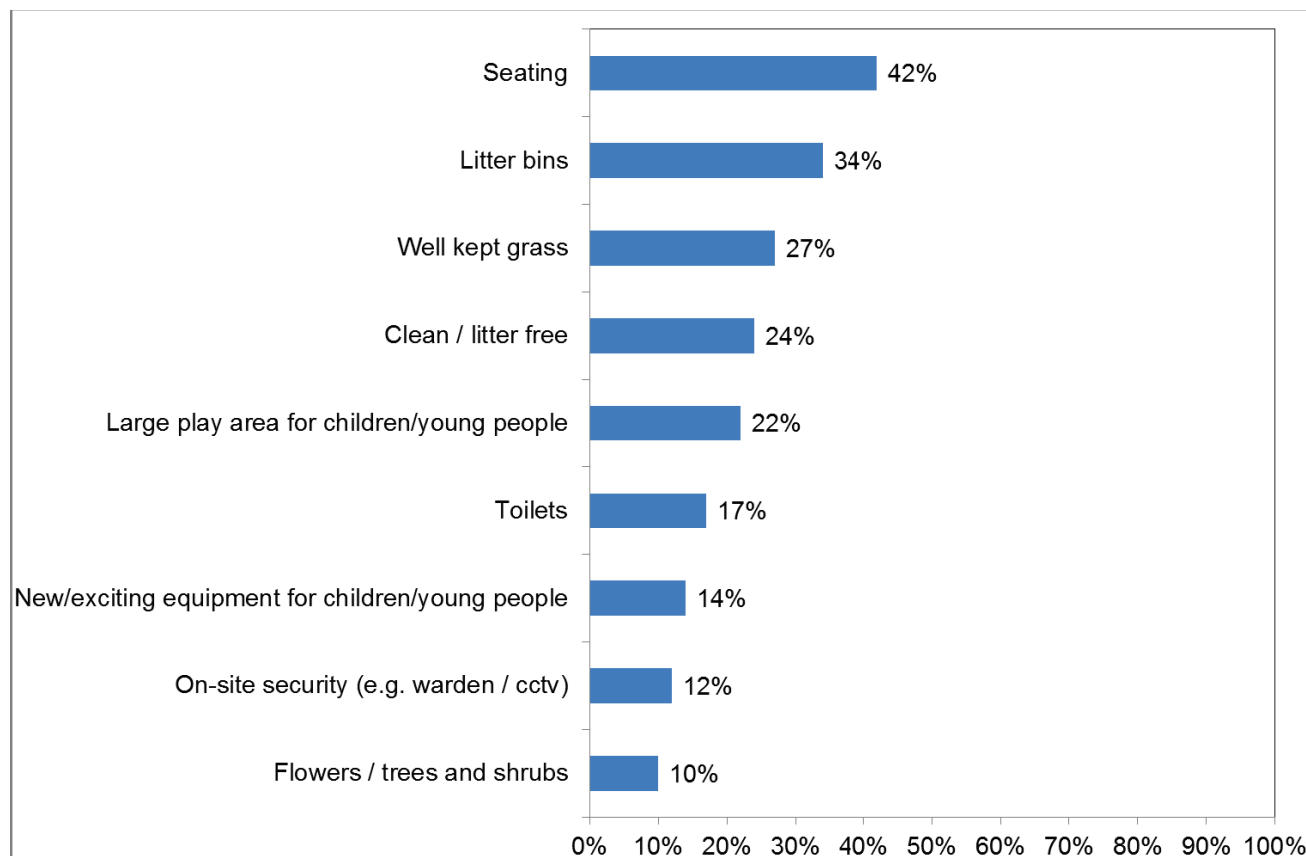
9.42 There is little clear variation in the views of residents according to the size of settlement in which they live although some differences in views are noticeable. In the large villages, a higher proportion of residents are satisfied with the quality of provision and over three quarters of respondents consider small amenity spaces to be good or very good.

9.43 In contrast, residents living in the Minor Service Centres are more negative about the majority of components than their counterparts. It is also clear that small amenity areas in the major and Minor Service Centres are perceived to offer a wider range of opportunities than those in the large and small villages.

Quality of Provision - Aspirations

9.44 Chart 9.3 illustrates the factors that residents of Central Bedfordshire consider most important in the provision of high quality small amenity areas. It confirms that facilities are expected to be basic with limited facilities, but highlights the importance of maintenance as well as the provision of appropriate seating.

Chart 9.3 – Aspirations for Small Amenity Areas



Town and Parish Councils

9.45 The quality of small amenity spaces is not viewed as positively by Town and Parish Councils as other types of Informal recreation areas. 10% consider these spaces to be poor, and just 25% rate them as good. Dog mess, vandalism and misuse were highlighted as an area of concern. The lack of amenity offered by these spaces was also highlighted and it was highlighted as being essential to ensure that these sites were functional. This was also reflected in public consultation, which demonstrated that play was one of the key drivers for usage of these spaces.

9.46 The survey demonstrates a strong perception that improvements to the quality of existing small spaces are as important as the provision of more sites, with just three respondents indicating that they would prioritise quantity over quality (Blunham Parish Council, Marston Moretaine Parish Council and Wrestlingworth and Cockayne Hatley Parish Council). Reflecting the lower levels of value placed on these spaces by Town and Parish Councils, just five placed improvements to small amenity spaces within their top three priorities for improving open spaces.

Accessibility

9.47 Access to open space and recreation facilities is as important as the quality of provision. Using the findings of the household survey, Table 9.6 summarises the mode of transport that

residents in Central Bedfordshire expect to use, and actually use, to reach a small amenity space and the type of transport that users actually do use.

Table 9.6 – Mode of Travel

Expected vs Actual	Walk	Cycle	Public Transport	Car
Expected	93%	1%	0%	5%
Actual	93%	1%	0%	6%

9.48 Table 9.6 demonstrates that there is an almost unanimous expectation that residents will find a small amenity space within walking distance of their home. Analysis of actual usage patterns (through the household survey) demonstrate that in the majority of cases, these expectations are reached, with 93% of users walking to a small amenity space.

Views by Settlement Hierarchy and Placemaking Area

This view is consistent across all placemaking areas and all settlement hierarchies.

Steps 3 and 4 - Setting and Applying Local Standards

9.49 In order to deliver a successful and varied network of open spaces consideration of quality, quantity and accessibility factors is required.

9.50 To develop provision requirements which are responsive to local needs, the findings of the facility audit and consultation can be used to inform the creation of quality, quantity and accessibility standards for each type of open space.

9.51 The findings of the local needs assessment, alongside the baseline audit of existing provision have therefore been used to determine local standards for the provision of large recreation areas. Existing provision can then be measured against these benchmarks to identify the requirement for new and improved facilities.

9.52 The approach taken to setting standards is explained in Section 2. The data used to set each standard for large recreation areas is outlined below.

Accessibility

9.53 As outlined in Section 2, standards are set using an accessibility led approach. It is therefore essential to understand the distance that residents expect to travel and the mode of transport that they will use to get there. The household survey provides a robust way of analysing these expectations.

9.54 The survey data set out earlier in this section demonstrates that there is a clear view that small amenity spaces should be within walking distance of the home and this is replicated across all demographic groups and within each placemaking area and settlement hierarchy.

9.55 To consider how large recreation areas fit into aspirations for the open space network in Central Bedfordshire, Table 9.7 uses the raw data collated in the household survey to evaluate

the amount of time residents expect to travel to reach a small amenity space in each of the settlement hierarchies.

9.56 To fully understand the spread of responses (and therefore the expectations of all residents), it categorises responses into quartiles. Each quartile represents 25% of the respondents. Quartile 1 is therefore equivalent to the 25% of residents with the highest aspirations, or those that would be willing to travel the shortest distance to reach an amenity space. PPG17 indicates that a local standard should be set using quartiles, and at a point which reflects the expectations of 75% of the population.

Table 9.7 – Travel Expectations – Small Amenity Spaces (calculated from household survey)

Mode of Transport	Walk Time			
	1	2	3	4
Central Bedfordshire	5	10	12	30
Major	5	5	10	20
Minor	5	10	15	30
Large	5	10	10	30
Small	2	5	10	30

9.57 Table 9.7 reveals the following key findings in relation to accessibility expectations;

- 25% of residents across Central Bedfordshire would only be willing to walk up to 5 minutes to reach a small amenity space (1st quartile). Residents in the small villages have higher expectations (only willing to walk up to 2 minutes);
- the remaining 75% would travel for at least 5 minutes to reach a small amenity space. The maximum distance any resident would be willing to travel is 30 minutes; and
- the modal response is 10 minutes walk and the average response is a 10 minute walk time.

9.58 This suggests that a 5 minute walk time to reach a small amenity space is broadly acceptable to 75% of the population.

9.59 It is also important to take into account the views arising from other consultations. All consultations clearly demonstrate that small amenity spaces are expected to be the most local form of open space available and that they should be located in close proximity to the home. Location is a key determinant of usage.

9.60 Statistical data therefore suggests that 75% of residents will walk up to 5 minutes to reach a recreation area and other consultation suggests that this is an appropriate distance for the local standard to be set at.

9.61 The recommended local accessibility standard and justification for this standard is set out below.

Accessibility

Small Amenity Spaces - Accessibility Standard	
5 walk time (240m)	
Justification	
<p>The findings of the consultation demonstrate that over 90% of residents would expect to walk to an amenity space and this is consistent across all areas of Central Bedfordshire and in almost all demographic groups.</p> <p>9.62 At least 75% of users are willing to travel 5 minutes to reach a small amenity space and this is reinforced by the modal response (10 mins) and the average response (10 mins).</p>	

Application of the Accessibility Standard

9.63 The application of this benchmark is illustrated in maps contained in Appendix B. In applying the accessibility standard for small amenity spaces, it should be noted that there are many overlaps in the function of amenity green space, urban parks and large formal recreation areas. To this end, where residents are within 240m of a park or large recreation area (the recommended catchment for amenity green space), as higher order facilities, it can be considered that the presence of these sites negates the need for further small amenity spaces as the larger spaces fulfil this function.

9.64 As such, application of the accessibility standard taking into account small amenity spaces alone demonstrates that there are significant deficiencies in almost every settlement.

9.65 When taking into account the role of large formal recreation areas (both formal and informal) shortfalls are reduced significantly. Areas remain however, where residents are further than 5 minutes walk to any form of amenity space in most settlements.

Quantity

Setting Quantity Standards

9.66 Overall consultation demonstrates satisfaction with the amount of sites provided and in many areas, the emphasis is placed on improvements to the quality of sites rather than the provision of additional facilities.

9.67 Reflecting this, application of the accessibility standard indicates that there are some areas where residents are outside of the catchment area for facilities.

9.68 Application of the accessibility standard of a five minute catchment (taking into account the role of large recreation areas and parks) demonstrates however that there remain some gaps in provision and areas where additional spaces are required.

9.69 Chapters 6 and 7 outlined a requirement for some additional formal recreation areas and parks. By definition and given the overlap in roles that these type of sites have, the provision of these additional sites would go some way to addressing the deficiencies in more local types of open space (some residents will be within a 240m catchment of the new sites) and therefore the

need for new small amenity spaces would be negated. There remains however a requirement for additional small amenity spaces in some parts of Central Bedfordshire.

9.70 Table 9.8 therefore summarises the additional requirement for small amenity spaces. To ensure that the standard is reflective of need and given the uncertainties around additional large recreation areas to be provided (their location, size etc), it assumes that half of the gaps identified for small amenity spaces will be filled by the provision of new large spaces. It also excludes sites 0.2ha and below and assumes that the size of new sites is in line with Central Bedfordshire wide average.

Table 9.8 – Baseline Demand for Small Amenity Spaces

Area	Total Provision (Ha)	Additional Required (Ha)	Provision	Total Required (Ha)
Central Bedfordshire	123.4	25.3		148.7

9.71 Taking into account requirements for additional amenity space, overall across Central Bedfordshire there is a total requirement for 148.7 hectares of small amenity spaces to meet current demand. This equates to 0.58 ha per 1000 population.

Quantity

Quantity Standard
0.58 ha per 1000 population
Justification
This figure represents the minimum requirement for small amenity spaces in Central Bedfordshire if all residents were to be located within a 5 minute walk time of a local site (taking into account the presence of large recreation areas, which as a higher order facility, negate the need for smaller amenity spaces).

Application of the Quantity Standard

9.72 Table 9.9 illustrates the application of this standard in the placemaking areas outlining current and projected future deficiencies. It must be noted that these provide a broad indication only as quantity standards should really be considered at a local level in conjunction with decision making relating to accessibility.

Table 9.9 – Shortfalls / Surpluses of Small Amenity Spaces by Placemaking Area

Area	Amount Required Current	Amount Required Future	Shortfall Surplus Current	Shortfall / Surplus Future
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	30.2412	33.8604	-1.41	-5.03
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	31.3606	36.1166	0.81	-3.94
North	86.449	98.5478	-24.05	-36.15
Central Bedfordshire	148.0508	168.5248	-24.65	-45.12

9.73 Table 9.9 therefore demonstrates that there are shortfalls currently in all areas except Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South, where there is just sufficient provision currently. Projected population growth will see shortfalls in all areas by 2022, and an overall shortfall of 45.12 ha in Central Bedfordshire. Table 9.10 illustrates the shortfalls and surpluses by settlement hierarchy. It indicates that the largest shortfalls are in the major settlements and it is in these settlements where population growth will have the highest impact.

Table 9.10 – Shortfalls / Surpluses Small Amenity Spaces by Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement Hierarchy	Required (Current)	Required (Future)	Shortfall / Surplus (Current)	Shortfall / Surplus (Future)
Major Settlements	81.1	93.1	-19.9	-31.8
Minor Settlements	28.8	32.8	-11.6	-15.6
Large Villages	23.8	25.5	-4.4	-6.1
Small Villages	15.1	15.7	-0.2	-0.8

9.74 Application of this standard at a settlement level indicates that the following settlements currently have the greatest shortfalls:

- Dunstable
- Leighton Buzzard
- Stotfold

- Flitwick
- Biggleswade
- Pottton
- Arlesey
- Ampthill
- Toddington

9.75 In total, by 2022, 49 settlements will have deficiencies of small amenity spaces. These will be greater than 2 hectares in the following locations:

-
- Dunstable
- Leighton Buzzard
- Biggleswade
- Flitwick
- Stotfold
- Arlesey
- Ampthill
- Pottton
- Marston Moretaine
- Toddington

9.76 All settlements that currently have sufficient provision to meet the baseline standard will continue to do so by 2022.

Quality

Setting Quality Standards

9.77 Local consultations have enabled the identification of issues viewed as important to residents, as well as aspirations that they have in relation to the type of spaces that they would like to see provided. Supporting this, site visits have provided an overview of the quality of small amenity spaces.

9.78 For small amenity spaces, on the whole, improvements to the quality of provision were seen as a greater priority by consultees than the creation of additional spaces (although new provision is required in some areas).

9.79 Consultation and feedback can be used to identify the key components of each type of open space in relation to quality and to set a quality standard that should be used as a basis for improving existing spaces as well as the creation of new spaces.

9.80 The quality standard for small amenity spaces is set out below

Quality

Small Amenity Spaces - Quality Requirements	
Size and Location	At least 0.2ha in size and shaped in a way that means that the site is a functional recreation space (and on a level gradient) Appropriately located for local catchment (within 5 minute walk time of target residents) Accessible via safe footpaths Clear boundaries that are locally appropriate
Character	Small recreation area for local residents Appropriate for residents of different ages
Access	Clearly defined pathways to the site
Facilities	Clearly defined paths Appropriate and regular seating Appropriate bins Management of dog fouling May also contain play equipment

Application of the Quality Standard

9.81 For each type of open space, several sites fall below the level where all factors are considered to be acceptable or above on the site visits matrix (66%). Quality improvements required are included within Appendix A and Appendix A also provides an understanding of sites that achieve low scores on the site assessment.

Summary – Issues Identified

Usage

27% of respondents to the telephone survey visit small amenity spaces at least once weekly and a further 14% use these spaces at least once per month. This makes this type of open space one of the most frequently visited and more users visit small amenity spaces daily than any other type of open space. Small amenity spaces are particularly frequently used by non white British residents.

Like most other types of space in Central Bedfordshire, the main reasons for using small amenity spaces are play, walk and exercise and relaxation. Few barriers to the use of these facilities are identified other than a lack of time and interest. There is little variation in usage across Central Bedfordshire, although it is clear that residents in Dunstable and Houghton Regis have less interest in these spaces than those in other parts. Further analysis of usage demonstrates that these spaces are particularly important for residents in small villages.

Quantity and Quality

The telephone survey indicates that there is an overall view that there are enough small amenity spaces and consultation with Parish and Town Councils confirms this more conclusively.

Analysis of existing provision confirms that the distribution of small amenity spaces across

Central Bedfordshire is relatively even. In Dunstable and Houghton Regis (where provision is lowest) the proportion of residents believing that additional spaces are required is highest. There are slightly lower levels of provision in major and minor service centres than in the large and small villages. The quantity of small amenity spaces is not a clear priority of many of the local Green Infrastructure documents or Parish plans.

Quality, Quantity and Accessibility

Site visits reveal that the average quality score achieved by small amenity spaces is amongst the lowest of all types of open space, with particular issues with the amount of benches and seating available. While consultation demonstrates a more positive perception of quality, many of the issues raised are similar. The quality of small amenity spaces is not viewed as positively by Town and Parish Councils as other types of Informal recreation areas. 10% consider these spaces to be poor, and just 25% rate them as good. Dog mess, vandalism and misuse were highlighted as areas of concern. The lack of amenity offered by these spaces was also highlighted. Overall, consultation suggest that improvements to the quality of existing spaces is perhaps more important than the provision of additional sites.

Amenity spaces are expected local to the home, within a 5 minute walk time. There are many overlaps in the function of amenity green space and parks and large recreation areas. To this end, where residents are within 280m of a park or large recreation area (the recommended catchment for amenity green space), as higher order facilities, it can be considered that the presence of these sites negates the need for small amenity spaces. Small amenity spaces are still however important in order to provide a local resource. When excluding consideration of the large recreation areas, there are gaps in access based upon a five minute catchment in almost every settlement. When taking into account the role that larger sites play, it is clear that gaps reduce significantly, although there remain areas of many settlements outside of the 5 minute catchment to local recreation space.

Population growth will however see demand for amenity spaces increase and there will be shortfalls of circa 45 ha by 2022. The key shortfalls currently are in Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard,

Stotfold, Flitwick, Biggleswade, Pottton, Arlesey and Toddington. All settlements that currently have sufficient provision will still meet the standard by 2022 and it is the areas of highest growth where there are already existing deficiencies.

There are some overlapping catchments (i.e. sites serving the same target residents) and these spaces may not be as highly valued as those serving unique catchments.

Step 5 – Identifying Priorities

Key Issues to Address

9.82 The above analysis therefore indicates that the Recreation and Open Space Strategy needs to address the following issues relating to small amenity spaces;

- Usage figures demonstrate that large recreation areas are frequently used, and in particular by residents of non white ethnic origin. They are important sites, particularly in the smaller villages

- The location of sites is one of the main determinants of use and almost all residents expect to walk to a facility. Sites are expected to be local to the home (within 5 minutes)
- Site visits reveal that the quality of small amenity spaces is lower than some other types of space and Parish / Town Councils confirm this viewpoint. There are concerns about the functionality of sites and issues raised about the impact that poor quality and poorly managed sites can have on the local community. Consultation and strategic documents highlight that these issues are of lower priority than those raised in relation to some other types of space
- Population growth may see an increase in usage of these types of space and a requirement for additional spaces, particularly if all residents are to be within 400m of a proposed site. The quality of spaces is however as important as the amount of space, and there is a strong interrelationship between quality, quantity and function.

Recreation and Open Space Strategy Outcomes and Key Priorities

9.83 Building upon the above, the recommendations set out below would help to deliver the following outcomes:

- Ensure that all residents have appropriate access to small amenity spaces (taking into account the role that large recreation areas play)
- Meet user aspirations relating to quality of provision and functionality
- Maintain a balance between quality and quantity of provision and promote the strategic distribution of high quality sites

Key Priorities

9.84 It is therefore recommended that key priorities for the delivery of small amenity spaces across Central Bedfordshire are as follows:

- promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy
- Work with communities to ensure that all sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. Sites should be functional and appropriately located
- Seek to ensure that all residents are within a 5 minute walktime of at least one open space (either a small amenity space or a larger recreation area). Sites should meet with minimum size criteria to ensure that they have a functional recreation purpose. New small amenity spaces should not be required where residents are within the catchment of a larger formal recreation area / countryside recreation site / urban park
- Ensure that the impact of population growth on usage of these spaces is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions.
- Review the function of existing amenity spaces where sites serve overlapping catchments and are of poor quality.

Site / Area Specific Implications

9.85 Table 9.10 summarises the likely site / area specific implications of the above recommendations.

Table 9.10 – Site Specific Priorities to Address Issues and Recommendations

Protect
All existing sites
New provision
<p>Areas without access or with limited access to small amenity spaces – most settlements, but key deficiencies in Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Stotfold, Flitwick, Biggleswade, Potton, Arlesey and Toddington.</p> <p>Areas of new development where incoming residents will create quantitative deficiency and / or are outside of catchment for existing open spaces.</p>
Quality Enhancements
<p>Quality of amenity spaces as if not more important than additional sites. Priority given to high value sites – sites serving unique catchment areas but are of poor quality</p> <p>Areas which contain clusters of poor quality provision</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to use existing facilities.</p>

10. Children's Play Space

Introduction

10.1 This section sets out the assessment relating to children's play space in Central Bedfordshire. It is structured as follows:

- Context and Definition
- Usage Profile
- Existing Provision – Quality, Quantity and Accessibility - and Aspirations
- Summary – Issues to Address
- Implications and recommendations

Context

10.2 The vision of the Central Bedfordshire Children and Young People's Plan 2011 - 2014 (Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust) is:

'We want every child in Central Bedfordshire to enjoy their childhood and have the best possible start in life. We want every child to do well at school, make friends and build strong relationships with their family. By the age of 19, as young adults, we want every young person to have the knowledge, skills and qualifications that will give them the best chance of success, so that they are prepared to take their full place in society as a happy, healthy, contributing and confident citizen'.

- The provision of children's play space is just one means of contributing to this overall vision (and indeed it is recognized that the effective provision of many other types of open space considered in this assessment will also directly contribute to these priorities. There is a wealth of evidence outlining the importance of play and the benefit that this has on mental and physical health and wellbeing. A recent literature review by Play England highlights brings together all research on play provision and the importance of play (A World Without Play – A Literature Review – 2012). It concludes that;
- there is a strong and growing direct relationship between play, health, cognition and well-being and benefits are both immediate and long term;
- play is important for children's physical, psychological and social well-being and development but also for the wider community and society. Play supports physical and mental well-being, educational development, brain development, language development, spatial and mathematical learning, creativity, and identity formation;
- access to play spaces in local communities for children is essential. The importance of adults having positive attitudes towards children playing freely outside is also highlighted;
- there is a need to safeguard children's health and well-being through the provision of high quality spaces and facilities for play and local outdoor facilities are an important part of this. The report states that "there should be greater emphasis in planning and

housing redevelopment on the preservation of good-quality public space, where children feel safe and where they can congregate and play without being considered a nuisance by neighbours and other users. If social barriers, such as fear, embarrassment or discriminatory attitudes, as well as physical barriers, are addressed, then accessible play spaces can be created for both disabled and non-disabled children (Dunn 2004)”; and

- it is not enough to merely provide excellent play opportunities for children. There is also a need to foster a culture of tolerance towards children playing, and children must be given the time they need to engage in free play.

Definition

10.3 For the purposes of this study, children’s play space has been defined as follows:

“Equipped play areas for children e.g. swings, slides and climbing frames”. The broad objective of the provision of these facilities is to ensure that children have opportunities to interact with their peers, to learn social and physical skills and be physically active”

10.4 This typology therefore encompasses a range of outdoor play spaces, from small areas of green space with a few pieces of equipment to large, multi purpose play areas. In order to facilitate analysis and interpretation of the range of facilities that this broad typology can encompass, provision can be subdivided as follows:

- **Local Areas for Play (LAP)** – a doorstep facility (i.e. very local) – a small space, within sight of home, where children, especially young children can play within view of known adults. This space is likely to incorporate a small number of items of fixed play equipment together with some interesting and attractive landscape features
- **Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)** – a local facility – a larger space which is likely to include more items of fixed play equipment and is intended to cater for the growing needs of older children
- **Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)** – a neighbourhood space – a very large play area which includes a variety of play experiences for older children and young teenagers, but which can also be combined with provision for younger children to create a destination site for all ages of children

10.5 Facilities included in this section in general fall under the typologies of either LAP or LEAP. NEAPs are primarily included in Section 11, Facilities for Young People, as they target older children.

10.6 The detailed composition of each play area type is set out in the design guidance.

10.7 The provision of facilities for children does not negate the need for outdoor provision for young people and vice versa. In light of the differences between provision for children and young people, this typology has been divided and the provision of Facilities for Young People across Central Bedfordshire is discussed in Section 11. It may however be necessary (or appropriate) to provide play facilities meeting the needs of both age groups on the same site and / or in the same location and this will be discussed further both in this section and in Section 5, summary and guidance for new development.

10.8 There is a wealth of documentation providing advice and guidance on effective design for play facilities. These include:

10.9 Play England: Design for Play – A guide to creating successful play spaces (2008) which provides guidance for the successful development of play spaces. It references the following 10 key principles:

- 'bespoke' - fits in with surroundings and enhances the local environment. Key features of the existing space should be built into the design, e.g. a tree with character, an old sculpture
- are well located – located where children would play naturally and have an effective balance between surveillance and seclusion
- make use of natural elements - grassy mounds, planting and logs can all help to make a more attractive and playable setting for equipment, planting can also help attract birds and other wildlife
- provide a wide range of play experiences – successful play space can be used in different ways by children and young people of different ages and interests and can also be important social spaces for parents and carers. Non-prescriptive play equipment and features that encourage and promote imagination and creativity help to achieve this principle
- are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children - though many play providers focus on equipment that is wheelchair-accessible, it is important to recognise that there are many different types of disability or special need. Non-prescriptive equipment, which can be used flexibly may be of benefit
- allow children of different ages to play together – where possible avoid segregating children on the basis of age or ability, and lay out the facility so that equipment and features can be used by a wide range of children
- build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge – include opportunities to experience challenge and excitement. Children need to take risks to learn how to manage risks
- are sustainable and appropriately maintained - consider using recycled or sustainably sourced materials. Long-term maintenance and sustainability are also vitally important considerations in the design process, but in successful play spaces do not overshadow the scheme's play value and ability to meet the play needs of children and young people. Good play spaces are designed and constructed bearing in mind sustainability but they are not necessarily tidy, and bits of scrub or long grass, fallen leaves and twigs, may all provide additional play opportunities
- allow for change and evolution - Some 'slack space' with no predefined function should be built into the layout – this increases the potential for change and evolution
- meets community needs – early and ongoing community engagement will help ensure that the facility is valued in the community

10.10 Fields in Trust (formerly National Playing Fields Association) has produced similar documentation relating to the importance of play and good design in play facilities (Planning and Design in Sport and Outdoor Play) and refers to the research undertaken by Play England. In addition, they recommend local standards for play space, specifically:

- **Quantity** – a minimum of 0.25ha per 1000 population equipped play space should be provided and a further 0.55ha per 1000 population set out for informal play
- **Accessibility** – residents should be within 100m of a local play space, 400m of an equipped play space and 1000m of a neighbourhood space and / or facility for young people; and
- **Quality** of provision should also be measured and local standards should be set

10.11 The Government Strategy for Play (Fair Play DCFS and DCMS 2008) set out the priorities for play across the UK and seeks to support and develop opportunities for play through an imaginative and flexible approach to the creation of new play spaces.

10.12 While national funding for play has ceased, the other aims of the strategy remain relevant, including:

- in every residential area, there is a variety of places for play, free of charge, both supervised and unsupervised
- local neighbourhoods are, and feel, safe and interesting places to play
- routes to children's play space are safe and accessible for all children and young people
- parks and open spaces are attractive and welcoming to children and young people, and are well-maintained and well-used
- children and young people have a clear stake in public space and their play is accepted by their neighbours
- children and young people behave in a way that respects other people and property; and
- children, young people and their families take an active role in the development of local play spaces; and play places are attractive, welcoming, engaging and accessible for all local children and young people, including disabled children, children of both genders, and children from minority groups in the community

10.13 The key messages from these strategic documents have been incorporated throughout this assessment and in the derivation of priorities.

Steps 1 and 2 – Evaluation of Local Needs and Audit of Existing Provision

Usage Profile

10.14 A household survey of 1000 residents of Central Bedfordshire was carried out to establish a baseline of views regarding current and future provision of the range of open spaces types detailed in the study. As well as providing an understanding of views and aspirations relating to current provision, the survey also enables evaluation of the current user profile of each type of open space.

Household Survey Responses

Usage

10.15 24% of respondents to the telephone survey use equipped play spaces at least once weekly. A further 13% visit such facilities at least once per month but 57% of those questioned never use children's play areas. The target age range for these facilities (and the fact that children were not questioned as part of the household survey) is likely to impact on the survey findings, which suggest that usage of play space is more restricted than some other types of open space.

10.16 Perhaps unsurprisingly, those with dependent children use place spaces for children more frequently, specifically:

- 41% of those with children aged up to 8 visit play spaces at least once per week and a further 28% visit once per month. Only 4% of families with children in this age bracket do not visit play areas; and
- usage is however lower for those with children aged 9 – 13. Only 12% use facilities at least once per week and a further 36% visit monthly. 31% of people with children in this age bracket do not use facilities

10.17 There is evidence of some variation in usage of play spaces between different sectors of the population. Notably:

- non white British residents are more like to use play areas regularly - (9% visit daily compared to 3% across Central Bedfordshire) and 30% visit at least once per week (25% across Central Bedfordshire). 69% of those who consider themselves to be a non white British residents however never use play spaces compared to 55% of the white British population. This suggests that facilities are therefore either very regularly used or not at all
- use of play spaces by those with a disability is lower. 29% of those with a disability use play spaces once per week or more compared to 35% who do not have a disability;
- there is little variation in use by socio economic group although those describing themselves as falling into socio economic group D/E are less likely to visit a play space

Usage of Children's Play Spaces by Placemaking Area

10.18 There are few variations between the usage patterns in different parts of Central Bedfordshire, with 26% of residents in Dunstable and Houghton Regis, 23% of residents in the east and 30% of residents in the west using play spaces once per week or more. The notable exception is in Leighton Buzzard, where only 18% of residents use play spaces this frequently. 70% of residents in this area do not use play areas compared to 50% in the east, 52% in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and 58% in the west.

Use of Children's Play Spaces by Settlement Hierarchy

10.19 There is also little diversity in usage between residents in settlements of different sizes, with the exception of residents in the smaller villages who use play spaces much less frequently.

Reasons for Visiting Children’s Play Spaces

10.20 Respondents that use play spaces indicate that the main reasons for doing so are:

- Children’s play (87%)
- Walk and exercise (13%)
- To relax (13%)
- Dog walking (1%)
- Picnic (1%)

Reasons for Visiting Children’s Play Spaces by Placemaking Area

10.21 There are no real differences in the reasons for using play areas in the different placemaking areas.

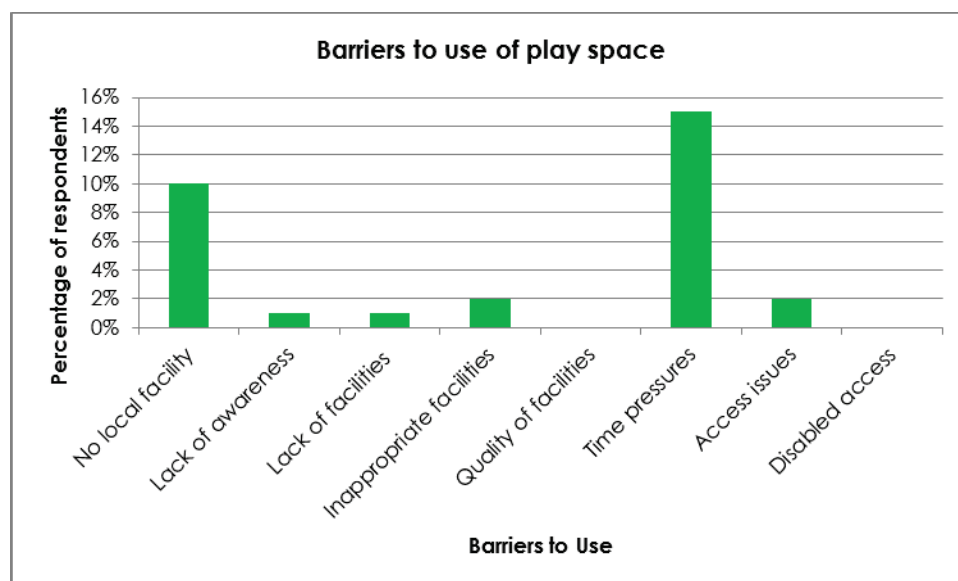
Reasons for Visiting Children’s Play Spaces by Settlement Hierarchy

10.22 There are no clear differences in the reasons for using play areas in the different settlement hierarchies.

Barriers to Use

10.23 Chart 10.1 below sets out the key barriers to use of play spaces. While a lack of interest in this type of space (due to the target age range) is the main reason for not using a play space, it reveals that other than time pressures, the lack of local facility is the only other clear barrier to usage.

Chart 10.1 – Barriers to Use of Children’s Play Spaces



10.24 Analysis of use across the different segments of population reveals little variation in reasons or barriers to use, with the only issues evident being:

- female users are more likely to highlight safety concerns and issues with the equipment, while it is predominantly male users that suggest that they have a lack of time
- the distance to a facility is more important to older residents (grandparent age) and to residents who are classified within lower socio economic groups; and
- lack of awareness of the location of facilities is particularly apparent amongst the 18 – 34 age group in comparison with other groups

10.25 For those residents with dependents aged between 0 and 8, the main reasons for not using facilities are safety of facilities, a lack of time and a lack of interest. These factors are the same for those with children aged between 9 and 13.

Barriers to Use Children’s Play Spaces by Placemaking Area

10.26 There is little difference in the barriers to use of open space in each Placemaking area. It is however clear that a significantly higher proportion of residents in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South have no interest than in other areas of Central Bedfordshire.

Barriers to Use of Children’s Play Spaces by Settlement Hierarchy

10.27 A higher proportion of residents in the small and large villages cite difficulties in accessing facilities and more residents also consider facilities to be inappropriate in these areas.

Current Provision and Views on Current Provision

Quantity

10.28 The audit reveals that almost 26 hectares is dedicated to the provision of facilities for children in Central Bedfordshire. The size of play facilities ranges considerably from sites containing just one piece of equipment, to sites offering a wide range of play facilities. Some sites are contained within a defined space, while others are dispersed across a wider field.

Table 10.1 summarises the distribution of the existing play facilities across Central Bedfordshire.

Table 9.1 – Current Distribution of Children’s Play Spaces across Central Bedfordshire

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)
Central Bedfordshire	209.00	26.09	0.10	0.09	0.13

Table 10.2 summarises the distribution of Children’s Play Spaces by placemaking area.

Table 10.2 – Current Distribution of Children’s Play Space by Placemaking Area

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)
27.00	3.27	0.06	0.06	0.12	27.00
39.00	4.42	0.08	0.07	0.11	39.00
143.00	18.40	0.12	0.11	0.13	143.00
Central Bedfordshire	209.00	26.09	0.10	0.09	0.13

10.29 In order to evaluate whether there are any differences in the distribution of play spaces according to the size of the settlement, Table 10.3 summarises the distribution of play spaces by settlement hierarchy. It considers provision per 1000 population, as well as the provision per 1000 of children aged between 5 and 15. It should be noted that not all sites are located in settlements in the settlement hierarchy and therefore figures in Table 10.3 are slightly different than those in Table 10.2.

Table 10.3 – Distribution of Play Spaces by Settlement Hierarchy

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)	Ha per 1000 population aged 5 - 17
Major Service Centres	92.00	11.50	0.08	0.07	0.13	0.5
Minor Service Centres	44.00	5.47	0.11	0.10	0.13	0.71
Large Villages	38.00	4.57	0.11	0.10	0.12	0.73
Small Villages	31.00	4.11	0.16	0.15	0.13	1.13

Quantity of Provision – Key Issues

10.30 Tables 10.1 – 10.3 illustrate the following key issues regarding the number, type and size distribution of Children’s Play Space:

- current provision is equal to 0.10 hectares per 1000 population and that the average site size is 0.13 ha. If no additional play areas were built, provision would decrease to 0.09 ha per 1000 population by 2022

- provision per 1000 population is significantly higher in the North of Central Bedfordshire than in Dunstable and Houghton Regis. Provision in the North is also higher than in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South. The average size of sites is however relatively consistent across Central Bedfordshire as a whole
- the amount of space dedicated to play facilities is higher in the Small Villages (per 1000 population) than in all other areas. Provision in the Large Villages and Minor villages is consistent, however it is significantly lower in the Major Service Centres
- Population growth will see the overall provision per 1000 decline. This will be particularly evident in the Major Services Centres and Minor Service Centres

Natural Play

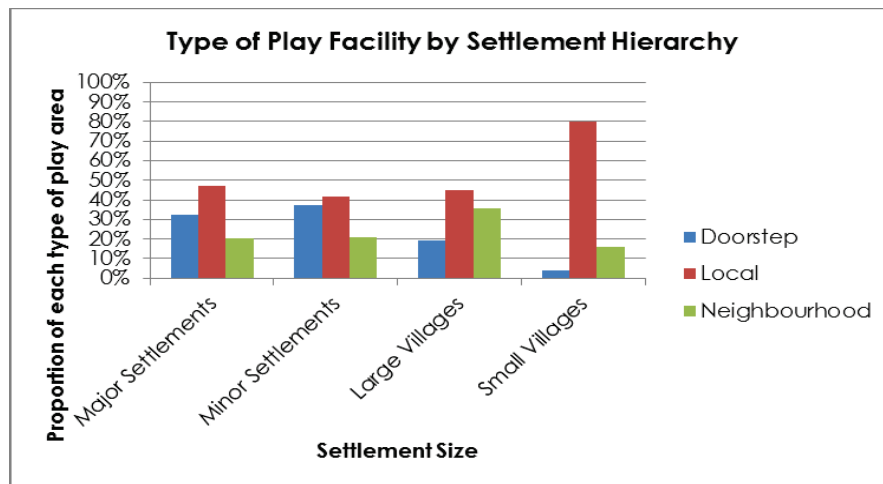
10.31 In addition to formal play areas, the Outdoor Access Improvement Plan (2013) identified a renaissance in natural play in Central Bedfordshire. This involves encouraging children to climb, jump, touch and explore the natural environment through play. This may incorporate many different environments, including countryside recreation sites, nature reserves, woodlands, heaths, commons, wetlands and open spaces. Application of natural play principles can be through planting or land-forming within urban play areas, or on a larger scale in more appropriate countryside locations.

Natural play areas are currently found at the following sites:

- Rushmere / Stockgrove Country Park
- Dunstable Downs (formal outdoor fitness equipment)
- Blue Waters and Taiters Way
- Tiddenfoot Country Park (natural play and trim / activity trail)
- Baulk Wood
- Campton Wood (natural play and trim trail)
- Saxon Gate Pocket Park
- Biggleswade Linear Wood
- Forest Centre & Millennium Country Park
- Rectory Wood

10.32 Chart 10.2 outlines the proportion of each type of play area that is provided within each settlement hierarchy. It indicates that while in the Major Service Centres, Minor Service Centres and Large Villages, supply is relatively evenly split between doorstep facilities (LAP), local facilities (LEAP and neighbourhood sites (NEAP), there are fewer neighbourhood play areas (NEAP) within Small Villages. This may influence overall perceptions of facilities.

Chart 10.2 – Type of Children’s Play Space Provided by Settlement Hierarchy



Consultation Responses – Views on Quantity of Children’s Play Space

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

10.33 A review of the priorities of Green Infrastructure studies and Parish Plans reinforces the views highlighted through other consultations, with demand for several additional facilities identified. The key priorities are set out below:

- anecdotal requirement for splash park in Dunstable. Significant recent investment in other play areas (Parish consultation)
- Flitwick – lack of provision in west of town (Town Council)
- new facilities required in Houghton Hall ward, Houghton Regis Town Council
- lack of provision – Leighton Linlade (Town Council)
- additional play space required in Sandy – (GI)
- Marston Moretaine – provide additional facilities particularly for 0-10yrs (GI)
- Shefford – requirement for new play provision north of Bedford Road (GI)
- Stotfold – new facilities needed to meet needs of new populations
- Clifton – opportunities for natural play (GI)
- Clophill – adventure play area for ages 6 – 12yrs (Parish Plan)
- Langford – GI study prioritises several new play areas including near Ivel Cottages, Station Road / High Street and south of Cambridge Road
- Broom – funding secured for new play area was lost as no site could be identified
- Ickwell – Parish plan identifies need for facilities for children
- Northill – Parish Plan identifies need for facilities
- Old Warden – no provision, demand identified (Parish)
- Ridgmont – Parish plan sets out requirement for facilities for children aged under 10yrs
- Wrestlingworth – Parish plan identifies need

10.34 While the above sets out aspirations for new facilities, it is clear that the majority of priorities relate to improvements to the quality of existing facilities.

Quantity of Provision – Household Survey Responses

10.35 The household survey reveals that:

- just 4% of the population consider there to be more than enough play spaces, while 54% believe that the amount of space is about right
- 36% suggest that there are not enough facilities, while 6% indicate that there are nearly enough

10.36 The above take into account the views of both users and non users of play areas. Overall therefore, more people think that there are enough play areas than believe that there are insufficient. A relatively high proportion of the population are however dissatisfied with the amount of facilities that are provided.

Views on Quantity of Children’s Play Space by Placemaking Area

10.37 The household survey demonstrates that there is little variation in perception between the placemaking areas, with between 33% and 39% of residents suggesting that there are not enough play spaces in each area. Interestingly, the lowest proportion of residents who believe that there are not enough play spaces is found in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South (where tables 10.1 – 10.3 have already demonstrated that provision is lowest). It is in this area where usage is also lowest. Provision in this area is higher than in Dunstable and Houghton Regis, but lower than in the north. This suggests that there may perhaps be other factors influencing these perceptions.

Views on Quantity of Children’s Play Space by Settlement Hierarchy

10.38 Analysis of the household survey demonstrates that despite differences in the distribution of facilities, perceptions are relatively similar in settlements of different sizes. It is however evident that a higher proportion of residents in small villages consider there to not be enough facilities than in larger settlements despite the high levels of provision. This is evident in all geographical areas of Central Bedfordshire and may be reflective of accessibility issues and / or quality issues, as well as concerns about the amount of facilities.

Views on Quantity of Children’s Play Space - Town and Parish Councils

10.39 In contrast to the findings of the household survey, more respondents to the Town and Parish Council survey believe that more play areas are required (59%) than are happy with the amount of facilities. Nearly enough is the most commonly given response. It is evident however that the majority of Town and Parishes indicate that the reason for their views is that the facilities provided are old, in need of upgrade and offer limited play value. This suggests that the real perception is that there are not enough play areas of appropriate quality and that in reality, quality is as much of an issue, if not more so, than the amount of play areas. This is confirmed when analysing priorities – only Fairfield Parish Council, Heath and Reach Parish Council, Northill Parish Council and Eggington Parish Council indicate that they would prioritise the provision of additional facilities over the improvement of existing sites.

10.40 Many Town and Parish Councils do however, express concerns about the impact of population growth on the demand for new facilities and the need to ensure that the number of facilities is kept in balance with the overall population.

Current Provision

Quality

10.41 Quality and value of play areas were assessed using a quality assessment matrix. It considers specific components of quality under the following headings:

- Location of site
- Play Value
- Cleanliness and maintenance

10.42 Total scores take into account the relative importance of each facility, with location weighted most highly and play value the lowest. Reinforcing the messages from the telephone survey, visits confirm that there are some high quality play areas and overall, the average score achieved across Central Bedfordshire is 64%. Visits clearly demonstrate that play value is the area of greatest concern, with an average score of 55%. This is illustrated in Chart 10.3.

Chart 10.3 – Headline Issues from Site Visits – Children’s Play Space

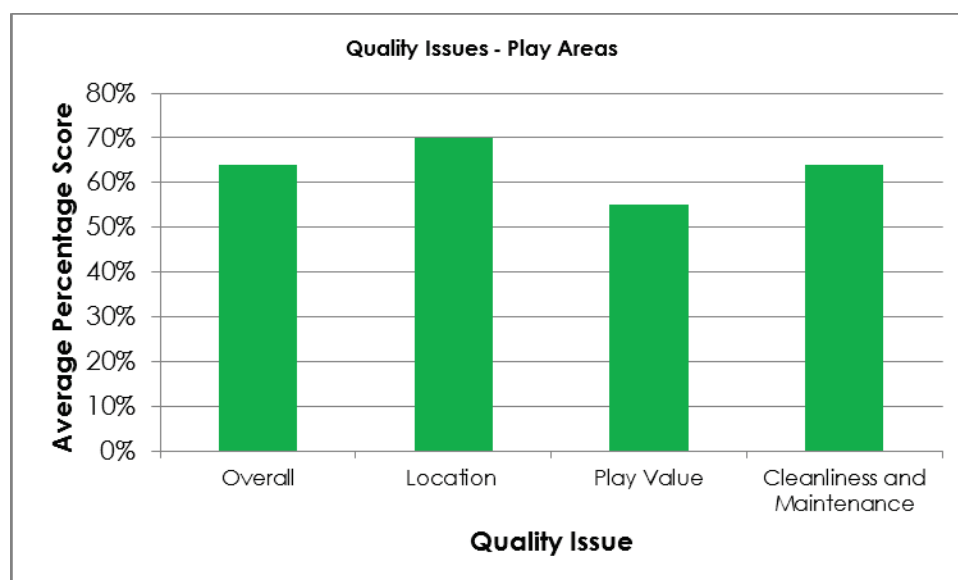


Table 10.4 summarises the scores by type of play facility.

Table 10.4 – Quality of Children’s Play Space by Size

Size of Play Area	Location	Play Value	Cleanliness and Maintenance	Overall
LAP - doorstep play areas	77%	46%	72%	65%
LEAP - local play areas	68%	57%	69%	66%
NEAP - neighbourhood play areas	68%	58%	64%	63%

10.43 Table 10.4 indicates that there is relatively limited overall difference in the quality scores achieved by play areas of different sizes with average scores ranging only between 63% and 66%. Small play areas achieved the highest scores in relation to cleanliness and maintenance and location. It was however noticeable that the play value of these sites is significantly lower in comparison to other sites. There is relatively limited difference in play value between local areas of play (LAP) and neighbourhood areas of play (NEAP).

10.44 With regards to the quality of specific aspects of play areas, site visits reveal that the key areas achieving lower scores are:

- facilities for disabled users
- signage
- links with natural environment
- seating for children
- play value / range of facilities offered

10.45 In contrast, features achieving high averages scores included:

- seating for adults
- access routes
- general maintenance
- provision of litter bins
- personal safety and security

Quality of Children’s Play Spaces by Settlement Hierarchy

Table 10.5 illustrates the average quality scores by settlement hierarchy.

Table 10.5 – Average Quality Scores for Children’s Play Spaces by Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement Hierarchy	Location	Play Value	Cleanliness and Maintenance	Overall
Major	66%	66%	66%	66%
Minor	75%	52%	69%	66%
Large	71%	58%	70%	68%
Small	59%	54%	56%	54%

10.46 Table 10.5 indicates that there is little variation in the quality of play areas according to settlement hierarchy, with the average quality scores consistent across settlements of all sizes with the exception of small villages, where quality is noticeably lower. There are greater challenges in maintaining play facilities in smaller villages.

Quality of Children’s Play Spaces by Placemaking Area

Table 10.6 summarises the quality of provision by Placemaking area.

Table 10.6 – Average Quality Scores of Children’s Play Spaces by Placemaking area

	Location	Play Value	Cleanliness and Maintenance	Overall
Dunstable and	73%	59%	64%	70%

Houghton Regis				
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	65%	53%	72%	63%
North	71%	62%	62%	65%

10.47 Table 10.6 demonstrates that there is a slightly higher degree of variation. The play value of facilities is higher in the North. Overall however the quality of facilities is highest in Dunstable and Houghton Regis, while facilities in Leighton Buzzard achieved the highest scores in terms of cleanliness and maintenance. Each area however contains examples of high and low scoring play facilities.

Quality of Provision – Consultation Responses

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

10.48 While consultations provide an overview of the quality issues experienced, as well as components that are important in the provision of recreation areas, reviews of the existing Green Infrastructure Studies, Parish Plans and detailed consultation provide a more in depth understanding of site specific priorities related to play spaces.

10.49 Analysis of Green Infrastructure Studies, Town and Parish Council consultation and available Parish Plans reveals the following concerns related to the quality of play areas for children;

- Ampthill - Upgrade Ampthill Park (Town Plan)
- Biggleswade - Refurbishment of play areas (Fairfield Recreation Ground, Heather Drive) – Town Council consultation
- Improvement of Grasmere Play area, Biggleswade through use of natural features (GI)
- Flitwick – quality improvements required, particularly Millennium Park (Town Council)
- Improvement to range of equipment – Houghton Regis Town Council
- Marston Moretaine - Upgrade existing facilities (GI) in particular play area behind Upper Shelton School
- Potton – recently received grant for improvement
- Stotfold – existing facilities out of date and need upgrading
- Blunham – requirement for upgrade identified in Parish Plan
- Harlington – requirement to upgrade existing site (Parish Council)
- Heath and Reach – replace facilities at Thrift Recreation Ground (recently removed)
- Henlow – facilities poor and need upgrading, particularly The Pyghtles
- Maulden – identified need to upgrade facilities (Parish Council)
- Shillington – play area needs upgrading (parish)
- Slip End – play area requires improvements (Parish Plan)
- Brogborough – upgrade of existing play area. Village hall recently removed all equipment so this site is Parish Council priority
- Greenfield – facilities recently upgraded
- Maulden – play area requires additional equipment (Parish)
- Southill – although existing play area has been recently upgraded there is potential to provide further equipment and improve quality (Parish)
- Sutton – play area requires minor repairs (Parish meeting minutes)
- Tilsworth – not enough facilities of appropriate quality (Parish)

- Totternhoe – equipment needs replacing on all three play areas (Parish – ROSPA report)
- Upper Gravenhurst – more equipment needed
- Upper Shelton – facilities require improvement

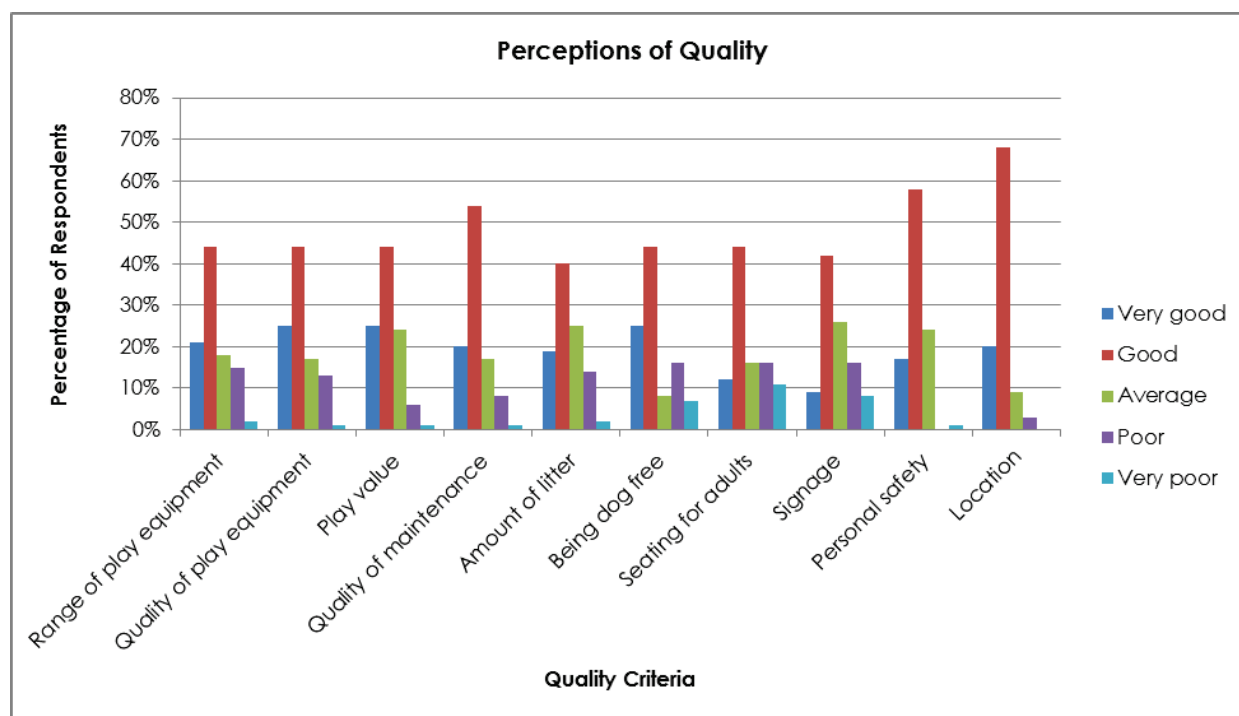
Household Survey Responses

10.50 The household survey reveals that there are relatively positive perceptions regarding the quality of play areas, with 65% considering provision to be good or very good and just 16% rating it poor or very poor. This takes into account the views of both users and non users.

10.51 Chart 10.4 summarises the viewpoints of the population of Central Bedfordshire as a whole relating to specific aspects for improvement. In general, these reflect the overall findings of site visits and reveal that:

- for each factor, the most common response is good
- there are few concerns relating to the location of existing facilities or the safety of the equipment provided – this concurs with the finding of site visits, which demonstrate that the location of facilities is one of the most positive features of current play provision
- 17% of respondents are unhappy with the range of equipment, while 14% are concerned about the quality. The majority of respondents however rate these factors as good or better. Site visits reveal play value to be the greatest concern; and
- more than 20% of respondents consider the provision of seating and signage to be poor and 23% have concerns about the presence of dogs in children’s play spaces. These features were also evident as issues at some sites across Central Bedfordshire during site visits

Chart 10.4 – Perceptions of Quality Factors for Children’s Play Space



Views on Quality of Children's Play Spaces by Placemaking Area

10.52 Consultation demonstrates that, on the whole, perceptions of users are consistent in each of the different placemaking areas. There are a few noticeable differences, many of which are also reflected in the findings of site visits;

- In general, residents in the west (part of the north placemaking area) rate each factor more positively. The only real exception to this relates to the presence of dogs, which appears to be more apparent in this area than any other. Site visits do not necessarily reflect this, with the quality of facilities relatively even in all three areas and play value lower in the North
- For all factors, there are more polarized perceptions in Dunstable and Houghton Regis than in any other area
- No residents in Leighton Buzzard and Rural South rate the quality of facilities as poor, although it is in this area where there are perhaps the most issues relating to the range of provision. Residents in this area also have significantly fewer concerns about dogs in play areas than in the other three placemaking areas. Site visits do not reveal the reason for this, with few clear issues with dogs identified in any area
- Residents in the east (part of the North placemaking area) are least satisfied with the play value offered by their facilities. Facilities in the North (in which east is included) is revealed by site visits to have the lowest in terms of play value
- Signage is rated much more highly in the west and east (North placemaking area) – site visits also rate the quality of signage marginally higher than in other areas
- Leighton Buzzard and the rural south is the only area where concerns about the location of facilities are evident – this also reflects the findings of site visits, where almost all elements of the location of sites score marginally lower in Leighton Buzzard

10.53 There are no other clear patterns emerging by placemaking area.

Views on Quality of Children's Play Spaces by Settlement Hierarchy

The greatest variation in the quality of provision is perhaps evident when considering the perception of quality of users by settlement hierarchy.

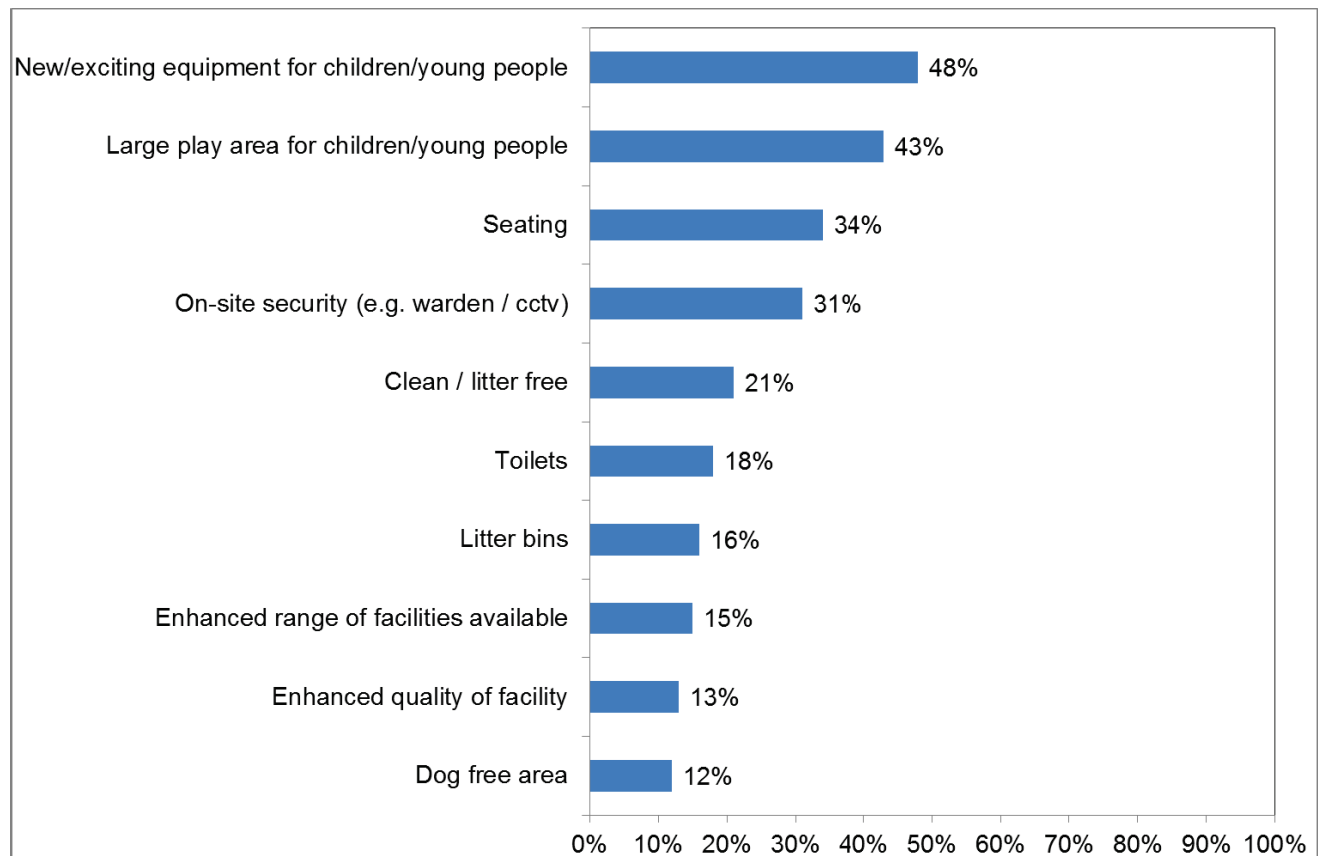
10.54 Consultation reveals that:

- for the majority of components of play areas, those in the larger villages are less satisfied than their counterparts elsewhere
- perhaps unsurprisingly, the range of play equipment provided is seen to be greatest in the Major Service Centres. The smaller the settlement, the smaller the perceived range of equipment (and this correlates to the reality). A higher proportion of residents in the larger settlements consider the quality of maintenance to be good, but there is greater variation, with almost no residents in the villages considering it to be poor. Views in the major and Minor Service Centres are generally more polarized; and
- lower proportions of people consider signage and seating to be poor in the small and large villages than in the major and Minor Service Centres

Quality of Children's Play Spaces - Aspirations

10.55 Chart 10.5 illustrates the factors that residents of Central Bedfordshire consider most important in the provision of high quality play facilities. It is noticeable that some of the issues raised correlate with those factors more frequently rated as poor (seating / range of facilities).

Chart 10.5 – Aspirations for the Provision of Children’s Play Spaces



Views on Quality of Children’s Play Spaces - Town and Parish Councils

10.56 As highlighted earlier in this section, while there is apparent discontent with the amount of play areas, only 3 responding Parish Councils would prioritise the provision of additional play spaces over the improvement of existing sites. Many Town and Parish Councils indicate that facilities are old, worn and in need of upgrade and several indicate that they are already seeking grants to address this issue. 23% of Parish / Town Councils consider the quality of their facilities for children to be poor and a further 50% indicate that they are only average. This means that providers rate play facilities as some of the poorest quality open spaces in Central Bedfordshire. It is particularly notable that it is the smaller Parishes that consider their provision to be of lower quality and to offer more limited play value. Tilsworth Parish Council, Heath and Reach Parish Council and Wrestlingworth and Cockayne Hatley Parish Council all consider the quality of their facilities to be poor.

10.57 Reflecting this, the importance placed on appropriate play provision by Town and Parish Councils is clear. While only two Councils prioritise improvements to provision for children over all other types of open space, more than a third make it their second priority and a further 10% consider it to be their third priority.

Accessibility

10.58 Access to play areas is as important as the quality of provision. National guidance set out earlier (Play England) highlights the importance of an appropriate location, while consultation demonstrates that location of sites is one of the key barriers to use.

10.59 Based upon the findings of the telephone survey, Table 10.7 summarises the mode of transport that residents in Central Bedfordshire expect to use to reach a play facility for children and the type of transport that users actually do use.

Table 10.7 – Mode of Travel

Expected vs Actual	Walk	Cycle	Public Transport	Car
Expected	89%	2%	0%	9%
Actual	81%	8%	0%	10%

Table 10.7 demonstrates that;

- on the whole, play facilities are anticipated to be within walking distance of the home (89% would expect to travel on foot).
- Current usage patterns suggest that 81% of users walk to a play facility suggesting that this aspiration of local provision is by and large achieved. The role of bikes in getting users to the facility and the importance of catering for those that do this should also not be underestimated.

10.60 Expectations are broadly similar across all socio – economic and demographic groups. For those with children however, expectations that play areas will be accessible on foot are even higher. For those with dependent children under 8, over 90% of users currently travel on foot. This decreases to 64% for those with children between aged 9 and 13, however it is cycling that is the second most commonly used most of transport and not the car.

10.61 Play England also provide guidance on suggested distance thresholds for play provision (Planning for Play, Play England 2008). Reflecting the aspirations of residents in Central Bedfordshire for local access to play provision, these suggested standards also evidence a need for play provision local to the home. The standards quoted are as follows:

- LAP doorstep play spaces – within 100m (60m straight line distance) of the home
- LEAP local play spaces – within 400m (240m straight line distance) of the home; and
- NEAP neighbourhood play spaces - within 1000m (600m straight line distance) of the home

10.62 Further analysis suggests that there is little variation overall in views in the different placemaking areas and settlement hierarchies, specifically:

Placemaking areas

10.63 The geographical variation in this view is limited. Only residents in the West (North Placemaking area) demonstrate a higher propensity to travel by car (almost 25%). It is however clear that this is linked with current travel patterns, as only 67% of users of play spaces living in

the west currently travel on foot. This compares with 82% in Dunstable and Houghton Regis, 75% in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south and 92% in the east placemaking area.

Settlement Hierarchy

10.64 Analysis of aspirations by settlement hierarchy demonstrates some variation in views, with the expectation that facilities for children are accessible on foot particularly apparent in the Major Service Centres. There is a greater acceptance in the large and small villages that there may be a need to travel by car with almost 25% in the smaller villages indicating that they would travel using this mode. This is also reflected in the actual mode of transport of existing users, with a greater reliance on the car in the small villages (36%) and large villages (21%) than in the rural areas.

Setting and Applying Standards

10.65 In order to deliver a successful and varied network of open spaces consideration of quality, quantity and accessibility factors is required.

10.66 To develop provision requirements which are responsive to local needs, the findings of the facility audit and consultation can be used to inform the creation of quality, quantity and accessibility standards for each type of open space.

10.67 The findings of the local needs assessment, alongside the baseline audit of existing provision have therefore been used to determine local standards for the provision of large recreation areas. Existing provision can then be measured against these benchmarks to identify the requirement for new and improved facilities.

10.68 The approach taken to setting standards is explained in Section 2. The data used to set each standard for large recreation areas is outlined below.

Accessibility

Setting Accessibility Standards

10.69 As outlined in Section 2, standards are set using an accessibility led approach. This accessibility led approach is particularly important for play areas, as access (along with quality) is the key determinant of usage.

10.70 It is therefore essential to understand the distance that residents expect to travel and the mode of transport that they will use to get there. The household survey provides a robust way of analysing these expectations.

10.71 Survey data demonstrates that there is a strong consensus that residents expect to travel on foot to reach a play area and an expectation that facilities will be located close to the home. Almost 90% of residents have this expectation.

10.72 Using the raw data collated in the household survey, Table 10.8 evaluates the amount of time residents expect to travel to reach an equipped play space for children.

10.73 To fully understand the spread of responses (and therefore the expectations of all residents), it categorises responses into quartiles. Each quartile represents 25% of the respondents. Quartile 1 is equivalent to the 25% of residents with the highest aspirations, or

those that would be willing to travel the shortest distance to reach a play space. PPG17 indicates that a local standard should be set using quartiles, and at a point which reflects the expectations of 75% of the population.

Table 10.8 – Travel Expectations to Children’s Play Spaces – calculated from Household Survey

Mode of Transport	Walk Time			
	1	2	3	4
Central Bedfordshire	5	10	10	30
Major	5	10	15	60
Minor	5	10	10	30
Large	5	5	15	30
Small	2	5	10	20

10.74 Table 10.8 reveals the following key findings in relation to residents’ accessibility expectations;

- 25% of residents across Central Bedfordshire would only be willing to walk up to 5 minutes to reach a play area (quartile 1). With the exception of the smaller villages (2 minutes) this is common to all settlement hierarchies
- the remaining 75% of residents would walk further than 5 minutes and the majority of responses indicated an expectation of between 10 and 15 minutes; and
- the modal response (i.e. the most common response given) was that a play area should be within 5 minutes of the home. The average response given was 10 minutes

10.75 This confirms that a 5 to 10 minute walk time to a play area is broadly acceptable to 75% of the population.

10.76 It is also important to take into account the views arising from other consultations. Other consultations (as well as the household survey) reinforce the importance of ensuring a balance between the quality of provision, access to the site and the range of equipment provided. Analysis and interpretation of responses to the telephone survey suggest that residents are willing to travel slightly further to a play area containing more equipment, however they also expect to have access to local facilities. It is important that these issues are factored into the calculation of a local standard. Taking this into account, as well as the statistical data which suggests that a 5 – 10 minute catchment area is acceptable, a 10 minute walk time catchment represents an appropriate distance for the standard to be set at.

Accessibility

Play Areas - Accessibility Standard
10 minute walk time (480m)
Justification

The findings of the consultation demonstrate that play areas are expected local to the home. As a result, there is a strong emphasis that such sites should be accessible on foot (89% would expect to walk). It is also clear that such sites are expected in both rural and urban areas.

In all areas, the average and most common responses are similar (9 and 10 minutes respectively). Views on quality and quantity of provision however indicate that the quality of play areas, and the provision of challenging facilities, is as important as the location of such sites. In order to promote a strategic approach to the provision of play areas, and facilitate the provision of a range of high quality sites, a standard of 10 minutes walk time has been used as a benchmark. This standard takes into account the expectations of residents by promoting the provision of easily accessible, high quality space, catering for all ages.

This figure falls in between criteria suggested by Fields in Trust (FIT) who indicate that residents should expect to travel for 400m to a local facility and 600m to a neighbourhood facility and therefore represents a realistic starting point for analysis of the adequacy of play facilities. It suggests that LAPs (recommended threshold 100m) are of limited value to local residents.

Application of the Accessibility Standard

10.77 The application of this benchmark is illustrated in maps contained in Appendix B. Given that data suggests that residents are willing to travel up to 10 minutes to reach a play space, it can be assumed that areas where residents outside of this travel distance are deficient in provision.

10.78 Application of this standard indicates that the distribution of facilities across Central Bedfordshire is relatively comprehensive, with most residents in the majority of settlements having access to play areas.

10.79 There are few residential areas with no play areas and the main areas of deficiency can be identified as follows:

Placemaking Area

- **Dunstable and Houghton Regis** – Watling and Manshead wards as well as some central parts (but predominantly industrial and / or commercial so limited significance)
- **Leighton Buzzard and Rural South** – south of Leighton Buzzard town centre and Linslade ward. Many of the gaps cover commercial and industrial areas and so are of limited significance (these areas are not expected to contain play areas)
- **North** – Flitwick (West of town) Heath and Reach (south of village), Totternhoe (east of village), Studham, Old Warden, Houghton Conquest, Northill, Broom, Blunham, Sandy (East of town), Langford (south of village), Harlington (east of village), Westoning (West of village), Ampthill, Salford, Cranfield (west of town), Marston Moretaine (West of town), Aspley Heath

Settlement Hierarchy

- Major Service Centres – Dunstable Watling and Manshead Wards, Leighton Buzzard Linslade ward and south of town, Sandy (east), Flitwick (West) Ampthill
- Minor Service Centres – Cranfield (west), Marston Moretaine (West), Fairfield
- Large Villages –Langford (South), Houghton Conquest, Harlington (east), Westoning (west), Heath and Reach (south)
- Small Villages – Totternhoe, Studham, Old Warden, Northill, Broom, Aspley Heath, Salford

10.80 Interestingly, further analysis indicates that on the whole, facilities across Central Bedfordshire are evenly distributed and there are very few sites serving overlapping catchment areas.

Maps outlining the distribution of facilities can be found in Appendix B.

10.81 It should be noted that while the 10 minute catchment provides a theoretical indication of accessibility, practical decision making relating to the location of play areas should also consider any impacting barriers, for example the presence of railway lines or significant main roads. Appropriate application of the standard should therefore be assessed on a case by case basis.

Quantity

Setting Quantity Standards

10.82 Overall, consultation suggests that the majority of residents believe there to be sufficient equipped play spaces to meet current requirements. There are however almost 40% of residents that suggest that there are not enough facilities and there are several concerns about the quality of facilities.

10.83 Application of the accessibility standard indicates that there are some residential areas where residents are outside of the catchment area for facilities although on the whole, play areas are evenly distributed across Central Bedfordshire. While it is recognised that some play areas have larger catchments due to the amount of facilities that they provide, to ensure consistent access to facilities it is important that all residents are able to access local facilities as a baseline.

10.84 Table 10.9 sets out the minimum amount of provision required across Central Bedfordshire. It is based upon the application of the accessibility standard to settlements in the settlement hierarchy and assumes that a facility will be provided within 480m of the majority of residents based within settlements included in the settlement hierarchy and assumes that all deficiencies identified are met with the provision of one additional play area. It also assumes that the new play area is of average size (0.13ha).

Table 10.9 – Current Quantity Requirements for Children’s Play Spaces

Settlement Hierarchy	Current Provision	Required Provision to meet 10 minute catchment	Minimum Current Requirement
Major Service Centres	92 sites – 11.5ha	7 sites – 0.91ha	12.41ha

Settlement Hierarchy	Current Provision	Required Provision to meet 10 minute catchment	Minimum Current Requirement
Minor Service Centres	44 sites – 5.47 ha	3 sites – 0.39ha	5.86ha
Large Villages	38 sites – 4.57 ha	5 sites - 0.65ha	5.22ha
Small Villages	31 sites – 4.11 ha	7 sites – 0.91ha	5.02ha
Central Bedfordshire	25.65 ha	25.65ha + 2.86ha	28.51ha

Current Quantity

10.85 Table 10.9 illustrates the **current shortfall of 2.86ha in provision** when calculated against the accessibility standard. The requirement for additional play areas to meet the accessibility standard means that a total of 28.51ha would be required. **This equates to the need to provide the equivalent of 0.11 ha of Children’s Play Spaces per 1000 population.** This level is below the level recommended by Fields in Trust (0.25ha per 1000 population) but ensures that most residents are within the target catchment area.

10.86 It should be noted however that accessibility should be treated as the primary determinant of the requirement of play spaces, together with the quantity standards, and the quality standard should be used to inform where contributions to improve existing are required.

Quantity

Children’s Play Areas - Quantity Benchmark
0.11ha per 1000 population
Justification
This figure represents the minimum requirement for play areas in Central Bedfordshire if all residents were to be located within a 10 minute walk of such a facility (480m).

Application of the Quantity Standard

10.87 Table 10.10 summarises current and projected shortfalls based upon placemaking areas to provide an indication of shortfalls and surpluses in the provision of play areas. It must be noted that these provide a broad indication only as quantity standards should really be considered at a local level. Gaps in access to existing play facilities should also be considered as the primary determinant of the requirement for new provision and not the application of quantity standards.

Table 10.10 – Current and Projected Shortfalls using a standard of 0.11ha per 1000 population

Area	Amount Required Current	Amount Required Future	Shortfall Surplus Current	Shortfall / Surplus Future	Number of Additional Facilities required (Current)	Number of Additional Facilities required (Future)
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	5.7354	6.4218	-2.47	-3.15	19	24
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	5.9477	6.8497	-1.52	-2.43	12	19
North	16.3955	18.6901	2.00	-0.29	Sufficient	2
Central Bedfordshire	28.0786	31.9616	-1.99	-5.87	15	45

10.88 Table 10.10 reveals that population growth alone will generate demand for an additional 3.9 hectares of play areas amounting to a total of almost 47 further play areas overall.

Application of Quantity Standard by Settlement

10.89 Earlier analysis revealed that the size (and content/age range) of facilities is an issue. The following Major and Minor Service Centres do not contain play spaces categorised as a neighbourhood (NEAP) facility:

- Minor Service Centres – Caddington, Shefford
- There are very few neighbourhood (NEAP) facilities in the Large and Small Villages

10.90 Local analysis, particularly when combined with analysis of accessibility, enables the analysis of real deficiencies. Use of this figure (0.11ha per 1000 population) as a benchmark indicates that the biggest deficiencies (in terms of ha per 1000 population) are in the following locations:

- Leighton Buzzard (accessibility deficiency also identified, requirement identified by Parish)
- Dunstable (accessibility deficiency also identified, requirement identified by Parish)
- Houghton Regis
- Sandy (accessibility deficiency also identified, requirement identified by Parish)
- Flitwick (accessibility deficiency also identified, requirement identified by Parish)
- Stotfold (requirement identified by Parish)
- Shefford (requirement identified by Parish)
- Henlow
- Toddington
- Barton-le-Clay
- Maulden (requirement for additional provision identified by Parish)
- Northill and Broom (accessibility deficiencies also identified)
- Langford (accessibility deficiency also identified)
- Clifton (requirement identified by Parish)
- Harlington (accessibility deficiency also identified)

- Westoning (accessibility deficiency also identified)

10.91 As is clear, some of the above settlements have sufficient provision to meet existing accessibility targets. This serves to demonstrate how quantity provides only an indication of the adequacy of facilities and should be considered in conjunction with accessibility rather than in isolation.

10.92 Application of figures relating just to the number of children in the settlement reveal similar findings. Many of the settlements with a deficiency calculated have also been identified as in deficient by Town and Parish Councils.

10.93 In addition to gaps in access to facilities, there are other reasons why settlements may have shortfalls in provision. These are likely to focus on areas of high population which need fewer facilities to serve the needs of residents in accessibility terms, but the amount of people living in close proximity to the site may mean that it is expected to sustain higher numbers of users. Deficiencies against the standard may mean that sites are at capacity. Equally, areas where there is sufficient provision to meet quantity standards but gaps in access may have poorly distributed facilities or large sites.

10.94 It must also be noted that figures are skewed slightly by the higher provision per 1000 population in smaller settlements (which is required to meet accessibility standards). The small population in smaller settlements means that these areas are far less likely to feature amongst the areas with the highest quantitative deficiencies as the requirement for quantity of provision is much lower.

Future Provision

10.95 Application of the quantity standard suggests that by 2022, quantitative shortfalls of provision will be highest in the following settlements:

- Leighton Buzzard
- Houghton Regis
- Dunstable
- Sandy
- Shefford
- Stotfold / Fairfield
- Henlow
- Flitwick
- Arlesey
- Clophill
- Maulden
- Toddington
- Northill
- Aspley Heath

10.96 There are 37 settlements with a total shortfall by 2022. Both Sundon and Streatley currently have sufficient provision, but population growth will generate a shortfall by 2022.

Quality

10.97 Local consultations have enabled the identification of issues viewed as important to residents, as well as aspirations regarding the type of spaces residents would like to see provided. Supporting this, site visits have provided an overview of the quality of play areas, as well as areas of concern and successful play provision.

10.98 Quality is as important as the quantity of each type of open space and for play areas. Consultation demonstrates that the quality of facilities is linked with perceptions of the quantity of facilities, and that there are considered to be insufficient play areas of the desired quality.

10.99 Linking with national good practice guidance, this input has been used to address improvements needed to existing play spaces and to guide the design of new open spaces and it is hoped that this strategy will promote the creation of higher quality play areas.

10.100 The quality standard for play areas in Central Bedfordshire is set out below. Further detail can be found in the Design Guidance. This will include specifications of facilities included within this typology (including LEAP).

Quality

Children's Play Spaces - Quality Standard	
Size and Location	Within appropriate distance of target catchment area Accessible via safe footpaths and roads Located in an area of incidental supervision – appropriate balance between seclusion and visibility Appropriate boundaries and buffer zone (not necessarily fenced in line with new guidance)
Access	Compliant with DDA – access audit in place Regular safety audit
Facilities	Bespoke design to suit location Age appropriate play facilities using NEAP, LEAP and LAP play area specifications (details of these play area types can be found in the design guidance) Range of play opportunities offering high play value and inclusive play equipment (details of the play value scale can be found in Appendix D) Formal play equipment and safety surfacing compliant with British Standards BSEN 1176 and 1177 Clear signage Fencing, seating and bins

10.101 The detailed requirements for play facilities will be provided in the design guidance.

Application of Quality Standards

10.102 There are multiple sites falling below 66% (a minimum of all ratings acceptable on the site assessment score) which require improvement to meet standards. These are included within analysis in Appendix A.

Summary – Issues Identified

Usage

For residents with children, equipped play spaces are an important facility. 41% of those with children aged up to 8 visit play spaces at least once per week and only 4% of families with children in this age bracket do not visit play areas. Usage however drops when children reach the age of 9, with only 12% visiting weekly and 31% not using facilities at all. This may indicate a lack of facilities targeting this age bracket, or perhaps suggest that the facilities provide are not meeting local need. Those with disabilities and non-white British residents are less likely to use a facility, although for those non-white British residents that do use a site, frequency of use is high.

Location is one of the main barriers to usage along with lack of time. A small proportion of residents indicate that there are no appropriate facilities. The perceived safety of equipment is also one of the key barriers for female residents and those with dependents, whilst older residents (of grandparent age) are more likely to only take children to use facilities if they are local.

Quality, Quantity and Accessibility

Consultation revealed that the quality and amount of facilities for children is perhaps one of the biggest issues in Central Bedfordshire. While the telephone survey revealed a degree of satisfaction with the amount of facilities (although 36% believe that more are required), 59% of responding Town and Parish Councils indicate that additional facilities are needed. While some Town and Parish Councils have these views because there are no facilities within their village, further analysis revealed that many of these views arise because facilities provided are considered to be old, in need of upgrade and offer limited play value. In many settlements there are not perceived to be enough facilities of appropriate quality.

Reflecting this, site visits reveal a significant range in the quality of provision and in the play value of the play spaces. While there are some examples of high quality facilities, there are also some poorer quality sites and the range of quality is much greater than most other types of open space. The variety of equipment, availability of seating and dog fouling are particularly important to residents. The quality of facilities is revealed to be particularly poor in the small villages.

Accessibility

Play facilities are expected in close proximity to the home and 90% of residents of Central Bedfordshire expect to be able to reach at least one facility on foot. 25% of residents believe that play areas should be within 5 minutes of the home while the majority would only walk between 10 – 15 minutes. Nationally recommended standards (Play England, Planning for Play) suggest that doorstep play areas (LAP) should be located within 100m walk of each home, while local play areas (LEAP) should be within 400m (or 240m straight line distance). Residents of Central Bedfordshire are willing to walk further to reach a play area, but have expectations that high quality facilities with a wide range of equipment will be provided when they reach the site. Consultations also demonstrate that residents are willing to travel further to reach destination facilities i.e. play spaces containing a wide range of opportunities (NEAP).

Application of the 10 minute walk time standard highlights gaps in provision in several areas, most notably in Dunstable Watling and Manshead Wards, Leighton Buzzard Linslade ward and south of town, Sandy (east), Flitwick (West) Ampthill, Cranfield (west), Marston Moretaine (West), Blunham, Langford (South), Houghton Conquest, Harlington (east), Westoning (west), Heath and Reach (south), Totternhoe, Studham, Old Warden, Northill, Broom, Aspley Heath and Salford.

In order to deliver facilities in the above locations (as a minimum baseline) and retain existing sites, a minimum of 0.11ha per 1000 population is required across Central Bedfordshire.

Application of this benchmark reveals several issues, including many areas where there are shortfalls (including most of the above areas) as well as settlements where there are perhaps sufficient facilities to meet accessibility targets, but only small, low quality sites provided.

Future population growth will require additional facilities to meet the needs of new populations. Use of the benchmark of 0.11 ha per 1000 population suggests that up to 45 additional play areas may be required to meet the demands of housing growth.

Step 5 – Identifying Priorities

Key Issues to Address

10.103 The above analysis indicates that the Recreation and Open Space Strategy needs to address the following issues relating to play spaces:

- Play spaces are important facilities for those with dependents. Use is strongly influenced by location, as well as the safety of facilities. Levels of use by residents with disabilities, as well as those of none white ethnic minority is lower and there is also a lack of awareness of facilities available, particularly in residents aged 18 to 34 (who are likely to have dependents)
- There are concerns relating to the quality of existing facilities and many sites are ageing and in need of upgrading. Added to this, there is a significant range in the play value offered at different sites. There are expectations that high quality facilities will be provided. Site visits reveal particular concerns with the quality of facilities in small settlements, many of whom are struggling with maintenance requirements
- Residents expect to find play areas local to their home and evidence suggests within a 10 minute walk time. Some residents must travel further than 10 minutes to reach current provision. Fewer high quality facilities will better meet the needs of residents than multiple small but dysfunctional sites but local provision remains relatively important for residents
- Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for play areas and a consequent increase in visitor numbers. New areas of housing development will also require new play facilities to ensure that residents have local access to play. As set out above, there is a need to balance quality with quantity

Recreation and Open Space Strategy Outcomes and Key Priorities

10.104 Building upon the above, the recommendations set out below would help to deliver the following outcomes:

- Ensure that all residents have appropriate access to local play areas (within a 10 minute catchment) and can also access destination play areas
- Promote the provision of high quality play facilities with strong play value
- Attract users from all sectors of the population, including residents with disabilities
- Meet user aspirations relating to quality of provision as well as local priorities

Key Priorities

10.105 It is therefore recommended that key principles for the delivery of children's play areas across Central Bedfordshire are set as follows:

- promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy
- to promote the strategic distribution of high quality play facilities, seek to ensure that all residents are within a 10 minute walk time catchment of at least one local play area. This should apply to all settlement types. Sites should be of high quality, cater for all age groups (linking with requirements set out in Facilities for Young People Section) and offer a range of play opportunities
- maximise access to a destination play area through the inclusion of these facilities at strategic locations – i.e. country parks, urban parks

- work with providers and communities to ensure that all play areas meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. This should include the creation of safe access routes to reach play areas. Linking with the quality criteria, sites should be tailored to the character of the area (for example natural play may be appropriate in some settings rather than formal equipment);
- review the distribution of play areas in areas that have overlapping catchments and work with site providers to consider decommissioning sites that are no longer meeting demand (investing instead in larger nearby facilities)
- ensure that the impact of population growth on play areas is addressed through policy requiring developers to provide appropriate on-site children’s play space facilities within the accessibility, quantity and quality standards as set out above. Where new development is not within the catchment of existing facilities, new sites should be strategically planned (taking into account the aspirations for fewer and high quality facilities)
- ensure that where appropriate the impact of population growth on play areas is addressed through policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions
- increase the access to and sustainability of play provision and address concerns over the management of facilities, support partnership working between Town and Parish Councils and other local organisations including schools

Site / Area Specific Implications

10.106 Table 10.10 below summarises the likely site / area specific implications of the above recommendations.

Table 10.10 – Site Specific Priorities to Address Issues and Recommendations

Protect
All existing sites that do not have overlapping catchments
New provision
Local Facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities –Aspley Heath, Old Warden, Salford, Leighton Buzzard (Linslade ward) Dunstable (Watling ward) Sandy, Flitwick, Fairfield Shefford, Maulden, Northill and Broom, Langford, Clifton, Harlington, Westoning. • On-site facilities within new housing development when outside catchment of existing facilities. Off-site contributions to improve existing facilities when within catchment of existing.
Destination Facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandy • Caddington • Shefford • Countryside recreation sites and urban parks

Areas of new development where incoming residents will create quantitative deficiency and / or are outside of catchment for existing open spaces.

Quality Enhancements

All facilities against standards set.

Identified requirements including facilities in the following settlements (identified through consultation and site visits)

Ampthill, Biggleswade, Flitwick , Houghton Regis, Marston Moretaine, Stotfold, Henlow, Maulden, Shillington, Slip End, Brogborough, Southill, Tilsworth, Totternhoe, Upper Gravenhurst, Upper Shelton, Eaton Bray.

Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to increase use of existing facilities.

11. Provision for Young People

Introduction

11.1 This section sets out the assessment relating to facilities for young people in Central Bedfordshire. It is structured as follows:

- Context and Definition
- Usage Profile
- Existing Provision – Quality, Quantity and Accessibility - and Aspirations
- Summary – Issues to Address
- Implications and recommendations

Context and Definition

11.2 As set out in Section 7, the vision of the Central Bedfordshire Children and Young People's Plan 2011 - 2014 (Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust) is

'We want every child in Central Bedfordshire to enjoy their childhood and have the best possible start in life. We want every child to do well at school, make friends and build strong relationships with their family. By the age of 19, as young adults, we want every young person to have the knowledge, skills and qualifications that will give them the best chance of success, so that they are prepared to take their full place in society as a happy, healthy, contributing and confident citizen'.

11.3 The provision of children's play space is just one means of contributing to this overall vision (and indeed it is recognized that the effective provision of many other types of open space considered in this assessment will also directly contribute to these priorities. Section 7 summarised the wealth of evidence outlining the importance of play and the benefit that this has on mental and physical health and wellbeing, drawing upon a recent literature review by Play England (A World without Play – A Literature Review – 2012). It also highlighted the role that the provision of high quality spaces and facilities for play have in meeting wider aims and objectives.

11.4 This section builds upon the analysis in section 10, which considered the adequacy of facilities for children and considers the needs of young people (aged 12/14 years and above).

11.5 For the purposes of this study, facilities for young people have been defined as follows:

“Facilities designed to meet the needs of young people such as youth shelters, skate parks and Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA).” The broad objective of the provision of these facilities is to provide opportunities for young people to play interact with their peers and be physically active”

11.6 Facilities included in this section in general fall under the existing NEAP definition as they target older children but it should be noted that MUGAS are also included within facilities for young people. The relationships between the existing definitions used and the facilities that will be required moving forwards are set out in Section 15. The actual facility to be provided

should be determined through local consultation (for existing populations) and / or discussions and evaluation of other nearby provision and an understanding of the potential target market. The possible facilities that could be included is shown in the design guidance.

11.7 Provision of facilities for children does not negate the need for outdoor provision for young people and vice versa. In light of the differences between provision for children and young people, this typology has been divided and the provision of facilities for young people across Central Bedfordshire is discussed in Section 10. It may however be necessary (or appropriate) to provide play facilities meeting the needs of both age groups on the same site and / or in the same location and this will be discussed further both in this section and in Section 14, summary and guidance for new development.

11.8 While all catering for young people, it must be noted that each range of equipment (and therefore each site) has a different purpose and may serve a specific target audience. This will be considered alongside analysis evaluating the adequacy of provision.

11.9 As already set out in Section 10 (Children's Play Space), there is a wealth of documents providing advice and guidance on effective design for play facilities which apply equally to facilities for young people. These include:

11.10 Play England: Design for Play – A guide to creating successful play spaces (2008) which provides guidance for the successful development of play spaces. It references the following 10 key principles:

- 'bespoke' - fits in with surroundings and enhances the local environment. Key features of the existing space should be built into the design, e.g. a tree with character, an old sculpture
- are well located – located where children would play natural and have an effective balance between surveillance and seclusion
- make use of natural elements - grassy mounds, planting and logs can all help to make a more attractive and playable setting for equipment, planting can also help attract birds and other wildlife
- provide a wide range of play experiences – successful play space can be used in different ways by children and young people of different ages and interests and can also be important social spaces for parents and carers. Non-prescriptive play equipment and features that encourage and promote imagination and creativity help to achieve this principle
- are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children - though many play providers focus on equipment that is wheelchair-accessible, it is important to recognise that there are many different types of disability or special need. Non-prescriptive equipment, which can be used flexibly may be of benefit
- allow children of different ages to play together – where possible avoid segregating children on the basis of age or ability, and lay out the facility so that equipment and features can be used by a wide range of children

- build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge – include opportunities to experience challenge and excitement. Children need to take risks to learn how to manage risks
- are sustainable and appropriately maintained - consider using recycled or sustainably sourced materials. Long-term maintenance and sustainability are also vitally important considerations in the design process, but in successful play spaces do not overshadow the scheme's play value and ability to meet the play needs of children and young people. Good play spaces are designed and constructed bearing in mind sustainability but they are not necessarily tidy, and bits of scrub or long grass, fallen leaves and twigs, may all provide additional play opportunities
- allow for change and evolution - Some 'slack space' with no predefined function should be built into the layout – this increases the potential for change and evolution
- meets community needs – early and ongoing community engagement will help ensure that the facility is valued in the community

11.11 Fields in Trust (formerly National Playing Fields Association) has produced similar documentation relating to the importance of play and good design in play facilities (Planning and Design in Sport and Outdoor Play) and refers to the research undertaken by Play England. In addition, they recommend local standards for play space, specifically:

- **Quantity** – a minimum of 0.25ha per 1000 population equipped play space should be provided and a further 0.55ha per 1000 population set out for informal play
- **Accessibility** – residents should be within 100m of a local play space, 400m of an equipped play space and 1000m of a neighbourhood space and / or facility for young people; and
- **Quality** of provision should also be measured and local standards should be set

Steps 1 and 2 – Evaluation of Local Needs and Audit of Existing Provision

Usage Profile

11.12 A household survey of 1000 residents of Central Bedfordshire was carried out to establish a baseline of views regarding current and future provision of the range of open space types detailed in this study. As well as providing an understanding of views and aspirations relating to current provision, the survey also enables evaluation of the current user profile of each type of open space.

Usage

11.13 17% of respondents to the telephone survey use facilities for young people at least once weekly and just a further 8% use facilities at least once per month. The remainder of respondents (75%) never use facilities for young people meaning that on face value, these sites are visited much more infrequently than most other types of open space. It must be noted however that this is primarily a consequence of the target age range for these facilities (and the fact that young people within these age ranges were not questioned as part of the survey).

11.14 Perhaps unsurprisingly, those with dependent children expressed higher levels of use of these facilities, particularly those with children aged between 9 and 13. 46% of respondents with young people aged between 9 and 13 used facilities at least once per week, although 48% still do not use facilities. 70% of those with young people aged between 14 and 18 do not use facilities.

11.15 There is little variation in usage of facilities for young people between different sectors of the population. Notably:

- non-white British residents are just slightly more like to use facilities. 83% of those who consider themselves to be non white British residents never use facilities for young people compared to 74% of the white British population
- there is no clear variation in levels of use between those indicating that they have a disability and those that do not; and
- there is little variation in use by socio economic group although those describing themselves as falling into socio economic group D/E are less likely to use a facility for young people with 83% never using such a facility compared to an average of 76%

11.16 It is important to note that population projections indicate that the proportion of people aged between 10 and 14 will increase by 2022 and this is therefore likely to generate further additional demand for this type of facility.

Use of Facilities for Young People by Placemaking Area

11.17 There are few variations between the usage patterns in different placemaking areas in Central Bedfordshire, with 18% of residents in Dunstable and Houghton Regis, 15% in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south, 19% of residents in the east and 12% of residents in the west (both in the north placemaking area) using facilities for young people once per week or more. A much higher proportion of respondents in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and the West have no interest in the use of these facilities (both over 80%) than in other areas.

Use of Facilities for Young People by Settlement Hierarchy

11.18 Usage in the Major Service Centres is higher than in other areas of Central Bedfordshire, with 23% visiting facilities for young people at least weekly. The next highest frequency is 11% in the larger villages.

Reasons for Visiting Facilities for Young People

11.19 Respondents that use facilities for young people indicate that the main reasons for doing so are:

- Play (53%)
- To relax (31%)
- Sports (24%)
- Walk and exercise (17%)

Reasons for Visiting Facilities for Young People by Placemaking Area

11.20 Reasons for visiting facilities for young people in Central Bedfordshire are the same in all placemaking areas and are reflective of the overall patterns of usage in Central Bedfordshire.

Reasons for Visiting Facilities for Young People by Settlement Hierarchy

11.21 Reasons for visiting facilities for young people in Central Bedfordshire do not vary between residents in different size of settlement and are reflective of the overall patterns of usage in Central Bedfordshire.

Barriers to Use

11.22 While a lack of interest in this type of space (due to the target age range) is the main reason for not using these facilities, other barriers to use are also raised. 10% of non users highlight time pressures, while 6% suggest that a lack of local facilities is an issue. A further 4% suggest that there is an overall lack of facilities, while 4% indicate that they are not aware of where there are facilities that they can use.

11.23 Barriers to usage however become more apparent when considering only the views of those with dependent children. 17% of respondents with children aged 9 – 13 and 15% of those with young people aged 14-18 indicate that the lack of local facilities prevents them from using such a site and this is by some distance the most commonly referenced issue. For those with dependents in these two age groups, the proportion of people with a lack of interest in using such facilities drops to below 30%. Notably, no respondents highlight the quality of facilities as a barrier to use.

11.24 Analysis of use across the different segments of population reveals little variation in reasons or barriers to use, with the only issues evident being:

- the distance to a facility is more important to older residents (grandparent age) and to residents who are classified within lower socio economic groups; and
- lack of awareness of the location of facilities is particularly apparent amongst those with a disability

Barriers to Use of Facilities for Young People by Placemaking Area

11.25 There are no clear differences in barriers to use between residents in different placemaking areas although it is notable that residents in the east and Dunstable and Houghton Regis are more likely to indicate that there are no local facilities or a lack of facilities. There are also much higher proportions of residents in Dunstable and Houghton Regis (12%) that indicate that they are not aware of the location of facilities than in other areas (4% across Central Bedfordshire). It appears that there is a particular emphasis on travel to these facilities for events in the east of the area.

Barriers to Use of Facilities for Young People by Settlement Hierarchy

11.26 Residents in the Major Service Centres and Minor Service Centres are far more likely to highlight the lack of local facilities (or overall lack of facilities) as a barrier to use than residents in smaller settlements.

Current Provision and Views on Current Provision

Quantity

11.27 Just 4.32 hectares is dedicated to facilities for young people across Central Bedfordshire. The range of facilities varies significantly from skateparks to BMX tracks and teenage shelters and in addition, there are several MUGAs which fulfil a dual role of recreation and sport.

Table 11.1 summarises the distribution of the existing facilities for young people across Central Bedfordshire.

Table 11.1 – Distribution of Facilities for Young People across Central Bedfordshire

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)
Central Bedfordshire	36.00	4.32	0.02	0.00	0.12

11.28 Broadly speaking, facilities provided can be summarised as follows:

- 6 BMX parks
- 10 skateparks
- 10 Multi Use Games Areas
- 10 shelter / youth areas

Table 11.2 summarises the distribution of facilities for young people by placemaking area.

Table 11.2 – Distribution of Facilities for Young People by Placemaking Area

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	4	0.83	0.02	0.01	0.21
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	16	1.62	0.03	0.03	0.10
North	16	1.87	0.01	0.01	0.12
Central Bedfordshire	36	4.32	0.02	0.01	0.12

11.29 Table 11.3 summarises the distribution of these facilities by settlement hierarchy. It considers the amount of provision per 1000 population as well as the amount of facilities in relation to the number of people aged between 5 and 15. Chart 11

Table 11.3 – Distribution of Facilities for Young People by Settlement Hierarchy

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)	Ha per 1000 population aged 5 - 17
Major Service Centres	14	2.08	0.01	0.01	0.15	0.09
Minor Service Centres	9	0.83	0.02	0.01	0.09	0.11
Large Villages	9	0.99	0.02	0.02	0.11	0.16
Small Villages	4	0.41	0.02	0.02	0.1	0.11

Quantity of Provision – Key Issues

11.30 Tables 11.1 to 11.3 illustrate the following key issues regarding the number, type and size distribution of facilities for young people:

- in comparison to other types of facility, much lower levels of space are dedicated to facilities for teenagers and there are significantly fewer facilities for this age group than there are for children
- Growth in the population resulting from housing growth will see provision per 1000 population decline significantly
- Provision is relatively consistent across each area when taking into account the amount of facilities per 1000 population, although it is highest in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South and lowest in the North
- Provision per 1000 population is consistent in settlements of all sizes, however when taking into account just the amount of young people, provision is high in the Large Villages and low in the Major settlements. Facilities are also on average much larger in the Major settlements than at all other tiers of the settlement hierarchy

Quantity of Provision – Consultation Responses

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

11.31 Reflecting issues raised in Town and Parish Council consultation, a review of Green Infrastructure studies and town/ parish plans also highlights significant concerns with the amount of facilities for teenagers. Almost every settlement for which one or more sources of information is available demonstrates issues with the provision of this type of facility. Consultations and the review of existing evidence highlight the following area specific priorities:

- Petition for skatepark and key priority of Town Council – Dunstable
- Request for Youth Shelter on Millennium Park- Flitwick

- Requirement for skatepark / MUGA – Houghton Hall ward, Houghton Regis (Town Council)
- Demand for skatepark – Leighton Linlade Town Council
- Demand for additional spaces including adventure play (Sand Hills) and moto BMX tracks in quarry – Sandy (GI)
- Demand for skatepark, BMX track and trim trail. MUGA underused – Arlesey Parish Council
- Barton le Clay – demand for skatepark (Parish Council)
- Cranfield – skate park (Parish Plan)
- Marston Moretaine – requirement for additional facilities. Need for BMX, youth shelter (GI)
- Potton – demand for skate park extension and centrally located MUGA (Town Plan)
- Shefford – identified need for further facilities (Town Council)
- Stotfold – demand for more and improved facilities (Town Council)
- Blunham – existing poor provision (Parish Council)
- Clifton – skateboard park (GI)
- Eaton Bray – teen shelter (Parish)
- Harlington – not enough facilities (Parish)
- Haynes – identified requirement for skatepark (parish)
- Henlow – requirement for skatepark (GI and Parish)
- Houghton Conquest – requirement for ball park (Village survey). Aspirations for youth shelter (Survey)
- Lower Stondon – requirement for MUGA (Parish Plan)
- Meppershall – facilities for young people, including zip wire are key priority (GI)
- Silsoe – new facilities for young people aged 12 – 16 (Parish Plan and new MUGA)
- Slip End – Parish plan identifies unmet demand
- Upper Caldecote – Parish plan identifies need for further facilities
- Westoning – lack of activities for young people (Parish Plan)
- Brogborough – lack of facilities for young. Demand for shelter (Parish)
- Eversholt – evidence of demand but village would not expect to provide such facilities
- Flitton – identified need for facilities – potential to provide basketball on the recreation ground
- Ickwell – Parish plan identifies requirement for provision
- Kensworth – existing BMX site but working group identifying further requirements
- Northill – Parish Plan identifies need for facilities
- Old Warden – no provision, demand identified (Parish)
- Ridgmont – Parish plan sets out requirement for facilities for young people including basketball / BMX / Skatepark and youth shelter
- Totternhoe – demand identified (Parish)
- Upper Gravenhurst – demand identified.

Household Survey

11.32 The household survey reveals that:

- overall, there is a strong perception that there are not enough facilities for young people with 70% dissatisfied with existing levels of provision. A further 6% think that there are only nearly enough; and

- just 1% of the population consider there to be more than enough and only 24% believe that the amount of facilities is about right

11.33 Headline findings therefore strongly indicate that more facilities are required. These views are consistent across all socio economic groups and there is no variation in perception according to ethnicity. Women are slightly more likely to indicate that there are not enough facilities for young people than men.

11.34 When considering the views of just those residents who have dependent children, views demonstrate even more clearly that there are perceived to be insufficient facilities. 70% of respondents with children aged between 9 and 13 and 71% with dependents aged between 14 and 18 suggest that there are not enough facilities.

Views on Quantity of Facilities for Young People by Placemaking Area

11.35 The household survey demonstrates that there is little variation in perception of the amount of facilities between the placemaking areas and that there is a consistent perception that more facilities are required. Between 61% and 67% of respondents in each area indicate that there is not enough provision. Interestingly, it is in Dunstable and Houghton Regis where the fewest facilities (in terms of number) are found that the highest levels of dissatisfaction exist (this is despite one of each type of facility being provided in this area).

11.36 Despite lower levels of facilities in the north, residents in the west (part of north placemaking area) are most satisfied, with 27% suggesting that the amount of facilities is about right. Despite this, only 44% of facilities for young people in the north placemaking area are located to the west of this areas suggesting that perception does not correlate directly with facilities available.

Views on Quantity of Facilities for Young People by Settlement Hierarchy

11.37 Analysis of the household survey demonstrates that like between the placemaking areas, there is no difference in the perceptions of residents living in settlements of different sizes. Between 60 and 62% of residents in each settlement hierarchy believe there to be insufficient provision while between 20 and 22% consider the amount of facilities to be about right. Provision per 1000 population is lowest in the Major Service Centres although there are more (and larger) facilities overall. When taking into account the amount of young people living in each type of settlement, analysis indicates that the large villages contain the highest levels of facilities while Major Service Centres contain the lowest.

Views on Quantity of Facilities for Young People - Town and Parish Councils

11.38 Reflecting the findings of the household survey, the Town and Parish Council consultation conclusively demonstrates a perception that there are insufficient facilities for young people in Central Bedfordshire. 96% of respondents indicate that there are not enough (or only nearly enough) facilities for young people. The facilities most commonly requested are skate parks and BMX tracks. Several councils indicate that a youth shelter does not represent sufficient provision.

11.39 A third of all respondents indicated that they have formal evidence of demand for additional facilities through either the Parish Plan process, informal consultation or receipt of a petition. Only Flitwick Town Council, Houghton Conquest Parish Council, Biggleswade Town Council and Aspley Guise Parish Council prioritise improvements to the quality of existing

provision over the demand for more sites, highlighting the strong perception that there is a need for more facilities.

11.40 The scale of the perceived issue is highlighted by the two thirds of responding Town and Parish Councils who indicate that addressing the needs of young people is their top priority in relation to open space. Less than 10% of Town and Parish Councils do not identify facilities for young people within their top three priorities and it is clear that the majority of Town / Parishes believe that there is a requirement for facilities within their parish. Only in a few small villages is it considered that there are not enough residents to justify the provision of facilities for young people.

Current Provision

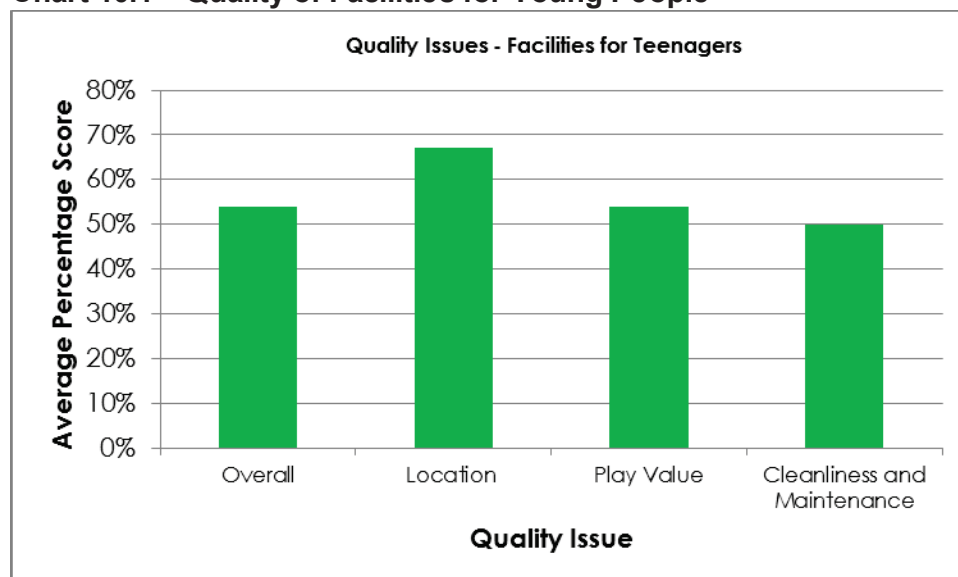
Quality

11.41 Quality and value of facilities for teenagers was considered using a site assessment matrix. The nature of MUGAs (multi-use games areas) which often have a dual purpose of being used for both sport and teenagers facilities) means that a different matrix was used for these sites. The assessment matrix is provided in Appendix D.

11.42 For teenage facilities (excluding MUGAs), site visits suggest that the quality of facilities is lower than most other typologies with an average score achieved of just 56%. It must be noted that while when measured against the criteria set out in the matrix sites appear poor, comments from site visits suggest that many facilities are appropriate for their target audience despite the lower scores.

11.43 Location was the most highly rated feature (67% average score) while cleanliness and maintenance was highlighted as the key area for concern (50% average score). This is illustrated in Chart 11.1. Further analysis of the site visit findings demonstrates that it is issues with litter, graffiti and empty bottles etc that are the key contributing factor to the lower scores for cleanliness and maintenance. Even when sites have bins it does not appear that they are always used.

Chart 10.1 – Quality of Facilities for Young People



11.44 For MUGAs, the quality of sites is slightly higher, with an average score of 68%.

11.45 Despite the poor perceptions of quality and the low average scores achieved, there are many examples of high quality facilities. It is perhaps the variation in the quality and value of facilities that is most obviously of concern. While some residents have access to facilities that offer a wide range of equipment and / or opportunity, other sites contain just a shelter, which has limited value.

11.46 This is reflected in the scores achieved relating to specific elements, which indicate for the different elements, scores range from between 13% to 97%. With regards the quality of specific aspects of facilities for young people, the following factors scored most poorly:

- dog free areas
- opportunities for the disabled
- informal supervision
- access routes
- mobility
- personal safety and security
- maintenance

11.47 In addition, several comments made during site assessments highlight that a lack of lighting is a key issue for residents. It was also evident that while some facilities receive heavy usage (and indeed were being used when visited), others showed little evidence of any use.

Quality of Facilities for Young People by Placemaking Area

11.48 Table 11.4 summarises the quality of provision by Placemaking area. It demonstrates that there is little difference between the quality of facilities for teenagers across Central Bedfordshire. Provision in Dunstable and Houghton Regis is perhaps of slightly lower play value however in general, facilities in this area are well located. The issues raised with cleanliness and maintenance are evident in each area.

Table 11.4 – Quality of Facilities for Young People by Placemaking Area

Placemaking Area	Average Quality Score (Location)	Average Quality Score (Play Value)	Average Quality Score (Cleanliness and Maintenance)	Overall Average Quality Score
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	72%	34%	49%	51%
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	67%	57%	47%	56%
North	61%	54%	51%	53%

Table 11.5 investigates whether the quality of facilities varies by size of the settlement according to site visits.

11.49 It reveals that there are some differences in the quality of provision, with overall residents in the Major Service Centres and Large Villages having access to the highest quality provision. The quality of facilities in the Minor Service Centres is lowest in all of the placemaking areas and the quality of facilities in Small Villages is also relatively poor (reflecting consultation) particularly in relation to cleanliness and maintenance.

Table 11.5 – Quality of Facilities for Young People by Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement Hierarchy	Average Quality Score (Location)	Average Quality Score (Play Value)	Average Quality Score (Cleanliness and Maintenance)	Overall Average Quality Score
Major Service Centres	71%	46%	49%	52%
Minor Service Centres	47%	53%	29%	34%
Large Villages	66%	64%	48%	53%
Small Villages	59%	58%	39%	43%

Quality of Provision – Consultation Responses

Green Infrastructure Studies and Parish Plans

11.50 Reflecting the results of other consultations, there is little reference to the improvement of the quality of facilities for young people in Green Infrastructure studies and / or Parish Plans or consultations, with emphasis for the most part placed on the provision of additional facilities. The only issues raised which directly relate to the quality of facilities are:

- Arlesey MUGA – surface quality poor (Parish)
- Greenfield – MUGA recently upgraded (Parish)
- Streatley – MUGA suffers from misuse and vandalism (Parish)
- Tilsworth – not enough facilities of appropriate quality (Parish)

Household Survey

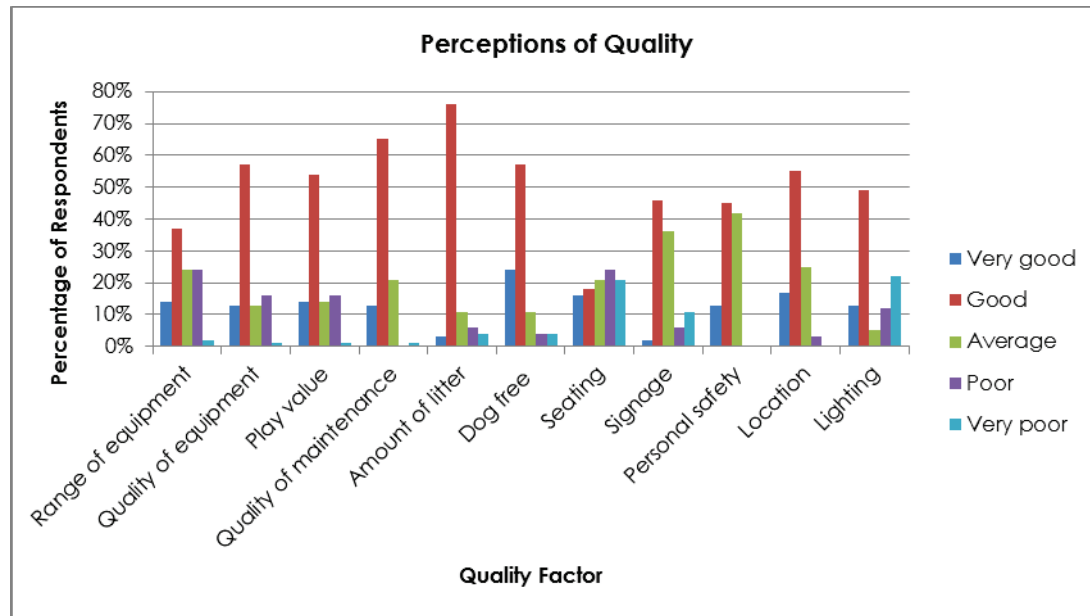
11.51 Reflecting the lower scores achieved during site visits, the telephone survey reveals a perception that the quality of facilities for young people is poor. 38% rate facilities as poor or very poor compared to just 19% that consider facilities to be good or very good. 33% of respondents have no opinion. This takes into account all residents, whether or not they use these types of space.

11.52 These figures are also evident when considering only the views of those respondents with dependents in the age brackets 9 – 13 and 14 – 18. While a higher proportion rate facilities as good or very good (39% good – with children aged 9 – 13 and 21% good with children aged 14 – 18) more residents also consider facilities to be poor (between 40% and 50%) and fewer respondents have no opinion. This suggests that the perceived quality of facilities for young people is low. Interestingly, no respondents indicated that the quality of facilities prevents them from using this type of facility.

11.53 Despite the quality concerns that are evident, Chart 11.2 (which considers the views just of those that use facilities) reveals that for each individual component of facilities for young

people a higher proportion of respondents consider quality to be good or very good or poor or very poor. The only exceptions to this are seating.

Chart 11.2 – Perceptions of Quality Factors for Facilities for Young People



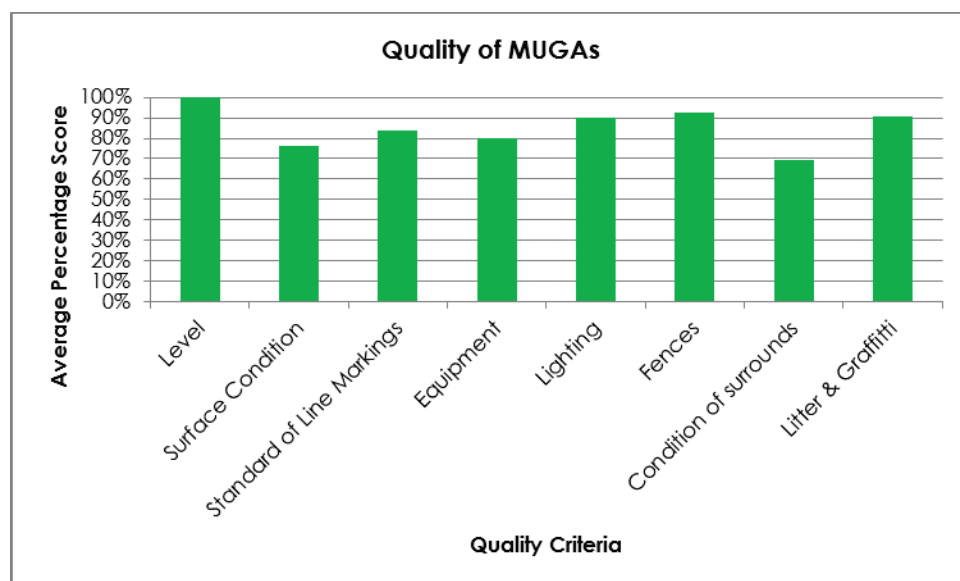
11.54 Areas where the highest levels of dissatisfaction are evident are:

- Seating (45% poor or very poor)
- Lighting (34% poor or very poor)
- Range of equipment (26% poor or very poor)
- Play value (17% poor or very poor)
- Quality of equipment (17% poor or very poor)

11.55 This suggests that although there is dissatisfaction, there is no clear reason for this and it is non users of facilities that in all likelihood hold the lower opinion. It will therefore be important to address perception in order to increase usage of facilities. As suggested earlier, perceived issues relating to the quantity of provision may also impact.

11.56 Chart 11.3 outlines the key quality issues raised relating to MUGAs, which also provide a play value for young people. It indicates that like other facilities for teenagers, the condition and maintenance of the facilities is amongst the highest issues. Issues with litter and graffiti were less evident at MUGAs.

Chart 11.3 – Quality of MUGAs



Views on Quality of Facilities for Young People by Placemaking Area

11.57 Consultation demonstrates that there are a few noticeable differences in perception of the quality of key components of facilities for young people between residents in different Placemaking Areas, specifically;

- in general, residents in the west (part of the North placemaking area) rate each factor more positively. The only real exception to this is the adequacy of seating. Respondents are particularly positive with regards the range of provision, the quality of provision, play value and maintenance. Provision in this area overall is relatively consistent with average levels suggesting that there is no clear rationale for the improved perceptions; and
- satisfaction is evidently much lower in Dunstable and Houghton Regis than all other parts of Central Bedfordshire. This is particularly evident in perceptions relating to the quality and range of provision, seating and signage. Site visits demonstrate that the quality of facilities in this area varies significantly, therefore providing a basis for this comment

Views on Quality of Facilities for Young People by Settlement Hierarchy

11.58 There is also some variation in perceptions of quality when evaluating views by settlement hierarchy. Consultation reveals that:

- for the majority of components of facilities for young people, residents in the Minor Service Centres exhibit the highest levels of dissatisfaction. This is particularly apparent in relation to the range of equipment and the quality of equipment. Analysis in Table 11.5 highlighted concerns relating particularly to maintenance and play value with facilities in the minor service centres, providing a justification for this overall perception
- the range of play equipment provided is seen to be greatest in the Major Service Centres. It is likely that this can be attributed to residents outside of Dunstable (as analysis of perceptions in each of the placemaking areas revealed that facilities in this

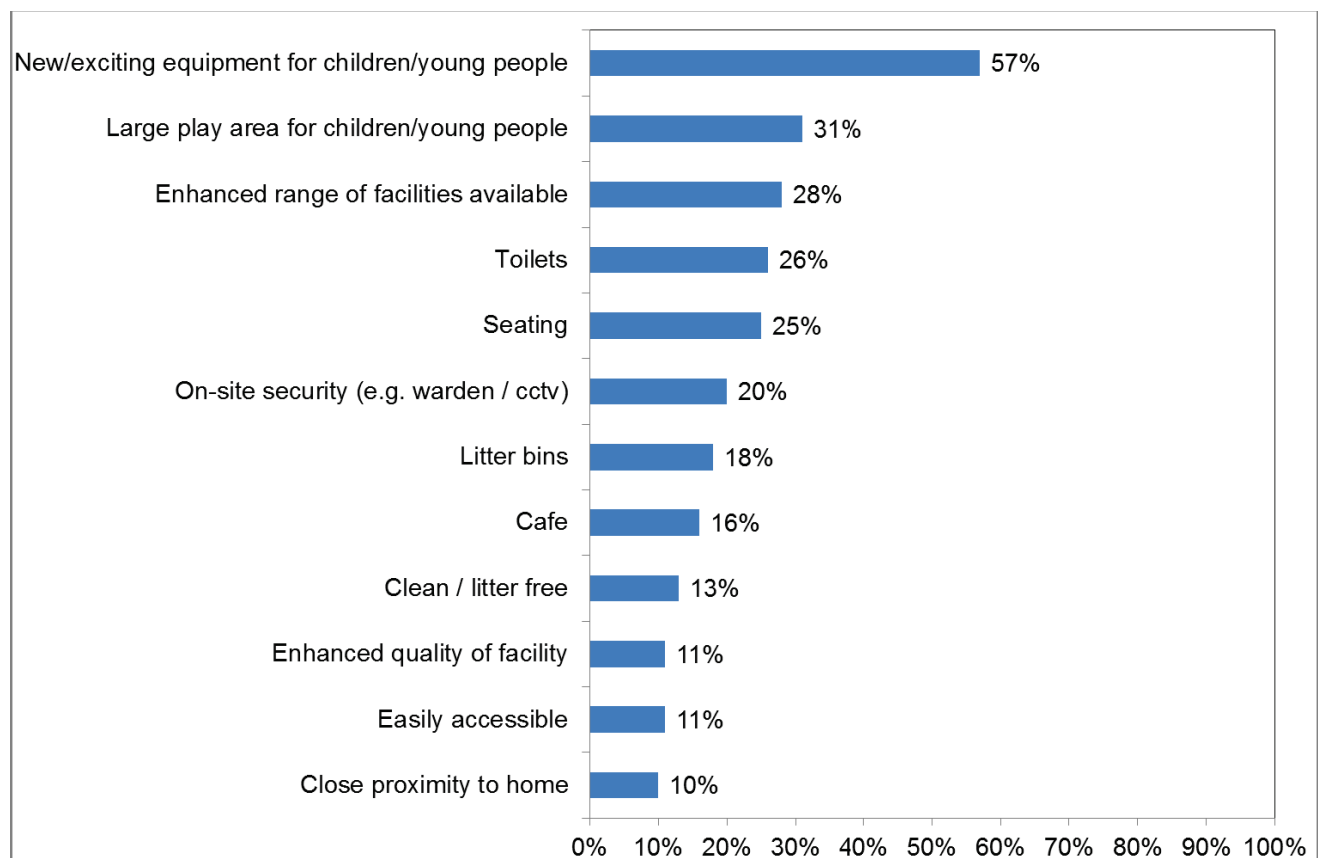
area are considered poorly). Residents in the larger villages are also relatively satisfied with the range of equipment – while site visits demonstrate that overall, the average score for range of equipment is lowest in the Major Service Centres, it is clear that this is influenced by the presence of several facilities such as youth shelters achieving low scores. This area also contains the sites that achieve the highest scores and offer the greatest range of opportunities

- concerns relating to the lack of seating at facilities for young people are particularly apparent in the Major Service Centres and Minor Service Centres. This trend is also apparent in relation to signage
- the only people considering play value to be poor at any site are all located within Major Service Centres

Quality of Facilities for Young People - Aspirations

11.59 Chart 11.4 illustrates the factors that residents of Central Bedfordshire consider most important in the provision of high quality facilities for young people. It is noticeable that particular emphasis is given to the quality and range of facilities. Seating, which is considered to be particularly poor in terms of existing provision is also considered important.

Chart 11.4 – Aspirations for Facilities for Young People



Views on Quality of Facilities for Young People - Town and Parish Councils

11.60 As highlighted earlier in this section, facilities for young people emerged as the key issue for Town and Parish Councils, particularly in relation to the amount and type of facilities provided. Building on this, 68% consider the quality of the current stock of facilities for young people to be poor and a further 18% rate provision as only average. The most common issues raised are the type of facilities provided and the scale of facilities. Towns and Parishes on the whole however prioritise the provision of additional sites over qualitative improvements (and more in depth analysis suggests that comments made relating to quality and quantity are interrelated).

Accessibility

11.61 Access to open space and recreation facilities is as important as the quality of provision, particularly for young people, many of whom it is likely wish to use facilities without parental supervision. Table 11.6 summarises the mode of transport that residents in Central Bedfordshire expect to use to reach a facility for young people and the type of transport that users actually do use.

Table 11.6 – Mode of Travel

Expected vs Actual	Walk	Cycle	Public Transport	Car
Expected	79%	3%	4%	15%
Actual	46%	14%	7%	33%

11.62 Table 11.6 demonstrates that on the whole, facilities for young people are expected to be within walking distance of the home (79% would expect to travel on foot).

11.63 Currently, only 41% of users walk to a site (33% travel by car) suggesting that this aspiration is not achieved. This may link with the perceptions expressed previously that there are not enough facilities.

11.64 14% of current users cycle to facilities, demonstrating that this is an important mode of transport that should be taken into account during the design processes of these facilities.

11.65 There are no clear differences in the views of users and non users and expectations are broadly similar across all socio – economic and demographic groups although residents describing themselves as non white ethnicity are more likely to expect a facility to be located within walking distance.

11.66 For those with children however, it is clear that currently, access by bike takes on even greater importance. 38% of those aged 9 – 13 and 56% with dependents aged between 14 and 18 travel by bike and in contrast, the amount of respondents with dependents reaching facilities on foot is below 30%.

11.67 Mirroring the views of residents of Central Bedfordshire as a whole, facilities are expected more locally than they are currently found. 76% of respondents with dependents aged 9 – 13 and 64% with children in the older age group (14 – 18) would expect access to facilities on foot.

Expectations of Accessibility by Placemaking Area

11.68 The geographical variation evident in the different size settlements is not apparent in the different placemaking areas. Residents in the West (North Placemaking area) demonstrate a slightly higher propensity to travel by car however it is the common expectation in all areas that facilities are accessible on foot (between 64% and 72%). It is however clear that when considering current travel patterns, the majority of existing users that walk or cycle are based in the west or in Dunstable and Houghton Regis. There is a reliance on the car in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south (62% of users travel by car).

Expectations of Accessibility by Settlement Hierarchy

11.69 The expectation that facilities for young people are accessible on foot is particularly apparent in the Major and Minor Service Centres (72% and 70% respectively). There is a greater acceptance in the Large and Small Villages that there may be a need to travel by car or by bike with just 41% in the Smaller Villages expecting access on foot. With regards actual travel patterns, all users that are currently cycling are based within the Major Service Centres and there is a particular reliance on the car for residents in Large Villages. The proportion of users that walk to a facility varies from 11% in the large villages to 100% of users in the small villages and Minor Service Centres.

Steps 3 and 4 - Setting and Applying Local Standards

11.70 In order to deliver a successful and varied network of open spaces consideration of quality, quantity and accessibility factors is required.

11.71 To develop provision requirements which are responsive to local needs, the findings of the facility audit and consultation can be used to inform the creation of quality, quantity and accessibility standards for each type of open space.

11.72 The findings of the local needs assessment, alongside the baseline audit of existing provision have therefore been used to determine local standards for the provision of large recreation areas. Existing provision can then be measured against these benchmarks to identify the requirement for new and improved facilities.

11.73 The approach taken to setting standards is explained in Section 2. The data used to set each standard for large recreation areas is outlined below.

Accessibility

Setting Accessibility Standards

11.74 As outlined in Section 2, standards are set using an accessibility led approach. It is therefore essential to understand the distance that residents expect to travel and the mode of transport that they will use to get there. The household survey provides a robust way of analysing these expectations.

11.75 The household survey demonstrates that residents expect to travel on foot to reach a facility for young people and as a consequence, it is anticipated that sites will be close to the home. Almost 70% of residents have this expectation. Despite this, existing travel patterns demonstrate a high reliance upon accessing facilities by car / bike.

11.76 To consider how facilities for young people fit into aspirations for the open space network in Central Bedfordshire, Table 11.7 uses the raw data collated through the telephone survey to evaluate the amount of time residents expect to travel to reach a facility for young people. To fully understand the spread of responses (and therefore the expectations of all residents), it categorises responses into quartiles. Each quartile represents 25% of the respondents. Quartile 1 is equivalent to the 25% of residents with the highest aspirations, or those that would be willing to travel the shortest distance to reach a facility. PPG17 suggests that a local standard should be set using quartiles, and at a point which reflects the expectations of 75% of the population.

Table 11.7 – Travel Expectations – Facilities for Young People (calculated from household survey)

Mode of Transport Quartile	Walk			
	1	2	3	4
Central Bedfordshire	10	10	15	35
Major	10	10	15	30
Minor	10	12	15	30
Large	10	15	15	35
Small	5	5	5	10

11.77 Table 11.7 reveals the following key findings in relation to access to facilities for young people;

- 25% of residents across Central Bedfordshire would be willing to walk up to 10 minutes to reach a facility for young people (quartile 1). With the exception of the smaller villages (5 minutes) this is common to all settlement hierarchies. The remaining 75% of residents would be willing to travel for 10 minutes or more, although it is notable that the majority of responses received were around 10 – 15 minutes (demonstrated by the median response); and
- the modal response (i.e. the most common response given) was that a facility for young people should be within 10 minutes of the home. The average response given was 12 minutes.

11.78 Residents therefore have similar aspirations for facilities for young people as for play spaces.

11.79 It is also important to take into account the views arising from other consultations. These clearly demonstrate the importance of ensuring a balance between the quality of provision, access to the site and the range of equipment provided.

11.80 Statistical data therefore suggests that 75% of residents will travel up to 10 minutes to reach a facility for young people and other consultation suggests that this is an appropriate distance for the local standard to be set at.

11.81 The recommended local accessibility standard and justification for this standard is set out below.

11.82 It should be noted that while the 10 minute catchment provides a theoretical indication of accessibility, practical decision making relating to the location of facilities for young people should also consider any impacting barriers, for example the presence of railway lines or significant main roads. Appropriate application of the standard should therefore be assessed on a case by case basis.

11.83 As well as informing analysis of the adequacy of existing provision, the standard will also be applied to new developments to inform requirements for facilities for young people.

Accessibility

Facilities for Young People - Accessibility Standard	
10 minute walk time (480m)	
Justification	
<p>The findings of the consultation demonstrate that facilities for young people are expected local to the home. As a result, there is an strong emphasis that such sites should be accessible on foot (70% would expect to walk) although these expectations are less evident in the more rural settlements, where higher numbers of residents indicate that they would expect to travel by car to reach such a facility. A lack of local facilities was highlighted as one of the key barriers to use of facilities for young people and there are also perceptions that there are not enough facilities. There are also concerns about the quality of some facilities for young people.</p> <p>In all areas, the average and most common responses are similar (10 and 12 minutes respectively) and analysis demonstrates that at least 75% of users are willing to travel for 10 minutes. To promote a strategic approach to the provision of facilities for young people and ensure that they can be sited adjacent to facilities for children, a standard of 10 minutes walk time has used as a benchmark. This standard takes into account the expectations of residents by promoting the provision of easily accessible, high quality space.</p>	

Application of the Accessibility Standard

11.84 The application of this standard is illustrated in maps contained in Appendix B.

11.85 Results of this analysis provide an insight as to why resident views of the amount of facilities are so negative. The application of the standard highlights that the distribution of facilities across Central Bedfordshire is relatively sporadic, with the majority of settlements having some deficiencies in provision. Gaps are evident in all placemaking areas as well as at all levels of the settlement hierarchy. It is also clear that there are particular gaps in provision in the North compared to the Leighton Buzzard and Rural South, and Dunstable and Houghton Regis placemaking areas.

11.86 It is evident that in the smaller settlements where facilities for young people are provided that accessibility is higher (although many settlements of this size do not have any facilities at all). Most large settlements require several facilities to meet accessibility targets and in general, only one or two are provided.

11.87 Areas where there is a lack of access to facilities for young people (and the accessibility standard is therefore not met) include:

Placemaking Areas

- **Dunstable and Houghton Regis** – provision limited. Gaps in access for residents in Parkside and Houghton Hall Wards (Houghton Regis) as well as Central, Icknield and Watling wards (Dunstable)
- **Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South** – Caddington (South), Heath and Reach (South) Hockliffe (South), Eaton Bray (South) Totternhoe (South) Tilsworth, Stanbridge, Studham
- **North** – Houghton Conquest (South), Haynes, Old Warden, Northill, Broom, Biggleswade (almost all), Moggerhanger, Blunham, Sandy (almost all), Everton, Tempsford, Potton (majority of settlement), Wrestlingworth, Dunton (South), Stotfold (majority), Arlesey, Shefford, Henlow, Clifton, Meppershall, Gravenhurst, Silsoe, Campton, Barton le Clay (north), Streatley, Sundon, Harlington, Westoning (East), Toddington (West), Eversholt, Aspley Guise, Husborne Crawley, Aspley Heath, Ridgmont, Lidlington, Flitwick, Clophill, Maulden, Ampthill, Salford, Brogborough, Millbrook, Cranfield and Marston Moretaine (West).

Settlement Hierarchy

- **Major Service Centres:** Gaps in access for residents in Parkside and Houghton Regis Wards (Houghton Regis) as well as Central, Icknield and Watling wards (Dunstable). Leighton Buzzard – gaps in Linslade ward as well as northern and southern areas of the town. Ampthill, Flitwick, Biggleswade and Sandy all have limited provision, meaning that large areas of the settlements are outside of the target catchment
- **Minor Service Centres:** Arlesey, Barton le Clay (north), Caddington (South), Cranfield, Marston Moretaine (west), Potton, Shefford, Stotfold and Toddington

11.88 Almost all large and small villages also contain deficiencies in accessibility although it should be noted that planning application has been submitted for a MUGA in Tempsford although this has not yet been delivered.

11.89 The above gaps in provision do not consider the variety of facilities provided. As alluded to earlier in this section, there are many types of facilities for young people and the provision of a skate park for example may not necessarily meet the needs and preferences of all young people and there may be residents who believe there to be insufficient provision in an area. This highlights the importance of ensuring that local consultation is undertaken and that facilities are tailored to local requirements.

Quantity

Setting Quantity Standards

11.90 Consultation reveals that overall, there is a strong perception that there are insufficient facilities for young people and this is also reflected in many of the local green infrastructure documents and parish plans. 96% of responding Parishes considered there to be a requirement for additional facilities and a third have received petitions evidencing specific demand.

11.91 To inform further analysis and to support the creation of local standards, it is possible to use accessibility standards to set a guideline for the amount of provision that is required. This can also be used to support the formulation of a local standard to guide new development.

11.92 Table 11.8 sets out the minimum amount of provision required across Central Bedfordshire. It is based upon the assumption that a facility will be provided within 480m of the majority of residents based within settlements included in the settlement hierarchy and assumes that all deficiencies identified above are met with the provision of one additional facility for young people (which in the case of many larger settlements is below the level that will be required). It also assumes that new facilities are on average 0.12ha (average size of site).

Table 11.8 – Current Requirements for Facilities for Young People

Area	Current Provision	Required Provision to meet 10 minute catchment	Minimum Requirement
Central Bedfordshire	36 sites – 4.32ha	Additional 57 sites @ 0.12ha	11.16 ha

11.93 Table 11.8 demonstrates that the requirement for facilities for young to meet the accessibility standard means that a baseline total of 11.16ha would be required. **This equates to the need to provide the equivalent of 0.043ha of space per 1000 population.**

11.94 Projected population growth (and it must be noted that it is anticipated that the proportion of young people aged 10 to 14 will increase) will see **requirements raise to 12.49 hectares. This level of provision will still see provision equate to only one facility in each settlement and it should be therefore treated as a baseline facility requirement only, with the accessibility standards guiding the distribution of facilities.**

11.95 Many Parish Councils expressed concern over the sustainability of providing facilities at a local level. Furthermore, residents in larger and smaller settlements indicated that they would be willing to travel further to reach a facility.

11.96 **If it was assumed that facilities for young people would only be required in the Major and Minor Service Centres, a minimum of 21 (2.52ha) additional sites (likely more to take into account role in meeting needs of residents in villages as well as the positioning of such sites) would be required to add to the 2.91ha of provision that is already available. This would equate to 0.03ha per 1000 population, based just upon those living in the Major and Minor Service Centres.**

11.97 It should be noted that accessibility issues should take priority over the application of the quantity standard, and opportunities for new provision should be considered primarily based upon accessibility, but informed by the quantity standard.

Quantity

Facilities for Young People - Quantity Standard
0.043ha per 1000 population
Justification
This figure represents the minimum requirement for facilities for young people in Central Bedfordshire if all residents were to be located within a 10 minute walk of such a facility (480m).

Application of the Quantity Standard

11.98 More local analysis is more relevant, particularly when combined with analysis of accessibility as this enables analysis of real deficiencies. As highlighted, analysis of access to facilities for young people should be considered the primary means of establishing need. The application of the quantity standard however supports this application and use of the overall standard of 0.043 ha per 1000 population indicates that the biggest current deficiencies (in terms of ha per 1000 population) are currently in the following locations:

- Cranfield
- Shefford
- Ampthill
- Stotfold
- Sandy
- Flitwick
- Leighton Buzzard
- Biggleswade
- Houghton Regis
- Dunstable

11.99 All of the above settlements have both accessibility deficiencies and evidence of unmet demand as well as quantitative shortfalls. Building on this, population growth will see demand increase in many settlements. The highest shortfalls by 2022 will be in:

- Houghton Regis
- Leighton Linlade
- Biggleswade
- Dunstable
- Flitwick
- Sandy
- Ampthill
- Shefford
- Cranfield
- Barton

11.100 While all of the above have existing shortfalls, high population growth in Houghton Regis, Leighton Buzzard and Biggleswade in particular will see an increase in the shortfalls of provision. Marston Moretaine is the only settlement where there is currently sufficient provision but population growth will generate an increase.

Quality

Setting Quality Standards

11.101 Local consultations have enabled the identification of issues viewed as important to residents as well as their aspirations in relation to the type of spaces that they would like to see provided. Supporting this, site visits have provided an overview of both areas of current concern and aspects of play provision that are being successfully delivered. Quality of facilities for young people is as important as the amount of facilities and there are currently concerns about both elements of facility provision.

11.102 Linking with national good practice guidance, this input can then be used to identify issues that are important to measure both improvements needed to existing play spaces and to guide the design of new open spaces.

11.103 The quality standard for facilities for young people in Central Bedfordshire is therefore set out below. Further detail can be found in the Design Guidance.

Facilities for Young People and Teenagers - Quality Standard

Size and Location	<p>Within appropriate distance of target catchment area</p> <p>Accessible via safe footpaths and roads</p> <p>Accessible by bike (and with areas for cycle storage)</p> <p>Located in an area of incidental supervision – appropriate balance between seclusion and visibility</p> <p>Appropriate boundaries and buffer zone</p>
Access	<p>Compliant with DDA – access audit in place</p> <p>Regular safety audit</p>
Facilities	<p>Bespoke design to suit location, e.g. skate parks, teenage ‘play’/sport equipment, MUGA</p> <p>Facilities that are inclusive and well designed – ideally in consultation with local young people</p> <p>Appropriate seating</p> <p>Fencing (where appropriate), and bins</p> <p>Signage</p> <p>Lighting (if appropriate)</p> <p>Age appropriate facilities using NEAP play area specification (full details in the Design Guidance Section)</p> <p>Any formal play equipment and safety surfacing compliant with British Standards BSEN 1176 and 1177</p>

Application of Quality Standards

11.104 For each type of open space, several sites fall below the level where all factors are considered to be acceptable or above on the site visits matrix (66%). Quality improvements required are included within each parish schedules.

Summary – Issues Identified

Usage

46% of respondents to the telephone survey with children aged between 9 and 13 use facilities for young people at least once per week, although 48% still do not use facilities. 70% of those with young people aged between 14 and 18 do not use facilities. This represents a significant decrease on the number of young people using play spaces. Just 30% of respondents with dependents in relevant age groups indicate that they are not interested in using facilities. Usage is highest in the Major Service Centres.

Location - lack of local facilities and distance from home are the main barriers to usage and there are no differences in views between residents in different parts of Central Bedfordshire or in settlements of different sizes.

Quality , Quantity and Accessibility

There is a range of provision targeting young people across Central Bedfordshire which can primarily be subdivided into MUGAs, skateparks, BMX tracks and youth shelters.

Consultation revealed that the amount of facilities for young people is perhaps the biggest concern in Central Bedfordshire. 70% of residents are dissatisfied with the amount of facilities and 96% of Town and Parish Councils think that there are not enough facilities. Notably, 90% of Parish Councils indicate that addressing this issue is their top priority. Negative views are evident at all levels of the settlement hierarchy and in all placemaking areas although they are particularly apparent in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and in Minor Service Centres and small villages.

To an extent, issues with quantity of provision impact upon the perceptions of quality and consultation again reveals that residents consider quality to be poor. Site visits reveal that while some facilities are fit for purpose and indeed offer appropriate opportunities for young people, others are lower in quality. Some sites appeared little used while others demonstrated clear heavy usage. The cleanliness and maintenance of many sites contributed to lower scores achieved and concerns were also raised with opportunities for integration of disabled young people, seating and dog fouling. Lighting was also highlighted as a key area for improvement. Consultation mirrored many of these identified issues, with Seating (45% poor or very poor), Lighting (34% poor or very poor), Range of equipment (26% poor or very poor, Play value (17% poor or very poor) and quality of equipment (17% poor or very poor) achieving the lowest scores. Residents in the Minor Service Centres and small villages viewed provision most negatively and these thoughts were reflected through site visit scores. Many smaller Parishes highlighted the challenges that they face in providing facilities and questioned the sustainability of the provision of large scale facilities for teenagers in all settlements.

Like play areas, facilities for young people are expected in close proximity to the home. 76% of respondents with dependents aged 9 – 13 would expect facilities to be accessible on foot while 64% with children in the older age group (14 – 18) would expect access to facilities on foot. Analysis of current usage patterns demonstrates a particular reliance upon cycling. 75% of residents are willing to travel for circa 10 minutes to reach a facility for young people and this is slightly higher in the large and small villages.

Application of a 10 minute walk time standard however emphasises the messages portrayed through consultation and demonstrates extensive gaps in the network of facilities. This includes most major and Minor Service Centres, as well as the majority of small and large villages.

In order to deliver facilities in identified locations (as a minimum baseline) and retain existing sites, a minimum of 0.043ha per 1000 population is required across Central Bedfordshire as a whole.

Application of this standard, linking with accessibility criteria highlight that there are significant quantity and accessibility deficiencies in many of the larger settlements, but in particular in Cranfield, Shefford, Ampthill, Stotfold, Sandy, Flitwick, Leighton Buzzard, Biggleswade, Houghton Regis and Dunstable.

Population growth will see demand increase to a total of 12.49 hectares by 2022 and it must be noted that the proportion of young people is projected to increase, meaning that demand for this facility type may be even higher.

Several concerns were raised with regards the lack of success of some facilities. It was highlighted that there is strong need to ensure that all facilities are tailored to the needs and aspirations of the local community and are developed in conjunction with residents (See Section 4, Strategy Principles).

Step 5 – Identifying Priorities

Key Issues to Address

11.105 The above analysis therefore indicates that the Recreation and Open Space Strategy needs to address the following issues relating to facilities for young people;

- There are clear concerns relating to the amount of existing facilities and there is identified unmet demand in almost every settlement. Most residents are further than a 10 minute walk time (the level which consultation identified as being acceptable). Fewer high quality facilities will better meet the needs of residents than multiple small but dysfunctional sites but local access to facilities is important
- Use of facilities for young people is strongly influenced by location as well as the type of facilities provided. There is a need for innovative facilities that are tailored to the target group if provision is to successfully address needs
- The quality of sites is varying and consultation suggests that provision does not meet local need
- Population growth (particularly in this age group) is likely to see an increase in demand for such facilities and a consequent increase in visitor numbers

Recreation and Open Space Strategy Outcomes and Key Priorities

11.106 Building upon the above, the recommendations set out below would help to deliver the following outcomes:

- Ensure that all residents have appropriate access to facilities for young people through the provision of a comprehensive network of facilities in Major and Minor Service Centres and the provision of one facility (where this is sustainable and developed with

the local community) in Large and Small villages. Residents in Major and Minor Service Centres should be within 10 minutes walk of at least one facility

- Attract users from all sectors of the population, including residents with disabilities
- Meet user aspirations relating to quality of provision as well as local priorities and national objectives
- Provide a variety of different play/activity opportunities for young people

Key Priorities

11.107 It is therefore recommended that key principles for the delivery of facilities for young people across Central Bedfordshire are set as follows:

- promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy
- To promote the strategic distribution of high quality facilities for young people, seek to ensure that all residents in major and minor service centres are within a 10 minute walk time catchment of at least one facility for young people. These sites should function as strategic sites that promote a range of different skills and interests
- Support tailored provision in large and small villages where there is clear evidence of demand and long term sustainability
- Maximise access to facilities for young people in Large Villages and Small Villages through the inclusion of these facilities at strategic locations in Major and Minor Service Centres, as well as in countryside recreation sites
- Work with providers and communities to ensure that all sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. This should include the creation of safe access routes to reach sites
- ensure that the impact of population growth on facilities for young people is addressed through policy requiring developers to provide appropriate on-site facilities within the accessibility, quantity and quality standards as set out above. Where new development is not within the catchment of existing facilities, new sites should be provided using figures outlined in this document
- ensure that where appropriate the impact of population growth on facilities for young people is addressed through policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions

Site / Area Specific Implications

11.108 Table 11.9 below summarises the likely site / area specific implications of the above recommendations.

Table 11.9 – Site Specific Priorities to Address Issues and Recommendations

Protect
All existing sites, except where there is clear evidence of limited use
New provision
<p>Key Priority – addressing gaps in provision in Major and Minor Service Centres, in particular focusing upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cranfield • Shefford • Ampthill • Stotfold • Sandy • Flitwick • Leighton Buzzard • Biggleswade • Houghton Regis • Dunstable <p>Longer term: all other areas of identified need, where meeting criteria of recommendations above.</p> <p>There is strong need to ensure that all facilities are tailored to the needs and aspirations of the local community and are developed in conjunction with residents (See Strategy Principles).</p> <p>Areas of new development where incoming residents will create a quantitative shortfall in provision or will be outside of the target accessibility catchments.</p>
Quality Enhancements
<p>All facilities against standards set. Provision of new facilities is considered to be of higher priority than improvement of existing sites.</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents will use existing facilities.</p>

12. Allotments

Introduction

12.1 This section sets out the assessment relating to allotments in Central Bedfordshire. It is structured as follows:

- Context and Definition
- Usage Profile
- Existing Provision – Quality, Quantity and Accessibility - and Aspirations
- Summary – Issues to Address
- Implications and recommendations

Definition and Context

12.2 For the purposes of this study, allotments have been defined as;

“Open spaces dedicated to growing produce and gardening – site where residents pay to have their own plot and grow vegetables”

12.3 The primary purpose of allotments is to provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce. Allotments also offer much wider benefits, including;

- promotion of sustainability – the provision of allotments enables local growth of produce and can provide food at low cost
- health improvement – there are recognised physical and mental benefits of working an allotment. Some GPs now prescribe the use of an allotment as a relief from stress
- Community Cohesion – allotments can bring together people from different age groups and varying social backgrounds
- education – allotments can facilitate an understanding of where food comes from and the value of fruit and vegetables in healthy lifestyles. Many schools now have small allotments on site for this purpose; and
- biodiversity and conservation - while allotments primarily have a recreational function, they can also offer important habitats and have a significant role to play in biodiversity and conservation. The range of plants, composting and wood plants that are present on site offer a variety of habitats. Allotments also offer an opportunity for connectivity with the wider countryside via hedges or other green corridors.

12.4 The 1998 White Paper, ‘The Future for Allotments’ recognised the health benefits of allotments and recommended that allotment provision be explicitly noted in national and local public health strategies. It stated that there is a need for urgent action to protect existing allotments and that allotment legislation must be overhauled to ensure the long-term protection of these facilities. The National Society of Allotment Gardeners is the advisory group to the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). They recommend that a standard plot of 250 square metres is sufficient to provide food for an average family.

12.5 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) are responsible for national policy on allotments and consider allotments to be important in terms of bringing

together all sections of the community, as well as providing opportunities for people to grow their own produce and promote health and wellbeing.

12.6 As a consequence, Central Bedfordshire Council, Town and Parish Councils are duty bound by the law [Section 23 of the 1908 Allotments Act (as amended)] to provide allotments for their residents if they consider there to be demand. They must take into a consideration a representation in writing by any six registered parliamentary electors or rate payers.

12.7 Allotments are also uniquely protected through the legislative and planning framework within the wider context of a firm national policy to improve the quality of urban green spaces. The allotments Act (Section 8 1925) indicates that a local authority must seek permission from the Secretary of State before selling or changing the use of a 'statutory' allotment site. The local authority must satisfy the Secretary of State that adequate provision has been made for allotment holders who are displaced by the sale of the site. (Statutory allotments are parcels of land acquired or appropriated by the local authority specifically for use as allotments). Allotments transferred by a local authority to a Parish Council will automatically become statutory allotments because they will have been acquired by the Parish Council specifically for use as allotments.

12.8 The Allotments Act (1950) further strengthened the requirements on Councils to provide allotment gardens and also included issues relating to notices to quit and compensation. In addition to the provision of statutory allotments, some sites are temporary (currently dedicated to allotment use, but land is ultimately destined to be used for another purpose). The same regulations do not apply to these sites and they are not protected from disposal in the same way that statutory allotments are.

12.9 The Town and Country Planning Act (1971) also have considerable influence, advocating the need to forward plan for the provision of allotments.

Steps 1 and 2 – Evaluation of Local Needs and Audit of Existing Provision

12.10 A household survey of 1000 residents of Central Bedfordshire was carried out to establish a baseline of views regarding current and future provision of the range of open space types detailed in this study. As well as providing an understanding of views and aspirations relating to current provision, the survey also enables evaluation of the current user profile of each type of open space.

Household Survey Responses

Usage Profile

12.11 Allotments are the most infrequently used type of open space considered within this strategy with just 2% of those responding to the telephone survey using allotments. For those that do use these sites however, consultation clearly indicates that they are an important resource.

12.12 Interestingly, while just 2% currently use allotments, a further 26% of residents responding to the telephone survey indicated that they would be interested in renting an allotment. Residents aged between 35 and 54 are most likely to rent an allotment, with 45% of respondents in this category expressing an interest. Just 10% of respondents over 55 said that they were interested in renting an allotment.

12.13 Of particular note, 58% of non-white British residents indicated that they would be interested in using an allotment. This compares to just 23% of white British. 38% of people that are in employment or studying would be interested in using an allotment compared to 8% that are unemployed. The proportion of residents with a disability that would like to use an allotment is slightly higher than the proportion of those that would consider themselves to be able bodied.

Use of Allotments by Placemaking Area

12.14 There is a small degree of variation between the usage patterns of allotments in different parts of Central Bedfordshire. 6% of residents in the west (North Placemaking area) currently rent an allotment compared to 2% in Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking area and 1% in the other areas.

12.15 Correlating with this, latent demand is lowest in the west (12%) where usage is highest. 36% of respondents in Dunstable and Houghton Regis would be interested in using an allotment, 30% in the east and 25% in Leighton Buzzard.

Use of Allotments by Settlement Hierarchy

12.16 There also variations in interest in allotments by settlement size. In the Major Service Centres, 36% of residents are interested in renting an allotment (there is potential that this may correlate with where gardens are smaller). This decreases to 16% in the Minor Service Centres and 6% in the large villages. 24% of those in the small villages would be interested.

Reasons for Using Allotments

12.17 Respondents that rent allotments indicate that the main reasons for doing so are:

- to grow food and vegetables (90%)
- walk and exercise (40%)
- to relax (25%); and
- for peace and tranquillity (10%)

Reasons for Using Allotments by Placemaking Area

12.18 Reasons for using allotments are consistent in each of the placemaking areas.

Reasons for Using Allotments by Settlement Hierarchy

12.19 There are no differences in the reasons for using allotments between settlements of different sizes.

Barriers to Use

12.20 The barriers to the use of allotments are listed as:

- a lack of interest (45%)
- lack of time (15%)
- lack of local facilities (10%)
- lack of awareness (2%)

12.21 Analysis of use across the different segments of population reveals little variation in barriers to use, with the only issues evident being:

- location and proximity of allotments to the home is more important to residents of none white British origin and to disabled users. 19% of disabled users highlighted issues with proximity to the home and 14% of non white British residents compared to 10% overall. Residents of non white British origin also indicate that they are not aware of where allotments are; and
- a significantly higher proportion of people who cite lack of time as the key barrier have dependents.

Barriers to Use of Allotments by Placemaking Area

12.22 It is notable that in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and East Central Bedfordshire, a significantly higher proportion of residents indicate that the lack of local facilities is the key barrier to use (17% in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and 15% in the east – compared to 1% and 4% in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south and the West (part of the north placemaking area) respectively).

Barriers to Use of Allotments by Settlement Hierarchy

12.23 The key barriers to use are similar in settlements of all sizes, with the only difference being the prominence of a perceived lack of access to sites in the main service centres.

Current Provision and Views on Current Provision

Quantity

12.24 Circa 80 hectares is dedicated to allotments in Central Bedfordshire and the size of sites ranges significantly from 0.8ha (Millbrook) to 8ha (Maulden).

12.25 Table 12.1 summarises the distribution of allotments across Central Bedfordshire. It includes an estimation of the number of plots available. This is based upon the assumption that each plot is 250m² (based upon guidance in Allotments: Plot Holder’s Guide, DTLR 2001). Use of this assumption ensures that all land designated as allotments is considered, even if it is not currently used as such. It demonstrates that there are over 3200 allotment plots in Central Bedfordshire.

Table 12.1 – Distribution of Allotments across Central Bedfordshire

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)	Number of Plots	Plots per 1000
Central Bedfordshire	59	80.3	0.3	0.3	1.4	3212	12.58

Table 12.2 summarises the distribution of allotments by placemaking area.

Table 12.2 – Current Distribution of Allotments by Placemaking Area

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Pop. (Current)	Hectares per 1000 Pop. (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)	Total Plots	Plots per 1000 (Current)	Plots Per 1000 (Future)
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	7	6.9	0.1	0.1	1.0	276	5.3	4.73
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	14	19.8	0.4	0.3	1.4	792	14.6	12.7
North	38	53.6	0.4	0.3	1.4	2144	14.4	12.6
Central Bedfordshire	59	80.3	0.3	0.3	1.4	3212	12.6	11.05

12.26 Table 12.3 summarises the distribution of allotments by settlement hierarchy to evaluate if there are any differences in the amount of facilities provided. It highlights that there are significantly different levels of provision in settlements of different sizes.

Table 12.3 – Current Distribution of Allotments by Settlement Hierarchy

Area	Number of Sites	Total Provision (Ha)	Hectares per 1000 Population (current)	Hectares per 1000 population (Future)	Average Site Size (Ha)	Number of Plots	Plots Per 1000 (Current)	Plots per 1000 (Future)
Major Service Centres	16	22.5	0.16	0.14	1.4	900	6.4	5.6
Minor Service Centres	10	15.9	0.32	0.28	1.6	636	12.8	11.2
Large Villages	18	27.7	0.67	0.63	1.5	1108	27	25.1
Small Villages	13	13.3	0.51	0.49	1	532	20.4	19.6

Quantity of Provision – Key Issues

12.27 Table 11.1 – 11.3 illustrate the following key issues regarding the number, type and distribution of allotments:

- Population growth will have a significant impact, with the number of plots per 1000 people decreasing from 12.6 across Central Bedfordshire to 11.05

- The majority of sites are located in the North Placemaking area. Provision is much lower in Dunstable and Houghton Regis
- While the majority of sites are located in the North Placemaking area, further analysis demonstrates that the distribution of these facilities is skewed to the west and just 36% of allotments are located in the east.
- Provision per 1000 population is equal in Leighton Buzzard and Rural South and north, although the average site size is larger in Leighton Buzzard. As per previously, the amount of plots available has been calculated using an estimate of average provision rather than a total of plots available as figures were not available for all sites.
- The largest villages contain both the highest number of sites and the highest levels of provision (number of hectares). Provision in the Major Service Centres is lowest in terms of hectares per 1000 population and number of plots per population
- Population growth will see both provision per 1000 population and the number of plots per 1000 population decrease

Quantity of Provision – Consultation Responses

12.28 The household survey reveals that:

- overall, when excluding people that have no opinion, there is a view that there are not enough allotments. 49% consider there to not be enough facilities and a further 8% think that there are only nearly enough
- just 5% of the population consider there to be more than enough and only 38% believe that the amount of facilities is about right

12.29 The headline findings therefore suggest that more facilities are required. These views are consistent across all socio economic groups and there is no variation in perception according to ethnicity or gender.

Views on Quantity of Allotments by Placemaking Area

12.30 The household survey indicates that residents in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis placemaking area are least satisfied with facilities and it is in this area where the highest levels of latent demand are evident.

12.31 The second highest levels of latent demand were evident in the East (30%) (part of the North placemaking area).

Views on Quantity of Allotments by Settlement Hierarchy

12.32 Analysis of the household survey demonstrates that the size of settlement has limited impact upon perceptions of the adequacy of allotments although there are clear differences between the amount of latent demand evident, with 36% of residents in the Major Service Centres and 24% in the Small Villages keen to rent an allotment, compared to 16% in the Minor Service Centres and 6% in the Large Villages. As well as the lowest levels of latent demand, residents in the large villages also demonstrate the highest levels of satisfaction.

Views on Quantity of Allotments - Town and Parish Councils

12.33 Responses to the Town and Parish Council survey reflect the high levels of demand for allotments expressed in the telephone survey. More than two thirds of respondents manage allotments and a further 15% indicate that there are private allotments in their village.

12.34 Despite the high levels of provision, 55% of respondents suggest that there is unmet demand in their village. In contrast, reflecting the localised nature of demand for allotments, some Town and Parish Councils have vacant plots. Despite this, responses clearly demonstrate that the provision of allotments (and demand for additional sites) is one of the priority challenges facing Town and Parish Councils currently.

12.35 Several councils have already identified land and are in the process of arranging for this to be converted to allotments. There are also concerns raised about the impact of new development and the potential for demand to increase as a result of this as new residents move to the area.

Latent Demand

12.36 As outlined, most plots are currently full and consultation demonstrates that there is a requirement for additional plots. Furthermore, there is demand for plots in areas where there are currently no allotments.

12.37 Given that the provision of allotments is demand led (rather than supply led like play areas and parks) it is essential that potential latent demand is considered in the forward planning for current and future need.

12.38 It is possible to calculate latent demand in several ways:

- using the household survey – which indicates that overall 26% of respondents that do not currently use an allotment would like to use one. Given that only 2% of respondents currently have an allotment (3200 plots provided) it could be suggested that supply would need to increase significantly
- calculating expressed latent demand – i.e. where residents have proactively sought allotment rental through either discussions with Parish Councils, registration on a waiting list etc.

12.39 Use of figures in the telephone survey provides an indication of the potential scale of demand, while the calculation of demand using figures where residents have more directly expressed an interest provides a more conservative approach.

12.40 Table 12.4 summarises the known levels of latent demand by placemaking area, while Table 12.5 outlines unmet demand by settlement hierarchy. In total, it indicates that there is expressed demand for over 250 plots (excluding areas where there are no allotments at all).

12.41 This analysis demonstrates that geographically, waiting lists are primarily located in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and to the east of the north placemaking area – it is in these areas where provision is lowest. In Leighton Buzzard, where the number of plots per 1000 population is higher, waiting lists are much lower.

12.42 By settlement hierarchy, the majority of waiting lists are in the Major Service Centres (where provision is significantly lower) and the Large Villages. Where actual figures are unknown, it is has been assumed that waiting lists / unmet demand are equivalent to 15 people or 10% of the total plots (where this is known).

12.43 Latent demand where there are no existing allotments is more evenly spread. It is notable however that demand for additional allotments is exhibited in all of the Major and Minor Service Centres (either through the use of current sites and / or waiting lists or evidence of latent demand). Clifton, Fairfield, Hockliffe and Langford are the only large villages where there is limited evidence of demand. The requirement for allotments is more sporadic in the smaller villages.

Table 12.4 – Unmet Demand for Allotments by Placemaking Area

Placemaking Area	Current Plots Provided	Plots Provided per 1000 Pop.	Waiting Lists (or unmet demand in settlements with existing allotments)	Settlements (waiting list)	Latent demand (settlements with identified demand and no allotments)
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	276	5.3	95	Dunstable / Houghton Regis – demand for at least 95 additional plots identified. This includes weighting lists at current sites and identified unmet demand.	Houghton Regis
Leighton Buzzard and Rural south	792	14.6	58	Leighton Buzzard, Slip End, Heath and Reach	
North	2144	14.4	94	Unmet demand located primarily in the East, Sandy, Henlow, Meppershall, Potton and Stotfold. Sandy Allotments shortly to close (48 plots) which will place extra pressure. Only pressures to the west are in Flitwick and Barton le Clay.	Cranfield, Shefford Blunham, Stondon Campton, Dunton, Northill. Ridgmont, Wrestlingworth

Table 12.5 – Unmet Demand for Allotments by Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement Hierarchy	Current Plots Provided	Plots Provided per 1000 Population	Waiting Lists (or unmet demand in settlements with existing allotments)	Settlements (waiting list)	Latent demand (settlements with identified demand and no allotments)
Major Service Centres	900	6.463706	166	Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Flitwick, Sandy (due to facility closing)	Houghton Regis
Minor Service Centres	636	12.93419	45	Arlesey, Potton, Stotfold, Barton le Clay, Toddington	Cranfield, Shefford
Large Villages	1108	27.60133	56	Henlow, Meppershall, Heath and Reach, Slip End	Blunham, Stondon
Small Villages	532	22.7808	15	Upper Caldecote	Campton, Dunton, Northill, Ridgmont, Wrestlingworth

12.44 It should be noted that some sites are not fully utilised although there are no sites with significant numbers of plots that are uncultivated. The majority of sites with available plots are smaller facilities that perhaps have a smaller target catchment area.

Current Provision

Quality

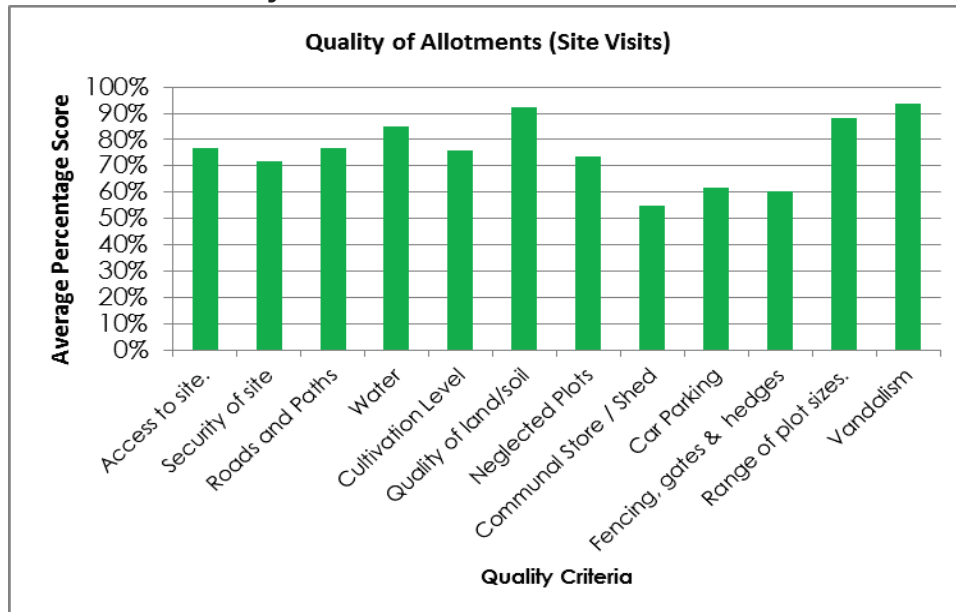
Existing Provision

12.45 The quality and value of allotments were assessed using a quality assessment matrix. This matrix is provided in Appendix D.

12.46 Site visits indicate that the quality of allotments varies significantly, with scores achieved between 33% and 97%. This is often influenced by the amount of plots that are left untended. Sites that are busy and well cultivated are usually more aesthetically pleasing. Most sites appeared to contain at least 60 – 70% of plots that were well tended however concerns with regards the maintenance of some plots were raised.

12.47 Figure 12.1 illustrates the average quality scores achieved for each factor rated during site assessments.

Chart 12.1 – Quality Issues at Allotments



12.48 As Chart 12.1 demonstrates, the key areas for improvement overall at allotments are the provision of facilities including sheds, site boundaries and the adequacy of car parking. Few issues with vandalism were identified and the quality of plots overall was considered good.

12.49 Table 12.6 summarises the quality of provision by Placemaking area. It demonstrates that there are few differences between the average scores achieved for allotments in each part of Central Bedfordshire. Scores are marginally lower in the north area (formerly east and west), but this influenced by a higher variation in quality in this area rather than overall poorer facility stock.

Table 12.6 – Quality of Allotments by Placemaking Area

	Average Quality Score	Access to site	Security of site	Roads and Paths	Water	Cultivation Level	Quality of land/soil	Neglected Plots	Communal Store / Shed	Car Parking	Fencing, gates & hedges	Range of plot sizes	Vandalism
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	82%	71 %	100 %	71 %	100 %	76%	100%	76 %	52 %	57 %	76 %	100 %	100 %
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	78%	77 %	79%	74 %	92%	74%	100%	77 %	51 %	62 %	56 %	100 %	95%
North	67%	78 %	60%	79 %	77%	77%	86%	71 %	59 %	63 %	58 %	78%	91%

12.50 Although there are some geographical differences in the quality of provision, Table 12.7 suggests that there is very little variation in the quality of allotments according to the size of the settlement.

Table 12.7 – Quality of Allotments by Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement Hierarchy	Average Quality Score	Access to site.	Security of site	Roads and Paths	Water	Cultivation Level	Quality of land/soil	Neglected Plots	Communal Store / Shed	Car Parking	Fencing, gates & hedges	Range of plot sizes.	Vandalism
Major Service Centres	78 %	81 %	94%	78 %	97 %	81%	100 %	81%	50%	69 %	81%	100 %	97%
Minor Service Centres	76 %	81 %	67%	86 %	86 %	81%	90%	81%	75%	71 %	62%	76%	90%
Large Villages	68 %	77 %	65%	79 %	74 %	75%	90%	74%	61%	58 %	46%	77%	90%
Small Villages	69 %	69 %	61%	67 %	83 %	69%	89%	61%	45%	53 %	58%	97%	97%

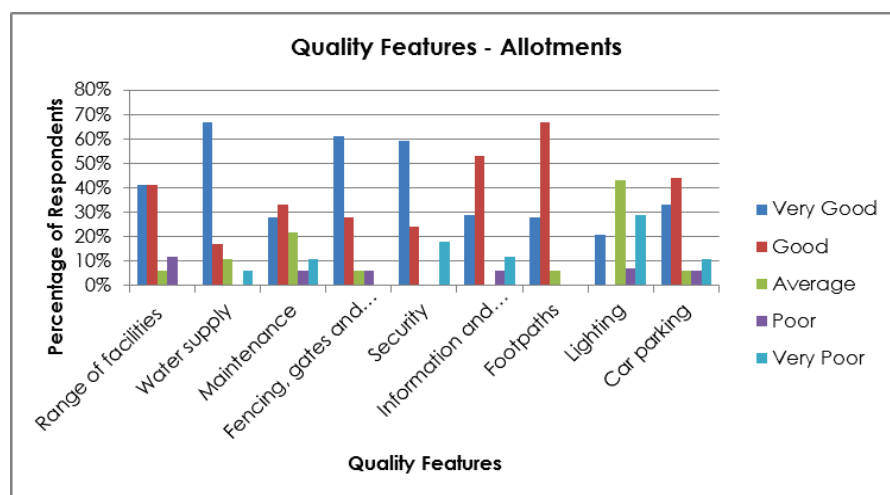
Quality of Provision – Consultation Responses

Household Survey Responses

12.51 Reflecting the positive site visit scores, the quality of allotments is rated good by respondents to the telephone survey, (66% good or very good). Only 23% consider allotments to be poor. These figures include the views of both users and non users.

12.52 Building on this, Chart 12.2 considers the views of users and reveals that for each individual component of allotments, a higher proportion of respondents consider quality to be good or very good than or poor or very poor.

Chart 12.2 – Perceptions of Quality Factors for allotments



12.53 Areas where the highest levels of dissatisfaction are evident are:

- Lighting (36% poor or very poor)
- Security (18% poor or very poor)
- Information and signage (18% poor or very poor)
- Car parking (17% poor or very poor)
- Maintenance (17% poor or very poor)

12.54 This suggests therefore that although on the whole the quality of allotments is high, there are some opportunities for improvement. These concerns reflect some of the findings of site visits, which concerns over the maintenance of some plots and parking.

Views on Quality of Allotments by Placemaking Area

12.55 Consultation demonstrates that there is little difference between the views of residents in different parts of Central Bedfordshire. Perceptions of quality are slightly higher in the west and Leighton Buzzard however average scores are marginally lower in these parts according to site visits.

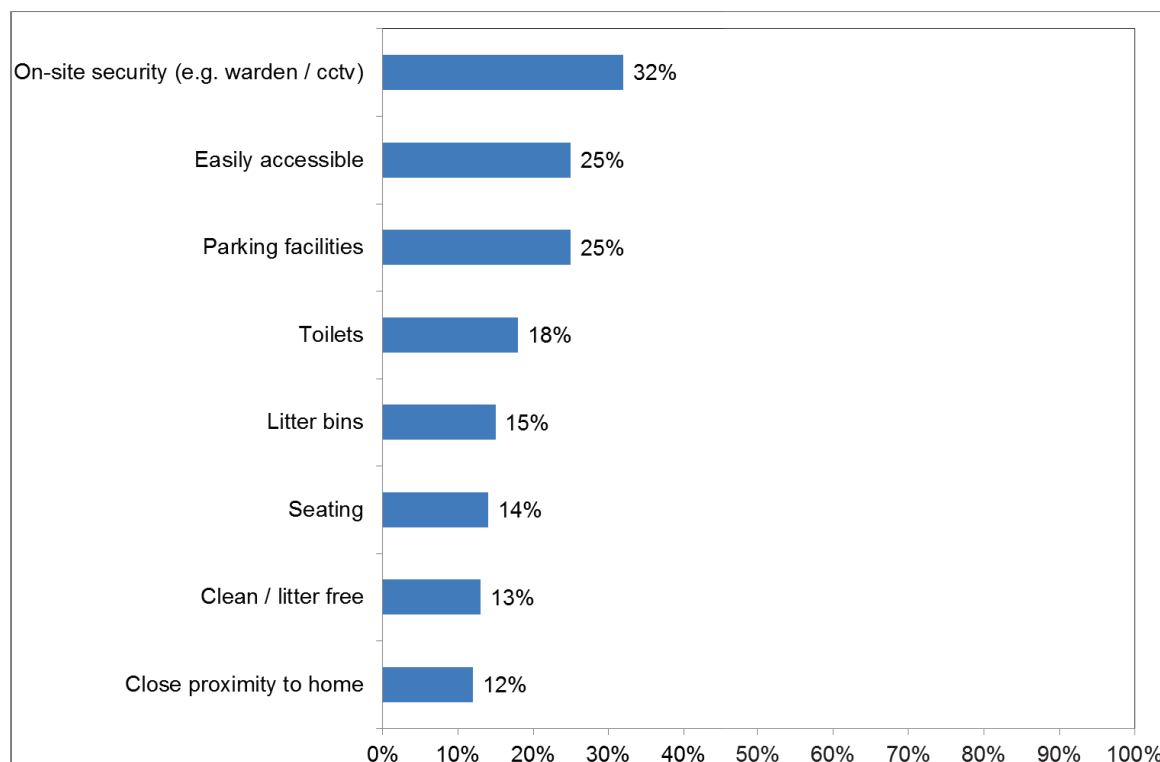
Views on Quality of Allotments by Settlement Hierarchy

12.56 The household survey reveals that the size of settlement has relatively limited impact upon the overall perception of quality. Residents in the small villages and large villages are however slightly more positive than those in the larger settlements with a much lower proportion of residents considering allotments to be poor.

Quality of Allotments - Aspirations

12.57 Chart 12.3 illustrates the factors that residents of Central Bedfordshire consider most important in the provision of high quality allotments. Reflecting concerns raised in relation to existing facilities with regards security and parking, these features are rated as being the most important element of high quality allotments.

Chart 12.3 – Aspirations for Allotments



Accessibility

12.58 Access to open space and recreation facilities is as important as the quality of provision and this is echoed in the review of aspirations, which rates accessibility as the second most important aspiration for an allotment.

12.59 Table 12.8 summarises the mode transport that residents in Central Bedfordshire expect to use to reach an allotment and the type of transport that users actually do use.

Table 12.8 – Mode of Travel

Expected vs. Actual	Walk	Cycle	Public Transport	Car
Expected	60%	0%	0%	40%
Actual	27%	0%	0%	73%

12.60 Table 12.8 indicates that there is a strong emphasis and expectation that allotments will be located in close proximity to home and 60% of users expect to travel on foot. Current user patterns indicate that in reality, the reliance upon car is much higher, with only 27% walking and 73% travelling by car. This suggests that users have to travel further to reach a facility than they would expect to.

12.61 When looking at the views of all residents of Central Bedfordshire (not just users), the expectation that allotments are located in walking distance remains, although a higher proportion of people would travel by car. It is notable that a higher proportion of residents of

non-white British origin expect allotments to be close to the home (70% would expect to walk). This is important as these residents express a particularly keen interest in renting an allotment.

Views on Accessibility of Allotments by Placemaking Area

12.62 There is limited geographical variation in perception, with the only slight difference being the expectations of residents in the east of Central Bedfordshire, who have lower expectations that facilities will be provided within walking distance.

Views on Accessibility of Allotments by Settlement Hierarchy

12.63 Residents in the small villages and larger villages have a higher expectation that allotments will be provided within walking distance of their home, with 69% and 70% of residents respectively indicating that would expect to travel on foot. This compares to 57% across Central Bedfordshire and is perhaps reverse to the trends for many other types of open space, where residents in the smaller settlements are more willing to travel further.

Steps 3 and 4 - Setting and Applying Local Standards

12.64 In order to deliver a successful and varied network of open spaces consideration of quality, quantity and accessibility factors is required.

12.65 To develop provision requirements which are responsive to local needs, the findings of the facility audit and consultation can be used to inform the creation of quality, quantity and accessibility standards for each type of open space.

12.66 The findings of the local needs assessment, alongside the baseline audit of existing provision have therefore been used to determine local standards for the provision of large recreation areas. Existing provision can then be measured against these benchmarks to identify the requirement for new and improved facilities.

12.67 The approach taken to setting standards is explained in Section 2. The data used to set each standard for large recreation areas is outlined below.

Accessibility

Setting Accessibility Standards

12.68 As outlined in Section 2, standards are set using an accessibility led approach (although for allotments, which are demand led rather than supply led, there are other measures of demand that can be taken into account such as waiting lists, and this will be returned to later). It is therefore essential to understand the distance that residents expect to travel and the mode of transport that they will use to get there. The household survey provides a robust way of analysing these expectations.

12.69 Earlier analysis indicated that for allotments, accessibility and location is a key determinant of use. There is a strong emphasis and expectation that allotments will be located in relatively close proximity to home and reflecting this, the majority of users expect to travel on foot. Current user patterns indicate a greater reliance on the car to reach an allotment than residents expect.

12.70 Table 12.9 uses raw data collated through the household survey to evaluate the amount of time residents expect to travel to reach an allotment. To fully understand the spread of responses (and therefore the expectations of all residents), it categorises responses into quartiles. Each quartile represents 25% of the respondents. Quartile 1 is equivalent to the 25% of residents with the highest aspirations, or those that would be willing to travel the shortest distance to reach an allotment. PPG17 indicates that a local standard should be set using quartiles, and at a point which reflects the expectations of 75% of the population.

Table 12.9 – Expectations from the Household Survey

Mode of Transport Quartile	Walk				Car			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Central Bedfordshire	6	10	15	40	10	15	15	60
Major	5	6	15	30	8	10	15	30
Minor	9	10	15	40	10	15	15	60
Large	10	15	15	20	10	15	22.5	60
Small	10	10	10	15	15	15	20	25

Table 12.9 reveals that:

- 25% of residents across Central Bedfordshire would only be willing to walk up to 6 minutes to reach an allotment while residents in the smaller and larger settlements would be willing to travel a little further, up to 10 minutes. The remainder would travel between 6 and 40 minutes on foot and between 15 and 60 minutes by car
- the modal response (i.e. the most common response given) was that allotments should be within 10 minutes of the home. The average response given was 12 minutes. For those that would travel by car, the modal response was 15 minutes and the average response was 14 minutes

12.71 This suggests that a 10 minute walk time to reach an allotment is broadly acceptable to 75% of the population. It is however important to consider the views arising from other consultations. These emphasise the importance of taking into account local aspirations and demand when planning the provision of allotments, as many external factors contribute to potential requirements.

12.72 The recommended local accessibility standard and justification for this standard is set out below.

Accessibility

Allotments - Accessibility Standard
10 minute walk time (480m)
Justification
The findings of the telephone survey demonstrate that a higher proportion of residents expect to walk to an allotment than travel by car and this is evident at all levels of the

settlement hierarchy and more so in the smaller settlements and large villages. Added to this, there are perceptions that the quantity of provision is not sufficient. A lack of local facilities is highlighted as one of the key barriers to use of allotments and proximity to the home is identified as a key determinant of use. Use of a standard requiring allotments to be within walking distance of the home is therefore justified.

The average and most common responses for the expected travel distance are similar (12 and 10 minutes respectively) and analysis demonstrates that 75% of users are willing to travel at least 10 minutes.

A standard of 10 minutes walk time therefore takes into account the expectations of residents by promoting the provision of easily accessible, high quality space.

Application of the Accessibility Standard

12.73 The application of this standard is provided in Maps in Appendix B. It indicates that there are significant gaps in access in the following settlements;

By Placemaking Area:

- Dunstable and Houghton Regis – Houghton Regis, Dunstable
- Leighton Buzzard and south –Hockliffe, Stanbridge
- North – Cranfield, Shefford, Blunham, Stondon, Campton, Ridgmont, Wrestlingworth, Aspley Heath, Brogborough, Broom, Campton, Chalton, Dunton, Everton, Northill. Husborne Crawley, Ickwell, Moggerhanger, Old Warden, Ridgmont, Salford, Southill, Tempsford, Upper Gravenhurst, Wrestlingworth

By Settlement Hierarchy:

- Major Service Centres - Houghton Regis
- Minor Service Centres - Cranfield, Shefford
- Large Villages - Blunham, Stondon, Clifton, Fairfield, Hockliffe, Langford,
- Small Villages – Aspley Heath, Brogborough, Broom, Campton, Chalton, Dunton, Everton, Northill. Husborne Crawley, Ickwell, Moggerhanger, Old Warden, Ridgmont, Salford, Southill, Stanbridge, Tempsford, Upper Gravenhurst, Wrestlingworth

12.74 While the above represent the significant gaps, it is clear that there are gaps in access to allotments in parts of all of the major and Minor Service Centres.

Quantity

Setting Quantity Standards

12.75 In light of the demand led nature of allotments, application of distance thresholds to identify potential areas where new allotments are required should be treated as a starting point only. Detailed research and monitoring of local demand should be undertaken prior to the development of new allotments. As outlined earlier, consideration of existing waiting lists is a particularly useful indicator of latent demand as is approaches for new allotments from local residents.

12.76 Consultation and analysis of waiting lists and key strategic documents outline that there are clear concerns with regards the amount of allotments. Coupled with the application of the accessibility standards, which highlights areas where residents are outside of a catchment to allotments, it is clear that additional facilities are required if current and future demand is to be met.

12.77 Analysis of existing provision indicated that there is expressed demand (whether it is met or unmet) in all Major Service Centres, Minor Service Centres and large villages and as a minimum, all residents in these settlements should be afforded access to allotments.

12.78 Demand is more ad hoc in smaller settlements and is perhaps dependent upon the character of settlements and the availability of gardens in residential dwellings.

12.79 Table 12.10 summarises baseline demand in Central Bedfordshire. It assumes that known unmet demand in each settlement is equivalent to 30 plots. This is below the average size of an allotment in Central Bedfordshire and therefore is likely to underestimate rather than over estimate demand.

Table 12.10 – Baseline Unmet Demand for Allotments

Settlement Hierarchy	Current Plots Provided	Waiting Lists (or unmet demand in settlements with existing allotments)	Minimum Requirement	Known Unmet Demand (No provision)	Minimum Total Plots Required	Minimum Hectares (Current)	Minimum Hectares per 1000 Population	Plots per 1000 Population
Major Service Centres	900	166	1066	Houghton Regis – 30 plots	1096	27.4	0.19	7.87
Minor Service Centres	636	45	681	Cranfield, Shefford – 60 plots	741	18.525	0.38	15
Large Villages	1108	56	1164	Blunham, Stondon – 60 plots	1224	30.6	0.76	30.4
Small Villages	532	15	547	Campton, Dunton, Northill, Ridgmont, Wrestlingworth – 150 plots	697	17.43	0.75	29.8
TOTAL	3176	282	3458		3758	93.95	0.37	14.91

12.80 Taking into account existing latent demand (waiting lists and known settlements where demand is expressed) there is therefore a minimum requirement of 3758 allotment plots in Central Bedfordshire. This assumes that all Major and Minor Service Centres and all Large Villages will have at least one allotment and that these facilities will also be provided in Smaller Villages where demand is identified.

Based upon this calculation (and assuming that each plot is 250m²), 93.95 ha of allotment land is required to meet expressed current demand in Central Bedfordshire. This is equivalent to 0.37 hectares per 1000 population or 14.91 plots per 1000 population.

12.81 This level of baseline demand can be compared to national standards. The 1969 Thorpe Report recommended a minimum standard of allotment provision of 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) per 1000 population. Current levels of provision in Central Bedfordshire are therefore above this level.

12.82 The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners considers that the target for provision, based on the findings of a national survey, should be 20 allotment plots per 1000 households (i.e. 20 allotments per 2,000 people or approximately 1 allotment per 200 people. This target allows for some growth in demand as forecast in the House of Commons Select Committee report 'The Future of Allotments' (1998), and equates to a recommended spatial standard of 0.25 hectares per 1000 population. Current levels of demand are also above this standard.

12.83 In addition, it must be noted that the telephone survey revealed significant additional potential demand, particularly in areas where there is more limited provision. The use of a minimum standard of 15 plots per 1000 population (0.37ha), the Central Bedfordshire-wide average is therefore appropriate as a guideline, but it should be recognised that demand is localised and more may be required in some areas. The provision of allotment plots may be central in promoting the use of open space to residents who do not currently do so. Community orchards are becoming increasingly popular within the Central Bedfordshire area and these could be also be an appropriate alternative to allotments in some areas, however this should be determined locally.

The recommended local quantity standard and justification for this standard is set out below.

Allotments - Quantity Standard
0.37ha per 1000 population / 15 plots per 1000 population
Justification
<p>This figure represents the minimum requirement for allotments in Central Bedfordshire. It has been derived through the calculation of the amount of land dedicated to existing allotments, as well as the amount of additional space that is needed to meet known demand.</p> <p>Additional allotments are required in Central Bedfordshire based upon the current waiting lists and areas where additional demand is identified. There are few existing allotment plots that are available that are not being used.</p>

Application of the Quantity Standard

12.84 Application of this standard suggests that population growth (35,200 people by 2022) across Central Bedfordshire will generate demand for an additional 529 plots.

12.85 Settlement shortfalls and deficiencies can be found in Appendix A. It is however suggested that the localised nature of demand for allotments means that this quantitative indication of demand is more appropriate for evaluating the impact of new development, while current waiting lists and expressed demand provides a greater understanding of the distribution

of current issues. For illustrative purposes however, the settlements with the largest deficiencies are set out below. It is clear that these are primarily urban areas (where provision is lower and more people live):

- Leighton Buzzard
- Dunstable
- Houghton Regis
- Sandy
- Biggleswade
- Shefford
- Cranfield
- Arlesey
- Langford
- Clifton
- Stondon
- Northill
- Potton

12.86 By 2022, the following settlements will have the largest shortfalls:

- Leighton Buzzard
- Houghton Regis
- Dunstable
- Biggleswade
- Sandy
- Shefford
- Arlesey
- Cranfield

12.87 All of the above settlements also have existing shortfalls. Population growth will see facilities in Houghton Conquest, Sundon and Stotfold become insufficient (currently achieve target standard).

Quality

Setting Quality Standards

12.88 Local consultations have enabled the identification of issues viewed as important to residents, as well as aspirations that they have in relation to the type of spaces that they would like to see provided. Supporting this, site visits have provided an overview of both areas of current concern and aspects of allotments that are being successfully delivered.

12.89 Consultation suggests that the quality of allotments currently is of lower concern than the amount of allotments. It is however important to ensure that the quality of both current and future allotments ensures that they are both fit for purpose and of sufficient quality to retain existing users and attract new users.

12.90 This feedback, alongside national good practice and issues emerging from site visits can be used to identify the key components of each type of open space in relation to quality and to set a quality standard that should be used as a basis for improving existing allotments as well as the creation of new sites.

12.91 The quality standard for allotments is therefore set out below. Further detail can be found in the Design Guidance.

Allotments - Quality Standard	
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice indicate that new and existing allotments should meet with the following criteria;	
Location	<p>Appropriately located for local catchment (within 400m of target residents)</p> <p>Accessible via safe footpaths and roads</p> <p>Clear boundaries that are locally appropriate and promote security</p>
Access	<p>Clearly defined pathways within allotment site (meeting with DDA requirements)</p> <p>Fencing (1.8m) weldmesh or similar where appropriate, with pedestrian and vehicle gates to comply with DDA</p>
Site Size	<p>To ensure economies of scale and to foster community atmosphere, Sites should be at least 0.25ha (10 standard sized plots or 20 half sized plots).</p> <p>Plot size 250 square metres.</p>
Facilities	<p><u>At least</u> one car parking space per 10 plots provided. Parking area to be hard surfaced, with tarmac entrance roadway</p> <p>Space for up to one shed per plot</p> <p>Mains water (to supplement collected rainwater) to all areas of site</p> <p>Toilet and washing facilities (unless public facilities are within 400m)</p> <p>New sites should incorporate the use of sustainable technologies where possible</p> <p>Communal garden to promote social interaction where space permits</p> <p>Clear signage to include site ownership, management and contact details.</p> <p>Seating and lighting at entrance/s</p>

Application of Quality Standard

12.92 The site visits provide a means of identifying poorer quality sites and highlighting those that require improvement to meet minimum standards. To achieve the above criteria (for those criteria included within the site visits undertaken), each site should achieve a minimum score of 2 out of 3 (meaning that it is adequate) and therefore a total score of 66%.

The following allotment sites fall below the target of 66%:

- Common Road (Stotfold)
- Silver End Road (Haynes)

- Sandhill Close (Millbrook)
- Shillington Allotments
- The Grove (Houghton Conquest)
- Billington Allotments
- Clophill Allotments
- Westoning Allotments
- Dunstable West Street Allotments (likely to soon be relocated)
- Front Street Allotments (Slip End)

Summary – Issues Identified

Usage

- Although just 2% of the population of Central Bedfordshire frequently use allotments, the telephone survey reveals that unmet demand for allotments is high. 26% of responding respondents indicated that they would be interested in renting an allotment in future years. The survey reveals that unmet demand is particularly high in Dunstable and Houghton Regis.
- While there are few variations in the views of different sectors of the population, the telephone survey revealed that 56% of residents of none white ethnicity would be interested in renting allotments (a much higher proportion than residents of none white ethnic origin) and access to the site was particularly important for these residents. The proportion of residents who have a disability and would like to use allotments was also higher than the amount of people that do not.
- Few barriers to use were identified but the range of facilities and a lack of local facilities were considered to be the key issues (excluding a lack of time). There is also some evidence of a lack of awareness of allotments.

Quantity, Quality and Accessibility

- Consultation revealed significantly greater concerns with regards the amount of allotments than the quality of those provided. The telephone survey highlighted that more residents felt that there were not enough allotments than were satisfied, while Town and Parish Councils highlight the provision of allotments as one of the key challenges that they are facing. There is high demand for allotments and several are currently seeking to extend existing facilities or to provide new sites in response to expressed demand.
- When taking into account the size of the population in each area, existing allotments are not evenly distributed, with significantly higher levels of provision in smaller settlements and outside the main urban areas (particularly Dunstable and Houghton Regis). There is little pattern in the quality of facilities provided, with examples of poorer and higher quality sites in all areas. The key quality concerns identified (through both consultation and site visits) relate to car parking and maintenance and ten sites achieve scores of below 66%.
- Consultation reveals that residents expect to use allotments in walking distance from their home, and that the location of allotments is a key determinant of use. 75% of residents in Central Bedfordshire would be willing to walk up to 10 minutes (480m). The local nature of allotments, and the fact that they are demand driven mean that local determination of needs and aspirations is essential.

- Latent demand is perhaps the key issue for allotments – there are several settlements where there are waiting lists to use existing sites (Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Flitwick, Sandy (due to facility closing), Arlesey, Pottton, Stotfold, Barton le Clay, Toddington. Henlow, Meppershall, Heath and Reach, Slip End, Upper Caldecote) and areas where demand has been formally identified but there are no existing allotments in the area (Cranfield, Shefford Blunham, Stondon, Campton, Dunton, Northill. Ridgmont, Wrestlingworth). Taking this into account, calculations suggest that demand for allotments is equivalent to a minimum of 0.37ha per 1000 population, or 15 plots per 1000 residents.

Population growth will have significant impact upon the demand for allotments, with potential demand reaching an additional 529 plots, based upon the standard of 15 plots per 1000 residents. Community orchards are becoming increasingly popular within the Central Bedfordshire area and these could be also be an appropriate alternative to allotments in some areas, however this should be determined locally.

Step 5 – Identifying Priorities

Key Issues to Address

12.93 The above analysis therefore indicates that the Recreation and Open Space Strategy needs to address the following issues relating to allotments:

- Allotments are currently well used however some sites are under threat of development and there are concerns about the long term sustainability of key sites
- There are opportunities to increase the usage of existing (and new sites) by attracting new user groups (significant interest in allotments by residents of non-white ethnic origin and those with disabilities)
- Allotments are expected to be local to the home (within 10 minutes walk). There are several small and large settlements without any allotments and all Minor and Major Service Centres have areas where residents are outside of this catchment. Many Parish Councils in areas without allotments have received requests to provide them
- Added to this, analysis of current demand highlights that there are waiting lists at numerous sites and there is a need to provide additional allotment plots to meet immediate needs
- Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for allotments and there are concerns that the stock is already at capacity
- There are limited issues with the quality of allotments currently and on the whole, improvements to the amount of plots are considered to be more important. Some site specific improvements are however required

Recreation and Open Space Strategy Outcomes and Key Priorities

12.94 Building upon the above, the recommendations set out below would help to deliver the following outcomes:

- ensure that the existing stock of allotments is retained
- meet expressed demand in relation to both waiting lists at existing sites and latent demand

- ensure that future demand for allotments is taken into account as the population grows; and
- maintain and improve the quality of allotments to ensure that existing users continue to participate and that new allotment users are attracted

Key Priorities

12.95 It is therefore recommended that key priorities for the delivery of allotments across Central Bedfordshire are as follows:

- ensure that policy protects statutory allotments from development, and supports the retention of all existing sites where demand is identified. Where existing sites are lost to development, replacements should be sought where there is evidence of ongoing demand
- seek to ensure that all residents are within a 10 minute drivetime of allotments
- investigate opportunities for new provision in areas where there are no existing allotment sites or where the amount of residents that can access a site is already maximised. This may include the provision of temporary allotments
- promote the implementation of management practices designed to maximise the number of residents that can be accommodated at each site in a bid to reduce waiting lists. These may include the provision of half plots and / or starter plots and restrictions on the number of plots that each resident can rent
- work with providers to ensure that all allotment sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section; and
- ensure that the impact of population growth on demand for allotments is addressed through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to provide allotments on larger developments and to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of existing provision through CIL and developer contributions. Demand for allotments is equivalent to at least 15 plots per 1000 population / 0.37 ha per 1000 population

Site / Area Specific Implications

Table 12.11 summarises the likely site / area specific implications of the above recommendations.

Table 12.11 – Site Specific Priorities to Address Issues and Recommendations

Protect
All existing sites. Sites in Dunstable and Sandy currently anticipated to be lost and should be replaced
Management Practices to Reduce Waiting Lists
Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Flitwick, Sandy (due to facility closing), Arlesey, Potton, Stotfold, Barton le Clay, Toddington, Henlow, Meppershall, Heath and Reach, Slip End, Upper Caldecote
New provision
<p>Potential options for the delivery of new allotments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of landowners willing to use their land to meet current demand for allotments (several landowners have approached the Council for this reason) • conversion of other types of open space • allocation of allotments within school sites which can function as community allotments as well as educational tools for pupils, or the provision of community growing gardens within public parks and open spaces • alternative means of providing allotments, such as the use of private gardens (through a community scheme that matches garden owners with potential allotment plot holders) <p>Priority areas are: Houghton Regis. Cranfield, Shefford. Blunham, Stondon, Campton, Dunton, Northill, Ridgmont, Wrestlingworth</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already at capacity and where demand is sufficient to warrant new allotments.</p>
Quality Enhancements
<p>All sites in line with target quality criteria</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to use existing facilities. This may also include the provision of additional land/plots.</p>

13. Cemeteries and Churchyards

Introduction

13.1 This section sets out the assessment relating to cemeteries and churchyards in Central Bedfordshire. It is structured as follows:

- Context and Definition
- Usage Profile
- Existing Provision – Quality, Quantity and Accessibility - and Aspirations
- Summary – Issues to Address
- Implications and recommendations

Context and Definition

13.2 This typology encompasses both churchyards contained within the walled boundary of a church and cemeteries outside the confines of a church. Cemeteries include private burial grounds, local authority burial grounds and closed churchyards. Although the primary purpose of this type of open space is burial of the dead, rest and relaxation and quiet contemplation, these sites frequently have considerable value for the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

13.3 Some churchyards contain areas of unimproved grasslands and various other habitats. They can also provide a sanctuary for wildlife in urban areas and often offer historic value in the more rural landscapes. Many churchyards and cemeteries in Central Bedfordshire are managed in a way that enhances their biodiversity and this is something that the local diocese positively encourages where it does not conflict with the formal use of the site. Totternhoe St Giles Churchyard is a particular example of this – the church is part of 'living churchyard project' run by the Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust whereby part of the churchyard is set aside for the conservation of wildlife. It is also possible to introduce significant biodiversity benefits through the sensitive management and maintenance of plots that are waiting to be used.

13.4 Table 13.1 summarises the categories of cemeteries and churchyards used by The Cemetery Research Group (Centre for Housing Policy, University of York).

Table 13.1- Cemeteries and Churchyards Definition (extracted directly from 'Mortality'. Cemetery Research Group, 2000)

	Physical characteristics	Ownership and purpose	Sacredness	Identity of the deceased
Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • location close to/outside to settlement • larger size • gate and boundary • internal demarcation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • varied ownership but principally secular • purpose varied over time • burial of an entire community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presence of the recently bereaved • local pilgrimage over generations • permanence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting and celebrating some individual identities; • corpse integrity key
Churchyard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • location close 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • religious ritual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • congregation more

	Physical characteristics	Ownership and purpose	Sacredness	Identity of the deceased
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to/within settlement smaller size gate limited internal demarcation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> spiritual benefits accrued from usage burial of an exclusive community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> local pilgrimage limited pilgrimage in recent time erodes sacredness lacking permanence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> important than individual; corpse integrity not key
Burial ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> location close to settlement size varied physical characteristics differentiated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ownership by distinctive sub-group purpose including ethnic, national, religious expression burial of a defined sub-community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> possible religious ritual limited pilgrimage over time eradicates sacredness lacking permanence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> distinctive group identity celebrated; importance of corpse identity variable

13.5 The 2001 Report on Cemeteries by the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee of the House of Commons highlights the importance of planning effectively for burial requirements. It states:

“Although the desire to bury the dead is now, and has been for some time, a minority choice, we are firmly of the opinion that this preference should be respected. Local authorities will, we suggest, wish to ensure the widest possible access to the option of burial. This means that ways have to be found to ensure that local, accessible burial space is provided. Local authorities should address this need in their Development Plans”.

13.6 The Government issued a consultation paper “Burial Law and Policy in the 21st Century” following a detailed report by a Select Committee, aiming at a widespread review of law and current practice. The conclusions to this consultation indicate a very broad support for reform to existing burial legislation, and the need to strengthen planning legislation in relation to land used for burials.

13.7 Furthermore, the consultation undertaken provided clear evidence of how burial grounds are a significant feature of local communities that should, as far as possible, be provided and run locally.

13.8 Projections relating to demand for burial space further emphasise the importance of planning for burial space in the UK:

- Death rates and the number of deaths nationally have fallen for many years, largely due to increased life expectancy, and are now at their lowest recorded levels. Projections (Office of National Statistics) indicate that numbers of deaths will begin to increase in England from 2016, with an increase of 15 per cent by 2035, rising to 28 per cent above current levels by 2060
- An average of 73% of funerals in the UK are cremations. The Cemetery Research Group indicate that while recently this proportion had demonstrated significant increases, this is now thought to have levelled off (Dr Tony Walker, Evidence to Select Committee).

Steps 1 and 2 – Evaluation of Local Needs and Audit of Existing Provision

Quantity

13.9 There is no statutory duty to create new cemeteries or extensions of existing cemeteries, but burial authorities are under a duty to maintain their existing cemeteries and also to dispose of those who die in the area where other funeral arrangements have not been made.

13.10 Most Town and Parish Councils in Central Bedfordshire provide and maintain burial grounds within their parishes and the majority of settlements still have some capacity within existing burial spaces (although there are also many closed churchyards).

13.11 Table 13.2 summarises the amount of space dedicated to cemeteries and churchyards across Central Bedfordshire by Placemaking area, while table 12.3 outlines the distribution of these facilities by settlement hierarchy. It should be noted that figures do not add up exactly, as some cemeteries and churchyards identified are located outside of the settlement hierarchy but are geographically located within Central Bedfordshire.

13.12 Tables 13.2 and 13.3 both outline the number of active cemeteries that are available and also highlights where there are churchyards that are either closed or now have limited roles in burials. It demonstrates that almost all settlements have an active cemetery.

Table 13.2 – Cemeteries and Churchyards across Central Bedfordshire

Area	Closed Churchyards	Churchyards	Cemeteries not associated with churches	Settlements with Active Cemeteries
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	2 closed	0	2	Dunstable, Houghton Regis
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	5 closed	3 churchyards and 5 cemeteries associated with churches	5	Eaton Bray, Eggington, Heath & Reach, Hockliffe, Leighton Buzzard (2), Slip End, Studham, Tilsworth, Whipsnade
North	20 closed churchyards,	30 cemeteries associated with churches, 31 churchyards	19	Amphill, Arlesey, Aspley Guise, Aspley Heath, Astwick, Barton-le-Clay, Battlesden, Biggleswade, Blunham, Campton & Chicksands, Clifton, Clophill, Cranfield, Dunton, Edworth, Eversholt, Everton, Eyeworth, Flitton & Greenfield, Flitwick, Gravenhurst, Harlington, Haynes, Henlow, Houghton Conquest, Hulcote & Salford, Husborne Crawley, Langford, Lidlington,

				Marston Moretaine, Maulden, Meppershall, Millbrook, Milton Bryan, Moggerhanger, Northill, Old Warden, Potton, Pulloxhill, Ridgmont, Sandy, Shefford, Shillington, Silsoe, Southill, Steppingley, Stondon, Stotfold, Streatley, Sundon, Sutton, Tempsford, Tigrith, Toddington, Upper Caldecote, Westoning, Woburn Wrestlingworth & Cockayne Hatley
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Table 13.3 – Cemeteries and Churchyards across Central Bedfordshire by Settlement Hierarchy

Area	Number of closed Churchyards	Number of churchyard	Number of active cemeteries not associated with churches	Settlements with Active Cemetery
Major Service Centres	8 closed churchyards	2 churchyards	8	Dunstable, Houghton Regis, Leighton Buzzard, Biggleswade, Flitwick, Ampthill, Sandy
Minor Service Centres	3 closed churchyards	4 churchyards and 4 cemeteries associated with churches	4	Arlesey, Barton-le-Clay Cranfield, Marston Moretaine, Toddington, Shefford, Stotfold, Potton
Large Villages	7 closed churchyards and 1 church with no graveyard	7 churchyards, 14 cemeteries associated with churches	7	Eaton Bray, Heath & Reach, Hockliffe, Slip End, Aspley Guise, Harlington, Henlow, Houghton Conquest, Langford, Meppershall Westoning, Clifton, Aspley Guise, Woburn, Blunham, Haynes, Langford, Houghton Conquest, Shillington, Stondon, Upper Caldecote
Small Villages	8 closed churchyards and 3 churchyards with no graveyards	13 cemeteries associated with churches, 11 churchyards	5	Studham, Tilsworth, Dunton, Eversholt, Everton, Flitton & Greenfield, Husborne Crawley, Lidlington, Moggerhanger, Northill Old Warden, Ridgmont Southill, Streatley, Sundon, Tempsford, Gravenhurst, Wrestlingworth

13.13 A much higher proportion of land is designated as cemeteries and churchyards in the North of the area than in the more densely populated urban areas of Dunstable and Houghton Regis and Leighton Linlade. Notably, the majority of

cemeteries that are not associated with a church (and therefore are open to the whole community) are also located in the Major and Minor Service Centres.

The settlements that are not known to have active cemeteries are:

- Major Service Centres – Wixams
- Minor Service Centres – Caddington (but Aley Green Cemetery in Slip End serves both Parishes)
- Large Villages – Clophill, Fairfield, Maulden, Silsoe; and
- Small Villages – Aspley Heath, Brogborough, Broom, Chalton, Greenfield, Ickwell, Kensworth, Millbrook, Salford, Stanbridge, Sutton, Totternhoe and Upper Shelton

Quality

13.14 The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) published a charter for the bereaved, which provides guidance on the management and maintenance of these facilities, as well as other related issues, for example choice of monument.

13.15 Specifically in relation to quality, the charter expects ICCM subscribers to provide:

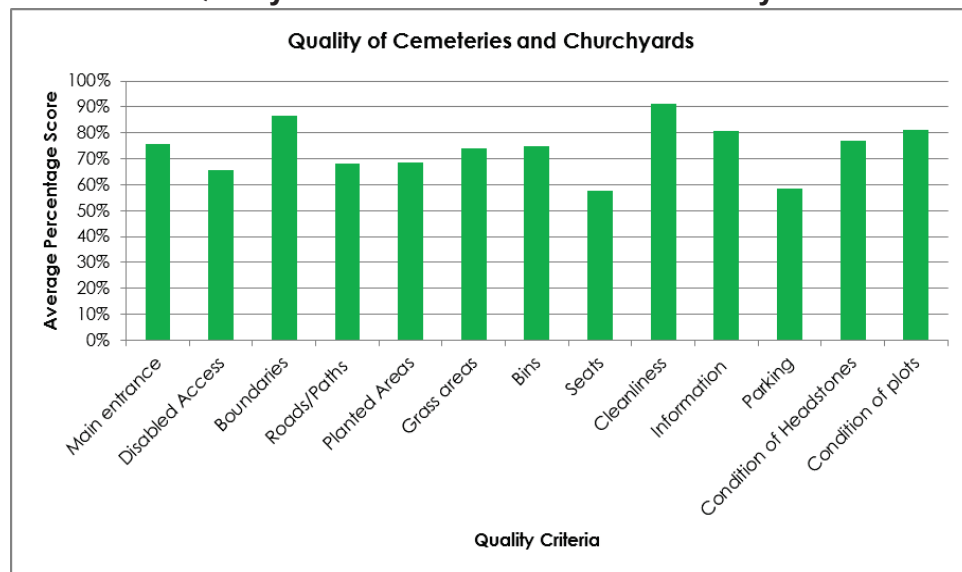
- grass cutting at least seven times a year, every four weeks from April to October (other than in cemeteries where grass is being allowed to grow freely for habitat purposes) with care taken to avoid damage to stones or tributes
- weekly removal of litter and of dead wreaths from recent funerals (though not from subsequent visits, which are the responsibility of visitors)
- accessible water supplies
- clear paths and walking surfaces that are safe for the elderly and disabled people
- minimal damage to existing graves, memorials and tributes when preparing adjacent new graves; and
- a statement of service standards.

13.16 The Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust and St Albans Dioceses promote the introduction of sensitive management practices within cemeteries and churchyards to enhance biodiversity and conservation. The key principles include;

- Management of mowing regimes and removal of cuttings
- Careful selection of wildlife friendly seed mixes
- Promoting of composting (but away from trees)
- Introduction of bird and bat boxes.

13.17 Site visits reveal that the average quality score for cemeteries and churchyards is 70%. The range of scores varies from 39% to 94%, demonstrating that there is a wide spectrum of quality. The issues identified through site visits are summarised in Chart 13.1. It is clear that most of the key principles identified above in relation to the Charter of Cemetery and Crematorium Management are delivered effectively in cemeteries and churchyards in Central Bedfordshire.

Chart 13.1 – Quality Issues at Cemeteries and Churchyards



13.18 Chart 13.1 indicates that seating and parking are the lowest scoring features of cemeteries and churchyards. In contrast, sites are well maintained on the whole, with sites achieving higher scores for cleanliness, condition of headstones and plots and site boundaries. Some improvements to paths would also be of benefit at some sites.

13.19 Further analysis demonstrates that the quality of cemeteries and churchyards is higher in the Major and Minor Service Centres than in the villages, with average scores as follows:

- Major Service Centres – 78%
- Minor Service Centres – 72%
- Large Villages – 69%
- Small Villages – 65%

13.20 In general, the quality of maintenance, boundaries and paths were consistent in all areas. Larger settlements however had better main entrances and improved planting, information and seating. It is also notable that many of the sites with lower scores are closed churchyards (i.e. where burials no longer take place) rather than active sites.

Consultations Responses - Views on Quality and Quantity

13.21 Due the sensitive nature of these sites, the telephone survey did not include consultation on cemeteries and churchyards. Consultation with Town and Parish Councils, as well as a review of issues arising in relation to cemeteries and churchyards of green infrastructure studies and parish plans did reveal that the majority of issues and concerns relating to this type of open space relate to site capacity rather than quality. Site specific quality issues that were identified include:

- Ampthill – priority given to maintaining quality over the long term
- Stratton Way, Biggleswade – improvements to footpath cemetery, street furniture and landscaping
- Arlesey – water table issue (burials currently suspended)
- improvements at Old Clophill Church (GI) are required

- Heath and Reach Cemetery – water table prevents double depth graves
- Dunton – seeking to provide water; and
- Ridgmont – working group established to upgrade quality of Segenhoe Churchyard

Accessibility

13.22 It is less appropriate to consider distance thresholds for cemeteries than for other types of space as most sites are historical sites and associated with a church.

13.23 The importance of these places to the elderly and infirm suggests strongly a need to take account of public transport when planning sites (and vice versa), and to provide sites that are reasonably easily accessed in terms of distance.

13.24 While sites are currently found in the majority of settlements, many of these are approaching capacity (to be outlined later in this section). If these are not replaced locally, then accessibility may therefore become a greater consideration in future years.

Setting and Applying Local Standards

13.25 Drawing upon the contextual information provided in relation to the provision of cemeteries and churchyards in Central Bedfordshire, the remainder of this section outlines the key issues for cemeteries and churchyards that need to be considered in the future planning for these facilities.

Quantity

Setting Standards

13.26 The growing population, as well as the ageing profile of residents is likely to generate an increase in the number of deaths and as a consequence, the number of burials. As set out earlier, Office of National Statistics figures project the number of deaths to increase by 15% by 2035 and this will have a knock on impact on the requirement for burial space.

13.27 The need for graves for all religious faiths can be projected from population estimates, coupled with details of the average proportion of deaths which result in a burial. This can then be used to understand the potential implications of population growth and the likely future requirements for cemeteries.

13.28 The key phases of the calculations to understand likely burial requirements are set out below:

- Across Central Bedfordshire in 2010 there were 1900 deaths (Source: Office of National Statistics)
- This equates to (based upon population of 255,220) a rate of 7.4 deaths per 1000 population
- 27% of deaths result in burial, compared to 73% cremations, based on England & Wales average (Mortality Cemetery Research Group, Housing Policy Department, University of York)
- Circa 513 burial plots were therefore required across Central Bedfordshire in 2010. This equates to 2.01 burial plots per 1000 population per annum

13.29 As the population grows, demand for burial plots will therefore increase. The ageing population means that the death rate is likely to increase and as set out earlier, National Office of Statistics estimates suggest that death rates may increase by up to 15% by 2035. Based upon the above calculations for Central Bedfordshire a 15% increase in death rate would result in 8.56 deaths per 1000 population (589 burial plots required per annum) and therefore a requirement for 2.3 burial plots per annum. **The slow increase in death rates is likely to mean that requirements fall between 2.01 and 2.3 burial plots per 1000 population over the plan period.**

Application of Standard

13.30 While the quantity standard should only be used to determine the impact of new development on the requirement for burials, it is possible to combine this information with analysis of current capacity in order to determine areas where new provision may be required.

13.31 Every individual cemetery has a finite capacity and therefore there is steady need for burial space. Nationally, many areas already face a shortage of burial grounds and in Central Bedfordshire, despite large numbers of burial grounds and high levels of provision in settlements of all sizes, many sites are at or near capacity and requirements for additional cemeteries have been identified. It is clear that for most Town and Parish Councils, there is an aspiration to provide local burial space to ensure that where a burial is desired, it can take place local to the home.

13.32 The remaining capacity of cemeteries (where known) over the plan period can be summarised by settlement hierarchy as follows:

Major Service Centres

- Ampthill – 796 plots available at new site provided by Town Council. Previous site at St Andrews now closed
- Biggleswade – new Stratton Way Cemetery replaces previous cemetery which is now closed
- Dunstable cemetery – recent extension has been provided – sufficient capacity
- Flitwick - only 2 years capacity remains
- Houghton Regis – only 8 / 9 years capacity remaining
- Leighton – Vandyke Cemetery has 173 spaces. New area for 500 burials to be provided shortly. Old Linslade – 188 spaces
- Sandy – site at Potton Road nearing capacity – extension to be provided on allotments during 2014 – allotment site will close at the end of 2013 to facilitate this. The other site in Sandy is already full.

Minor Service Centres

- Arlesey – one third capacity remaining
- Barton le Clay – capacity for 17 – 18 years
- Cranfield – cemetery requires extension but request to purchase land refused (Parish)GI plan highlights aspirations for green also
- Marston Moretaine – less than 10 plots remain. New site under construction currently
- Sandy Road, Potton – spaces available
- Shefford – Campton Road has 2 years remaining (50 plots). Land has been retained for extension (in conjunction with Campton Parish Council)

- Stotfold – 500 plots and 500 ashes only burials
- Toddington – capacity of cemetery unknown

Large Villages

- Aspley Guise – cemetery extended recently and capacity now sufficient
- Blunham – capacity unknown
- Clifton – recently provided cemetery in churchyard has capacity
- Eaton Bray Bower Lane – 78 spaces available and 140 for ashes
- Harlington – 495 green burial plots, 464 burials, 300 ashes plots
- St Marys Church, Haynes – only 20 plots remaining
- Heath and Reach Cemetery – capacity for 15 years
- Henlow Cemetery – capacity unknown
- Houghton Conquest – capacity unknown
- Langford – approaching capacity - cemetery extension required (GI)
- Lower Stondon – Capacity unknown
- Meppershall – approaching capacity
- Shillington – capacity unknown
- Upper Caldecote Cemetery – circa 50% capacity remaining
- Westoning – capacity unclear

Small Villages

- Dunton Cemetery – 100 spaces
- Eversholt Burial Ground- capacity unknown
- Everton – approaching capacity. Proposals for extension under discussion
- Flitton Cemetery – 80 years capacity remaining
- Husborne Crawley – capacity unknown
- Lidlington – capacity at existing site
- Moggerhanger – capacity unknown
- Northill – Cemetery has recently been extended
- Old Warden Burial Ground – capacity unknown
- Ridgmont – Segenhoe – remaining capacity (church now closed)
- Tempsford – old churchyard closed to burials but capacity at new cemetery
- Tilsworth – capacity unknown
- Upper Gravenhurst – existing burial space has significant capacity
- Wrestlingworth Burial – capacity unknown

13.33 It is clear therefore that several sites are reaching capacity and that a strategy for the provision of future burial space will need to be drawn up.

Quality

Setting Standards

13.34 The quality of cemeteries and churchyards is particularly important due to the role that they are fulfilling and the value of these spaces.

13.35 Drawing upon the best practice guidance set out earlier as well as the findings of site visits, the quality standard for cemeteries and churchyards is set out below.

Cemeteries and Churchyards - Quality Standard	
Location	Appropriately located for local catchment Accessible via safe footpaths and roads as well as public transport Clear boundaries that are locally appropriate and promote security
Access	Clear entrance Clearly defined pathways within site (meeting with DDA requirements) Gates should comply with DDA
Maintenance	Regular cut (at least 7 times per year) Removal of grass cuttings from site Management of gravestones and headstones Sensitive management in line with Wildlife Trust guidelines to promote biodiversity and conservation
Facilities	Sufficient car parking Water Supply Clear signage to include site ownership, management and contact details Regular and appropriate seating

Summary – Issues Identified

Context

- Cemeteries and churchyards offer important conservation and biodiversity values as well as meeting a burial function. The Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust and St Albans Dioceses promote the introduction of sensitive management practices within cemeteries and churchyards to enhance biodiversity and conservation. St Giles Churchyard, Totterhoe, part of which has been designated as a living churchyard is a particular example of this. The rear of Langford churchyard has also been designated as an area of importance for conservation

Quantity, Quantity and Accessibility

- Cemeteries and churchyards are spread across Central Bedfordshire in settlements of all sizes and for the most part, burials take place locally. Almost all settlements within the hierarchy have at least one burial site and many also have a closed churchyard. Several new cemeteries and churchyards have recently been provided to accommodate ongoing demand.
- Death rates and the number of deaths nationally have fallen for many years, largely due to increased life expectancy, and are now at their lowest recorded levels. Projections from the Office of National Statistics however indicate that numbers of deaths will begin to increase in England from 2016, with an increase of 15 per cent by 2035, rising to 28 per cent above current levels by 2060. Demand for burial space is therefore likely to increase.
- Across Central Bedfordshire in 2010 there were 1900 deaths (Source: Office of National Statistics) which equates to (based upon population of 255,220) a rate of 7.4 deaths per 1000 population. As 23% of deaths result in burial, compared to 77% cremations (Mortality Cemetery Research Group, Housing Policy Department, University of York), circa 513 burial plots were therefore required across Central Bedfordshire in 2010. This equates to 2 burial plots per 1000 population per annum. Anticipated increases to the death rate may see this rise to 2.3 burial plots by 2035 and these figures can be used to project future burial

requirements

- While there is currently a good distribution of burial space, there are a few settlements with no site, several sites are already approaching capacity and many more providers indicate that there will be no remaining capacity within the plan period. Forward planning of burial space is therefore essential. Settlements where there are projected shortfalls of burial capacity over the plan period are: Flitwick (only 2 years capacity remains), Houghton Regis (only 8 / 9 years capacity remaining), Cranfield (cemetery requires extension but request to purchase land refused), Haynes (only 20 plots remaining) Heath and Reach (capacity for 15 years), Langford (approaching capacity and identified need for cemetery extension), Meppershall (approaching capacity).
- Four settlements have more immediate burial space requirements and are currently progressing new sites and / or extensions of existing sites. These include Shefford (Campton Road has 2 years remaining). Land has been retained for extension in conjunction with Campton Parish), Sandy (Potton Road nearing capacity – extension to be provided on allotments during 2014 – allotment site will close at the end of 2013 to facilitate this. The other site in Sandy is already full), Marston Moretaine (less than 10 plots remain, new site currently under construction), Everton (approaching capacity. Proposals for extension under discussion).
- The capacity of cemeteries appears to be by far the greatest challenge relating to this type of open space, however, site visits revealed a wide spectrum of quality of facilities, with some sites in need of improvement. The quality of facilities in larger settlements (Major and Minor Service Centres) was evidently higher than in smaller villages and the quality of active sites is also generally better than closed churchyards. Areas with low scores include footpaths and seating. Sites are in general well maintained and provide an essential and valuable resource to the local community.

Step 5 – Identifying Priorities

Key Issues to Address

13.36 The above analysis therefore indicates that the Recreation and Open Space Strategy needs to address the following issues relating to cemeteries:

- current projections indicate that death rates are likely to increase by 2035 and there will be higher requirements for burial space. The projected population growth will further see the number of burials per annum increase
- there is a strong emphasis on the provision of local burial space in Central Bedfordshire and as a consequence, almost all settlements have cemeteries and / or churchyards
- several existing sites are approaching capacity and new space will be required to accommodate ongoing and increasing demand; and

- the quality of facilities is important and while most sites are well maintained, there is a requirement to improve some sites and to retain appropriate maintenance regimes in other areas

Recreation and Open Space Strategy Outcomes and Key Priorities

13.37 Building upon the above, the recommendations set out below would help to deliver the following outcomes:

- address capacity issues across Central Bedfordshire
- ensure that future demand for burial space is considered as the population grows and associated death rates increase
- ensure that the impact of population growth on demand for burial space is addressed through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to provide cemeteries on larger developments and to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of existing provision through CIL and developer contributions; and
- focus upon ongoing maintenance of existing sites and improvement of some sites to ensure that minimum standards are met

Key Priorities

13.38 It is therefore recommended that key priorities for the delivery of cemeteries and churchyards across Central Bedfordshire are as follows:

- promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy
- address capacity issues at existing burial sites through the provision of extensions and / or new spaces where these are identified as being required and the allocation of appropriate land to facilitate this. It is anticipated that between 2 and 2.3 burial spaces will be required per annum per 1000 population
- ensure that the impact of population growth on demand for cemeteries is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions
- ongoing maintenance of existing sites and improvement of some sites to ensure that minimum standards are met; and
- maximise access routes to large cemeteries that serve residents in more than one settlement. This should include public transport and cycle routes as well as access by car

Site / Area Specific Implications

Table 13.4 summarises the likely site / area specific implications of the above recommendations.

Table 13.4 – Site Specific Priorities to Address Issues and Recommendations

Protect
All existing sites
Capacity Issues
Immediate Requirements:
Shefford (Campton Road has 2 years remaining). Land has been retained for extension in conjunction with Campton Parish),
Sandy (Potton Road nearing capacity – extension to be provided on allotments during 2014 – allotment site will close at the end of 2013 to facilitate this. The other site in Sandy is already full),
Marston Moretaine (less than 10 plots remain. New site under construction currently),
Everton – approaching capacity. Proposals for extension under discussion.
Projected Shortfalls:
Flitwick (only 2 years capacity remains), Houghton Regis (only 8 / 9 years capacity remaining), Canfield – cemetery requires extension but request to purchase land refused), Haynes (only 20 plots remaining) Heath and Reach (capacity for 15 years), Langford – approaching capacity and identified need for cemetery extension, Meppershall – approaching capacity.
Quality Enhancements
All sites in line with target quality criteria

Leisure Strategy

Chapter 2: Recreation & Open Space Strategy

Technical Guidance

Appendices

Final draft for Exec 18 March 2014

Appendices

Appendix A. Parish Schedules (example)

Appendix B. Accessibility Maps (to be developed post approval)

Appendix C. Telephone Survey Report (separate report)

Appendix D. Strategic Context and Green Infrastructure Priorities

Appendix E. Key Partners

Appendix F. Minerals and Waste sites

Appendix G. Adoption Procedure

Appendix A. Parish Schedule (Settlement Summaries)

Settlement Name	
Settlement Hierarchy	Major Service Centres
Placemaking Area	North
2013 Population	7250
2022 Population	8360

Settlement Description

Amphill is an attractive Georgian market town, with a close-knit historic core and extensive parkland designated within the Conservation Area. In the past 20 years Amphill has grown steadily through redevelopment within it's built up area and through controlled expansion. Amphill is bypassed to the south and west by the A507 which provides a direct link to the M1 motorway, whilst the B530 links the town to Bedford some 8 miles to the north.

Open Spaces within Town

Strategic open spaces that serve residents in this area

- Amphill Park dominates the area and provides sport and play facilities, but also includes woodlands and areas of wildlife and historical importance. This site is considered to be at / over capacity in terms of visitor impact
- Coopers Hill – wildlife site that is fully open to the public
- Kings Wood – large accessible woodland outside of Parish boundary

Table 1 – Adequacy of Provision (balance between quantity / quality and accessibility)

Type of Open Space	Current Provision	Standard	Current Surplus / Shortfall	Future Surplus / Shortfall	Accessibility	Quality Issues	Other Issues
Country Parks							Green Infrastructure Assessment highlights potential for country park extension. Also recommends installation of footpath / cycleway to improve access to Millenium Country Park
Urban Parks							Park cared for by development manager. Council strategy highlights a need to improve disabled access
Large Recreation Areas	Formal						
	Informal						Green Infrastructure Plan highlights importance of protection of woodland and suggests extension of Coopers Hill.

Small Amenity Spaces									Green Infrastructure Plan suggests the creation of a new public open space around the ruins of Houghton House.
Play Areas for Children									Longer term, potential requirement to improve / replace play equipment in Ampt Hill Park
Facilities for Young People									Town Council identify the need for a skatepark
Allotments								Both sites (Everitts Field (79 plots) and Grange Farm (57 plots)) have waiting lists	
Cemeteries								1 site, 796 burial plots to include ashes plots. No requirement for additional facilities. Town Council corporate priority is the long term maintenance of the site.	

Table 2 - Key Issues and Priorities

Type of Open Space		Key Issues	Priorities
Country Parks			
Urban Parks			
Large Recreation Areas	Formal		
	Informal		
Small Amenity Spaces			
Play Areas for Children			
Facilities for Young People			
Allotments			
Cemeteries and churchyards		No additional burial requirement	Maintenance of existing facility
Connectivity		<p>Green Infrastructure Plan highlights importance of connectivity with key priorities including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to Millenium Country Park • Cycleway and footpath links between Flitwick and Ampthill • Links between Flitton and Ampthill • Links between Allotments and Maulden 	

Appendix D. Strategic Context and Green Infrastructure Priorities

Key Priorities in Key Strategic Documents

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure plans identify priority areas for protecting and improving existing green infrastructure and creating new spaces in order to develop a network of multi-functional greenspaces.

GI plans have been developed at a variety of scales across Central Bedfordshire, notably:

- a strategic level plan covering the whole county of Bedfordshire
- district level plans, for Mid Bedfordshire and for Luton and Southern Bedfordshire
- community level plans, developed by many individual towns and parishes across Central Bedfordshire

The district level plans consider green infrastructure within the following components;

- Accessible Greenspace
- Access Routes and connectivity
- Biodiversity
- Historic Environment
- Landscape.

Priorities are broken down into several areas and are briefly summarised below:

Forest of Marston Vale

- Creating the Forest of Marston Vale. This is the primary, overarching green infrastructure initiative for this part of the District, seeking to deliver the agreed vision of 30% woodland cover across this landscape by 2031
- Bedford & Milton Keynes (B&MK) Waterway. This is a major green infrastructure project that seeks to complete a missing link in the national waterway network between the Great Ouse at Bedford and the Grand Union Canal at Milton Keynes
- Clay Ridge Woodland Linkage Corridor. A landscape-scale woodland linkage project to reverse the isolation of a set of key remaining ancient woodlands
- Millennium Country Park – New wetlands habitats are being provided with improved management of herb rich grassland. Enhanced visitor facilities and access improvements
- Wixams – Multi-functional woodlands and greenspace buffering the new 4,500 home development

- Lidlington Ridge Woodlands – community woodland development and expansion along the Lidlington Ridge.

Ivel Valley

- Blue Lagoon - detailed feasibility study has been undertaken for use as a Country
- River Hiz Corridor – restoration plans with some potential recreation benefits
- Stotfold Green Wheel. A range of GI opportunities linked to existing features around Stotfold.
- Broom Quarry - restoration plans will provide benefits for biodiversity, recreation and access. Historic environment benefits can also be delivered.
- Sandy Green Wheel - proposals to create a network of linked green spaces around the Sandy area
- Biggleswade Green Wheel – proposals to create a network of linked green spaces around the Biggleswade area
- Kingfisher Way A strategic footpath route running north/south along the Valley with
- important links to Greensand Ridge Walk, Navigators Way and Route 51
- Navigators Way – extension from Clifton Road to Stanford Lock.
- Clifton – greenspace and access links to east and west of Clifton to prevent coalescence.
- Shefford – enhancement and extension of multiple urban and urban fringe sites.

Greensand Ridge

- Aspley Woods – Enhanced visitor management
- Aspley Guise – conservation and recreation in association with the proposed urban extension of Milton Keynes.
- Greensand Ridge Scarp – expand and link woods via both new woodland and networks of hedgerows, lowland meadows and sensitively managed arable field margins
- Ampthill Park – Upgrade to facilities including toilets and heritage centre. Restoration of parkland features to areas within the Registered Park to the north of the Park are proposed.
- Coopers Hill – Enhanced visitor management and extensions to the existing heathland habitat
- Maulden Wood – Improved facilities are needed including parking, toilets and refreshment facilities. A working woodland centre to achieve sustainable management of ancient woodland is also proposed.
- North of Clophill –habitat extensions and linkages with improved management

- Rowney Warren – Changes from a conifer plantation towards more heathland and broadleaved woodland are proposed at this popular visitor facility.
- Sandy Heathland Creation A major heathland creation project around the RSPB headquarters at the Lodge with new visitor facilities and off road access links to Sandy and Potton.
- Sandy Lodge –extensions to the RSPB Nature Reserve are underway
- Sandy Heath Quarry – heathland habitat creation as sand quarry is restored with some public access.
- Sandy – Potton Greenway – multi-user route via disused railway line.
- The Greensand Ridge Walk upgrading the route
- A new flagship cycle route is planned along the Greensand Ridge

Flit Valley

- Fancott Wood and Meadows. Newly acquired SSSI with enhanced management and visitor facilities planned.
- Flitwick Green Wheel – to include wetland and woodland, new country park, restoration of grassland at Flitwick Moor
- Clophill Lakes –Aspirations for footpaths, bridleways and interpretation.
- Sandy Smith Nature Reserve –
- Proposals for wet woodland and deciduous woodland to link Upper Alders to Chicksands Wood and acid grassland

Southern Clay Ridge

- Shallow river /stream valleys – conservation of habitats, potential for bridleway
- Harlington to Pulloxhill Ridge –rebuild a network of species and grasslands. Off-road cycleway proposals linking to upper school and station.
- Rolling Arable farmland - East of Biggleswade and into Cambridgeshire – creation of networks of habitats
- Potton Wood – ancient woodland – initiative for management and habitat creation

Chilterns

- Chalk Arc –link the chalk grasslands that encircle the Luton, Dunstable, Houghton Regis conurbation to form a sub-regional recreational facility

Luton and South Bedfordshire Area

- Southern Ouzel Meadows – access across key points and connect new communities to schools and open spaces. Includes proposals for a Leighton Linlade Green Wheel
- Rushmere park – new space and improve access to existing space

- Chalk Living Landscape – improve existing sites to encourage visitors
- Sundon Hills enhancement – wetland and grassland creation
- Totternhoe Heritage Park – enhance linkages and improve access to landscape

Luton's forgotten Rivers – enhance the Upper River Lea Valley corridor for wildlife and people.

Outdoor Access Improvement Plan – Central Bedfordshire Council (2013)

The Outdoor Access plan sets out how Central Bedfordshire Council will manage access to the countryside over the next 10 years are to make Central Bedfordshire a great place to live and work by;

- Providing access to a range of high quality green spaces and the wider countryside through a well maintained Rights of Way network
- Involving local communities in the development and management of the countryside
- Raising public confidence and understanding of countryside access
- Increasing use and enjoyment of the Central Bedfordshire countryside for fresh air, relaxation, recreation, health and exercise.

The strategy emphasises a desire to ensure that sites are;

- Connecting spaces... Public Rights of Way and Linear Access
- Breathing spaces... Sites and Greenspaces
- Local spaces... Community Involvement and Participation
- Healthy spaces... Health and Wellbeing
- Growing spaces... The Countryside and the Growth Agenda

The strategy sets the following policy statements;

- **Policy Statement 1 – Surface Management** ; work with local communities to prioritise paths that require surface vegetation clearance and seek opportunities to surface, manage and promote paths that increase accessibility
- **Policy Statement 2 – Signposts and way-makers** - signpost all required points of access from the main highway, using distance, destination and path identification as necessary.
- **Policy Statement 3 – Bridges and culverts** - seek to ensure that major new structures on the network are appropriate for the location, as accessible as possible and do not limit future access improvements to the adjacent network.
- **Policy Statement 4 – Accessibility of Structures** - ensure that any new structures installed meet the requirements of the Least Restrictive Access policy. In addition, The Council will make the network more accessible by negotiating the removal of redundant structures and replacing stiles with gaps or gates where stock control is still needed.
- **Policy Statement 5 – Network Ease of Use** - The Council will look to increase results by 1% year on year through resolving map anomalies and targeting other failure areas, whilst working within existing constraints.

- **Policy Statement 6 – New Greenspace** - work with communities to explore the feasibility of new greenspaces and to deliver access and green space proposals.
- **Policy Statement 7 – Green Infrastructure** - use Green Infrastructure plans and the GI priority network to enhance existing green spaces. Seek to utilise planning obligation and CIL funding to fund the development and enhancement of existing green spaces.
- **Policy Statement 8 – Managing for the Historic Environment** - The Council will protect, conserve, enhance where appropriate and promote access, interpretation and enjoyment of heritage assets including archaeological and historic landscape sites and features.
- **Policy Statement 9 - Public Art in the Countryside** - consider opportunities for the creation of public art on countryside sites and walking and cycling routes in line with the Central Bedfordshire Public Art Framework.
- **Policy Statement 10** – The Council will continue to support and extend the P3 and 'Friends of' approach, seeking to widen its investment in and the skills of volunteers working in the environmental sector.
- **Policy Statement 11** – Community Involvement - ensure that local and community involvement principles are written into area master plans and site management plan documents.
- **Policy Statement 12 – Community Engagement and development** ensure that development proposals provide or enhance opportunities for community engagement and cohesion through and with outdoor access and the local countryside.
- **Policy Statement 13 – Provision of Local Greenspace** - seek opportunities to increase provision of local greenspaces (at the 2Ha / 300m level of Accessible Natural Greenspace Targets) in areas with identified public health issues that could be improved through better access to greenspaces.
- **Policy Statement 14 – Promotion of Health Benefits** - promote the associated health benefits related to public use of Rights of Way and greenspaces and will seek to develop programs of activity (e.g. Health Walks, Nordic Walking and Practical Volunteering) to encourage greater public use of these facilities.
- **Policy Statement 15 – Leaflets** - ensure that all Countryside, Greenspace and Rights of Way Leaflets and Interpretation will carry health information, linked to the benefits of exercise in the Natural Environment
- **Policy Statement 16 – Public Health** - ensure that opportunities to integrate Countryside Access with public health are taken, seeking to complement approaches to reducing obesity, increase exercise and preserving health and motivations to remain active.
- **Policy Statement 17 – Play** - continue to develop and promote the use of formal and natural play facilities on countryside sites.

The strategy includes a detailed action plan which will be revised annually. These policy statements and the key actions will be taken into account in the preparation of the strategic direction for the leisure strategy.

Appendix E. Key Partners

This strategy and open space assessment focuses not just upon the delivery of open spaces owned and managed by the Council, but also spaces owned and managed by others.

There are several key partners in the delivery of open space and green infrastructure in Central Bedfordshire. All of the key partners have provided details of the facilities that they manage and outlined their current priorities to inform the development of this assessment.

Some of the many partners are:

National Trust – The National Trust is a charity that works to preserve and protect historic places and spaces. They work in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council to manage open spaces in Central Bedfordshire, including Dunstable Downs.

Marston Vale Trust - The Marston Vale Trust (FOMV) is a registered charity responsible for leading the creation of the Forest of Marston Vale, one of 12 Community Forests across England. The Marston Vale Trust is responsible for the management of Millennium Country Park.

Greensand Trust - The Greensand Trust (GST) is an independent environmental charity that works with local communities and landowners to conserve and promote the landscape, wildlife and history of the Greensand Ridge and the wider surrounding area. Key components of the Trusts work include conservation, natural play, education and restoration. Amongst other things, the trust manage Rushmere Country Park and Stanbridge Meadows and are involved in several other projects including Working Woodland (Maulden Wood) as well as volunteer development initiatives.

Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity - Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) is a community development charity which seeks to support local communities to ensure that everyone is involved in a thriving community and that residents have access to employment services, housing and natural environment regardless of where they live. The BRCC supported many local communities of Central Bedfordshire in the preparation of the local green infrastructure plans.

Sustrans – are a national charity that develops strategy and vision for the delivery of achievable cycling, walking and sustainable travel change. They are currently working alongside the sustainable transport team of Central Bedfordshire Council on several projects including cycle route 6 (Houghton Regis and Dunstable) and the Chiltern Cycle Route.

Natural England seeks to protect and improve the natural environment and to promote involvement of local residents in their surroundings. Recognising the proven benefits of access to good quality natural greenspaces, Natural England recommends standards for access to accessible Natural Greenspace (the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)).

Analysis undertaken by Natural England for Bedfordshire indicates that access to natural greenspace across Bedfordshire as a whole against the standards is high with 93.7% of the population within 2km of a site 20ha or more and 31.7% within 300m of a site of 2ha in size. Access in Central Bedfordshire is slightly lower, particularly to more local open space, where only 26.5% have access to a space within the target of 300m.

Groundwork Trust - Groundwork Luton & Bedfordshire delivers bespoke projects that use the environment as a catalyst for building a more sustainable future. Recent work within the Central Bedfordshire area includes Kensworth Quarry, Bluewaters Woodland and Totternhoe vision plan for greenspaces.

Wildlife Trust – seek to protect wildlife and biodiversity across the country and using the network of existing nature reserves, are implementing a plan to reduce fragmentation of habitats through the restoration, recreation and reconnection of areas of wildlife habitat. The trust also seeks inspire people about wildlife and offers many volunteer opportunities working on local projects. The Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust are working extensively in Central Bedfordshire and in particular prioritise the North Chilterns Chalk Living Landscape from a biodiversity conservation perspective. The Greensand Ridge National Character Area has also been identified as a nature improvement area recently. The Wildlife Trust is keen to emphasise the balance between biodiversity and recreation and to ensure that the capacity of sites to accommodate recreation (without detriment to wildlife) is taken into account.

Forestry Commission – is the Government department responsible for the protection and expansion of forests and woodlands in England and Scotland. The commission is involved in several projects in the Central Bedfordshire area, including Potton Wood near Potton, Rowney Warren, Stanford near Shefford and Maulden and Chicksands Woods.

RSPB – the RSPB is nationally recognized organization whose base at the Lodge in Sandy is a Nature Reserve containing a Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). SSSI's are some of the country's very best wildlife sites, they hold some of the rarest and most threatened wildlife and are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. As a SSSI, the RSPB site has managed public access to prevent harm to the SSSI.

Chilterns Conservation Board - The Chilterns Conservation Board is the public body established to conserve and enhance the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The management plan for the area (2008 to 2013) sets a vision that includes several references to the role of the AONB in providing recreational opportunities and meeting recreational need, including;

- well-managed woodlands produce good quality timber and wood fuel as well as providing natural spaces for recreation and a home for wildlife;
- a wide range of people, both local and from further afield, enjoy and value the Chilterns countryside;

- the rich historic environment of the Chilterns is conserved and appreciated by a wide audience; and
- the common land of the Chilterns is conserved and valued by local communities and visitors.

Town and Parish Councils – Town and parish Councils manage and maintain a variety of open spaces across Central Bedfordshire.

The key priorities of all of these partners are taken into account where relevant and are reflected within this strategy document. They have formed a key part of the local needs assessment and where relevant, influence the setting of local standards.

Appendix F. Minerals and Waste sites

Recreation and Open Space Strategy Approach to Minerals and Waste Sites

There are currently in excess of 30 sites in Central Bedfordshire which are either under reclamation or are planned for reclamation following minerals and waste extraction. In order to ensure that this strategy makes appropriate reference to the recreation provision to be provided by these sites, a separate sites audit has been prepared. This identifies the sites, their intended size, location, function and ownership, together with the planned level of public accessibility and the date, where known, from which they will be open to the public and functioning in the intended way.

The audit of planned sites, shown in the table below, provides the basis on which each site will be assessed for its function, accessibility and consequently its contribution to recreational open space provision. Those sites falling within the typologies in this strategy will be categorised under the most appropriate open space typology, and will be factored into the accessibility, quantity and quality calculations in this strategy.

Where sites fall outside of the typologies in this strategy, for example sites providing only pathway access, these will be referred to in other council strategies/documents e.g. rights of way; where appropriate.

At present there are no sites which provide the level of recreational access/use classed as publicly accessible open space i.e. sites with full unrestricted access to the whole site, which enables a range of recreational activities to be undertaken. There are a small number of sites providing perimeter footpaths to which the public has access, these are not considered to be publicly accessible open space in terms of this strategy and are therefore not included in the calculations undertaken to date.

Public Access Provision at Minerals and Waste Sites in Central Bedfordshire

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
Sandy Heath (JD)	Sand Quarry	Potton Road, Sandy Plan ref. BC/CM/96/13-1	60ha	The creation of a number of valley features incorporating areas of heathland, woodland and rock outcrops. (Restoration Concept drawing S2/65)	Management of the restored land is undertaken by the RSPB. Public access to restored areas is already provided through the creation of a permissive footpath and through guided walks provided by the RSPB. As mineral extraction is completed and restoration progresses, further permissive footpaths and bridleways will be created and eventually dedicated. The site is located close to The Lodge (RSPB headquarters and visitor centre). The RSPB is in the	Approximately, 20ha has been restored and is under the active management of the RSPB. Restoration of remaining permitted area is to be completed by 31 Dec 2018. An application is likely to extend this deadline.

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
Quest Pit (JD)	Clay Pit	Quest Pit, Stewartby Way, Stewartby Plan ref:- BC/CM/2000/4-1	88ha	Restoration to a valley landform with open water, reed bed and marshes, grassland and woodland (Restoration Concept HBk-52 / 06 Rev C)	process of considering ways to increase public access between the Lodge and the restored quarry. No public access proposed.	Extraction ceased in 2008 (when the brickworks closed). The site was not fully extracted, which will impede the delivery of the low level restoration scheme. Restoration has not commenced within the extracted section of the site as permission exists for NIRAH to be developed.

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
Simpsonhill Plantation (JD)	Sand Quarry	Silsoe Sandpit, Bedford Road, Silsoe Plan ref:- BC/CM/1998/17	5ha	Natural regeneration to woodland and acidic grassland. (Restoration concept P2113 D1)	No public access proposed.	Approx 1ha restored. Extraction permitted to continue until 2042. Progress with restoration will be slow as the quarry is only campaign worked for 2-3 weeks a year.
Aspley Wood (JD)	Fullers Earth Quarry	Former Steetley Quarry, Woburn Road, Woburn Sands	47ha	Restoration to predominantly commercial woodland, with enhanced amenity. This includes a variety of broadleaf, coniferous and mixed woodland, and open space bordering the reinstated rights of way network. (Restoration drawing 3574/D01/D12-0463 rev 3)	Reinstated public footpaths and bridleways cross the site. CBC manage Aspley Wood (some 300+ ha) area under an Access Agreement with Bedford Estate. This includes the land around the former quarry. Aspley Wood is one of the leading mountain bike areas in the region. Parking is a problem – CBC has	Restoration to woodland commenced in 1993, progressing northwards, and was completed by 2006. Planting struggled due to impoverished soils and the landowner (Bedford Estate) has recently had a revised planting scheme approved which includes extensive replanting programme to be completed in the 2013/14 planting

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
Broom (JD)	Sand and gravel quarry	Broom Quarry, Gypsy Lane, Broom Plan ref:- BC/CM/2000/45-1 BC/CM/2005/6-1	96ha Main Site: 54ha Extension: 32ha	Main Site: Restoration to agriculture, with lakes designated for recreational uses (fishing and sailing) and nature conservation, and a reinstated/enhanced rights of way network, including a nature trail (see Restoration drawing B92/15a and Section 106 agreement). Extension: Approved	Reinstated/enhanced public footpaths, bridleways and natural trails cross both the main site and extension area. The Section 106 requires the landowner to make the restored lakes within the main site available for sailing and fishing on	Main site: Mineral extraction began in 1997 and the site was worked progressively in ten phases. Extraction completed October 2007. Restoration should be completed by Dec 2014 (delayed by need to retain the plant site whilst extraction taking place
					upgraded a lay-by on Woburn Road but this is still insufficient on busy days. An option being mooted is the possibility of providing car parking, potentially with visitor facilities, at the site of the former quarry building (which has permission to be retained for forestry uses).	season.

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
				restoration to a shallow valley landform with a stream and a series of pools running through a marshy grassland. Woodland planting and public access will be provided around the perimeter (see B92/148b and Section 106 agreement). S106 agreement also requires long term management of the wildlife conservation features in the extension area (20 year aftercare scheme).	reasonable terms to Clubs and Associations, membership of which is available to local inhabitants. Details of the car parking, buildings and structures required for such activities are to be submitted and approved under the terms of the S106.	in extension area). Much of the agreed rights of way network has already been laid out and dedicated. Extension: Mineral extraction began in October 2007, and the site is due to be extracted and restored by Dec 2014. Extraction is now complete and restoration should be completed by the Dec 2014 deadline.
Broom South (JD)	Sand and gravel quarry	Land to the south of Broom, Plan ref:- BC/CM/2006/30-1	113ha	Restoration to agriculture, with two irrigation lagoons and a conservation lake and wildlife area, and a reinstated/enhanced rights of way network (see S165/25l and Section 106	Reinstated/enhanced public footpaths and bridleways will cross the restored site.	The planning permission for Broom South was implemented in April 2013. A footpath along the west bank of the

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
				agreement).		River lvel is to be provided before extraction commences in phase 2 (i.e. late 2015). CBC has until April 2018 to request the operator to provide a footbridge over the River lvel to link the site to Langford. This is subject to CBC confirming that the necessary access arrangements are in place on the eastern bank of the lvel.
Whitsundoles Farm (JD)	Sand and gravel quarry	Whitsundoles Farm, Broughton Road, Salford Plan Ref:- 97/15	36ha	Restoration to woodland, meadows, ponds and marshy grassland (See KB-W001-M, Oct 2013)	Reinstated public bridleway crosses the site.	Planting has been carried out progressively, with the earliest completed 6 years ago. A public footpath, diverted whilst mineral

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
						extraction was taking place, has now been reinstated.
						Restoration to be completed by 27 August 2015.
Cainhoe (GT)	Sand Quarry	Amphthil Road Sheffield	9.2ha	Part of the site will be restored to grass land for grazing while the other half of the site will be restored to Biodiversity under a S106.	There will be no public access or rights of ways.	Active, restoration to be completed by 2039.
Arlesey (GT)	Landfill	Mill Lane Arlesey	9.6ha	Will be a mixture of Woodland and species rich grassland.	Public Rights of way will run around the site but there will be no further access across the site.	Interim restoration is near completion. The site cannot go into full restoration for a least another 50+ years.
Stone Lane (GT)	Inert Landfill	Woburn Road	17ha	Mixture of Grazing land, small water bodies, species rich grassland, woodland and hedges	ROW will run around the site with one footpath	Restoration to be completed 2024

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
		Heath and Reach		and energy crops	across the site	
Double Arches (GT)	Sand Quarry	Shenley Hill road Heath and reach	48ha	DA contains a SSSI and area of Ecological interest The site is large at 48ha, including 14ha of semi-improved grassland, over 8ha of open water and c.13ha of re-seeded grassland. It is intended for the sites after use to be agricultural and nature conservation.	None at the moment. The Site is due its ROMP review next year and RoW provision will be reviewed at this time.	The site has planning consent for quarrying and processing operations until 21st February 2042. Restoration 2043. ROMP Review 2015.
Nine Acres (GT)	Sand Quarry	Mill Road Heath and reach	20ha	The primary after use of Nine Acres will be agricultural grazing. However woodland and species rich grassland will also be planted to increase biodiversity. There will be no direct access onto the site.	Pathway agreement to be signed to create a green corridor across part of the site.	Active restoration is progressive and should be completed by 2018.
New Trees (GT)	Sand Quarry	Shenley Hill Road Heath and Reach	6.0ha	Agricultural land, wood land planting, open water, species rich grassland.	Public access will be allowed going around the site with connections to Leighton Buzzard, Chamberlains Barn and in the direction of Reach	Active until June 2042. Restoration to take place within 12 month after

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
					Lane and Munday's Hill Quarries	
Chamberlains Barn (GT)	Sand Quarry	Heath Road Heath and Reach	19ha	Restoration for this site is currently uncertain.	No public access allowed as part of approved restoration plan.	Restoration scheme likely to require review in near future.
Tottenhoe Stone (GT)	Clunch stone quarry	Former Lime Quarry, Tottenhoe	0.2ha	Although the site is due an IDO review for restoration, it is likely the Wildlife trust will keep the stone quarry as it remains with natural regeneration.	ROW bound the former works but there are no plans for any ROW near the quarry itself.	Active until 2015 and then left for natural regeneration.
Myers Farm (GT)	Sand Quarry	Potton Road Everton		The approved restoration plan includes areas of tree and hedge planting with some grassland. However this is subject to change.	Currently FP 12 will be reinstated across the site. Other rights of way could be included in the new restoration plan and ROMP review. The site is bounded by footpaths and bridleways.	Active, restoration to be completed by 2015.
Sundon (GT)	Landfill	Common Road Sundon	102 acres	Will be an area of Public Amenity (owned by CBC) with a combination of meadows, chalk grassland and wooded areas.	There will be extensive ROW round and through the site once restoration is	Restoration to be completed 2019.

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
				Local Planning Authority is awaiting new restoration plan.	completed.	
Rookery Pit (SM)	Clay Pit	Land off Green Lane, Stewartby (BC/C/M/2000/8)	210ha (partly in BBC) Rookery south pit approx. 100ha	Rookery Pit north – amenity including lakes and nature conservation. Rookery Pit south – low level agricultural restoration with tree planting around edge. (Plan: Restoration Strategy 8.7A)	The scheme provides for a network of paths around the pits and between the pits. These are initially permissive but some will be dedicated at a later stage (Section 106 agreement relating to ROW)	Some paths have been constructed but have not been made accessible to the public (contrary to the s106 agreement) – this is being followed up. The permission extends up to 2042. Rookery south has now been designated both a strategic site for non hazardous waste landfill and for waste recovery purposes. In the longer term this will affect the level of activity in this area –

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
						which is currently quite quiet.
Churchways (SM)	Sand Quarry	Eastern Way, Heath and Reach	39ha	Agriculture and Ecological after use (Plan no.497/PL9 Restoration Plan)	No public access provision within restoration scheme	At first review (1999) about half the site had been restored. The remainder is still in various stages of extraction and restoration. Restoration to be completed by 21 February 2042. Application for review of conditions due May 2015
Checkleywood (SM)	Sand Quarry	Eastern Way, Heath and Reach	34ha	Agriculture and Nature conservation area (plan no.497/PL9 Restoration Plan)	No public access within restoration scheme	Still being extracted and in process of restoration. Restoration to be completed by 21 February 2042. Application for review of conditions due May 2015

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
Mundays Hill (SM)	Sand Quarry	Eastern Way, Heath and Reach	55ha	Mainly Agriculture with a wet land habitat at the western end of the site (plan no. 496/PL4 dated 17.6.1997. Restoration Plan)	No public access within restoration scheme	2015. Restoration to be completed by 21 st February 2042.
Grovebury Road (SM)	Sand Quarry	Grovebury Road, Leighton Buzzard	126.5ha	Agriculture, lake/reedbed, tree planting (plan no. GQ-RP-9 Rev A)	Comprehensive permissive rights of way network and some PROW, including path around lake and cycle track. Connections with existing ROW. Section 106 agreement relating to ROW provision	Grovebury is still an active quarry. The western side has been worked although the land is not completely restored. Extraction is now in eastern extension. An outer path has recently been constructed.

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
Brogborough (DP)	Non-hazardous Landfill	Woburn Road, near Lidlington	192 ha	<p>The approved restoration scheme provides for extensive blocks of woodland and shrub planting, hedgerows, species-rich meadow, wetland and open water habitats.</p> <p>Main Interim Restoration Plan no. 464R239D. Main Final Restoration Plan no. 464244B/ <i>Nb. Both plans currently being revised to reflect a number of changes on the ground.</i></p>	A network of dedicated public rights of way (footpaths and bridleways) will be created to link in with the surrounding network. No areas of open access are included.	<p>Site has been largely restored to an interim stage.</p> <p>Final restoration will not be achieved in the foreseeable future since certain buildings and infrastructure associated for environmental emissions monitoring and control purposes (e.g. gas pipework for the collection of leachate and landfill gas, leachate storage tanks and groundwater test boreholes) will need to be retained so that the operator can fulfil Environment Agency Permitting</p>

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
Kensworth Quarry (DP)	Chalk Quarry	Isle of Wight Lane, Kensworth, Dunstable, LU6 2PP (Plan ref. BCC/92/001)	169ha	Low level restoration scheme involving the creation of 40 ha of exposed chalk grassland on the upper slopes, permanent leys, tussocky grassland, chalk cliffs, woodland and hedgerows. ARUP Restoration concept Figure 6.	Future provision: In accordance with green infrastructure initiatives, public pedestrian access within the will be facilitated by the creation of footpath routes. This is secured by Section 106 Agreement attaching to the current permission dated 16 August 2010. A designated pedestrian route from the Chilterns Gateway Centre will cross the southern edge of the restored quarry land.	obligations. New rights of way expected to be fully open to the public later this year. Some routes across the outer parts of the site are already open however. Restoration is required to be completed by 31 December 2037.

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
					<p>Visitor information panels will be provided as a recreational, educational and scientific resource.</p> <p><u>Existing provision:</u> In accordance with a 1993 Section 106 Agreement, a nature reserve was established several years ago on the worked out western section of the quarry. It is publicly accessible via the existing rights of way network bordering the operational quarry site. The reserve comprises a steep-sided bowl supporting calcareous grassland and trees. In addition, a geological exposure has been preserved.</p>	

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
Fox and Hounds (DP)	Inert Landfill	Adjacent to A505, near Potsgrove / Heath & Reach (Plan ref. BC/CM/2002/14-1)	1.2ha	Open grassland habitat for low level conservation grazing together with pond and coppiced woodland edge. Scheme tailored to complement the adjacent Kings Wood National Nature Reserve. Drawing no. SA/8704/2.	No public access permitted.	The site was fully restored in late 2004. A 10 year ecological management programme is being implemented by the Greensand Trust who act as conservation managers on behalf of the owner. There are 2 years of the ecological programme remaining.
Bryants Lane (DP)	Sand quarry	Woburn Road, Heath & Reach (Plan ref. BC/CM/96/9-1)	22.5 ha	An up to date detailed restoration scheme has yet to be approved. Outline restoration proposals are currently before the Minerals Planning Authority as part of the first periodic review for determination of new operating conditions. This submission states that the site will be restored to a low level with steep terraced sides	No open access is proposed. However, the operator will be required to reinstate Footpath No. 1 to its original course but this will not be possible whilst the quarry is still operational. With respect to the	Extraction must cease not later than 31 December 2041 and final restoration of the site must be completed by the end of 2042.

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
Thriff Quarry (DP)	Inert Landfill	Thriff Road,	5.1 ha	<p>and a fairly level base encompassing grazing pasture, scrub, woodland and wildlife habitats.</p> <p>A community playing field / sports pitch (140 metres x 90 metres), heathland area and species-rich meadow form the three component parts of the approved restoration plan.</p> <p>Main restoration drawing ref. 4092431/THRIFT/LS006 Rev G.</p>	<p>temporary diversion of Footpath No. 1 which runs along the northern edge of the quarry, officers are considering the landowner's offer to make this available on a permanent basis as a supplementary route.</p> <p>Heath & Reach Parish Council has entered into a 50 year peppercorn lease with the landowner such that it will control and manage the use of the sports pitch facility and oversee routine maintenance. In order to formalise arrangements for the neighbouring St Leonards school to use the site on a regular basis, the Parish Council intend to</p>	<p>Having been recently restored, the site is in the early stages of the aftercare period. It is expected that the sports pitch will be actively used from this year.</p>

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
					enter into a simple licence with the school Governors. Access to the sports pitch will be by arrangement through the school grounds. There is no provision for open, unrestricted access at any time.	
Fox Corner (DP)	Sand Quarry	Woburn Road, Heath & Reach (Plan ref. 400/152-1)	c. 2 ha	Detailed proposals for the final restoration of the site are being developed and will be submitted in autumn 2014 as part of an application for the review and determination of new operating conditions.	No public access provision.	2041 end date for extraction and restoration works.
Reach Lane (DP)	Sand Quarry (& inert landfill)	Woburn Road, Heath & Reach (Plan ref. CB/09/06556/MW-	26 ha	Approved scheme provides for a low level restoration landform with typical 1 in 5 batters. A significant proportion of the pit will be	Public access entails a new bridleway route following the western, southern and eastern	The first section of the bridleway (Overend Green Lane to Gig Lane) was created and

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
	in part)	1)		restored as species-rich grassland interspersed with wooded areas and copses to break up the extensive slopes. Grazing pasture delineated by new hedgerow will be established at the top of the eastern and south eastern slopes. A water body will be situated at the base of the pit – this will collect and manage surface water run off from within the site. Indicative drawing no. 4092431/412 Rev B and detailed planting plan ref. 4092431/426 Rev D.	perimeter of the quarry linking Overend Green Lane to Reach Lane on the edge of Heath & Reach village.	opened as a permissive route in 2011. The second section, from Gig Lane to Heath & Reach, is scheduled to be installed in late 2015, initially as a permissive route. Upon final restoration of all phases of the quarry, to which a deadline of 31 December 2016 applies, the whole length of the bridleway must be made available for formal adoption as a public right of way.
Pratts Pit (DP)	Sand Quarry	Billington Road, Leighton Buzzard	65 ha	The overall Pratts Quarry restoration scheme is for housing,	There will be a variety of informal open space in the	Extraction of the site is required to be

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
		(north side of A505) Plan ref. BC/CM2008/41		informal public open space, formal playing fields, amenity lake with aquatic planting and nature conservation areas. The lake and associated swale and drainage infrastructure are designed to serve as a facility for management of surface water runoff from the new residential development to the north. Main drawing ref. 0329.1.2G ('Landscape Restoration with Pylon Retained').	form of grassland, meadow and woodland for low key recreation and more secluded areas for nature conservation. A circular lakeside path will be installed with a link to Billington Road. Paths will be constructed to a standard to allow use by disabled persons. The land will be transferred to the ownership of Central Bedfordshire Council for use as public open space upon completion. The management body or organisation for the land has yet to be identified but is likely to be the Council's Countryside Access	completed by the end of May 2014 and a further period of 30 months is allowed (i.e. until November 2016) for completion of final restoration. It is anticipated that the mineral operator will need to submit an application for a short extension of time (perhaps 6 months) in order to complete extraction.

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
					<p>Service.</p> <p>A Section 106 Agreement contains obligations for the future use of the site, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - management of the informal and formal open space for a minimum period of 25 years from completion of the engineering / restoration works; - dedication of a public right of way from Billington Road and around the perimeter of the lake; and - provision of financing by commuted sum to 	

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
Ledburn Road (DP)	Disused quarry	Ledburn Road, Leighton Buzzard (Plan ref. CB/11/03849/MW-1)	8 ha	<p>Low level restoration of the disused void to create new wildlife habitats comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sloped sides planted with trees; - a lake at each end of the site; and - a gently undulating grassland plateau on the central base area of the site with small ephemeral ponds in localised low spots. <p>Final restoration concept drawing no. P1062/2A.</p>	enable the Management Plan to be implemented.	The site is currently in a despoiled state. The Council has resolved to grant planning permission for the remediation of the site by treating and re-spreading the existing deposits of imported clay materials subject to the prior completion of a Section 106 Agreement. As a significant amount of earthworks are involved, the remediation and final restoration of the site will take place over a

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
					<p>northern lake and central grassland area for a period of 25 years from completion of restoration; and implementation of a 25 year Management Plan for the nature conservation and informal public space areas of the site.</p> <p>-</p> <p>The Greensand Trust (GST) will be handed the role of land managers through a renewed lease arrangement to allow it to develop as a wildlife haven. (The GST has held a leasehold interest on a portion of the site since 2004, although the land</p>	<p>period of 3 years</p>

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
Warren Villas (Manor and Ivel Farms southern extension, including mineral plant site) (DP)	Former Sand and gravel quarry	New Road, Sandy SG19 1AW (Plan refs. CB/11/01376/MW-1 & P1/861/59C)	32.4 ha	Restoration to arable use (section alongside A1). Restoration of remainder of site predominantly to nature conservation uses with some recreational elements, incorporating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - floodplain grazing pasture; - open water with marshy grassland margins; - blocks of woodland; - stock ponds (utilised by Manor Farm Fisheries); and - exposed gravelly substrate area with scrape feature left to natural regeneration 	has not really been managed during this time). An existing Section 106 Agreement tied to the mineral working permission contains obligations for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creation and maintenance of a permissive footpath for a minimum period of 25 years and dedication of a further section for use as a footpath which will link with existing Public Footpath no. 19; and - implementation of a Management Plan in relation to the nature 	The whole of the site has been satisfactorily restored except for the former plant site but this does not impact on the delivery of the public access requirements. The footpaths are expected to be laid out and opened to the public later this year once an amendment to the Section 106 has been finalised to take account of, <i>inter alia</i> , changes to the alignment of the permissive path. Similarly, the period of management of the nature conservation land is expected to

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
				(plant site only). Main final restoration drawing no. P1/861/53/10 (Jan 2013) Drawing no. P1/861/61A rev July 2012 (Phase 1a only) Drawing no. P1/861/55a (Plant site only)	conservation land for a minimum period of 25 years. Nb. No informal open space created.	commence during 2014 A Management Plan has already been approved but is currently being revised and updated in parallel with the process of modifying the Section 106 Agreement.
Lodge Farm (including former plant site) (DP)	Former sand and gravel quarry and inert landfill.	Land on the north side of Broughton Road, Salford (Plan refs. BC/CM/2008/42-1; CB/13/00431/MW-	13ha	Native woodland with glades and meadow grassland for agricultural use; disused silt ponds area left to natural regeneration in the interests of biodiversity. ADAS Report dated July 1997,	No public access provision - private use only. No public rights of way cross the site.	Restoration works, including seeding and planting completed in early 2012 (with the exception of a small area of disturbed ground abutting the silt ponds where levelling and cultivation of the

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
		1; 7/1987).		ref. 100951/ANEHT/SOUTHSECTION N Drawing no. ASC.01.38 (dated 03/08/01).		land remains outstanding).
Grovebury Farm (NC)	Sand Quarry restored through the importation of inert waste	Grovebury Road, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 4SQ	6ha	Interim arrangement for the site to be restored via the importation of inert waste followed by clay capping, spread with topsoil and seeded to rough grassland/pasture. It is very likely that the site will be developed for housing, as there is an outline planning permission in place, though the reserve matters are yet to be submitted. In the event that full planning permission	None included in the restoration scheme	The void has been filled and levelled to pre-restoration contours (i.e. minus the topsoil layer). Outline planning permission for housing at the site has been granted.

Site (case officer)	Type of site	Location	Area	Summary of approved restoration scheme (include plan reference)	Public access provision, including facilities	Status (planned/partial complete/complete) <i>If not complete, please provide completion date.</i>
				for residential development is not implemented within 5 years from the date of completion of the landfill operations, the site must be restored to grassland and landscaped within 7 years from the completion of landfill operations.		

Appendix G. Adoption Standards and Commuted Maintenance Sums

The council's Countryside Access Service and Leisure Services sections currently own and manage a range of open spaces and children's play facilities. The council will consider the adoption of certain applicable types of new facilities in accordance with the respective departments' guidance set out below.

When a developer offers a site to the council for adoption, the following general process will be followed:

1. To consider a site for adoption, the council will require full details of the development and the areas/sites the developer proposes for adoption.
2. The developer shall provide a scale plan (1:1250) detailing all the areas and features they propose for adoption. The plan should identify all landscaping elements, including trees, shrub, hedge and grass areas; for play areas developers must provide details of the play equipment, surfacing, fencing etc separately. Each of the elements/facilities which comprise the site must be quantified in square metres.
3. Where the council is willing to accept the adoption of new facilities, a financial contribution will be required to cover the cost of future management and maintenance. The current costs are outlined in the respective sections below. These sums will be reviewed annually and the current version will be available on the council's website.
4. The site information provided by the developer will be checked and the commuted sum figure will be calculated.
5. The council will evaluate the site for adoption and inform the developer if it wishes to adopt the site. The council will inform the developer of any problems with the site or remedial action required in order that the developer can rectify these to the satisfaction of the council, prior to the council adopting the site. Any areas proposed for adoption must be laid out fully in accordance with planning approvals.
6. The developer will be informed of the commuted sum, which will also include the cost of the council's legal fees in respect of the land transfer.
7. Should the developer wish to proceed with adoption then written confirmation of acceptance of the commuted sum and remedial action will be required together with six copies of the site plan identifying in a red outline the areas for adoption. The developer will also provide details of their solicitors or representatives that will deal with the transfer of the land which will be passed to the council's legal department.

Management Company

In certain circumstances a developer may choose to transfer the ownership of a site to a private management entity which will be responsible for its long term maintenance as well as ensuring ongoing public access to the site.

In this instance the developer will be required to provide details of the management entity to the council for approval to ensure the entity is sufficiently well-funded, or will be so, to ensure that the facilities are capable of being managed and maintained to the appropriate standard in perpetuity.

A management plan must be submitted and agreed in writing by the council to ensure that appropriate maintenance and safety inspections regimes are carried out to ensure the site remains safe for public use.

Town or Parish Council

Where a town or parish council is to adopt a site, the developer must consult directly with the town/parish council to agree the adoption and the commuted sum for maintenance. The commuted sum must be paid by the developer to the town/parish council at the time of the land transfer. The town or parish council may utilise the commuted sum calculations below or use its own maintenance contract specification and rates.

Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy

Adoption of Open Spaces - Countryside Access Service

1. Countryside Access Service

This policy relates to the type of newly created open space sites that the Council's Countryside Access Service (CAS) would consider adopting and managing. As an indication of the type of sites which may be applicable for adoption by CAS, Table 1 identifies the type of sites CAS currently own and / or manage.

Table 1.

Countryside Access Service - Existing Responsibilities
<p>Countryside Sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country parks • Urban parks • Woodland • Wildlife sites • (all types except linear routes)
<p>Heritage Sites: (e.g. Swiss Garden at the Shuttleworth Estate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape with heritage value • Buildings and landscape with heritage value
Common Land and Village Greens (statutory responsibility to manage)
CROW Act Open Access Land (statutory responsibility to manage)
Rights of Way (statutory responsibility to manage network)

2. Evaluation of Sites for Adoption

The suitability for adoption and management of new sites by the Countryside Access Service will be considered on a case by case basis. Table 2 below outlines the basic criteria sites must meet in order to be considered for adoption by CAS.

Table 2.

Chapter 2 Appendices

Chapter 2 – Open Space Typologies Suitable for Adoption by CAS

- Country Parks
- Large Recreation Areas (Informal)
- Urban Parks (dependent on nature and location of site)

Criteria for Adoption of New Sites by CAS

- Sites should be minimum of 1ha in size
- Should have a relevance and similarities to the existing portfolio of CAS sites
- Sites that are connected to existing CAS site (if below 1ha or of different typology)

3. Sequential Approach

Table 3 identifies the sequential approach which will be taken in considering sites for adoption by CAS. The decision regarding adoption will be made using this approach and in accordance with the relevant policies of Central Bedfordshire Council and the Countryside Access Service.

Table 3.

Sequential approach for considering site adoption

- i) site offered to CBC (CAS) for adoption with commuted sum negotiated;
- ii) site offered to relevant town or parish council for adoption with commuted sum negotiated by Town or Parish Council;
- iii) site offered to partner organisation – i.e. Marston Vale Trust, The National Trust, The Wildlife Trust, The Greensand Trust;
- iv) developer retains ownership and a management company maintains the

facilities to CBC defined and approved standards.

4. Commuted Sums

Central Bedfordshire Council will only accept the transfer of new open space sites where an appropriate commuted sum is paid for the future maintenance of the open space. The commuted sum will provide for the appropriate management and maintenance of the open space and avoid situations where open spaces are neglected and deteriorate to an extent that their functions are harmed.

For open space sites less than 5ha the commuted sum will be calculated for a maintenance period of 15 years and for sites over 5 ha it will be calculated for a maintenance period of 20 years. The site areas are for general guidance only as the levels of facilities on a site may influence, to a greater or lesser degree, the amount of commuted sum; i.e. a 4 ha site may be provided with a car park, building and other facilities that could require a longer maintenance period.

5. Aftercare Period

Where CAS agrees to the adoption of a new open space, the site will be maintained by the developer to the satisfaction of the Council for a period of 12 months after it is laid out. Upon the expiry of this period, a land transfer shall be completed which transfers the site to the Council and the agreed commuted sum paid to cover its future maintenance.

6. Adoption Requirements

Prior to the land transfer being completed (and following the 12 month Aftercare period) the open space will be inspected by the Countryside Access Service and the Council's Property Services Surveyor to ensure all the planning conditions have been discharged. Any undischarged planning conditions, problems with planting, landscaping, fencing, access, etc which are evident will be referred to the developer for rectification prior to adoption.

7. Sustainable Drainage Systems

Sustainable Drainage Systems can form a valuable part of the open space, however, it should be planned at the outset and a discreet adoption process will be required.

Please refer to the Central Bedfordshire Council SuDS Approval and Adoption Guide, and point X below.

8. Management Plan

A Management Plan should be submitted by the developer for the open space and approved by CAS. The management plan will detail the management (including conservation/ecological) regime (including costings) for the open space site for a 20

year period. The Management Plan will be required irrespective of who will be managing the site and will be a planning condition or S106 requirement.

Table 4 sets out an example of how the commuted sums are calculated, using figures which are valid at the time of writing.

Table 4.

Countryside Access Service

Commuted Sum Calculator for Country Parks, Large Recreation Areas (Informal) and Urban Parks (under review).

	Unit Cost	Number per site* per year		10 year cost	20 year cost
Officer/Ranger Inspections	£40.00	25	£1,000.00	£10,000.00	£20,000.00
visits per year					
Bins and emptying	£190.00	2	£380.00	£3,800.00	£7,600.00
Access Routes (including surfaced paths) per linear m	£30.00	1000	£3,000.00	£30,000.00	£60,000.00
Access Infrastructure					
Signage, waymarking and interpretation	£15.00	100	£150.00	£1,500.00	£3,000.00
Grounds Maintenance					
Grass management	£4.40		£2,900.00	£29,000.00	£58,000.00
Grass management	£0.80	2500	£2,000.00	£20,000.00	£40,000.00
Hard Surface and Perimeter Weed Spraying	£0.40	1000	£400.00	£4,000.00	£8,000.00
Ground cover Maintenance	£3.00	100	£300.00	£3,000.00	£6,000.00

Tree	£0.20	1000	£200.00	£2,000.00	£4,000.00
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Maintenance

x 2 visits per year

Seats/Benches	£50	1	£50.00	£500.00	£1,000.00
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Fencing, Gates & Boundary Treatments	£12	1000	1200	£12,000.00	£24,000.00
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Notice Boards and Cabinets	400	1	40	£400.00	£800.00
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Special Features

X As appropriate and to be costed accordingly.

Totals for Site			£8,720.00	£87,200.00	£174,400.00
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*Size of site is based on sites between 1 and 10 ha. For sites above this size - the costings will be increased accordingly.

Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy

Adoption of Equipped Children's Play Areas and Open Space within the Settlement Envelope

1. Leisure Services Section

This policy relates to the type of newly created children's play space sites that the Council's Leisure Services Section would consider adopting and managing.

2. Evaluation of Sites for Adoption

Consideration of the suitability for adoption and management of new sites by the Leisure Service Section will be considered on a case by case basis. Table 2 below outlines the basic criteria sites must meet in order to be considered for adoption by Leisure Services.

Table 2.

Chapter 2 typologies suitable for adoption by Leisure Services

- Children's Play Spaces
- Facilities for Young People

Criteria for adoption of new sites by Leisure Services

- Sites should be minimum of 100 square meters in size
- Should have equipment relevant to their respective typology i.e. formal children's play equipment, equipment/facilities for young people

3. Sequential Approach

Table 3 identifies the sequential approach which will be taken in considering sites for adoption by Leisure Services. The decision regarding adoption will be made using this approach and in accordance with the relevant policies of Central Bedfordshire Council and the Leisure Services Section.

Table 3.

Sequential Approach for Considering Site Adoption

- i) The housing developer offers the play area to Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) for adoption. If the area meets the Standards for Adoption set out below, CBC will accept adoption of the area. However, CBC reserves the right to refuse adoption at all times.
- ii) If CBC chooses not to adopt the area, the housing developer may offer it to the relevant Town or Parish Council for adoption.
- iii) The housing developer may choose to pass ownership and management of the area to a management company.

4. Adoption Standards

Size and Layout of Land:

All areas offered for adoption must be at least 100 square metres. The land must have been laid out in accordance with the landscaping, play, sporting or amenity scheme approved by Central Bedfordshire Council as part of the proposed development; in addition the following are required:

Grass

The grass must be of a type specified and approved by CBC.

Trees and Shrubs

These should be planted in accordance with the relevant British Standards laid out below:

- (i) Planting and landscaping BS4428 (1989). The quality of plants should comply with BS3936.
- (ii) Planting and landscaping must be carried out as approved by the Council's Tree and Landscape Officer.

Play Equipment and Safety Surfaces

- (i) Equipment - must be in accordance with the approved play area plans as approved in advance by CBC. The type, manufacturer, quantity and layout cannot be altered unless appropriate permission is granted.
- (ii) All new equipment and components must conform to and be installed in accordance with BS EN 1176.
- (iii) Safety surfaces - Continuous wet pour rubber safety surface should be used, installed flush with ground level. The safety surface must conform and be installed in accordance with BS EN 1177 and BS7188. The free height of fall of the safety tiles must be equal to or greater than the free fall height of the equipment that the safety surface is to be provided for when tested in accordance with BS EN 1177 and BS7188

Sustainable Drainage Systems

Please refer to the Central Bedfordshire Council SuDS Approval and Adoption Guide, and Sustainable Drainage Systems – Additional Safety Information below.

5. Adoption Requirements

Prior to adoption by the Council, the open space will be inspected by a Facility Officer and Planning Officer to ensure all the planning conditions have been discharged. In addition, any problems with landscaping, fencing, access etc which are evident will be referred to the developer for amendment prior to adoption.

In respect of play areas, the developer will be required to employ an independent inspector to carry out a post-installation inspection of the play site in accordance with the British Standards for play equipment and safety surfacing BS EN 1176, 1177 & BS7188. In addition, the independent inspection will include an assessment of the facility and its immediate environs against the access requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995. Any faults, barriers to reasonable access, or non-compliance with the British Standards must be rectified before adoption can be considered.

6. Commuted Sums

This Council will only accept a transfer of open space provided a commuted sum is paid for the future maintenance of the open space. This will be for 15 years' maintenance of small POS sites, but for sites within major developments it will be for 20 years' maintenance.

Set out below is an example of how these sums are calculated, using figures which are valid at the time of writing the guidance notes. The table below shows an example of a commuted sum calculation.

Grass Cutting

- 16.5p per square metre
 - 13 cuts per year
 - 15 years
 - e.g. 100 sqm. of grass
- Total cost for 15 years' grass cutting would be £3217.50

Independent Play Area Inspections

- Equipped Play Areas will have an Annual Independent Inspection, at a cost of £46.50 per year.
- £46.50 per site per year
 - 15 years
 - e.g. 1 site
- Total cost for 15 year's annual independent inspections would be £697.50

Council Play Area Inspections

- In addition to the Annual Independent Inspections, the Council will inspect the site once per week:
- £30 per site per inspection
 - 52 inspections per year
 - 15 years
- Total cost for 15 years' Council Play Inspections would be £23,400.00

Play Equipment Repair & Maintenance

- £200 per item, per year
 - 15 years
- = £3,000 for one item
- Total cost of Equipment Repair & Maintenance for one item would be £3,000.00

Litter Bin Emptying

- £ 97.00 per bin per year (weekly empty)
 - 15 years
- Total cost of Bin Emptying for 15 years would be £1455.00 per bin, plus cost of a new bin @ £500.00 each.

Litter Bin Vandalism/Maintenance/Replacement

- 25% of cost of new (Big Ben) Litter Bin purchase per year = £62.50

Total cost of Bin Emptying & Maintenance for 15 years would be £2392.00 per bin, plus cost of a new bin @ £500 each.

Seats / Benches Vandalism/Maintenance/Replacement

Metal: £150 per seat per year

- 15 years

Total cost of Metal Seat maintenance for 15 years would be £2,250.00

Timber: £150 per seat per year, plus 15% of cost of new metal seat (Ranger) purchase @ £62 per year

- 15 years

Total cost of Timber Seat Maintenance for 15 years would be £3,180.00

Litter Picking

- 0.21p per square metre
- 17 visits per year
- 15 years
- e.g. 100 square metre site

Total cost for 15 years' maintenance would be £ 5355.00 *

Shrub Maintenance

- £84 per 100sq.m per cut
- Two cuts per year
- 15 years

- e.g. 100 sqm. of shrubs

Total cost of shrub maintenance for 15 years would be £2520.00

Hedge Maintenance

- 1.35 p per Linear Metre
- for two cuts per year
- 15 years
- e.g. 100 Linear Metres

Total cost of hedge maintenance for 15 years would be £2025.00

Fencing

To Fencing Standard BS1722

Metal fencing will be painted once every 5 years.

- £7 per linear metre per year
- 15 years
- 40 Linear Metres

Total Cost of Metal Fence maintenance per 40 linear metres for 15 years would be £4,200.00

Timber Fencing will be stained once every 3 years, plus cost of replacing whole fence with Bow Top metal fencing e.g. 40 linear metres @ £3,200 at 2013 prices

- £8 per linear metre per year
- 15 years
- 40 Linear Metres

Total Cost of Timber Fence maintenance per 40Lin M. for 15 years would be £4,800, plus £3,200 = £8,000.00

Special Features

The cost of maintenance for any special or unusual features will be evaluated separately by the relevant officer.

Sustainable Drainage Systems – Additional Safety Information

If a SuDs is to be located near a play area, the following must be provided:

- (a) safety and information signs must be installed warning of the depth and irregularity of the water levels;
- (b) life saving equipment should be provided, regularly checked and maintained;
- (c) fencing must be provided to a minimum height of 1.1 metres. It must be Band 3 fencing which has vertical bars, is canted over at the top using pretensioned wire or mesh, and is un-climbable to children under the age of 8 years;
- (d) planting in and around the water's edge should be used to restrict and hinder access to it, i.e. the use of emergent plants at the water's edge causes the water to be less attractive to potential paddlers;
- (e) a perimeter of grass around the water should be left uncut to allow nettles to flourish and discourage access. Additionally, the planting of thorny hedge and shrub material will add to this effect;
- (f) the play area itself should be securely fenced with the entrance/s away from the water. Seats within the site should be placed with their backs to the water and facing the play equipment to give parents/carers a clear view of children playing at all times.

ROSPA recommend that a risk assessment of the water element and the play facility be carried out and that a management plan be prepared and put in place for the owners/operators of the site to ensure safety equipment and measures are maintained and any new advice/recommendations on water/play are implemented.

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Leisure Strategy

Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy

Technical Guidance

Final draft for Exec 18 March 2014

Prepared by Neil Allen Associates in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council

Neil Allen Associates Registered Office:

20 Brook Road, Lymm, Cheshire, WA139AH

A limited company, registered in England and Wales no. 616528

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Part 1:

➤ Playing Pitch Strategy

1. Introduction and Purpose

The Leisure Strategy

- 1.1 Central Bedfordshire Council appointed Neil Allen Associates to produce four of the five elements which comprise the Leisure Strategy. Chapter 4: the Physical Activity Strategy has been produced in-house. The chapter headings are:
- Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy
 - Chapter 2: Recreation & Open Space Strategy
 - Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy
 - Chapter 4: Physical Activity Strategy
 - Overarching Leisure Strategy
- 1.2 In accordance with Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy have each assessed the current provision of identified leisure facilities across Central Bedfordshire in 2012/13, and further evaluated the respective leisure requirements which result from the planned growth in Central Bedfordshire's population. These chapters comprise the Planning policy guidance. Chapter 4, the Physical Activity Strategy addresses the opportunities for physical activity across Central Bedfordshire and will be supported by a programme of activity delivery.
- 1.3 The Leisure Strategy planning guidance will support the securing of new and improved facility provision via the development management process, identify needs and priorities, address inequalities of provision, inform investment priorities of Central Bedfordshire Council, and seek to ensure that residents of Central Bedfordshire have access to a range of recreation and sporting facilities.
- 1.4 The Leisure Strategy will support Central Bedfordshire Council's responsibility for public health by ensuring sustainable, high quality sport and physical activity infrastructure and opportunities are provided to enable residents to live active lives, prevent ill health, improve overall health & wellbeing, and reduce care costs. The strategy also seeks to ensure that the number of adults taking part in sport and physical activity remains above the national average.

Planning Status

- 1.5 Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy have been prepared in accordance with the procedures required for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) but will initially be adopted as Technical Guidance for Development Management purposes.

- 1.6 Chapters 1, 2 and 3 provide facility standards and future facility requirements to be met through the planning process and will form material evidence and policy to inform the Council's emerging Development Strategy. On adoption of the Development Strategy the Council will look to formally adopt the Leisure Strategy Chapters 1, 2 and 3 as a Supplementary Planning Document which will attract more weight in decisions reached on planning applications.
- 1.7 Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy are derived from Policy 22 'Leisure and Open Space Provision' in the pre submission Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire 2013, which identifies general requirements for recreation and leisure provision. The detailed assessment will provide the evidence base and facility requirements to support Policy 22.
- 1.8 Chapter 4: the Physical Activity Strategy will detail Central Bedfordshire Council's strategic approach to the promotion and delivery of physical activity programmes, but does not form part of the Technical Guidance.

Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy

- 1.9 Chapter 3: the Playing Pitch Strategy, sets out both the evidence base and strategic direction for the provision of outdoor sporting facilities in Central Bedfordshire. It has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and guidance set out by Sport England (Towards a Level Playing Field – A Guide to the Production of Playing Pitch Strategies 2002 and partly in accord with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance (2014), which will shortly be released for consultation.

Scope

- 1.10 This document sets out the playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities assessment which considers the adequacy of provision for key pitch sports, specifically football, cricket, rugby and hockey. It also evaluates the availability of facilities for tennis, outdoor bowls, netball and athletics. It summarises the data collected as part of the assessment and identifies the strategic requirements for provision in Central Bedfordshire which result from that assessment.

Purpose and Functions of Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy

- 1.11 The primary purpose and function of Chapter 3 is as Technical Guidance which will expand upon and provided guidance on the application of Policy 22 'Leisure and Open Space Provision' in the pre submission Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire 2013.
- 1.12 It provides the evidence base and policy standards/facility requirements to secure new or improved outdoor playing pitch provision as a result of new housing development. It will apply to both new on-site facilities provided within a new housing development site, and developer contributions secured to provide / improve off-site facilities which are required to mitigate the additional demand placed upon them by development.

- 1.13 In addition, the facility assessment and identification of need in this Chapter can be used by facility providers such as town and parish councils, sports clubs etc. as evidence to assist them in securing external funding to improve/deliver the facilities within their ownership.

Planning Obligations / Community Infrastructure Levy

- 1.14 When the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council the use of planning obligations in agreements entered into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will be reduced, and the council will only be able to pool contributions from five planning agreements.
- 1.15 CIL is a charge on new development based on the size and type of new development, which can be used by the council towards infrastructure priorities. The Leisure Strategy will provide the evidence and priorities to support the securing and use of CIL and should be read in conjunction with the Council's CIL policy.
- 1.16 In response to CIL, the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is currently being reviewed. The SPD sets out the council's approach to seeking obligations to address infrastructure needs. The Leisure Strategy will provide the evidence and priorities to support the SPD and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Planning Obligations Strategy.

The Role of Central Bedfordshire Council

- 1.17 Central Bedfordshire Council's primary role in the provision of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities is via the provision and application of planning policy to secure new or improved provision / contributions from new development in line with the requirements set out in this document.
- 1.18 The facility requirements identified in Chapter 3 are not intended to be provided directly by Central Bedfordshire Council. The majority of existing outdoor sports facilities are not owned or managed by Central Bedfordshire Council, consequently the responsibility for delivery of the identified needs remain with the facility owners.
- 1.19 Central Bedfordshire Council will support clubs and external providers with guidance on strategy requirements, external funding and the planning process where there is an identified need for the improvement / creation of projects within their ownership.
- 1.20 While the Council is unlikely to directly provide the playing pitch facilities detailed in Chapter 3, this document will be the key reference point for decision making relating to both existing and future playing pitch / outdoor sports facility requirements. To that end, the Council will ensure that investment (s106/CIL/external sources) is targeted where it is needed and where it can have maximum benefit in accordance with the requirements of the strategy.

Aims and Objectives

- 1.21 The key aims and objectives of this document are to:

- analyse the location, availability and quality of existing pitches and outdoor sports facilities regardless of ownership
- identify all current and potential users of pitches / sports facilities in Central Bedfordshire and understand their needs and aspiration
- evaluate the profile of the current population and their propensity to participate in sport / physical activity
- consider the impact of population growth and analyse the adequacy of provision to meet current and future needs
- promote the provision of facilities that of high quality, fit for purpose and promote physical activity and participation in sport
- provide evidence to support other facility providers in delivering new or improved facilities
- guide the investment strategies of Central Bedfordshire Council for facilities in its ownership
- provide planning policy which ensures planned growth makes appropriate pitch / sports facility provision to meet future needs
- maximise the contribution of sporting facilities to wider agendas, particularly the health agenda in support of Central Bedfordshire Council's responsibility for public health, sustainable transport and economic priorities

1.22 The overall aim of this assessment is to ensure that residents have access to sufficient, good quality outdoor sports facilities, both now and as the population grows.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 This section summarises the methodology that has been used in the development of the assessment and strategy. The evidence has been developed in line with *'Towards a Level Playing Field: A Manual for the Production of a Playing Pitch Strategy'* (Sport England, 2003) (TaLPF) as well as partly in line with the new methodology (which will supersede TaLPF) set out in Sport England's Playing Pitch Guidance (due for publication in 2014).
- 2.2 Figure 2.1 summarises the key stages of the TaLPF methodology. These stages cover the issues of supply and demand as well as analysis of the adequacy of provision. While stages one to six are largely numerical calculations, designed to evaluate the current supply and demand, it is steps 7 and 8, the evaluation of issues and solutions, which are the essential components of a successful strategy.

Figure 2.1 - The key stages of the Playing Pitch Methodology (TaLPF)



- 2.3 As highlighted, TaLPF is currently being updated and a revised methodology is now in draft form. The revised methodology takes into account the evolving context of sport as well as the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It places a greater emphasis on site specific issues and includes new ways of assessing the quality of facilities and recording the availability of each pitch. Most importantly, the new methodology promotes the involvement of National Governing Bodies and Sport England, ensuring that local priorities are matched with regional issues and priorities. It also seeks to ensure that strategies are representative of the needs of sport. The emerging

requirements of the new methodology have been considered and where data collection allowed, these changes have been incorporated into the preparation of this assessment and strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

- 2.4 The approach undertaken is considered to be a robust methodology by Sport England.
- 2.5 There is no formally adopted approach for an assessment of tennis, outdoor bowls, netball and athletics. The adequacy of provision for these sports has therefore been evaluated through the interpretation of supply and demand as well as detailed consultation.
- 2.6 The remainder of this section briefly summarizes the approach that has been undertaken in the preparation of this assessment and strategy.

Approach

Demand (Steps 1 – 5)

- 2.7 A full audit of teams playing or wishing to play within Central Bedfordshire was conducted. This audit process involved:
- use of data collected by National Governing Bodies (NGBs) on participation;
 - cross referencing of NGB data through analysis of pitch booking records, local league websites and fixture lists and internet research; and
 - surveys to Town and Parish Councils, league secretaries, clubs and providers;
- 2.8 To supplement baseline data, a consultation exercise was carried out to provide full understanding of the issues and challenges currently experienced. This comprised:
- distribution of an online survey to schools;
 - consultations with league secretaries;
 - a survey to Town and Parish Councils (final response 36%). This supplements the consultation with Town and Parish Council which was carried out as part of Phase 2 of the Leisure Strategy (which also included some detail on outdoor sports);
 - face to face consultation with NGBs to discuss key issues and priorities; and
 - discussion with other external stakeholders.
- 2.9 In addition to the above consultations, surveys were distributed to all clubs known to be playing within Central Bedfordshire and follow up telephone consultations were undertaken with clubs that did not respond. A high proportion of teams engaged with the process, specifically;
- Football – 58 / 156 clubs (representing 72% of teams)
 - Cricket – 72%
 - Rugby Union – 100%
 - Hockey -100%
 - Tennis – 44%

- Bowls – 59%

2.10 The above approach to consultation, as well as the responses achieved, is in line with recommendations and targets set in the new methodology.

Supply (Step 6)

2.11 A full audit of the supply of playing fields and sports facilities is an essential component of a sports facility assessment. A detailed audit of the facilities across Central Bedfordshire was compiled by;

- reviewing existing information held by Central Bedfordshire Council and data collated as part of Chapters 1 and 2 of the Leisure Strategy;
- cross matching existing data sources with the Sport England Active Places database tool;
- a detailed survey to all schools and analysing the findings of the sports club and Town and Parish Council survey;
- undertaking non technical site visits (in line with the Sport England Matrix provided in TalPF) to all public playing fields and a sample of school sites; and
- carrying out internet searches and local consultation.

2.12 A full audit of provision is also required as part of the new methodology.

Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs)

2.13 AGPs are increasingly being used to meet demand for pitch sports. To acknowledge this, the adequacy of AGPs has been informed by the use of the Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM) as well as Sport England Active Places. This analysis has been used to inform decision making in relation to the future requirements for AGPs as well as the adequacy of current pitch provision.

2.14 Requirements for AGPs are also informed by a new standard created by the Football Association, which seeks to determine the number of AGPs required for football. This will be explored further in Section 4.

2.15 It should be noted that the new methodology requires the demand for AGPs to also be informed by an assessment of the number of hours that the AGP is available and a comparison with the use of these facilities. This additional requirement of the new methodology was not included in earlier drafts and has therefore not been undertaken as part of this assessment.

Geographical Analysis

2.16 This assessment covers pitch and outdoor sports provision across Central Bedfordshire.

2.17 To fully understand the patterns of supply and demand and in order to take a strategic view of provision, the adequacy of provision has been evaluated at a strategic level across Central Bedfordshire as a whole.

2.18 In addition, to provide a more localised understanding, analysis has also been undertaken by Placemaking area. This is a local term previously used for planning implementation and monitoring purposes, which divides Central Bedfordshire into broad geographical areas. Although these placemaking areas are not set out in policy they can be used to interpret how provision and views vary geographically. Table 2.1 summarises the Placemaking Areas and the wards and parishes that fall within each area.

Table 2.2 – Placemaking Areas

Placemaking Area	Wards	Town/ Parishes
North	Amphill	Amphill, Clophill, Maulden
	Aspley& Woburn	Aspley Guise, Aspley Heath, Battlesden, Eversholt, Husborne Crawley, Milton Bryan, Potsgrove, Woburn
	Barton le Clay	Barton le Clay
	Cranfield and Marston Moretaine	Brogborough, Cranfield, Hulcote& Salford, Lidlington, Marston Moretaine, Millbrook, Ridgmont
	Flitwick	Flitwick, Steppingley
	Toddington	Chalton, Harlington, Sundon, Streatley, Toddington
	Arlesey	Clifton, Henlow, Arlesey, Stondon
	Biggleswade North	Biggleswade
	Biggleswade South	Biggleswade
	Houghton Conquest & Haynes	Haynes. Houghton Conquest
	Northill	Moggerhanger, Northill, Old Warden, Southill
	Potton	Dunton, Edworth, Everton, Eyeworth Potton, Sutton, Tempsford, Wrestlingworth & Cockayne Hatley
	Sandy	Blunham. Sandy
	Shefford	Campton & Chicksands, Meppershall, Shefford
	Silsoe& Shillington	Gravenhurst, Shillington, Silsoe
Stotfold& Langford	Astwick, Langford , Stotfold	
Leighton Buzzard	Caddington	Caddington, Hyde, Kensworth, Slip End, Studham, Whippsnade

Placemaking Area	Wards	Town/ Parishes
and Rural South	Eaton Bray	Billington, Eaton Bray, Totternhoe
	Heath and Reach	Chalgrave, Eggington, Heath and Reach, Hockliffe, Stanbridge, Tilsworth
	Leighton Buzzard North	Leighton Linlade
	Leighton Buzzard South	
	Linslade	
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Dunstable Central	Dunstable
	Dunstable Icknield	
	Dunstable Manshead	
	Dunstable Northfields	
	Dunstable Watling	
	Houghton Hall	Houghton Regis
	Parkside	
	Tithe Farm	

- 2.19 Taking into account the emerging principles of the new playing pitch methodology, site specific and settlement specific issues are also considered.
- 2.20 Section 3 sets out the strategic context for the provision of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities across Central Bedfordshire. It also provides an understanding of the participation profile in sport and physical activity of residents, as well as their propensity to participate in sport and physical activity. Key population trends that may influence demand for pitch provision in future years are also considered.

3. Context, Population and Sports Participation Profile

Introduction

- 3.1 An understanding of the local strategic context is essential if a strategy is to be effectively tailored to achieve local targets and priorities. The demographics of a given area can also impact upon the propensity of a population to participate in different sports.
- 3.2 This section therefore sets out the key policies that impact upon the preparation of this sports facilities assessment and provides an overview of the demographics of Central Bedfordshire and the impact of this upon participation in sports.

Strategic Context

- 3.3 At a national level, there are several key policies which impact upon the preparation of a sports facilities assessment.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, and to promote sustainable growth. The 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' champions a greater emphasis on having a Local Plan in place. Through the plan, local communities will have a say in the sort of development they want and need in their areas. These plans will set out the opportunities for local development and form the basis for planning decisions.
- 3.5 Directly referencing open space and sport, paragraph 73 of the NPPF states;

'Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. 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. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessment should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.'

- 3.6 Paragraph 74 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;
 - 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 needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.
- 3.7 The NPPF references the importance of sport and recreation facilities. Paragraph 70 indicates that to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:
- plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places and sports venues) and other local services to
 - guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
- 3.8 This Playing Pitch Strategy will provide the evidence base and strategic direction to assist in fulfilling these requirements.

National Context

Sport England Playing Field Policy

- 3.9 Sport England has been a statutory consultee on planning applications affecting playing pitches since 1996 and has a long established policy of retention. Sport England also advises that informed decisions on playing pitch matters require all local authorities to have an up to date (within the last three years) assessment of need and a strategy emanating from this.
- 3.10 Sport England policy on the loss of playing fields is set out in 'A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England'. This policy indicates that Sport England would oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would prejudice the use of whole or part of a playing field, unless an assessment has been carried out which confirms that there is an excess in playing field provision in the catchment area and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.
- 3.11 The Government (through legislation in Statutory Instrument 2010 /2184) considers the definition of a playing field to be "the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch". Sport England policy on playing fields indicates that a playing field is defined as such where it has either been used in the last five years for this function, or is allocated as a playing field within Local Authority Plans. This policy relates to all playing fields of 0.2 ha or above.
- 3.12 The policy indicates that Sport England will not object to the loss of playing fields where one or more of the following exception criteria are met:
- An assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport
 - The proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields, and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use

- The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any playing pitch
- Lost playing fields would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development
- The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.

Local Context

3.13 With regard to Central Bedfordshire, the preparation of this Playing Pitch Strategy impacts upon, or is informed by, a number of key documents as set out below in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 - Links with other strategic documents in Central Bedfordshire

Document	Key Priorities and Issues raised	Links with this Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Assessment
Delivering your Priorities: The Council's Plan for Central Bedfordshire 2012 – 2016.	<p>The Council is committed to six key priorities which are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting the countryside and enabling businesses to grow. • Improved educational attainment. • Promote health and well being and protecting the vulnerable. • Better infrastructure • Great universal services • Value for money 	The effective provision, delivery and management of sports facilities can contribute to the achievement of these objectives.
Pre-submission Development Strategy – Central Bedfordshire 2013	<p>The Development Strategy is a new planning policy document that will set the framework for growth across Central Bedfordshire. It will set out how much development (housing, employment, retail etc) the Council needs to plan for and broadly where it should go. It will also set out detailed policies to help determine planning applications.</p> <p>Policies directly linking to sports facilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space Development in the Green Belt • Leisure and Open Space provision • Local Green Space 	This evidence and assessment of need will underpin policies in the development strategy.

Document	Key Priorities and Issues raised	Links with this Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Assessment
Sustainable Community Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Infrastructure <p>The Sustainable Community Strategy is based on a shared long-term vision for Central Bedfordshire that has been developed by Central Bedfordshire Together. The vision is to create a 'Globally connected, delivering sustainable growth to ensure a green, prosperous and ambitious place for the benefit of all'.</p> <p>The key strategic priorities of the plan are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising employment opportunities and delivering housing growth to meet the needs of our communities • Ensuring our local people have the skills to prosper • Keeping our communities safe • Nurturing a sense of pride and belonging • Getting around and caring for a green and clean environment • Promoting health and reducing health inequalities • Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people • Supporting and caring for an ageing population and those who are most vulnerable. 	<p>Effective sports facilities can directly contribute to the achievement of this vision and many of the strategic priorities. In particular, sports facilities are essential in the delivery of priorities relating to health, opportunities for young people. It will also be important to ensure that opportunities are provided for those in older age groups.</p>
Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan	<p>The Local Transport Plan (LTP) forms a long-term framework for investment in transport infrastructure and services across Central Bedfordshire. It is a statutory requirement of the authority to produce and maintain the Plan, which considers the needs of all forms of transport, particularly walking, cycling, buses, rail and car use.</p> <p>The time period for implementing the LTP covers the period between April 2011 and March 2026 to enable a strategic approach to the delivery of transport schemes and help secure lasting changes in travel behavior.</p> <p>The key objectives in relation to walking are as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of people walking • Improve the quality of the pedestrian environment • Improve the safety of pedestrians • Increase awareness of the benefits of walking 	<p>The key priorities of the plan should be taken into account when evaluating travel patterns to sports facilities and when considering proposals for new facilities.</p>

Document	Key Priorities and Issues raised	Links with this Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Assessment
	<p>The focus of the cycling strategy is as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of people cycling • Improve the quality of the cycling environment • Improve the safety and perceived safety of cycling • Increase awareness of the benefits of cycling • Increase access to a bicycle 	

Population and Sports Participation

- 3.14 An evaluation of population trends and overall participation in sport in Central Bedfordshire underpins the more detailed investigation of the adequacy of pitches and sports facilities in later sections. This section draws on the findings from the Sport England Active People Surveys and Sport England Market Segmentation. It summarises some of the key trends identified through analysis in Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy (indoor sports) and provides more specific information related to outdoor sports.
- 3.15 Participation relating to specific sports is considered within the sport specific sections in Part 2 of this document.
- 3.16 Population data was provided by Central Bedfordshire Council, originally in connection with scenario testing undertaken in Sport England’s Facilities Planning Model as part of analysis for Chapter 1. *For the purposes of consistency, this data has also been used in this assessment of outdoor sports. Figures provided take into account natural population growth and planned new future housing development.*
- 3.17 Table 3.2 summarises the population for Central Bedfordshire both currently and in 2022.

Table 3.2 – Population for Central Bedfordshire

Persons		
	2010	2022
0-4	16,130	16,420
5-9	15,210	17,450
10-14	15,500	17,900
15-19	15,340	14,390
20-24	13,510	12,070
25-29	14,690	16,200

Persons		
	2010	2022
30-34	15,280	19,770
35-39	18,490	20,530
40-44	21,270	19,250
45-49	21,300	18,720
50-54	17,780	20,930
55-59	15,470	21,020
60-64	16,160	18,120
65-69	12,100	14,560
70-74	9,710	14,330
75-79	7,500	12,640
80-84	5,240	7,990
85-89	3,140	4,950
90+	1,420	3,320
Total	255,220	290,560

3.18 The main characteristics of the local population in 2010 are as follows (comparisons with wider areas are taken from compatible information available in the Local Sport Profiles supplied by Sport England):

- Central Beds is the largest local authority in the region by population
- There is a slightly higher proportion of males than average, although females are still in the majority
- There are more people than average in the 16-19 and 35-49 age groups, and fewer people in the 25-34 age group
- There is more than the national average of pensioners (though fewer than the region)
- There is a very small proportion of non white residents
- There is a smaller proportion of disabled people
- The main changes that are estimated to occur to 2022 are:
 - the overall population is expected to increase by about 35,000 people, representing a 14% increase over 2010;

- there are projected increases in all age groups in absolute terms but wide variations in percentage increases – large increases in the 10-14, 55 – 64 and 65+, and smaller increases in the 0-4 and the 15-34 (the main sport playing age group);
- the number of people in the ‘active’ age groups (i.e. mainly 5-44, taken from Sport England’s advice as set out in its Playing Pitch Strategy advice but equally applicable here) is estimated to rise by about 8000 people, but this only represents a 6% increase compared with the 14% increase in the overall population. The number of people in the ‘inactive’ age groups increases by 21%. It is estimated that by 2022 the number of people within the ‘active’ population is actually less than those who are ‘inactive’ (47/53% compared with 51/49% in 2010);
- the demographic changes alone suggest that (participation and other changes aside) future sports facility provision needs to increase by 6% by 2022 compared with the present, not the 14% increase estimated for the overall population increase; and
- conversely the increase in the ‘inactive’ population means that there is a need to consider other facilities and activities for the ageing population – there will be an additional 16500 people over 45 and about 15000 between 45 and 74.

3.19 Table 3.3 overleaf outlines the breakdown of the population by age.

Table 3.3 – Central Bedfordshire Population Breakdown

Population breakdown											
	2010				2022				% increase 2010-2022		
	Total	%	Age groups	%	Total	%	Age groups	%			
0-4	16,130	6.3	16,130	6.3	16,420	5.7	16,420	5.7	1.8		
5-9	15,210	6.0			17,450	6.0					
10-14	15,500	6.1	30,710	12.0	17,900	6.2	35,350	12.2	15.1		
15-19	15,340	6.0			14,390	5.0					
20-24	13,510	5.3			12,070	4.2					
25-29	14,690	5.8			16,200	5.6					
30-34	15,280	6.0	58,820	23.0	19,770	6.8	62,430	21.5	6.1		
35-39	18,490	7.2			20,530	7.1					
40-44	21,270	8.3			19,250	6.6					
45-49	21,300	8.3			18,720	6.4					
50-54	17,780	7.0	78,840	30.9	20,930	7.2	79,430	27.3	0.7		
55-59	15,470	6.1			21,020	7.2					

Population breakdown									
	2010				2022				% increase 2010-2022
	Total	%	Age groups	%	Total	%	Age groups	%	
60-64	16,160	6.3	31,630	12.4	18,120	6.2	39,140	13.5	23.7
65-69	12,100	4.7			14,560	5.0			
70-74	9,710	3.8	21,810	8.5	14,330	4.9	28,890	9.9	32.5
75-79	7,500	2.9			12,640	4.4			
80-84	5,240	2.1			7,990	2.7			
85-89	3,140	1.2			4,950	1.7			
90+	1,420	0.6	17,300	6.8	3,320	1.1	28,900	9.9	67.1
Total	255,240	100	255,240	100	290,560		290,560	100	13.8

Participation in Sport

3.20 Data on sports participation in Central Bedfordshire and the wider areas has been taken from the latest Active People Surveys commissioned by Sport England. This is set out in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4 – Participation in Sport in Central Bedfordshire

Indicator	Year	Central Bedfordshire			East of England			England		
		All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female
0 days / 0x30	2005/06	47.3%	41.8%	52.6%	49.0%	45.0%	52.8%	50.0%	45.1%	54.6%
	2009/11	47.6%	41.6%	53.5%	47.9%	42.4%	53.1%	48.2%	42.2%	54.0%
1-3 days	2005/06	9.9%	11.0%	9.0%	9.2%	9.8%	8.7%	8.8%	9.5%	8.1%
	2009/11	9.4%	10.3%	8.5%	9.7%	10.8%	8.8%	9.1%	9.9%	8.4%
4-7 days / 1x30	2005/06	13.1%	14.3%	12.0%	12.5%	13.2%	11.8%	12.0%	12.8%	11.3%
	2009/11	11.9%	12.2%	11.6%	12.7%	13.6%	11.8%	12.4%	13.5%	11.4%
8-11 days / 2x30	2005/06	7.7%	8.6%	6.7%	8.4%	9.1%	7.7%	8.0%	8.7%	7.3%
	2009/11	8.6%	9.0%	8.2%	8.3%	9.1%	7.6%	8.3%	9.3%	7.4%
12-19 days / 3x30	2005/06	9.5%	11.6%	7.5%	9.5%	10.6%	8.4%	9.6%	10.9%	8.4%
	2009/11	11.6%	14.4%	8.8%	10.2%	11.8%	8.8%	10.6%	12.1%	9.2%
12+ days / 3x30 - N18	2005/06	22.0%	24.2%	19.8%	20.8%	22.8%	18.9%	21.3%	24.0%	18.7%
	2009/11	22.5%	26.9%	18.1%	21.4%	24.1%	18.8%	21.9%	25.2%	18.9%
20+ days / 5x30	2005/06	12.5%	12.8%	12.3%	11.4%	12.3%	10.5%	11.7%	13.1%	10.3%
	2009/11	10.9%	12.5%	9.3%	11.1%	12.4%	10.0%	11.3%	13.1%	9.7%

Source: Active People Survey. Year: 2005/06 (APS1), 2009/11 (APS4/5) or 2010/11 (APS5) if LA sample is boosted, Measure: Adult participation

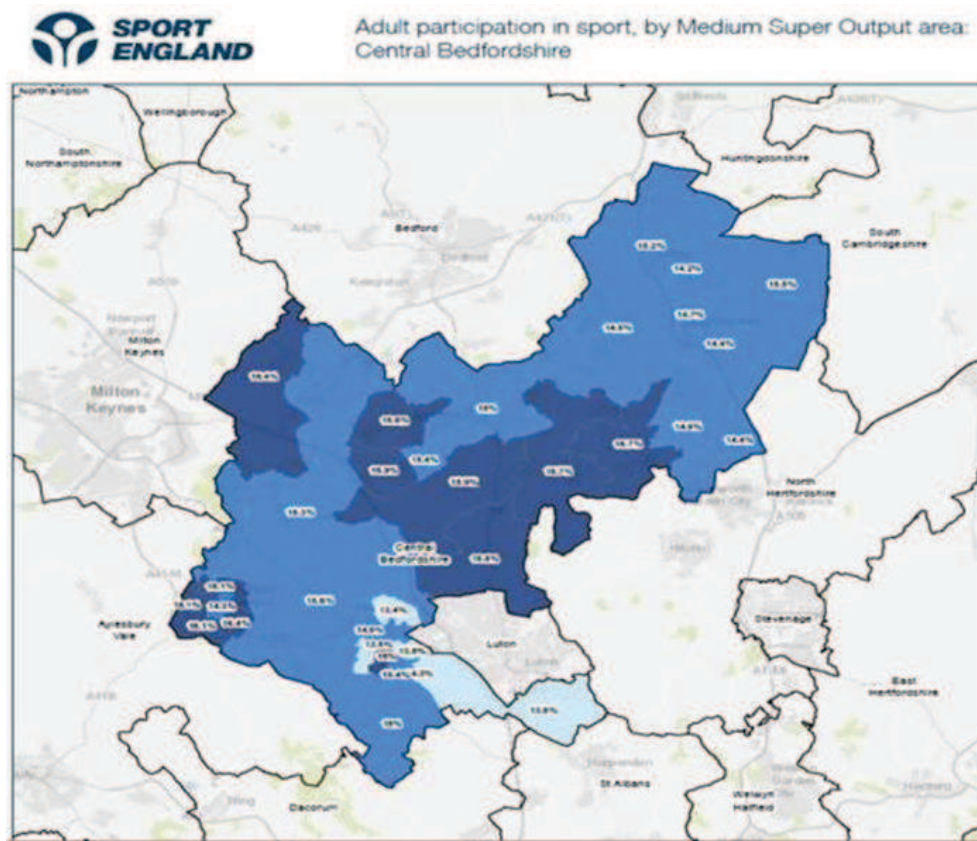
3.21 The former national indicator NI8, has been highlighted – this shows the amount of the population that participate in 3 x 30 minutes sessions or more of moderate intensity activity per week. The broad conclusions from this are:

- Similar levels of activity are maintained in Central Beds between 2005/6 and 209/11
- Activity levels in Central Bedfordshire are generally higher than the regional or national average
- Male activity levels are much higher than female and higher than the average
- Female activity levels are about average, but have declined slightly (probably not significant).

Adult Participation in sport in Central Bedfordshire by Middle Super Output Area (MSOA)

3.22 Map 3.1 illustrates the adult participation in sport across Central Bedfordshire as a whole. The higher levels of participation are shown in the darker tones, and are located in Leighton Buzzard and some more rural parts of the centre of the district. The lowest participation is in the Dunstable area.

Map 3.1 – Participation in Sport across Central Bedfordshire



3.23 In terms of the other indicators, Central Bedfordshire fares as follows:

- Relatively low levels of volunteering, and some decline since 2007/8
- Low and declining club membership
- Low and declining amounts of coaching and tuition
- Average but declining levels of organised competition
- Average but growing levels of satisfaction with local sports provision

Main Sports

3.24 Table 3.5 sets out the main/top sports in Central Bedfordshire. This is measured by the participation rates in sports and the number of people that participate at least once per month (according to the Active People Survey).

Table 3.5 – Top sports in Central Bedfordshire

Top 5 sports in local authority with regional and England comparison						
Sport	Central Bedfordshire		East of England		England	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Gym	23.8	11.4%	452.3	9.7%	4,494.2	10.7%
Swimming	21.3	10.3%	530.4	11.4%	4,838.8	11.6%
Cycling	19.3	9.3%	452.1	9.7%	3,875.0	9.3%
Football	14.3	6.9%	338.7	7.3%	3,103.1	7.4%
Athletics	12.3	5.9%	295.7	6.4%	2,698.5	6.5%

Source: Active People Survey 5, Population data: ONS Annual Population Survey 2011

3.25 It can be seen that of the pitch sports considered within this strategy document, only football is included within the five top sports. Athletics is also within the top five sports although this includes running and jogging.

Sport England Active People Survey – Trends in Participation

3.26 Table 3.6 sets out the trends in participation in sports considered in this study according to Active People Survey (based upon once per week participation for at least 30 minutes). It indicates that with the exception of **hockey, netball and athletics**, for all sports considered, nationally, participation rates are declining. Hockey has demonstrated a slight increase in participation, although at this time, this increase is not statistically significant. For athletics, there has been a marked increase in participation and this is statistically significant.

Table 3.6 – Trends in Participation

Sport	AP1 (Oct 2005 - 2006)		AP6 (Oct 2011 - Oct 2012)	
	Percentage of population	Percentage of population	Percentage of population	Statistically significant change from APS 1
Football	4.97%	4.94%		Yes
Tennis	1.12%	1.03%		Yes
Bowls	3.13%	2.45%		Yes
Cricket	0.48%	0.43%		Yes
Rugby Union	0.46%	0.42%		Yes
Hockey	0.23%	0.25%		No
Rugby League	0.18%	0.12%		Yes
Athletics	3.33%	4.72%		Yes
Netball	0.27%	0.37%		Yes

Sport England Market Segmentation

- 3.27 As an extension to the Active People Survey findings, together with Department for Culture, Media and Sport's, (DCMS) 'Taking Part' survey and the Mosaic work by Experian, Sport England analysed the data on the English population (18+) to produce 19 market segments with distinct sporting behaviours and attitudes.
- 3.28 This includes information on specific sports people take part in as well as why people do sport, whether they want to do sport and the barriers to doing more sport. In addition, the segments provide information on media consumption and communication channels, social capital, health indicators including obesity and engagement in the wider cultural sphere.
- 3.29 The power of these sporting segments lies not only in their ability to help us better understand the characteristics of our potential market but also to explore the market base at differing geographic levels. It is possible to analyse the market in a particular community, local authority or regions. Each segment has been assigned a name that reflects the most popular first names for the group.
- 3.30 Market segmentation allows development of a more sophisticated, tailored approach to delivering services. In tailoring the service we provide to the customer's individual needs, rather than adopting a 'one size fits all' approach. It is one of the best tools we have to improve public services and outcomes.
- 3.31 The market segments in Central Bedfordshire are set out in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 – Market Segments in Central Bedfordshire

Code	Name	Description	Central Bedfordshire		East of England		England	
			Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
A01	Ben	Competitive Male Urbanites	11.0	5.6%	236.4	5.3%	1,989.1	4.9%
A02	Jamie	Sports Team Drinkers	5.2	2.6%	177.6	4.0%	2,162.9	5.4%
A03	Chloe	Fitness Class Friends	11.2	5.6%	236.0	5.3%	1,896.5	4.7%
A04	Leanne	Supportive Singles	4.8	2.4%	143.5	3.2%	1,711.6	4.3%
B05	Helena	Career Focused Females	9.3	4.7%	222.6	5.0%	1,829.8	4.5%
B06	Tim	Settling Down Males	24.8	12.5%	467.1	10.5%	3,554.0	8.8%
B07	Allison	Stay at Home Mums	14.8	7.5%	240.1	5.4%	1,766.4	4.4%
B08	Jackie	Middle England Mums	11.0	5.5%	215.0	4.8%	1,965.0	4.9%
B09	Kev	Pub League Team Mates	6.0	3.0%	183.4	4.1%	2,386.6	5.9%
B10	Paula	Stretched Single Mums	4.4	2.2%	128.0	2.9%	1,507.3	3.7%
C11	Philip	Comfortable Mid-Life Males	23.0	11.6%	429.2	9.6%	3,480.0	8.6%
C12	Elaine	Empty Nest Career Ladies	15.4	7.8%	304.8	6.8%	2,443.9	6.1%
C13	Roger & Joy	Early Retirement Couples	16.5	8.3%	365.2	8.2%	2,723.7	6.8%

Code	Name	Description	Central Bedfordshire		East of England		England	
			Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
C14	Brenda	Older Working Women	5.2	2.6%	144.8	3.2%	1,976.8	4.9%
C15	Terry	Local 'Old Boys'	4.2	2.1%	127.4	2.9%	1,484.5	3.7%
C16	Norma	Later Life Ladies	1.9	1.0%	70.3	1.6%	855.0	2.1%
D17	Ralph & Phyllis	Comfortable Retired Couples	9.0	4.5%	225.4	5.1%	1,700.2	4.2%
D18	Frank	Twilight Year Gents	7.1	3.6%	189.8	4.3%	1,612.9	4.0%
D19	Elsie & Arnold	Retirement Home Singles	13.0	6.6%	354.3	7.9%	3,206.3	8.0%

3.32 The 5 main groups (comprising nearly 50% of the total adult population) are:

- **Tim (segment 6)** – known as ‘a settling down male’, a very active type enjoying high intensity activities. Enjoys technical sports such as skiing, uninhibited by financial outlay. Both team games and individual activities feature high on his agenda and personal fitness activities are also popular. High activity rates (27% of 3x30 minutes per week compared with average of 22%). 21% of the Tim segment take part in cycling compared to 9% of all adults nationally; 20% of this segment takes part in keep fit/gym, compared to 17% of all adults nationally, and 15% in football (compared with the average of 4%). Swimming and athletics or running are also popular sports for Tim. Tim is more likely than all adults to take part in football and athletics. Tim is the dominant segment and well spread across much of the district.
- **Philip (segment 11)** – comfortable mid-life professional male, health conscious and interested in badminton, cycling and cricket, most active in his age group. Philip’s sporting activity levels are above the national average and the top sports that Philip participates in are cycling, keep fit, swimming, football and golf. Cycling is the top sport, and 16% of this segment do this at least once a month, almost double the national average. His participation in most of his top sports is above the national average, which is indicative of the priority he places on sport. Philip is the dominant segment in Biggleswade and Sandy, Amptill, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard, the main towns in the district.
- **Roger & Joy (segment 13)** are known as an ‘early retirement couple’, and are slightly less active than the average adult population. Roger & Joy have below average levels of sports participation. 66% of this segment has done no sport in the past four weeks, compared with 60% of all adults. 38% have participated in sport at least once a week, which is consistent with other segments of the same age. The top sports that Roger & Joy participate in are keep fit/gym and swimming which are the most popular sports with 13% of the segment doing these, followed by cycling with 8% of this segment doing cycling, golf with 6% of the segment playing golf and angling with 2% of this segment doing angling. Their participation levels are below average for all these sports, with the exception of golf and angling. They are the dominant segment in small areas such as Barton, Harlington and parts of Flitwick and Dunstable.
- **Elaine (segment 12)** – empty nest career ladies who have more time for themselves now that the children have left home. Elaine’s sporting activity levels are consistent with the national average, and slightly above average for some indicators. The top sports that Elaine participates in are keep fit/gym and swimming (the most popular sports with around a fifth of the segment doing these), followed by cycling (7%), athletics or running (3%), tennis (2%), badminton (2%) and horse riding (2%). Her participation levels are above average for keep fit/gym and swimming. Similar to Tim, Elaine is the dominant segment in no specific part of the district but is concentrated in the rural parts of the north and north east of the district.

- Alison (segment 7)** – is a ‘stay at home mum’ on a career break while husband works as an accountant. A quarter of this group take part in sport three times a week (slightly higher than the average). 27% of this segment take part in keep fit/gym compared to 17% of all adults; 25% in ‘swimming’ compared to 14% of all adults, 12% in cycling, and 11% in athletics (including running). Other sports that appeal are tennis and horse riding.. Alison is not the dominant segment in any one area, but there are concentrations of this group in the Barton/Streatley and Woburn/Marston Moretaine areas.

3.33 Map 3.2 outlines the distribution of the dominant market segments.

Map 3.2 – Distribution of the Dominant Market Segments



Implications for Pitch and Outdoor Sports

The key implications for pitch and outdoor sports of the demographic profile of Central Bedfordshire are as follows;

- There are more people than average in the 16-19 and 35-49 age groups, and fewer people in the 25-34 age group. There are also more than the national average of pensioners (though fewer than the region) – this means that the overall propensity of the population to participate in outdoor sports facilities may be lower than in other areas
- The overall population is expected to increase by about 35,000 people, representing a 14% increase over 2010. While there are projected increases in all age groups in absolute terms but wide variations in percentage increases – large increases in the 10-14, 55 – 64 and 65+, and smaller increases in the 0-4 and the 15-34 (the main sport playing age group). The number of people in the

'active' age groups (i.e. mainly 5-44, taken from Sport England's advice as set out in its Playing Pitch Strategy advice but equally applicable here) is estimated to rise by about 8000 people, but this only represents a 6% increase compared with the 14% increase in the overall population. This means that while the population will increase significantly, future sports facility provision needs to increase by 6% by 2022 compared with the present, not the 14% increase estimated for the overall population increase.

- Conversely the increase in the 'inactive' population means that there is a need to consider other facilities and activities for the ageing population – there will be an additional 16500 people over 45 and about 15000 between 45 and 74. This means that different sports facilities may be required
- Of the sports considered in Chapter 3, only football and athletics are in the top 5 sports played by residents in Central Bedfordshire. Considering the dominant market segments, reflecting the profile of the population, only Tim and Philip are regular participants in outdoor sports. There is however interest in sports considered in this analysis by the dominant market segments, specifically;
 - Football – Tim and Philip
 - Cricket - Philip
 - Golf – Roger and Joy, Philip
 - Athletics – Alison, Elaine, Tim
 - Tennis – Alison and Elaine
 - Netball –Alison

3.34 The remaining sections evaluate the adequacy of provision for each type of sport, taking into account the issues raised relating to participation and demographics.

3.35 **As AGPs cross over between football, hockey and rugby, section 5 outlines the application of each tool used to evaluate demand. The implications for each sport are then discussed in the sport specific sections.**

4. Application of the Playing Pitch Strategy

Uses of this Document

4.1 The primary purpose of this document is to provide planning policy for playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities, to inform pre-application discussions on proposed development and support the implementation of planning policy and the delivery of facilities associated with development. In addition, it will:

- Provide the evidence base and strategic direction for playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities in Central Bedfordshire
- Maximise the benefits for playing pitch and outdoor sports
- Highlight and justify the case for sports development activities
- Inform the work, strategies and plans of sporting organisations and pitch providers in the area
- Provide the evidence base and strategic need to support funding bids to a variety of potential funding sources
- Advocate the need to work with specific education establishments to secure community use of sites

Impact of New Development

Housing Growth

4.2 Over the next 20 years it is planned that Central Bedfordshire will see a growth of 28,700 new homes. In planning for growth Central Bedfordshire Council must ensure that its policy for playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities seeks to provide a range of good quality, accessible facilities which support its residents in leading healthy, active lives.

4.3 This document has assessed the requirements for future provision as well as establishing current needs and aspirations. This has identified that in many parts of Central Bedfordshire current provision is insufficient to meet both current and projected demand. The strategy will secure appropriate facility provision and/or developer contributions from new development to ensure the facility stock meets local needs, now and in the future.

4.4 New development generates additional population which in turn increases demand for playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities. This assessment has identified that many of the existing facilities in Central Bedfordshire are of poor quality and are unable to cope with current or future demand. In addition to new facility provision, the strategy identifies qualitative improvements required to improve existing facilities to enable them to cope with the increased pressure from development.

4.5 In order to address the impact of new development and ensure that appropriate facilities / contributions are secured from development, the facility / sport assessments in Part 2 of this document, identify the specific requirements for new and improved provision required to meet the needs of new development and population growth.

Playing Pitch Strategy Policy Requirements

4.6 This playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities strategy has assessed current and future facility provision required to meet the needs of Central Bedfordshire's growing population. The following policy statements support the delivery of Policy 22 of the emerging Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

PPS 1. Protection of Existing Facilities

4.7 The Council will safeguard existing playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities in line with Paragraph 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework, existing facilities should not be built on unless it meets one of the three tests identified in paragraph 74. If playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities are lost as a result of development, replacement facilities of equal or improved standard are required to meet the continued needs of residents. Replacement facilities must also be located to serve the users of the original facility.

4.8 Capital receipts from disposals of playing pitch facilities will be ring-fenced specifically for investment into other playing pitch facilities. To be invested according to the aims of the Strategy.

4.9 Planning consent for replacement facilities will include appropriate conditions and / or be subject to a Section 106 agreement or CIL. Developers will also be required to make contributions towards maintenance and running costs. Contributions will be secured through planning obligations or CIL.

PPS 2. New Development

On-site Provision

4.10 The facility requirements of Chapter 3 will apply to all new residential development across the whole of Central Bedfordshire. The provision of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities and developer contributions toward off-site provision may not be sought from some forms of development e.g. sheltered housing, however, provision or contributions may be sought for only specific facilities which are suited to the intended residents.

4.11 New development must be supported by the delivery of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities. This provision is to be made on-site in line with the required standards and will be provided as an integral part of new development, planned in at the early stages to meet both the needs arising on and off-site.

4.12 New and enhanced sports facilities will be expected to be designed in accordance with the relevant Sport England and (where applicable) National Governing Body (NGB) design guidance in order to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose and of a suitable quality.

Off-site Contributions

4.13 For smaller developments where on-site provision of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities is not possible/appropriate, or where existing facilities or

planned projects are located within the catchment of the development, contributions will be sought to maintain and enhance existing facilities/identified projects, in lieu of on-site facilities.

PPS 3. Addressing Deficiencies

- 4.14 The strategy has identified existing and future deficiencies in facility provision to meet the needs of Central Bedfordshire residents. The strategy facility requirements will seek to address these deficiencies by securing the provision of new facilities or contributions from development to provide new or improve existing facilities in areas of need.
- 4.15 Where appropriate, the provision of new facilities will be prioritized to provide additional sites to increase supply in areas of deficit or housing growth.

PPS 4. Maximising Access to Facilities

- 4.16 The strategy will seek to ensure that all residents of Central Bedfordshire have good access to a range of high quality playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities. The provision of new facilities or the enhancement of existing facilities will take into consideration the location, catchment and accessibility of facilities for residents.
- 4.17 New or enhanced facilities will be constructed in accordance with Sport England and National Governing Bodies for Sport guidance on user requirements and accessibility for all.

PPS 5. Maximising Investment

- 4.18 The strategy will seek to maximise investment in new or improved facilities through the prioritisation of projects, partnership working with facility providers, National Governing Bodies for Sport and Sport England to secure external funding for identified priorities. It will also secure S106/CIL contributions from development in accordance with the strategy requirements and utilise those contributions where maximum facility benefit can be achieved.
- 4.19 The strategy will seek to develop relationships with schools in order to maximise access to existing facilities, but also to work in partnership with schools to maximise available funding to provide new/improved facilities which will serve both the school and the local community.

Calculating the Contribution from Development

- 4.20 In order to ensure that contributions sought from new development toward facility provision are fair and commensurate with the development, the contributions must be assessed using the statutory tests for the use of S106 planning obligations:

- *“Necessary to make development acceptable in planning terms*
- *Directly related to the development; and*
- *Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development”*

4.21 To ensure that the above tests are met, the contributions of new development towards playing pitch provision will be measured and defined based upon the demand generated by population growth and the size of the new development.

Use of Team Generation Rates (TGR)

4.22 TGRs for Central Bedfordshire are calculated for each form of each sport in the playing pitch assessment and set out in Part 2. They represent the number of people that it takes of a certain age group in Central Bedfordshire to make one team.

4.23 For example – a TGR for junior male football of 100 means that for every 100 males aged between 10 and 15, a junior male football team will be created.

4.24 These TGRs are used within Part 2 to determine the number of additional teams that will be created through population growth and the impact that this growth will have on demand for pitches. This takes into account the changing profile of the population (ageing) as the numbers for future projections are based upon the anticipated population profile by 2021. The pitch requirements can then be calculated by determining the number of teams per pitch and the related requirement in hectares.

4.25 Table 4.1 therefore indicates the number of teams that will be generated through population growth, as well as the number of pitches that this means would be required. This takes into account both demand at peak time, and usage over a week. The actual number of pitches has then been rounded up as part pitches can not accommodate teams.

4.26 Table 4.1 assumes that one adult pitch is required per adult team and one pitch per two junior teams – while this level of use is lower than the maximum capacity of a pitch, it takes into account the need to provide pitches where residents are located. As this document clearly indicates that cricket / rugby infrastructure should be club based, pitch capacity is considered higher for these two sports and each pitch is able to accommodate a greater number of teams.

Table 4.1 – Calculation of Additional Pitch Requirements in Central Bedfordshire

Sport and Age Groups	Current TGR	Potential Change in Team Number	Pitch Size	Calculations using FA Parameters (1 adult pitch per team)			
				Number of Teams per Pitch	Number of Pitches Required	Pitch Requirement (no part pitches)	Pitch Requirements (Ha)
Football Adult Men (16-45yrs)	315	6	0.8	1	6	6	4.8
Football Adult Women (16-45yrs)	6891	0	0.8	1	0	0	0
Football Youth Boys (10-15yrs)	35	31	0.6	2	15.5	16	9.6
Football Youth Girls (10-15yrs)	494	2	0.6	2	1	1	0.6
Football Mini Soccer Mixed (6-9yrs)	44	41	0.5	2	20.5	21	10.5
Cricket Open Age Mens (18-55yrs)	563	4.2	1.5	2	2.1	3	4.5
Cricket Open Age Womens (18-55yrs)	64870	0	1.5	2	0		0
Cricket Junior Boys (11-17yrs)	154	4	1.5	2	2	3	4.5
Cricket Junior Girls (11-17yrs)	0	0	1.5	2	0		0
Rugby Union Senior Men (19-45yrs)	2488	0.7	0.7	2	0.35	1	0.7
Rugby Union Senior Women (19-45yrs)	0	0	0.7	2	0		0
Rugby Union Youth Boys (13-18yrs)	438	2.5	0.7	2	1.25	2	1.4
Rugby Union Youth Girls (13-18yrs)	0	0	0.7	2	0		0
Rugby Union Mini/Midi Mixed (7-12yrs)	487	3.7	0.25	2	1.85	2	0.5
TOTAL REQUIREMENT (HA)							37.1
Population Change							35430
Requirement per 1000 population (ha)							1.047135

Table 4.1 therefore indicates that a total of 1.05 ha is required per 1000 population.

- 4.27 Quality standards indicate that all pitches in Central Bedfordshire should be delivered in conjunction with appropriate car parking and changing accommodation. Guidance (The FA) suggests that 20% should be added to recognise this requirement. Based upon the above, there is therefore a requirement for 1.25 ha grass pitches per 1000 population in Central Bedfordshire.
- 4.28 Decisions relating to the requirement for new and / or improved provision should then be made using the playing pitch strategy evidence as a base. In areas where it new provision has not been identified as required, qualitative improvements should be made. Where the development is of insufficient size to require new pitch provision, contributions towards quality should also be made.
- 4.29 Specific requirements will be evaluated on a site by site basis and a decision made as to the type of facility that is required to deliver the PPS and whether on or off site provision was required.
- 4.30 Where on site provision is required, arrangements should be made for the effective management and maintenance of the facility and agreed with Central Bedfordshire Council.

Off Site Contributions

- 4.31 Where not on site, contributions will be expected to be made and will be spent on projects outlined within the Playing Pitch Strategy (listed in Part 2). Priority projects will be informed through the action plans that are to be produced.
- 4.32 Where provision is not required on site, the costs will (until detailed costings for all projects are available) be based upon the prices set out in the Sport England Planning Kit Bag. These will be calculated as follows:

Example 1: Calculation for off-site contribution for playing pitches:

Hectares required	/	0.64 (typical hectares of grass pitch)	X	80,000 (cost of grass pitch of 0.64 ha as identified by Sport England for calculation purposes)	=	£ off-site contribution
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Example 2: Calculation for off-site contribution for ancillary facilities:

No. of Pitches (Need 2 team changing room per pitch)	x	565,000 (cost of 4 team changing room as identified by Sport England for calculation purposes)	/	2 (based on 2 teams per pitch)	=	£ Total off-site contribution
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NB: The total figures do not include land value contribution or commuted sum for future maintenance.

4.33 The above calculation will be updated as a minimum annually (as Sport England Kit Bag figures are updated) however Table 4.2 uses the above calculations (and quoted prices) to provide a figure per ha required to aid calculations.

Table 4.2 – Off Site Contributions Required Per Hectare

Area	Component	Average Pitch Size (£)	Price for 1 Pitch Size (£)	Price per Ha (£)
Playing Field	Average Pitch Size	0.64	80000	12500
Ancillary Provision	Changing Accommodation (Based upon assumption 2 rooms per pitch)	0.64	282000	440625
TOTAL				453125

Off site contributions towards maintenance will also be required in accordance with Sport England life cycle cost guidance.

Other Sports Facilities

4.34 While the Playing Pitch Assessment revealed that population growth will create shortages in the provision of grass pitches, it is unlikely that additional facilities for other sports (bowls, tennis etc.) will be required. Qualitative improvements are however required and contributions may be requested from new developments.

4.35 As Central Bedfordshire Council has yet to approve its approach to the Community Infrastructure Levy, the Leisure Strategy action plan will identify the requirement to develop the methodology for calculating contributions for CIL and S106 for inclusion in Leisure Strategy when the Council’s approach has been decided.

5. Delivery of the Strategy

5.1 The playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities assessment provides the evidence base relating to the supply / demand of facilities across Central Bedfordshire. It has been created to support planning policy as well as to drive proactive and reactive improvements in playing pitch provision. It should therefore be used to inform decision making relating to pitch and outdoor sports facilities.

5.2 The NPPF focuses on the delivery of specific facility needs; this needs assessment has therefore concluded with an understanding of the surpluses and deficiencies across Central Bedfordshire, and has listed areas where there is a need to improve the sporting infrastructure either through protection, enhancement or new provision. This information will be used to inform the development of a Chapter 3 action plan for delivery in consultation with key partners.

Principles

5.3 The strategic priorities and area / site specific priorities, detailed in Part 2 of this document, have been developed following an extensive assessment of current and projected need. The following principles have been identified as key priorities in the delivery of the facilities:

- **Quality of facilities is as important as the amount of provision** – the strategy seeks to ensure that Central Bedfordshire contains the right amount of facilities, of the right quality and in the right place. It promotes the protection of current provision and the creation of facilities that are fit for purpose
- **The creation of sporting hubs and multi-sport sites is supported** – recognising the benefits and long term sustainability of sites providing for multiple sports, the co-location of facilities and links between clubs should be supported
- **Sustainability of provision is essential for successful delivery of pitch and outdoor sport facilities** – all recommendations seek to deliver new and improved facilities in a sustainable manner, supporting well established clubs, promoting sustainability and good practice

Action Planning

5.4 Following adoption of the Leisure Strategy by the Council's Executive an action plan for Chapter 3 will be developed. In preparing the action plan, Central Bedfordshire Council will consult further with relevant stakeholders and facility providers to establish their delivery priorities.

5.5 The majority of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities are owned and managed by town and parish councils and sports clubs, the action plan must therefore reflect the views of the asset owners as well as identifying the deliverability of the proposed projects.

5.6 Central Bedfordshire Council will work with a range of partners including the County Wide Sports Partnership, Sport England and the NGB's to prioritise new and enhancement projects in accordance with the strategy requirements and support a coordinated approach to new / improved sporting facilities.

5.7 The action plan will seek to prioritise projects in accordance with the following priorities:

Ensuring that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand

Ensure that facilities are of appropriate quality to meet the needs of users

Promote increases in participation and the creation of sustainable clubs

5.8 The action plan will set out the priority actions required to address the needs set out in Chapter 3. The resource implications will be identified using the Sport England guidance on the cost of facilities, which is updated on a quarterly basis. This information is currently available at the following link:

<http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/cost-guidance/>

5.9 The action plan will be used to inform both the securing of on-site playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities and developer contributions resulting from new development. In addition, the action plan will inform the release of CIL and S106 funds.

Funding and Implementation

5.10 Given the potential level of funding required to refurbish or redevelop the playing pitch and outdoor sports facility infrastructure across Central Bedfordshire it is likely that investment will only be achieved through a combination of opportunities and funding sources.

5.11 Local authority finances are currently under pressure and previous major national funding programmes are no longer available. Some funding opportunities, however, still remain; for example, individual school capital grants have replaced BSF and Sport England now has more clearly defined capital available through its *Places People Play* Legacy funding programme. While the education capital funding programmes will continue to change over time, there will still be a need for investment to take place on school sites during the strategy period and opportunities for joint projects may arise.

5.12 The council will seek to use assets innovatively and work on a multi-agency approach to address the facility requirements in the strategy.

The main funding delivery mechanisms for Central Bedfordshire Council and others in delivering the strategy are:

- i. **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 developer contributions:** The Leisure Strategy will secure developer contributions in association with new development to provide or improve infrastructure.
- ii. **Capital Grant funding:** From schools and national agencies such as Sport England, including its Iconic Facilities, Improvement Fund and Inspired Facilities programmes. National Governing Body (NGB) support could also be available to develop specific specialist facilities.
- iii. **Third party funding:** Financing capital through the forecast operational surplus and finance packages as part of the leisure management procurement process or construction contracts. Also, leisure management operators are asked as part of their consideration, to fund developments of health and fitness suites and small refurbishments of existing leisure centre sites.
- iv. **Commercial sector funding:** limited potential for investment from commercial leisure operators such as those who provide health and fitness centre and 5 a-side artificial pitch football centres.
- v. **Council funding:** capital funding allocated to deliver facilities within the council's ownership, and potentially the use of capital receipts from the sale of existing assets.
- vi. **Prudential Borrowing:** or 'invest to save': the local authority may choose to use revenue savings or income from its investment to pay for monies used for capital development, which may be cheaper than an operator can borrow.
- vii. **Education sector:** while the previous sources of funding (including BSF and Primary Schools Programme) have changed and the scale of the education capital programmes have been reduced, the education sector is still likely to be a key funding stream especially for sports halls.

Partnership Working

5.13 Central Bedfordshire Council recognises that it currently plays a limited role in the direct provision of playing pitches and sports facilities, the strategy therefore seeks to bring together key partners in the delivery of these facilities to ensure that available funding is maximised for the benefit of sports facility provision and community use.

5.14 The leisure strategy will promote:

- Partnership working and knowledge sharing
- Community involvement
- Community Asset Transfer where there is a sports development benefit

Facility Criteria and Design Guidance

5.15 In addition to the overarching strategy principles outlined earlier in this section, the following will be considered when evaluating the requirement for facilities from new developments:

Location - When planning new facilities, the existing sporting infrastructure should be taken into account. In particular, club bases for cricket and rugby should be retained and the provision of single pitch sites with limited facilities should be avoided. Where new development generate additional teams and new provision is required on-site any single pitch facilities should be linked to existing club bases or function as a satellite facility.

Quality - Any new pitch provision must meet with the design and quality standards guidance provided by Sport England and/or the relevant NGB (detailed below). The following general criteria must also be met:

- a high standard of design, construction and maintenance, enabling the pitch to be played at least twice per week without detrimental impact and ensuring that sites are clean and attractive facilities
- adequate changing facilities that:
 - are flexible, fit for a variety of purposes
 - fully comply with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act
 - provide for a number of different groups to use the facility at the same time, in safety and comfort
 - meet current standards - Sport England & NGB guidelines
- managed community access
- accessible by public transport and by car
- sufficient car and coach parking
- size of pitches and run offs complies with NGB specification
- located in a no-flood zone
- security of tenure (at least 20 years) if a club is to be based at the site
- for rugby clubs in particular, sites should include floodlit training facilities

5.16 All new and enhanced sports facilities must be designed in accordance with the relevant Sport England and (where applicable) National Governing Body (NGB) design guidance in order to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose and of a suitable quality.

Sport England's web site www.sportengland.org contains a range of current guidance documents which provide detailed specifications and information regarding the design of sporting and ancillary facilities.

5.17 This provides a link to the NGB's supported by Sport England, and to the guidance on the respective NGB websites:

<http://www.sportengland.org/our-work/national-work/national-governing-bodies/sports-we-invest-in/>

This provides a link to the NGB Whole Sport Plan Summary Documents, providing information on the respective sports:

<https://public.sportengland.org/b2bengage/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

6. Monitoring and Review

6.1 This strategy has been produced to enable the development of playing pitches and sports facilities within Central Bedfordshire to be provided for in a planned and co-ordinated way that meets the needs of the local population and addresses areas of greatest demand.

6.2 In order to ensure that the Leisure Strategy requirements keep pace with the large amount of growth planned for Central Bedfordshire, a costed action plan will be prepared for the period 2014–2019. The Plan will be then reviewed and updated annually.

6.3 A key component of the process of delivering the action plan is the establishment of a steering group, which should be set up by the Council to implement the action plan emerging from the strategy with key stakeholders participating in the steering group as and when necessary and the Council working in partnership with stakeholders to deliver the strategy.

6.4 A full review of the strategy will be undertaken in 2019 in readiness for the 2019-2023 action plan period. In addition to reviewing the achievements of the action plan for the 2014-2019 period, the review will need to assess the full basis of calculating sports facilities requirements for Central Bedfordshire and emerging sporting trends and health issues that will have an impact on this. This will also involve a full reassessment of the following baseline criteria:

- Housing numbers
- Population estimates, both ONS and internal projections
- Full socio-economic and demographic analysis of population projections
- Participation rates (e.g. Active People Surveys) and new sport trend analysis and uptake levels
- Updated facility data including usage, accessibility, affordability, management and facility improvements
- Evolving needs of clubs and governing bodies, and any requirements for major facilities in the area
- Analysis of funding sources and new funding opportunities for the provision/improvement of sports facilities
- Review of growth of emerging sports, their participation rates, facilities available for them and likely facilities necessary for their support and development

Central Bedfordshire Council Leisure Strategy

Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy

Technical Guidance

Final draft for Exec 18 March 2014



Prepared by Neil Allen Associates in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council

Neil Allen Associates

Registered Office: 20 Brook Road, Lymm, Cheshire, WA139AH

A limited company, registered in England and Wales no. 616528

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Part 2:

- **Facility Analysis**
- **Site and Sport Specific Priorities**

6. Artificial Grass Pitches

Introduction

6.1 Artificial grass pitches (AGPs) are used for both football and hockey, as well as to a lesser extent rugby. While different surfaces are preferred for each sport, in reality, many facilities are used interchangeably by one or more sports.

6.2 As a result, many of the tools for analysing AGPs consider the stock of AGPs as a whole. For this reason, this section sets out the adequacy of AGPs and the key issues for Central Bedfordshire based upon a variety of key tools available. The implications of this analysis for football, rugby and hockey will be identified in each of the specific sections.

6.3 This section draws upon:

- Active Places Power
- Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM)
- Sport England Facility Calculator
- Football Association Demand Modelling for AGPs

6.4 It should be noted that some additional pitches have been added since modelling was undertaken and tools have not been updated (and / or have been withdrawn since the initial analysis was produced). Where changes to the provision of AGPs may impact upon the findings of the tools this is noted.

6.5 As set out in Section 2, the new methodology for the assessment of AGPs includes a comparison of the number of hours that an AGP is available at peak time versus the number of hours use the site actually receives. This methodology was not published at the time of research and preparation for this assessment and has therefore not been used.

6.6 It should also noted that this strategy considers 3g pitches and sand based surfaced AGPs as these currently represent the most up to date surfaces that are available. It is acknowledged that these will be superseded. Requirements will still remain although the most appropriate surface type may be determined on a site by site basis.

Active Places Power

Supply

6.7 Tools for analysis of the adequacy of AGPs on Active Places Power have recently been removed. Analysis was undertaken before the tools were no longer available.

6.8 The analysis undertaken through Active Places Power revealed that Central Bedfordshire had a total of 8 full size Artificial Grass Pitches, all of which are floodlit. Five are located on school sites, two are owned by Central Bedfordshire Council and managed in-house or commercially, and one is on an MOD establishment and used privately. Three are sand based and five are 3G/rubber crumb. Three of the 'public' pitches have pay and play access whilst the remainder are used mainly by sports clubs and the community on a booking system.

6.9 Table 6.1 summarises the AGP pitches available within Central Bedfordshire. Since this analysis was undertaken, a further pitch has been built at All Saints Academy, Dunstable.

Table 6.1 – AGPs in Central Bedfordshire

Site Name	Size	Facility Sub Type	Number	Access Type	Ownership Type	Management Type	Year Built	Refurbished	Year Refurbished
All Saints Academy	Full Size	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	1	Sports Club / Community Association	Academies	School/College/University (in house)	2013	No	n/a
Ashton Middle School	Small 30 x 40	Sand Filled	1	Private Use	Voluntary Aided School	School/College/University (in house)		No	n/a
Briants Lane Sports Ground	Small (35 x 35)	Sand Filled	1	Pay and Play	Commercial	Local Authority (in house)	2002	No	n/a
Creasey Park	Full size	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	1	Pay and Play	Local Authority	Local Authority (in house)	2011	No	n/a
Defence Intelligence And Security Centre	Full size	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	1	Sports Club / Community Association	MOD	MOD	2010	No	n/a
Dunstable Leisure Centre	Full size	Sand Filled	1	Pay and Play	Local Authority	Commercial Management	1996	Yes	2004
Newton Recreation Ground	40 x 60m	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	1	Pay and Play	Local Authority	Local Authority (in house)	2010	No	n/a
Redborne Upper School & Community College	Full size	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	1	Sports Club / Community Association	Community school	School/College/University (in house)	2012	No	n/a
Robert Bloomfield Middle School	60 x 40m	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	1	Sports Club / Community Association	Academies	School/College/University (in house)	2009	No	n/a
Sandy Sports & Recreation Centre	Full size	Sand Filled	1	Pay and Play	Community school	Trust	1996	Yes	2008
Vandyke Upper School And Community College	Full size	Sand Dressed	1	Sports Club / Community Association	Community school	School/College/University (in house)	1997	No	n/a
Cedars Upper School	Full Size	Rubber crumb	1	Sports Club / Community	Community	School/College/University	2012	No	n/a

Site Name	Size	Facility Sub Type	Number	Access Type	Ownership Type	Management Type	Year Built	Refurbished	Year Refurbished
		pile (3G)		Association	school	(in house)			

6.10 In addition, there are several other full size AGPs within a 20-minute drive the middle of Central Bedfordshire Council, which are:

- A new 3g pitch in Wixams (which straddles the boundary of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford)
- Lea Manor Recreation Centre, Luton sand based pay and play
- Dame Alice Harper School, Bedford, sand based pay and play

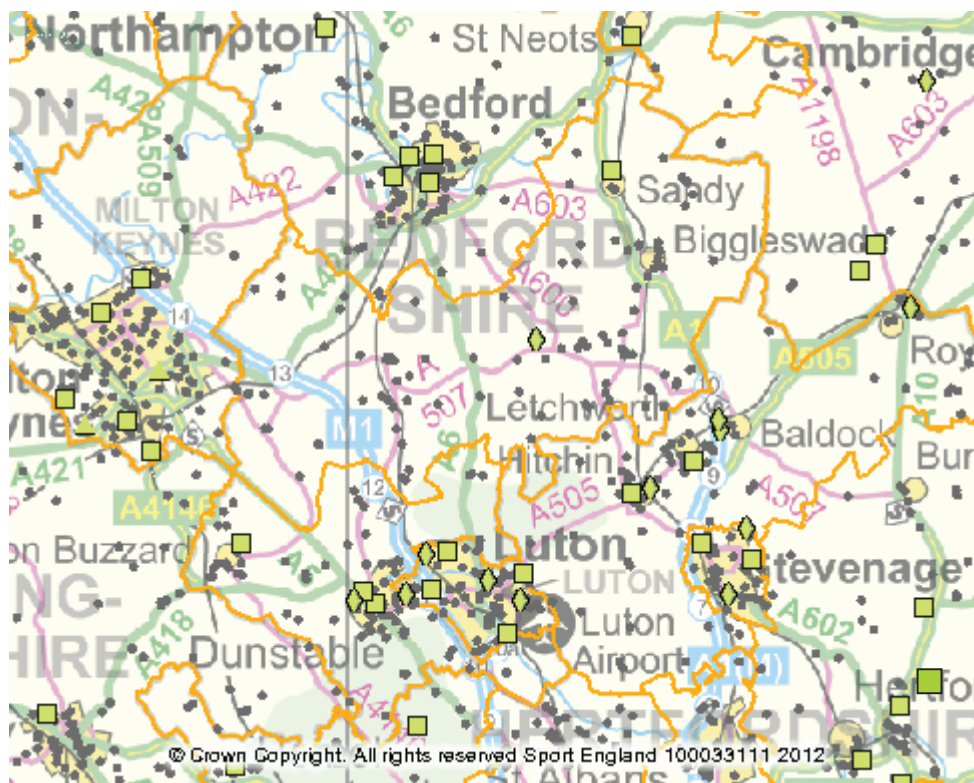
and further pitches within 20-30 minutes drive, specifically;

- Hitchin Boys School, sand based pay and play
- Luton Sixth Form College, sand based, no floodlights
- Lealands High School, Luton, 3G sports club use
- The Arena, Baldock, 3G pay and play
- North Herts College, 3G pay and play
- Bedford Sports & Hockey C, 2 sand based pay and play
- Bedford Modern School, sand based, not floodlit, sports club use
- Knights Templar School, Baldock, 3G pay and play
- Bedford School, 2sand based sports club use, 1 not floodlit
- Barnfield East Academy, Luton, sand based pay and play (some recent quality issues)
- Letchworth Corner SC, sand based pay and play
- Challney Girls High School, Luton, sand based sports club use
- John Henry Newman LC, Stevenage, sand based pay and play
- The Pavilion, Milton Keynes, 2 water based pay and play
- Barnfield West Academy, 3G with floodlights and access to the community
- Bedford Academy AGP, full size floodlit sand based pitch with community use
- Vauxhall Recreation C, Luton, sand based pay and play
- Ashcroft High School, 3G sports club use.

6.11 The conversion of an existing sand based AGP at the Lea Manor Leisure Centre on the northern fringe of Luton to a 3G pitch is also proposed.

6.12 The location of these AGPs is outlined in Map 6.1 (extracted directly from the Sport England Active Places website). It should be noted that new facilities (or facilities not in place at the time of analysis) are not shown on this map.

Map 6.1 - Location of AGPs in and around Central Bedfordshire



6.13 Active Places Power also enables analysis of the number of pitches per 1000 population

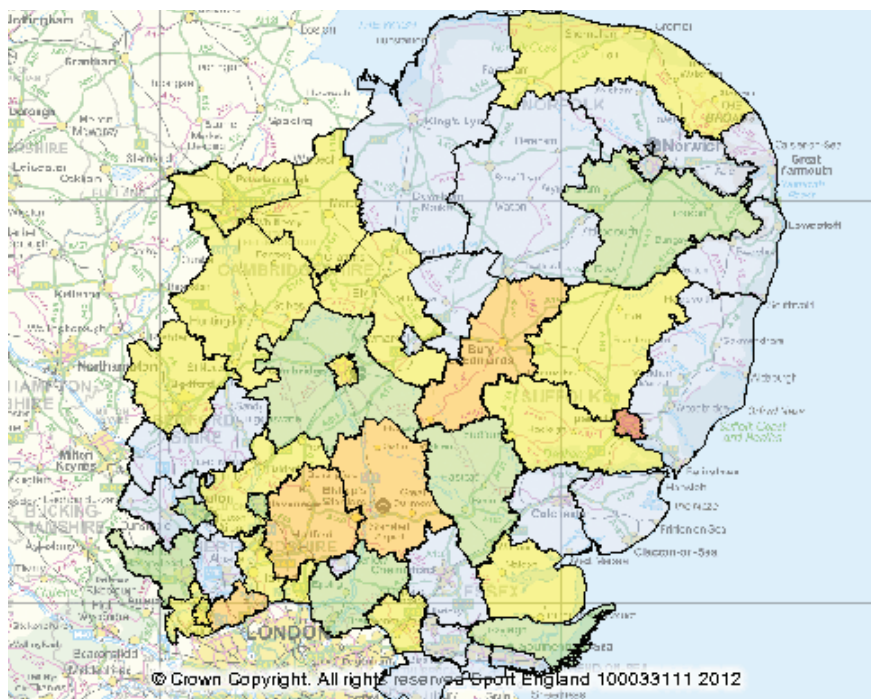
6.14 Table 6.2 and Map 6.2 illustrate provision per 1000 population in Central Bedfordshire.

Table 6.2 – Facilities per 1000 Population

	Pitches per 1000 population
Central Bedfordshire	0.021
Bedfordshire	0.043
East region	0.04
England	0.04
Best in region (Ipswich)	0.094

- 6.15 The relative supply of AGPs in Central Bedfordshire is therefore only half the county, regional and national averages, and less than a quarter of the best provided LA in the region. Central Bedfordshire provision is 6th worst in the region of 47 local authorities (LA), and the worst in the county.
- 6.16 The relative provision of 3G in Central Bedfordshire is better than sand based pitches as there are more sand based pitches overall.
- 6.17 Overall therefore AGP provision in terms of relative supply and compared with other areas is very poor although it should be noted that the new 3G pitch at All Saints Academy, Dunstable, which opened in 2013 will improve this situation.

Map - 6.2 AGPs per 1000 Population



Quality

- 6.18 All rubber crumb AGPs have been built since 2010 and are all good quality currently. All Saints Academy in Dunstable was only completed in 2013.
- 6.19 In contrast, sand based pitches are much older. Although the pitch at Van Dyke School was refurbished in 2012, pitches at Sandy Sports and Recreation Centre and Dunstable Leisure Centre have been refurbished since their initial installation, but in 2008 and 2004 respectively. The quality of pitches at Sandy Sports and Recreation Centre and Van Dyke School is thought to be good, although some teething problems arose immediately after the replacement surface at the school.
- 6.20 In all cases, it must be acknowledged that over the term of this strategy, all facilities will become up to 15 years older, and even if in good quality at the present, may eventually through normal usage no longer be fit for purpose by 2027. AGPs require

regular maintenance of their surface, and it is normally recommended that these are replaced at least every 10 years.

Accessibility

6.21 APP also enables assessment of the access to AGPs. Current access is illustrated in Maps 6.3 – 6.8. The following key relates to all maps:

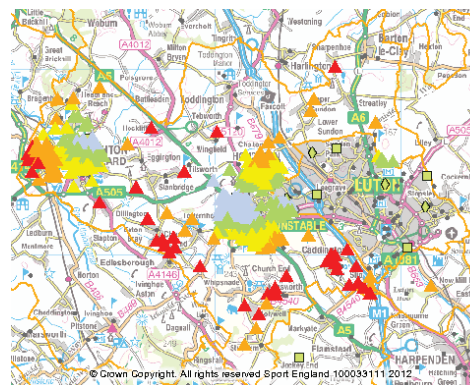
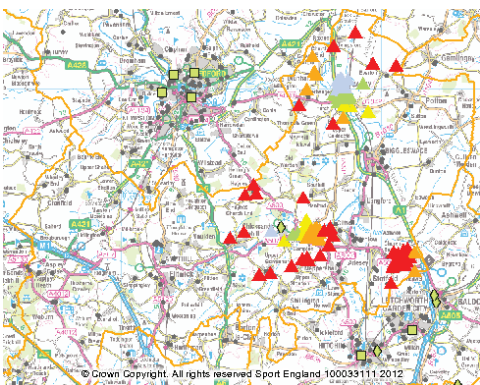
	Lowest values
	↓
	Highest value

Symbol	Range
▲	0 - 10
▲	10.1 - 20
▲	20.1 - 30
▲	30.1 - 45
▲	45.1 - 60

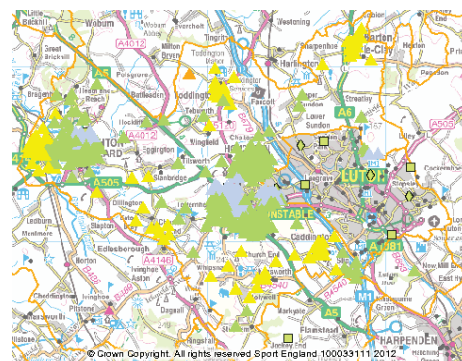
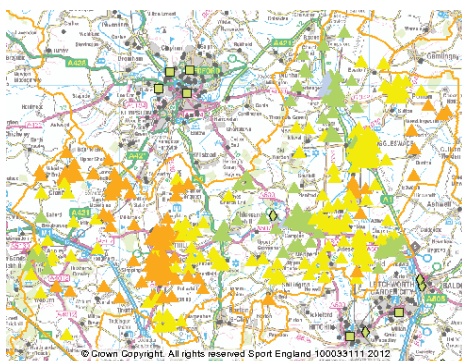
Map 6.3 and 6.4 - Accessibility by car



Map 6.5 and 6.6 - Accessibility on foot



Map 6.7 and 6.8 Accessibility by public transport



6.22 Table 6.3 summarises the information presented in the maps above and in more detail, highlights the proportion of people who live within each 10-minute time band. Again it should be noted that the new pitch at All Saints Academy, Dunstable will have had a positive impact upon provision in this area but is not taken into account in the analysis.

Table 6.3 – Proportion of People living within each distance of an AGP

	Car		Walk		Public transport	
0-10 mins	115890	50%	19439	15%	21346	9%
10-20 mins	117097	50%	32308	25%	94544	40%
20-30 mins	730	<1%	28980	22%	82086	35%
30-45 mins			25899	20%	35781	15%
45+ mins			24392	19%		

6.23 The maps and table demonstrate that despite the relative lack of pitches, most of the population can access a pitch within a 20-minute drive, although some of these pitches will be outside of Central Bedfordshire. The areas with the best car accessibility are in and on the edge of the towns of the district and neighbouring LA area, where the main pitches exist (populations are based on 2001 Census).

6.24 Accessibility to AGPs on foot is inevitably poorer and worse in the northern part of the district where fewer people live in towns where pitches exist. Only about 40% of local residents can walk to a pitch in a reasonable time (20 minutes). Access by public transport also reflects the remoteness of some of the rural areas to pitches, and only about 50% can get to a pitch within 20 minutes. Again the northern part of Central Bedfordshire is less accessible.

6.25 Overall therefore despite the small number of facilities, accessibility to local AGPs is relatively good, especially by car, and also within towns on foot, though the rural areas

and parts of the main towns are outside a 20-30 minute walking catchment. In general, residents in the southern part of the district gain easier access to pitches.

Sport England Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC)

- 6.26 The SFC is primarily intended to estimate the demand for facilities in discrete areas e.g. it is useful in determining the likely demand for AGPs from the residents of new housing growth. With some provisos it can be used to give a broad estimate of the demand over a local authority area, though it takes no account of demand across LA boundaries, quality of facilities and detailed opening times.
- 6.27 The SFC estimates that at present (with the latest population estimate of 255,000 in 2011, there is sufficient demand in Central Bedfordshire at normal participation rates for 7.5 full size pitches in community use.
- 6.28 This compares with current provision of 8 full size pitches that have some form of community usage. From this crude assessment, there appears to be sufficient pitch space in total to meet this expected demand from Central Bedfordshire residents, although pitches in neighbouring LA area will pick up some usage from Central Bedfordshire residents.
- 6.29 Population growth will see demand according to the Sports Facilities Calculator increase to over 8 pitches (but less than nine).

Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM)

- 6.30 The Sport England Facility Planning Model considers the adequacy of AGPs in more detail. It takes into account the availability of pitches throughout the day, hours of usage, location in terms of demand, age and condition.
- 6.31 Sport England's FPM was utilised to test the current (run 1) and 2022 (run 2) adequacy of AGPs in Central Bedfordshire and wider surrounding area as part of the Chapter 1 assessment. The assessment for pitches included all outdoor, full size AGP's with a surface type of sand based, water based or rubber crumb, available for community use i.e. pay and play, membership, Sports Club/Community Association, with a minimum pitch dimension of 75m x45m. The assessment excluded non floodlit pitches from all runs after 1700 on any day, all indoor pitches, 5-a-side commercial football centres and small sided 'pens' and MUGA's, redgra, ash, marked out tarmac areas, etc. But included all 'planned' facilities and commitments. The analysis is based on national participation rates for sport, which are broadly consistent with Central Bedfordshire data. The great benefit of this tool is that it assesses demand and supply across LA boundaries and takes into account catchments and capacities of existing centres. It is based on the database of facilities contained in APP at April 2012, supplemented by additional facilities planned and in the pipeline. It therefore considers all pitches that are now on site

Table 6.4 – Status of Pitches included within Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM)

Name	Surface	Opening Date	Location	Length	Width	Area	Hrs	Comments
Sandy Sports & Community Centre	Sand Based	1996 (Refurbished 2008)	Sandy	102	63	6426	13 Week / 16 Weekend	
Creasey Park	3G	2012	Dunstable	110	70	7700	18 Week / 16 Weekend	
Dunstable Leisure Centre	Sand Based	1996 (Refurbished 2004)	Dunstable	102	63	6426	18 Week / 16 Weekend	
Vandyke Upper School	Sand Based	1997	Leighton Buzzard	101	63	6426	13 Week / 16 Weekend	
Cedars Upper School (Now built)	3G	2012	Leighton Buzzard,	100	65	6890	18 Week / 16 Weekend	New Facility. Included in run 1
RedborneUpper School	3G	Open 2012	Amphill	100	65	6890	18 Week / 16 Weekend	New Facility. Included in run 1
All Saints Academy	3g	Now open 2013	Dunstable	101	63	6363	15 Week / 16 Weekend	Currently under construction. Included in run 2.

6.32 This assessment includes new and committed pitches, but excludes the pitch at Chicksands as it is not accessible to the public. The total number of pitches considered in this assessment is 7 pitches on 7 sites over the 2 runs.

Summary of run 1 (the current situation) of FPM Modelling

- 6.33 **Supply** - Central Bedfordshire has a slightly lower level of provision in terms of total pitch space per 1000 people when measured against the figures for the surrounding areas and England, though provision is better than in the region as a whole. This provision comprises 6 pitches on 6 sites in run 1 (or 5.6 pitches scaled to hours available). Total supply is the equivalent of 4150 visits per week in the peak period.
- 6.34 **Demand** - total demand generated by the existing population taking into account participation rates and accessibility is for the equivalent of 5850 visits per week (or about 8 pitches).
- 6.35 **Supply/demand comparison** – when comparing demand and supply solely within Central Bedfordshire (as a broad indication of adequacy of pitches), there is an apparent shortfall of sports hall space of about 2 pitches when comparing space requirements. In the wider study area outside Central Bedfordshire, there is an apparent deficiency of about 6 pitches.
- 6.36 **Satisfied demand** - the FPM suggests that approximately 88% of the demand for AGP provision in Central Bedfordshire is being satisfied by facilities within or outside the area. This is broadly consistent across Central Bedfordshire and the study area, although lower in the west area. One of the main factors for the high level of SD in Central Bedfordshire is the high proportion of the population which has access to a car (91%) as a high proportion of satisfied demand is from residents who travel to a facility by car i.e. the resident population is relatively mobile and is able to travel further to access facilities than residents in other areas.
- 6.37 Some 55% of the Central Bedfordshire residents' satisfied demand for AGPs is met at pitches in the authority with the remainder being exported, mainly to North Hertfordshire, Milton Keynes, Luton and Bedford. There is high mobility and close proximity and good accessibility to facilities in areas that adjoin Central Bedfordshire.
- 6.38 **Unmet demand** for AGP provision in Central Bedfordshire represents 12% of the total demand and equates to less than 1 pitch in total. Over the wider study area, the unmet demand is about 15%, the equivalent of about 7 pitches. When aggregated across the whole study area including Central Bedfordshire, aggregated unmet demand is higher in the more densely populated areas and in areas of good accessibility such as main road junctions. AUD is higher in parts of the West Area, Leighton Buzzard and Rural South and Houghton Regis and Dunstable. Central Beds has both types of unmet demand - 78% is due to lack of capacity of existing pitches and 22% is because local residents live outside the catchment area of a pitch.
- 6.39 **Usage** - Across Central Bedfordshire over 98% of the total capacity of AGP's is utilised. There is 100% used capacity in the West Area and Houghton Regis and Dunstable, and this does not "dip" significantly in the other sub areas, East Area is 94.5% and Leighton Buzzard and Rural South is 97.6%. This includes the second pitch in the area at Cedars Upper School that opened in 2012.
- 6.40 **Import/export** - Central Bedfordshire is a net exporter of demand for AGPs to LAs outside of about 1000 visits. It retains only 54% of its own SD and exports 46%, slightly mitigated by 32% of capacity imported from outside. In general therefore it relies on pitches outside the district to meet some of its demand, and in particular Luton, Bedford, MK and North Herts, as suggested above, with some import from the same areas (plus

Aylesbury Vale) where pitches in Central Beds are more convenient to residents outside the district.

- 6.41 **Relative share** - In terms of comparison against the national figure, relative share is slightly higher (+16%). Despite the relative lack of pitches, accessibility to pitches outside the district is good with a relatively low population sharing them. The overall score masks some variations within the area, with highest positive scores in the East Area and Leighton Buzzard and Rural South with values of +25% and +29% of the national average respectively, while the West Area and Houghton Regis and Dunstable have a value of +3% to the national average.
- 6.42 The FPM assessment considered the needs of both hockey and football separately, as these are the two main beneficiaries of such facilities.
- 6.43 **Summary of key issues for hockey** - There are no big issues for hockey arising from the hockey specific analysis, and the findings are low key. The total supply of hockey pitches is 0.8 and the total demand from Central Bedfordshire residents is for 1.7 pitches. The supply and demand balance therefore shows a deficit of less than 1 pitch. However based on the number and location of pitches in the rest of the study area much of this deficit can be met by other pitches for hockey, which effectively results in a deficit of only 0.17 pitches for hockey.
- 6.44 **Summary of key issues for football** -The total unmet demand for AGP's specifically for football on football is only 0.76 pitches. The main concern is that all 6 pitches considered in run 1 are working at 100% of their capacity. So whilst there is not that much unmet demand for AGP's for football (i.e. less than one pitch), it does mean there is no spare capacity. There is a very fine balance between the low unmet demand and pitch use at 100% of pitch capacity in 2012. Central Bedfordshire exports some 38% of its total satisfied demand for football to pitches located in the wider study area. So whilst the total satisfied demand for AGP's for Central Bedfordshire residents for football use is an impressively high 88% of total demand, this is in part because Central Bedfordshire exports a lot of its football demand to the wider study area.

Conclusions for run 1 of FPM Modelling

- 6.45 Current supply of AGPs (including planned and committed pitches) is slightly lower than average, and there is a crude shortfall of pitches if comparing supply and demand within the district alone. In the wider study area there is a larger shortfall.
- 6.46 However satisfied demand is very high, and the relative share of Central Bedfordshire residents well above average, and this is due to good access by local residents to pitches in the wider study area. Unmet demand is consequently relatively low and only the equivalent of one pitch over the whole area. When aggregated over the wider area to take into account travel catchments, there are some hotspots in CB where additional pitches could be justified though this would drag in some demand from outside the district. Unmet demand is caused more by a lack of capacity at pitches than by residents living outside the catchment of a pitch.
- 6.47 Central Bedfordshire is a significant net exporter of demand for AGPs to neighbouring local authority areas who meet 14% more of Central Bedfordshire demand than vice versa.

- 6.48 The main issue for AGPs in the district is that nearly all existing capacity is utilised and effectively all pitches are full.
- 6.49 It is likely therefore that additional pitches can be justified at present in Central Bedfordshire, to release some spare capacity and partly redress the export of demand outside. A further issue at present is the imbalance between sand filled and 3G pitches and their prime users.

Summary of run 2 (the future situation in 2022) of FPM Modelling

- 6.50 **Supply** – the supply of AGPs in Central Bedfordshire increases by one pitch (at All Saints Academy in Houghton Regis), and the effective supply (scaled for hours available) increases from 5.6 to 6.5 pitches. The supply comprises 3 sand filled and 4 3G, which is an unusual balance. There are 3 further pitches provided in the rest of the study area by 2022 (at Barnfield South Academy and Barnfield West Academy in Luton (now open) and AFC Kempston in Bedford). All three pitches have a 3G surface. The total supply of pitches in the wider study area in 2022 is 54 pitches (scaled to 44 pitches when the hours available for public use are assessed). Total supply of pitches in Central Beds represents 4800 visits.
- 6.51 **Demand** – total demand increases by about 3%, compared with a population increase of 13%, reflecting an ageing population, and in run 2 represents 6050 visits, the equivalent of 8 pitches.
- 6.52 **Supply/demand comparison** – the 2010 shortfall (when assessing supply against demand crudely) of about 2 pitches reduces slightly to about 0.5 pitches (i.e. threefold) and the apparent shortfall in ROSA also falls by about 1 pitch. So within Central Bedfordshire and over the whole study area there remain insufficient pitches to meet local demand (but with the provisos outlined above about the robustness of this measure).
- 6.53 **Satisfied Demand** - Satisfied demand for AGPs increases overall within the area by 10% in terms of total visits, to 5500, and this increases as a proportion from 88% to 91% from in Run 1. The location of the new pitch at All Saints Academy in Houghton Regis (and the 2 new pitches in Luton and the one in Bedford UA) re-distribute demand around the whole study area. In Houghton Regis and Dunstable satisfied demand increases to 94% in run 2 because of the new All Saints Academy pitch, up from 89% in run 2. In the West Area satisfied demand increases to 86%, up from 80% in run 1. The proportion of satisfied demand retained and exported outside the district remains similar to run 1.
- 6.54 **Unmet demand** - with increased population, but additional capacity, UD levels decrease in percentage terms from 12% to 9%, a slight reduction in the equivalent number of pitches (which remains at less than 1). This is spread over much of the area, but when aggregated there are hot spots in the Leighton Buzzard and rural south area in the area south of Luton and a second area around Leighton Buzzard town, around Dunstable itself and in areas of high accessibility near the M1. However much of this aggregated unmet demand is dragged in from the rest of the study area, where unmet demand in run 2 is for 7 pitches, compared with less than 1 pitch in Central Beds

- 6.55 The levels of unmet demand are now more the result of lack of accessibility to halls mainly by those without access to a car, although capacity issues still account for two thirds of the total.
- 6.56 **Usage** – the used capacity of pitches is estimated to be 98% of total capacity in run 2, unchanged from run 1. The increase in pitch supply between runs 1 and 2 with the All Saints Academy pitch and the 3 other pitches in the wider study area soaks up some of the unmet demand in Central Bedfordshire. However there is not a sufficient increase in pitch supply to bring down the used capacity of pitches which remains very high. Used capacity will only start to decrease when the pitch supply increase is greater than the total demand increase and by so doing reduces unmet demand and creates some “spare capacity”. Individual pitch capacity.
- 6.57 **Import/export** - the district retains a larger amount but smaller proportion of its own SD (2900 visits compared with 2750), but at the same time becomes a smaller net exporter of demand than in run 1, thus relying more on the availability of pitch space within Central Bedfordshire. However the district remains a significant exporter of demand to neighbouring areas.
- 6.58 **Relative share** – RS in the district as a whole and within each area increases significantly, as the result of additional pitches, and is consistently higher than the national average. The district figure is 25% above the average, and the sub areas vary between 15 and 31% above average. The ROSA also has a better RS than in run 1 (&5 above average compared with 1%)
- 6.59 The geographical distribution of the RS remains the same, and no small area of the district has below average RS.
- 6.60 **Findings for Hockey** - In run 2 there is one additional AGP for hockey use at All Saints Academy in Houghton Regis. This has however since been laid as a 3g pitch. The FPM analysis indicates that by 2022, there is virtually no unmet demand (0.17 of a full size pitch and is unchanged between runs 1 and 2) and much of the hockey demand continues to be exported to neighbouring areas. It should however be noted that this overstates the hockey provision by one pitch (due to the actual provision of a 3g pitch at All Saints Academy, Dunstable rather than a sand based pitch).
- 6.61 **Summary of key issues for Football** - There is very little change in the findings for football between runs 1 and 2, because supply does not alter and demand increases marginally.
- 6.62 However satisfied demand increases to 91%, and total unmet demand is reduced accordingly, and remains at the equivalent of less than 1 pitch overall.
- 6.63 As with run 1 the concern is that all of the 6 pitches are working at 100% of their capacity in run 2. So whilst unmet demand for AGP's for football is very low, it does also mean that the existing pitches are working at maximum capacity and there is no spare capacity. The fine balance between low unmet demand but 100% pitch capacity remains in 2022. The new 3g pitch now provided at All Saints Academy may reduce this slightly.

Conclusions for run 2 of FPM Modelling

- 6.64 The supply of AGPs in Central Bedfordshire and the whole study area (particularly Luton) increases significantly and demand increases only marginally. The crude balance between supply and demand with the district therefore drops significantly to much less than 1 pitch.
- 6.65 Relative share in Central Bedfordshire and the whole study area rises steeply and is now up to 31% better than the national average.
- 6.66 Satisfied demand increases overall to 91% as additional pitches meet some of the previous unmet demand in run 1, and unmet demand accordingly is reduced to 9% or the equivalent still of less than 1 pitch overall. Aggregated unmet demand is in sufficient concentrations in some parts of Central Bedfordshire to justify additional pitches, but reflects unmet demand both inside and outside of the area and would drag in usage from outside if new facilities were built.
- 6.67 Demand is still exported overall but to a lesser extent than in run 1. The main issue in run 2 remains the almost complete utilization of all capacity at the (now) 7 pitches in Central Beds, which would justify additional capacity being provided. Overall conclusions and summary of FPM Modelling

Overall Conclusions and Summary of FPM Modelling

- 6.68 Overall the projected large increase in population up to 2022 is not creating significant changes in demand for full size AGPs. Rounding things up there is a need for one full size pitch in Central Bedfordshire to meet the level of unmet demand both now and projected by 2022, but this is spread across much of the area.
- 6.69 When aggregated, the hot spot locations for unmet demand are in the Leighton Buzzard and rural south area particularly south of Luton and around Leighton Buzzard itself, in Dunstable, and along the M1 corridor, in particular Harlington (east of M1) and Toddington (west of M1) and the A421 junction/rural area east of Milton Keynes. It is higher at these locations because a lot of demand is imported from outside Central Bedfordshire to accessible locations, where unmet demand is for 7 full size pitches by 2022. So these locations in Central Bedfordshire “soak up” some of the unmet demand in the wider study area.
- 6.70 Without the provision of any further new pitch(es) the estimate is that used capacity of the 6/7 pitches in Central Bedfordshire now and in 2022 will be up to 100% of their total capacity. There is therefore no “spare pitch capacity” or headroom and contingency for any pitch being taken out of use. To create this headroom used capacity will only start to decrease when the pitch supply increase is greater than the total demand increase and by so doing create some “spare capacity”. In effect this means providing 2 new full size pitches and thereby building in some spare capacity. Even so, the then 9 pitches would still be working at around 80% of their total capacity.
- 6.71 In terms of locations for new pitch(es) and modeling options for new pitch provision to lower unmet demand/create spare capacity, it is the hot spot locations already described to focus on. In selecting locations it can also be as much about meeting sports specific development requirements and possibly securing funding through the location of new housing development as locations which best suit projected future demand.

6.72 All these findings assume that the 2012 rates and frequencies of participation in AGPs for football and hockey remain unchanged between 2012 – 2022. Should participation increase then total demand and unmet demand will increase and vice versa with a decrease in participation between 2012 - 2022. Sport specific sections indicate that there are projected increases in the rate of participation for both football and hockey.

6.73 Specific requirements for AGPs for football and hockey will be considered in the sport specific sections.

Key issues to Address – AGPs

6.74 It is essential that theoretical tools (i.e. Active Places Power, Sport England Facilities Planning Model, Sport England Facility Calculator) are considered alongside consultation and sports development needs.

6.75 The key issues arising from the application of the tools are:

- The APP assessment finds that relative provision of AGPs in Central Bedfordshire is very low, although most residents can access a pitch within a reasonable time because of pitches in adjacent local authority areas.
- The SFC estimates that at present there is sufficient demand in Central Bedfordshire at normal participation rates for 7.5 full size pitches in community use, compared with current provision of 8 pitches in some form of community usage. From this crude assessment, there appears to be sufficient pitch space in total to meet this expected demand from Central Bedfordshire residents. In addition, other tools indicate that pitches in neighbouring LA area will pick up some usage from Central Beds residents
- The FPM assessment confirms that while there is relatively low provision of pitches, local residents have good access to pitches and actual unmet demand is low. The main issue is that now and in the future, Central Beds residents depend on pitches in Luton, Bedford and other neighbouring areas, and also that all existing pitches are used to capacity. There is a case for 1-2 new pitches to meet the needs of hockey and football now and in the future.
- The significant increase in population is likely to generate demand for an additional facility over the course of the strategy period.

6.76 Specific issues relating to AGPs for each sport are considered in the Football and Hockey sections

7. Football

Introduction

7.1 This section evaluates the adequacy of pitches for football and provides:

- An overview of supply and demand for football
- An evaluation of the overall adequacy of pitches to meet demand
- Key issues and strategic priorities the strategy will address

Football in Central Bedfordshire – An Overview

Pitch Supply

7.2 There are 192 public football pitches in Central Bedfordshire and these are summarised in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 – Community Use Pitches

Placemaking Area	Adult Football Pitches	Junior Football Pitches	9 v 9 Pitches	Number of Mini Football Pitches	Provision Per 1000 Population
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	16	9	1	4	0.58
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	20	12	1	5	0.70
North	59	31	3	31	0.83
Central Bedfordshire	95	52	5	40	0.75

7.3 Table 7.1 shows that that the majority of football pitches in Central Bedfordshire are located in the North Placemaking area. Provision in these parts is equivalent to 0.83 pitches per 1000 compared to just 0.58 per 1000 population in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking area. Each area contains at least one of all types of pitches and the proportion of each type of pitch is similar except for higher levels of mini pitches in the North Placemaking area.

7.4 In addition to the community use pitches highlighted above, there are numerous football pitches at school sites across Central Bedfordshire. These can be subdivided into two categories:

- Those that are used by the local community
- Those for the private use of schools only

7.5 Table 7.2 summarises the approximate number of school pitches (Several schools indicate that this changes very frequently) that are currently used by the community. These pitches are located at 40 sites.

Table 7.2 – School Pitches Used by the Community

Placemaking Area	Adult Football Pitches	Junior Football Pitches	9 v 9 Pitches	Number of Mini Football Pitches	Proportion of Total Pitches Used
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	2	7	0	6	33%
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	9	2	1	8	35%
North	7	11	0	21	24%
Central Bedfordshire	18	20	1	35	28%

7.6 Table 7.2 reveals that a relatively high proportion of the total pitches used are at school sites (28% across Central Bedfordshire as a whole). There is a higher reliance upon school sites in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South and Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking Areas than in the north. These figures should be treated as indicative only, as all pitches available at each school site are used in the above totals, but in the majority of cases, only one or two pitches on site are used by the community. It does however clearly reflect the importance of school facilities in providing for pitch sports within Central Bedfordshire.

7.7 Pitches that are used informally or are available for community use include; Leighton Middle School, Vandyke Upper School, Swallowfield Lower School, Beecroft Lower School, Brooklands Middle School, Burgoyne Middle School, Caddington Village School, Cedars Upper School, Clipstone Brook Lower School, Etonbury Middle School, Gothic Mede Lower School, Greenfield School, Lark Rise Lower School, Mill Vale School, Oak Bank School, Pulloxhill School, Redborne Upper School and Community centre, Sandye Place Middle School, Shuttleworth College, Streetfield Middle School, Russell Lower School, Ardley Hill Academy, Ashton St Peters Lower School, Arnold Junior School, St Marys Lower School, Clophill, Derwent Lower School, Henlow, Kingsland Campus, Houghton Regis, Firs Lower School Ampthill, Harlington Lower School, Lancot Lower School, St Georges School, Beaudesert Lower School, Maulden Lower School, Ramsey Manor Lower School, Raynesford Lower School, Southcott Lower School, Stratton Upper School, Roecroft Lower School, Templefield Lower School, Watling Lower School, Dunstable and Woodlands Middle School.

7.8 Almost all of these sites are used on an informal basis. Some of the larger schools indicate that they have more formal arrangements for the use of their facilities, specifically:

- Van Dyke Upper School
- Stratton Upper School

7.9 These schools are however able to make decisions relating to public access to their pitches at any time.

7.10 Map 7.1 illustrates the location of all football pitches in Central Bedfordshire demonstrating those facilities that are available for community use.

7.11 The 192 pitches (mini, 9 v 9, junior and adult) pitches that are available for formal community use located at 92 sites. Map 7.2 illustrates the scale of facilities that are available for formal community use. It clearly demonstrates that the majority of sites are relatively small scale and contain just one or two playing pitches. The average site size across Central Bedfordshire is just over 2 pitches.

Map 7.1 – Distribution of grass football pitches across Central Bedfordshire

TO BE INSERTED Post approval

Map 7.2 – The Scale and Distribution of Community Use Football Pitches

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Disused and Lapsed Sites

7.12 While not currently functioning as formal playing pitches, it is also important to consider playing fields that have previously functioned as such, as it may be necessary to bring them back into play and they may offer an opportunity to meet existing deficiencies. Such sites in Central Bedfordshire are currently as follows;

- Heathfield School (Caddington)
- Roecroft Lower School (Stotfold)
- Hunting Engineering Sports Ground

Other Facilities

7.13 There are 8 full size Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) that complement the spread of grass football pitches across Central Bedfordshire. Of these, five are 3g surfaces, meaning that they are specifically designed for football. The remainder are sand based and can also be used for football training.

7.14 The 3g pitches are located at:

- Creasey Park, Dunstable
- Defence and Intelligence Security Centre, Chicksands (limited / no community access)
- Redborne Upper School and Community Centre, Ampthill
- Cedars Upper School, Leighton Buzzard
- All Saints Academy, Dunstable

7.15 They are supplemented by a network of smaller AGPs located at:

- Ashton Middle School, Dunstable (sand based) (private use)
- Briants Lane Sports Ground (sand based) (Heath and Reach)
- Biggleswade Football Club (needle punch carpet surface)(Biggleswade)
- Robert Bloomfield Middle School (3g)Shefford
- Newton Recreation Ground(3g), Dunstable
- RAF Henlow (recently resurfaced).

7.16 Section 4 provided detailed modelling of the adequacy of AGPs. Specific detail for football will be considered later in this section.

Demand

Active People and Market Segmentation (Sport England)

7.17 Table 3.5 indicated that according to the Active People Survey, nationally, between 2005/6 (Active People Survey 1) and 2011/2012 (Active People Survey 6) participation in football has declined from 4.97% to 4.94%.

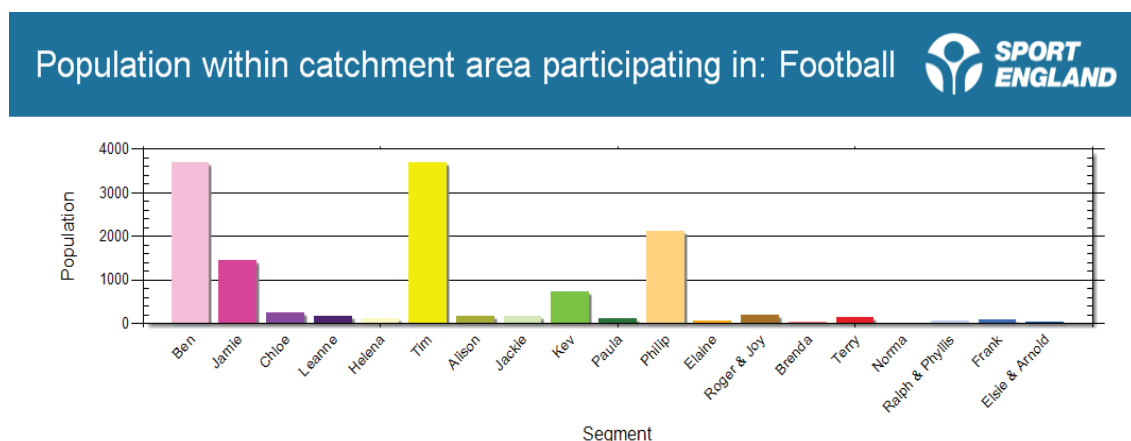
7.18 Using the Active People Survey and Market Segmentation, it is possible to evaluate how many residents of Central Bedfordshire **do** participate in football and how many of the population **would like** to participate in football. It is also possible to understand how this varies across different parts of Central Bedfordshire.

7.19 Map 7.3 overleaf shows spatially the percentage of the Central Bedfordshire population who, based on the Active People survey findings, are currently participating in football. Chart 7.1 overleaf sets out the profile of current participation in football across the 19 market segments.

Map 7.3: Percentage and location of the adult population who do play football



Chart 7.1: Profile of the market segments who participate in football in Central Bedfordshire



7.20 As can be seen, participation in football is relatively consistent across all areas, between 5.1-10%. More specifically, it ranges between 6.1% and 7.3% and is marginally higher to the west of Central Bedfordshire.

7.21 There are four market segments that dominate participation in football, specifically Ben (3685), Tim (3687), Philip (2112), Jamie (1452) and Kev (724). People in these groups represent 83% of all players.

7.22 The Active People analysis of the percentage of adults who **would like** to play football is represented in map and bar chart form and set out in Map 5.4 and Chart 5.2 overleaf.

Map 7.4: Percentage and location of the adult population who would like to play Football.

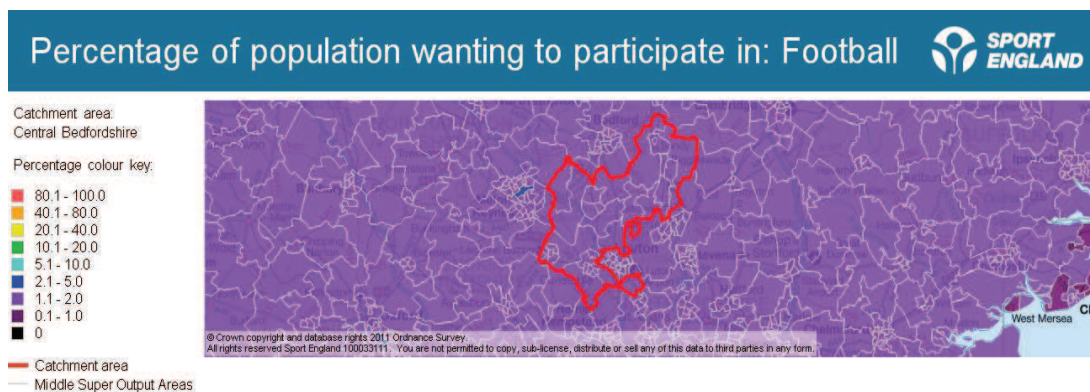
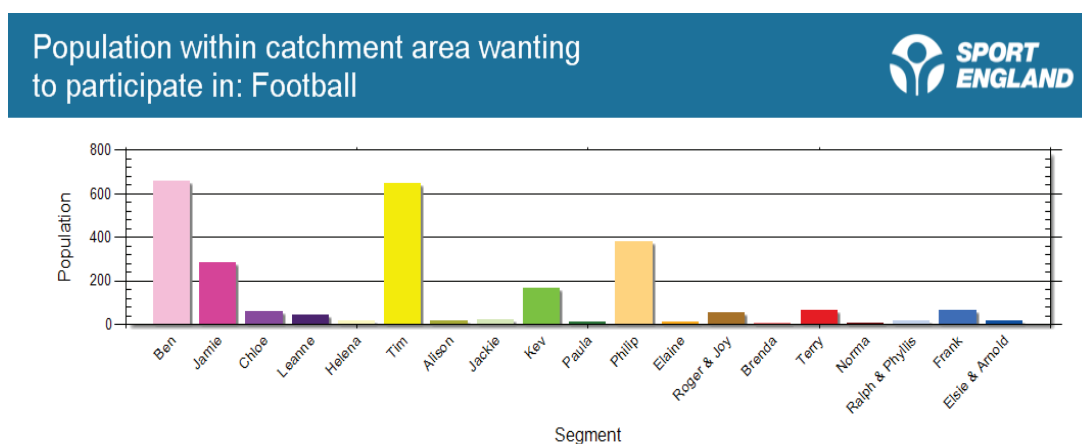


Chart 7.2: Profile of the market segments who would like to play football



7.23 The map and bar chart demonstrate that the number of people in Central Bedfordshire who would like to play football is between just 1.1 and 2%. The segments that would like to increase the amount of football they play are similar to those that currently play – Ben, Tim, Philip and Jamie as well as Kev. These segments together represent 84% of players who do not currently play but would like to.

7.24 Table 7.3 sets summarises the above statistics, providing an indication of the exact number of people who currently play and would like to play, according to Sport England Market Segmentation and Active People Surveys.

Table 7.3 – Participation in Football

DO PLAY POPULATION	% of Adult Population	WOULD LIKE TO PLAY POPULATION	% of Adult Population	Total Number and % who do/would play
13214	6.9%	2535	1.3%	7.96%

Football Association (FA) Participation Report

7.25 The FA record the number and type of football clubs that are affiliated for each season and as a result are able to undertake analysis of participation for each local authority area.

7.26 Reports for Central Bedfordshire for the season 2012 – 2013 provide a comparison with participation in that season and during the previous year. This is set out in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4 – Participation trends in Central Bedfordshire between 2010 and 2012

Area and Year	Adult Male Football (Number of Teams)	Female Football Participation (Number of Teams)	Junior Male Football Participation (Number of Teams)	Junior Female Participation (Number of Teams)	Mini Soccer (Number of Teams)
Central Beds 2011/2012	152	5	271	33	224
Central Beds 2012 / 2013	156	6	267	33	231
Central Beds % change	+2.6%	+2%	-1.5%	0%	+3.1%
East England % change	-0.3%	0%	-0.1%	-0.1%	+0.5%
National % change	0%	0%	-0.2%	-0.1%	+0.3%

7.27 It demonstrates that overall, and contrasting with national and regional trends, with the exception of junior male and female football, there has been an increase in participation between 2010 and 2012. The decline in junior male football is marginally larger than that seen nationally and regionally.

7.28 The FA measure participation in football by conversion rates (the proportion of the population in the relevant age group that play football). Analysis of conversion rates reveals that;

- the overall conversion rate is higher than both the East average and national average (7.6% / 6.2% / 5.2% respectively) – this means that football participation in Central Bedfordshire is strong, and
- adult participation is the only area where conversion rate is lower than the East average – in Central Bedfordshire it is 5.8% compared to 6.6% in the East Region. The conversion rate in Central Bedfordshire is higher than national levels (5.2%)
- participation across Central Bedfordshire is growing, particularly in the Leighton Buzzard and Central areas.

7.29 FA analysis compares participation in Central Bedfordshire with that of similar neighbouring authorities. It indicates that participation is higher than that in most other areas and that as a consequence, there is limited latent demand. Baseline participation targets (which seek to challenge all local authorities to perform at levels equivalent to those in the same family group in the top quartile in terms of performance) are met.

7.30 Adding to the strong levels of performance in terms of participation, FA data reveals that 32.8% of clubs have achieved community club / development club or charter standard status. This compares positively to 24% nationally. 80% of youth and mini soccer teams play in a club with charter standard status. This suggests that there are strong structures for football in Central Bedfordshire. The data reports just 34 teams travelling out of the Central Bedfordshire to play.

7.31 Analysis demonstrates that the peak age for football in Central Bedfordshire is U9. Strong participation at a young age is likely to lead to high demand at junior and senior football levels too as players maintain an interest in the game. This in turn may require higher levels of facility provision. There is however a decline in participation around the U17 and U18 age groups, which reflects national trends (although Bedfordshire FA is seeking to address this – see later in this section).

7.32 It is difficult to directly compare the FA football participation findings on conversion rates and the Sport England market segmentation findings for football given they have different purposes of analysis. Both sets of figures provide contextual analysis only and should be used to support the analysis of issues emerging through analysis of current football participation using the playing pitch methodology.

Current Football Participation

7.33 Football is the most popular outdoor sport in Central Bedfordshire and in total there are 703 teams, of which 22% play senior football. Table 5.5 summarises the spread of teams currently based in Central Bedfordshire by Placemaking area. It also considers the amount of teams created in proportion to the population of each area.

Table 7.5 – Football Teams in Central Bedfordshire

Placemaking Area	Adult Teams	Junior Teams	9 v 9 Teams	Mini Soccer Teams	Teams per 1000 population
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	32	32	4	56	2.12
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	34	67	0	50	2.42
North	91	155	8	174	2.52
TOTAL	157	254	12	280	2.42

7.34 Table 7.5 indicates that overall, taking into account the size of the population, the North Placemaking Area contains the highest proportion of teams per 1000 population (2.52). Given the size of the population, participation is lowest in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking Area. This accords with analysis outlined in Section 3 which indicated

that levels of physical activity are lower in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area than in other parts of Central Bedfordshire.

7.35 In addition to the above teams, the following teams are based in Central Bedfordshire but currently travel into neighbouring authorities to play their home fixtures:

- AFC Clophill - Leagrave School, Luton
- Arlesey Town Ladies 2nd - Fearnhill School, Letchworth
- Caddington Chequers – Luton
- Cranfield Colts U15, U13 and U12 - North Crawley Recreation Ground;
- Dunstable Rangers - Cavendish Rd, Markyate
- Dunstable Town Ladies - Vauxhall Rec C Luton

7.36 Analysis of the distribution of play indicates that teams are based in settlements of all sizes. There is evidence of significant travel and many clubs are dispersed across a multitude of sites. There are numerous clubs containing large numbers of teams and there are numerous very large clubs running over 20 teams, including; Dunstable Town Youth, Flitwick Eagles, EB Lions AFC, Stotfold Junior, Leighton Utd, Woburn Lions Junior and AFC Dunstable. By the 2013 – 2014 season, this had increased to 10 clubs.

7.37 Reflecting the FA trends, 16 clubs report an increase in the number of teams that they are running between 2012 and 2013. During the same period, 10 clubs have experienced decline, with the main reasons for this given as a lack of membership, internal politics, a lack of facilities and the distances that players are expected to travel (resulting partly from a perceived lack of facilities). The majority of growth appears to be in junior teams but decline also focuses in these age groups.

7.38 While growth has occurred in teams in all Placemaking areas, the majority of participation increases have taken place in the North Placemaking Area (69% of clubs reporting growth are based in the North). Many market towns are now experiencing significantly high demand for pitches due to the growth of clubs associated with the town.

Leagues

7.39 The league structure across Central Bedfordshire is relatively complex with clubs involved in just under 40 different leagues of which circa 50% are adult leagues.

7.40 The key local leagues that teams participate in are summarised below:

Adult teams

- Bedford and District Sunday Football League – large league with six divisions and a U21 division. Play Sunday morning
- Bedfordshire County Football League – five divisions playing Saturday afternoon. The premier division is at Step 7 of the National League system

- Leighton and District Sunday Football League – four divisions playing Sunday morning
- Spartan South Midlands Football League – league is part of the national football pyramid (Step 5 – Step 7) meaning that there are specific requirements for facilities. Matches are played on a Saturday

7.41 There are seven teams playing at step 6 or higher in the National Pyramid structure, specifically:

- Crawley Green (play at Barton Rovers)
- Barton Rovers (Barton Rovers)
- Arlesey Town (play at Arlesey)
- Stotfold (play at Stotfold)
- Potton (play at Potton)
- Biggleswade Town)(Biggleswade)
- Biggleswade United (also play in Biggleswade)
- Cranfield United (Cranfield)
- Leighton Town (Leighton Buzzard)
- AFC Dunstable (Dunstable)
- Dunstable Town (Dunstable)
- Ampthill Town (Ampthill).

7.42 These clubs are required to maintain a standard of facility and are judged against the FAs ground grading requirements for the level of competition that they are in or aspire to.

Junior Football Leagues

- Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire County Girls and Women's League – includes three open aged divisions as well as U18, U15 and U11
- Bedfordshire Mini Soccer League – play on a Sunday and include age groups from U7 to U10
- Bedfordshire Youth Saturday League – for teams U12 to U16, play on Saturdays
- Chiltern Junior Sevens and Youth Leagues – includes league and cup fixtures for teams U11 to U18

- Dunstable and District Lower Schools League – lower schools league playing on a Saturday morning
- Mid Bedfordshire Mini Football League – lower schools league playing on a Saturday morning
- Milton Keynes and District Development League – large league accommodating teams U9 to U14. Play a mixture of Saturday and Sunday morning
- Royston Crow Youth and Mini Football League – U7 to u18 for teams within a 25 mile radius of Royston

7.43 Analysis of patterns of play demonstrates that demand is relatively high at peak time, which is a Sunday morning for both junior football and senior football. At this time, 54% of adult teams and 54% of junior teams all wish to play. All teams playing 9 v 9 football also play on a Sunday morning, while peak time demand for mini soccer is Saturday morning.

Quality of Football Pitches

7.44 Pitch quality influences the amount of matches that be sustained, and as a consequence has a significant impact on the overall adequacy of supply. Furthermore, perceived quality of pitches (and ancillary facilities) is almost as important as actual quality and can change usage patterns.

7.45 Pitch quality in Central Bedfordshire has been evaluated in several ways including:

- site visits
- consultation with providers
- consultation with users – leagues and clubs as well as providers (town and parish councils)

Site Assessments

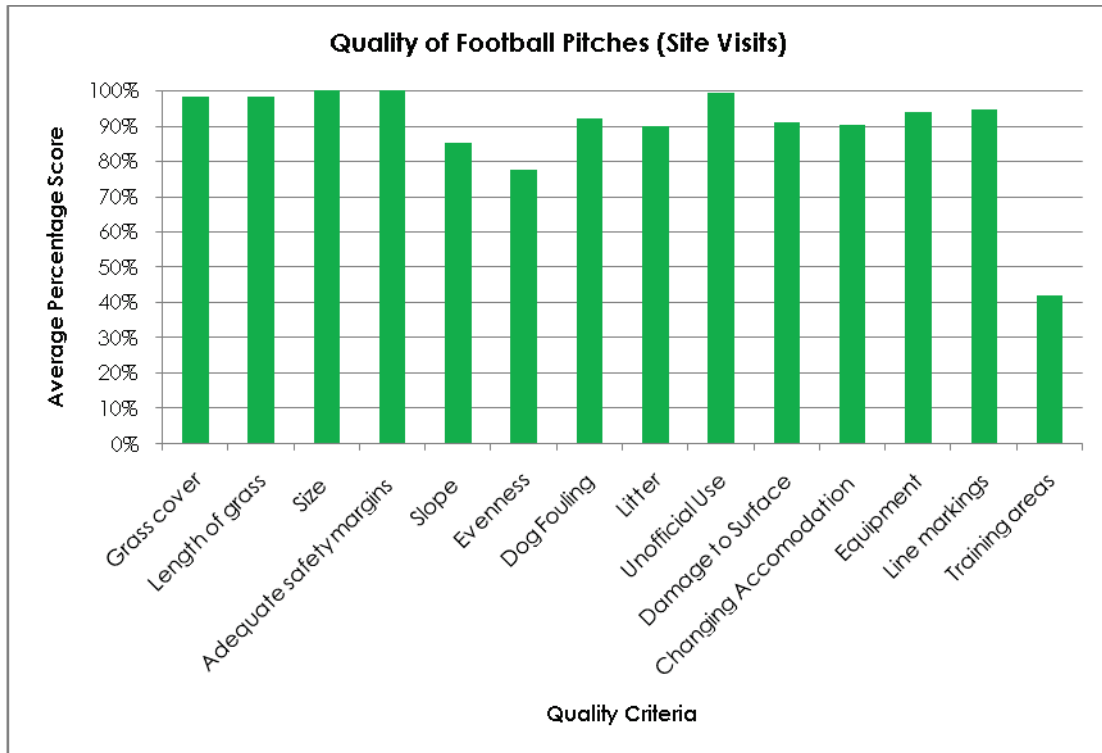
7.46 Site assessments were undertaken using an assessment matrix – these assessments are non-technical assessments designed to provide an overview of pitch quality. The timing of this study meant that many of the visits were undertaken at the beginning of the season and that pitches may therefore appear to be of higher quality than if they had been measured later in the season.

7.47 Overall, the quality of football pitches was good at the time of site visits with the range of scores achieved being 61% - 91% (good to very good). This may be partially attributed to the lack of use over the preceding weeks, but nevertheless pitches were considered to be largely of good quality. Changing facilities however varied significantly and many facilities were heavily fortified, perhaps reflecting issues with vandalism and graffiti.

7.48 With regards pitches, the key issues raised included the evenness of pitch surface, with several pitches having problems with molehills. Gradient was also rated more poorly than most other factors. Almost all sites met with minimum safety margins and few issues with unofficial use were highlighted although some sites contained evidence of dog fouling and / or suffered from problems with litter. In addition, a relatively low proportion of sites provided access to training areas.

7.49 Chart 7.3 illustrates the average quality score achieved for each of the criteria sites were measured against. Site-specific quality issues are discussed later in this section.

Chart 7.3 – Quality issues at football pitches



Changing Facilities

7.50 The proportion of sites that do not contain changing accommodation is low. Ridgeway Avenue Recreation Ground (Dunstable), Downs Road (Dunstable), Mentmore Crescent Recreation Ground (Dunstable), Holmans Field (Eaton Bray), The Pit Recreation Ground (Henlow), Station Park (Leighton Buzzard), The Rufus Centre (Flitwick) and The Glebe Sports Field (Toddington) do not have changing accommodation. It should also be noted that almost all of the schools that offer use of their pitches do not provide access to changing accommodation.

7.51 While the overall amount of changing facilities provided is high, as highlighted earlier, the quality of this provision is more varying.

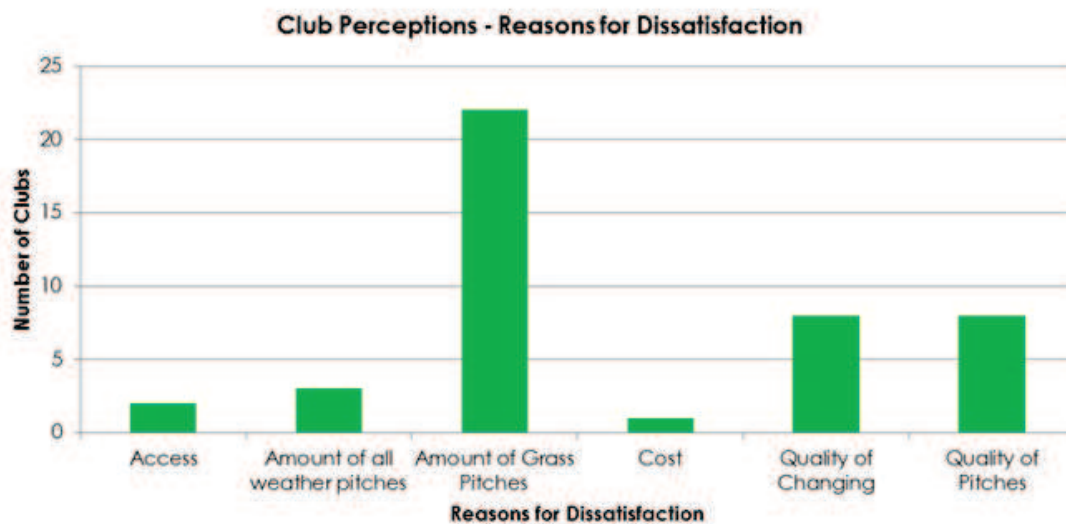
Club Perceptions of Quality

7.52 Just 24% of responding clubs indicate that they are satisfied with pitch provision in Central Bedfordshire.

7.53 Clubs were asked to comment upon the quality of pitch provision in Central Bedfordshire and more specifically on the pitches that they most frequently use. While there is relatively clear dissatisfaction with the overall pitch stock, it is clear that most clubs do not attribute this directly to the quality of pitches, but to the amount of pitches (although there is a view that this then negatively impacts upon pitch quality by causing overuse).

7.54 The reasons given for dissatisfaction with the pitch stock are illustrated in Chart 7.4, which clearly demonstrates that the amount of grass pitches is the area of most significant concern. The quality of pitches and changing accommodation is however the secondary concern for clubs.

Chart 7.4 – Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Pitch Provision

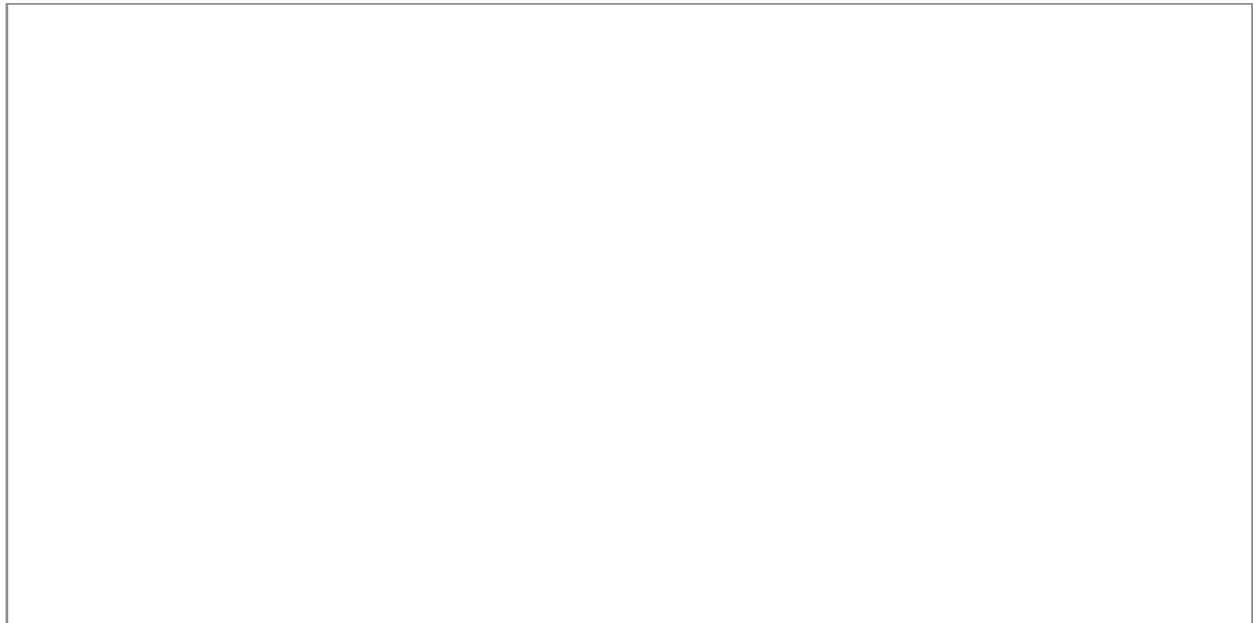


7.55 Geographically, satisfaction with the pitch stock varies between the Placemaking areas:

- 9% of clubs in Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking Area are dissatisfied
- 38% of clubs in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South Placemaking Area are dissatisfied
- 28% of clubs in the North Placemaking area are dissatisfied

7.56 Chart 7.5 reveals that the main concerns for clubs relate to dog fouling, litter and unauthorised use. Parking is also highlighted as a key issue. Reflecting the findings of site assessments, some clubs consider drainage and changing accommodation to be poor and the evenness of pitches is also one of the most poorly scoring factors.

Chart 7.5 – Perceived Quality of Pitches (Clubs)



7.57 Further analysis of the perceptions of clubs demonstrates that there are variations according to the location of pitches, with views relating to the quality of pitches much more negative in Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking Area than in other parts. Contrasting with the overall views of the pitch stock (where dissatisfaction is highest in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South), the quality of pitches was consistently rated most highly in this area. It is hoped that the development of Astral Park will increase club satisfaction in the Leighton Buzzard area.

7.58 It is clear that on the whole, there are greater issues with pitch quality and maintenance in the North area, while concerns in Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking area focus around the secondary issues of unauthorised use and equipment. The quality of changing accommodation is rated consistently across the three areas, but the highest average score is achieved in Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking Area. In the north area in particular, there is a heavy reliance upon small Town and Parish Councils to provide and maintain facilities.

7.59 Table 7.6 therefore summarises the perceived quality of facilities by Placemaking area.

Table 7.6 – Pitch Quality Issues by Placemaking Area

Area	Drainage	Grass coverage	Length of grass	Evenness	Dog fouling	Litter	Unauthorised use	Posts and Sockets	Changing	Parking	Overall Pitch Quality
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	93%	87%	87%	73%	80%	73%	73%	73%	83%	73%	87%
Leighton Buzzard and Rural Surrounds	90%	88%	92%	92%	82%	87%	87%	100%	82%	92%	92%
North	75%	83%	83%	77%	73%	86%	76%	86%	80%	74%	85%

Consultation Results

7.60 Consultations with clubs revealed the following:

- In general, participants in football play local to their home with 47% of club members believed to travel a mile or less, a further 19% between 1 and 3 miles and an additional 24% between 3 and 5 miles. Only 9% of participants travel more than five miles. This suggests that local facilities are important. This is also supported by the inclusion of travelling distance by several clubs as one of the reasons for the loss of teams over the past season
- It is clear that more teams are based locally in the North Placemaking area (48% below one mile) than in Dunstable and Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South (this is perhaps influenced by pitch availability, which will be returned to later. The proportion of players within 3 miles is relatively similar:
 - 63% Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking area
 - 69% Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Placemaking area
 - 66% North Placemaking Area

7.61 15% of players from the Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking area travel further than 5 miles.

7.62 It must be noted that this provides an overall indication of travel distance only, as other factors will be involved in decision making including the availability of clubs and pitches, the standard that players wish to compete at and pitch quality.

- 27% of clubs indicate that they have difficulty accessing facilities for matches. Of these, the highest concerns are in the North Placemaking area, specifically:
 - 9% of responding clubs in Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking Area
 - 31% of responding clubs in Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Placemaking Area
 - 33% of responding clubs in the North Placemaking Area
- Clubs highlighting difficulties are largely clubs containing large numbers of youth teams, but include several ladies teams as well as a small number of adult teams.
- 43% of clubs indicate that they have difficulties accessing training facilities, suggesting that this is of even greater concern. These include:
 - 27% of responding clubs in Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking Area
 - 54% of responding clubs in Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Placemaking Area
 - 48% of responding clubs in the North Placemaking Area

- 19 clubs indicate that they are not currently playing at their preferred venue. The majority of these are seeking single venues that can accommodate all of their teams and / or have aspirations to own and manage their own facility. A small number of clubs highlight that they are playing outside of their home settlement and that they would like to move closer but are unable due to pitch availability.
- Reflecting the issues identified above, many clubs raise site and club specific issues with regards the adequacy of the pitch stock. These include:

Dunstable and Houghton Regis Area

- Houghton Athletic Youth – club dispersed across several sites
- Dunstable Town Youth – would prefer to use other pitches
- Woodside FC – no availability of preferred pitches

Leighton Buzzard and Rural South

- Leighton Park Rangers – would like own ground
- Leighton United – would like to use Astral Park when opened
- Caddington Youth - no availability of preferred pitches

North Placemaking Area

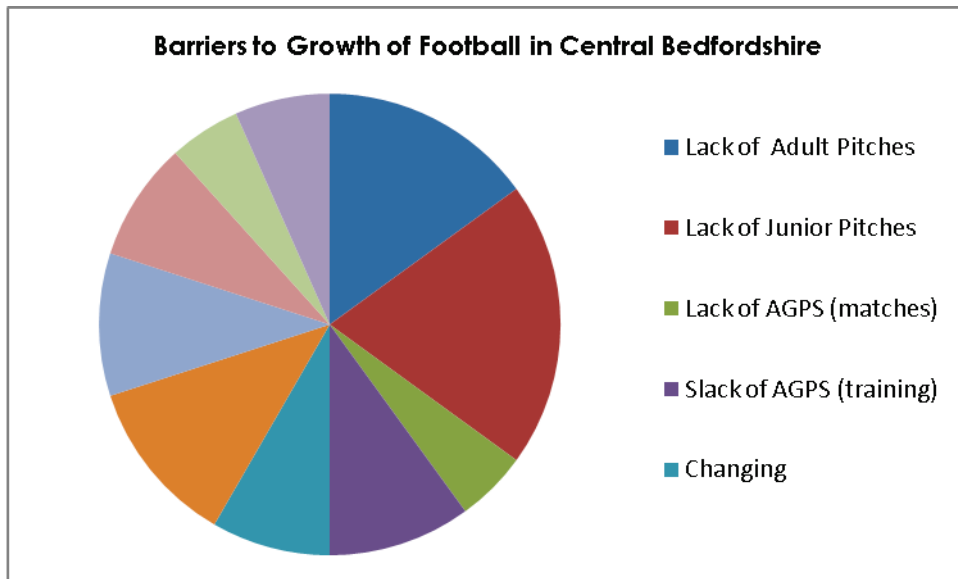
- Biggleswade United – would like own pitch
 - Flitwick Eagles – would like own ground
 - Barton Rovers – no appropriate alternatives to existing pitches
 - GP United – would like to establish home base at one site
 - Stotfold Junior – would like own ground. Stotfold hope to relocate to Arlesey Road when open
 - Cranfield Colts – would like own ground
 - Potton Colts – would like to play in Potton
- Despite recent increases in participation, there is significant potential for further growth. 40 clubs (28 in the north, 9 Leighton Buzzard and 3 in Dunstable) indicate that they have aspirations to increase the size of their club. Most of these relate to increased junior teams, the retention of junior teams to adult teams and the creation of female / girls teams. Taking into account just specific aspirations stated, this could equate to as much as 78 more teams if goals were to be achieved.
 - Several barriers to increasing participation were however raised and these are outlined in Table 5.7 and Chart 5.6. As may be expected due to the levels of dissatisfaction with the provision of football pitches, the existing pitch stock is

perceived to be amongst the greatest barriers to ongoing growth of football in Central Bedfordshire. The amount of clubs in each area highlighting each barrier should be treated as indicative only, as the number of responding clubs in the North Placemaking area is significantly higher than in Leighton Buzzard and Rural South and Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking areas as there are more clubs in the area.

Table 7.7 – Barriers to Growth of Football Clubs in Central Bedfordshire

	Lack of Adult Pitches	Lack of Junior Pitches	Lack of AGPS (matches)	lack of AGPS (training)	Changing	Coaches / Volunteers	Pitch Hire	Internal Funds	External Funds	Shortage of suitable indoor training facilities
Central Bedfordshire	9	12	3	6	5	7	6	5	3	4
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	1	2	0	2	0	2	2	2	0	1
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
North	7	9	3	4	5	4	3	3	3	2

Chart 7.6 – Barriers to Growth of Football Clubs in Central Bedfordshire



Football League Consultations

7.63 All of the main football leagues operating in Central Bedfordshire were offered the opportunity to feedback on pitch provision and participation. The following issues were raised by responding leagues.

- Participation in terms of the number of teams that are playing has been relatively static in recent years. There has been a small decline in mini soccer and adult leagues report a more recent drop in the number of teams registering. It is thought that cost is the main reason for the decline, particularly for adult teams who are finding it increasingly difficult to secure sponsorship.
- There are perceived to be shortfalls of junior pitches both in Central Bedfordshire and in neighbouring authority areas. As a result, there are concerns over the impact of the new FA review, which requires additional pitch sizes and is therefore likely to place extra pressures on the existing pitch stock.
- The quality of pitches is perceived to be adequate for the standard of football played on the whole, although some pitches do require improvement. Many teams now play on private pitches as they are better quality. Changing facilities are a concern in some areas (and sometimes prevent promotion).
- It is believed that changes to the way pitches are managed in Bedford may see an increase in the number of teams migrating to Central Bedfordshire to play. If this happens, it will place further pressures on the pitch stock which is already perceived to be at capacity.
- There is increasing support for 3g pitches and the role that they can play both in terms of providing a venue for training, but also for match play, is recognised.

National Governing Body Perspective - The Football Association (FA)

The FA National Facilities Strategy (2013 – 2015)

7.64 The document sets out the long term vision of the FA for the development of facilities to support football. It has a strapline of “Building, Protecting and Enhancing sustainable Football Facilities”. The strategy research identified several key issues relating to the provision of football facilities in England, specifically;

- playing pitch surfaces – many grass pitches fall below acceptable standards. This contributes to poor play and impedes the development of a players technical ability;
- a lack of 3g pitches – these are essential for player and coaching development;
- Lack of floodlighting – to ensure that facilities are used to their maximum potential; and
- basic facilities – such as toilets or changing facilities are either absent or fall below the minimum standards expected

7.65 Based upon the research undertaken, the strategy indicates that facilities should satisfy the following criteria;

- flexible – to support a variety of match and training formats;
- reflective of demand;
- well maintained;
- club centred;
- financially sustainable; and
- inspiring places to train and play.

7.66 Several challenges that football faces to provide facilities to meet these criteria are highlighted, including falling public investment, changes in society, new forms of football, increased club and league ownership and the need to maximise financial sustainability. In particular, the strategy seeks to promote increased club ownership and the acquisition of facilities for clubs through asset transfer, targeting leases of at least 20 years.

7.67 The FA strategy sets out its priorities under five key themes as follows:

- Leading the development of technical standards – building upon existing guidance and leading the way in technical guidance, drawing upon user feedback
- Facility development and protection of playing fields – supporting local authorities to undertake playing pitch strategies, working with key authorities to ensure that provision meets demand, working to ensure that new developments take into account the needs of football and supporting Sport England with their statutory planning role
- Supporting club and league volunteers – create relevant supporting resources and monitor feedback from volunteers

- Targeted facility improvement schemes – national floodlighting scheme, pitch improvement scheme, self-help scheme for clubs, an equipment bank and advice and guidance services
- Capital investment – promoting good standards and good practice and prioritising facilities impacting the activities of Charter Standard clubs.

7.68 The strategy targets the following key facility improvements nationally;

- natural grass pitches improved – target: 3000;
- a network of new Artificial Grass Pitches built – target: 100;
- a network of refurbished Artificial Grass Pitches – target: 150;
- on selected sites, new and improved changing facilities and toilets;
- continue a small grants programmes designed to address modest facility needs of clubs; and
- ongoing support with the purchase and replacement of goalposts.

7.69 Local to Central Bedfordshire, the Bedfordshire FA indicate that participation in football is thriving and there is a very strong network of football clubs across the area. There has been an upward trend in participation in several years in contrast to national trends. Adult football is historically strong in North Central Bedfordshire whilst the south of the area has strong foundations for youth football.

7.70 Central Bedfordshire Council has part funded a post that focuses on encouraging new players into the game, and a focus on reducing the number of players that drop out at 16 – 18 has paid dividends, with a new county wide league introduced capturing players aged 16 – 21 and facilitating the transition between the junior and senior game. In addition to this, walking football has also been introduced – targeting older / less mobile participants and using the basic form of the game but eliminating strenuous physical activity.

7.71 While female participation is not as strong as that for males, it is hoped that this will improve in future years. Recent efforts have been made to streamline girls' leagues across the pathway and it is hoped that the reduction in fragmentation will lead to clearer pathways and an increase in participation. Open age female participation is strong but there are opportunities to further increase girls' participation through improvements to school / club links as this is not as strong as it currently could be.

7.72 There is also a clear focus upon knowledge and information sharing and both clubs and providers meet regularly in an organised forum to share best practice and promote consistency. A forum for AGP providers for example has recently been established that seeks to support providers in offering an efficient service.

7.73 Central Bedfordshire Council does not provide any football pitches, meaning that provision is focused upon a network of club bases, facilities provided by Town and Parish Councils and schools. This contrasts with neighbouring authorities of Bedford and Luton, both of which rely largely on council provision. There is therefore a degree of importing and exporting teams that takes place.

- 7.74 There are some examples of strong partnership working between football clubs and Town and Parish Councils and many councils provide a high quality service. It is clear however that consistency is lacking across Central Bedfordshire, as there are no pricing structures in place due to the number of different providers that have a role to play. Increasing numbers of clubs are taking on greater responsibility for the maintenance of pitches and there is a need to ensure support and access to grants and training so that the quality of this can be improved.
- 7.75 Linking with the strong foundations for participation, facilities have improved and there is a strong network of 3g pitches linking with the club bases.
- 7.76 Despite this, several clubs are experiencing issues with the existing facility stock and it is anticipated that this will only increase if and when population growth is realised. The FA indicates that improvements to facilities are essential if aspirations relating to football are to be achieved. Several clubs are dispersed across multiple sites and some clubs are struggling to access enough facilities to accommodate all of their teams. Many clubs have identified (or are seeking to do so) opportunities for new / improved. It must also be noted that changes to the way that pitches are provided in Bedford Borough (reductions in the service office while prices are retained) may have further implications on demand for pitches in Central Bedfordshire.
- 7.77 There is also a need to ensure that clubs on the FA pyramid have appropriate facilities. While many of the existing sites in Central Bedfordshire are of a high standard, two clubs share the facility at Barton Rovers and two clubs also use Creasy Park (Dunstable).
- 7.78 The implications of the FA youth review, which requires new forms of the game (specifically 5 v 5 and 9 v 9) has already been partially embraced in Central Bedfordshire, with leagues operating 9 v 9 football this season as a pilot. This has been implemented with success and few issues have been experienced. The new format has seen an increase in the number of teams run, as the number of players required is lower and more closely aligned with 7 v 7, aiding the transition between the two formats and reducing the number of surplus players.
- 7.79 As well as grass pitches, the importance of 3g pitches is increasing, and these sites are particularly important given the close balance of supply with demand in some areas of Central Bedfordshire. A strategic network of facilities is essential and it is believed that some additional facilities are required to complete this network.
- 7.80 Several club and site specific issues were also raised and these are covered within area and club specific comments throughout this section.

Supply and Demand Modelling

- 7.81 The methodology undertaken for the football assessment follows the 8 step process set out in TaLPP. To ensure compliance with the emerging methodology (which is not yet published) as far as possible, the following steps of analysis were also undertaken;
- Engagement with NGBs
 - Evaluation of site specific capacity over a week as well as at peak time
 - Consideration of the impact of training and casual use
 - Analysis of site specific activities and issues

7.82 All assumptions made are outlined in the following section.

Peak Time Demand

7.83 In Central Bedfordshire, there is a reasonable spread of play, with 54% of junior and 54% of senior play taking place at peak time (Sunday morning). In addition all 9 v 9 matches are played on a Sunday morning. Peak time for mini football is Saturday morning. Patterns of play have a significant impact on the number of pitches required as the higher the peak time usage, the more pitches that are required to meet demand (particularly as juniors wish to play at the same time as adults).

7.84 The relatively even balance of play means that many pitches are used in more than one time slot and are therefore often required to sustain more than one match.

7.85 Table 5.8 summarises the results of the supply and demand assessment for peak time football. It includes only those pitches that have secured community use.

7.86 These figures have been calculated using the following steps:

- number of teams in each area wishing to play on each type of pitch;
- temporal demand – i.e. proportion of teams that wish to play at peak time;
- number of Games at Peak Time – calculated by evaluating the proportion of teams that wish to play at peak time and using the assumption that each team will play home and away alternately; and
- comparison of above figures with number of pitches of each type available in each area to determine whether there are shortfalls or surpluses.

7.87 More in depth analysis on a site by site basis is provided later in this section.

Table 7.8 – Adequacy of Pitch Provision in Central Bedfordshire

Placemaking Area	Adult	Junior	9 v 9	Mini	Total Pitch Provision
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	7.36	0.36	-1	-16.44	-9.72
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	10.82	-6.09	1	-13.25	-7.52
North	34.43	-10.85	-1	-32.51	-9.93
TOTAL	52.61	-16.58	-1	-62.2	-27.17

7.88 As Table 7.8 indicates, overall across Central Bedfordshire, there are sufficient adult football pitches to meet demand at peak time. This is however negated by a shortfall of

junior pitches (and peak time is the same day and time as adult pitches) and mini pitches (peak time Saturday morning). This suggests that there are some pressures on existing pitches, particularly as these figures do not take into account the need for rest and recovery and rotation of pitches. It assumes that each pitch is able to sustain two games per week. This provides an average, as the quality of pitches is a key determinant of capacity and overuse of pitches can lead to deterioration of quality.

7.89 Further analysis indicates that it is in the Leighton Buzzard and Rural South and Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking areas where concerns regarding the quantity of pitches are greatest. In both of these areas, shortfalls of pitches almost outweigh the surplus adult pitches, meaning that supply is very closely matched with demand.

7.90 Table 7.2 highlighted the role of schools in meeting the needs of football clubs in Central Bedfordshire. While most of these schools are used informally (and access could be restricted at any time) they remain an important component of the facility stock. Table 7.9 summarises the shortfalls and surpluses when including the facilities at school sites. It clearly demonstrates that there are enough pitches when including schools.

Table 7.9 – Adequacy of football pitches in Central Bedfordshire (including schools)

Placemaking Area	Adult	Junior	9 v 9	Mini	Total Pitch Provision
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	9.36	7.36	-1	-10.44	5.28
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	19.82	-4.09	2	-5.25	12.48
North	41.43	0.15	-1	-11.51	29.07
TOTAL	70.61	3.42	0	-27.2	46.83

7.91 While the reliance on the use of school sites is clear from the above figures, it must be noted that in almost all instances, school sites can accommodate only one / two teams (and do not therefore meet the needs of large clubs). They also offer limited access to toilets and changing accommodation, and where access may be available, the size/condition of facilities may be a limiting factor. For these reasons, many clubs do not prioritise the use of school sites. Added to this, the changing nature of schools and the introduction of academies, which have greater independence from the local authorities, means that it is becoming much more difficult to guarantee long term community use.

Varying Patterns of Temporal Demand

7.92 Further in depth analysis however indicates that while Table 7.8 and 7.9 assume that patterns of play are similar across Central Bedfordshire, in reality there are some small differences across the area. This is primarily caused by the dominance of different leagues in different areas. This variation has limited impact on the overall peak period but does mean that pressures in some Placemaking areas are higher than appears in previous tables. Table 7.10 summarises the percentage of play in each local authority at peak time.

Most notably, peak time in Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking area is more concentrated than area-wide peak time (Sunday AM). In contrast, play in the North Placemaking area is more spread out than the area-wide average.

Table 7.10 – Percentage of Play in area at Peak Time

Area	Adult Peak (Sunday AM)	Junior Peak (Sunday AM)	9 v 9 Peak	Mini Soccer Peak Saturday AM
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	71%	64%	100% Sunday AM	58% (Sunday)
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	56%	46%	100% Sunday AM	79%
North	45% (Saturday PM)	36%	100% Sunday AM	81%

7.93 Table 7.11 takes these variations in peak time into account and illustrates the adequacy of provision in each area based upon actual temporal demand.

Table 7.11 – Shortfalls and Surpluses taking into account temporal demand in each area

Placemaking Area	Adult	Junior	9 v 9	Mini	TOTAL
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	4.64	-1.24	-1	-12.24	-9.84
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	10.48	-3.41	1	-14.75	-6.68
North	38.525	3.1	-1	-39.47	1.155

The Impact of Quality

7.94 Alongside access to pitches and the dispersion of clubs across multiple pitches, quality of pitches also emerged as one of the significant concerns throughout consultation, particularly with regards the drainage of sites and the undulating and bumpy playing surfaces. Site visits revealed the quality of pitches to be relatively high, although this was caveated by the time of year that pitches were evaluated.

7.95 To provide an indication of the potential impact that poor quality pitches can have on capacity, Table 7.12 summarises the shortfalls and surpluses across Central Bedfordshire of sites known to suffer from poor drainage (through provider and user consultation) are removed, which in total amounted to 40 pitches. It can be seen that pressures on pitches increase, particularly in the North where these quality issues are more apparent.

Table 7.12 – Impact of Poor Quality Pitches

Area	Adult	Junior	9 v 9	Mini	Total Pitch Provision
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	6.36	0.36	-1	-16.44	-10.72
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	7.82	-11.09	1	-13.25	-15.52
North	15.43	-16.85	-1	-38.51	-40.93
TOTAL	52.61	-16.58	-1	-62.2	-27.17

7.96 Notably, many of the large clubs are also located in areas where there is high clay and loam content. This can impact upon the capacity of the pitch and the ability of pitches to sustain the number of matches that are required.

Impact of the FA Youth Review

7.97 The FA Youth Review will see changes to the way that football is played next season. As highlighted, 9 v 9 has already been introduced this season as a pilot, but next season it will be compulsory. Age group requirements will be as follows:

- U7 – 5 v5 (by 2013/14)
- U8 – 5v5 (by 2014/15)
- U9 – 7v7 already established
- U10 – 7v7 already established
- U11 – 9v9 (by 2013/14)
- U12 – 9v9 (by 2014/15)
- U13 - 11v11 or 9v9 optional

7.98 Based upon participation levels this year (and assuming that relevant age groups continue to play next year), by 2014 / 2015 the following numbers of teams will require 9 v 9 and 5 v 5 pitches:

- 9 v 9 – 116

- 5 v 5– 76

7.99 While 5 v 5 pitches can be marked out with cones, 9 v 9 pitches are required to be more formally laid out.

7.100 If current patterns of play are continued (all 9 v 9 matches take place at the same time) there would be a requirement for 58 9 v 9 pitches (there are currently 13). Teams that have previously required junior pitches will require a 9 v 9 pitch instead. This will mean that there is less flexibility for teams of different ages to share pitches and will lead to an overall increase in the number of pitches needed.

Other Forms of the Game – Vets Football and U21

7.101 Increased focus on the development of U21 and veterans leagues may place further pressures on existing pitches. These initiatives seek to encourage people who are not currently playing football to participate and even though matches are likely to be played outside peak time, are likely to generate further demand for pitches.

Frequency of Use of Pitches

7.102 Analysis of surpluses and shortfalls at peak times disguises the frequency of use of pitches across Central Bedfordshire. As set out previously, while demand is focused at peak time, there is a reasonable spread across the weekend with some play midweek, and use of pitches is higher than may initially appear. Table 7.13 summarises the number of matches per week on each pitch (competitive matches only). Figures include only sites secured for community use. It indicates that usage of community pitches is around optimum levels in all areas (circa 2 games per week). Adult pitch usage is however low, while junior and mini pitch usage is much higher.

Table 7.13 – Frequency of Use of Pitches

Placemaking Area	Adult	Junior	9 v 9	Mini	TOTAL
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	1.0	1.8	2.0	7.0	2.1
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	0.9	2.8	0.0	5.0	2.0
North	0.8	2.5	1.3	2.8	1.7
TOTAL	0.8	2.4	1.2	3.5	1.8

7.103 Analysis of formal match play only however ignores other uses of pitches. Many of the pitches are located within council owned and managed parks, or within wider recreation areas and are therefore also used informally. There is evidence of many clubs using pitches to train on during the week and some formal pitches are used primarily for training only.

7.104 This use does not impact upon peak time demand, but adds wear and tear to pitches. Dog fouling and litter was highlighted as one of the major concerns by clubs and several clubs highlighted the impact that informal use of the site has on pitch quality.

Imbalance of Use

- 7.105 While analysis of surplus and deficiencies contained in tables 7.8 to 7.12, as well as the evaluation of the frequency of use of each pitch indicates that the existing pitch stock is stretched (when excluding pitches at school sites) to accommodate the required amount of play, it must be noted that this disguises significant imbalances in the use of pitches both for competitive fixtures and matches.
- 7.106 Analysis of peak time capacity reflects modelling scenarios presented in tables earlier in this section. Many sites are at / nearing capacity at peak times, however there are several pitches that are not used at this time and there are some pitches that receive limited use.
- 7.107 Table 7.14 summarises the situation in each settlement while Table 7.15 provides further detail on site specific usage and quality.
- 7.108 They indicate that in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking area as a whole, reflecting earlier calculations, there is some availability of adult pitches at peak time, however fewer junior pitches have availability, with only 3 sites available at peak times and others oversubscribed. There is a similar situation in Leighton Buzzard and again there are clear imbalances of use.
- 7.109 In the North Placemaking area, pitches are used less interchangeably, but again there are examples of adult pitches being used by junior teams due to a lack of availability of junior pitches.
- 7.110 At a settlement specific level, it is clear that there are particular pressures on pitches in Cranfield, Leighton Buzzard, Arlesey, Flitwick, Potton, Tilsworth, Aspley Guise and Stotfold. In contrast, pitches in Everton, Kensworth, Heath and Reach and Blunham in particular receive limited use.

Table 7.14 – Settlement Specific Issues

Area	Settlement	Issue by Settlement
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Dunstable	Imbalance of use of pitches, some capacity but clear pressures. Pitches used quite interchangeably
	Houghton Regis	Some availability, poor quality pavilions and pitches
	Caddington	Some capacity
	Cranfield	High levels of use, quality concerns
	Eaton Bray	Poor quality, limited additional capacity
	Heath and Reach	Limited use of pitches
	Hockliffe	Nearing capacity
	Kensworth	Limited use of pitches
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	Leighton Buzzard	Imbalance of use. High levels of use associated with Leighton Town FC, some public pitches have lower use. Varying quality but some opportunities for improvement
	Slip End	Small capacity for additional use but poor quality

Area	Settlement	Issue by Settlement
	Studham	Some additional capacity, high quality pitches
	Tilsworth	At capacity and overused
	Totternhoe	Sites under pressure with very little capacity
North	Amphill	Some imbalance of use and pitches approaching capacity. One busy site low lying and approaching capacity
	Arlesey	Pressure on pitches
	Aspley Guise	High levels of use, no additional capacity
	Barton-le-Clay	Qualitative improvements required
	Biggleswade	Provision mixed and capacity pressures on some pitches
	Blunham	Limited use of pitches
	Campton	Well used Saturday
	Clifton	Some remaining capacity but busy periods
	Clophill	Some remaining capacity but busy periods
	Dunton	Busy pitch
	Everton	Limited use of pitch
	Flitton and Greenfield	Scope to increase use
	Flitwick	Some quality issues and sites approaching capacity
	Harlington	Some scope to increase use, qualitative improvements
	Haynes	Small capacity for additional use
	Henlow	Small capacity for additional use (adult), Groveside over capacity
	Houghton Conquest	Scope to increase use
	Langford	Pressures on pitches
	Lidlington	Approaching capacity and quality issues
	Marston	Capacity to increase use, poor quality
	Maulden	Pitch at capacity but good quality
	Mogerhanger	Scope to increase use
	Northill	At capacity, some quality issues
	Northill	Scope to increase use but has poor drainage
	Potton	High demand for junior pitches and junior teams using adult pitches. Over capacity
	Sandy	Capacity at current time
	Shefford	Scope to increase use of pitches although pressures for juniors / mini teams
	Shillington	Poor quality, some additional capacity
	Silsoe	Some limited additional capacity
	Stondon	Some additional capacity
	Stotfold	Poor quality pitches and significant capacity issues

Area	Settlement	Issue by Settlement
	Toddington	Pressures on capacity, varying quality
	Westoning	Poor quality pitches, pressures on pitches from junior teams
	Woburn	Pitches nearing capacity. Heavy use by junior and mini teams

Table 7.15 provides further detail on site specific usage and quality. It includes:

- The number of teams using each site (measured in number of teams)
- The number of pitches at each site (measured in number of pitches)
- An overview of the use per pitch per week (number of matches per week)
- An overview of the capacity of the pitch – this measures the ability of the pitch to sustain the usage it is receiving over a week and assumes that each pitch can take 2 games. It is measured in number of matches i.e. a figure of -1 means that the pitch is overplayed
- An evaluation of the peak time capacity of the site – provides an indication as to whether any additional matches can be sustained at peak time, based upon the current patterns of play at the site.

Table 7.15 – Site Specific Issues and Analysis

Ground Name	Settlement	Placema king Area	Total Teams (no of teams)	Pitch Provision (no of pitches)	Use of Pitch Per week (matches per week)	Peak Time Availability			Peak Time Capacity on Pitch			Comments on Usage	Quality Issues	
						Adult Pitch (matches per week)	Junior Pitch (matches per week)	9 v 9 Pitch (matches per week)	Mini Pitch (matches per week)	Adult (matches per week)	Junior (matches per week)			Min i (ma tch es per wee k)
Creasey Park	Dunstable	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	55	2 adult, 3 junior, 3 mini	3.4375	1	-2	-0.5	2	0	-2	2	Pitches used over capacity, particularly by junior teams	Excellent pitches throughout site
Luton Rd Dunstable	Dunstable	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	3	2 adult	0.75	1.5	0	0	0	1.5	0	0	Capacity to increase use over week, available at peak time	Surrounded by heavily fortified fencing
Ridgeway Ave Dunstable	Dunstable	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	1	2 junior	0.25	0	1.5	0	0	0	1.5	0	Junior pitch available at peak time, potential to increase usage	No changing. Large site with potential to change layout.
Downs Park Rec	Dunstable	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	1	1 adult	0.5	1	-0.5	0	0	1	-0.5	0	No availability at peak time, scope to increase weekly	Lower quality site, no changing

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provision	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues	
Mentmore Drive	Dunstable	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	0	2 adult, 1 junior	0	1	2	0	Pitches used interchangeably with others	No changing
Bennetts Rec	Dunstable	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	7	2 adult	1.75	-1.5	0.5	0	No availability at peak time, almost at capacity	Average quality
Moore Cresc	Houghton Regis	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	3	2 adult, 1 junior	0.5	0	1.5	0	Pitches available at peak time and scope to increase weekly usage	Good quality facilities
Parkside Drive	Houghton Regis	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	13	1 adult, 2 junior, 1 mini	1.625	1	0.5	0	Some availability at peak times, adult and junior teams playing at same times	Poor pavilion. Equipment and parking poor. Site also has public access and suffers from litter, dogs etc

Ground Name	Settlement	Placema king	Total Teams	Pitch Provisio	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues
Tithe Farm HR	Houghton Regis	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	7	3 adult	1.166667	0	0	Capacity to increase use over week, one slot available Sunday	Training area is separate small goal. Dog bins in place but a lot of dog mess. Pavilion in need of improvement
Peter Newton Playing Field (Houghton Regis)	Houghton Regis	Dunstable and Houghton Regis		19 v 9	0	0	0	Pitches used interchangeably with others	
Caddington	Caddington	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	7	2 adult	1.75	0	0	Available at peak time, almost at capacity	One pitch includes dugouts. Good quality facility
Cranfield Recreation Ground	Cranfield	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	5	2 junior	1.25	0	1.5	Capacity at peak time, busy on Saturday, able to accommodate additional use	Other sports churn up pitch - poor surface
	Cranfield	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	0	2 mini	0	0	2	Pitches used midweek by students	

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provision	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues
Cranfield United - Crawley Rd, Cranfield	Cranfield	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	5	1 adult	2.5	0.5	0	0	High levels of use, one available slot at peak time	Poor quality equipment
Cranfielduni v	Cranfield	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	6	1 adult	3	1	0	-1	High use overall, mini teams using adult pitches	
The Rye	Eaton Bray	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	6	1 adult	2	0	0	-2	Optimum use of pitches over week, use of adult pitch by mini teams	Changing accommodation in very poor condition
Holmans' Field	Eaton Bray	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	4	1 junior	0	0	0	0	Pitches used interchangeably with others	No changing
Bryants Lane Recreation Ground	Heath and Reach	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	0	2 junior	0	0	2	0	Capacity - pitches not used for formal play	
Hockliffe Recreation Ground	Hockliffe	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	1	1 adult	0.5	0.5	0	0.5	Capacity to increase use over week, one slot available Sunday	Old wooden changing

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provision	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Peak Time Capacity on Usage	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues
Kensworth Playing Fields	Kensworth	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	0	1 adult, 1 junior	0	1	1	0	Capacity - pitches not used for formal play	
Bell Close LB - Leighton Buzzard Town	Leighton Buzzard	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	5	1 adult	2.5	0	-0.5	0	Adult pitch available at peak time, but high pressures on Saturday. Pitches at capacity	Very old 'stadium', shabby in parts, which has been added to on a piecemeal basis over the years. Pitches average
Pages Park	Leighton Buzzard	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	11	3 adult, 1 9 v9	1.375	0	0	0	Shortfalls of pitches at peak time	Good facility
Vandyke and other schools/parks	Leighton Buzzard	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South		1 junior	0	1	1	0	Pitches used interchangeably with others	Large site with potential to add pitches. Poor changing and suffers with vandalism and dog fouling
Pages Field (The Vynes LB)	Leighton Buzzard	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South		2 adult, 1 junior	0	1	2	0		Pitches average to poor. Some concerns about

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provisio	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Peak Time Capacity on Usage	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues
Mentmore Rd LB	Leighton Buzzard	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	8	1 adult, 1 junior	2	0	0	0	Optimum levels of usage, primarily focused outside peak times	Poor pavilion. Pitches of good quality
Station Park (Linslade Rec)	Leighton Buzzard	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	1	1 junior	0.5	0	0	0	Some capacity at peak times	Relatively poor. No changing
St Andrews Playing Field - Slip End	Slip End	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	2	1 adult, 1 junior	0.5	0	0	0	Capacity to increase use over week, one slot available Sunday	Changing in village hall. One of lower standard pitches. Drainage issues
Studham Sports and Social Club	Studham	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	3	4 adult	1.5	0.5	0	0	Limited availability at peak time, full on Saturday, limited additional capacity	Exceptional grass quality.

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provision	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues					
Stanbridge Rd Tilsworth	Tilsworth	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	28	2 adult, 3 mini	2.8	1.5	-5.5	0	2.5	1.5	-5.5	2.5	Pitches used over capacity, significant pressures from junior teams	Excellent pitches
Church End Rec - Totterhoe Rec	Totterhoe	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	7	1 adult, 1 junior	1.75	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	Limited capacity. Adult pitch available at peak times	Good. Some concerns about dog fouling
Lancot Park Totterhoe	Totterhoe	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	4	1 adult	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Pitches at capacity and no availability at peak times	Good quality facility
Abbey Lane Amphill	Amphill	North	9	1 adult, 1 junior, 1 mini soccer	1.5	1	1	0	-0.5	0	0	-0.5	Usage within reasonable levels, peak periods Saturday, mini teams using other pitches	Site is low lying and appears to be vulnerable to flooding. Suffers from poor drainage and overuse. Poor grass cover. Clubhouse in need of refurbishment

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provision	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues			
Lawrence Park, Amphill	Amphill	North	3	1 adult, 1 mini soccer	0.75	0	1	0	0	1	Scope to increase usage, some capacity for mini football	Good quality facility
Amphill Park	Amphill	North	4	1 adult	2	-0.5	0	-0.5	0	0	Pitches at capacity, pressures on junior pitches, adult pitches used by junior teams	Very smart ground. Excellent facility
Armadillo Stadium (Arlesey Town FC)	Arlesey	North	3	2 adult	0.75	0	2	1	0	0	Some availability at peak time	Struggle with maintenance. Drainage poor
Arlesey Rec	Arlesey	North	6	2 junior, 1 9 v 9, 2 mini soccer	0.6	-1	2	0	1	2	Pressure on junior pitches	
Aspley Guise Common	Aspley Guise	North	14	1 adult, 1 junior, 1 mini soccer	3.5	0.5	1	0	0	0	High levels of use over the week and no additional capacity, but some availability at peak time	Some mole hills, older style changing

Ground Name	Settlement	Placema king	Total Teams	Pitch Provisio	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues
Barton PF and Barton Rovers FC	Barton-le-Clay	North	25	4 adult, 3 junior	1.3888889	2	2	1.5	Potential for additional pitches, overall good facilities but poor ground conditions and grass coverage
Biggleswade Town - Carlsberg Stadium	Biggleswade	North	11	2 adult, 2 mini	1.375	0.5	0.5	-1.5	Pitch usage high, some availability locked. Appears new and very smart. Good but need more facilities
Second Meadow - Biggleswade United	Biggleswade	North	2	1 adult	1	1	1	0	Limited parking
The Lakes Playing Fields, Biggleswade	Biggleswade	North	1	2 junior	0.25	0	0	1.5	Changing accessible via subway under the A1
Stratton Way PF Biggleswade	Biggleswade	North	3	1 adult	1.5	1	1	0	Shortfalls of pitches at peak time
	Biggleswade	North	0	1 adult, 2 junior	0	1	1	2	

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provision	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues		
Eagle Farm Rd Biggleswade	Biggleswade	North	5	1 adult, 1 junior, 3 mini	0.5	1	1	1	1	Capacity at peak times and overall capacity to increase usage	Average pitches, but poor changing and toilets
	Blunham	North	0	1 adult, 1 junior	0	1	1	0	0	Capacity - pitches not used for formal play	
Campton PF	Campton	North	2	1 adult	1	0	0	0	0	Some availability at peak time, at capacity Saturday	
Clifton PF, WhistonCre sc	Clifton	North	4	1 adult, 1 mini soccer	1	-0.5	-0.5	1	0	Scope to increase usage over week but relatively busy. Some spare slots	
Clophill Rec	Clophill	North	2	1 junior	1	1	0	-0.5	-0.5	Capacity to increase use over week, pitches busy on Saturday	

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provision	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues
Dunton Recreation Ground	Dunton	North	4	1 adult	2	0.5	0	Limited availability at peak time, optimum use over week	
Everton Recreation Ground	Everton	North	0	1 adult, 1 mini soccer	0	1	0	Capacity - pitches not used for formal play	
Flitton & Greenfield Park	Flitton and Greenfield	North	3	1 adult, 1 junior, 1 mini soccer	0.5	1	0.5	Some availability at peak times, scope to increase use	Average, storage issues
Flitwick LC	Flitwick	North	10	2 adult, 1 junior	1.6666667	1	0.5	Some availability at peak times, capacity to increase use	Some line marking over fallen leaves at time of site visit. Poor maintenance, drainage and issues with grass coverage
Rufus Centre Flitwick	Flitwick	North	7	2 mini	1.75	0	0	Some capacity for mini soccer	Good quality playing surface, although field used as an overflow car park.

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provision	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues		
Hinkley Rd Rec, Flitwick	Flitwick	North	4	2 adult	1	1.5	0	0	0	Some scope to increase usage, some availability at peak time	Linear site restricts width of pitches. Heavily fortified changing. Poor quality pitches
Bury Orchard Sports Field - New Grounds Harlington	Harlington	North	7	1 adult, 1 junior, 1 mini soccer	1.1666667	1	1	0	-1	Junior team use adult pitch, peak time is Saturday, site available at CB-wide peak time	Changing in good condition. Issues with drainage and molehills, some concerns about public access and dog fouling
Haynes Playing Field	Haynes	North	1	1 adult	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	Capacity to increase use over week, one slot available Sunday	
RAF Henlow	Henlow	North	1	1 adult	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	Capacity to increase use over week, one slot available Sunday	

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provision	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues								
Hurst Grove, Lidlington	Lidlington	North	1	1 adult	0.5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Some availability at peak times, nearly at capacity on a Saturday	Grass cover not uniform. 2 container units also on site. Poor soil leads to associated drainage problems
Marston Moretaine Playing Field	Marston	North	3	2 adult	0.75	1.5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	Available at peak time, scope to increase use across week	Drainage issues and poor grass cover
Maulden Rec	Maulden	North	5	1 junior, 1 mini	1.25	0	-1	0	1	0	0	-1	0	1	0	Pressure on junior pitches at peak times	Good quality
Moggerhanger PF	Moggerhanger	North	1	1 adult	0.5	1	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	Available at peak time, scope to increase use across week	
Ickwell Green	Northill	North	3	1 adult	1.5	1	-0.5	0	0	0	0	-0.5	0	0	0	Pressures on pitches at peak time.	Training lights attached to changing rooms. Oak tree overhangs pitch. Some line marking over fallen

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provisio	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues		
Upper Caldecote Playing Fields (Harvey Close)	Northhill	North	5	3 adult	0.833333	2.5	0	0	1.5	0	Available at peak time, scope to increase use across week	Poor drainage
The Hollow, Potton	Potton	North	2	1 adult	1	1	0	0	0	0	Available at peak time, at capacity Saturday	
Mill Lane Rec, Potton	Potton	North	8	2 adult	1.333333	2	-2	0	2	-0.5	Scope to increase use overall, but high demand for pitches at peak times. Junior teams using adult pitches	
Sunderland Rd Sandy	Sandy	North	11	2 adult, 1 junior, 1 9v9, 2 mini	0.916667	2	0	1	2	2	Scope to increase use over week, pitches available for further use	New pavilion. Issues with parking. Public access results in concerns with dog fouling

Ground Name	Settlement	Placema king	Total Teams	Pitch Provisio	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Peak Time Capacity on Usage	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues
Bedford Rd, Sandy	Sandy	North	3	1 adult	1.5	0.5	0	0	Some availability at peak time, at capacity Saturday	Good, poor parking
Sandy Recreation Ground	Sandy	North		2 adult	0	2	0	0	Capacity - pitches not used for formal play	
Sheffield Memorial Association	Sheffield	North	3	2 adult	0.75	2	0	1.5	Available at peak time, scope to increase use across week	One pitch is slightly larger, though both are capable of adult play.
Belcote Meadow	Sheffield	North	1	1 junior	0.5	0	1	-0.5	Some capacity to increase use, pressures on mini pitches	
Shillington Memorial Playing Field	Shillington	North	9	2 adult, 1 junior, 2 mini	0.9	1.5	0.5	2	Some slots available at peak time	Poor drainage and old equipment. Pavilion too small.
Wrest Park	Silsoe	North	10	2 adult, 1 junior, 2 mini	1	0.5	0.5	0	Minimal capacity available at peak time, scope to increase weekly	Issues with parking and dog fouling.

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provisio	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues
Lower Stondon Rec	Stondon	North	2	1 adult	1	0	0	usage	Kickabout goal behind pitch - training area. Changing compact and functional Poor surface
The Green Stofold	Stofold	North	6	1 mini	3	0	-2	Junior teams use adult pitch. No real availability at peak times	High use of pitches by mini teams
Roker Park	Stofold	North	4	1 adult	2	-0.5	0	Pressures on pitches at peak time.	Enclosed, floodlit ground. Cypress trees beginning to overhang pitch. Poor parking. Clubhouse in need of refurbishment
Riverside Playing Field, Stofold	Stofold	North	3	2 adult	1.5	-1.5	0	No availability at peak time, junior teams using senior pitches	Molehills

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provision	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Peak Time Capacity on Usage	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues			
Hitchin Rd Rec Stoffold	Stoffold	North	4	3 adult	2	0.5	-1.5	0	0	0	0	No availability at peak time, at capacity	Poor changing accommodati on
Poplars	Toddington	North	3	1 junior	1.5	0	0	-0.5	0	-0.5	-0.5	Limited availability at peak times, some scope to increase use over the week	Basic changing
Luton Road (Toddington Rec)	Toddington	North	4	1 adult	2	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	Limited availability at peak times, pitches functioning at capacity	Smart, new style changing block. Poor quality pitches
The Glebe Toddington	Toddington	North	8	1 adult, 1 mini soccer	2	0	1	0	-2.5	0	-2.5	Optimum use over week, shortfalls of mini pitches - juniors using mini pitches	Site has capacity for more pitches. Relatively poor
Westoning Rec	Westoning	North	11	1 adult, 2 junior	1.833333	0.5	2	0	-3.5	0	-3.5	Some capacity at CB peak time. Most play takes place outside peak time. Adult	Poor drainage and uneven surface. Suffers from overuse and informal public access

Ground Name	Settlement	Placemaking	Total Teams	Pitch Provisio	Use of Pitch	Peak Time Availability	Peak Time Capacity on Pitch	Comments on Usage	Quality Issues		
Woburn Vill hall, Crawley Rd	Woburn	North	16	1 adult, 2 junior, 2 mini	1.6	2	1	2	-1	Pitches used by mini teams	Pitches nearing capacity. Heavy use by junior and mini teams
Fox & Duck Stotfold	Stotfold	North	4	1 9v9	2	0	0	0	-1.5	Optimum use over week, at capacity with shortfalls of mini pitches	

Adequacy of AGPs

- 7.111 As set out in Section 6, modelling indicates that while the balance of 3g AGPs is broadly in line with supply, almost all facilities are operating at capacity and there is little scope for additional use. All facilities have recently been developed and as such are of good quality, but reflecting the findings of modelling, all are believed to be heavily used. Reinforcing this, anecdotal evidence suggests that despite additional 3g pitch provision, hockey clubs must still compete against football clubs for access to sand based AGPs.
- 7.112 43% of clubs indicate that they struggle to access AGPs (or floodlit facilities for training). Recent additions to the pitch stock in Dunstable (All Saints Academy) and Leighton Buzzard (Cedars Upper School) have improved access in the south of Central Bedfordshire (and were only just opening at the time of the survey) however no further provision has been made in the North Placemaking area. FPM modelling demonstrates that as well as Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable, the key hotspots for lack of provision are around Toddington and Harlington in the centre of Central Bedfordshire.
- 7.113 In addition to the modelling set out in Section 6, the FA has created its own model which is used to predict need. It seeks to ensure that all teams aged between 6 and 18 at a charter standard club have access to at least one hour per week for training during peak periods.
- 7.114 The FA also holds modeling and mapping data which is based upon providing access to at least one hour on an AGP per week for teams aged U6 – U18 and playing at a charter standard club. The high participation in football in Central Bedfordshire (discussed further in Section 5) means that the FA modeling indicates that there is demand for 12 full sized AGPs, based upon the current population and this will increase with population growth.
- 7.115 Taking into account the adequacy of existing facilities, the FA therefore indicate that they believe that there is a requirement for football of between 3 – 4 additional AGPs in Central Bedfordshire and highlight that the key areas of unmet demand for football are as follows;
- Rural south of Central Bedfordshire
 - Toddington / Harlington area
 - Stotfold / Arlesey
 - Biggleswade
 - North Houghton Regis.
- 7.116 While FPM modelling suggests that there are enough AGPS to meet current need, although existing sites are at capacity, it is therefore clear that the high participation in football in Central Bedfordshire means that there is a football development justification for some additional provision to support the needs of large clubs. This is particularly evident in the north and central areas of Central Bedfordshire. It is also important to note that recent changes to rules for competitive fixtures mean that 3g pitches can also be used in local leagues, meaning that they can be used to meet demand at peak time and for competitive fixtures as well as meeting training needs. The introduction of new 3g pitches can therefore reduce the overall level of demand for grass and offset some shortfalls of provision at peak time.

Predicting Future Needs - Team Generation Rates

7.117 Team Generation Rates (TGRs) indicate how many people in a specified age group are required to generate one team. TGRs are derived by dividing the appropriate population age band by the number of teams playing within that area in that age band.

7.118 Comparison of TGRs in Central Bedfordshire against the Sport England database reflect messages portrayed earlier in this section and indicate that participation is above national averages for all types of football. Comparison with the national database should however be treated with caution as the database has not been updated for several years. With the exception of junior female, participation is also above that of Cheshire West and Chester, considered to be a nearest 'neighbour authority' for Central Bedfordshire. Table 7.16 summarises the TGRs for Central Bedfordshire.

Table 7.16 – TGRS in Central Bedfordshire

Sport	TGR Central Bedfordshire	TGR Cheshire West and Chester	Sport England National Average
Mini Soccer	1:44	1:69	1:431
Junior Male	1:35	1:45	1:195
Junior Female	1:494	1:293	1:4038
Adult Male	1:315	1:357	1:452
Adult Female	1:6891	1:2,270	1:19,647

Future Demand

7.119 By applying TGRs to population projections, we can project the theoretical number of teams that would be generated solely from population growth and gain an understanding of future demand. Table 7.17 summarises the number of teams in Central Bedfordshire both now, and taking into account the projected population growth.

Table 7.17 – Impact of Projected Population Growth on Football Teams

Sport and Age Groups	Number of teams in age group within the area	Current population in age group within the area	Future population in age group within the area	Current TGR	Population Change in Age Group	Potential Change in Team Numbers in Age Group
Football Adult Men (16-45yrs)	150	47278	49169	315	1792	6
Football Adult Women (16-45yrs)	7	48234	50163	6891	1929	0
Football Youth Boys (10-15yrs)	261	9191	10285	35	1094	31
Football Youth Girls (10-15yrs)	19	9377	10493	494	1116	2
Football Mini Soccer Mixed (6-9yrs)	280	12168	13960	44	1792	41

7.120 Assuming that no additional pitches are created or secured this would mean that there were;

- 50.99 adult pitches surplus;
- 27.51 junior pitches short; and
- 46.67 mini pitches short.

7.121 Tables 7.17 – 7.19 consider potential increases in teams by Placemaking area. They calculate TGRs for each area rather than using Central Bedfordshire as a whole and indicate that the majority of additional teams are likely to be created in the North if participation continues.

Table 7.17 – Potential increase in Demand (Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking Area)

Sport and Age Groups	Number of teams in age group within the area	Current population in age group within the area	Future population in age group within the area	Current TGR	Population Change in Age Group	Potential Change in Team Numbers in Age Group
Football Adult Men (16-45yrs)	31	9657	9879	312	319	1.00
Football Adult Women (16-45yrs)	1	9852	10079	9852	227	0.00
Football Youth Boys (10-15yrs)	35	1877	2067	54	189	3.50
Football Youth Girls (10-15yrs)	1	1915	2108	1915	193	0.10
Football Mini Soccer Mixed (6-9yrs)	56	2485	2805	44	319	7.20

Table 7.18 – Potential increase in Demand (Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Placemaking Area)

Sport and Age Groups	Number of teams in age group within the area	Current population in age group within the area	Future population in age group within the area	Current TGR	Population Change in Age Group	Potential Change in Team Numbers in Age Group
Football Adult Men (16-45yrs)	33	10015	10538	304	414	1.4
Football Adult Women (16-45yrs)	1	10217	10750	10217	533	0.1
Football Youth Boys (10-15yrs)	61	1947	2204	32	257	8.1
Football Youth Girls (10-15yrs)	6	1986	2249	331	263	0.8
Football Mini Soccer Mixed (6-9yrs)	50	2577	2992	52	414	8

Table 7.19 – Potential increase in Demand (North Placemaking Area)

Sport and Age Groups	Number of teams in age group within the area	Current population in age group within the area	Future population in age group within the area	Current TGR	Population Change in Age Group	Potential Change in Team Numbers in Age Group
Football Adult Men (16-45yrs)	86	27607	28753	321	1058	3.3
Football Adult Women (16-45yrs)	5	28164	29333	5633	1169	0.2
Football Youth Boys (10-15yrs)	170	5367	6014	32	648	20.5
Football Youth Girls (10-15yrs)	12	5475	6136	456	661	1.4
Football Mini Soccer Mixed (6-9yrs)	174	7105	8163	41	1058	25.9

Impact on Adequacy of Pitch Provision

7.122 Table 7.20 assumes that pitch provision remains constant, but that the area specific TGRs are applied. It illustrates the shortfalls and surpluses that would exist at peak time, assuming pitch provision and temporal demand remains constant. It indicates that there will be significant shortages of pitch provision across Central Bedfordshire, but particularly in the North. Note totals will vary slightly from previous tables due to the use of area specific TGRs.

Table 7.20 – Adequacy of Pitch Provision by Placemaking Area

Area	Adult	Junior	9 v 9	Mini	Total Pitch Provision
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	7.09	-0.72	-1	-18.995	-13.625
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	10.55	-8.52	1	-16.17	-13.14
North	33.35	-21.92	-1	-42	-31.57

Planned Developments

7.123 Planned developments including new facilities at Flitwick (Flitwick Football Centre), Leighton Buzzard (Astral Park) and Arlesey (new football site) will reduce these shortfalls but pressures will remain. These pressures will be highest in areas of high population growth, many of which are already at capacity for football pitches.

7.124 The above figures provide an indication of the impact of population growth. The Bedfordshire FA also has aspirations to stimulate further growth in football participation, which would have clear implications for pitch provision.

7.125 Supporting this, 40 football clubs (28 in the north, 9 Leighton Buzzard and 3 in Dunstable) stated aspirations to increase their club membership and the number of teams that they were running. Most of these relate to increased junior teams, retention of junior teams to adult teams and creation of female / girls teams. Based on specific aspirations stated, this could equate to as much as 78 more teams. This would exacerbate existing pitch deficiencies further, potentially requiring an additional 20 pitches.

Summary and Key Issues

7.126 Table 7.21 summarises the data presented in this section.

Table 7.21 – Summary of Statistics Relating to Provision in Each Placemaking Area

Area	Scenario	Adult	Junior	9 v 9	Mini	Total Pitch Provision
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Baseline	7.36	0.36	-1	-16.44	-9.72
	Including Schools	9.36	7.36	-1	-10.44	5.28
	Taking into account impact of poor quality pitches	6.36	0.36	-1	-16.44	-10.72
	Future	7.09	-0.72	-1	-18.995	-13.625
	Future including schools	9.09	6.28	-1	-12.995	1.375
	Future taking into account poor quality	6.09	-0.72	-1	-18.995	-14.625
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	Baseline	10.82	-6.09	1	-13.25	-7.52
	Including Schools	19.82	-4.09	2	-5.25	12.48
	Taking into account impact of poor quality pitches	7.82	-11.09	1	-13.25	-15.52
	Future	10.55	-8.52	1	-16.17	-13.14
	Future including schools	19.55	-6.52	2	-8.17	6.86
	Future taking into account poor quality	7.55	-13.52	1	-16.17	-21.14
North	Baseline	34.43	-10.85	-1	-32.51	-9.93
	Including Schools	41.43	0.15	-1	-11.51	29.07
	Taking into account impact of poor quality pitches	15.43	-16.85	-1	-38.51	-40.93
	Future	33.35	-21.92	-1	-42	-31.57
	Future including schools	40.35	-10.92	-1	-21	7.43
	Future taking into account poor quality	14.35	-27.92	-1	-48	-62.57
TOTAL	Baseline	52.61	-16.58	-1	-62.2	-27.17
	Including Schools	70.61	3.42	0	-27.2	46.83
	Taking into account impact of poor quality pitches	52.61	-16.58	-1	-62.2	-27.17
	Future	50.99	-31.16	-1	-77.165	-58.335
	Future including schools	68.99	-11.16	0	-42.165	15.665
	Future taking into account poor quality	27.99	-42.16	-1	-83.165	-98.335

7.127 Drawing on the issues and analysis set out in previous pages, the key issues for football in Central Bedfordshire are therefore summarised below.

Key issues to address – Football

- Football participation is very high across Central Bedfordshire. In contrast to national trends, participation continues to grow and with the exception of junior male football, all types of football saw growth between seasons 2011 and 2012. Active People analysis further supports the high levels of participation but indicates that there is potential for a further 1.3% of the population to participate. Current participants are Ben (3685), Tim (3687), Philip (2112), Jamie (1452) and Kev (724) and these represent 83% of all players – it is in these groups where further unmet demand is also evident.
- Football in Central Bedfordshire is well structured – 80% of junior and mini teams play in a club that has achieved charter standard accreditation, levels of above the national and regional averages. Over half of all teams are based in the north and participation is lowest (taking into account the size of the population) in Dunstable and Houghton Regis.
- Football pitches are spread across Central Bedfordshire but the highest levels of provision are found in the North. The majority of the stock is formed from single / double pitch sites (the Central Bedfordshire average is 2 pitches). The quality of pitches is varying although on the whole it is above average. Key issues arising include drainage, changing and evenness of pitches. There is limited consistency between pitches provided.
- Despite relatively high quality pitches, club satisfaction is low, with only 25% of clubs happy with the current stock of facilities. Leighton Buzzard and the rural south contains the highest proportion of clubs that are dissatisfied. The majority of clubs attribute their dissatisfaction to the amount of pitches provided and there are also concerns about dispersion over numerous facilities and the quality of pitches. Some clubs also raise issues with the adequacy of changing accommodation. The FA highlights inconsistencies between different providers in the management and maintenance of football pitches across Central Bedfordshire.
- 25% of clubs suggest that they have difficulties accessing appropriate pitches for matches. Reflecting these concerns, modelling reveals that there are pressures on existing pitches, particularly in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South Placemaking areas. While there are enough adult pitches, surpluses in this type of pitch are offset by shortfalls of junior and mini pitches.
- 40 schools currently allow use of their facilities by the local community – these play an essential role in ensuring that all clubs are able to play. Most do not offer changing accommodation and/or toilets. It must be noted that while these facilities currently act as overspill for the public grounds, there is no long term guarantee that this will remain. Changes to the way that schools operate will place more responsibility for decision making with the school and pitches can be withdrawn from community use at any time.
- Further interpretation enables the identification of areas where there are site specific issues and particular capacity pressures. In many areas, there is an imbalance of play with some pitches very well used and some pitches not used at

Key issues to address – Football

all. There are particular capacity pressures in Cranfield, Leighton Buzzard, Arlesey, Flitwick, Potton, Tilsworth, Aspley Guise and Stotfold. Pitches in Everton, Kensworth, Heath and Reach and Blunham in particular receive limited use.

- It is clear that many sites experiencing high levels of use are those associated with the larger clubs. These clubs are keen to minimise the dispersion of their teams (which hinders club development) and as a consequence focus activity on a small number of pitches. Several clubs have therefore expressed dissatisfaction with their current facilities and are seeking new facilities that will accommodate all teams. There is also evidence that several clubs are keen to explore opportunities for asset transfer, enabling them to manage and maintain their own facilities and secure long term access to a site
- Adding to pressures that are evident currently, the population of Central Bedfordshire is growing and increases in the population alone are likely to generate an additional 6 adult teams, 47 junior teams and 41 mini teams. This will have major implications on demand for pitches and the adequacy of the pitch stock, and if pitch provision remains constant, is likely to increase the reliance upon school sites. Projecting forwards, there are particular deficiencies in North Central Bedfordshire. Furthermore, the larger developmental clubs all indicated that they are seeking to further increase participation, in particular concentrating on more junior participation, as well as creating female and disability teams. Pressure on pitches is therefore likely to grow and there may be further fragmentation of clubs across different sites. There is also evidence of some clubs already travelling outside of Central Bedfordshire to play due to a lack of existing facilities – at least six clubs based in Central Bedfordshire currently travel outside to play
- Planned developments including new facilities at Flitwick (Flitwick Football Centre), Leighton Buzzard (Astral Park) and Arlesey (new football site) will reduce these shortfalls but pressures will remain. These pressures will be highest in areas of high population growth, many of which are already at capacity for football pitches.
- Access to facilities for training is as important for clubs as the selection of appropriate pitches for competitive fixtures. 43% of clubs indicate that they struggle to access training facilities and a shortage of AGPs was highlighted as a key barrier to club development. While Sport England FPM modelling suggests that there is sufficient provision, there is therefore a football development justification for some additional provision to support the needs of large clubs and FA modelling, which is based upon the number of charter standard teams in the district outlines demand for several additional facilities. This demand is particularly evident in the north and central areas of Central Bedfordshire and new AGPs could be used to meet demands for both training and competitive fixtures.
- The FA would like to see priority given to supporting charter standard and community clubs. They are also keen to support clubs in their development and eventually, to own / manage sites. The FA national strategy identifies several issues for football most of which are prevalent in Central Bedfordshire – these include poor playing surfaces, a lack of 3g pitches, a lack of floodlighting and a lack of basic facilities such as toilets and changing. Key priorities over the national strategy

Key issues to address – Football

period include upgrading playing surfaces and creating a network of 3g pitches.

- The recent introduction of 9v9 football by the FA will further impact in Central Bedfordshire as while a small amount of 9 v 9 has been played this year, additional pitches will be required to accommodate this form of the game when it becomes compulsory. While in some areas junior pitches will be converted to 9 v 9 pitches, in others this will not be possible due to required current uses.

Key Priorities to Address

7.128 The key priorities for the future delivery of football pitches across Central Bedfordshire include the following:

Ensure that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand

- Protect all current playing fields to ensure the longevity of the pitch stock across Central Bedfordshire (unless pitches are replaced with larger multi pitch sites – see below). This should include former playing pitches, unless they are located in an area identified as having sufficient provision to meet current and future demand.
- In the short term, review the designation of pitches to address deficiencies in junior football and to accommodate the recent FA review of youth football. Ensure that as far as possible, all teams are playing on pitches of the correct size
- increase the amount of pitches available and support clubs to find home venues to ensure that they are not dispersed across multiple sites. This is likely to include
- securing of formal agreements for the use of school sites – ideally sites offering multiple pitches should be prioritised and consideration should be given to the provision of accessible changing / toilets for community teams
- new pitches (promote the creation of new multi pitch sites to support large clubs). This will free up other sites for the use of smaller clubs and single teams
- the creation of new pitches linked with new developments, to offset the impact of the increase in population on the demand for playing pitch provision. There are particular pressures in areas of growth and new facilities will be required where there is evidence of need. Improvements to the quality of existing facilities should be required where there is already sufficient provision.
- There is a need to support football development and access to training facilities for football clubs through the provision of 3g pitches, particularly in the North and Central parts of Central Bedfordshire. 3g pitches (if provided to appropriate standards) can also be used for competitive fixtures and to reduce the requirement for grass pitches.

- Ensure that facilities are of appropriate quality to meet current and future demand

- Ensure that all clubs have access to facilities of the appropriate specification by focusing on the improvement of both pitch quality and ancillary facilities. Qualitative improvements should be prioritised over quantity where there are already enough facilities. The following standards should be considered;
 - investment to address basic quality issues at key sites to ensure NGB specifications and standards are met;
 - the provision of changing accommodation at all sites where adult football is played, and a minimum of toilet provision at junior and mini football sites; and
 - supporting clubs in the creation of facilities of higher specification where these are required for club progression.

Promote increased participation and sustainable club development

- Maintain the existing football forums to establish clear routes of communication with pitch users and providers ensuring that all decisions are taken with a full understanding of needs and aspiration
- Support the principles of asset transfer where this will result in positive club and football development outcomes

8. Cricket

8.1 This section evaluates the adequacy of facilities for cricket across Central Bedfordshire and provides:

- An overview of supply and demand for cricket
- An evaluation of the overall adequacy of pitches to meet demand
- Key issues and strategic priorities the strategy will address

Cricket in Central Bedfordshire - An Overview

Supply

8.2 There are 36 cricket grounds across Central Bedfordshire located at club sites. Table 8.1 summarises the distribution of these facilities by Placemaking area.

Table 8.1 – Cricket Pitches in Central Bedfordshire

Placemaking Area	Club Cricket Pitches
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	3
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	8
North	25
TOTAL	36

8.3 Dunstable Cricket Club is the only site containing two cricket pitches. Shefford Town Memorial Association is included in the above totals as the cricket square remains. The facility is however thought to be unused at present.

8.4 In addition to the above facilities, there are circa 30 cricket wickets at school sites, 25 of which are reported to be available for public use. There is also an artificial wicket at Creasey Park, Dunstable.

8.5 Despite the abundance of cricket facilities at school sites, there is a more limited role for school cricket pitches in Central Bedfordshire than for other sports, partially due to the quality standards associated with cricket and the high expectations of facilities. The facility at Shuttleworth College (a full cricket pitch) is the only facility used for community cricket although Fulbrook School, Alameda Middle School, Sandy Upper School and Van Dyke School are used for adhoc junior play and / or training. The remainder of school pitches are largely artificial wickets used for teaching.

8.6 As well as sites currently containing cricket pitches, several sites were identified that have previously contained cricket pitches but no longer do so. These are:

- Houghton Conquest Playing Field
- Luton Road Recreation Ground
- Mogerhanger CC -Shillington Memorial Playing Field
- Westoning Recreation Ground
- Stanbridge and Tilsworth Recreation Ground

8.7 Map 8.1 illustrates the distribution of existing cricket pitches across Central Bedfordshire.

Map 8.1 – Cricket Pitches across Central Bedfordshire

TO BE INSERTED Post approval

Demand

Active People and Market Segmentation (Sport England)

8.8 Table 3.5 indicated that according to the Active People Survey, nationally, between 2005/6 (Active People Survey 1) and 2011/2012 (Active People Survey 6) participation in cricket has declined from 0.48% to 0.43%.

8.9 Using the Active People Survey and Market Segmentation, it is possible to evaluate how many residents of Central Bedfordshire **do** participate in cricket and how many of the population **would like** to participate in cricket. It is also possible to understand how this varies across different parts of Central Bedfordshire.

8.10 Map 8.2 shows spatially the percentage of the Central Bedfordshire population who, based on the Active People survey findings, are currently participating in cricket. Chart 8.1 sets out the profile of current participation across the 19 market segments.

Map 8.2 - Percentage and location of the adult population who do play cricket

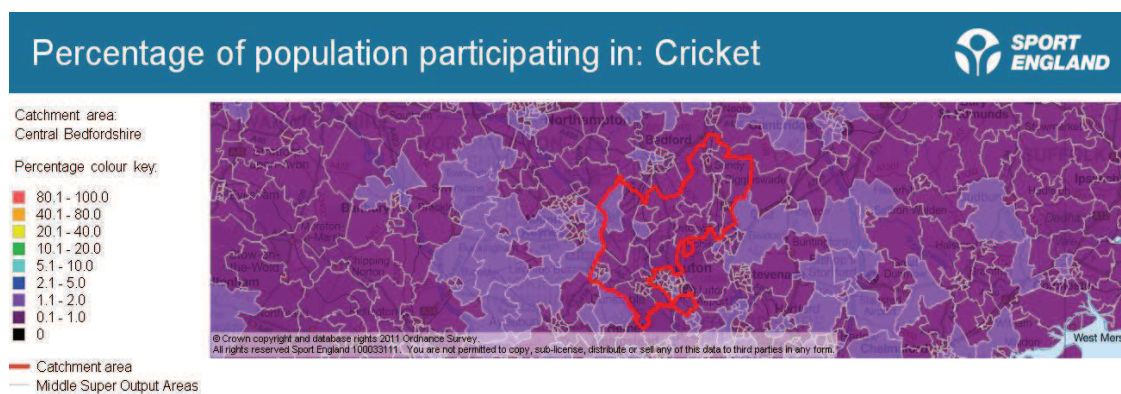
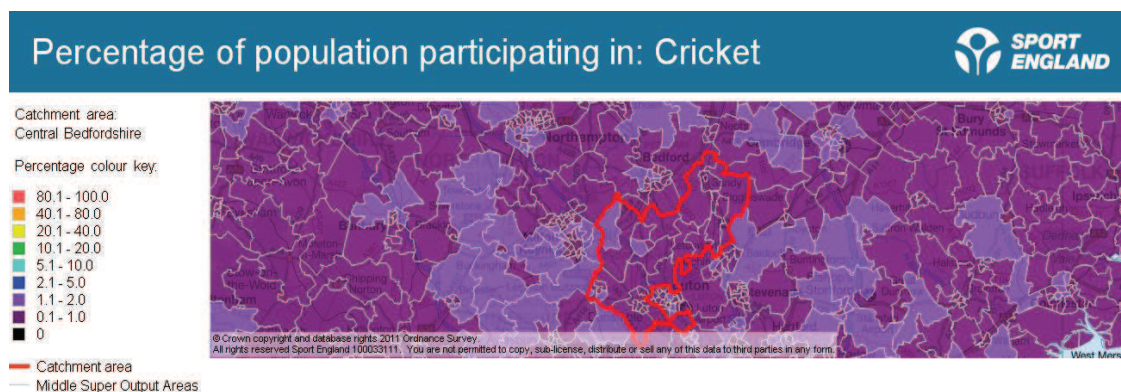


Chart 8.1 - Profile of the market segments who participate in cricket in Central Bedfordshire



8.11 As can be seen, participation in cricket is relatively consistent across all areas, between 0.1% and 1%. It is marginally higher to the west of Central Bedfordshire.

- 8.12 There are four market segments that dominate participation in cricket, specifically Ben (416), Tim (593), Philip (375) and Jamie (144). Players in these groups represent 74% of the total number of cricket players. In addition to these groups, there is some play by residents in the segments of Roger and Joy, Chloe, Jackie and Alison. This suggests that cricket has a wider target audience than rugby and football.
- 8.13 The Active People analysis of the percentage of adults who **would like** to play cricket is represented in map and bar chart form and set out in Map 8.3 and Chart 8.2.

Map 8.3- Percentage and location of the adult population who would like to play cricket



Chart 8.2 - Profile of the market segments who would like to play cricket



- 8.14 The map and bar chart demonstrate that the number of people in Central Bedfordshire who would like to play cricket is below 1%. Taking into account the number of residents currently playing cricket, this represents an opportunity to increase the amount of participants in the sport. Those that would like to play are geographically evenly distributed.
- 8.15 Interestingly, 24% of those that would like to play are in groups with lower current participation profiles. While the main additional demand is from groups that already play cricket, specifically Tim, Ben, Jamie and Philip, there is some evidence of latent demand from Kev (80), Roger and Joy (50), Terry (40), Frank (36) and Ralph and Phyllis (38). This suggests that there is potential to attract a more diverse range of participants to cricket. This is supported by specific research undertaken by the ECB, which highlighted particular demand for cricket in the South Asian Communities. A notable drop off was also highlighted in the 26 – 29 age groups.

8.16 Table 8.2 sets summarises the above statistics, providing an indication of the exact number of people who currently play and would like to play, according to Sport England Market Segmentation and Active People Surveys.

Table 8.2 – Participation in Cricket

DO PLAY POPULATION	% of Adult Population	WOULD LIKE TO PLAY POPULATION	% of Adult Population	Total Number and % who do/would play
1935	<1%	1004	<1%	1.4%

8.17 While Active People surveys indicate therefore that there was a small decline in participation during the previous year, it should be noted however that the 2012 season was particularly poor in terms of weather and the ECB Club survey indicated that 30% of fixtures were cancelled during this year, which had a significant impact upon participation.

8.18 Two Circles on behalf of ECB conducted a player survey in 2013 (with 22,000 respondents) which demonstrated that participation nationally is actually increasing. (Eureka insight 2013).

Current Participation

8.19 The distribution of cricket teams across Central Bedfordshire is summarised in Table 8.3

Table 8.3 – Cricket Teams across Central Bedfordshire

Placemaking Area	Adult Male	Ladies Teams	Junior Male	Junior Female	Proportion of Teams	Proportion of Population
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	11	0	7	0	9%	20%
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	25	0	12	0	20%	21%
North	77	1	48	0	71%	58%
Central Bedfordshire	113	1	67	0		

8.20 Table 8.3 above indicates that when taking into account the population in each Placemaking area, participation in the North Placemaking area is higher than may be expected, with 71% of teams compared to 58% of the population. Conversely, the amount of teams in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking area is lower than may be expected. This accords with participation data outlined in section 3, which indicates that it is in this area where participation in general is lowest. Table 8.1 also highlighted that there are lower levels of provision for cricket in this area.

8.21 There are no girls' teams and only one female team although it is acknowledged that some of the junior boys' teams include female players.

8.22 10% of cricket clubs responding to the survey report an increase on membership from the previous season while the same proportion have seen a decrease in number. The remainder of clubs have remained static.

Cricket Leagues

8.23 Adult cricket is split evenly between Saturday and Sunday (43% each day) with the remaining games taking place midweek. 45% of junior cricket also takes place on Sunday morning before adult fixtures and the other fixtures are played on midweek evenings.

8.24 The main leagues in which teams across Central Bedfordshire participate in are:

- Bedford Midweek Cricket League
- Saracens Herts Cricket League (Saturday)
- Beds Invitation Saturday Cricket League (Saturday)
- Beds County Cricket League (Sunday)
- Hunts County Cricket League (Saturday)
- Morrants Four Counties Cricket league (Saturday)
- Beds Youth Cricket League (Sunday and midweek)
- Cherwell Cricket League (Saturday)

Quality of Cricket Pitches

8.25 Pitch quality has a significant impact on the overall adequacy of supply in an area. Particularly for cricket, poorer quality pitches can lead to a difficult game, can be dangerous, and can lead to injuries due to uneven bounce of the ball. Lower quality facilities can therefore deter people from playing.

8.26 The following data sources have therefore been used to evaluate the quality of cricket pitches across Central Bedfordshire:

- a. Site Assessments in line with Towards a Level Playing Field
- b. Analysis of individual club perceptions
- c. View of Bedfordshire Cricket Board

Site Assessments

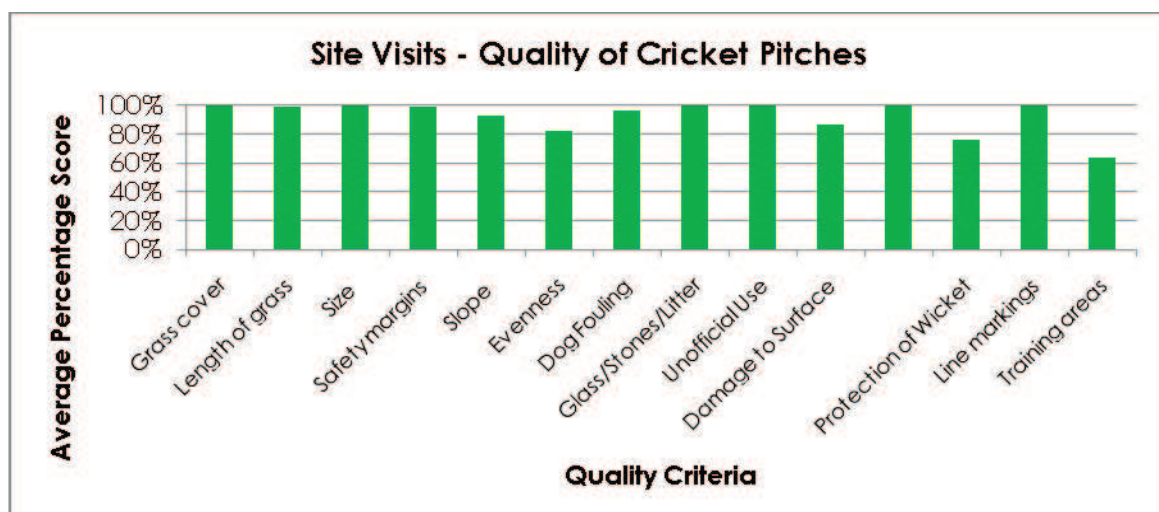
8.27 The specialised grounds maintenance requirements of cricket pitches mean that the non technical site assessment matrix provided as part of Towards a Level Playing Field guidance is of more limited value than for other sports. It does not assess the way that the pitch plays and provides only an overview of pitch quality. Adding to this, the timing of the assessment means that many site visits were carried out during the cricket off season, meaning that wickets were not fully prepared and making it more difficult to accurately judge pitch quality.

8.28 Overall, site visits reveal that;

- the quality of cricket pitches is good, with almost all pitches achieving scores equivalent to good or excellent;
- there is some variation in the quality of pavilions – facilities range from old sheds to new-build high specification pavilions;
- the majority of cricket facilities exhibited good grass cover, perhaps reflecting the lack of use that takes place outside of the season;
- the main areas for improvement were damage to the surface and the unevenness of some outfields. This was mostly the case where facilities were shared with football;
- some pitches are also subject to informal use due to their location. In some instances, wickets were not protected and there is therefore potential that they may suffer damage over the course of the off seasons; and
- several clubs did not appear to have access to any on-site training facilities either artificial wickets or nets.

8.29 Chart 8.3 reinforces the issues outlined above and demonstrates the average percentage score achieved for each of the key quality criteria during site visits.

Chart 8.3 – Quality of Cricket Pitches in Central Bedfordshire



Club Opinion on Quality

8.30 60% of clubs are satisfied with cricket facilities in Central Bedfordshire. Despite this, 50% of clubs indicate that issues with facilities inhibit club development. Most issues raised relate to the quality of pitches for third and fourth teams and for junior teams rather than the quality of the main pitch.

8.31 Clubs were asked to rate the quality of pitches that they use. Table 6.4 illustrates that overall, responding clubs view pitch provision positively. It should be noted that this might be influenced by the questionnaire, which asks clubs to rate the quality of their main ground. Several clubs caveat their responses by indicating that they struggle to find suitable grounds for their third and fourth teams but that they consider their first team pitches to be of a high standard.

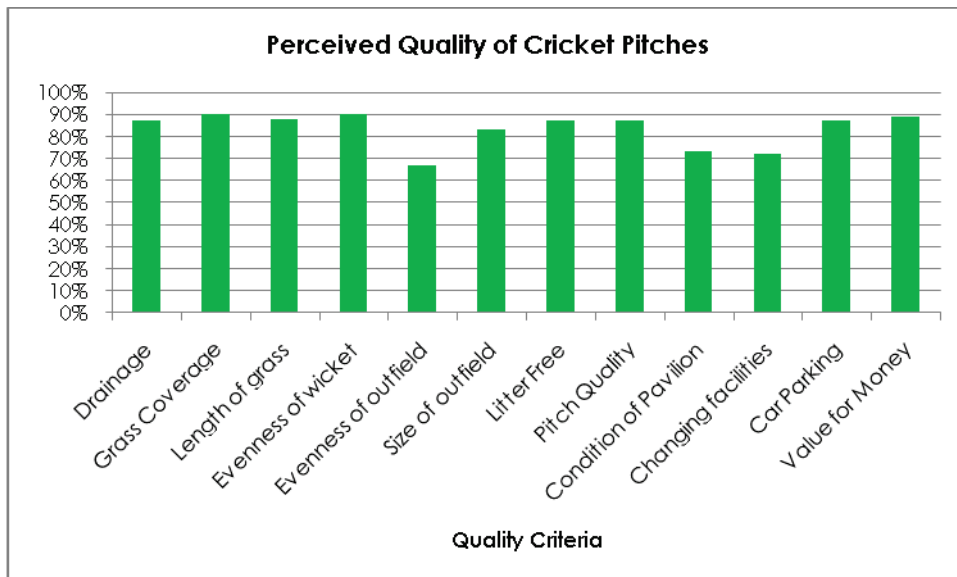
8.32 Responses indicate that the evenness of pitches is perhaps the largest concern, reflecting the issues raised during site visits. The quality of changing / pavilions emerged as the other area for improvement. It is clear that responses are slightly more negative in the north Placemaking area, however this should be treated with caution as there are more clubs in this area and therefore greater opportunities for scores awarded to vary.

Table 8.4 – Perceptions of Pitch Quality by Cricket Clubs

Placemaking Area	Drainage	Grass Coverage	Length of grass	Evenness of wicket	Evenness of outfield	Size of outfield	Litter Free	Pitch Quality	Condition of Pavilion	Changing facilities	Car Parking	Value for Money
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	100%	89%	89%	89%	78%	89%	89%	89%	67%	67%	100%	89%
North	83%	90%	88%	90%	63%	81%	85%	85%	73%	71%	83%	88%
Central Bedfordshire	87%	90%	88%	90%	67%	83%	87%	87%	73%	72%	87%	89%

8.33 Chart 8.4 summarises the perceived quality of cricket pitches across Central Bedfordshire as a whole.

Chart 8.4 – Perceived Quality of Cricket Pitches



Site specific comments are recorded later in this section.

8.34 Despite positive overall perceptions, it should be noted that several clubs noted issues with access and or facility quality as follows:

- Leighton Buzzard (quality and quantity)
- Langford (quality and quantity)
- Biggleswade (quantity of pitches, currently discussing with Stratton Upper School)
- Harlington (quality issues and access to training)
- Ampthill CC – access to pitches
- Blunham CC – access to pitches

Consultation Results

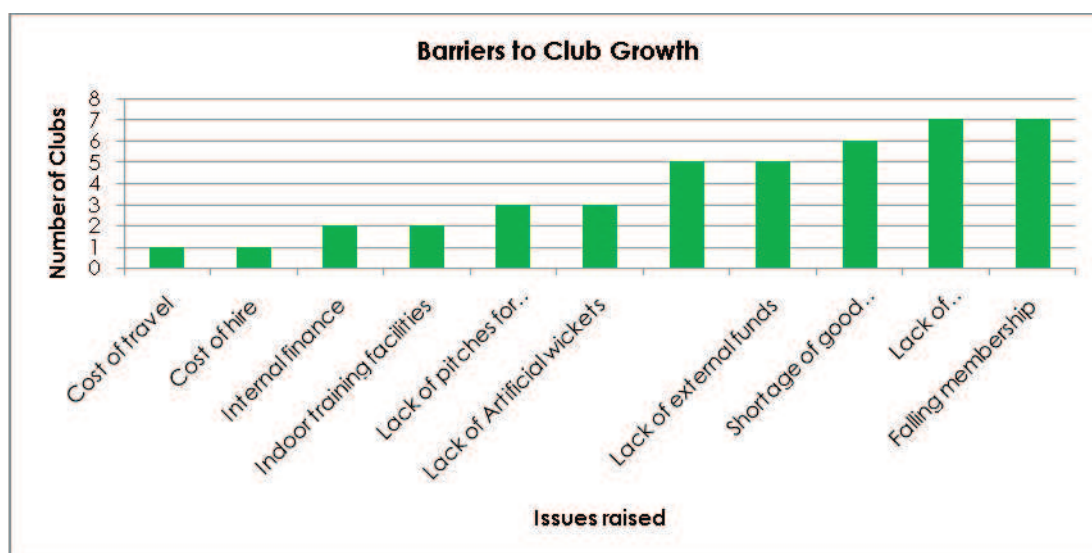
8.35 Consultation with cricket clubs demonstrated that:

- on average, 53% of club members travel 3 miles or less to play cricket at their home ground. Just 24% travel more than 5 miles. This suggests that cricket clubs have a relatively local catchment area;
- circa 50% of clubs do not have access to training bays. Site visits confirm the low levels of practice nets and indoor facilities are also perceived to be difficult to access;

- 31% of clubs indicate that quality factors make it difficult to accommodate matches and training, suggesting that this is a problem that needs to be addressed; and
- there is significant potential to continue to the growth in cricket participation across Central Bedfordshire. More than half of clubs have aspirations to increase the number of teams that they are running in the short term. These include Aspley Guise, Langford, Dunstable, Caddington, Leighton, Sandy, Steppingley, Lidlington, Biggleswade, Potton, Flitwick, Ampthill, Blunham, and Caldecote. Aspirations stated demonstrate a particular focus upon the creation of ladies teams and additional youth teams.

8.36 With regards barriers to participation, club consultation demonstrates some clear patterns and highlights that facilities are a key concern. Several clubs indicate that growth will be inhibited unless issues identified can be addressed. The key barriers are referenced in Chart 8.5.

Chart 8.5 – Barriers to the Growth of Cricket



National Governing Body Perspective - England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB)

8.37 The ECB Strategic Plan (2013 – 2017) Champion Counties recognises the challenging financial environment in which cricket clubs are operating and targets operational excellence. It highlights the additional challenges caused by flooding during 2012 and the impact that this has had on participation, facilities and consequently short term sustainability. The strategy sets the following aims;

- energising people and partnerships through effective leadership and governance;
- building a Vibrant domestic game through operational excellence and delivering a competition structure with appointment to view;
- engaging participants through the maintenance of existing facilities, supporting club/school links , supporting volunteers and expanding women’s and disabilities cricket;

- delivering Successful England teams and world class global events;
- to contain support costs within 7.5% of total expenditure;
- to sustain current participation levels and to support clubs in applications for capital grants to Sport England to total a minimum of £5 million for the period 2014–2017;
- to provide funding of £6.15m to the Cricket Foundation to ensure that two million children are introduced to cricket within the school system;
- to increase the number of volunteers to 80,000 by 2017;
- to expand the number of participants in women's and disabilities cricket by 10% prior to 2017;
- to provide up to £5 million of interest free loans and to work with schools and facilities in inner city areas to provide greater community use by 2017; and
- ECB will work through Five Sports to influence Government policy for sport.

8.38 The strategy places a particular focus on increasing participation in the 14 – 25 age group and also seeks to support the introduction of a youth T20 competition engaging with a minimum of 500 teams by 2017.

8.39 Locally in Central Bedfordshire, participation in cricket is vibrant and there is a strong network of both adult and junior participation. Participation has increased significantly in recent years however it is believed that facilities have now begun to restrict further development and growth. Many clubs are at capacity and in need of second grounds. While first team pitches are generally protected, satellite facilities are generally overused and several clubs are not able to field any more teams without the acquisition of a second ground. Several clubs have two teams in each junior age group and matches throughout the week, while senior sides play both Saturday and Sunday.

8.40 The proximity of Central Bedfordshire to Luton and Bedford exacerbates this situation further, as there are shortages of pitch provision in both areas and players are travelling into Central Bedfordshire to find facilities. Both areas have demographic profiles that link with a high propensity to participate in cricket and demand is high and increasing. Many clubs and grounds on the borders of these areas are rented by clubs from outside Central Bedfordshire Council who would otherwise have no facilities. Teams in the Luton Taxi Drivers League for example, frequently use facilities in Central Bedfordshire. Proposals to change the way that pitches are managed in Bedford, through the reduction in services offered, may have further implications on demand for pitch provision in Luton and Central Bedfordshire if teams decide to travel outside of Bedford.

8.41 There are particular concerns with the amount of pitches around Dunstable, Houghton Regis, Leighton Buzzard, Sandy and Biggleswade and the new Wixams Development, which will cross into Central Bedfordshire. There is a strong need to provide additional facilities to support existing club bases and to facilitate the ongoing growth and expansion of the game. To facilitate the provision of such facilities, the ECB and Bedfordshire Cricket Board are keen to support asset transfer and will provide training on groundsmanship to relevant clubs. The increased sense of ownership that this brings usually generates a higher standard of facility and reduces problems of misuse. Opportunities to create shared use sites in conjunction with other sports, for example junior football, should also be considered.

- 8.42 While the pitch stock is currently restricting participation, there are ongoing attempts to increase the number of players. 57 schools across Bedfordshire have engaged with Chance to Shine, an initiative to introduce cricket into schools. Coaching courses have also been provided for local teachers and for both schemes, new participants are signposted to clubs. The more successful these schemes are however, the greater pressure that is put on the infrastructure base. There is felt to be significant latent demand in Central Bedfordshire for additional cricket from existing residents as well as opportunities to introduce new players to the game as the population expands.
- 8.43 Reflecting the growth in cricket, two schools (Cedars Academy in Leighton Buzzard and Samuel Whitbread in Shefford) have expressed an interest in creating cricket academies, which would be run for students alongside A levels. Those who participate would leave with coaching, umpiring and groundsmanship qualifications as well as their own personal player development. Both schools would however require improvements to their existing facilities in order to successfully run these schemes. The ECB is supportive of these proposals and keen to ensure their successful delivery through partnership working. It is envisaged that both schemes will be active by 2014. It is hoped that further opportunities to work with schools can be found, particularly in areas where the club based facility infrastructure is struggling.
- 8.44 Recent engagement with clubs by the Bedfordshire Cricket Board highlighted significant latent demand, but also demonstrated a need to adapt cricket to ensure its ongoing popularity. While there remains demand for the long form of the game (50 overs) which is currently played on both Saturday and Sunday in Bedfordshire, there is also high demand for 20 over games to be played on Sunday. This attracts a different type of player and its introduction would remove some of the barriers to participation associated with cricket. Last Man Standing (a franchise promoting an alternative short form of the game) was introduced unsuccessfully last year and is likely to be reintroduced in the next year. This will provide midweek opportunities and is anticipated to provide a different type of challenge. The promotion of 20 – 20 matches on a weekend would currently clash with the longer forms of the game, however there is a need to review all activities in order to maximise the variety of opportunities that are available to new players.
- 8.45 Surveys undertaken demonstrated particular latent demand for female cricket, with 42% of participants saying that they would play more if the opportunity arose, but this is often limited by a lack of facilities.
- 8.46 In addition to outdoor cricket, indoor cricket is thriving and there is a large indoor league, currently based in Bedford (John Bunion Centre). There are concerns over the long term future of this facility however, and the closure of the site would have significant implications for the development of cricket. In order to expand the league, as well as secure its future, additional facilities are required. Consideration has been given to locating some play at Stratton Upper School.

Supply and Demand Modelling

- 8.47 The methodology undertaken for the cricket assessment follows the 8 step process set out in TaLPF. To ensure compliance with the emerging methodology (which is not yet published) as far as possible, the following steps of analysis were also undertaken;
- Evaluation of site specific capacity over a season as well as at peak time
 - Consideration of the impact of training and casual use

- Analysis of site specific activities and issues

8.48 The Playing Pitch Methodology (PPM) determines the adequacy of pitch supply to meet peak time demand.

8.49 For adults, peak time demand for cricket is split between Saturday and Sunday, with 43% of matches taking place on each day. Junior matches take place throughout the week and 45% of junior fixtures take place before Senior matches on a Sunday.

8.50 Table 8.5 summarises the situation when considering the availability of pitches at peak time for cricket. It indicates that assuming that assuming that 43% of play takes place on a Sunday afternoon, there are on average just 11 pitches that are not used at this time. Cricket is also played on a Sunday morning (juniors) meaning that there are additional pressures, with it being essential that matches are finished in time for senior cricket to start. If matches overrun (i.e. are played at the same time rather than consecutively) it is clear that there are shortfalls of cricket pitches overall. Supply in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking area is only just in balance with demand. It is within the North Placemaking area where the majority of spare capacity appears to be located at peak time.

Table 8.5 – Adequacy of Cricket Provision at Peak Time

Placemaking Area	Peak Time Demand	Number of Junior Matches also on a Sunday	Shortfall / Surplus Adult and Junior (Sunday)
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	0.6	3.5 (3 grounds available)	-0.9
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	2.6	6 (8 grounds available)	0
North	8.4	24 (25 grounds available)	-2.4
Central Bedfordshire	11.7	33.5 (36 grounds available)	-3.4

8.51 Table 8.5 includes only pitches at club bases. In addition to the club bases, the following sites are used for competitive community cricket:

- Shuttleworth College (used ad hoc midweek for senior cricket)
- Almeda Middle School (used Sunday morning for junior cricket)
- Fulbrook Middle School (used Sunday morning for junior cricket)

Table 6.6 provides a summary of the adequacy of provision including these school sites.

Table 8.6 – Adequacy of Pitch Provision (Including sites used for competitive community cricket)

Placemaking Area	Peak Time Demand	Number of Junior Matches also on a Sunday	Shortfall / Surplus Adult and Junior (Sunday)
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	0.6	3.5 (3 grounds available)	-0.9
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	3.6	6 (8 grounds available)	0
North	104	24 (26 grounds available)	-1.4
Central Bedfordshire	13.7	33.5 (36 grounds available)	-3.4

8.52 With the exception of Shuttleworth College, facilities at school sites are considered relatively poor and are largely artificial wickets. These sites are therefore not suitable to accommodate formal adult cricket and are excluded from further consideration.

8.53 The provision of facilities at school sites may however offer opportunities for cricket development and / or links with clubs and this will be considered when evaluating the adequacy of future provision.

8.54 Further in depth analysis of the adequacy of cricket facilities (based on actual patterns of play at each site rather than assumed patterns of play across Central Bedfordshire as a whole) demonstrates that the following sites are at capacity (i.e. not able to accommodate any more teams) on a Saturday:

- Lancot Park CC(Dunstable Town) (Dunstable and Houghton Regis)
- Caddington Cricket Club (Leighton Buzzard)
- Leighton Buzzard Cricket Club (Bell Close) Leighton Buzzard
- The Rye (Eaton Bray) (Leighton Buzzard)
- Ampthill Park – Ampthill Cricket Club (North)
- Blunham Cricket Club (North)
- Eversholt CC (North)

- Flitwick CC, (North)
- Ickwell Green (North)
- Marston Cricket Pitch (overspill for Ampthill Town) (North)
- Milton Bryan Playing Fields (North)
- The Common (Aspley Guise) (North)
- The Hollow, Potton (North)

Further detail on the above is provided in Table 8.7.

8.55 With the exception of Eaton Bray, Lancot Park and Caddington CC, the same sites are also at capacity on a Sunday. Houghton Regis CC, Fairfield CC and Southill CC and Wrest Park, Silsoe are also unable to accommodate any more teams on a Sunday. Chalgrave Sports Club is used relatively extensively for friendlies on a Sunday.

8.56 This suggests that in each placemaking area, there are the following numbers of sites have capacity on some weekends to sustain additional usage;

- Dunstable and Houghton Regis –2 Saturday, 1Sunday
- Leighton Buzzard and Rural South –7 Saturday, 7Sunday
- North – 13 Saturday, 10 Sunday

Site specific pressures and capacity

8.57 While evaluation suggests that overall across Central Bedfordshire there are sufficient pitches to accommodate demand at peak time, many of these pitches are not located in the right areas (or are not of the right quality) and several clubs are experiencing particular pressures at their own club base as highlighted above. Many clubs are not able to run more teams than they are currently doing without finding a venue outside of their own facility to support the new team. The following clubs are currently using venues outside of their own main site:

- Ampthill (Marston / Alameda MS / Silsoe)
- Aspley Guise CC (Fulbrook MS)
- Blunham CC (Roxton CC);
- Flitwick CC (Wrest Park / Eversholt)
- Leighton Buzzard (Pages Park)

8.58 To support both the sustainability of the cricket club as well as to foster club development, clubs like to focus as much activity as possible on or near the club site. As already highlighted, several of the sites function as overspill facilities and there are no clubs based at the site. Several further clubs have a small number of teams but also accommodate teams from other clubs.

8.59 The ECB works alongside the Bedfordshire Cricket Board and associated leagues to improve the quality of the cricket experience and promote higher quality facilities. The amount of cricket played in Central Bedfordshire means that many of the wickets are currently used for a full game Saturday and Sunday as well as by junior teams midweek. ECB guidelines suggest that a strip / wicket should be used as follows:

- 3 times – optimum
- 4 times – overuse
- 5 times – extensive overuse

8.60 Using the above as a basis, it is possible to produce an indication of the usage of each wicket to support analysis of the adequacy of current provision.

8.61 Calculations have been undertaken using the broad assumption that senior teams will play ten home games per season and that junior use will be equivalent to 8 home games per season. Where the number of strips at a club is not known, the average amount in Central Bedfordshire (11) has been used to provide an indication.

8.62 This analysis reveals that strips at the following sites are currently being used more than five times per week:

- Milton Bryan CC
- Langford Playing Fields CC
- Bell Close (Leighton Buzzard)
- Blunham CC
- Caddington CC

8.63 In addition, three other sites use each strip between 4.5 and 5 times per season suggesting that they are also at capacity.

8.64 It should be noted that this assumes that all play occurs on the grass wicket. While artificial wickets are used for some junior play, it was highlighted as being preferable for development that play takes on grass.

8.65 Site specific usage will be outlined later in this section.

Training Facilities

8.66 In addition to the heavy usage that many sites sustain from match. Most of the clubs also train at their own grounds which can add extra wear and tear.

8.67 Usage of the facilities for training is largely off peak and therefore does not impact on peak time shortfalls and surpluses. It can however generate wear and tear of the outfield and on the wicket where artificial wickets are not used.

8.68 The following club based sites are not thought to have artificial wickets; meaning that there is a heavier reliance upon the grass wicket.

- Caddington Sports and Social Club
- Ampthill Park, Ampthill Town CC
- Biggleswade Cricket Club
- Eaton Bray CC - The Rye Gardens cricket pitch
- Eggington Cricket Ground
- Flitwick CC, The Vale
- Harlington Cricket Club
- Henlow CC - Pyghtles Recreation Ground cricket pitch
- Houghton Regis Village Green cricket pitch
- Hurst Grove Recreation Ground cricket pitch
- Studham Sports and Social Club

8.69 Just over half of all sites include practice nets however the following clubs do not have access to either practice nets or an artificial wicket:

- Caddington Sports and Social Club
- Biggleswade Cricket Club
- Houghton Regis Village Green cricket pitch
- Eggington Cricket Ground
- Harlington Cricket Club
- Hurst Grove Recreation Ground cricket pitch

8.70 A lack of access to indoor facilities for training was also highlighted by several clubs and this concern was also raised by the Bedfordshire Cricket Board.

Site Specific Analysis

8.71 Table 8.7 summarises the site specific usage of each community cricket pitch in Central Bedfordshire and also highlights any issues raised with regards the quality of provision through site visits and consultation. It draws together the information presented on previous pages and highlights where sites are at capacity (i.e. unable to sustain any more play) on each day. Pitches with no further availability are highlighted in red.

8.72 The key messages that arise from the table are that;

- reflecting issues highlighted earlier, there are several sites at capacity on both Saturday and Sunday. Most of the large clubs are at or reaching capacity and several are already using overspill facilities. Where there are no facilities available

nearby, the amount of teams that can be run is restricted. There are clear pressures in Dunstable and Houghton Regis on a Sunday, as well as at specific sites across the north (Biggleswade in particular);

- despite this, there are some sites that have relatively limited use (or no use). These include Cranfield University, Shefford Memorial Association and the public facilities in Leighton Buzzard;
- much of the spare capacity is at poorer quality sites or those that suffer from higher levels of informal use. These sites are largely publicly managed facilities, rather than owned or maintained by specific clubs. Many of these sites are also used on an adhoc basis by teams from outside of Central Bedfordshire; and
- at most club bases, there is little capacity to accommodate significant increases in participation either due to the availability of facilities at peak time and / or the number of strips on the square.

Table 8.7 – Site Specific Capacity of Cricket Pitches that Accommodate Competitive Fixtures (Pitches with no further capacity highlighted in red)

Site	Area	Approximate Teams Using Site (number of teams)	Use on Saturday PM (Number of teams)	Use on Sunday PM (Number of Teams)	Number of Strips on wicket	Estimated Use per Strip (number of games per season)	Other Facilities Available	Comments (Site Visits / Consultation)
Lancot Park - Dunstable Town CC	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	14	4	3	35	3.6	Nets and artificial wicket	Impressive facility with extensive pavilion capable of holding minor county games. Second facility not quite as good
Houghton Regis Village Green - Houghton Chargers CC	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	3	1	2	11	2.7	None	Square still in very good condition considering near end of season
Leighton Buzzard CC - Bell Close	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	12	2	2	14	6.9	Nets and artificial wicket	Excellent facility
Caddington Rec - Caddington CC	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	5	2	1	7	6.9	None	Good facilities, some areas of outfield uneven
Cranfield Univ	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	1	-	-	11	0.9	Nets and artificial wicket	Nice looking set up with large club house. Brick scoreboard. No nets evident.
Eggington CC	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	5	-	-	11	4.5	None	No grass square apparent - appears to have limited usage.
Chalgrave CC	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	4	-	4	11	Friendlies only	Nets and artificial wicket	

Site	Area	Approximate Teams Using Site (number of teams)	Use on Saturday PM (Number of teams)	Use on Sunday PM (Number of Teams)	Number of Strips on wicket	Estimated Use per Strip (number of games per season)	Other Facilities Available	Comments (Site Visits / Consultation)
								Pavilion in need of upgrade
Mentmore Recreation Ground	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	-					None	Well tended square in public park. Square still in good condition considering time of season
Pages Park Leighton Buzzard	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	2	1	1	11	1.8	None	Well tended square in public park. Square still in good condition considering time of season. Site does not have protection or cover
Studham PF - Studham CC	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	2	-	-	11	0.0	Nets	Excellent grass quality wicket and outfield. Wicket doesn't show much wear considering end of season.
The Rye - Eaton Bray CC	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	8	1	2	11	2.2	Nets	Good quality facility
Amphthill Park - Amphthill CC	North	7	2	2	13	4.9	Nets	Attractive site, terraced pitch providing viewing from grass banks. 4 lane nets with very good surface. Separate scoreboard. Club confirm high quality facility but struggle for good

Site	Area	Approximate Teams Using Site (number of teams)	Use on Saturday PM (Number of teams)	Use on Sunday PM (Number of Teams)	Number of Strips on wicket	Estimated Use per Strip (number of games per season)	Other Facilities Available	Comments (Site Visits / Consultation)
Aspley Guise CC - The Common	North	8	2	2	15	4.9	Nets and artificial wicket	second grounds Some dog mess and mole hills on undulating outfield. Artificial strip in dangerous condition. Square still in very good condition considering near end of season. Outfield poor, changing accommodation also poor. Club indicate that investment is needed in square. Site also suffers from unofficial use
Biggleswade CC	North	9	1	4	14	5.9	None	Average facilities, site has a small outfield
Blunham CC	North	12	2	2	7	14.6	Nets and artificial wicket	Well maintained, some evidence of damage to surface
Caldecote PF - Caldecote CC	North	3	1	1	9	3.1	Nets and artificial wicket	Very picturesque
Eversholt CC	North	7	2	2	14	4.6	Nets and artificial wicket	Good condition
Fairfield - Letchworth CC	North	9	1	4	10	8.2	Artificial Wicket	Very smart set up with separate scoreboard and
Flitwick CC	North	10	2	2	11	8.0	Nets	

Site	Area	Approximate Teams Using Site (number of teams)	Use on Saturday PM (Number of teams)	Use on Sunday PM (Number of Teams)	Number of Strips on wicket	Estimated Use per Strip (number of games per season)	Other Facilities Available	Comments (Site Visits / Consultation)
								covers. Club consider facility to be average to good
Groveside, Henlow CC	North	5	1	1	11	4.0	Nets	Good facilities. Club indicate that improvements are required to the pavilion
Hurst Grove - Lidlington CC	North	1	1	-	6	1.7	None	Football pitch on outfield. Club highlight several issues - poor outfield, issues with drainage. Wicket would benefit from covers and rollers
Ickwell Green	North	7	2	2	10	4.0	Nets and artificial wicket	Attractive pavilion in village green location. Club indicate that facility is good but has a low bounce
Langford PF - Langford CC	North	9	1	1	9	8.9	Nets and artificial wicket	Good wicket, some evidence of damage to surface
Marston Playing Fields - Ampthill CC	North	4	2	2	11	3.6	None	Maintained by Ampthill Cricket Club and used as overspill. Site well maintained
Milton Bryan Playing Fields - Milton Bryan CC	North	4	2	1	7	5.4	Nets and artificial wicket	Artificial strip on edge of square - short boundary. Club

Site	Area	Approximate Teams Using Site (number of teams)	Use on Saturday PM (Number of teams)	Use on Sunday PM (Number of Teams)	Number of Strips on wicket	Estimated Use per Strip (number of games per season)	Other Facilities Available	Comments (Site Visits / Consultation)
								highlight issues with uneven outfield and poor pavilion
New Grounds Sundon Rd - Harlington CC	North	1	1	-	11	0.9	None	Links with football pitches which can result in damage to outfield. Issues with litter and grass cover
Old Warden CC	North	3	-	-	11	2.72	Nets	Picturesque ground
Shuttleworth College	North	1	-	-	11	1	Nets and artificial wicket	Good quality cricket facility. Site also used for curricular use
Rectory Rd - Steppingley CC	North	1	1	-	6	1.7	Artificial Wicket	Small pavilion. Club suggest this is in need of improvement. Outfield poor.
Silsoe (Wrest Park)	North	3	1	2	11	2.7	Artificial Wicket	Several clubs indicate facility to be poor quality
Southill Park - Southill CC	North	6	1	2	15	3.9	Nets	Facility good
Stanford Lane - Clifton CC	North	8	-	-	11	2.9	Nets and artificial wicket	No comments received
Sunderland Rd Rec - Sandy Cricket Club	North	4	1	1	11	3.3	Artificial wicket	New pavilion. Club indicate poor drainage. Suffers from dog fouling and litter due to

Site	Area	Approximate Teams Using Site (number of teams)	Use on Saturday PM (Number of teams)	Use on Sunday PM (Number of Teams)	Number of Strips on wicket	Estimated Use per Strip (number of games per season)	Other Facilities Available	Comments (Site Visits / Consultation)
								recreational use
The Hollow - Potton CC	North	6	2	2	12	4.7	Nets and artificial wicket	Cricket pitch and changing completely separate from football. Small but well tended
Memorial Playing Fields, Shefford	North	-			11	0.0		No use although site appears to still be in place
Alameda Middle School	North	1	0	1	1	11	Artificial wicket	School facility used for junior play
Fulbrook School	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	1	0	1	1	11	Artificial wicket	School facility used for junior play

Projecting Future Needs - Team Generation Rates and Latent Demand

8.73 Team Generation Rates (TGRs) indicate how many people in a specified age group are required to generate one team, thus enabling analysis of participation. Table 8.8 summarises the TGRs for cricket and provides a comparison with national standards. These national figures should be treated with caution as the Sport England database has not been updated for several years, however it can be concluded that participation in cricket in Central Bedfordshire is high and there is limited latent demand for male sport although there is potential to grow participation in female cricket. Participation in Cheshire West and Chester is also higher than in Cheshire West and Chester, an authority falling into the same family group as Central Bedfordshire.

Table 8.8 – TGRs across Central Bedfordshire

Type of Cricket	Sport England National Average	Central Bedfordshire TGR	Cheshire West and Chester TGR
Junior Male Cricket	1:1480	1:154	1:188
Junior Female Cricket	1:21052	0	0
Senior Male Cricket	1:1415	1:563	1:728
Senior Female Cricket	1:54,815	1:64870	

8.74 By applying TGRs to population projections, we can project the theoretical number of teams that would be generated solely from population growth and gain an understanding of future demand. Table 8.9 summarises the number of teams in Central Bedfordshire both now, and taking into account the projected population growth.

Table 8.9 – Impact of Projected Population Growth on Cricket Teams

Sport and Age Groups	Number of teams in age group within the area	Current population in age group within the area	Future population in age group within the area	Current TGR	Population Change in Age Group	Potential Change in Team Numbers in Age Group
Cricket Open Age Mens (18-55yrs)	113	63586	65947	563	2361	4.20
Cricket Open Age Womens (18-55yrs)	1	64870	67279	64870	2409	0.00
Cricket Junior Boys (11-17yrs)	67	10310	10919	154	609	4.00
Cricket Junior Girls (11-17yrs)	0	10519	11140	0	621	0

8.75 Tables 8.10 – 8.12 consider potential increases in teams by placemaking area. They calculate TGRs for each area rather than using Central Bedfordshire as a whole and indicate that the majority of additional teams are likely to be created in the North if participation continues.

Table 8.10 – Potential increase in Demand (Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking Area)

Sport and Age Groups	Number of teams in age group within the area	Current population in age group within the area	Future population in age group within the area	Current TGR	Population Change in Age Group	Potential Change in Team Numbers in Age Group
Cricket Open Age Mens (18-55yrs)	11	12988	13250	1181	262	0.2
Cricket Open Age Womens (18-55yrs)	0	13251	13518	0	267	0
Cricket Junior Boys (11-17yrs)	7	2106	2194	301	88	0.3
Cricket Junior Girls (11-17yrs)	0	2149	2238	0	90	0

Table 8.11 – Potential increase in Demand (Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Placemaking Area)

Sport and Age Groups	Number of teams in age group within the area	Current population in age group within the area	Future population in age group within the area	Current TGR	Population Change in Age Group	Potential Change in Team Numbers in Age Group
Cricket Open Age Mens (18-55yrs)	25	13469	14133	539	664	1.20
Cricket Open Age Womens (18-55yrs)	0	13741	14419	0	678	0
Cricket Junior Boys (11-17yrs)	12	2184	2340	182	156	0.90
Cricket Junior Girls (11-17yrs)	0	2228	2387	0	159	0

Table 8.12 – Potential increase in Demand (North Placemaking Area)

Sport and Age Groups	Number of teams in age group within the area	Current population in age group within the area	Future population in age group within the area	Current TGR	Population Change in Age Group	Potential Change in Team Numbers in Age Group
Cricket Open Age Mens (18-55yrs)	77	37128.62	38564	482.2	1435.0	3.0
Cricket Open Age Womens (18-55yrs)	1	37878.69	39343	37878.7	1463.9	0.0
Cricket Junior Boys (11-17yrs)	48	6020.365	6385	125.4	364.8	2.9
Cricket Junior Girls (11-17yrs)	0	6141.989	6514	0	372.2	0

8.76 As can be seen in Tables 8.9 – 8.12, population projections indicate that while the amount of people living in Central Bedfordshire will grow, the age of these residents will increase and lower proportions of the population will have the propensity to participate in pitch sports.

8.77 Despite this, the scale of the population growth in Central Bedfordshire will however cause an increase in the number of cricket teams that will be generated. Assuming that the TGRS remain constant;

- the number of adult teams will increase by 4;
- the number of junior male teams will grow by 4; and
- all other participation will remain relatively static.

8.78 Overall across Central Bedfordshire, the above increase in teams would mean full usage of an additional pitch (assuming that all teams were located in one area). In reality however, increases are likely to occur in areas of high population growth and are likely to result in the generation of additional teams at existing clubs.

8.79 Tables 8.10 to 8.12 suggest that the increases will however be geographically skewed towards the north of Central Bedfordshire, in particular;

- Generation of less than one additional adult and one additional junior team in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area – no additional pitch requirements arising directly from population growth
- Creation of 1 further adult team and one junior team in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south
- Creation of 3 senior cricket teams and 3 junior cricket teams in the north.

The overall impact of the additional teams on peak time supply and demand is outlined in Table 8.13.

Table 8.13 – Projected Future Peak Time Demand for Cricket

Placemaking Area	Peak Time Demand Shortfall / Surplus of Grounds	Number of Junior Matches also on a Sunday	Shortfall / Surplus Adult and Junior (Sunday)
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	0.6	3.5 (3 grounds available)	-0.9
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	2.4	6.5 (8 grounds available)	-0.5

North	7.5	24 (25 grounds available)	-3.9
Central Bedfordshire	10.6	33.5 (36 grounds available)	-5

Increased participation

8.80 In addition to the growth arising through population projections, the ECB targets significant participation increases however and is keen to see cricket in Central Bedfordshire grow both in terms of traditional cricket but also less formal cricket meaning that facilities able to accommodate both forms of the game will be required. Successful interventions to increase participation would see pressures on the existing pitch stock grow.

8.81 Supporting the Governing Body aspirations, more than half of responding clubs have aspirations to increase the number of teams (Aspley Guise, Langford, Dunstable, Caddington, Leighton, Sandy, Steppingley, Lidlington, Biggleswade, Potton, Flitwick, Ampthill, Blunham, and Caldecote). There is a particular focus upon the creation of new junior and ladies teams which will not necessarily influence peak time demand immediately, but will place existing pressures on strips, many of which are already overused.

8.82 If at least one additional team was created at each of the 14 clubs expressing aspirations to create additional teams, 14 teams would be created. This would lead to higher shortfalls when combining junior and senior play, equivalent to almost 10 pitches.

8.83 Consultation indicated that there are also issues with teams from adjacent authorities seeking to use pitches in Central Bedfordshire. Increases in these patterns of activity will further pressurise the already at capacity pitch stock.

Summary and Key Issues

Key issues to address – Cricket

- Cricket is a popular sport in Central Bedfordshire and there is a strong network of cricket clubs. Participation is increasing and almost all clubs have aspirations to grow further.
- More than half of all cricket clubs are based in the North Placemaking area and there are only two clubs in Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking area. Dunstable are the only club with two on site grounds in Central Bedfordshire. There are 36 public facilities used for community cricket and a further 30 facilities at school sites (of which 25 are available but only three are used regularly). Facilities at school sites are largely artificial and in general are poor quality. They are not of sufficient standard to serve the needs of community cricket clubs. Some schools (in Leighton Buzzard and Shefford) are however considering opportunities to become cricket academies, which would require a subsequent improvement in facilities. There is a pitch at Chicksands MOD (not used at all by the community) and in addition, there are several sites that no longer function as cricket pitches but have previously been maintained as such. These sites currently have no role in the

provision of cricket.

- Cricket clubs are very proactive and the quality of existing clubs is high, particularly with regards the first team pitches. The condition of the outfield and issues with drainage are perhaps the main concerns impacting upon pitch quality and several clubs also raise concerns with the quality of their pavilion. There are much lower levels of satisfaction with the overall stock of facilities however, with 50% of clubs suggesting that facilities inhibit club development and 40% of clubs suggesting that they are not happy with the stock of facilities. The qualities of pitches for 3rd and 4th teams, as well as access to sufficient pitches are the main reasons attributed to this. Several clubs are currently using more than one ground, including Ampthill (Marston / Alameda MS / Silsoe), Aspley Guise CC (Fulbrook MS), Blunham CC (Roxton CC), Flitwick CC (Wrest Park / Eversholt), and Leighton Buzzard (Pages Park).
- Analysis of the adequacy of supply to meet demand at peak time suggests that there are sufficient pitches overall, although supply is particularly closely matched in Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking area. This however disguises site specific pressures and almost all club bases are at capacity on both Saturday and Sunday afternoon. In contrast, several other facilities are used much less frequently and have capacity for further clubs. These are largely of lower quality and may not be in locations adjacent to the large clubs where pressures are occurring. Ampthill Park, Bell Close LB, Blunham, Caddington, Eversholt CC, Flitwick CC, Ickwell Green, Lancot Park CC(Dunstable Town), Marston, Milton Bryan PF, The Common (Aspley Guise), The Hollow, Potton, The Rye (Eaton Bray) are all at capacity on a Saturday and with the exception of Eaton Bray, Lancot Park and Caddington CC, the same sites are also full on a Sunday. In addition, Fairfield CC and Southill CC are also at capacity
- Analysis of the usage of wickets demonstrates that several clubs are using facilities above optimum levels (5 times per season). Adding to pressures, there are several sites that do not include either an artificial wicket or training nets, meaning that any practice must take place upon the grass square or off site. A lack of access to indoor facilities is also highlighted as a key issue for clubs.
- Many clubs have aspirations to increase participation which would place further pressures on pitches in Central Bedfordshire. In addition, the ECB highlight the need to evolve cricket in order to maintain growth and to attract new participants to the game. Analysis of Active People and Market Segmentation indicate that there are just over 1000 people in Central Bedfordshire who would like to play but do not currently.
- Use of Team Generation Rates indicates that population growth alone will generate an additional 5 senior male teams and 4 senior female teams. While this is likely to create extra teams for clubs in areas in close proximity to development, it is clear that it will place further pressures on the existing stock of facilities. The impact of increasing demand will be particularly evident in the north of Central Bedfordshire, where shortfalls of provision (when taking into account both adult and junior matches) will increase to 4 pitches overall. Additional increases in junior participation may see further growth in demand for cricket pitches, with unmet demand eventually increasing to over 10 pitches. This may be exacerbated further by the impact of teams from other local authorities using pitches within Central Bedfordshire. Consultation suggests that this may increase due to growing

pressures for pitches in neighbouring authorities.

Key Priorities

Table 8.14 summarises the quantitative issues raised in this assessment.

Table 8.14 - Quantitative Issues

Placemaking Area	Current / Future	Peak Time Demand Shortfall / Surplus of Grounds	Shortfall / Surplus Adult and Junior (Sunday)	Clubs at capacity (Saturday)	Clubs at capacity (Sunday)	Clubs overusing Wicket
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Current	0.6	-0.9	Lancot Park CC	Houghton Regis CC	N/A
	Future	0.6	-0.9			
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	Current	2.6	0	Caddington Cricket Club, Leighton Buzzard Cricket Club, The Rye	Leighton Buzzard Cricket Club, Wrest Park	Leighton Buzzard CC / Caddington CC
	Future	2.4	-0.5			
North	Current	8.4	-2.4	Ampthill Park, Eversholt CC, Flitwick CC, Ickwell Green, Marston, Milton Bryan, The Common, The Hollow	Ampthill Park, Eversholt CC, Flitwick CC, Ickwell Green, Marston, Milton Bryan, The Common, The Hollow,	Potton CC / Milton Bryan CC / Langford CC / Blunham CC
	Future	7.58	-3.8			

					Fairfield CC, Southill CC	
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8.84 The issues evident in the table, as well as those set out in the assessment indicate that the key priorities for cricket in Central Bedfordshire are as follows:

Ensure that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand

8.85 Reflecting the pressures on existing club bases across Central Bedfordshire, protect all existing cricket grounds through the inclusion of appropriate planning policy.

8.86 In partnership with the Bedfordshire Cricket Board, ensure that the amount of cricket facilities available does not impact on the opportunities to grow participation in the sport. Many clubs are at or nearing capacity and there is a need to provide access to additional appropriate facilities. This should be sought by;

- the ongoing development of relationships between larger and smaller clubs. This has already proved successful in Central Bedfordshire, with many larger clubs using facilities owned by smaller clubs;
- the provision of a new satellite ground for clubs at capacity where this represents a sustainable option for growth. This may be either through new provision or the reinstatement of sites that have formerly been used for cricket;
- the development of school club links and the establishment of a relationship between schools and cricket clubs. Facilities at school sites can then be used by the cricket club as the club expands. Note improvements to the quality of facilities are likely to also be required if this is to be successful; and
- ensuring that the impact of the increasing population is taken into account when identifying facility requirements – there are particular pressures in areas of growth and new facilities will be required where there is evidence of need. Improvements to the quality of existing facilities should be required where there is already sufficient provision.

8.87 Any new facilities should be provided in conjunction with an existing club or in support of a new club that has appropriate leadership and structures in place.

Ensure that the quality of facilities is sufficient to meet current and future demand

8.88 Address quality issues raised and ensure that both cricket grounds and pavilions are up to appropriate standards. This should include overspill facilities as well as first team grounds.

8.89 Key areas for improvement relate to:

- grounds maintenance skills
- changing pavilions
- surface
- drainage

8.90 Support cricket clubs in the development of training nets to enhance club sustainability and improve overall performance as well as to remove pressure on grass wickets. This may include:

- an indoor cricket venue
- the provision of outdoor cricket nets at larger clubs that do not currently have access to such facilities

Promote increases in participation and the creation of sustainable clubs

8.91 Support long term sustainability of clubs by promoting succession planning, for example in groundsmanship. Both providers (including Town and Parish Councils) and clubs should be supported in gaining key skills.

8.92 Support initiatives to increase cricket participation including the introduction of new forms of the game, which may require the provision of flexible spaces.

9. Rugby

9.1 This section evaluates the adequacy of facilities for rugby across Central Bedfordshire and provides:

- An overview of supply and demand for rugby
- An evaluation of the overall adequacy of pitches to meet demand
- Key issues and strategic priorities the strategy will address
- Summary and key issues to address.

Rugby in Central Bedfordshire - An Overview

Supply

9.2 Table 9.1 summarises the rugby pitches that are available across the whole area. In total there are 44 senior pitches available. Ampthill RUFC and Dunstablians RUFC also have midi pitches that are used for the younger age groups. Several other schools also mark rugby pitches out on occasion when required.

Table 9.1 – Rugby Pitches in Central Bedfordshire

Area	Site	Senior Pitches Available	Midi Pitches Available	Number of Pitches that are Floodlit	Community Use
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Queensbury Academy	1	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	Dunstablians RUFC	3	1	2	Club base - Yes
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	Brooklands Middle School	1	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	Streetfield Middle School	1	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	Vandkye Upper School and Community College	1	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	Cedars Upper School	2	0	0	No
	Manshead Church of England Upper School	1	0	0	No
	Leighton Buzzard RUFC	4	0	3	Club base - yes

Area	Site	Senior Pitches Available	Midi Pitches Available	Number of Pitches that are Floodlit	Community Use
North	Biggleswade RUFC	6	0	2	Club base - Yes
	Amphill RUFC	4	2	1	Club base - Yes
	Alameda Middle School	1	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	Arnold Academy	1	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	Cranfield University	1	0	0	University
	Defence Intelligence and Security Centre	2	0	0	No – private use
	Henlow Church of England Academy	1	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	Holywell School	1	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	RAF Henlow Sports Ground	1	0	0	Private – no use by rugby clubs
	Redborne Upper School and Community College	3	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	Samuel Whitbread Academy	2	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	Sandy Sports and Recreation Centre	2	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	Sandye Place Middle School	1	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	Shuttleworth College	1	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
	Stratton Upper School and Community College	2	0	0	School – yes but no use by rugby clubs
Parkfields Middle School	1	0	0	No	

Map 9.1 outlines the distribution of rugby pitches across Central Bedfordshire.

Map 9.1 – Rugby Pitches in Central Bedfordshire

TO BE INSERTED Post approval

Demand

Active People Survey and Market Segmentation Analysis (Sport England)

9.3 Table 3.5 indicated that according to the Active People Survey, nationally, between 2005/6 (Active People Survey 1) and 2011/2012 (Active People Survey 6) participation in rugby has declined from 0.46% to 0.42% of the adult population.

9.4 Using the Active People Survey and Market Segmentation, it is possible to evaluate how many residents of Central Bedfordshire **do** participate in rugby and how many of the population **would like** to participate in rugby. It is also possible to understand how this varies across different parts of Central Bedfordshire.

9.5 Map 9.2 shows spatially the percentage of the Central Bedfordshire population who, based on the Active People survey findings, are currently participating in rugby. Chart 9.1 sets out the profile of current participation in rugby across the 19 market segments.

Map 9.2: Percentage and location of the adult population who do play rugby

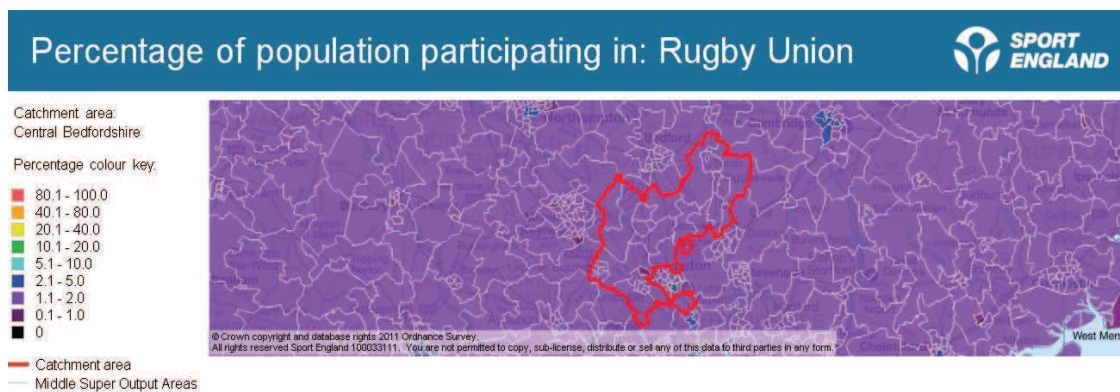
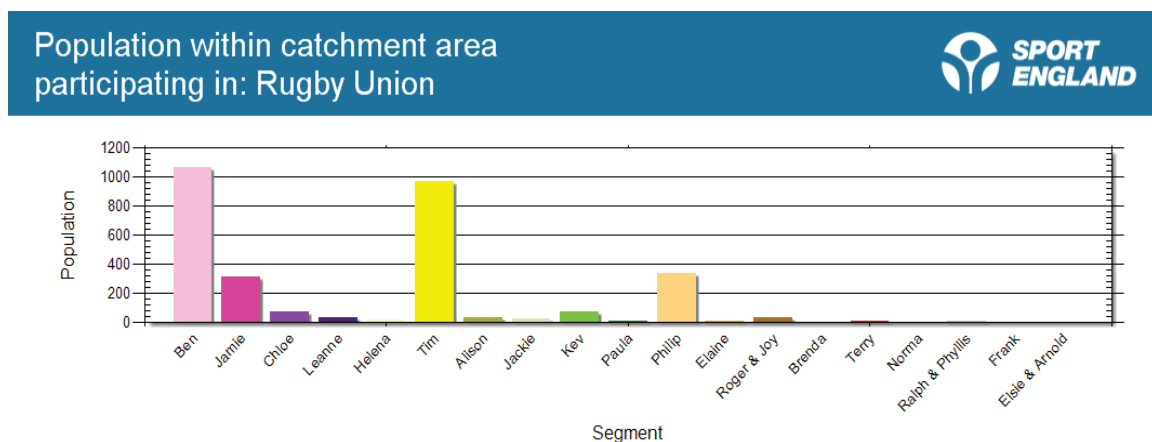


Chart 9.1: Profile of the market segments who participate in rugby in Central Bedfordshire



9.6 As can be seen, participation in rugby is consistent across all parts of Central Bedfordshire (between 1.1-2%) with the exception of north Dunstable (0.1% - 1%). This indicates that participation in Central Bedfordshire is higher than national averages.

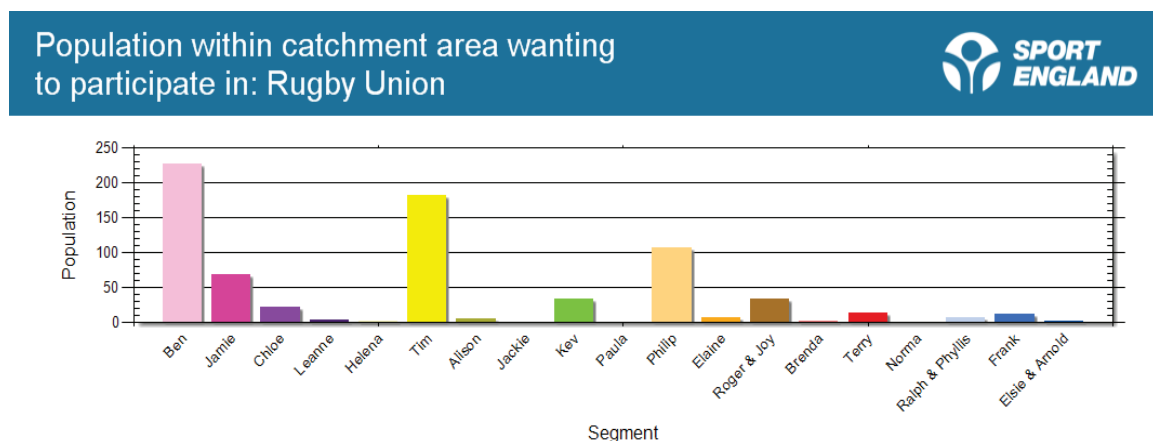
9.7 Like other sports in the area, most rugby players fall within a small number of market segments, specifically Ben (1068), Tim (967), Philip (337) and Jamie (314). In addition, there are a small number of residents in the groups of Kev, Chloe and Leanne that also play rugby.

9.8 The Active People analysis of the percentage of adults who would **like to** play rugby is represented in map and bar chart form and set out in Map 9.3 and Chart 9.2.

Map 9.3: Percentage and location of the adult population who would like to play Rugby.



Chart 9.2: Profile of the market segments who would like to play Rugby



9.9 The map and bar chart demonstrate that the number of people in Central Bedfordshire who would like to play rugby is between just 0.1 and 1% - this is geographically consistent across the area. The segments that would like to play are consistent with those that already do play, specifically Ben (227), Tim (183), Philip (107) and Jamie (68). These groups make up 82% of total. There is however also some interest from several other groups, including Kev, Roger and Joy, Terry and Frank, as well as Chloe.

9.10 Table 9.2 sets summarises the above statistics, providing an indication of the exact number of people who currently play and would like to play, according to Sport England Market Segmentation and Active People Surveys.

Table 9.2 – Participation in Rugby

DO PLAY POPULATION	% of Adult Population	WOULD LIKE TO PLAY POPULATION	% of Adult Population	Total Number and % who do/would play
3004	1.5%	725	0.03%	3729 (1.9%)

Current Participation

9.11 There are four rugby clubs based within the boundaries of Central Bedfordshire. According to data collated by the RFU, in the 2012 – 2013 season these clubs accommodate 1337 rugby union players, 69% of which are aged under 17. Drawing upon the figures highlighted in the Active People Survey above, this suggests that there is also a degree of casual rugby that takes place in Central Bedfordshire.

9.12 All of the clubs operate both junior and mini teams as well as adult teams, meaning that there are opportunities for progression through the age groups. Female participation is however limited, with no female teams run at any of the four clubs. Table 9.3 summarises the rugby clubs within Central Bedfordshire and the teams that each club runs.

Table 9.3 – Rugby Clubs in Central Bedfordshire

Club	Adult Teams	Colts Teams	Junior Teams	Mini / Midi Teams	Venue
Amphill RUFC	5	1	6	6	Amphill RUFC
Biggleswade RUFC	3	0	5	6	Biggleswade RUFC
Dunstablians RUFC	4	1	5	6	Dunstablians RUFC
Leighton Buzzard RUFC	5	0	5	7	Leighton Buzzard RUFC
TOTAL	17	2	21	25	

Trends in Participation

9.13 Rugby Football Union (RFU) data on club membership suggests that participation in rugby has increased in recent years.

Quality of Rugby Pitches

9.14 Pitch quality influences the amount of matches that can be sustained, and as a consequence has a significant impact on the overall adequacy of supply in an area.

9.15 Site assessments have been carried out in line with the assessment matrix provided in Towards a Level Playing Field – these assessments are non-technical assessments designed to provide an overview of pitch quality and the degree to which facilities are fit for purpose. The non-technical site assessments revealed the quality of rugby pitches to be excellent overall, although there is evidence of heavy use on some of the pitches. In brief, the following comments were reported;

- Ampthill RUFC – Quality excellent overall, pitches consistently good
- Biggleswade RUFC – some pitches located across busy road. Pitches consistent, some bare patches on grass
- Dunstablians RUFC – the only site to contain a small stand. Quality overall consistently excellent
- Leighton Buzzard RUFC – quality good, slight slope and unevenness on one pitch. Grass cover excellent although some evidence of heavy use.

Rugby Football Union Pitch Quality Assessments

9.16 Supporting the site assessments undertaken specifically for this assessment, detailed site visits were carried out to all four club bases by highly qualified groundsmen on behalf of the RFU. These reflected the findings of site visits and revealed that all four rugby clubs in Central Bedfordshire currently have high quality pitches. Despite this (and it should be taken into account that most pitches will look to be of higher quality during the summer months), all clubs suffer from poor pitch quality on their floodlit training areas due to high levels of demand from senior and junior teams, as well as ad hoc school competitions.

The key issues identified for each club can be summarised as follows;

9.17 **Ampthill RUFC** – pitches confirmed as being overall very high quality, particularly the two new pitches which are described as top class. The first team pitch is documented as being in good condition, particularly given the time of year.

Opportunities to improve pitches further were identified as;

- top dress with sand at the end of the season, aerate the pitch and then reseed, and the potential to use fertiliser with lower levels of nitrogen during the Autumn;
- verti drain new pitches at end of season; and
- level first team pitch (seeking grant)

9.18 **Biggleswade RUFC** – Pitches considered to be excellent overall. All pitches were extremely dry and hard due to weather conditions, however the grass was a good height and the mowing was good and line markings were also clear.

Opportunities for improvement of the pitches were identified as;

- irrigation system for the 1st team pitch and bore hole on site to provide water;
- 3rd team pitch had recently been reseeded and needs close monitoring to ensure that grass is appropriately bedded in before play takes place. The training pitch and 3rd team pitch may also need a top dressing of sand next season;
- requirement to spread training over the whole floodlit area to ensure that play is distributed evenly. There would also be scope to mark out some lines outside of the pitch to enable practicing of line outs etc;
- pitches would benefit from chain harrowing on a regular basis to repair divots and to maintain levelling; and
- increased fertilisation on the Sheep Walk pitches.

9.19 **Dunstablians RUFC** – Pitches in good condition particularly given the timing of the visit at the end of a long season and the site is clearly well maintained. The second pitch was highlighted as being the highest quality on the complex. The training pitch was highlighted as being clearly overused, but well looked after particularly given the levels of use to which it is subjected. The cut of pitches was described as excellent. Areas for improvement highlighted as;

- invest is requiring in a low nitrogen feed fertiliser to promote grass growth and improve the quality;
- top dressing and aeration on corner of first team pitch that suffers more from drainage issues; and
- investment in larger chain harrow and spiking equipment.

9.20 **Leighton Buzzard RUFC**– Pitches are again very well maintained and are of high quality. Line marking was also highlighted as excellent and the grass was cut to a regular height and was frequently mown.

Much of the report focuses upon the need to reflect practices undertaken this year in future years, specifically;

- the importance of the application of sand was highlighted particularly if floodlights are provided as this will be necessary to accommodate additional wear and tear;
- the benefits of the use of the Earth Quake machine and the importance of regular aeration of pitches; and
- use of fertiliser and the potential use of slow release fertiliser in future years.

9.21 In particular, the importance of spreading training over the whole floodlit area to ensure that play is distributed evenly was highlighted. It was also emphasised that pitches need at least 8 – 10 weeks rest per year to re-establish themselves and was suggested that alternative arrangements for training needed to be considered during this time.

Club Consultation – Quality Issues and other issues experienced

9.22 Consultation with the rugby clubs resulted in responses from all clubs. The key issues raised were;

- **Ampthill RUFC** – despite positive ratings at the time of RFU visits and visits undertaken specifically as part of this assessment, the club rate pitch quality as relatively poor, with most elements rated as poor or average (and all elements relating to pitch surface considered poor). Issues were primarily attributed to overuse of pitches at the time of response to the questionnaire. The two pitches on the Dillingham Park side of the site are perceived to be particularly poor due to overuse and the car park is also highlighted as being inadequate. Issues with changing facilities and a lack of external funding are perceived to be the key barriers to the development of the club.
- **Biggleswade RUFC** –the club highlight few issues relating to pitch quality, with the only concerns raised relating to parking and the standard of the equipment i.e. posts etc. Quality is not perceived to inhibit current club activities, although the club do indicate that they struggle to access appropriate pitches for matches on occasion. The club highlight the main barriers to growth to be access to all weather pitches for both training and matches, changing facilities and lack of coaches. A lack of internal and external funding is also perceived to inhibit club development activity. Perhaps most importantly, the club indicate that they are looking to renew the planning permission for the Sheepwalk pitches (part of the overall Biggleswade RUFC site) as these are important if the ongoing activity at the club is to be sustained. The club have a relatively wide catchment area, with 65% of club members believed to travel over 3 miles. 25% of members travel more than five miles;
- **Dunstablans RUFC** – Pitches are rated as average to good, although the pitch surface is considered to be relatively uneven. The club also highlight a need to re-surface the existing car park which is badly pot-holed and breaking-up. The club suggest that it is becoming difficult to accommodate all activity at their existing site (youth teams) and in good weather conditions, pitches become overused (which has implications for quality). The club highlight the main barriers to growth to be access to all weather pitches for both training and matches, a lack of youth pitches and lack of coaches. In response to these issues, the club are currently evaluating the conversion of 1 Adult pitch and 1 Mini-pitch to an all-weather 4G surface.
- **Leighton Buzzard RUFC** – The club rate their facilities as average to good overall. Club development and growth mean that pitches receive a lot of use and as a consequence, pitch quality now needs upgrading, particularly the floodlit areas. While the club has a successful regular maintenance programme, to rectify the issues caused by this overuse, the club estimate that £25,000 investment is required, which they are seeking funding to afford. It is indicated that high levels of use have led to a deterioration of pitch quality over the last 2 years and raising the standard of the pitches is currently the key priority; and
- the club are not satisfied with the overall provision of rugby pitches in Central Bedfordshire and highlight a lack of public pitches (that can be used for overspill to reduce wear and tear on club pitches) as the main reason for this. The club highlight the main barriers to growth to be access to all weather training pitches, changing facilities and lack of coaches. A lack of internal and external funding is also

perceived to inhibit club development activity. The club have a relatively local catchment, with the majority of members travelling between 1 and 3 miles to reach the club.

National Governing Body Perspective

9.23 Facilities are one of the most important components of a rugby club. They drive the club ethos and spirit and facilitate high quality participation and club development. Rugby is increasing in popularity as a sport, with 26,000 new players joining the game in the third quarter of 2012 and it is hoped that this growth will continue, particularly as the rugby world cup will be held in 2015. Appropriate amounts of facilities are essential if clubs are to grow and to develop and attract new members. Facilities are also central to the sustainability of rugby clubs.

9.24 The overall vision of the RFU National Facilities Strategy (2013 – 2017) is;

‘Strengthening our Member Clubs and Growing the Game in Communities around them’

9.25 Effective and efficient facilities are seen as a key component of achieving this goal. Rugby development opportunities (including both the retention of existing players, the recruitment of new players and the development of coaches and volunteers are seen as being essential to the success of the strategy delivery.

9.26 The strategy seeks to;

- recognise the role of facility development in the delivery of community rugby’s core purpose and key drivers;
- provide evidence-based conclusions on the current key facility issues affecting the sustainability and growth of rugby union in England;
- set out priority areas for future investment;
- outline a facility planning model to enable the delivery of the strategy at a local level;
- highlight other key factors in the delivery of high quality facilities; and
- outline the need for and role of associated Investment Strategies.

9.27 The strategy indicates that the key priorities of the RFU in relation to rugby clubs are as follows:

- increase the provision of integrated changing facilities that are child- friendly and can sustain concurrent male and female activity at the club;
- improve the quality and quantity of natural turf pitches (including maintenance);
- improve the quality and quantity of floodlighting; and
- increase the provision of artificial grass pitches that deliver wider game development outcomes.

9.28 The document indicates that investment in the following will also be prioritised;

- social, community and catering facilities, that can support diversification and the generation of additional revenues;
 - facility upgrades, which result in an increase in energy-efficiency, in order to reduce the running costs; and
 - pitch equipment, including quality rugby posts and pads.
- 9.29 Increasing participation in rugby by teenagers, with a particular focus on retaining players during the transition between junior and senior rugby is a key priority of the RFU and there is also work underway to increase the amount of female participants. In addition to continuing to build the existing club infrastructure, touch rugby, a newer form of the game is also being introduced in an attempt to attract new participants to the sport. It is hoped that growth across the club structure will amount to at least 2% of participants per annum.
- 9.30 The facilities strategy sets out three types of model venues, which seek to balance the level of activity that takes place at a club with the facilities that are provided (both on and off the field). The three tiers of provision are;
- Model Venue 1: This is usually a club, school, university or other provider playing lower level or recreational rugby;
 - Model Venue 2: An established club venue with a wider programme of adult and junior rugby for both male and female; and
 - Model Venue 3: A venue with potentially higher level competitive rugby that can provide for more sophisticated RFU development programmes.
- 9.31 The strategy indicates that the range of facilities required should be driven by the activity that takes place (named the Activity v Facility Continuum).
- 9.32 The Sport and Recreation Alliance Survey (2011) revealed the following about rugby clubs;
- accessing funds/sponsorship (81%), generating sufficient income, maintaining/recruiting/retaining volunteers (80%) and recruiting new members (79%) are the key challenges faced by rugby union clubs. Developing skill sets (59%) is seen as the greatest opportunity;
 - 32% of clubs are growing and 22% are contracting;
 - 30% of rugby clubs share their facilities with football, 24% with cricket and 10% with rugby league. 40% do not share their facilities with any other sports;
 - 38% of rugby union clubs hire their facilities, primarily from schools, colleges and universities, down from 45% in 2009; and
 - bar, catering and hospitality represents both the biggest income stream and expense, whilst grants provide further income and sports costs represent the next largest expense.
- 9.33 Locally, rugby union is very strong and all four rugby clubs run both senior and junior sections. Participation in all clubs has increased in recent years and all clubs are

proactive and efficiently run. Ampthill RUFC, Dunstablians RUFC and Leighton Buzzard RUFC have all received investment from the RFU in recent years.

9.34 While participation is strong, linking with the agenda of Sport England the RFU are seeking to reduce the drop off that typically occurs when players reach age 14 as well as continue to grow the club membership bases. The projected population growth in the area offers the opportunity to increase the number of players within Central Bedfordshire, however increasing the proportion of the existing population that play rugby is also prioritised.

9.35 Analysis of the Activity v Facility Continuum indicates that in Central Bedfordshire, all clubs are functioning within the capacity of their facility at the current time. In order that current activity, aspirations for participation growth as well as likely population growth can be accommodated, in addition to the Grounds maintenance requirements highlighted earlier in this section, the following is however required;

- Leighton Buzzard RUFC – there is a need to improve the quality of one of the floodlit pitches in order that this can be returned to use;
- Dunstablians RUFC – upgrades to the social facilities including social facilities, toilets and the kitchen were required for the club to accommodate both current and projected demand. The RFU, alongside Sport England, have recently provided support to the club to make significant improvements and it is thought that this work is now complete. Longer term, successful increase in the membership of the club may require the creation of additional facilities including further floodlit training areas (grass or 3g) and social facilities;
- Ampthill RUFC has grown significantly in recent years and have successfully extended their facility through the acquisition of a lease for adjacent land. The pitches on site are of excellent standard however there is a need to ensure that the clubhouse is upgraded to ensure that activity can be sustained; and
- Biggleswade RUFC – the club are currently working towards Inspired Facilities funding to secure improvements to the existing clubhouse.

Supply and Demand Modelling

9.36 The methodology undertaken for the rugby assessment follows the 8 step process set out in TaLPPF. To ensure compliance with the emerging methodology (which is not yet published) as far as possible, the following steps of analysis were also undertaken:

- Evaluation of site specific capacity over a week as well as at peak time
- Consideration of the impact of training and casual use
- Analysis of site specific activities and issues.

9.37 Table 9.4 evaluates the adequacy of existing pitch provision on a peak day. It includes all facilities, whether or not they are available for community use and compares this against the number of teams wishing to play (assuming that each team plays home and away on alternative weeks). As two midi games can be played on an adult pitch, it is assumed that 2 midi teams are equivalent of one adult team. Table 7.4 indicates that there are a large number of pitches in Central Bedfordshire.

Table 9.4 – Adequacy of Rugby Pitches taking into account all pitches

Placemaking Area	Number of pitches	Total Number of Match Equivalents per week	Total Number of Matches (Saturday – Senior)	Total Number of Matches (Sunday morning – Junior and Midi)	Total Number of Sunday afternoon (female and colts)	Shortfall / Surplus at Adult Peak Time (Saturday)	Shortfall / Surplus Sunday Morning
Central Bedfordshire	44	26.25	8.5	16.75	1	35.5	27.25
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	4	6.5	2	4	0.5	2	0
Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South	10	6.75	2.5	4.25	0	7.5	5.75
North	30	16.5	4	8.5	0.5	26	21.5

9.38 Table 9.4 therefore suggests that there are enough rugby pitches in Central Bedfordshire as a whole. Only in Dunstable and Houghton Regis Placemaking area is provision relatively tightly matched with demand. It must however be noted that Dunstablians has a midi pitch, which if taken into account would alleviate some of the pressures identified above.

Access and Capacity

9.39 In reality, six of the above pitches are not available for community use at all (three in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South and three in the North Placemaking area). Even when these pitches are removed from the equation, there remains sufficient provision, although supply is only just above demand in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South.

9.40 Table 9.5 summarises the availability of pitches at peak time when these facilities are excluded from consideration.

Table 9.5 – Adequacy of Pitches available for community use

Placemaking Area	Number of pitches	Total Number of Match Equivalents per week	Total Number of Matches (Saturday – Senior)	Total Number of Matches (Sunday morning – Junior and Midi)	Total Number of Sunday afternoon (female and colts)	Shortfall / Surplus at Adult Peak Time (Saturday)	Shortfall / Surplus Sunday Morning
Central Bedfordshire	38	26.25	8.5	16.75	1	29.5	21.25
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	4	6.5	2	4	0.5	2	0
Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South	7	6.75	2.5	4.25	0	4.5	2.75
North	27	16.5	4	8.5	0.5	23	18.5

9.41 Building upon this picture, Table 9.6 considers the adequacy of provision when including just the club bases. It indicates that supply is very closely matched with demand. This will be explored in further detail later in this section.

Table 9.6 – Club Base Only

Placemaking Area	Number of pitches	Total Number of Match Equivalents per week	Total Number of Matches (Saturday – Senior)	Total Number of Matches (Sunday morning – Junior and Midi)	Total Number of Sunday afternoon (female and colts)	Shortfall / Surplus at Adult Peak Time (Saturday)	Shortfall / Surplus Sunday Morning
Central Bedfordshire	17	26.25	8.5	16.75	1	8.5	0.25

Dunstable and Houghton Regis	3	6.5	2	4	0.5	1	-1
Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South	4	6.75	2.5	4.25	0	1.5	-0.25
North	10	16.5	4	8.5	0.5	6	1.5

9.42 It is clear therefore that while at club bases, pitch provision is relatively constrained, the large number of schools with rugby pitches provides a potential opportunity for use of these pitches as satellite facilities for clubs.

Impact of Training on Capacity

9.43 All rugby clubs in Central Bedfordshire train at their club base and each club has at least one floodlit pitch to facilitate this. Leighton Buzzard has three floodlit pitches and both Biggleswade and Dunstablians have two.

9.44 This additional use of the facilities outside of match play can impact on pitch quality.

9.45 This can be considered by including this training within modelling. Based on the number of teams at each club and the number of training sessions clubs are thought to have, it has been assumed that the maximum impact of training is equivalent to the following:

- Ampthill RUFC – 7.5 matches per week
- Biggleswade RUFC – 6.5 matches per week
- Dunstablians RUFC -5.5 matches per week
- Leighton Buzzard RUFC – 7.5 matches per week

9.46 This means that training generates the equivalent of 26 - 27 matches per week (54 team equivalents).

9.47 24 of the rugby pitches in Central Bedfordshire are located at school sites (18 sites) and are therefore subject to wear and tear during a typical curriculum programme, particularly for PE lessons and by school teams. The implications of these uses can also be factored in as team equivalents based on the following assumptions:

- each school with a rugby pitch runs 2 hours outdoor PE per week per year group – equivalent of 90 teams (45 matches per week); and
- each school with a rugby pitch also has 5 school teams that compete (45 matches per week).

- 9.48 In addition, three pitches are located at the MOD site (2 pitches) and Cranfield University (one pitch). This could be considered to generate the equivalent of another 6 teams (3 matches per week), although use on both sites is to be adhoc.
- 9.49 These implications represent the worst case scenario and assume that all PE use is focused on the rugby pitches and would generate an additional 90 teams matches per week.
- 9.50 It must be noted that demand from school lessons and training does not impact upon the adequacy of provision to meet peak time demand, however it increases the amount of times pitches are used significantly. Table 9.7 evaluates the impact of both training and school use on the amount of times pitches are used per week.

Table 9.7 – Adequacy of Rugby Pitches in Central Bedfordshire

Number of pitches	Club Matches	Use including training team equivalents	Use including PE lessons and training	Matches per week	Matches per week per pitch
44	26.25	26.25+26.25	26.25+26.25 +95	147.5	3

- 9.51 As is illustrated, when taking into account the implications of training patterns and school use of facilities, it is clear that pitch provision is much more well used than initially suggested. With pitches used up to 3 times per week. While this perhaps over emphasises the use of the facilities, it provides an important indication of the potential scale of use.

The Importance of the Club Base

- 9.52 The nature of rugby however means that the adequacy of provision at the club base is the overarching priority and this is also emphasised in the national rugby facilities strategy. Satellite facilities at school sites, while offering a useful short-term solution do not fit into the club ethos and can inhibit club development if they become permanent features if the situation is not appropriately managed.
- 9.53 All clubs in Central Bedfordshire have their own facilities and there are no known issues with security of tenure for any of the clubs currently (although Biggleswade RUFC must apply for planning permission for their Sheepwalk pitches again).Furthermore, site visits and club consultation confirm that pitch quality is excellent overall, although the quality of the training pitches is poor due to heavy levels of use.

Site Specific Supply and Demand

- 9.54 Table 7.8 therefore considers the adequacy of supply to meet demand at each of club bases. It focuses on the club bases only as almost all rugby activity focuses upon these sites.
- 9.55 It can be seen that while the overall spread of rugby across the week generates theoretical surpluses of provision, when looking at the club bases, provision is more closely matched with demand. All of the clubs are however currently functioning within the parameters that might be expected, however there is little scope to increase usage as the number of matches per week is already relatively high. Added to this, Table 9.6 indicated that peak time demand is also relatively closely matched with demand.

- 9.56 It should be noted that the reduced impact of midi rugby teams (due to their small size and the fact that they play across adult pitches on two club sites) has been taken into account.

Table 9.8 – Club Based Issues - Rugby

Venue	Baseline Demand		Supply and		Home Games Per Week				Capacity			Games Per Pitch		Matches Per Pitch		Comments
	Number of Pitches	Number of Mini Pitches	Number of Teams	Adult	Colts	Junior	Mini	Saturday	Sunday AM	Sunday PM	Games Per Pitch	Games Per Pitch Including Training	Games Per Pitch	Games Per Pitch Including Training		
Amphill	4	2	18	2.5	0.5	3	1.5	1.5	1.5	3.5	1.25	3	1.25	3	Club wish to extend clubhouse	
Biggleswade	6	0	14	1.5	0	2.5	1.5	4.5	2	6	0.9166667	2.3333333	0.9166667	2.3333333	Club wish to upgrade social facilities	
Dunstablians	3	1	16	2	0.5	2.5	1.5	1	0	2.5	1.625	4	1.625	4	Club wish to upgrade social facilities	
Leighton Buzzard	4	0	17	2.5	0	2.5	1.75	1.5	-0.25	4	1.6875	4.25	1.6875	4.25	Club wish to reinstate one pitch	

9.57 The above figures do not take into account the aspirations of clubs to grow and develop or the potential impact of population growth in the area.

Predicating the Future and Latent Demand

9.58 Latent demand can be identified from a variety of sources, including Team Generation Rates (TGRs). TGRs indicate how many people in a specified age group are required to generate one team, thus enabling analysis of current participation and the projection of future participation. TGRs are derived by dividing the appropriate population age band in the area by the number of teams playing within that area in that age band. Table 9.9 summarises TGRs for rugby across Central Bedfordshire and compares them with national statistics. To provide a more up to date comparison, figures for Cheshire West and Chester Council (Cheshire West and Chester PPS 2011), who are one of Central Bedfordshire’s nearest neighbours in terms of population structure are also provided.

9.59 The TGRs indicate that TGRs in Central Bedfordshire are better than the national averages, suggesting that there is limited latent demand. The national statistics should be treated with caution, as the Sport England database has not been updated for several years. Figures are also on the whole better than Cheshire West and Chester Council although it is noticeable that there is a lack of female participation in Central Bedfordshire in comparison to both national statistics and the comparator authority.

Table 9.9 – TGRs across Central Bedfordshire

Type of Rugby	National Average	TGR Central Bedfordshire	TGR Cheshire West and Chester
Midi Rugby	1:2639	1:487	1:3770
Junior Male Rugby	1:2105	1:438	1:1701
Junior Female Rugby	1:19,524	0	1:2842
Senior Male Rugby	1:7032	1:2488	1:59166
Senior Female Rugby	1:43770	0	1:4837

Meeting Future Demand

9.60 By applying TGRs to population projections we can estimate the theoretical number of teams that would be generated from population growth and gain an understanding of the adequacy of current pitch provision to meet future demand. While there will be population growth, the trend towards an ageing population means that the proportion of the population falling within the age bands most likely to play rugby will be lower. The population growth will not have such a significant impact on demand for pitches therefore as may initially appear.

9.61 By 2022, use of TGRs suggests that assuming that the proportion of participants remains constant, that the following number of teams will be generated in Central Bedfordshire:

- Senior Male – 20 teams (increase of 1)
- Junior Male – 23.5 teams (increase of 2.5)
- Midi rugby – 29 teams (increase of 4)

9.62 Table 9.10 summarises the calculations that have been used to derive the TGRs and the impact of population growth.

Table 9.10 – Impact of Population Growth for Rugby

Sport and Age Groups	Number of teams in age group within the area	Current population in age group within the area	Future population in age group within the area	Current TGR	Population Change in Age Group	Potential Change in Team Numbers in Age Group
Rugby Union Senior Men (19-45yrs)	19	47278	49169	2488	1792	0.7
Rugby Union Senior Women (19-45yrs)	0	48234	50163	0	1929	0
Rugby Union Youth Boys (13-18yrs)	21	9191	10285	438	1094	2.5
Rugby Union Youth Girls (13-18yrs)	0	9377	10493	0	1116	0
Rugby Union Mini/Midi Mixed (7-12yrs)	25	12168	13960	487	1792	3.7

9.63 If female participation was to develop to levels equal to that in Cheshire West and Chester, there would be 3 junior female teams and 3 female senior teams.

Adequacy of Pitch Provision (Future)

9.64 As has already been documented, the amount of activity at club sites, particularly at peak times, means that clubs are approaching capacity. The additional teams that will be generated through population growth will be spread across Central Bedfordshire and will generate a small additional impact at club bases.

9.65 Analysis indicates that the existing pitches at rugby clubs will be sufficient to meet current and projected needs assuming that pitches are well maintained and able to sustain appropriate numbers of matches. All pitches are however already close to capacity meaning that significant increases in participation above and beyond those highlighted above as generated from population growth may mean that additional facilities are required.

9.66 The RFU measures participation increases through the affiliation process, looking at the number of participants, number of matches etc. They target increases in adult participation, as junior participants are more easily generated. The conversion of junior

participants to adults (thus avoiding the drop off) is also a key target. Clubs indicate that the targets that they are working towards currently are:

- Ampthill RUFC – additional teams in all age groups. Girls U13 and U15 within next two years
- Biggleswade RUFC – creation of veterans and colts teams;
- Dunstablians RUFC – Youth U6, adult 4th team and ladies
- Leighton Buzzard RUFC – aspiration to develop a girls team.

9.67 The ability of the current pitch stock at club bases to account for these additional games at peak time (from both population growth and participation increases) is summarised in Table 9.11. It indicates that there are enough pitches to accommodate adult demand but pitch provision is constrained when meeting the needs of junior teams.

Table 9.11 – Adequacy of Club Based Stock to accommodate Future Demand

Placemaking Area	Number of pitches	Total Number of Match Equivalents per week	Total Number of Matches (Saturday – Senior)	Total Number of Matches (Sunday morning – Junior and Midi)	Total Number of Sunday afternoon (female and colts)	Shortfall / Surplus at Adult Peak Time (Saturday)	Shortfall / Surplus Sunday Morning
Central Bedfordshire	17	30.75	10.5	19.25	1	6.5	-2.25

9.68 When taking into account the additional training requirements that further teams will generate, it is clear that clubs will be reaching capacity. This is summarised in Table 9.12 but it should be noted that this includes expressed growth only (i.e. not growth likely to occur as a result of population increases).

9.69 Concentration of growth generated from population projections at one of the rugby clubs (and / or significant growth in cub membership) may therefore generate capacity issues at specific clubs. This could be addressed through further grass pitch or 3g provision.

Table 9.12 – Site Specific Capacity (Future)

Venue	Baseline Demand		Supply and		Home Games Per Week				Capacity			Games Per Pitch	Matches Per Pitch	Comments
	Number of Pitches	Number of Mini Pitches	Number of Mini Pitches	Number of Teams	Adult	Colts	Junior	Mini	Saturday	Sunday AM	Sunday PM	Games Per Pitch	Games Per Pitch Including Training	
Amphill	4	2		17	2.5	0.5	4	1.5	1.5	0.5	3.5	1.4166667	2.8333333	Club wish to extend clubhouse
Biggleswade	6	0		13	2	0.5	2.5	1.5	4	2	5.5	1.0833333	2.1666667	Club wish to upgrade social facilities
Dunstablians	3	1		15.5	3	0.5	2.5	1.75	0	-0.25	2.5	1.9375	3.875	Club wish to upgrade social facilities
Leighton Buzzard	4	0		14.5	2.5	0	3	1.75	1.5	-0.75	4	1.8125	3.625	Club wish to reinstate one pitch

Summary and Key Issues

Key issues to address – Rugby Union

- Participation in rugby is relatively strong in Central Bedfordshire and there are four clubs, all of which offer full transition between midi, junior and senior rugby, offering clear player pathways. There have been clear increases in participation in recent years. North Herts Crusaders are also located outside of Central Bedfordshire in Letchworth, and the location of this club means that it is likely to serve some residents of the north of Central Bedfordshire.
- There are 44 rugby pitches spread across Central Bedfordshire and modelling reveals that when taking into account all of these pitches, there are sufficient pitches to meet demand, with circa 27 pitches available at peak time. The majority of pitches are however at school sites and there is limited if any use of these by the clubs currently. Analysis of potential use at these pitches (taking into account school curricular and extracurricular activity, as well as club matches and training) suggests that pitches may be used as much as 3 times per week each, a relatively high amount. Pitches sustaining this level of play need to be high quality, with appropriate drainage and maintenance regimes.
- Club bases are particularly important for the growth and development of rugby clubs. All four clubs in Central Bedfordshire own and manage their own facilities and have security of tenure at these sites. Modelling of the adequacy of pitches at each club highlights that pitches are used between two and four times per week, taking into account training and matches, which is at the higher end of recommended levels. Technical assessments reveal the quality of pitches to be high, although clubs identify some concerns and three of the four clubs identify the requirement to refurbish/ improve / extend their club house facilities, aspirations which are supported by the RFU. Added to this, the levels of training that take place on training pitches mean that these are heavily used and often of poor quality. Club specific improvements will be essential if current levels of activity are to be maintained and potential growth in activity is to be supported. Key club related priorities include;
 - Leighton Buzzard – floodlit pitch
 - Dunstablians –longer term may require more pitches as site is already approaching capacity. This may include new training facilities (grass or 3g). The club have recently received support from both the RFU and Sport England to improve the clubhouse
 - Ampthill – clubhouse upgrade
 - Biggleswade – clubhouse
- The RFU National Facility Strategy emphasises the importance of facilities, and recommends the use of an activity v facility continuum. This enables an evaluation of where club facilities are inhibiting participation and also provides guidance as to the type and extent of facilities that are required to support clubs of varying sizes and aspirations. Reflecting the findings of the TaLPF modelling, all clubs in Central

Bedfordshire are currently functioning within the capacity of their existing facilities.

- Modelling demonstrates that participation in rugby in Central Bedfordshire is high in comparison to national averages and it is also above that in neighbouring authorities. It is clear however that there is limited female participation currently. Use of TGRs to project the impact of future population increases demonstrates that the ageing population will impact on the number of teams that will be generated, however it is likely that population growth alone will see an increase of 1 adult rugby team, 2 - 3 junior rugby teams and 4 midi rugby teams across Central Bedfordshire as a whole. Some clubs also have aspirations to increase their membership, in all likelihood generating further pressures on the existing facility stock. Pitch capacity at club bases will become particularly strained by 2022 if club development aspirations are realised. In this instance, access to school pitches and / or the creation of new pitches at club bases or as a satellite pitch may become increasingly important.

Rugby League

Supply

9.70 There are no public rugby league pitches within Central Bedfordshire. The only pitches identified are at Fulbrook Middle School and Robert Bloomfield Middle School. In addition, North Herts Crusaders, based in Letchworth (outside of CB boundaries) may be the closest club for many of the residents in the North of Central Bedfordshire. The club run adult and junior teams.

Demand

9.71 There are no rugby league clubs in Central Bedfordshire. The nearest clubs are in Bedford (Bedford Tigers), Milton Keynes and St Albans.

9.72 Sport England Active People Survey suggests that there are 875 rugby league players across Central Bedfordshire. These players are predominantly in the same market segments as those playing rugby union specifically Ben (340), Jamie (114) and Tim (185). The same source estimates that there are an additional 295 players that would like to play. These people fall into the same groups as those that currently play (Ben (91), Tim (61) and Jamie (43))

National Governing Body Perspective – the Rugby Football League (RFL)

9.73 Consultation with the RFL confirms that little rugby league takes place in the area with the only known participation being the above clubs. There is limited demand for the provision of a rugby league club within Central Bedfordshire due to the distribution of clubs surrounding the authority.

Summary and Key Issues

Key issues to address – Rugby League

Existing participation in rugby league is limited with no teams based in Central Bedfordshire although there are several on the periphery. There is limited evidence of demand for rugby league in Central Bedfordshire.

Key Priorities– Rugby Union and Rugby League

9.74 The assessment of rugby in Central Bedfordshire therefore indicates that the key priorities for future facilities are as follows:

Ensuring that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand

- Monitor club growth over strategy period. Additional facilities will be required for clubs if participation increases significantly over and above levels that are generated by growth in population. Notably, the impact of training on pitches is significant and this could be addressed through the provision of a 3g training pitch which would reduce the impact of use on grass pitches. Any new provision should be in conjunction with existing or new clubs rather than provided ad hoc on new sites.
- Monitor demand for rugby league provision over the strategy period.

Ensuring that facilities are of appropriate quality to meet the needs of current and future users

9.75 To ensure that pitches can accommodate the level of play that they are required to currently, as well as to meet the needs of additional teams in future years, maintain and improve the quality of existing facilities by;

- addressing maintenance issues identified through RFU ground surveys;
- improving and expanding social facilities and pavilions; and
- the provision of training floodlights – these should be located to enable rotation and use of different parts of the pitches to ensure that additional wear and tear is dispersed.

9.76 Qualitative improvements are currently more important than the creation of new rugby pitches in the short term however long term new provision may be required.

Support Rugby Development

- Support aspirations to increase participation in rugby across Central Bedfordshire Council and manage the impact of these aspirations on facility development.
- Support initiatives to increase rugby participation including the introduction of new forms of the game, which may require the provision of flexible spaces.

10. Hockey

10.1 This section evaluates the adequacy of facilities for hockey across Central Bedfordshire and provides:

- An overview of supply and demand for pitches
- An evaluation of the overall adequacy of pitches to meet demand
- key issues and strategic priorities the strategy will address

10.2 It draws upon the information set out in Section 6 – AGPs.

Hockey in Central Bedfordshire - An Overview

Supply

10.3 Hockey is almost exclusively played on Artificial Grass Pitches and grass pitches are largely obsolete for competitive forms of the game. Guidance on AGPs (Sport England 2010) indicates the following surfaces to be suitable for hockey:

- Water Based (suitable for high level hockey)
- Sand Filled (preferred surface for hockey)
- Sand Dressed (acceptable surface for hockey)
- Short Pile 3g (acceptable surface for hockey)

10.4 Table 10.1 summarises the AGPs available in Central Bedfordshire and details their suitability for hockey. It indicates that three of the AGPs are suitable for hockey. These sites are located in Dunstable, Sandy and Leighton Buzzard.

Table 10.1 – Suitability of AGPs in Central Bedfordshire for Hockey

Site Name	Location	Size	Floodlights	Access	Surface	Suitability for hockey
Ashton Middle School	Dunstable	Small 30 x 40	No	Private Use	Sand Filled	No - small size
Briants Lane Sports Ground	Heath and Reach	Small (35 x 35)	No	Pay and Play	Sand Filled	No - small size
Creasey Park	Dunstable	Full size	Yes	Pay and Play	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	No - surface
Defence Intelligence and Security Centre	Chicksands	Full size	Yes	Sports Club / Community Association	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	No - surface
Dunstable Leisure Centre	Dunstable	Full size	Yes	Pay and Play	Sand Filled	Yes
Newton Recreation Ground	Dunstable	40 x 60m	Yes	Pay and Play	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	No - small size and surface
Redborne Upper	Amphill	Full	Yes	Sports Club /	Rubber	No -

Site Name	Location	Size	Floodlights	Access	Surface	Suitability for hockey
School and Community Centre		size		Community Association	crumb pile (3G)	surface
Robert Bloomfield Middle School	Shefford	60 x 40m	No	Sports Club / Community Association	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	No - surface
Sandy Sports and Recreation Centre	Sandy	Full size	Yes	Pay and Play	Sand Filled	Yes
Vandyke Upper School and Community College	Leighton Buzzard	Full size	Yes	Sports Club / Community Association	Sand Dressed	Yes
Cedars Upper School	Leighton Buzzard	Full size	Yes	Sports Club / Community Association	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	No – surface
All Saints Academy	Dunstable	Full Size	Yes	Sports Club / Community Association	Rubber crumb pile (3G)	No – surface

Demand

Active People and Market Segmentation (Sport England)

10.5 Table 3.5 indicated that according to the Active People Survey, nationally, between 2005/6 (Active People Survey 1) and 2011/2012 (Active People Survey 6) participation in hockey has increased from 0.23% to 0.25%.

10.6 Using the Active People Survey and Market Segmentation, it is possible to evaluate how many residents of Central Bedfordshire **do** participate in hockey and how many of the population **would like** to participate in hockey. It is also possible to understand how this varies across different parts of Central Bedfordshire.

10.7 Map 10.1 shows spatially the percentage of the Central Bedfordshire population who, based on the Active People survey findings, are currently playing hockey. Chart 10.1 sets out the profile of current participation in hockey across the 19 market segments.

Map 10.1: Percentage and location of the adult population who do play hockey.

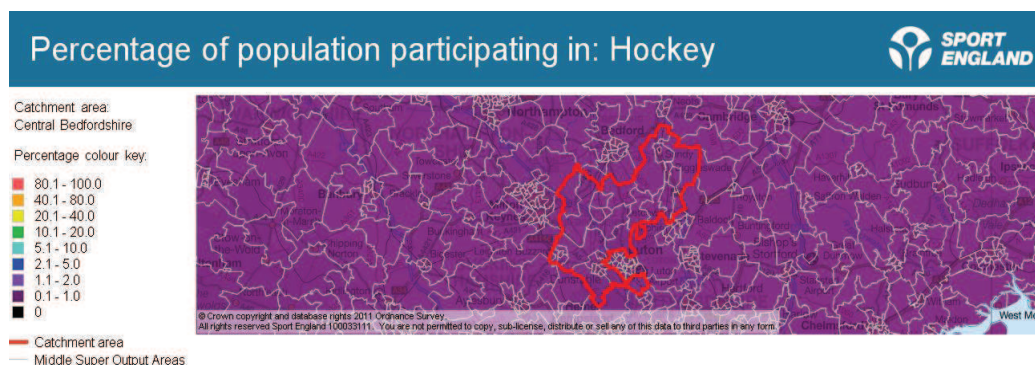
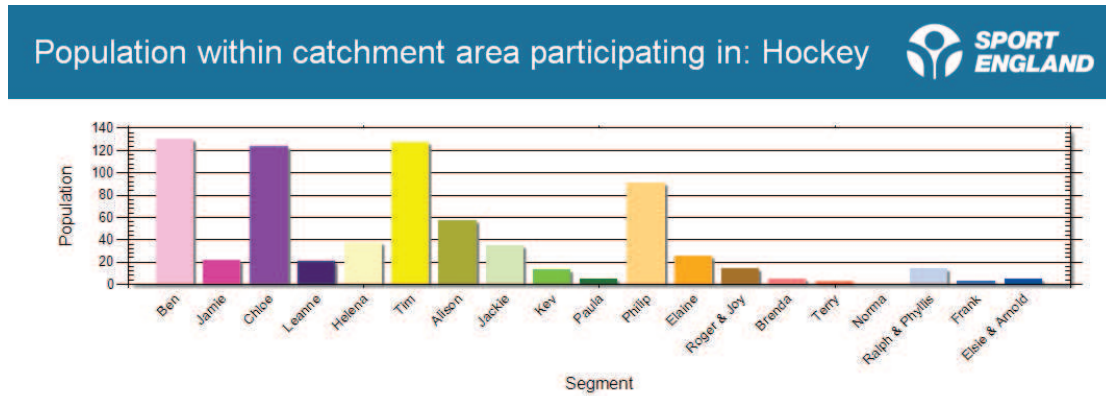


Chart 10.1: Profile of the market segments who participate in hockey in Central Bedfordshire



10.8 As can be seen, participation in hockey is consistent across Central Bedfordshire. The dominant groups in terms of participation are slightly different from most other pitch sports included within this assessment of facilities with the majority of players falling in the groups of Ben (130), Chloe (124), Tim (127) and Philip (91).

10.9 The Active People analysis of the percentage of adults who **would like** to play hockey is represented in map and bar chart form and set out in Map 10.2 and Chart 10.2.

Map 10.2 Percentage and location of the adult population who would like to play Hockey



Chart 10.2: Profile of the market segments who would like to play Hockey



10.10 The map and bar chart demonstrate that the number of people who would like to play hockey is below 1% in all parts of Central Bedfordshire. Potential participants can be found across a spread of different market segments, including Chloe, Alison, Tim and Jackie. While numbers of potential players are on a much smaller scale than some other sports considered, this suggests that hockey provides an opportunity to encourage different groups of residents back into sport than other pitch sports.

10.11 Table 10.2 summarises the above statistics, providing an indication of the exact number of people who currently play and would like to play, according to Sport England Market Segmentation and Active People Surveys.

Table 10.2 – Participation in Hockey

DO PLAY POPULATION	% of Adult Population	WOULD LIKE TO PLAY POPULATION	% of Adult Population	Total Number and % who do/would play
730	0.03%	409	0.02%	1139 (0.05%)

Current Participation

10.12 There are just two hockey clubs in Central Bedfordshire – Leighton Buzzard Hockey Club and Shefford and Sandy Hockey Club. In total they run 18 adult teams. Full details are provided in Table 10.3 below.

Table 10.3 – Hockey Clubs in Central Bedfordshire

Club	Adult Male Teams	Adult Female teams	Junior Male Teams	Junior Female Teams	Veterans	Mixed	Venue	League
Leighton Buzzard Hockey Club	4	4	3				Vandyke Upper School (Leighton Buzzard), Training is at Van Dyke Upper School.	Five Counties Leagues (Ladies), Middlesex, Berks, Bucks and Oxon Leagues (men),
Sandy and Shefford Hockey Club	4	5	2	2	2		Shefford and Sandy Recreation Centre (Matches and Training)	East Hockey Womens League, Five Counties Leagues (Ladies), East Hockey Leagues (Men)

10.13 As demonstrated, the pitch at Dunstable Leisure Centre is not currently used for hockey. Leighton Buzzard HC in particular sometimes have to travel outside of Central Bedfordshire to alternative venues in other local authorities when there is limited capacity at their own site.

10.14 Participation in hockey in Central Bedfordshire has grown in recent years with both clubs demonstrating an increase in playing membership. Table 10.4 summarises the increase in playing members for clubs registered to England Hockey between season 2011 / 2012 and 2012 / 2013.

Table 10.4 – Increases in Participation (Data provided by England Hockey)

Club	Percentage Increase
Leighton Buzzard Hockey Club	28% increase
Shefford and Sandy Hockey Club	20% increase

10.15 Both clubs have aspirations for ongoing and continued growth.

Schools Participation

10.16 Despite the high levels of participation at club level, participation by schools in Central Bedfordshire is relatively low.

Club Consultation

10.17 Consultation with clubs reveals that hockey players travel a greater distance than for most other sports to reach facilities. Just 35% of players are based within 3 miles of their club facility. Neither club owns their own facilities currently and both clubs raise issues with the overall facility stock. The key issues arising from consultations can be summarised as;

10.18 **Leighton Buzzard Hockey Club** - the club rent the pitch at Van Dyke School and consider the quality of the facility to be average to good. The pitch has recently been re-laid and since then, a number of matches have been cancelled as the new carpet is susceptible to frost. The club indicate that they are not currently satisfied with the stock of facilities, raising concerns with the amount of pitches and access to existing pitches. Until recently, teams had to compete with football for access to the pitch at Van Dyke School however it is hoped that the opening of new facilities will improve access for the hockey club. The club however still struggle to access appropriate pitches. There is also no pavilion on site and players have to travel across town to reach the facility that they share with Leighton Buzzard Football Club. The key barriers to club growth are highlighted as internal funding, the cost of pitch hire and the amount of pitches that are available for training.

10.19 **Shefford and Sandy Hockey Club** – like Leighton Buzzard HC, the club rent pitches and do not own or manage their own facilities. They consider the quality of the pitch to be average to good, but raise concerns that they do not have access to changing facilities at the school. Instead refreshments etc are served at the nearby village hall. They suggest that

ideally, they would like a dedicated club house to support the growth of the club. The club raise particular concerns about the cost of pitch hire and indicate that they have recently lost members as a result of high match fees. Access to pitches is also a key concern, with difficulties encountered for both matches and training. Competition from football clubs is thought to be a key reason for this. As well as issues with access to pitches, the club cite falling membership and a shortage of coaches and volunteers as key barriers to ongoing growth.

National Governing Body Perspective

10.20 England Hockey believes that facilities are arguably one of the most important assets that a club can have. The National Hockey Facility Strategy – The Right Facilities in the Right Places (2012) provides strategic direction and guidance for the provision of new and maintenance and improvement of existing facilities and highlights that with the increasing importance of AGPs for other sports, and the growing rivalry for use of these facilities, it is essential that sufficient appropriate facilities for hockey are secured and protected.

10.21 The strategy sets out the following methodology for evaluating the need for hockey pitches:

- supply and demand – what issues should be addressed, including the amount and quality of nearby facilities
- strategic considerations – for example whether the facility will serve as a venue to accommodate play as part of the single system pathway
- type and level of use – what will be the main use of the pitch and what standard of hockey will be played
- amount of use

10.22 The strategy indicates that there are approximately 1000 sand based / dressed pitches and a further 50 water-based pitches across England. Of these, 12% are over 15 years old and 32% are over 10 years old. It indicates that the key challenges for hockey clubs in relation to facilities are:

- access
- costs
- quality
- storage
- poor / lack of programming

10.23 The strategy sets the target of increasing participation by an additional 10,000 adult players and 32500 junior players nationwide by 2013. This equates to one or two teams per club. It is anticipated that this will largely be met through the growth in existing hockey bases rather than the establishment of new clubs. It also highlights the importance of retaining existing participants and indicates that one of the key ways to do this by providing a quality playing experience.

10.24 As well as growing participation at club level, there are two other initiatives that might impact upon the future demand for hockey, specifically:

- **Back to Hockey:** A scheme providing informal sessions to encourage women to take up hockey. Following the informal sessions, participants are invited to join the club and:
- **Rush Hockey:** This initiative is currently being piloted. It is a small sided form of hockey (4 or 5 players) that can take place on any surface. It is being tested with commercial partners and is likely to roll out following this. It is not anticipated that this new form of the game will immediately generate additional club based players, but will encourage people who are not currently playing hockey to play. It requires a different type of facility and there is potential for this type of hockey to be run from a club base as a commercial venture, or from leisure centres.

10.25 More locally in Central Bedfordshire both hockey clubs have experienced growth over recent years. Given the size of the local catchment area (and the fact that there are also strong hockey clubs in Luton and Bedford) participation levels are considered to be good. In addition to formal hockey structures, a rush hockey programme is also being run at Flitwick Leisure Centre, which may in the longer term encourage new participants into the game. This area was identified as having the propensity to participate in hockey, based upon the demographic profile of the area.

10.26 Supporting the issues raised by the clubs, England Hockey make the following points relating to club based hockey:

- **Leighton Buzzard Hockey Club** has a good relationship with Van Dyke School. The club are able to access the changing facilities and these are segregated from the main school. The club have a club house but this is cited several miles away in Leighton Buzzard Town Centre. A new clubhouse, (on the school site) including a social facility and meeting room would be of significant benefit to the club and would improve the financial sustainability of the club. England Hockey research also indicates that a club house improves the social scene of the club, which in turn attracts new players to the game. There is potential that a new club house could link with other sports that also use facilities at the school. The potential growth of Leighton Buzzard as a town may see increased membership of the club, who are keen to expand and in particular would like to run junior sections on a different day. Historically, the club have struggled to access facilities at appropriate times for training as they compete with football. It was hoped that the new 3g pitch at Cedars School would reduce this, however some competition from football still remains. The facility is at capacity at peak times, however programming fixtures to ensure that all teams can be accommodated is considered sufficient to meet current needs. It should however be noted that the club are approaching capacity and that growth aspirations, coupled with population growth, may see a requirement for access to additional pitches.
- **Shefford and Sandy Hockey Club** currently plays at Sandy Upper School. The facility was refurbished in 2008 and is of high quality and the club are keen to grow as a club. Like Leighton Buzzard Hockey Club, the existing club is approaching capacity at their current site. Increases in participation, as well as population growth may therefore see a requirement for additional pitches.

10.27 In addition to issues experienced by clubs, there have been no coach education courses due to the lack of appropriate facilities and it is hoped that a new club house could also be used to address this issue.

10.28 There is no hockey use of the sand based AGP facilities in Dunstable. Luton Vagrants used to be based at this site (2 male teams) however they have recently moved to Luton Sixth Form College and no longer require use of the facility at Dunstable Leisure Centre.

Adequacy of Pitches

10.29 Towards a Level Playing Field requires the comparison of the number of teams wishing to play at peak time, with the availability of pitches. The new methodology also considers the total use of facilities at peak time (in terms of number of hours across all sports) however this was released following the preparation of this assessment and is therefore not included.

10.30 Hockey operates more flexibly than most sports, with fixtures typically played over the course of a day with push back times to suit pitch availability. The nature of synthetic pitches means that extensive use of the pitch does not have the same impact as it would on grass. As highlighted, most clubs however report issues with access to training facilities rather than concerns about securing appropriate match venues.

10.31 Table 10.5 summarises the current situation at peak time, considering scenarios at each individual AGP that is suitable for hockey and also when using hockey pitches interchangeably.

Table 10.5 – Towards a Level Playing Field Calculations - Hockey

Calculation	Pitches Suitable for Hockey	Sandy and Shefford Hockey Club	Van Dyke Upper School (Leighton Buzzard HC)
Number of AGPS	3	1	1
Capacity of pitches on peak day (assumes 4 matches per pitch)	12	4	4
Main Peak Day	Saturday	Saturday	Saturday
Peak Demand for Teams (assumes all senior (except veterans) play on Saturday)	17	9	8
Home matches at peak time	9	5	4
Supply / Demand at Peak Time	0	-1 pitch	Adequate

10.32 On the basis that each pitch can take 4 matches per day, overall within Central Bedfordshire there are enough pitches to accommodate match play at peak times.

10.33 When looking at the club specific requirements however, it is clear that both clubs are accommodating high levels of play at their club bases and that there is insufficient capacity at either site to meet the needs of the resident club. This is reflected in the need for teams from both clubs to travel to second venues on occasion. There is sufficient provision in Central Bedfordshire as a whole as there is a pitch at Dunstable, which has sufficient capacity to accommodate the overspill from either club, however this is not located appropriately to do so. This pitch currently receives limited use for hockey and this is not anticipated to change in future years. Pitch capacity for both clubs is therefore a key issue.

10.34 The reliance upon pitches outside of the area is an overall concern, as while the clubs currently have access to these facilities at appropriate times, there is no long term security over these facilities either through the Council or agreements with the clubs. While provision is therefore currently sufficient, the long term adequacy of provision (due to the reliance upon sites outside of Central Bedfordshire outside of the club base could be questioned).

Latent Demand and Team Generation Rates (TGR)

10.35 It is difficult to estimate precise levels of latent demand because of the sub regional nature of hockey. Sport England Active People Survey and Market Segmentation data suggests that latent demand is low, however there is also relatively low participation in terms of the proportion of people playing hockey.

10.36 The Team Generation Rates set out in Table 8.6 enable comparison with national averages. They demonstrate that participation in hockey is above national averages and suggest that there is limited latent demand. It must be noted however that national averages should be treated with caution as the Sport England database containing these figures has not been updated for several years. To facilitate further comparison, TGRs for Cheshire West and Chester (an authority considered to be a nearest neighbour of Central Bedfordshire) are also provided (extracted from Cheshire West and Chester PPS – 2011). Participation in Central Bedfordshire is slightly below levels in Cheshire West and Chester.

Table 10.6 – TGRs for Hockey

Age Group	National Average	Central Bedfordshire	Cheshire West and Chester
Senior Male	1:7944	1:4916	1:2,540
Senior Female	1:8943	1:4823	1:3,972
Junior Male	1;4304	1:3828	1:2,106
Junior Female	1:5299	1:3906	1:2,056

Meeting Future Demand

10.37 TGRs can be used to provide an indication of the likely impact of population growth on demand for hockey. As set out in Section 3, population projections indicate that the total population of Central Bedfordshire will grow significantly.

10.38 Application of the current Team Generation Rates to future population projections indicates that despite the overall high levels of population growth, this will have limited impact upon the number of hockey teams in Central Bedfordshire, with no additional teams

created. This is due in part to the ageing population, but occurs primarily as a result of the low proportion of residents that participate in hockey. The number of participants in hockey will however increase (just not substantially enough to create an additional team). This is summarised in Table 10.7.

Table 10.7 – Impact of Future Population Growth for Hockey

Sport and Age Groups	Number of teams in age group within the area	Current population in age group within the area	Future population in age group within the area	Current TGR	Population Change in Age Group	Potential Change in Team Numbers in Age Group
Hockey Senior Men (16-55yrs)	9	44241	49169	4916	1792	0
Hockey Senior Women (16-55yrs)	10	48234	50163	4823	1929	0
Hockey Junior Boys (11-15yrs)	2	7657	8513	3828	856	0
Hockey Junior Girls (11-15yrs)	2	7811	8685	3906	874	0

10.39 England Hockey does however have aspirations to increase participation in hockey. In addition to targeting growth in the existing club (around one to 2 teams per club over the next five years). Both clubs highlight aspirations to increase the number of teams that are run, including the provision of more junior, senior and veterans teams. They would anticipate that growth in participation would focus around the existing club structure rather than the creation of new clubs in the area.

10.40 England Hockey have also introduced several initiatives designed to attract new players to the game, specifically:

- Back to Hockey
- Rush Hockey

10.41 Analysis of the market segmentation data suggests that Jackie is particularly keen in playing hockey but currently has a low participation profile. The characteristics of Jackie mean that the Back to Hockey Programme may be particularly successful. This is currently being tried out at Flitwick Leisure Centre as set out earlier in this section.

Adequacy of AGPs

- 10.42 As set out in this and previous sections, AGPs are essential for football as well as hockey and it is important that needs of the two sports are balanced. The key concerns of hockey clubs relate to access to pitches for training and the competing demands for pitches between football and hockey teams.
- 10.43 Section 6 has summarised the need for AGPs according to the theoretical modelling and highlighted that there is considered to be enough sand based pitches. Added to this, FPM analysis indicates that overall there are sufficient facilities in Central Bedfordshire, although both clubs are at capacity on their current facilities. The pitch in Dunstable is not used for hockey and is not appropriately located to function as an overspill for the existing clubs.
- 10.44 Significant growth in the proportion of residents playing hockey may see a requirement for increased provision, as there is little scope for additional teams within the existing infrastructure. In the short term, clubs however identify the need for improvements to the club bases and these are perceived important if either club is to attract more players.

Summary and Key Issues

Key issues to address – Hockey

- There are two hockey clubs in Central Bedfordshire. Analysis of participation trends demonstrates evidence of significant recent expansion. Despite this, the current and potential playing profile of the area is relatively limited, with hockey likely to attract less than 1% of residents of Central Bedfordshire, even when taking into account latent demand
- Both hockey clubs are dissatisfied with the current levels of provision in Central Bedfordshire. There are concerns about both access to changing and social facilities, with neither club having a dedicated on site clubhouse, as well as issues with access to facilities for training and matches. Both clubs highlight challenges of competing demands with football.
- Analysis of use of the facilities at a peak time confirms that there are enough pitches overall to accommodate demand within Central Bedfordshire, however this is skewed by the presence of the pitch at Dunstable Leisure Centre, which is not currently used at all for hockey although it has a sand based surface. It is not located appropriately to function as an overspill facility for either of the two existing hockey clubs. While overall there are sufficient pitches, both clubs are at / nearing capacity at their club bases, meaning that access to overspill facilities is essential if levels of activity are to be maintained. Currently the only availability additional facilities are outside of Central Bedfordshire and as participation grows, the ongoing availability of these sites is essential. The surfacing of these sites is however out of the control of the hockey club and any change from the current sand based surfaces may have significant impact for the clubs in Central Bedfordshire.
- Demand modelling (Sport England FPM / Active Places Power) highlights that the supply of AGPs is broadly in line with demand. While FA modelling identifies

Key issues to address – Hockey

shortfalls, this primarily relates to 3g pitches designed for football rather than hockey. Total demand for hockey pitches is equivalent to 1.7 pitches across Central Bedfordshire, meaning that the current stock is sufficient. This does not take into account the strong membership that both clubs currently have and their local growth aspirations

- The significant population growth that is projected to occur will have minimal impact on the demand for hockey and TGRs suggest that no additional teams will be created just from population growth. This can partially be attributed to the small proportion of people that play hockey and also to the impact of the ageing population profile.
- While population growth alone will have limited impact, schemes designed to increase participation in hockey may generate demand for further facilities in the longer term. These include Back to Hockey and Rush Hockey, both of which are currently being trialled at Flitwick Leisure Centre.

10.45 The above analysis leads to the following priorities for hockey:

Ensure that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand

- To support hockey development, ensure that the surfaces currently used for hockey are retained as sand based pitches.
- Monitor club activity and support the provision of additional sand based facilities (linked with the clubs) if significant participation increases occur and / or if issues are identified with pitches used outside of Central Bedfordshire
- Work with providers of sand based surfaces to ensure that access for hockey clubs is prioritised
- Ensure that the impact of housing growth is taken into account and that contributions towards hockey are required.

Ensure that facilities are of sufficient quality to meet current and future demand

- Support aspirations for the provision of on site club houses and changing accommodation to facilitate club development. There may be opportunities to share this with other sports as part of the process of securing formal use of school sites (see football recommendations)
- Maintain the quality of existing sand based AGPs, ensuring that facilities are refurbished every 10 years

Promote increases in participation and the creation of sustainable clubs

- Support the introduction of new forms of hockey through the provision of appropriate facilities for the new form of the game

11. Outdoor Bowls

11.1 This section evaluates the adequacy of facilities for outdoor bowls across Central Bedfordshire and provides:

- An overview of supply and demand for greens
- An evaluation of the overall adequacy of greens to meet demand
- key issues and strategic priorities the strategy will address

Outdoor Bowls in Central Bedfordshire - An Overview

Supply

11.2 There are 19 bowling greens in Central Bedfordshire. The distribution of these facilities is summarised in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1 – Bowling greens in Central Bedfordshire

Area	Number of Greens	Facilities	Bowling Greens Per 1000 Population
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	3	Dunstable Town BC, Houghton Regis BC, Kingsbury BC	0.06
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	2	Leighton Buzzard BC, Linslade BC	0.04
North	14	Fairfield BC, Potton BC, Shefford BC, Stotfold Bowls Club, Barton le Clay BC, Henlow Park BC, Langford BC, Maulden BC, Biggleswade Town BC, Sandy Conservatives BC, Sandy Town BC, St Andrews BC, Ampthill BC, Flitwick BC	0.09
Central Bedfordshire	19		0.07

11.3 As can be seen in Table 11.1, when taking into account the size of the population, provision is lowest in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South and highest in the North Placemaking area. Notably, most of the bowling greens in the North Placemaking area are to the east– just four are situated in the west.

11.4 The majority of bowling greens are located in the Major Service Centres (11) and there are just five in the Minor Service Centres, with the other sites situated in Larger Villages. There are no Small Villages that contain a bowling green.

Quality of Facilities

11.5 The quality of existing playing and ancillary facilities was investigated by site visits as well as by club questionnaires. As visits to some sites were undertaken outside of the main bowling season, the site visits should be considered to provide an overview of quality issues only. Key issues raised include:

- all sites were highly rated, with scores varying only between 82% and 100% - the average score achieved was 92%, suggesting that provision is of consistently high standard;
- all sites were described as being in good condition. The grass cover and green quality were the most highly scoring attributes; and
- where bowling greens were marked down, this tended to be on the condition of the surroundings (paths / boundaries etc) rather than the quality of the actual green itself.

Demand

11.6 Table 3.5 indicated that according to the Active People Survey, nationally, between 2005/6 (Active People Survey 1) and 2011/2012 (Active People Survey 6) participation in bowls has declined from 3.13% to 2.45%.

11.7 From the Active People Survey and Market Segmentation (explained in Section 3), it is possible to evaluate how many residents of Central Bedfordshire **do** participate in bowls and how many of the population **would like** to participate in bowls. It is also possible to understand how this varies across different part of Central Bedfordshire.

11.8 Map 11.1 shows spatially the percentage of the Central Bedfordshire population who, based on the Active People survey findings, are currently participating in bowls. Chart 11.1 sets out the profile of current participation in bowls across the 19 market segments. In total, analysis reveals that there are 1892 people who play bowls, which represents less than 0.1% of the adult population.

Map 11.1: Percentage and location of the adult population who do play bowls

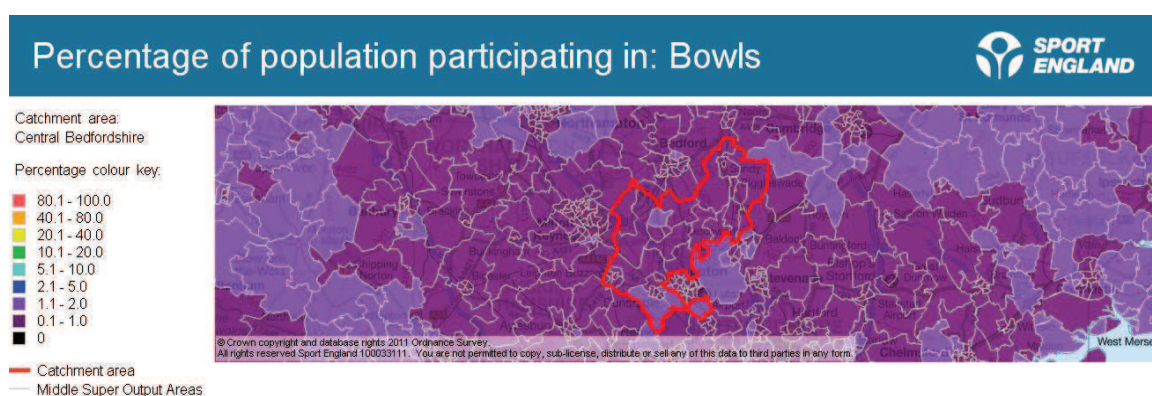
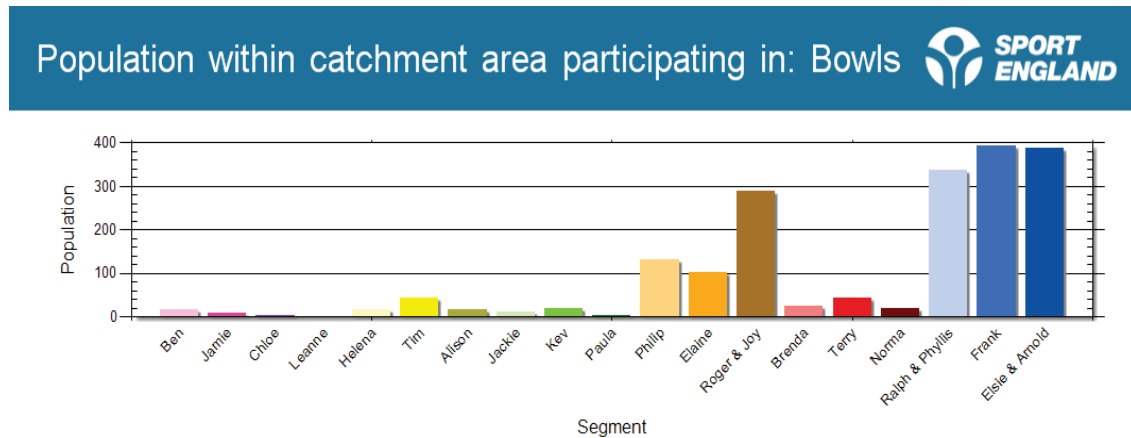


Chart 11.1: Profile of the market segments who participate in bowls in Central Bedfordshire



11.9 It indicates that the proportion of residents currently playing bowls varies slightly across the area, and is marginally higher in the south of Central Bedfordshire (despite fewer bowling greens in this area).

11.10 Chart 11.1 indicates that in general, bowlers are from a different demographic to other sports considered within this assessment. The main participants are Frank (392), Elsie and Arnold (388), Ralph and Phyllis (338), Roger and Joy (289). All of these sectors have a higher average age than participants for other pitch sports.

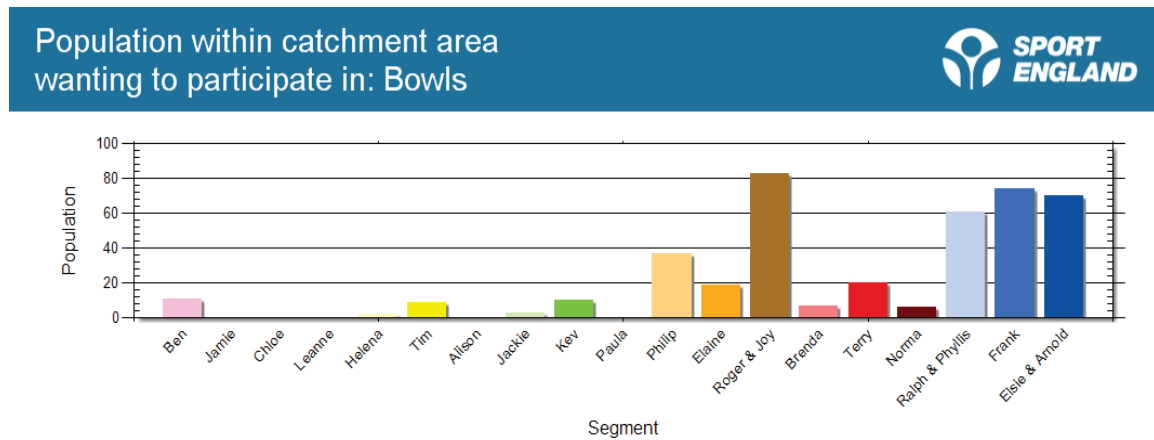
11.11 In comparison to the number of people that do play bowls in Central Bedfordshire, the amount of latent demand is relatively small. 412 residents would like to play bowls that do not currently play and these residents are distributed evenly across the area. These residents are primarily in the same groups as those that already play (Roger and Joy (83), Frank (74), Elsie and Arnold (70)) however interest is also expressed by a small number of residents in the Philip category (37).

11.12 The Active People analysis of the percentage of adults who **would like** to play bowls is represented in map and bar chart form and set out in Map 11.2 and Chart 11.2.

Map 11.2: Percentage and location of the adult population who would like to play bowls.



Chart 11.2: Profile of the market segments who would like to play bowls



11.13 Table 11.2 summarises the above information, setting out the current proportion of residents that participate in bowls according to Active People and also the number of residents that would like to play. It should be noted that this refers to data collated through the Active People Survey only.

Table 11.2 – Participation in Bowls

DO PLAY POPULATION	% of Adult Population	WOULD LIKE TO PLAY POPULATION	% of Adult Population	Total Number and % who do/would play
1862	0.09%	412	0.02%	2274 (1.1%)

Current Participation

11.14 There are bowling clubs associated with all existing bowling greens in Central Bedfordshire. Reflecting the distribution of bowling greens, access to clubs is therefore highest in the north and lowest in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south. Members of all clubs participate in both separate gender and mixed competitions and in single and doubles events.

Club Feedback

11.15 Clubs were contacted by telephone and / or electronic questionnaire and feedback was provided with regards participation in bowls, as well as the quality and quantity of greens in the Central Bedfordshire

11.16 For those responding, consultation revealed that;

- participation is static at all clubs. The average club membership is now 69. For those clubs responding, out of 561 members in total, just four are junior members, indicating that there are significant opportunities for growth if new segments of the

population could be attracted to the sport. Just under half of responding clubs have members with disabilities, although some issues relating to access for wheelchairs arise because of this; and

- all clubs currently have capacity for new members. All responding clubs indicate that they are actively seeking new members and almost all suggest that they have tried to do this through open days / leaflets / advertisements. The only barriers to growth referenced are funding and finance and issues with falling membership. All clubs raise similar issues and there is no evidence of variations in opinion in different areas of Central Bedfordshire.

Perceptions of Quality

11.17 Overall, consultation demonstrates a high level of satisfaction with facilities for bowls across Central Bedfordshire and only two responding clubs indicate that they are not happy with the facilities (Henlow BC and Sandy BC). Both of these attribute their issues to the number of greens that are available of the right quality.

11.18 There is no evidence of variation in opinion between different parts of Central Bedfordshire and quality is perceived consistently highly across all three Placemaking areas. The majority of greens are managed and maintained by the local clubs and associated volunteers.

11.19 Almost all clubs rate the quality of their facilities as good overall and the majority of factors considered are also rated as good. The playing surface and maintenance of greens are held in particularly high esteem. Alongside the pavilion, car parking is the lowest rated issue by clubs. A breakdown of average scores attributed to each quality factor can be found in Table 11.3.

Table 11.3 – Perceived Quality of Bowling Greens

Playing Surface	Maintenance	Dog Fouling	Litter	Overall Quality	Pavilion / Changing	Car Parking	Value for Money
90%	96%	97%	100%	93%	70%	77%	80%

11.20 Only three clubs highlight specific concerns requiring immediate action;

- Biggleswade St Andrews Bowls Club – toilets required adjacent to green. A new club house adjacent to the existing tennis club is currently being built to address this concern, which is currently a barrier to increasing the membership;
- Leighton Buzzard Bowls Club – existing pavilion requires upgrading and there is also a need for disabled toilets; and
- Potton BC also highlighted a concern about the long term future of their bowling green due to a recent change in the freehold owner.

Accessibility

- 11.21 Consultation with bowling clubs reveals that most members choose clubs relatively close to their home. On average, 55% of club members live within 1 mile of the green and only 9% travel further than five miles.
- 11.22 Current travel patterns are however in part likely to be reflective of the distribution of current facilities. i.e. people are forced to travel to reach a bowling green where there is not one located close to their home. The age profile of participants in bowls means that access may be more important, and many may expect local facilities, or require greens that are accessible by public transport. Map 11.3 therefore illustrates the location of each of the greens and includes a 3 mile catchment area.

Map 11.3 – Bowling Greens in Central Bedfordshire

TO BE INSERTED Post approval

Meeting Current and Future Demand

- 11.23 There are no supply and demand models for bowls greens and it is therefore not appropriate to assess demand by applying the methodology used by other sports or by the use of TGRs.
- 11.24 Recent participation trends (existing club memberships) suggest that participation in bowls is stagnant. Reflecting this, all clubs indicate that they have capacity for additional members, and the flexibility of fixtures means that there is scope to accommodate additional teams on existing greens. It must be noted however that more than half of all members of bowling clubs in Central Bedfordshire travel less than 1 mile to reach their green and the vast majority of residents in Central Bedfordshire are outside this catchment. This may infer that the provision of additional greens would help to address latent demand and to encourage new players to the sport.
- 11.25 Although there is sufficient capacity within the existing stock to meet the needs of current bowlers, the ageing population suggests that the number of people who may have the propensity to participate in bowls is likely to grow in future years. Increases in the proportion of residents participating may further increase demand.

11.26 Table 3.5 highlighted that there will be significant growth in the number of residents falling into the older age groups by 2028. The potential impact of this is summarised in Table 11.4. It must be noted that these figures are based upon the assumption that bowls players fall into the age group of 60+. While it is recognised that this is not entirely accurate, membership figures, consultation and the Sport England Market Segmentation indicate that this enables a realistic estimate of future participation to be undertaken.

Table 11.4 – Calculation of Potential Growth in Bowls

Current Situation	
Area considered	Calculation
Current Population Aged 60+	55270
Current Membership of Bowling Clubs	1311 (based upon average membership of 69)
% of Current Population Participating in Bowls	2.3%
Future Situation based upon above figures	
Future Population aged 60+	75910
Assumed Future Population in Bowls (participation remains constant)	2.3%
Potential Future Participants in Bowls	1746
Likely members per club (assumes no new club)	92

*assumes average membership for all clubs to enable inclusion of totals for clubs where exact figures are not known

11.27 Table 11.4 indicates that assuming participation rates remain constant, demand for bowls is likely to increase by 435 players as a direct result of population growth. Assuming that membership of all greens is even, this would mean a membership of 92 players at each bowling club. An average of ten players per team would therefore mean that at least 5 games per week would be taking place per week (in addition to training and taking into account home and away fixtures) and greens would still be able to accommodate further play.

11.28 This suggests therefore that there is just sufficient stock to of facilities to meet current and future demand, based on existing participation rates and the assumption that all greens are retained. The higher levels of membership are likely to maximise the sustainability of clubs.

11.29 Future participation in bowls is only likely to grow significantly however if a more aggressive approach to recruitment is taken by clubs and governing bodies. There is little marketing of existing opportunities outside of word of mouth and leafleting currently and there has been little growth in the sport. If marketing / promotion was to be successful and latent demand and participation increases were realised, demand could increase significantly and new provision may be required.

11.30 Active People and Market Segmentation analysis quotes higher figures for current participation in bowls (1862 people) and indicates that growth in participation (excluding population increases) could see this rise to 2274 people. Table 11.5 summarises the calculations if these figures are used for baseline analysis and also highlight the implications of population growth. It demonstrates that the increases in participation would lead to significant questions about the capacity of bowling greens to meet demand and reinforces the impact that growth in the proportion of people playing bowls could have on the number of greens that are required.

Table 11.5 – Implications of High Participation Rates on the adequacy of bowling greens

Scenario	Baseline figures from Active People Used	Potential Latent Demand (Active People) realised
Current Population Aged 60+	55270	55270
Current Membership of Bowling Clubs	1862 (according to Active People)	2264 (according to Active People including latent demand)
% of Current Population Participating in Bowls	3.3%	4%
Future Situation based upon above figures		
Future Population aged 60+	75910	75910
Assumed Future Population in Bowls (participation remains constant)	3.3%	4%
Potential Future Participants in Bowls	2505	3036
Likely members per club (assumes no new club)	132	160

Summary and Key Issues

Key issues to address – Bowls

- There are currently 19 bowling greens across Central Bedfordshire. Provision is highest in the north (particularly to the east) and lowest in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South.
- In quantitative terms, there are no supply and demand models for bowls greens and it is therefore not appropriate to assess demand by applying the methodology used by other sports.
- Analysis of capacity of existing facilities suggests that all clubs are able to accommodate additional members, and there is scope to accommodate more teams on most greens. Adding to this, there is no evidence of growth in bowls with all

responding clubs indicating that participation is static despite efforts to attract new players.

- Almost all clubs are satisfied with the quality of existing greens and this was also reinforced through site visits, which reveal that facilities are well maintained and all greens are in good condition. Just three clubs identify site specific issues requiring improvement and only two clubs are not happy with the overall stock of facilities (attributing this to the number of greens of the right quality).
- The average membership of bowls clubs in Central Bedfordshire is 69, representing a rate of 2.3% of residents over the age of 60. In contrast to pitch sports, the ageing population may see bowls become more popular in future years, as market segmentation demonstrates that it is the older age groups who have a higher propensity to participate. This growth alone could generate additional 435 bowls players, meaning that clubs would have on average 92 members and supply would be much more closely matched with demand. Sport England Active people surveys however suggest that current demand is higher and also highlight the potential to increase participation, potentially up to 4%. If these targets were to be achieved, added to the anticipated impact of participation increases, the current stock of bowling greens would become insufficient.
- The changing population profile and the propensity of the older age groups to play bowls means that there is a significant opportunity to promote the sport. While overall provision is currently sufficient, regardless of current capacity, it should be noted that residents expect these facilities to be local to their home (on average, 55% of members are within 1 mile of their club) and many residents are outside of this distance to a current facility.

11.31 The key issues raised suggest that the following priorities should be considered:

Ensure that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand

- Protect all current bowling greens
- Retain the existing amount of facilities. New bowling greens are not required to meet current (or future) demand unless expressed demand is identified in an area further than 1 mile from an existing bowling green. New provision should be demand rather than supply led and facilities should only be developed where demand has already been identified. Instead, improvements to existing bowling greens should be prioritised
- Monitor the impact of attempts to increase participation as well as population growth on club membership.

Ensure that facilities are of sufficient quality to meet current and future demand

- Seek to maintain the quality of facilities and where issues are identified, improve the quality and consistency of bowling greens

Promote increases in participation and the creation of sustainable clubs

Support clubs to proactively increase participation and membership. To maximise the sustainability of bowls as a sport, efforts should focus on recruitment of junior players as well as adult and veterans.

12. Tennis

12.1 This section evaluates the adequacy of facilities for tennis across Central Bedfordshire and provides:

- An overview of supply and demand for courts
- An evaluation of the overall adequacy of courts to meet demand
- key issues and strategic priorities the strategy will address

Tennis in Central Bedfordshire - An Overview

Supply

12.2 There are 75 formal tennis courts located at public venues across Central Bedfordshire. These courts are found at 28 sites and circa 50% are floodlit. In addition to these sites, there are some Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) distributed across Central Bedfordshire, which are on occasion used for tennis as well as for other sports. These have not been included within the count of tennis courts but are important venues, and some include markings for tennis.

12.3 Table 12.1 outlines the spread of tennis courts across Central Bedfordshire. It can be seen that, in terms of the number of courts, provision is substantially higher in the North Placemaking area than in other areas. Taking into account the size of the population in each area, the distribution of courts is even across Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South and the North Placemaking areas but is lower in Dunstable and Houghton Regis.

Table 12.1 – Distribution of Tennis Courts across Central Bedfordshire

Area	Total Courts	Floodlit	Non Club Based	Courts per 1000 Population
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	10	60%	2	0.19
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	17	29%	3	0.31
North	48	50%	16	0.32

12.4 The majority of tennis courts (57%) are located in the Major Service Centres and 22% are situated in the Large Villages. The stock of courts in the Minor Service Centres and Small Villages is much lower. The largest settlements without dedicated tennis facilities are Houghton Regis, Caddington and Marston Moretaine.

12.5 While provision is highest in the Major Service Centres, these settlements also contain the highest proportion of courts that are not floodlit. This is largely due to the provision of pay and play (and /or free access) facilities in these settlements.

12.6 In addition to the above facilities, there are several multi-purpose facilities (primarily located at school sites) that are used for tennis. There are also 43 courts at upper schools (excluding those with formal community use access arrangements which are included in totals in Table 10.1) and several middle schools also have markings for tennis on their Multi Use Games Areas. There are public facilities at Heath and Reach and Arlesey.

12.7 There are also three courts located at two commercial venues located within Central Bedfordshire, specifically:

- Champneys, Henlow
- Luton Hoo Spa

Demand

Active People and Market Segmentation (Sport England)

12.8 Table 3.5 indicated that according to the Active People Survey, nationally, between 2005/6 (Active People Survey 1) and 2011/2012 (Active People Survey 6) participation in tennis decreased from 1.12% to 1.03%.

12.9 Using the Active People Survey and Market Segmentation, it is possible to evaluate how many residents of Central Bedfordshire **do** participate in tennis and how many of the population **would like** to play. It is also possible to understand how this varies across different parts of Central Bedfordshire.

12.10 Map 12.1 shows spatially the percentage of the Central Bedfordshire population who, based on the Active People survey findings, are currently playing tennis. Chart 12.1 sets out the profile of current participation in tennis across the 19 market segments.

Map 12.1: Percentage and location of the adult population who do play tennis

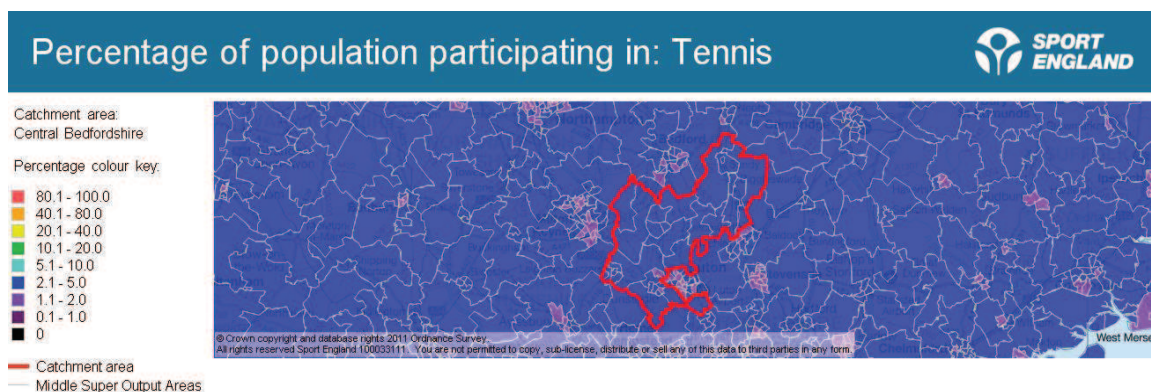
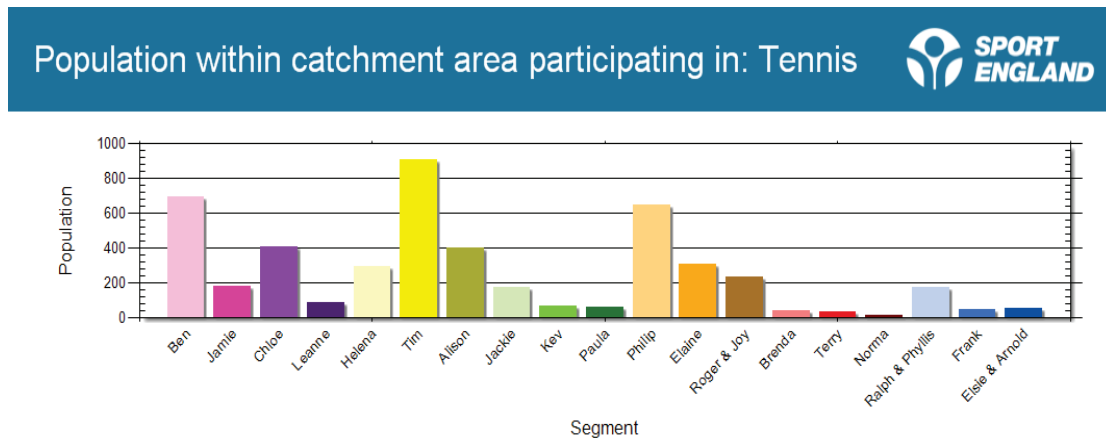


Chart 12.1: Profile of the market segments who play tennis in Central Bedfordshire



12.11 As can be seen, participation in tennis is consistent across Central Bedfordshire, with between 2.1 and 5% playing in most areas. The only exception to this is in North Dunstable.

12.12 There is a much wider spread of participants than in most other sports and more than half of all of the market segments play tennis. The dominant market segment groups are Ben (694), Philip (650), Chloe (468), Alison (400), Elaine (309) and Roger (234), meaning that tennis attracts different residents to other sports considered in this document.

12.13 The Active People analysis of the percentage of adults who would like to play tennis is represented in map and bar chart form and set out in Map 12.2 and Chart 12.2.

Map 12.2 Percentage and location of the adult population who would like to play Tennis

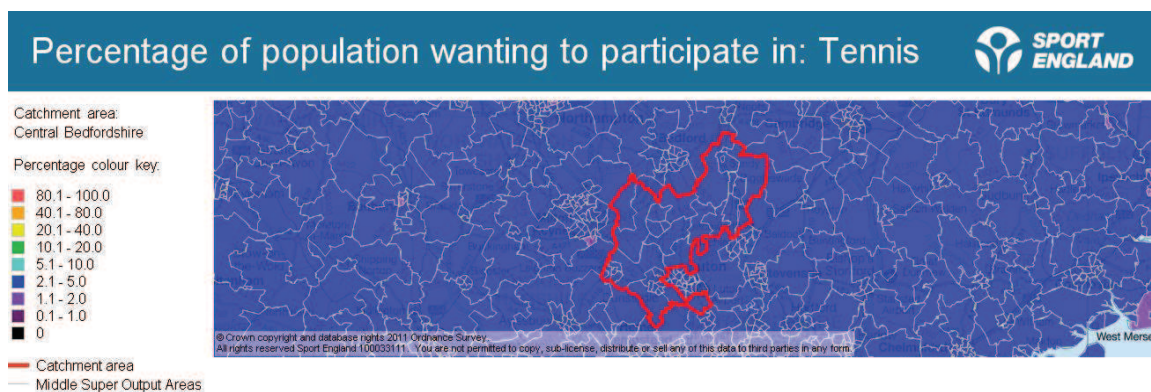
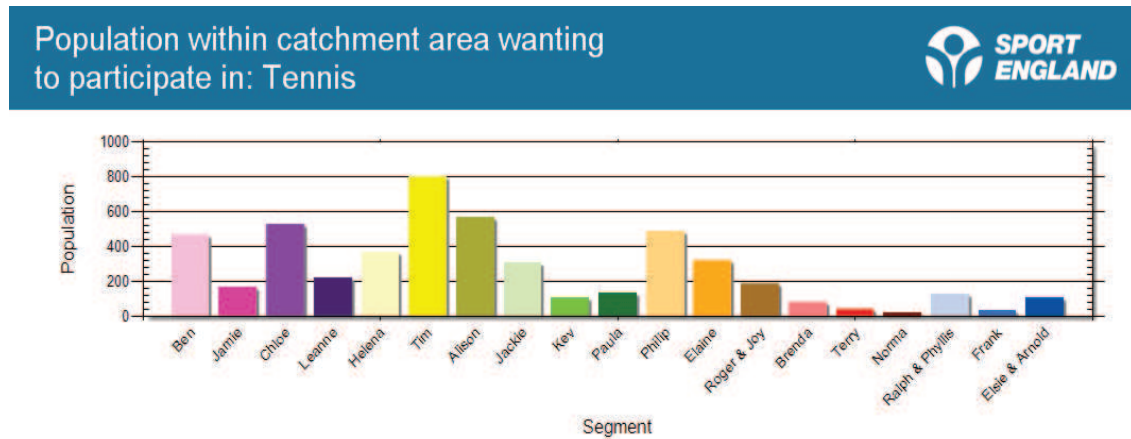


Chart 12.2: Profile of the market segments who would like to play Tennis



12.14 The map and bar chart demonstrate that the number of people who would like to play tennis is between 2.1% and 5% in all parts of Central Bedfordshire. Analysis of exact figures demonstrates that the number of people interested in playing tennis is higher than the amount of people that do.

12.15 Potential participants are evenly dispersed geographically, but are spread across numerous different market segments. The highest levels of latent demand are for Tim, Ben, Alison and Philip. This spread of potential participants as well as high levels of latent demand mean that there may be significant opportunities to introduce new tennis players to the game.

12.16 Table 12.2 summarises the above statistics, providing an indication of the exact number of people who currently play and would like to play, according to Sport England Market Segmentation and Active People Surveys.

Table 12.2 – Participation in Tennis

DO PLAY POPULATION	% of Adult Population	WOULD LIKE TO PLAY POPULATION	% of Adult Population	Total Number and % who do/would play
4826	2.44%	5082	2.5%	9908 (5%)

Existing Participation - Clubs

12.17 Around 75% of identified public courts are associated with tennis clubs. The tennis clubs in each Placemaking area are summarised in Table 12.3.

Table 12.3 – Tennis Clubs in Central Bedfordshire

Area	Club
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Dunstable TC
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	Linslade TC, Leighton Buzzard TC, Slip End TC, Studham TC, Eaton Bray TC
North	Barton TC, Westoning TC, Langford TC, Pottton TC, Flitwick & Ampthill TC, Toddington TC, Biggleswade Conservative Club TC, Cranfield University TC, Eversholt TC, Harlington TC

12.18 All of the above clubs operate on a membership basis. According to the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), the following clubs are registered as offering pay and play access:

- Biggleswade Conservative Tennis Club
- Barton le Clay Tennis Club
- Dunstable Tennis Club
- Leighton Buzzard Tennis Club
- Linslade Tennis Club
- Slip End Tennis Club
- Toddington Tennis Club
- Studham Tennis Club

12.19 Access is available free of charge at the following sites:

- Bennetts Memorial Park (Dunstable)
- Pages Park (Leighton Buzzard)
- Mentmore Recreation Ground (Leighton Buzzard)
- Biggleswade Tennis Courts
- Ampthill Tennis Courts

Quality of Provision

12.20 The quality of existing playing and ancillary facilities was investigated by site inspections and also informed by consultations. The following key issues were identified;

Site Visits

12.21 The quality of tennis courts is less consistent than other types of facility. There is a greater discrepancy in overall scores and examples of very poor and very good provision. This is evidenced by the range of scores achieved, which vary from 32% to 100%. In general, the facilities to the south of Central Bedfordshire appear to be of poorer quality than those in the north and it is clear that the higher quality facilities are predominantly associated with the large clubs.

12.22 The key issues identified were the condition of fencing, equipment (nets) and surfacing. Spectator provision, storage and litter and graffiti were the areas achieving the most positive scores.

12.23 With regards specific quality issues, site visits revealed particular concerns about public facilities, notably:

- Tilsworth - untidy court in poor condition
- Billington Tennis Court - poor court with an uneven surface

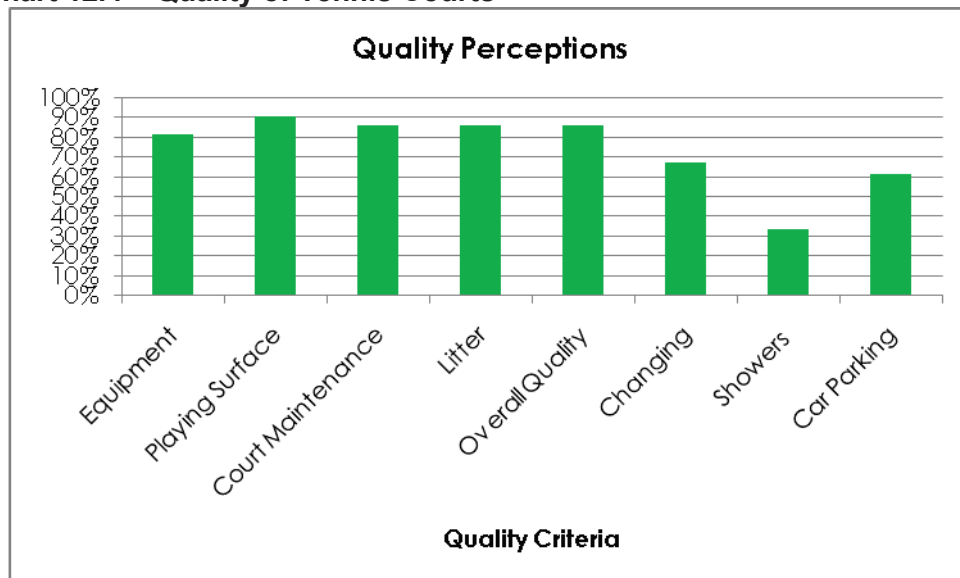
Club Consultation

12.24 Consultation with clubs revealed the following issues with regards the quality of facilities:

- Only 28% of responding clubs are satisfied with facilities for tennis in Central Bedfordshire. Clubs that are dissatisfied are evenly spread. Reasons behind the dissatisfaction are split between the lack of courts, court quality, poor quality changing pavilions and a lack of indoor courts.
- There is a positive view on the quality of facilities overall, although 4 clubs indicate that quality impacts on their ability to function
- Several clubs identified site specific priorities – these primarily relate to similar issues - resurfacing / floodlighting / changing pavilions.

12.25 Chart 12.4 illustrates the views of clubs in relation to each of the factors considered. It indicates that access to parking, changing and showers are poorly rated features for tennis clubs. Court surface and maintenance are the most highly rated elements overall, although it must be noted that this disguises several site specific concerns which will be explored later.

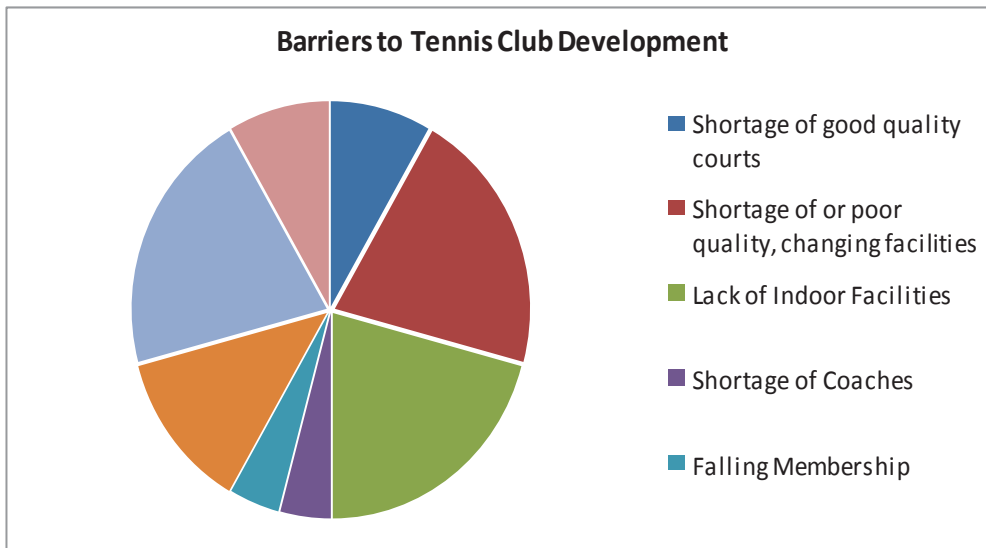
Chart 12.4 – Quality of Tennis Courts



Other Issues arising from consultation

- All but one club (Potton TC) indicate that they are fielding similar teams as in previous seasons, suggesting that membership is relatively static. Potton TC have experienced decline and attribute this to quality of facilities as well as changes to the coaching routines
- Based on LTA figures, the average membership is 124. Flitwick is the largest club (259 members) followed by Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and Linslade. All clubs indicate that they have capacity for additional members and are currently trying to actively recruit new members (open days / junior coaching / links with schools / social media). The average membership of clubs responding to the survey is 152
- Barton, Linslade and Potton TC all indicate that they would like to run more teams but suggest that growth is inhibited by facilities
- Varying barriers to club development and growth were identified. The key issues raised were the quality of pavilions and a lack of internal and external funding. This is illustrated in Chart 12.5 overleaf.

Chart 12.5 – Barriers to the Growth of Tennis Clubs



Accessibility

12.26 Consultation provides an understanding of the catchment areas of the existing clubs. It is clear that the catchment area of most facilities is relatively local – on average 46% of members of clubs are based within 1 mile of the club base and just 10% travel further than 5 miles.

12.27 The expectation that tennis courts are local to the home may contribute to the relatively high levels of latent demand within Central Bedfordshire, as the majority of residents are located further than 1 mile from a tennis court and lots must travel further than 5 miles to reach a tennis court. This is illustrated in Map10.3, which illustrates the location of each of the courts and includes a five mile radius from each site.

Map 12.3 – Catchment Areas of Existing Tennis Facilities

TO BE INSERTED Post approval

National Governing Body Perspective – Lawn Tennis Association

12.28 The Governing Body for tennis is the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA). It is responsible for the administration of tennis across the country, including youth and other development. The LTA National Facility Strategy is set out in Places to Play. The Place to Play Strategy sets out:

- the overall vision for places to play
- how the LTA will grow regular participation by supporting places to play to develop and deliver the right programmes
- how the LTA will make capital investment decisions to ensure investment in the right facilities to grow the sport
- how LTA will support performance programmes in the right locations

12.29 It indicates that the LTA is committed to growing the sport to ensure that more people are playing tennis more often at first class facilities, with high quality coaching programmes and well organised competition. The overall aim between 2011-2016 is to ensure that, as far as practicably possible, the British population has access to and are aware of the location of high quality tennis opportunities in their local area. In brief:

- access for everyone to well maintained high quality tennis facilities which are either free or pay as you play
- a Clubmark accredited place to play within a 10 minute drive of their home
- indoor courts within a 20 minute drive time of their home
- a mini tennis (10 and under) performance programme within a 20 minute drive of their home (Performance Centres)
- a performance programme for 11 - 15 year olds within a 45 minute drive time of their home (High Performance Centre)
- a limited number of internationally orientated programmes strategically spread for players 16+ with an international programme (International High Performance Centres)

12.30 The facility element of the LTA places to play strategy focuses on:

- **improving facilities at high quality places to play:** Enhancing facility provision at performance venues and Tennis Clubmark accredited places to play;
- **tennis in community settings:** Beacon sites - supporting LA's to bring back into use existing community tennis facilities and working with them to develop affordable quality tennis programmes; and
- **sustainability:** Advising places to play to ring fence funding to ensure existing facilities can be upgraded or replaced when they get to the end of their life.

12.31 LTA research reveals that many successful places to play are unable to grow or maximise their potential and their tennis programme due to site restrictions e.g.

- courts are at capacity and there is no space to expand further; and
- planning restrictions preventing the installation of floodlights or indoor courts.

12.32 The key priorities of the LTA both nationally and more locally in Bedfordshire are to develop tennis participation for those aged 14 and above and nationally, to ensure that 450,000 players are playing tennis once per week or more. Current figures are equivalent to 445,000. There was an 18% increase over the summer months in participation in tennis (partially stimulated by the success of Andy Murray) and it is therefore also essential to retain these players.

12.33 To achieve this, a series of priority areas have been developed. These focus upon areas of higher population density as these offer significant potential to increase the amount of residents involved in the sport. Central Bedfordshire is not identified as a priority area, however nearby Bedford is considered to be priority.

12.34 With regards club development, activity is focused on clubs that have achieved the Club Mark accreditation and therefore have a clearly defined programme of activities in place. In Central Bedfordshire, Dunstable TC, Flitwick TC, Leighton Buzzard TC and Linslade TC have all achieved the accreditation. The LTA also targets performance clubs – there are none of these located within Central Bedfordshire.

12.35 For facilities, the key priorities are to:

- rejuvenate park courts
- floodlight existing facilities to extend capacity where there are active tennis programmes
- cover existing tennis courts / provide low cost indoor structures to provide additional capacity and ensure that facilities are playable all year round

12.36 Partnership working with key partners to develop tennis is also identified as a key priority, and technical support is available from the LTA to support clubs and other partners for the improvement of facilities.

12.37 Although there is a good distribution of tennis clubs in Central Bedfordshire, there are no indoor tennis courts available to clubs and the nearest facilities are in Luton (2 indoor courts) and Bedford (3 seasonal courts) as well as at Letchworth Tennis Centre (3 indoor courts). There is a need to consider the provision of such a facility in Central Bedfordshire, focusing particularly on areas of high population and propensity to participate. Key areas for further consideration include Leighton Linslade, Dunstable and Flitwick – all of these areas have a club marked club and a good sized local population. This issue was also reflected in the indoor facility strategy.

12.38 With regards outdoor facilities, the majority of clubs have access to sufficient facilities in relation to the levels of activity that they are undertaking.

12.39 Supporting the network of clubs, there are strong foundations for tennis in schools and circa half of Central Bedfordshire have now attended teacher training on the delivery of tennis. There are structured activity programmes across Bedfordshire of competitive activity.

12.40 In addition to growing participation of formal tennis, there are also aspirations to inspire players through the introduction of new forms of the game including short tennis and cardio tennis. These new forms of the game may increase the number of people playing tennis in the county and longer term, increase the demand for park and club based courts.

Adequacy of Current Provision and Meeting Future Demand

12.41 As with bowls the assessment of tennis facilities does not lend itself to the estimation of demand used in other sports or the use of TGRs. It is however possible to evaluate the adequacy of provision drawing upon the tools available and the information outlined in this section as well as the targets set by the LTA.

12.42 With regards the adequacy of provision, these reveal that:

- Tennis facilities are predominantly located in the major settlements and large villages in Central Bedfordshire and there are relatively few large settlements which do not contain tennis courts. The largest settlements without dedicated tennis courts are Houghton Regis and Caddington, although residents in both settlements are within 5 miles of Dunstable, which contains both a tennis club and free to access courts.
- Active People surveys show that across Central Bedfordshire, 4826 people currently participate in tennis however a further 5082 people would like to play. This latent demand is spread across different population groups and both genders (unlike most other pitch sports). The fact that the amount of people that would like to play is higher than the number of current participants suggest that there is potentially quite a lot of latent demand. Active People suggests that there is an overall potential tennis playing population of 9908. While the LTA now predominantly measures the adequacy of facilities in an area using a series of targets around accessibility, previous standards have measured the amount of facilities based upon a quantity standard of one court per 45 participants (and 1 court per 60 participants if floodlit). It is however emphasised that this provides an indication only, and other elements should be taken into account including tennis development, club structure and sustainability when considering the requirement for additional courts.

12.43 Applying this broad figure however (and drawing firstly upon data collated as part of the Active People Programme) to the estimated current and future demand provides an indication of the adequacy of provision. It can be concluded that;

- based upon an assumed standard of 1 court per 45 participants (not floodlit) and 1 court per 60 players (floodlit), the existing stock of public facilities will serve 3900 players. According to Active People, there are 4826 players, meaning that the stock of facilities is insufficient. The current stock of provision is equivalent to 64 people per court;
- if latent demand was to be realised, creating a potential tennis playing population of 9908, there would be 132 players per court, a figure significantly above LTA standards; and
- the rising population in Central Bedfordshire would have further impact upon the adequacy of facilities. Assuming that current participation rates are maintained and the adult population over 18 increases by 14%, 5501 people would be playing tennis

(73 people per court). If latent demand was realised, this figure would increase to over 10,000 and the number of people per court would be approaching 150.

- 12.44 The above figures indicate that provision in Central Bedfordshire is insufficient. Further analysis however indicates that actual playing membership of existing clubs accounts to just 1686, a much lower figure than that suggested by Active People. Despite this, 75% of courts are club based. While this does not include casual play and takes into account only club membership, it does suggest that the figure compiled through the active people survey perhaps overestimates the amount of regular activity that takes place. Added to this, all responding clubs in Central Bedfordshire indicate that they currently have capacity for additional members, although it must be noted that some are dissatisfied and attribute this to the number of courts that they have access to.
- 12.45 While the above calculations provide an indication, they can therefore be considered to potentially over estimate demand and therefore provide an indication of the upper echelons of demand.
- 12.46 Considering provision on a club by club level provides more revealing analysis. Table 12.4 summarises the theoretical capacity of each club (based upon the number of floodlit and none floodlit courts) and highlights shortfalls and capacity for new members. It also clearly illustrates issues highlighted by clubs in relation to quality and quantity of facilities. It reveals that only Barton le Clay Tennis Club is at capacity in theoretical terms and Langford and Studham Tennis Club are approaching capacity. Both Barton le Clay and Langford Tennis Clubs are restricted by a lack of floodlights at their club bases.

Table 12.4 – Club Based Capacity and Issues

Club	Membership	Floodlit	None Floodlit	Capacity (60 floodlit 45 none)	Spaces Left	Comments (Club / LTA / Site Visits)
Dunstable	157	4	4	420	263	Old clubhouse in poor condition. Club have also highlighted aspirations for expansion
Flitwick and Ampthill	259	4	4	420	161	Poor changing and showers. New building required
Leighton Buzzard	164	4	0	240	76	Issues with current pavilion. Pavilion important income stream for club and in it's current form is not suitable to rent out
Linslade	106	3	0	180	74	Seeking to provide new pavilion for changing and toilets as previous facilities are no longer available
Studham	81	0	2	90	9	No floodlights

Club	Membership	Floodlit	None Floodlit	Capacity (60 floodlit 45 none)	Spaces Left	Comments (Club / LTA / Site Visits)
Biggleswade	93	3	0	180	87	
Eaton Bray	103	2	1	165	62	Upgrade of court surface required
Langford	116	2	0	120	4	Upgrade to changing facilities required. Club also approaching capacity.
Slip End	91	2	0	120	29	Two courts no longer used. Poor quality and suitable for conversion to alternative facility type
Toddington	75	0	4	180	105	
Westoning	30	0	2	90	60	Lack of floodlights restricts use
Potton	70	2	0	120	50	Poorly located adjacent to sewage works. Courts suffer from overhanging trees which encourage moss growth. Courts will require resurfacing in 5 - 6 years, however potential for relocation to new courts as part of development of new community centre
Harlington	124	0	6	270	146	
Eversholt	124	0	1	45	-79	
Barton Le Clay	93	0	2	90	-3	No seating, poorly located. Club highlight lack of local courts and floodlighting as restrictive to tennis development

- 12.47 As shown above, the majority of clubs have capacity within their current structures to accommodate existing demand and also to meet some latent demand. Further calculations demonstrate that there is capacity within the existing clubs to accommodate just over 1000 additional players – population growth is likely to generate between 600 and 700, meaning that there is scope for some increases in participation.
- 12.48 Supporting this, there is no evidence that the existing network of club and parks courts, with the backup of courts at school sites, is insufficient to meet current demand (although there are some concerns about the quality of public pay as you play facilities, raised earlier in this section).
- 12.49 There is however clear latent demand and potential to grow participation in tennis, supported by Active People surveys and Market segmentation as well as suggestions from providers that tennis courts could be better used. Growth of the membership of these facilities will be essential if clubs are to remain sustainable, as well as if they are to progress and improve the facilities that are provided.
- 12.50 Population growth, coupled with an increase in the proportion of residents that are playing tennis would however place pressures on the existing stock of facilities. There are an additional 43 courts at school sites as well as a number of multi-use venues. These venues (and public access to these facilities) may become increasingly important in future years.

Summary and Key Issues

Key issues to address – Tennis

- The stock of tennis courts is well spread across Central Bedfordshire, with more than half of all courts in the major service centres. Most residents in larger settlements have access to at least one tennis court within a five mile radius. Provision in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis placemaking area is however much lower than in other parts of Central Bedfordshire.
- Tennis offers a significant opportunity to increase overall participation in sport and physical activity in Central Bedfordshire – the sport has a wider participation base than any other sport and the Active People Survey indicates that there is significant latent demand at present. While analysis of the existing club bases suggest that demand may be slightly overestimated, it is clear that tennis still provides a an opportunity to introduce new residents to the sport.
- Application of participation statistics outlined in the Active People survey to the existing stock of facilities reveal shortfalls in provision, with the theoretical capacity of the public courts available lower than the number of people in Central Bedfordshire that are currently playing tennis (64 people per court).
- Despite this, there are sufficient courts at all clubs to meet the needs of current membership, with only Studham Tennis Club, Barton Le Clay Tennis Club and Langford Tennis Club approaching their capacity. While club membership does not account for casual play, the current club membership figures suggest that the Active People survey perhaps overestimates demand slightly and provides an indication of the upper echelons of potential demand.
- Building upon this, if all potential latent demand was realised (using figures

outlined in the Active People / Market segmentation analysis) notwithstanding the significant amounts of population growth that are projected, then capacity at club and public facilities would be exceeded (136 people per court) and there would be a reliance upon the use of school facilities. Population growth alone could be accommodated within existing club structures (where there is capacity for up to 1000 more members) although some clubs are approaching capacity and may require additional courts if growth is focused in their area. New provision should therefore be based upon specific needs identified for each club.

- While overall there are few concerns about the amount of tennis courts currently, there are concerns about the quality of courts (particularly at public facilities) but also at several club sites and the overall quality is the most varying of all types of outdoor sport, with scores achieved ranging from 32% to 100%. The court surface and changing accommodation are perhaps the issues most in need of attention. Several clubs believe that the quality issues at both club and public facilities will inhibit the overall development of tennis in both the short and long term.

12.51 The above issues indicate that the strategic priorities for tennis are as follows:

Ensuring that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand

- Support the provision of new facilities at clubs where specific need can be identified at clubs, taking into account the capacity and quality of existing facilities. In the first instance, additional capacity should be created by adding floodlights to courts. Longer term and following population growth, new courts may be required at some clubs.
- Where there is expressed demand for tennis in areas not currently within a 5 mile catchment, to maximise the use of resources, support additional demand for tennis through a partnership approach with schools where this is possible. Demand for pay and play tennis should be considered in line with the Beacon Tennis Scheme, established by the LTA. Existing public tennis courts in large settlements should also be retained, unless appropriate pay and play opportunities can be organised through club bases or schools

Ensure that facilities are of appropriate quality to meet the needs of users

- Address quality issues identified at club sites prioritising areas where club development is limited by quality constraints, specifically
 - Floodlighting (linked with increasing capacity above)
 - Covering existing courts (linked with increasing capacity above)
 - Surfacing
 - Pavilion / Changing
- Support the development of new forms of tennis in order to increase participation. This might include mini tennis, which provides the use of more flexible spaces.

13. Athletics

13.1 This section evaluates the adequacy of facilities for athletics in Central Bedfordshire and provides:

- An overview of supply and demand for athletics
- An evaluation of the overall adequacy of facilities to meet demand
- key issues and strategic priorities the strategy will address

Athletics in Central Bedfordshire - An Overview

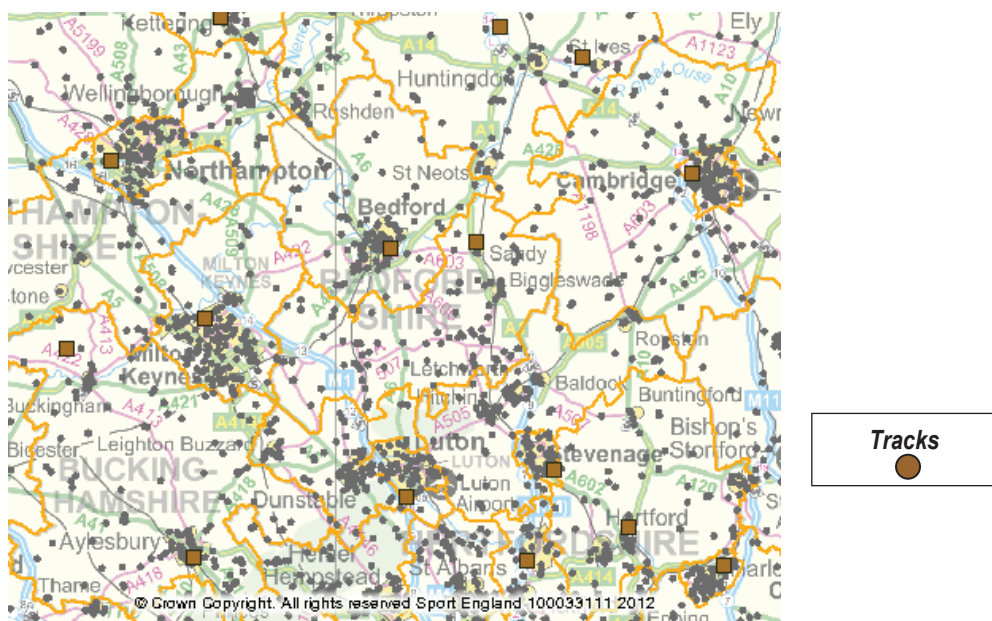
Supply

13.2 There is one athletics track in Central Bedfordshire at Sandy Sports and Community Centre. The track is floodlit and available on a pay and play basis and is of County standard. This is summarised in Table 13.1

Table 13.1 – Athletics Tracks in Central Bedfordshire

Site Name	Ward	Number of Lanes	Ownership/management	Access	Year Built
Sandy Sports & Community Centre	Sandy Pinnacle	8	Community school/trust	Pay and Play	2005

Map 13.1 Athletics tracks in and around Central Bedfordshire



13.3 Other tracks within a 40-minute drive of the middle of Central Bedfordshire are as follows:

- Bedford International Athletic Stadium, 8 lane floodlit, pay and play
- Stockwood Park Athletics Centre, Luton, 8 lane floodlit, pay and play
- Stantonbury Campus Leisure Centre, Milton Keynes, 6 lane floodlit, pay and play
- Ridlins Wood Athletics track, Stevenage, 8 lane floodlit, pay and play
- Gosling Sports Park, Welwyn garden City, 6 lane floodlit, pay and play
- Sportspace Athletics Track, Hemel Hempstead, 8 lane floodlit, pay and play
- Watford Woodside Leisure Centre, 8 lane floodlit, pay and play

13.4 It should also be noted that several schools in Central Bedfordshire mark out grass athletics tracks on their playing fields during the summer months.

Demand

Active People and Market Segmentation Analysis (Sport England)

13.5 From the Active People Survey and Market Segmentation (explained in Section 3), it is possible to evaluate how many residents of Central Bedfordshire **do** participate in athletics and how many of the population **would like** to participate in athletics. It is also possible to understand how this varies across different parts of Central Bedfordshire.

13.6 Map 13.2 illustrates the distribution of residents that currently participate in athletics while Chart 11.1 illustrates the market segments to which they belong.

Map 13.2 – Population of Central Bedfordshire that participate in athletics

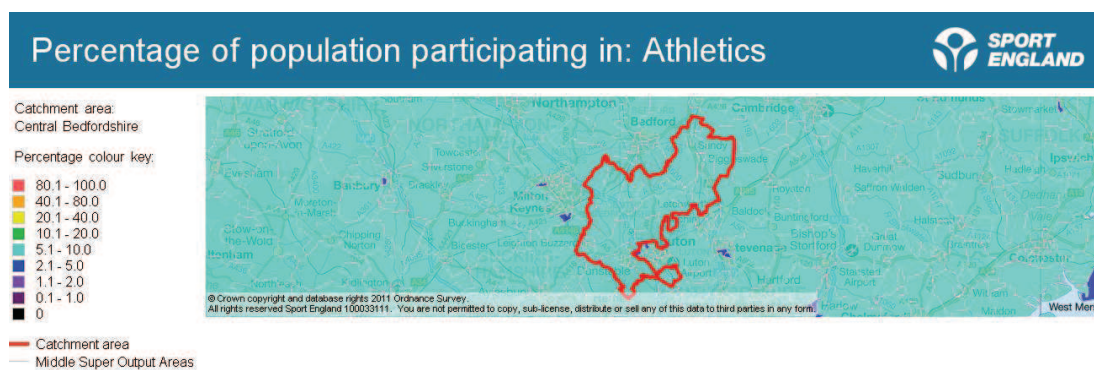
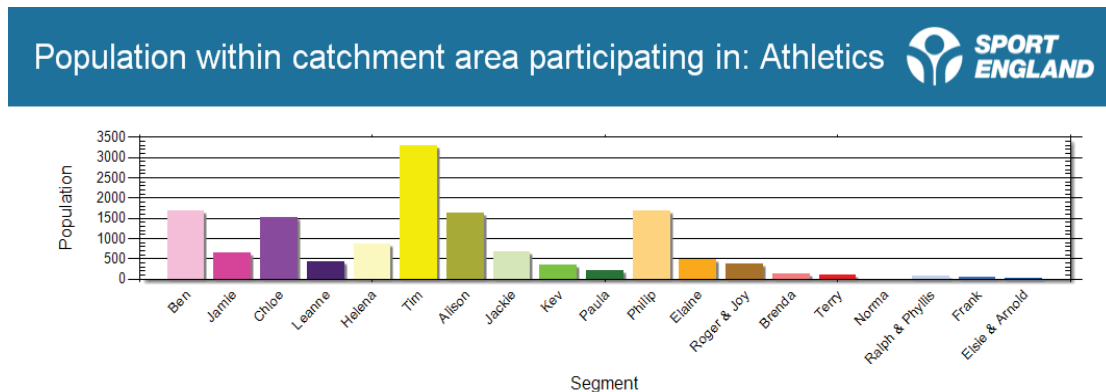


Chart 13.1 – Market Segments of Central Bedfordshire participating in athletics



13.7 Map 13.1 and Chart 13.1 indicate that the distribution of people participating in athletics is even across Central Bedfordshire. Like most other sports included in this document, Tim is the main participant (3294). Ben, Chloe, Phil, Alison, Jamie, Leanne and Jackie also however have strong participation profiles, demonstrating that athletics appeals to a wider cross section of the population than many other sports. In total, there are 14,133 people that participate in athletics.

13.8 Map 13.3 and Chart 13.2 illustrate the distribution of people that would like to do athletics, according to the Active People Survey. It can be seen that the proportion of people that would like to participate in athletic is even across Central Bedfordshire. The profile of those that would like to participate is very similar to those that do participate, with the groups with the highest number of potential participants being Tim, Alison, Chloe, Ben and Philip. In total, there are 5870 people across Central Bedfordshire that would like to participate in athletics but do not currently do so. This is a relatively high quantity and suggests that there are opportunities to increase the number of people.

Map 13.3 – Population of Central Bedfordshire that would like to participate in athletics

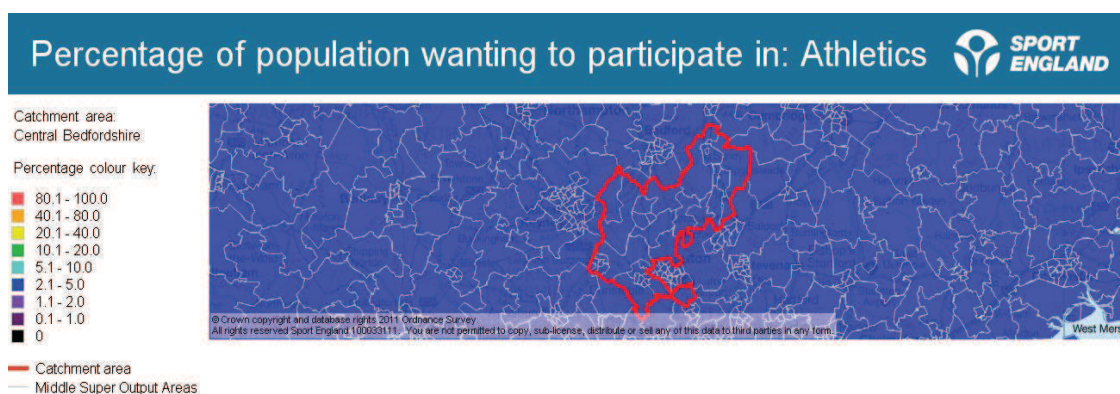
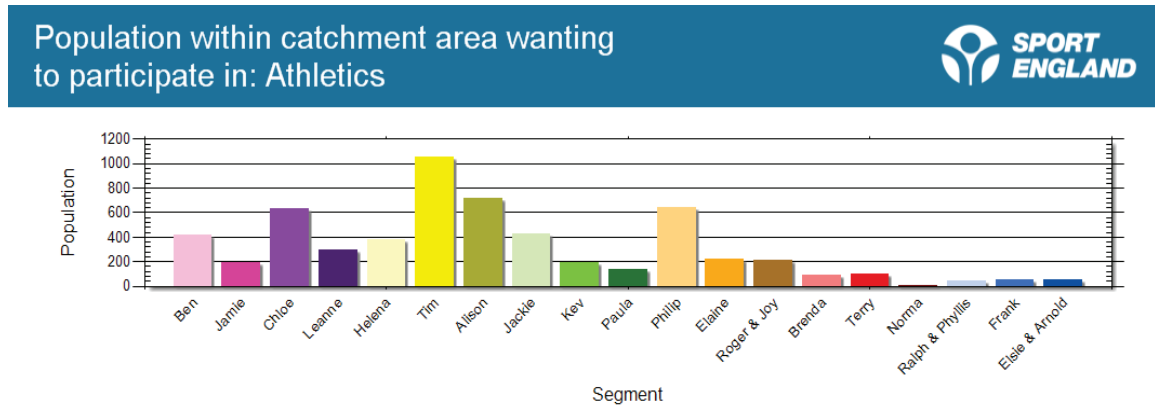


Chart 13.2 – Market Segments of Central Bedfordshire that would like to participate in athletics



Clubs

13.9 There are four athletics clubs in Central Bedfordshire, specifically:

- Ampthill and Flitwick Flyers Running Club (meet at Flitwick Leisure Centre / Redborne School but road running)
- Biggleswade Athletics Club (based at Sandy Athletics Track)
- Dunstable Road Runners Club (road running)
- Leighton Buzzard Athletics Club (meets at Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre but road running and also occasionally competes in track and field)

13.10 While Ampthill and Flitwick Flyers Running Club compete primarily in road races and cross country, both Biggleswade Athletics Club and Leighton Buzzard Athletics Club compete in track and field as well as on the road and cross country.

Club and Local Consultation

13.11 Feedback from club and local residents highlights demand for an athletics track in Leighton Buzzard and it is clear that there have been aspirations for the creation of a new athletics track for several years, and since the loss of a previous facility.

Both Leighton Buzzard Athletics Club and Leighton Linlade Town Council have expressed aspirations for a new athletics track and this has been discussed extensively both in the community and at a more strategic level. There are believed to be three possible sites, specifically;

- Tiddenfoot and Cedars School
- Vandyke School
- Astral Park

13.12 A new athletics facility is believed by the club to be essential in taking the club forward. The club however recognise that the development of a new athletics track is a long term project and highlight an initial requirement for a floodlit training area with a clubhouse and storage of equipment. Currently, the club are unable to practice field events during the

winter months and this reduces interest from young athletes and has a detrimental impact on the overall membership of the club.

England Athletics Association Strategic Facility Plan 2012 – 2017

13.13 The strategic facility plan identifies the strategic priorities for England Athletics' future involvement in facility development. It seeks to ensure that investment in facilities supports the overarching core priorities of driving mass participation, developing and supporting sustainable clubs and enhancing coach development.

13.14 The strategy identifies several key issues relating to specific facilities for athletics, including;

- The variety of athletics disciplines and diverse athlete profile require varied facilities
- It is a low cost participation sport and cost is therefore not seen as a barrier but there is a more limited income generation as a result
- Overall there appears to be a sufficient number of formal competition tracks in England, albeit with some uneven distribution around the country
- Tracks are significantly underutilised on non-club nights and during daytimes providing significant potential for further activity
- There is an ageing stock of formal track and field facilities and very limited new build
- An annual subsidy is required for most track operations resulting in sustainability and maintenance issues at some locations
- Approximately 40% of tracks are deemed to be below the standard required for competitive events
- The major growth area is recreational running on-road and off-road

13.15 As highlighted, not all athletics participation takes place in formal facilities. The key priorities for road and off road running therefore focus upon the natural environment and are;

- Helping ensure established routes are protected;
- Exploiting opportunities for new routes;
- Making the entry-level into running easier for new participants and
- Enhancing the enjoyment of existing runners so that they remain actively involved.

13.16 England Athletics encourage local authorities to actively promote running in parks and green spaces. They are also keen to engage with local authority planning officers with regards the installation of 1km – 2km running routes in more urban areas.

13.17 With regards track and field, the strategy identifies five levels of facilities, specifically;

- Level 5 – major venues that may host international and/ or televised events. Such facilities include an 8 lane track as well as warm up track and at least 5000 spectator seats. They would also include full accommodation for athletes, track officials,
 - Level 4 – major domestic venues – with capacity of up to 10,000 and similar facilities to level 1 albeit on a smaller scale
 - Level 3 – regional or small championship events – 6 or 8 lane track with all field event facilities. Some ancillary accommodation and crowd capacity of at least 200
 - Level 2 – league completion / school competition – 6 or 8 lane track with some or all field event facilities
 - Level 1 – Not suitable for UKA competitions – undersized or non standard tracks.
- 13.18 Recent analysis of track suitability (marked against a criteria of grade A – suitable for competition, Grade B – suitable for competition with restrictions and Grade C – not suitable for completion) indicated that all tracks in Bedfordshire are currently categorised as Grade A.
- 13.19 The strategy identifies several key priorities in relation to the provision, management and maintenance of track and field facilities including;
- Drive the development of Sustainable Facilities Frameworks (SFF) within each Athletics Network to determine local priorities for improvement and investment.
 - Identify and assist the funding of a range of field facility and equipment improvements and adaptations to help convert 'B' venues into 'A' venues and to enhance disability provision.
 - Provide financial models and best practice studies to illustrate maximising track and field usage to increase revenues without compromising athletics activity, including sharing facilities, club mergers, cross-sport usage, infield mixes etc.
 - Work with UKA and Networks to deliver club/operator forums to discuss issues around maintenance, operations, delivery, partner engagement and best practice examples.
 - Provide enhanced resources and advice to clubs on business planning and finance, marketing, legal and contract issues, and sponsorship.
 - Provide expertise to engage with owners and operators on the issues, impact and opportunities relating to track closure, asset transfer, risk mitigation and future planning.
- 13.20 In addition to formal track and field facilities, the strategic plan also outlines the role of mobile / compact models including J tracks, enclosed field event facilities and the use of Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) dedicated to athletics. It indicates that compact facilities should include the following:
- 2-4 lane 60-80m running straight, with or without J-track extension
 - Vertical and horizontal jumps
 - Shot circle

- Adequate lighting to undertake the activities during the winter
- Shelter and toilets (incorporated or nearby)

13.21 The strategic plan also outlines the opportunity to combine the provision of an AGP with an integrated athletics track within the pitch sport enclosure.

13.22 The strategic plan therefore states that the key facility priorities for athletics between 2012 –2017 are as follows:

Road and off-road running

- High visibility route and distance markers
- Notice boards
- Outdoor drop-in units

Track and Field

- Upgrading of field event facilities and equipment
- Clubhouse modernisation projects
- Access improvements for disabled athletes
- Track floodlighting

Compact Athletics

- Permanent compact athletics models

Adequacy of Provision

13.23 Sport England's Active Places tool provides comparison of the amount of athletics tracks with national and regional averages. For Central Bedfordshire it indicates that in lanes per 1000 population, relative provision in Central Bedfordshire is poor compared with the average. It ranks 28th in the region of 47 LAs (and in fact the lowest of any LA where a track exists) and local provision is the lowest in the county.

This is illustrated in Map 13.4 and explained further in Table 13.2

Map 13.4 Athletics tracks per 1000

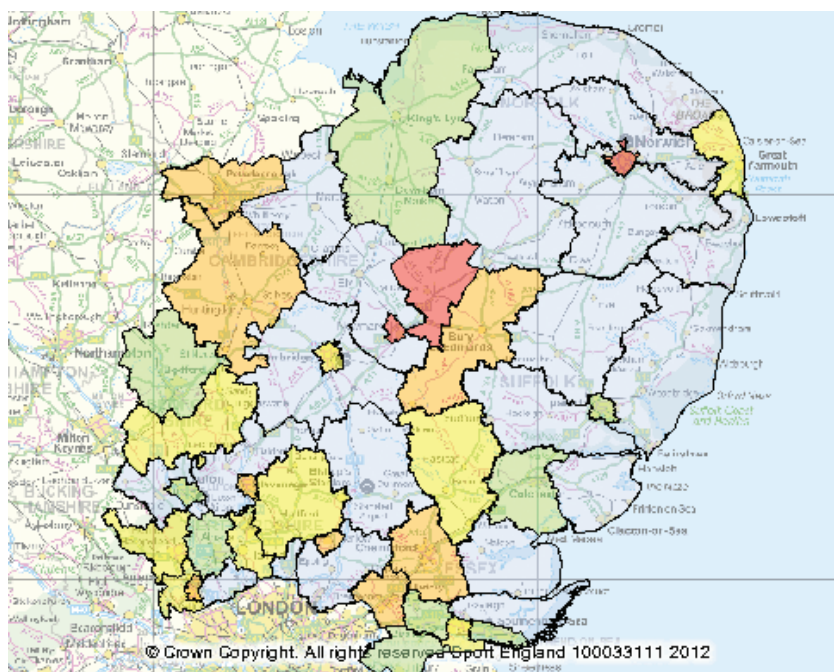


Table 13.2 – Athletics Tracks per 1000 population

	Lanes per 1000 population
Central Bedfordshire	0.034
Bedfordshire	0.052
East region	0.04
England	0.05
Best in region (Norwich)	0.132

13.24 It should be noted that these figures should be considered with some caution as they reflect all tracks, including synthetic, cinder and permanent grass. The track in Central Bedfordshire is a synthetic track.

Quality

13.25 Using Active Places data, it is possible to estimate the quality and condition of the track from date of construction. The track was built in 2005 and is generally in good condition. This was confirmed by a site inspection.

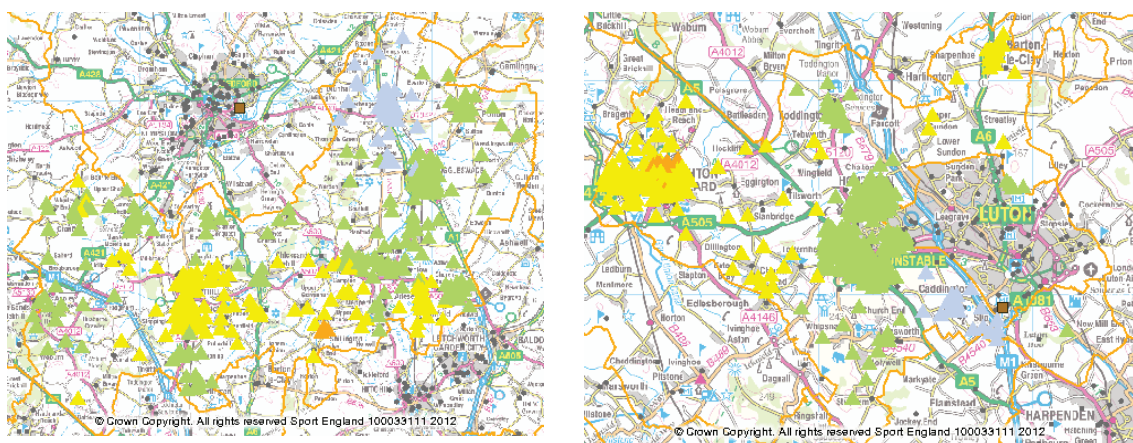
Accessibility

13.26 Active Places Power also allows analysis of access to athletics tracks, taking into account both facilities within Central Bedfordshire and those in the nearby vicinity. This is illustrated in Map 11.4.

13.27 Map 13.4 clearly indicates that with the existence of only one track in Central Bedfordshire and despite other tracks nearby, accessibility for local residents is poor, with over a third living outside a 20 minute driving catchment. Accessibility is skewed to the east (due to the location of the existing track), with parts of Central Bedfordshire in the west outside of the catchment to a track.

13.28 Accessibility is best in Sandy (the location of the current track) but in general, residents in the north placemaking area are closer to athletics facilities than in the south. Poorest accessibility is in Leighton Buzzard and the rural south. The athletics club in Leighton Buzzard (who sometimes participate in track and field) travel to Stantonbury Athletics Track in Milton Keynes.

Map 13.5 Accessibility by car (*see key in Appendix 1)



13.29 In more detail, the proportions of residents within each band are as follows (populations are based on 2001 Census).

Table 13.3 – Access to Athletics Tracks in Central Bedfordshire.

	Population	%
0-10 mins	20634	9%
10-20 mins	125367	54%
20 – 30 mins	84458	36%
30 – 45 mins	3268	1%

13.30 Much population increase will take place in the south, in and around Leighton Buzzard and Houghton Regis and the proportion of the population that are outside of the catchment of an athletics track will therefore also increase.

13.31 Added to this, Active People analysis indicates that there is considerable scope to increase participation in athletics, although it is likely that much of this will be in the form of road running, rather than track and field.

National Governing Body Perspective

England Athletics

13.32 England Athletics promotes the development of athletics in Bedfordshire through the Bedfordshire Athletics Network. The network seeks to:

- Develop generic and technical knowledge of coaches
- Share coaching resources amongst clubs within the network
- Establish localised coach development learning programmes
- Develop standardised support from clubs to athletes
- Provide delivery opportunities in schools and link to club activity
- Strengthen club structure across the network area

13.33 All four clubs in Central Bedfordshire are members of the athletics network and contribute to the achievement of the above aims and objectives.

13.34 Of the Central Bedfordshire Clubs, only Biggleswade AC use an athletics track regularly, although the importance of ensuring that road running clubs have access to appropriate changing and meeting facilities is highlighted.

13.35 The track at Sandy Recreation Centre is the home for Biggleswade Athletics Club and is the centre of activity for the club and as such, is an important base for athletics in Central Bedfordshire. The club have recently drawn up a business plan setting out how they propose to enhance current arrangements for the management and maintenance of the facility. Sustainability of the facility is perhaps the key challenge moving forwards.

To evaluate the strategic demand for additional athletics tracks, England Athletics consider several factors including;

- Local demographics
- Existing participation and club infrastructure
- Availability of nearby facilities (athletics tracks are considered to have a catchment of 30 minutes to 1 hour)
- The potential to increase demand and club membership through the provision of a new track
- Sustainability of a new track.

13.36 The application of these considerations to Central Bedfordshire indicates that there is no strategic need for the provision of further athletics tracks within the area, particularly given the close proximity to existing tracks in Bedford and Luton.

13.37 The needs and aspirations of Leighton Buzzard AC are noted however and England Athletics remain keen to promote club and facility development. It was highlighted that a compact athletics facility may provide a locally appropriate and sustainable means of improving the facilities that are available to the club.

Key issues to address – Athletics

- There is one athletics track in Central Bedfordshire at Sandy Sports and Community Centre. The track is floodlit and available on a pay and play basis and is of County standard.
- According to Active People, like most other sports included in this document, Tim is the main participant (3294). Ben, Chloe, Phil, Alison, Jamie, Leanne and Jackie also however have strong participation profiles, demonstrating that athletics appeals to a wider cross section of the population than many other sports. In total, there are 14,133 people that participate in athletics and a further 5870 that would like to (made up of the same market segment groups).
- There are four athletics clubs in Central Bedfordshire. While Biggleswade Athletics Club is based at Sandy Sports Centre, the remainder are road running and cross country clubs. Only Biggleswade AC therefore uses a formal athletics track regularly.

13.38 Sport England's Active Places tool provides comparison of the amount of athletics tracks with national and regional averages. For Central Bedfordshire it indicates that in terms of lanes per 1000 population, relative provision in Central Bedfordshire is poor compared with the average. It ranks 28th in the region of 47 LAs (and in fact the lowest of any LA where a track exists) and local provision is the lowest in the county. Supporting this, analysis indicates that with the existence of only one track in the district and despite other tracks nearby, accessibility for local residents is poor, with over a third living outside a 20 minute driving catchment. Accessibility is skewed to the east, with parts of Central Bedfordshire in the west outside of the catchment to a track.

- Accessibility is best in Sandy (the location of the current track) but in general, residents in the North placemaking area are closer to athletics facilities than in the south. Poorest accessibility is in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South.
- Despite these deficiencies, current activity levels do not provide clear evidence of a requirement for a new athletics track in Central Bedfordshire (as most activity is in the form of road running). Parameters used by England Athletics to determine the need for new facilities suggest that there is no strategic need for an additional full scale track within the area, although the provision of a compact athletics track may support the growth of athletics.
- There is however clear local aspiration for a new facility in Leighton Buzzard, an area which has previously had a track and the area of Central Bedfordshire that is least well served for facilities. Leighton Buzzard Athletic Club indicates that there is a clear need for facilities in the area and that club development is inhibited without the creation of a track. Recognising that the creation of a track is a longer term project, the club also highlight an immediate priority of the provision of a clubhouse, floodlit outdoor training area and storage facility.

13.39 The above suggests that the key priorities for athletics in Central Bedfordshire are as follows:

Ensuring that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand

- Support ongoing athletics participation through the protection of the existing athletics track used by Biggleswade AC
- Ensure that appropriate changing and meeting facilities are available for road running club
- Support sustainable solutions to provide new facilities for athletics in Leighton Buzzard.

Ensure that facilities are of appropriate quality to meet the needs of users

- Maintain the quality of the existing track

Promote increases in participation and the creation of sustainable clubs

- Support clubs to proactively increase participation and membership to maximise the sustainability of the sport.

14. Netball

Introduction

14.1 This section evaluates the adequacy of facilities for outdoor netball in Central Bedfordshire and provides:

- An overview of supply and demand for outdoor courts
- An evaluation of the overall adequacy of courts to meet demand
- key issues and strategic priorities

Netball in Central Bedfordshire - An Overview

Supply

14.2 Netball in Bedfordshire is played both indoors and outdoors. While the majority of competitive fixtures in Bedfordshire take place outdoors, most clubs use indoor facilities for training.

14.3 Unlike for other sports considered in this document, the majority of competitive netball is played at central venue leagues and all teams travel to these venues to play in the scheduled fixtures. The leagues are based out of a small number of venues and attract teams from across Bedfordshire. Local leagues are located in Luton and Bedford as well as in Central Bedfordshire. The facilities used for netball across Central Bedfordshire are as follows;

- All Saints Academy (indoor)
- Cranfield University (indoor)
- Stratton Upper School (outdoor and Indoor)
- Sandy Sports Centre (outdoor and indoor)
- Redbourne Upper School (outdoor and indoor)
- Van Dyke Upper School
- Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre
- Linslade Middle School
- Alameda School.

14.4 In addition, teams from Central Bedfordshire travel to use facilities in Bedford Borough and Luton. The Bunyan Centre / Bedford Academy (indoor and outdoor courts in Bedford Borough) are particularly important in accommodating teams from Central Bedfordshire.

Demand

Active People and Market Segmentation Analysis

14.5 From the Active People Survey and Market Segmentation (explained in Section 3), it is possible to evaluate how many residents of Central Bedfordshire **do** participate in netball and how many of the population **would like** to play netball. It is also possible to understand how this varies across different parts of Central Bedfordshire.

14.6 Map 14.1 illustrates the distribution of residents that currently participate in netball while Chart 14.1 illustrates the market segments to which they belong.

Map 14.1 – Population of Central Bedfordshire that participate in netball

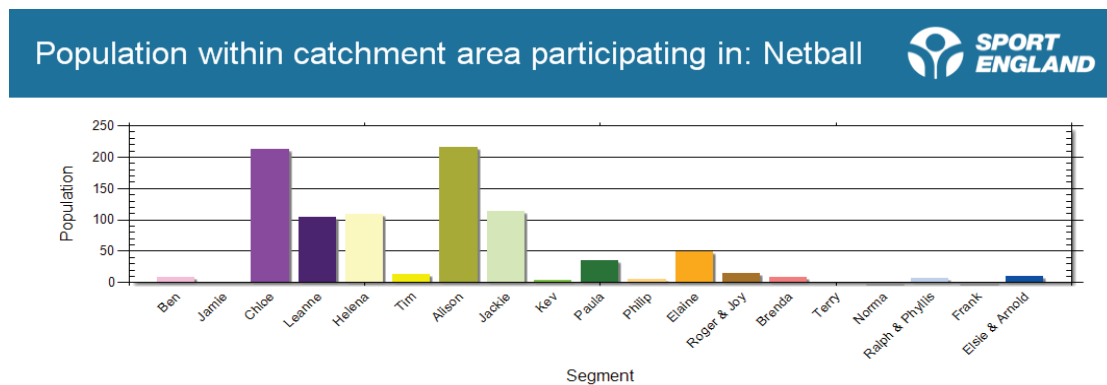
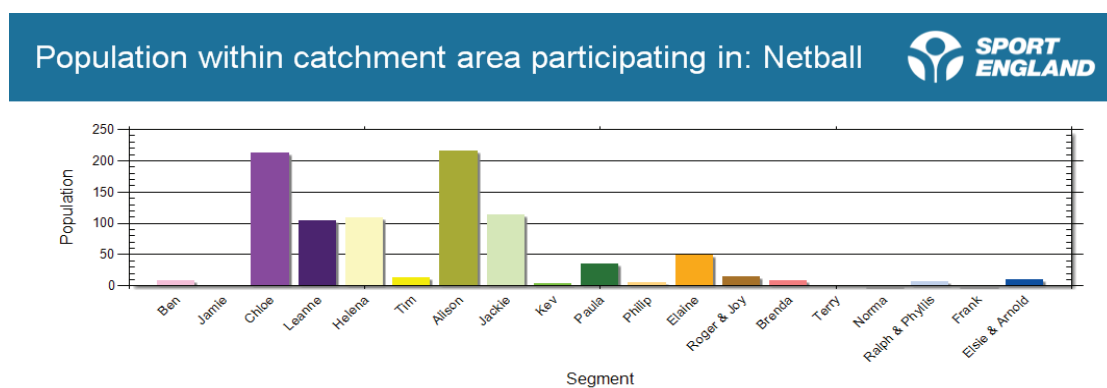


Chart 14.1 – Market Segments of Central Bedfordshire participating in netball



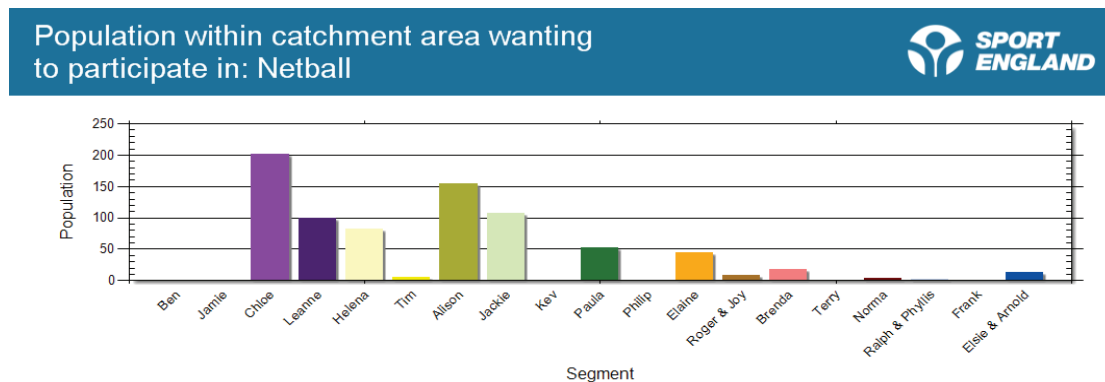
14.7 Map 14.1 and Chart 14.1 indicate that the distribution of people participating in netball is even across Central Bedfordshire. Unlike most other sports considered in this document, there is a strong female participation profile, with the main participants being Alison (216 players) and Chloe (213 players). Jackie, Helena and Leanne are also active in netball and to a lesser extent Paula and Elaine. There is no male profile in netball and in total, there are 912 people that play netball.

14.8 Map 14.2 and Chart 14.2 illustrate the distribution of people that would like to play netball, according to the Active People Survey. It can be seen that the proportion of people that would like to participate in netball is even across Central Bedfordshire. The profile of those that would like to participate is just below those that do participate, and it is the same groups of residents that would like to play. In total, there are 790 people across Central Bedfordshire that would like to participate in netball but do not currently do so. This suggests that there are some opportunities to increase the number of people.

Map 14.2 – Population of Central Bedfordshire that would like to participate in netball



Chart 14.2 – Market Segments of Central Bedfordshire that would like to participate in athletics



Participation

14.9 Participation in Bedfordshire is strong and there are three main leagues running, all of which have catchments across the county, specifically;

- Bedford and District Netball League – 6 divisions as well as junior and youth leagues. The league runs Monday – Thursday and is based at the Bedfordshire Academy in Bedford (64 teams)
- The Heritage League has 19 teams spread over 3 divisions and is based in Central Bedfordshire at Sandy Sports Centre and Stratton Upper School
- Luton and Dunstable Netball League has five divisions with 32 teams and is based at several venues primarily in Luton.

14.10 In addition to the above leagues, Cranfield Netball Club also participate in the East Regional League. All clubs in the Central Bedfordshire area operate full junior to senior team pathways and in addition, there are numerous casual and work based teams that play in the local leagues. These teams tend not to train, while those based at clubs train at least once per week at a mix of indoor and outdoor facilities.

14.11 The key clubs based in the Central Bedfordshire area are as follows:

- Leighton Buzzard Netball Club – venues include Vandyke Upper School, Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre and Linslade School
- Maulden Netball Club – Redborne Upper School
- Chiltern Girls Netball Club – Redbourne Upper School
- Westoning Recreation Netball Club – Alameda Sports Hall / Marston Vale / Redbourne Upper School
- Shefford Netball Club
- Cranfield Netball Club – Cranfield University

Consultation –England Netball

14.12 England Netball are the National Governing Body for the sport of netball. The Whole Sport Plan sets out the key aims and objectives of England Netball and these are as follows;

- Grow participation in the game by an average of 10,000 participants per annum
- Deliver a 1st Class Member and Participant experience
- Establish England as the number 1 team in the world by winning the World Netball Championships
- Lead an effective and progressive infrastructure enabling all involved in the netball experience to collaborate as one team aligned behind one dream.

14.13 These targets will be delivered through a series of initiatives seeking to retain and increase the number of players and to expand participation in different groups, including those in hard to reach areas. The provision of the right facilities in the right place is identified as being central to the achievement of these goals.

Bedfordshire County Netball Plan 2013 – 2017

14.14 The Bedfordshire County Netball Plan 2013 to 2017 sets out the current landscape and strengths and weaknesses for participation in netball across Bedfordshire as a whole.

14.15 It considers specifically;

- Equity and equality of access
- Current participation including school netball, club development and community netball
- Facility related issues
- Performance pathways and volunteering.

14.16 The document identifies several issues directly relating to facilities, specifically;

- Lack of quality indoor courts for Regional/National teams
- Lack of quality indoor courts for Performance/Academies

- Facilities predominately fully booked
- University facilities used by BUCs clubs currently no availability
- Lack of outdoor courts for the Luton League
- Lack of maintenance on school courts.

14.17 It highlights the presence of a strong central venue, as well as good relationships with facility providers as a key strength of netball in the county.

14.18 Other issues raised with regards the netball landscape in the county which might impact upon facility requirements in future years include;

- Concern about the varying participation in schools and the lack of participation in lower schools and urban areas in particular. Initiatives to increase this may generate further demand for facilities and clubs
- There are good competition structures across the county but a lack of clubs in urban areas. Club development is often inhibited by a lack of facilities. There is potential to develop satellite facilities on club sites, new clubs through links with the Back to Netball programme.

Adequacy of Provision

14.19 There are no tools for evaluating the adequacy of provision for netball and the spread of play in Bedfordshire countywide, as well as across indoor and outdoor facilities means that it is not possible to quantify demand within Central Bedfordshire.

14.20 Consultation with the Bedfordshire Netball Association, who are regularly in contact with all netball leagues and clubs in the area have the following views with regards the adequacy of provision and future need and aspirations;

- All leagues currently have access to appropriate facilities and there are not anticipated to be shortfalls in provision in the near future. All areas of Central Bedfordshire are adequately served by local leagues, with three leagues (in addition to regional and national competition) available in the county as a whole
- There is a strong network of clubs with good development pathways for players of all ages
- Clubs struggle more to access appropriate facilities for training – many sports halls are full and / or are expensive to hire
- There is a lack of participation in the Dunstable area – recent attempts to set up a club have had limited success
- Similarly, the introduction of Back to Netball Sessions in North Central Bedfordshire also had relatively little success. This was attributed to already good levels of participation and good access to the local league structure. The Back to Netball Scheme has however been implemented in other parts of Central Bedfordshire with more success, particularly in conjunction with the County Sports Partnership Back to programme.

14.21 With regards facilities, the key issues were highlighted as;

- Poor and deteriorating quality of courts at Redbourne Upper School – this facility serves several clubs for training and is also used as a central venue for netball activity by Bedfordshire Netball
- A lack of netball markings on facilities at Dunstable Leisure Centre – this means that the club must use All Saints Academy, where the cost is believed to impact upon interest in the session.

Key issues to address – Netball

- There is a strong network of participation in netball across Central Bedfordshire, linked with other local authorities in Bedfordshire. There are several affiliated and accredited clubs in the area offering strong development pathways. National increases in participation in netball are mirrored in the Bedfordshire area and participation remains strong.
- According to Active People, there is a relatively high amount of latent demand, generally found in the same market segments as existing participants. England Netball indicate that much of the lower levels of participation are focused in the urban areas and particularly in Dunstable, where the main gap in participation is considered to be. Despite this, all areas of CB are equitably served by local leagues.
- There are no tools for measuring the adequacy of facilities for netball however consultation with Bedfordshire Netball indicate that the network of facilities is currently adequate for local leagues, although there are some issues with access to appropriate training facilities for clubs. The nature of netball and the leagues that are run mean that competition generally takes place at central venues and some degree of travel is expected. Growth in participation may place further demand upon existing facilities, which are spread across Bedfordshire.

14.22 The above suggests that the key priorities for netball in Central Bedfordshire are as follows;

Ensuring that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand

- Ensure that there are sufficient appropriate venues for club based netball training
- Facilitate the requirement for any competitive netball venues longer term in the event of significant participation increases and the creation of new leagues

Ensure that facilities are of appropriate quality to meet the needs of users

- Maintain the quality of the existing facilities and improve the standard of those courts that are not sufficient to sustain appropriate levels of play

Promote increases in participation and the creation of sustainable clubs

- Support clubs to proactively increase participation and membership to maximise the sustainability of the sport
- Support initiatives designed to increase player retention and participation.

15. Site and Sport Specific Priorities

Strategic Priorities - Football

15.1 The assessment of pitches for football indicates that the key issues to address for football across Central Bedfordshire are as follows;

- Football participation is very high across Central Bedfordshire and in contrast to national trends, participation continues to grow.
- The majority of the existing pitch stock is formed from single / double pitch sites (the Central Bedfordshire average is 2 pitches) and pitches are distributed in settlements of all size. The quality of pitches is varying and key issues arising include drainage, changing and evenness of pitches.
- Club satisfaction is low and the majority of clubs attribute their dissatisfaction to the amount of pitches provided and there are also concerns about dispersion over numerous facilities and the quality of pitches.
- Modelling reveals that there are pressures on existing pitches. While overall there are enough adult pitches, surpluses in this type of pitch are offset by shortfalls of junior and mini pitches. There are particularly capacity issues and unmet demand in some settlements, while in others, the amount of pitches is more than sufficient to accommodate demand. A lot of the high demand is associated with the large clubs. The recent FA Youth Review, requiring 9 v 9 pitches as well as facilities of other sizes will further impact upon the demand for facilities.
- 40 schools currently allow use of their facilities by the local community – these play an essential role in ensuring that all clubs are able to play.
- Increases in the population will have major implications on demand for pitches and the adequacy of the pitch stock and will generate further shortfalls in some areas.
- 43% of clubs indicate that they struggle to access training facilities and a shortage of AGPs was highlighted as a key barrier to club development. Based upon the existing high participation levels, modelling reveals demand for several additional facilities.

The strategic priorities to respond to these issues and the area / site specific implications are therefore set out overleaf in Table 15.1

Table 15.1 Football - Strategic Priorities – Area Specific Requirements

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
<p>Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand (Protect)</p>	<p>Protect all current playing fields to ensure the longevity of the pitch stock across Central Bedfordshire (unless pitches are replaced with larger multi pitch sites). This should include former playing pitches, unless they are located in an area identified as having sufficient provision to meet current and future demand.</p> <p>All pitches (including former playing fields unless they are located in an area identified as having sufficient provision to meet current and future demand.</p> <p>In the short term, review the designation of pitches to address deficiencies in junior football and to accommodate the recent FA review of youth football. Ensure that as far as possible, all teams are playing on pitches of the correct size</p> <p>Review of all pitch requirements required by pitch providers following introduction of FA Youth Review Requirements</p> <p>Increase the amount of pitches available and support clubs to find home venues to ensure that they are not dispersed across multiple sites. This is likely to include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • securing of formal agreements for the use of school sites – ideally sites offering multiple pitches should be prioritised and consideration should be given to the provision of accessible changing / toilets for community teams • reinstating former playing pitches • new pitches (promote the creation of new multi pitch sites to support large clubs). This will free up other sites for the use of smaller clubs and single teams • the creation of new pitches linked with new developments, to offset the impact of the increase in population on the demand for playing pitch provision. There are particular pressures in areas of growth and new facilities will be required where there is evidence of need. Improvements to the quality of existing facilities should be required where there is already sufficient provision. 		

	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>Capacity to meet current demand. Population growth will however generate unmet demand in both Houghton Regis and Dunstable.</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eaton Bray • Totternhoe • Tilsworth • Leighton Buzzard (longer term depending upon closure of pitches following opening of Astral Park). 	<p>North</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amphill • Arlesey • Flitwick(proposed developments currently underway will address existing deficiencies) • Cranfield • Langford • Maulden • Potton • Shefford • Stotfold(proposed developments currently underway will address existing deficiencies)
	<p>Support football development and access to training facilities for football clubs through the provision of 3g pitches, particularly in the North and Central parts of Central Bedfordshire. 3g pitches (if provided to appropriate standards) can also be used for competitive fixtures and to reduce the requirement for grass pitches.</p>		
<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>North Houghton Regis (3g)</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>Totternhoe / Eaton Bray</p>	<p>North (up to 2 required)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toddington / Harlington area • Stotfold / Arlesey • Biggleswade 	

<p>Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all clubs have access to facilities of the appropriate specification by focusing on the improvement of both pitch quality and ancillary facilities. Qualitative improvements should be prioritised over quantity where there are already enough facilities. The following standards should be considered; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - investment to address basic quality issues at key sites to ensure NGB specifications and standards are met; - the provision of changing accommodation at all sites where adult football is played, and a minimum of toilet provision at junior and mini football sites; and • supporting clubs in the creation of facilities of higher specification where these are required for club progression. 		
	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>Dunstable Houghton Regis</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>Eaton Bray Leighton Buzzard Slip End</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Cranfield Biggleswade Harlington Lidlington Marston Shillington Northill Westoning</p>
<p>Support Club Development</p>	<p>Maintain the existing football forums to establish clear routes of communication with pitch users and providers ensuring that all decisions are taken with a full understanding of needs and aspiration</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place including evaluation of success of football forum.</p>		

	<p>Support the principles of asset transfer where this will result in positive club and football development outcomes</p> <p>To be evaluated on a club specific basis.</p>
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Strategic Priorities - Cricket

15.2 The assessment of cricket provision across Central Bedfordshire indicates that the key issues to address are as follows;

- Participation is increasing and almost all clubs have aspirations to grow further.
- Most community play takes place at public facilities. Facilities at school sites are largely artificial and in general are poor quality and insufficient for community use.
- The quality of first team cricket facilities is high, and the condition of the outfield and issues with drainage are perhaps the main concerns and several clubs also raise concerns with the quality of their pavilion. There are much lower levels of satisfaction with the overall stock of facilities however, with 50% of clubs suggesting that facilities inhibit club development and 40% of clubs suggesting that they are not happy with the stock of facilities. The quality of pitches for 3rd and 4th teams, as well as access to sufficient pitches are the main reasons attributed to this.
- Although there are enough pitches overall to meet current peak time demand, this disguises site specific pressures and almost all club bases are at capacity on both Saturday and Sunday afternoon. Most clubs with capacity are not located in close proximity to those clubs requiring additional pitches. Added to this, several clubs are using wickets above optimum levels (5 times per season) and for many, there are no artificial wicket or training nets, meaning that any practice must take place upon the grass square or off site.
- Population growth will generate increasing demand and unmet demand may rise to over 10 pitches.

The strategic priorities to respond to these issues and the area / site specific implications are therefore set out overleaf in Table 15.2

Table 15.2 - Cricket - Strategic Priorities – Area Specific Requirements

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
<p>Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand</p>	<p>C1 Reflecting the pressures on existing club bases across Central Bedfordshire, protect all existing cricket grounds through the inclusion of appropriate planning policy.</p> <p>Appropriate planning policy to be incorporated into emerging development strategy and other relevant documents</p> <p>C2: Ensure that the amount of cricket facilities available does not impact on the opportunities to grow participation in the sport. Many clubs are at or nearing capacity and there is a need to provide access to additional appropriate facilities. This should be sought by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ongoing development of relationships between larger and smaller clubs. This has already proved successful in Central Bedfordshire Council, with many larger clubs using facilities owned by smaller clubs; • the provision of a new satellite ground for clubs at capacity where this represents a sustainable option for growth. This may be either through new provision or the reinstatement of sites that have formerly been used for cricket; • the development of school club links and the establishment of a relationship between schools and cricket clubs. Facilities at school sites can then be used by the cricket club as the club expands. Note improvements to the quality of facilities are likely to also be required if this is to be successful; and • ensuring that the impact of the increasing population is taken into account when identifying facility requirements – there are particular pressures in areas of growth and new facilities will be required where there is evidence of need. Improvements to the quality of existing facilities should be required where there is already sufficient provision. <p>Any new facilities should be provided in conjunction with an existing club or in support of a new club that has</p>		

appropriate leadership and structures in place.		
<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>Additional provision required in Dunstable and Houghton Regis (1 pitch) to be delivered through either new facility or investment into school site. There was a former cricket pitch at Luton Road that may provide an opportunity to bring back into use</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>Areas where provision needs to be addressed are as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caddington CC currently at capacity (impacted by lack of training facilities too) C4 • Leighton Buzzard CC at capacity but use overspill ground. Facility at this site requires improvement (C3). No use of second facility currently, but may be required longer term 	<p>North</p> <p>Capacity issues in the following settlements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggleswade • Blunham • Ampthill • Flitwick <p>Potential to reinstate facilities at Houghton Conquest / Westoning to provide additional capacity but this should be considered in conjunction with clubs.</p> <p>No clear evidence of need for former facility at Shefford currently.</p>
<p>C3: Address quality issues raised and ensure that both cricket grounds and pavilions are up to appropriate standards. This should include overspill facilities as well as first team grounds.</p> <p>Key areas for improvement relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grounds maintenance skills • changing pavilions • surface • drainage 		
<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>Dunstable Cricket Club</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>Page Park / Mentmore Gardens</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Biggleswade CC</p> <p>Sandy CC</p> <p>Wrest Park (Silsoe)</p>

			<p>Lidlington CC Henlow CC Milton Bryan CC Steppingley CC Aspley Guise</p>
<p>Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements</p>	<p>C4: To ensure that pitches can accommodate the level of play that they are required to currently, as well as to Support cricket clubs in the development of training nets to enhance club sustainability and improve overall performance as well as to remove pressure on grass wickets. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an indoor cricket venue • the provision of outdoor cricket nets at larger clubs that do not currently have access to such facilities 		
<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis Houghton Regis (no nets or artificial wicket)</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Caddington (no nets or artificial wicket) Eaton Bray Eggington Studham</p>	<p>North Biggleswade (no nets or artificial wicket) Harlington (no nets or artificial wicket) Lidlington (no nets or artificial wicket) Ampthill Flitwick Henlow</p>	

<p>Support Club Development</p>	<p>C5: Support long term sustainability of clubs by promoting succession planning, for example in groundsmanship. Both providers (including Town and Parish Councils) and clubs should be supported in gaining key skills.</p> <p>Initiatives to be developed to achieve these objectives</p> <p>C6: Support initiatives to increase cricket participation including the introduction of new forms of the game, which may require the provision of flexible spaces</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</p>
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Strategic Priorities - Rugby

15.3 The assessment of rugby provision across Central Bedfordshire indicates that the key issues to address are as follows;

- Participation in rugby is relatively strong in Central Bedfordshire and there are four clubs, all of which offer full transition between midi, junior and senior rugby, offering clear player pathways.
- The majority of pitches in the Central Bedfordshire are at school sites and there is limited if any use of these by the clubs currently. Club sites are important for the growth and development of rugby clubs and all clubs are approaching capacity and training facilities are poor. Added to this, there are some quality issues that need to be addressed
- Population growth is likely to generate an increase in participation and some clubs also have aspirations to increase their membership, in all likelihood generating further pressures on the existing facility stock. Pitch capacity at club bases will become particularly strained by 2022 if club development aspirations are realised. In this instance, access to school pitches and / or the creation of new pitches at club bases or as a satellite pitch may become increasingly important.

The strategic priorities to respond to these issues and the area / site specific implications are therefore set out overleaf in Table 15.3.

Table 15.3 - Rugby - Strategic Priorities – Area Specific Requirements

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
<p>Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand</p>	<p>R1: Monitor club growth over strategy period. Additional facilities will be required for clubs if participation increases significantly over and above levels that are generated by growth in population. Notably, the impact of training on pitches is significant and this could be addressed through the provision of a 3g training pitch which would reduce the impact of use on grass pitches. Any new provision should be in conjunction with existing or new clubs rather than provided ad hoc on new sites.</p> <p>Amount of pitches currently sufficient. Population growth and increase in participation likely to generate requirement for new pitch. To be delivered either through;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New pitch at club base or satellite facility • Conversion of grass pitch to AGP to increase capacity • Use of school facility by club (may require qualitative improvements) – Queensbury Academy) 	<p>Amount of pitches currently sufficient. Population growth and increase in participation may generate requirement for new pitch longer term. To be delivered either through;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New pitch at club base or satellite facility • Conversion of grass pitch to AGP to increase capacity • Use of school facility by club (may require qualitative improvements) – Cedars Upper School / Vandyke School 	<p>Amount of pitches currently sufficient. Population growth and increase in participation may generate requirement for new pitch longer term. To be delivered either through;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New pitch at club base or satellite facility • Conversion of grass pitch to AGP to increase capacity <p>Use of school facility by club (may require qualitative improvements) – Stratton Upper School / Redborne Upper School</p>
	<p>R2: Monitor demand for rugby league provision over the strategy period.</p>		
<p>Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</p>			

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
<p>Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements</p>	<p>R3: To ensure that pitches can accommodate the level of play that they are required to currently, as well as to meet the needs of additional teams in future years, maintain and improve the quality of existing facilities by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addressing maintenance issues identified through RFU ground surveys; • improving and expanding social facilities and pavilions; and • the provision of training floodlights – these should be located to enable rotation and use of different parts of the pitches to ensure that additional wear and tear is dispersed 	<p>Leighton Buzzard RUFC – require additional training floodlights. Quality improvements should be prioritised over additional capacity in the short term.</p>	<p>Biggleswade RUFC – improvements to clubhouse</p> <p>Amphill RUFC – improvements to clubhouse</p> <p>Quality improvements should be prioritised over existing capacity in the short term.</p>
<p>Support Club Development</p>	<p>R4: Support aspirations to increase participation in rugby across Central Bedfordshire Council and manage the impact of these aspirations on facility development.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</p> <p>R5: Support initiatives to increase rugby participation including the introduction of new forms of the game, which may require the provision of flexible spaces.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</p>		

Strategic Priorities - Hockey

15.4 The assessment of hockey across Central Bedfordshire indicates that the key issues to address are as follows;

- There are two hockey clubs in Central Bedfordshire. Analysis of participation trends demonstrate evidence of significant recent expansion. Despite this, the current and potential playing profile of the area is relatively limited, with hockey likely to attract less than 1% of residents of Central Bedfordshire, even when taking into account latent demand
- Both hockey clubs are dissatisfied with the current levels of provision in Central Bedfordshire. There are concerns about both access to changing and social facilities, with neither club having a dedicated on site clubhouse, as well as issues with access to facilities for training and matches. Both clubs highlight challenges of competing demands with football.
- Analysis of use of the facilities at a peak time confirms that there are enough pitches overall to accommodate demand within Central Bedfordshire, however this is skewed by the presence of the pitch at Dunstable Leisure Centre, which is not currently used at all for hockey although it has a sand based surface. It is not located appropriately to function as an overspill facility for either of the two existing hockey clubs. While overall there are sufficient pitches, both clubs are at / nearing capacity at their club bases, meaning that access to overspill facilities is essential if levels of activity are to be maintained.
- While population growth alone will have limited impact, schemes designed to increase participation in hockey may generate demand for further facilities in the longer term. These include Back to Hockey and Rush Hockey, both of which are currently being trialled at Flitwick Leisure Centre.

The strategic priorities to respond to these issues and the area / site specific implications are therefore set out overleaf in Table 15.4

Table 15.4 - Hockey - Strategic Priorities – Area Specific Requirements

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand	<p>H1: To support hockey development, ensure that the surfaces currently used for hockey are retained as sand based pitches.</p>		
	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis No facilities required for hockey</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Pitches at Van Dyke School should remain sand based surface</p>	<p>North Sandy Sports Centre should remain sand based surface</p>
	<p>H2: Monitor club activity and support the provision of additional sand based facilities (linked with the clubs) if significant participation increases occur and / or if issues are identified with pitches used outside of Central Bedfordshire.</p> <p>New provision likely to be required within reasonable distance of club base to support existing club structures.</p> <p>H3: Ensure priority access for hockey clubs at sand based facilities</p>		
	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis No facilities required for hockey</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Van Dyke School</p>	<p>North Sandy Sports Centre</p>
<p>H4: Ensure that the impact of housing growth is taken into account and that contributions towards hockey are required</p> <p>The two hockey clubs will both be impacted upon by population growth and will serve residents across Central Bedfordshire</p>			

<p>Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements</p>	<p>H5: Support aspirations for the provision of on site club houses and changing accommodation to facilitate club development. There may be opportunities to share this with other sports as part of the process of securing formal use of school sites to address quantitative deficiencies</p>		
<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>No facilities required for hockey</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>Pavilion / clubhouse at Van Dyke School</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Pavilion / clubhouse at Sandy Sports Centre</p>	
	<p>H6: Maintain the quality of existing sand based AGPs, ensuring that facilities are refurbished every 10 years</p>		
<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>No facilities required for hockey</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>Van Dyke School</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Sandy Sports Centre</p>	
<p>Support Club Development</p>	<p>H7: Support the introduction of new forms of hockey through the provision of appropriate facilities for the new form of the game</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</p>		

Strategic Priorities - Bowls

15.5 The assessment of bowls across Central Bedfordshire indicates that the key issues to address for bowls are;

- Analysis of the capacity of existing bowling greens suggests that all clubs are able to accommodate additional members, and there is scope to accommodate more teams on most greens. Adding to this, there is no evidence of growth in bowls with all responding clubs indicating that participation is static despite efforts to attract new players.
- Almost all clubs are satisfied with the quality of existing greens and this was also reinforced through site visits, which reveal that facilities are well maintained and all greens are in good condition. Just three clubs identify site specific issues requiring improvement and only two clubs are not happy with the overall stock of facilities (attributing this to the number of greens of the right quality).
- The average membership of bowls clubs in Central Bedfordshire is 69, representing a rate of 2.3% of residents over the age of 60. In contrast to pitch sports, the ageing population may see bowls become more popular in future years. This growth alone could generate additional 435 bowls players, meaning that clubs would have on average 92 members and supply would be much more closely matched with demand. Sport England Active people surveys however suggest that current demand is higher and also highlight the potential to increase participation, potentially up to 4%. If these targets were to be achieved, added to the anticipated impact of participation increases, the current stock of bowling greens would become insufficient.
- The changing population profile and the propensity of the older age groups to play bowls means that there is a significant opportunity to promote the sport. While overall provision is currently sufficient, regardless of current capacity, it should be noted that residents expect these facilities to be local to their home (on average, 55% of members are within 1 mile of their club) and many residents are outside of this distance to a current facility.

The key strategic priorities and area specific implications for bowls are therefore set out in Table 15.5.

Table 15.5 Strategic Priorities and Site Specific Implications – Outdoor Bowls

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North	
<p>Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand</p>	<p>BG1: Protect all current bowling greens</p> <p>All bowling greens. Consideration should be given to the future of Potton Bowling Green, a valuable site which may be at risk in the longer term.</p> <p>BG2: New bowling greens are not required to meet current (or future) demand unless expressed demand is identified in an area further than 1 mile from an existing bowling green. New provision should be demand rather than supply led and facilities should only be developed where demand has already been identified. Instead, improvements to existing bowling greens should be prioritised</p> <p>New participants and residents of new development should be channelled towards existing bowling clubs until it becomes clear that an existing facility is over capacity and / or there is significant expressed demand for a new facility in an area currently outside of the catchment of a facility.</p> <p>BG3: Monitor the impact of attempts to increase participation as well as population growth on club membership.</p>			
	<p>Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</p>			
	<p>Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements</p>	<p>BG4: Seek to maintain the quality of facilities and where issues are identified, improve the quality and consistency of bowling greens</p>	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>No facilities required for hockey</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Biggleswade St Andrews Bowls</p>
		<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>No facilities required for hockey</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>Leighton Buzzard Bowls Club</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Biggleswade St Andrews Bowls</p>

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
			Club
Support Club Development	<p>BG5: Support clubs to proactively increase participation and membership. To maximise the sustainability of bowls as a sport, efforts should focus on recruitment of junior players as well as adult and veterans.</p>		
	<p>Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</p>		

Strategic Priorities - Tennis

15.6 The assessment of tennis across Central Bedfordshire indicates that the key issues to address for tennis are;

- The stock of tennis courts is well spread across Central Bedfordshire, with more than half of all courts in the major service centres. Most residents in larger settlements have access to at least one tennis court within a five mile radius. Provision in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis placemaking area is however much lower than in other parts of Central Bedfordshire.
- Tennis offers a significant opportunity to increase overall participation in sport and physical activity in Central Bedfordshire – the sport has a wider participation base and there are high levels of latent demand
- there are sufficient courts at all clubs to meet the needs of current membership and only three clubs are approaching capacity. While club membership does not account for casual play, the current club membership figures suggest that the Active People survey perhaps overestimates demand slightly and provides an indication of the upper echelons of potential demand.
- Population growth alone could be accommodated within existing club structures (where there is capacity for up to 1000 more members) although some clubs are approaching capacity and may require additional courts if growth is focused in their area. Significant participation increases would however require more wholesale increases in provision
- there are concerns about the quality of courts (particularly at public facilities) but also at several club sites and the overall quality is the most varying of all types of outdoor sport. Several clubs believe that the quality issues at both club and public facilities will inhibit the overall development of tennis in both the short and long term.

The strategic priorities to respond to these issues and the area / site specific implications are therefore set out overleaf in Table 15.6

Table 15.6 Strategic Priorities and Site Specific Implications – Tennis

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand	<p>T1: Support the provision of new facilities at clubs where specific need can be identified at clubs, taking into account the capacity and quality of existing facilities. In the first instance, additional capacity should be created by adding floodlights to courts. Longer term and following population growth, new courts may be required at some clubs.</p>	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>n/a</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Barton le Clay TC</p> <p>Langford TC</p>
	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>n/a</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>Studham TC</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Barton le Clay TC</p> <p>Langford TC</p>
Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements	<p>T2: Where there is expressed demand for tennis in areas not currently within a 5 mile catchment, to maximise the use of resources, support additional demand for tennis through a partnership approach with schools where this is possible. Demand for pay and play tennis should be considered in line with the Beacon Tennis Scheme, established by the LTA. Existing tennis courts in large public settlements should also be retained. Existing public tennis courts in large settlements should also be retained, unless appropriate pay and play opportunities can be organised through club bases or schools</p>	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p>	<p>North</p>
	<p>T3: Address quality issues identified at club sites prioritising areas where club development is limited by quality constraints, specifically</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floodlighting (linked with increasing capacity above) • Covering existing courts (linked with increasing capacity above) • Surfacing 	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p>	<p>North</p>

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pavilion / Changing. 		
	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>Linslade TC Studham TC (Impacting upon capacity) Eaton Bray TC Slip End Tilsworth Billington</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Langford (impacting upon capacity) Barton le Clay (impacting upon capacity) Potton Westoning</p>
Support Club Development	<p>T4: Support the development of new forms of tennis in order to increase participation. This might include mini tennis, which provides the use of more flexible spaces.</p>		
	<p>Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</p>		

Strategic Priorities - Athletics

15.7 The assessment identifies the key issues for athletics as:

- There is only one athletics track in Central Bedfordshire at Sandy Sports and Community Centre.
- There are four athletics clubs in Central Bedfordshire. While Biggleswade Athletics Club is based at Sandy Sports Centre, the remainder are road running and cross country clubs. Only Biggleswade AC therefore uses a formal athletics track regularly.

Sport England's Active Places data suggests that the amount of facilities in Central Bedfordshire is poor compared with the average. Supporting this, analysis indicates that with the existence of only one track in the district and despite other tracks nearby, accessibility for local residents is poor, with over a third living outside a 20 minute driving catchment. Accessibility is skewed to the east, with parts of Central Bedfordshire in the west outside of the catchment to a track. Accessibility is best in Sandy (the location of the current track) but in general, residents in the North placemaking area are closer to athletics facilities than in the south. Poorest accessibility is in Leighton Buzzard and the Rural South.

- Despite these deficiencies, current activity levels do not provide clear evidence of a requirement for a new athletics track in Central Bedfordshire (as most activity is in the form of road running).

There is however clear evidence of demand for a new facility in Leighton Buzzard, an area which has previously had a track and the area of Central Bedfordshire that is least well served for facilities. Leighton Buzzard Athletic Club indicate that there is a clear need for facilities in the area and that club development is inhibited without the creation of a track. Recognising that the creation of a track is a longer term project, the club also highlight an immediate priority of the provision of a clubhouse, floodlit outdoor training area and storage facility.

The area specific priorities for athletics are therefore set out overleaf in Table 15.7.

Table 15.7 - Strategic Priorities and Site Specific Implications – Athletics

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand	A1: Support ongoing athletics participation through the protection of the existing athletics track used by Biggleswade AC		
	Dunstable and Houghton Regis n/a	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North Sandy Sports and Community Centre
	A2: Ensure that appropriate changing and meeting facilities are available for road running clubs		
	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
Ensure Pitch Quality	A3: Support sustainable solutions to provide new facilities for athletics in Leighton Buzzard.		
	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Sustainable athletics facility	North
	A4: Ensure that appropriate changing and meeting facilities are available for road running clubs		

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
Meets Requirements	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>Dunstable</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre (or alternative venue)</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Flitwick Leisure Centre / Redborne School</p> <p>Sandy Sports and Community Centre</p>
Support Club Development	A5: Maintain the quality of the existing track		
	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>n/a</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>n/a</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Sandy Sports and Community Centre</p>
	A6: Support clubs to proactively increase participation and membership to maximise the sustainability of the sport.		
Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary			

Strategic Priorities - Netball

15.8 The assessment identifies the key issues for netball as:

- There is a strong network of participation in netball across Central Bedfordshire, linked with other local authorities in Bedfordshire. There are several affiliated and accredited clubs in the area offering strong development pathways. National increases in participation in netball are mirrored in the Bedfordshire area and participation remains strong.
- England Netball indicate that much of the lower levels of participation are focused in the urban areas and particularly in Dunstable, where the main gap in participation is considered to be. Despite this, all areas of Central Bedfordshire are equitably served by local leagues.
- Bedfordshire Netball indicate that the network of facilities is currently adequate for local leagues, although there are some issues with access to appropriate training facilities for clubs. The nature of netball and the leagues that are run mean that competition generally takes place at central venues and some degree of travel is expected. Growth in participation may place further demand upon existing facilities, which are spread across Bedfordshire.

The strategic priorities to address the key issues identified are therefore set out overleaf in Table 15.8

Table 15. 8 - Strategic Priorities and Site Specific Implications – Netball

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
<p>Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand</p> <p>Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements</p>	<p>N1: Ensure that there are sufficient appropriate venues for club based netball training</p> <p>No priorities at current time. Dunstable Leisure Centre may provide an opportunity to accommodate demand for training if aspirations to develop a club are achieved. This site is not currently marked out for netball (indoor or out)</p> <p>N2: Facilitate the requirement for any competitive netball venues longer term in the event of significant participation increases and the creation of new leagues</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</p> <p>N3: Maintain the quality of the existing facilities and improve the standard of those courts that are not sufficient to sustain appropriate levels of play</p>		
	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>Dunstable Leisure Centre</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>n/a</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Stratton Upper School</p>
	<p>Support Club Development</p>	<p>N4: Support clubs to proactively increase participation and membership to maximise the sustainability of the sport</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary</p> <p>N5: Support initiatives designed to increase player retention and participation.</p>	

Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary	
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Tables in the previous pages have served to highlight the priority areas for new and improved provision by sport. Table 15.9 provides a brief summary of areas where action is required, bringing together the findings for all sports.

Table 15.9 – Key Priority Summary

	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
New Pitch Provision	<p>Football</p> <p>Capacity to meet current demand. Population growth will however generate unmet demand in both Houghton Regis and Dunstable.</p> <p>3g AGP North Houghton Regis</p> <p>Cricket</p> <p>Dunstable / Houghton Regis</p> <p>Rugby</p> <p>Dunstable RUFC (increased capacity)</p>	<p>Football</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eaton Bray • Totternhoe • Tilsworth • Leighton Buzzard (longer term depending upon closure of pitches following opening of Astral Park). <p>3g AGP</p> <p>Totternhoe / Eaton Bray</p> <p>Cricket</p> <p>Caddington</p> <p>Rugby</p> <p>n/a</p>	<p>Football</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amphthill • Arlesey • Flitwick (proposed developments currently underway will address existing deficiencies) • Cranfield • Langford • Maulden • Potton • Shefford • Stotfold (proposed developments currently underway will address existing deficiencies) <p>3g AGP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toddington / Harrington area • Stotfold / Arlesey • Biggleswade <p>Cricket</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggleswade

	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
<p>Quality Improvements</p>	<p>Football</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dunstable • Houghton Regis <p>Cricket</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dunstable <p>Rugby</p> <p>n/a</p> <p>Athletics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dunstable 	<p>Tennis</p> <p>Studham TC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blunham • Ampthill • Flitwick <p>Rugby</p> <p>n/a</p> <p>Tennis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barton le Clay TC • Langford TC
	<p>Football</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eaton Bray • Leighton Buzzard • Slip End <p>Cricket</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leighton Buzzard <p>Rugby</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leighton Buzzard RUFC (floodlights) <p>Hockey</p> <p>Van Dyke School</p> <p>Bowls</p>		<p>Football</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cranfield • Biggleswade • Harlington • Lidlington • Marston • Shillington • Northill • Westoning <p>Cricket</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggleswade • Sandy • Silsoe • Lidlington • Henlow

	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
		<p>Leighton Buzzard Bowls Club</p> <p>Tennis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linslade TC • Studham TC (Impacting upon capacity) • Eaton Bray TC • Slip End • Tilsworth • Billington <p>Athletics</p> <p>Leighton Buzzard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milton Bryan • Steppingley Aspley Guise <p>Rugby</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amphill RUFC • Biggleswade RUFC <p>Hockey</p> <p>Sandy Sports Centre</p> <p>Bowls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggleswade St Andrews <p>Tennis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Langford (impacting upon capacity) • Barton le Clay (impacting upon capacity) • Pottton • Westoning <p>Athletics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandy • Biggleswade <p>Netball</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggleswade

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