

Appendix **A**

Central Bedfordshire Council

**Leisure Strategy
Summary Document**

Comprising:

Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy

Chapter 2: Recreation & Open Space Strategy

Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy



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1. Introduction and Background

The Context

Sport England is the government agency responsible for building the foundations of sporting success, by creating a world-leading community sport system of clubs, coaches, facilities and volunteers.

Sport England is focused on helping people and communities across the country create a sporting habit for life, its priorities are set out in the 2012-17 Strategy – *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life*. In order to achieve its goals Sport England works in partnership with other key agencies in the national sports structure, including local authorities, schools, national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) and County Sports Partnerships (CSPs). The key central aim of all partners is to increase participation in sport.

The health benefits of sport are central to this focus. Many of the leading causes of ill health in today's society such as coronary heart disease, cancer and type two diabetes could be prevented if people were to play more sport and increase their overall levels of physical activity and sport.

In July 2011 the Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales launched *Start Active, Stay Active*, a joint report on physical activity, which included guidelines for participation across the life course. These guidelines provide recommendations on the levels of physical activity needed to provide population level changes in health. Sport is a key part of wider physical activity and can make a valuable contribution to the CMO guidelines.

Sport therefore clearly has an important role to play in getting and keeping people active and thereby improving their health and wellbeing. Professor Dame Sally Davies (the Chief Medical Officer for England) said that, *'If physical activity was a drug it would be regarded as a miracle.'*

Sport and recreation therefore plays a fundamental part in peoples' lives and the provision of the *right facilities in the right place* is in turn central to this.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the government's planning policy, recognises the clear link between sport and health. 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.

Improving health, social and cultural well-being is one of its twelve core principles. Paragraph 171 places health considerations and by extension participation in sport, as a key consideration in the planning process, it states:

'Local planning authorities should work with public health leads and health organisations to understand and take account of the health status and needs of the local population (such as for sports, recreation and places of worship), including expected future changes, and any information about relevant barriers to improving health and well-being.'

Meeting the needs of local communities through the provision of accessible, high quality facilities which provide opportunities to participate in sport is therefore a critical part of good planning. The efficient and effective delivery of sports facilities depends on understanding the nature of current provision and assessing what will be required in the future by taking account of demographic and sports participation changes and trends.

The NPPF makes this clear in paragraph 73, which 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 assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.'

Paragraph 69 of the NPPF also references the importance of providing high quality open space as part of new development.

Sport England therefore aims to ensure *'positive planning for sport to increase participation and maximise the health benefits, enabling the right facilities to be provided in the right places, based on robust and up-to-date assessments of need for all levels of sport and all sectors of the community.'*

The local facility network in any area is varied and the need to understand the nature of provision and demand in a locality reflects the often highly variable type, quality and accessibility of facilities. Understanding the character of local provision in turn works through to the preparation and application of policy and the setting of priorities which need to be justified by evidence. Equally, in light of increasing pressure on resources, it is vital that the collection, analysis and application of evidence is carried out efficiently, serves multiple purposes where possible, and in so doing demonstrably adds value to delivering corporate aspirations and priorities.

The local authority however remains at the centre of the local facility network as the sport and planning authority. From a local authority perspective the need to work with partners across the public, private, education and voluntary sector to plan sports facility provision is central to the NPPF.

Central Bedfordshire Council has a vision to be, *'a great place to live and work.'* In order to achieve this the Council has 6 key drivers:

- Great prospects
- Great value
- Great services
- Great communities
- Great journeys
- Great lifestyles

In terms of Great Lifestyles the Council is committed to *'improving health, well being and independence.'*

The Council is committed to strategic planning for sport, recreation and open space in line with national policy guidelines and the Leisure Strategy reflects the approach set out. Moreover the Leisure Strategy links the Council's corporate objectives and

the authorities commitment to improving health, well being and independence in its new public health role by ensuring in planning delivery terms Central Bedfordshire has leisure facility and open space provision that will drive sports participation and lead to improved health outcomes for all residents.

The Leisure Strategy for Central Bedfordshire

The mix of urban and rural settlements combined with the historical differences in approach to leisure provision has resulted in a diversity of leisure provision within Central Bedfordshire. Central Bedfordshire Council has sought the creation of a leisure strategy in order to adopt a holistic approach to the provision of sport, leisure and recreational open space facilities across the Council's area.

The aim of the project is to assess current facilities and services, estimate future demand and thereby create a strategy which will assist the authority to deliver and facilitate good quality, sustainable, demand-led facilities and services.

Central Bedfordshire Council appointed Neil Allen Associates to produce four of the five chapters that comprise the Leisure Strategy. Chapter 4, the Physical Activity Strategy has been produced in-house. The Leisure Strategy 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

As set out in the context, in accordance with Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), each chapter of the Leisure Strategy will assess the current provision of identified leisure facilities and opportunities across Central Bedfordshire in 2012/13, and further evaluate the respective leisure requirements which result from the planned growth in Central Bedfordshire's population up to 2031.

The purpose of the Leisure Strategy is to support the securing of new and improved facility provision, identify needs and priorities, address inequalities of provision, inform investment strategies of the Council and other bodies, provide a basis for management reviews and ensure that residents of Central Bedfordshire have access to good quality leisure and recreation facilities which enable them to be physically active.

Planning Status

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 as a material consideration for planning applications.

The Leisure Strategy relates to Policy 22 Leisure and Open Space Provision of the pre submission Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire 2013, which identifies general requirements for recreation and leisure provision. On adoption of the Development Strategy the Council will look to formally adopt the Leisure Strategy

Chapters as a Supplementary Planning document which will attract more weight in decisions reached on planning applications.

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

Timetable

Technical Guidance Adoption

The timetable for the approval and adoption of the Leisure Strategy Chapters is:

- January 2013 - the Council's Executive Committee adopted Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy as the leisure facilities strategy for Central Bedfordshire
- January 2014 – the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider the final draft of Chapters 1, 2 and 3, amended following formal consultation
- March 2014 – the Council's Executive Committee will consider adoption of the final Chapters 1, 2 and 3, as Technical Guidance to inform the Development Strategy

Consultation

A communications plan for the Leisure Strategy was prepared which defined the opportunities when a variety of stakeholders would be updated and consulted on the progress of each chapter. The consultation is detailed in the communications plan and consultation statement. At each stage consultation responses have been incorporated in the development of the respective chapters.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Leisure Strategy

Purpose and Functions of the Leisure Strategy

The primary purpose and function of the Leisure Strategy is as a Planning policy document providing the evidence base and policy standards to secure new or improved indoor and outdoor sporting facilities and recreational open space provision as a result of new housing development.

The Strategy provides the evidence base and justification for seeking either new facilities which are to be provided within a new housing development site, or developer contributions secured to provide / improve off-site facilities which are required to mitigate the additional demand placed upon them by the increased population.

The facility requirements identified in the Strategy are not intended to be provided or funded directly by Central Bedfordshire Council, with the exception of the approved capital projects for the major public leisure centres within Central Bedfordshire Council's ownership. The majority of other indoor and outdoor sporting facilities and recreational open spaces are not owned or managed by Central Bedfordshire Council, consequently the responsibility for delivery of the identified needs remains with the facility owners.

Central Bedfordshire Council's role in the delivery of facilities is primarily via the creation and application of Planning policy from which it will secure new or improved facilities or developer contributions from new development in line with the requirements set out in the Strategy chapters.

Where Central Bedfordshire Council directly owns facilities, such as the major public leisure centres, the Strategy will be used to guide its future investment priorities. Additionally, Central Bedfordshire Council will provide facility owners with guidance on external funding sources and will facilitate / advise, where appropriate, the improvement / creation projects of those facility providers.

The facility assessment and identification of need in the Strategy can also be used by facility providers such as town and parish councils, sports clubs, countryside organizations, etc. as evidence to assist them in securing external funding to improve/deliver the facilities within their ownership.

In developing the action plan to accompany each chapter, 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 resulting from new development and the release of S106 / CIL funds.

Key Drivers

The strategic purpose of the four chapters which comprise the Leisure Strategy is to provide a framework for the prioritisation, provision and development of sport and recreation facilities and opportunities in Central Bedfordshire in line with the NPPF. By highlighting deficiencies in facility provision and opportunities for improvement, it will set the context for decisions about the priority and delivery of local provision up to 2031.

The key drivers supporting the development of the Leisure Strategy for Central Bedfordshire as set out in the context are:

- To create a robust evidence base on which to base planning policy/standards
- To identify appropriate locations for new/improved leisure provision to target need
- To secure appropriate leisure facilities & S106/CIL contributions, to accompany new development
- To inform Central Bedfordshire Council's capital expenditure on new/improved facilities within its ownership
- To support Central Bedfordshire Council's responsibility for public health from April 2013 by ensuring sustainable, high quality sport and physical activity infrastructure and opportunities are provided to enable Central Bedfordshire residents to live active lives, prevent ill health, improve overall health & wellbeing, and reduce care costs
- To ensure the number of adults taking part in sport and physical activity remains above the national average

The vision for the Leisure Strategy is:

'plan and provide a network of high quality, accessible and affordable 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'

Principle Objectives of this Guidance

The Leisure Strategy Technical Guidance will identify the Council's requirements for sport, leisure and recreational open space provision. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 comprise the needs and evidence assessments and policy standards for their respective facilities, and provide the standards used to calculate requirements. It provide guidance for landowners, developers and applicants to determine provision requirements and will be used a material consideration in determining planning applications prior to the Development Strategy being adopted. It will also develop guidance on financial contributions from developers linked to the provision of leisure and recreational open space facilities.

Composition and Scope of the Leisure Strategy

In order to appropriately research and address the range of facilities which comprise the Leisure Strategy, it has been divided into four chapters, comprising three facility-based chapters which examine a range of indoor, built facilities, open spaces and outdoor playing pitches; and a fourth chapter which seeks to marry the facilities currently available, and those identified as being required, with the types of physical activities needed to support Central Bedfordshire's residents in pursuing healthy, active lifestyles.

The scope for each chapter of the Leisure Strategy is detailed within the respective Audit and Assessment Reports. The following summarises the scope for each chapter:

- Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy – built, indoor sport and leisure facilities
- Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy – a range of open spaces (excluding sports pitches)
- Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy – outdoor sports playing pitches and courts
- Chapter 4: Physical Activity Strategy – a range of sports and recreation activities undertaken indoors and outdoors
- Overarching Leisure Strategy – provides a strategic overview of the Leisure Strategy, its linkages and strategic purpose.

The facilities which comprise the scope for each chapter have been included because they represent facilities which are widely available and accessible to all members of the public, and which residents expect to be available locally. Specialist facilities or those catering for elite athletes have been excluded from the strategy due to the limited number of people they cater for.

3. Leisure Strategy Development

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy have been prepared by Neil Allen Associates with the detailed participation of Central Bedfordshire Council officers and members. Chapter 4 has been prepared in-house by the Council's Physical Activity Team with input from a range of internal and external partners. These stages reflect the approaches set out by Sport England in its new Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance (ANOG).

Stages of Strategy Development

The following stages of development are applicable to each of the four chapters of the Leisure Strategy.

Stage 1 Audit & Assessment: Using the relevant methodology and research tools for each chapter, facility evidence was gathered using existing data sources and new research. Population growth and housing growth forecasts have been used together with other socio economic and demographic data (from Sport England's Local Authority profiles) to assess the potential impacts of growth on each of the facilities included. Facility inspections and stakeholder feedback were then combined with the audit evidence to detail both the current and future provision required to meet the sport and recreation needs of Central Bedfordshire residents now, and to 2031.

Evidence Gathering and Consultation: 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 were invited to comment on current and future leisure requirements at opportunities set out in the Leisure Strategy Communications Plan.

Stage 2 Issues & Options: This stage identified the key findings arising from the audit and assessment of each chapter and highlighted the main issues affecting provision now and in the future. These key issues were presented for consultation with a range of options to address the issues.

Stage 3 Strategy: The preferred options were identified and developed into policies on provision standards and future facility requirements.

Technical Guidance Adoption: Chapters 1, 2 and 3 have undergone the formal consultation required for SPD adoption, however, until the Development Strategy is adopted, they will be adopted as Technical Guidance and will attract some weight in decisions reached on planning applications.

Stage 4 Action Plans: Action plans will be prepared to accompany each chapter, detailing the delivery of the facility requirements identified.



Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy

Scope: The scope of Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy encompasses indoor, built sports facilities which are available to the wider community (listed below). Specialist sports facilities which cater for regional or national level sport are outside the scope of this report, but Central Bedfordshire's role in facilitating such facilities is considered where they can be accommodated within the other proposals in this report.

- Swimming Pools
- Health and Fitness (gyms)
- Sport Halls
- Bowls
- Tennis
- Squash courts

To capture the sport and recreation facilities and opportunities offered in the village and community halls in Central Bedfordshire, a separate study was carried out, and the results will inform the Chapter 1 Leisure Facilities Strategy. Chapter 4: the Physical Activity Strategy assessment utilised this information to help signpost residents to current activities and to develop its emerging programme of new activities.

Methodology: Chapter 1 was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Working closely with Sport England, the audit and assessment process utilised the most up to date facility database to establish the adequacy of current facilities and to model and test the requirements of the future population.

Stage 1 Audit & Assessment: Sport England's strategic planning tools, which are listed below and detailed in Chapter 1, have been used to audit and assess the supply, usage and demand for existing facilities in Central Bedfordshire now, and in combination with population growth estimates, the tools have been used to forecast future facility requirements.

Sport England's strategic planning tools for sport:

- Active Places Power (APP)
- Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC)
- Facilities Planning Model (FPM)

Stage 2 Issues & Options: The key issues affecting the current and future provision of indoor leisure facilities was identified together with options for addressing those issues.

Stage 3 Strategy: The future facility requirements were identified and prioritised.

Stage 4 Technical Guidance Adoption: Chapters 1, 2 and 3 will be adopted as Technical Guidance.

Stage 5 Action Plan: As Central Bedfordshire Council owns and manages the major indoor leisure facilities in the area, the action plan is being prepared in conjunction with the Council's capital programme. It will also identify funding gaps which may be addressed by Section 106 or CIL developer contributions or external funding.

Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy

Scope: The scope of Chapter 2: the Recreation and Open Space Strategy encompasses facilities within nine different typologies of open space. These typologies are based upon those set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) typologies, but have been specifically developed for Central Bedfordshire to incorporate the types of open space that are available in the area and the functions that these spaces have.

The typologies assessed in Chapter 2 are:

- Countryside Recreation Sites
- Urban Parks
- Large Formal Recreational Areas
- Informal Recreation Spaces
- Small Amenity Spaces (e.g. small piece of green space for informal recreation use / landscaped value)
- Children's Play Spaces
- Facilities for Young People
- Allotments
- Cemeteries – the assessment of current provision and future demand has been included in Chapter 2, however, future strategy will be developed through other Council Planning policy documents.

Methodology: Chapter 2 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. 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

The methodology for this assessment has built upon the above principles and has been tailored to the character and nature of Central Bedfordshire. The resulting assessment and strategy will:

- identify and report the views of residents and key stakeholders in relation to open space in Central Bedfordshire
- outline the current provision of each type of open space in Central Bedfordshire
- set local standards for the provision of open space
- report the implications of the local standards across Central Bedfordshire
- outline 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

Stage 1 Audit & Assessment and Stage 2 Issues & Options: An initial analysis of the number, type, location and primary function of open spaces in Central Bedfordshire was used to inform the Central Bedfordshire-specific site typologies. A telephone survey of 1,000 households then established a baseline from residents' views of current open space facilities and their expectations for future provision. In excess of 1,000 sites were then reviewed and categorised into one of the identified typologies with cross checks and site visits to new / changed sites to ensure consistency. Categorisation of sites on a Graphical Information System (GIS) layer enabled the assessment of accessibility, quantity and quality criteria which have been developed into proposed standards for each typology.

Stage 3 Strategy: The proposed accessibility, quantity and quality standards were consulted upon in October/November 2013 to identify the final standards which will then be applied on a parish basis to show all typologies and their relative areas of shortfall or surplus. The parish schedules will identify the future facility requirements arising from the application of the policy standards.

Stage 4 Technical Guidance Adoption: Chapters 1, 2 and 3 will be adopted as Technical Guidance.

Stage 5 Action Plan: As the majority of open space sites are not owned or managed by Central Bedfordshire Council the action plan will focus on establishing key priorities for new or improved provision and seek to identify ways in which CIL or Section 106 developer contributions or external funding can be secured to help achieve those priorities.

Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy

Scope: The scope of Chapter 3 includes the following outdoor grass and artificial sports playing pitches and courts:

- Artificial Grass Pitches
- Football
- Cricket
- Rugby
- Tennis
- Hockey
- Outdoor Bowls
- Athletics Tracks
- Netball

Methodology: Chapter 3 has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and 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), and with the draft revised methodology set out in Sport England's Playing Pitch Guidance (due for publication in 2014).

The TaLPF methodology established 8 key stages in developing a playing pitch strategy (detailed in Chapter 3) which cover the issues of supply and demand as well as analysis of the adequacy of provision. The updated TaLPF places 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.

There is no formally adopted approach for an assessment of tennis and bowls 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.

Stage 1 Audit & Assessment and Stage 2 Issues & Options: In accordance with the TaLPF and Playing Pitch Guidance, a comprehensive audit of the specified sporting facilities was undertaken in combination with the sports governing bodies and Sport England. This included wide ranging consultation which included contacting all sports clubs to determine their facility condition, usage and future needs. This process identified site and sport specific requirements.

Stage 3 Strategy: The strategy policies identify the sport and site specific requirements for each area, and

Stage 4 Technical Guidance Adoption: Chapters 1, 2 and 3 will be adopted as Technical Guidance.

Stage 5 Action Plan: As the majority of open space sites are not owned or managed by Central Bedfordshire Council the action plan will focus on establishing key priorities for new or improved provision and seek to identify ways in which CIL or Section 106 developer contributions or external funding can be secured to help achieve those priorities.

Chapter 4: Physical Activity Strategy

The Physical Activity Strategy will assist the Council in its response to its new public health responsibilities, arising from the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and NHS Act 2006 (amended), which gives responsibility for health improvement to unitary authorities; and will guide the work of the Council's Physical Activity Team.

The Physical Activity Strategy considers a range of sport and recreation activities undertaken indoors and outdoors including:

- Walking
- Cycling
- Running/Jogging
- Seated Exercise
- Dance
- Keep Fit Classes
- Gyms
- Sports opportunities

Locations where activities may take place:

- Village and Community Halls
- Leisure Centres
- Sports Clubs – that have their own grounds
- Schools, Colleges and Universities
- Town & Parish Councils
- Military Defence establishments – where public access is available
- Children Centres
- Golf clubs
- Sheltered accommodation and care homes

There is no recognised methodology for carrying out a physical activity audit. The content and extent of an audit will depend on the outcomes the local authority wishes to achieve from the strategy. The Physical Activity Strategy's aim is to provide a snapshot of the activities available, the type of facility where physical activity is offered and the type of person who is currently taking part. The list below sets out the principles behind the audit and the different methods and tools used to capture information.

- Each of the government guidelines set out above provides a methodology detailing the 'who' and the 'how' to address their respective aims.
- The Sport England Local Profile Tool, Market Segmentation and Active People Databases, have provided detailed activity and participation information taken from the most current and detailed source currently available.
- An audit of activities and facilities has been carried out in-house by the Physical Activity Team, and has been combined with the Sport England data.
- Research has been carried out in partnership with both internal and external partners to provide detailed information on the physical activities taking place in the facilities listed in the scope.
- The audit identifies gaps in the provision of physical activity opportunities.
- The guidance, facility and physical activities evidence gathered has been used to produce an Audit & Assessment Report. From this report the key issues affecting physical activity provision and participation will be identified and a series of policy options for addressing these issues have been set out in an Issues and Options Report.
- The Issues and Options Report was used to consult with key stakeholders in accordance with the Chapter 4 Consultation Plan.

As the purpose of this document is to summarise the planning requirements relating to the Leisure Strategy Technical Guidance document, no further details on Chapter 4 are provided here. Chapter 4: the Physical Activity Strategy is available on the Central Bedfordshire Council web site.

4. Central Bedfordshire Context

Profile of Central Bedfordshire

Central Bedfordshire is a varied area containing a mixture of rural countryside, attractive villages, and small to medium sized towns. It covers 716 square kilometres and is well connected, via the M1, A1, A5 and A6. Currently the population is 260,000, making it the 17th largest unitary authority in England by population. The population is forecast to increase to around 287,300 by 2021, with a 35% increase in the number of people aged 65 and over compared to 2011.

The semi-rural nature of much of Central Bedfordshire make it one of the least densely populated areas ranking 42nd out of 56, it is classified as predominantly rural with just over half the population living in the rural area. Approximately 65% of the population are within the working age group, being between 16 and 65 years of age.

In terms of deprivation, none of Central Bedfordshire's neighbourhoods are in the 10% most deprived nationally, however pockets of deprivation do exist mainly in Houghton Regis and Dunstable.

Life expectancy in Central Bedfordshire is higher than in England, at 83 years for women and 80 years for men. Equally, overall health is slightly better than the national average, and children are less likely to be obese (at Year 6: CB is 16%, England is 19%).

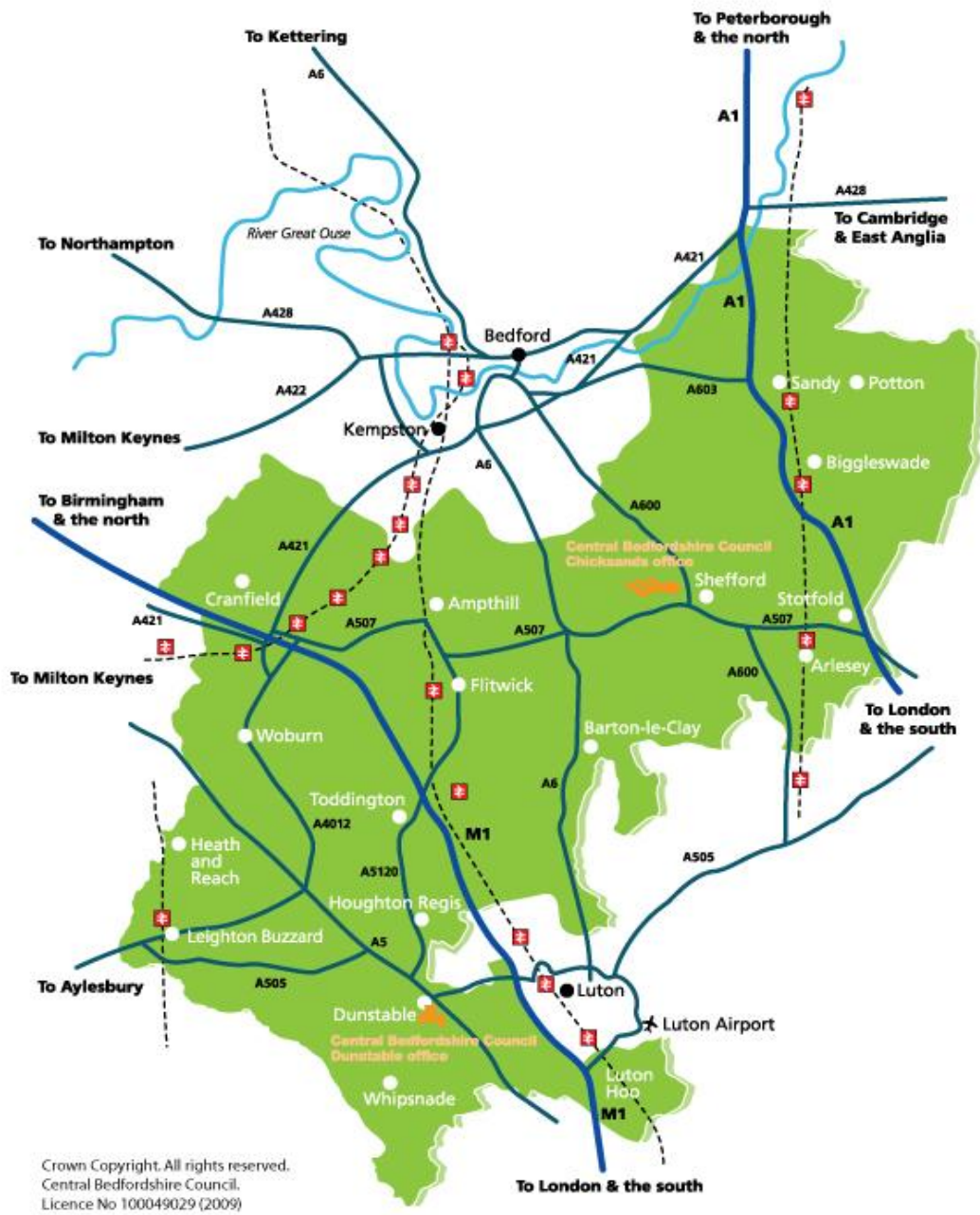
With assets such as the Greensand Ridge, much of the rural area is of high landscape and biodiversity value with extensive tracts of high-grade agricultural land. The southern part of the Marston Vale and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) cover large parts of the authority. In addition, the southern part of Central Bedfordshire, outside of the main towns and villages, is designated as Green Belt.

Central Bedfordshire has a rich historic environment, with a number of heritage assets, historic buildings, landscapes and archaeological sites and monuments.

Unemployment is lower in Central Bedfordshire than in England, with 3,159 people claiming Job Seekers Allowance in September 2013, a rate of 1.9% compared to the England rate of 3.1%.

At present 60,900 Central Bedfordshire residents travel outside of the area to work, while 29,300 people travel to work in Central Bedfordshire from other areas.

Central Bedfordshire Key Facts and Figures. January 2013



Central Bedfordshire

Planning Policy Context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into force in March 2012 and makes several references to planning for sport, recreation and open space. As set out in the context the NPPF highlights the importance of undertaking robust and up to date needs assessments for indoor and outdoor sport, taking account of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and delivering sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs. Similarly, Paragraph 69 references the importance of providing high quality open space as part of new development, as well as referencing the importance of open space and sport.

The Leisure Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) together with guidance relevant to the specific chapters as detailed in the methodology.

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.

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

Policy 22 Leisure and Open Space Provision

- Policy 22 of the emerging Development Strategy states that the Council will require new development to be supported by the delivery of leisure and open space facilities. These are to 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. Provision is to be made on-site in accordance with the required accessibility, quantity and quality standards.
- It also states that where adequate on-site provision is not possible, contributions will be sought to maintain and enhance existing leisure and open space facilities. The Council will safeguard existing leisure and open space facilities. If open space is lost as a result of development replacement

open space of equal size and quality will be required. Developers will also be required to make contributions towards maintenance and running costs. Contributions will be secured through planning obligations or CIL.

- Policy 22 provides the strategic basis for the detailed evidence base and policy requirements contained within the Leisure Strategy.

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, further consideration of issues raised and the implications of new Government CIL regulations is required. The Council is therefore currently considering its approach to the introduction and timing of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

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. However, in accordance with the NPPF development needs to be viable and deliverable and this will need to be taken into account when determining the required contributions.
- 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.

Local Context

Housing Growth

While plans are not yet final at this time the pre submission version of the Development Strategy (2011 to 2031) suggests that Central Bedfordshire will see growth of 28,700 new homes, which will comprise both large scale new developments and smaller Neighbourhood Plan and windfall sites across the authority area. In planning for growth Central Bedfordshire Council must ensure that Leisure and Open Space policy seeks to provide a range of good quality, accessible sport, leisure, open space and recreation facilities which meet the needs of its growing population; supporting its residents in leading healthy, active lives.

In developing the evidence base for the Leisure Strategy, Central Bedfordshire Council has used population and housing growth forecasts to consider both natural population increases together with that generated by new housing. Calculation has considered not only the amount of growth but its location and timing. Facility modelling undertaken in Chapter 1 utilised a 10 year planning horizon in order to achieve accurate results. For this reason the other chapters have also employed this forecasting period and data.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy will each develop a facility-specific action plan which will detail the priorities for new and improved leisure facilities to be provided in Central Bedfordshire, including that required in association with new development.

Central Bedfordshire Context

As set out in the context the Leisure Strategy has been developed with reference to the following local strategies:

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 Guidance

Production of the Leisure Strategy conforms to guidance provided by Sport England that strategic planning for sport is essential in delivering appropriate facilities in the right location. Central Bedfordshire Council has been supported by Sport England in producing the Leisure Strategy to ensure that it plans adequately for sport and recreation. In particular the Leisure Strategy has been developed with reference to the following strategies:

Sport England Strategy 2012-17 Creating a Sporting Habit for Life

- Strategy and investment to create a sporting legacy from the 2012 London Olympics by growing participation at grass roots level, particularly among young people

Health Agenda

Health & Wellbeing Boards are part of broader plans to modernise the NHS. In April 2013, Health and Wellbeing Boards replaced Primary Care Trusts (PCT) with around 150 being established across local authority areas in England. The role of the Health & Wellbeing Board is to provide integration between health and social care agendas to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population and reduce health inequalities.

There is increasing recognition that raising levels of physical activity provides a clear route to improving public health outcomes. The Department of Health has produced a number of reports and initiatives, 'Be Active, Be Healthy', 'Stay Active, Stay Healthy' and 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People' which identify and promote the link between activity and health improvements.

Chapter 4 of the Leisure Strategy, the Physical Activity Strategy, will detail the current national and local policies relating to healthy improvements, create a strategic and practical link between current and future activity opportunities, and enable Central Bedfordshire residents to access facilities and services which allow them to lead more active lives. Promoting physical activity has significant benefits for local authorities over and above health improvement. It can help to deliver on a wide range of other priority outcomes, for example, improving health and well-being in target groups and communities reduces health and social inequalities, thereby contributing towards achieving social justice milestones.

There is also a strong economic argument in favour of promoting physical activity. Increasing physical activity can help to reduce preventable disease and disability

such as strokes, coronary heart disease, obesity and back pain, a major source of working days lost. It can also contribute to reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, which impact on the level of sickness and absence from work.

5. Leisure Strategy Standards and Priorities

Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy

Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy has assessed the current provision of the identified types of indoor sport and leisure facilities (listed on page 6), and was approved by Central Bedfordshire Council as its Leisure Facilities Strategy in January 2013. The formal planning guidance consultation process carried out in October/November, will enable the council to formally adopt this chapter as a technical planning guidance.

The new and improved facilities from this chapter are set out below:

- Provide a new leisure centre in Flitwick close to the site of the existing leisure centre, comprising a sports hall with four courts and an eight lane swimming pool.
- Refurbish Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre pool and sports hall.
- Refurbish Saxon Pool and Leisure Centre and provide a new sports hall with four courts in the east area of Central Bedfordshire.
- Refurbish Dunstable Leisure Centre to also incorporate additional health and fitness facilities and squash court facilities.
- Market-test the cost of re-opening Houghton Regis pool in the short term pending longer term development of a new leisure centre in Houghton Regis.
- Provide a new sports hall with four courts in the Leighton Linlade Growth Area in conjunction with proposed housing development.
- Replace the eight lane swimming pool at Tiddenfoot in conjunction with proposed housing development growth.
- Provide a new leisure centre for Houghton Regis close to the site of the existing leisure centre, comprising a sports hall with six courts, a six lane 25m swimming pool and a range of other facilities.
- Support the development of a joint use leisure facility incorporating a sports hall with four courts at Etonbury School in Arlesey.

Progress to Date

Since adoption of Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy £8m of capital investment has already been approved from the Central Bedfordshire Council capital fund for the provision of new or improved leisure facilities in Central Bedfordshire. This will see investment at all 6 leisure centres in Dunstable, Houghton Regis, Biggleswade, Sandy, Flitwick, Leighton Linlade.

The investment of £3m at Creasey Park in Dunstable is already delivering positive outcomes and a further £1m investment has been supported at Astral Park, together with £400k investment at Stotfold.

Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy

Chapter 2 has assessed the current provision of the identified types of recreation and open space facilities (listed on page 7) across Central Bedfordshire in 2012/13, and evaluated the respective requirements which will result from the planned growth in Central Bedfordshire's population up to 2031.

The strategy has identified the following standards for Accessibility, Quantity and Quality for each type of open space. These will be applicable to all residents of Central Bedfordshire:

Leisure Strategy Site Types and Standards	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
Countryside Recreation Sites	20 minute drive time	3.19 hectares per 1,000 population	Size: average 45 hectares, appropriately located for the local catchment, predominantly natural landscape, may have DDA access audit, toilets, café or visitors centre, play equipment, parking etc
Urban Parks	15 minute walk time for Major and Minor Settlements and; 20 minute drive time for Large and Small Villages	0.22 hectares per 1,000 population (Major Service Centres only) and; 0.39 hectares per population (minor towns where/if required)	Size: min. 5 hectares, appropriately located for the local catchment, offering a range of activities and events, landscaped with ornamental planting which reflects the character / history of the local area/town, toilets, refreshments, seating, play facilities and lighting etc.
Large Formal Recreation Areas	10 minute walk time for major settlements or; 10 minute drive time for small villages	1.16 hectares per 1,000 population	Size: approx 1 hectare, appropriately located for the local catchment, formal recreation area offering a variety of facilities for different age groups such as formal sports pitches/courts/changing facilities, play provision, DDA compliant access, parking etc
Informal Recreation Spaces	10 minute walk	2.36 hectares per 1,000 population	Size: relevant to location/size of site, appropriately located for the local catchment, predominantly natural space, links with rights of way network, DDA compliant access, parking etc.
Small Amenity Spaces	5 minute walk	0.58 hectares per 1,000 population	Size: min. 0.2 hectares of functional recreation space, appropriately located for the local catchment, seating, signage, safe paths, no formal facilities.
Children's Play Spaces	10 minute walk	0.11 hectares per 1,000 population	Size: relevant to location/size of site, local catchment facilities, formal play facilities for 3-14+yrs, seating, signage, fencing where appropriate, etc.
Facilities for Young People	10 minute walk	0.043 hectares per 1,000 population	Size: relevant to location/size of site and local catchment facilities, located to allow surveillance but not disturb residents, accessible by bicycle with storage, formal age-appropriate play/recreation facilities, signage, DDA etc.
Allotments	10 minute walk	0.37 hectares per 1000 population / 15 plots per 1000 population	Size: approx. 0.25 hectares (i.e. 10 standard sized plots) appropriately located for the local catchment, accessible via roads and paths, DDA compliant access, parking, one shed per plot, mains water, toilet and washing facilities etc.
Cemeteries & Burial Grounds	N/A	N/A	The audit evidence will be used by the council's Planning Department to inform local requirements

Following adoption of the Chapter 2 facility standards above, the standards will be applied to the open spaces in each settlement in Central Bedfordshire. These will be displayed on the GIS layer and in the Settlement Summaries which will be produced for consultation with site providers to establish local priorities to inform the securing of on-site facilities and developer contributions.

Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy

Chapter 3 assessed the location, availability and quality of existing sports pitches and outdoor sports facilities (listed on page 8) across Central Bedfordshire. The overarching priorities for the future delivery of sports pitch facilities across Central Bedfordshire are:

- Ensure that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand
- Ensure that facilities are of appropriate quality to meet current and future demand
- Promote increased participation and sustainable club development

The conclusions and commitments for each type of facility are summarised below.

Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs)

While relative provision of artificial grass pitches (AGPs) in Central Bedfordshire is very low, most local residents can access a pitch within a reasonable time, often in adjacent local authority areas, consequently unmet demand is low. The forecast population increase will however, generate sufficient demand to justify one or two new AGPs to meet the needs of hockey and football in the future.

Football-specific AGPs: While modelling suggests that there is currently sufficient provision, there is justification for some additional provision to support the further development of the sport within large clubs, and growth may generate the need for additional AGPs.

The strategy proposes to:

- Protect all current AGPs
- Monitor growth and demand to identify future need

Football

Participation in football in Central Bedfordshire is above the national average for all types of football and many sites are at, or nearing capacity at peak times; there are also imbalances in the demand for junior and senior pitches. Population growth is predicted to significantly increase demand and generate an additional 6 adult teams, 47 junior teams and 41 mini teams.

The strategy proposes to:

- Protect all current playing fields
- Increase the amount of pitches available and support clubs to find home venues
- Secure formal agreements for the use of school sites
- Create new pitches linked with new developments

- Support football development
- Ensure clubs have access to good quality facilities (i.e. changing rooms, toilets)
- Maintain the existing football forums

Cricket

Analysis suggests that there are currently sufficient pitches overall, although supply and demand is particularly closely matched in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area.

This however, disguises site specific pressures and almost all clubs are at capacity on both Saturday and Sunday afternoon. In contrast, some facilities are used much less frequently and have capacity for further clubs, however, these are largely of lower quality and may not be in locations where pressures are occurring.

The strategy proposes to:

- Protect all existing cricket grounds
- Ensure that the amount of cricket facilities does not restrict increased participation in the sport
- Encourage relationships between small and large clubs to maximise potential use of different sites
- Provide a new pitch for clubs at capacity where this represents a sustainable option for growth
- Develop links between schools and cricket clubs
- Any new facilities will be provided in conjunction with an existing club or in support of a new club
- Address quality issues to bring cricket grounds and pavilions up to standard
- Support cricket clubs to provide training nets
- Support long term sustainability of clubs by promoting succession planning
- Support initiatives which encourage participation (i.e. new forms of the game)

Rugby

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 pitches in Central Bedfordshire.

Rugby Union - participation in rugby is high in Central Bedfordshire. There are four clubs, all offering full transition between midi, junior and senior rugby. There have been clear increases in participation in recent years.

There are 44 rugby pitches across Central Bedfordshire and modelling reveals that when all pitches are considered, there are sufficient pitches to meet demand. The majority of pitches are however, at school sites and there is limited, if any, use of these by the clubs.

Club bases are particularly important for the growth and development of rugby. All four clubs in Central Bedfordshire own and manage their facilities and have security of tenure. Pitch usage analysis 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.

The quality of pitches is high, although clubs identify some concerns and three of the four clubs identify the requirement to refurbish/ improve/ extend their club house facilities.

Population growth and the projected ageing population will impact on the number of additional teams that will be generated, however it is likely that population growth alone will see an increase of one adult rugby team, one junior rugby team and four midi rugby teams across Central Bedfordshire. Some clubs also have aspirations to increase their membership, generating further pressures on the existing facilities.

The strategy proposes to:

- Protect all existing rugby pitches
- Ensure that existing pitches can accommodate demand by addressing maintenance issues, improving social facilities and pavilions and providing floodlights
- Monitor rugby club growth and demand to identify increased use or participation requiring additional facilities
- Monitor demand for rugby league provision
- Support initiatives which encourage participation (i.e. new forms of the game)

Hockey

Hockey is almost exclusively played on artificial grass pitches (AGPs) and real grass pitches are largely obsolete for competitive forms of the game. There are currently 12 AGPs in Central Bedfordshire, but only two are suitable for hockey. The two hockey clubs in Central Bedfordshire run a total of 18 adult teams, but clubs have to access pitches and training facilities outside Central Bedfordshire.

Despite significant recent increases in participation, 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. Total demand for hockey pitches is equivalent to 1.7 pitches across Central Bedfordshire, meaning that the current stock is sufficient.

The significant population growth predicted will have minimal impact on the demand for hockey with no additional teams being created.

The strategy proposes to:

- Ensure that the surfaces currently used are retained as AGPs
- Maintain the quality of existing AGPs, ensuring facilities are refurbished every ten years
- Monitor club activity and demand for facilities
- Work with providers of AGPs to ensure access for hockey clubs is prioritised
- Support the provision of on-site club houses and changing rooms to encourage club development; this could involve sharing with other sports and use of school sites
- Support initiatives which encourage participation (i.e. new forms of the game)

Outdoor 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 of Central Bedfordshire.

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.

The current membership of bowls clubs in Central Bedfordshire represents 2.3% of residents over 60 years. In contrast to pitch sports, bowls may become more popular in future years due to the ageing population. 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 live within one mile of their club) and many residents are outside of this distance to a current facility.

The strategy proposes to:

- Protect all current bowling greens
- Any new bowling greens will need to be further than 1 mile from an existing green
- Maintain and where necessary improve the quality and consistency of existing bowling greens
- Monitor club activity and demand
- Support clubs to proactively increase participation and membership, particularly junior players

Tennis

There are currently 15 tennis clubs in Central Bedfordshire, with a total of 75 courts located at 28 sites and approximately half of these are floodlit. With more than half of all courts in the major towns, 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 area is however much lower.

There is currently a shortfall in provision. 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.

The quality of court surface and changing accommodation are 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.

Population growth alone could be accommodated within existing club structures (where there is a total capacity for up to 1,000 more members) although some clubs are approaching capacity and may require additional courts if growth is focused in their area.

The strategy proposes to:

- Support the provision of new facilities at clubs where needed. Add capacity by adding floodlights to courts. Longer term and following population growth, determine if new courts are required
- Support additional demand for tennis courts through partnership with schools where there is demand for tennis courts in areas not currently within five miles of facilities. Demand for pay and play tennis should be considered in line with the Beacon Tennis Scheme, established by the LTA
- Address quality issues (floodlights, court coverings, surfaces, pavilions and changing facilities) at club sites, prioritising areas where club development is limited by quality issues
- Support initiatives which encourage participation (i.e. new forms of the game)

Athletics Tracks

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. Within a 40 minute drive of Central Bedfordshire there are seven pay and play tracks, in addition to which a number of schools in the area mark out grass athletics tracks in the summer months. Evidence suggest that across Central Bedfordshire there are 5870 people who 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 participating. It also indicates that housing growth will likely increase demand.

The Playing Pitch Strategy identifies the current provision of athletics facilities in Central Bedfordshire and through emerging consultation the English Athletics Association, has identified the likely key issues for athletics in the area.

Further investigations with England Athletics and local clubs are ongoing to determine future requirements.

Site / Sport Specific Priorities

The site and sport specific priorities for each facility type are identified in Appendix A.

6. Application of the Leisure Strategy

The emerging Development Strategy identifies the requirement for the provision of appropriate sport, leisure, open space and recreation facilities to meet the needs of the current and planned population of Central Bedfordshire. It acknowledges that the emerging Leisure Strategy will include audits and assessments of facility provision leading to the creation and adoption of a supplementary planning guidance providing standards and facility requirements which, once adopted, will be used to guide the provision of new and improved facilities. As identified earlier, until adoption of the Development Strategy, the Leisure Strategy will be adopted as technical guidance.

The Leisure Strategy will also be used to inform the CIL charging schedule and to update the Planning Obligations Strategy. As the timetable for the production of the Development Strategy did not accord with that for the Leisure Strategy, the former includes the following policy which will be evidenced by the specific standards and facility requirements in the adopted Leisure Strategy.

Policy 22 of the emerging Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire states:

The Council will require:

- new development to be supported by the delivery of leisure facilities and open space. These 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.
- this provision to be made on-site in line with the required qualitative, quantitative and accessibility standards.
- where adequate on-site provision is not possible, contributions will be sought to maintain and enhance existing leisure and open space facilities.

The Council will safeguard existing leisure and open space facilities. If open space is lost as a result of development replacement open space of equal size and quality will be required.

Developers will also be required to make contributions towards maintenance and running costs. Contributions will be secured through planning obligations or CIL.

Applying the Leisure Strategy Standards

Where there is a need for additional provision to make the development acceptable in planning terms as required by Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations 2010, new or improved facilities will be required.

On-site Provision: where appropriate the respective Leisure Strategy Chapter will identify the need for the provision of facilities on-site, for example; children's play facilities.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 each identifies the standards and circumstances in which on-site provision will be required. Where provision is required it will be expected to meet the respective size/quality standards identified in the respective chapter.

Off-site Contribution: where it is not appropriate to provide facilities in full or in part on the development site due to site constraints or context, financial contributions in lieu of on-site provision will be sought in accordance with the prevailing Central Bedfordshire Council Planning Obligations Strategy.

The above requirements will be applicable to new residential development, and in some instances to commercial development. Exceptions will apply in certain circumstances, for example; children's play facilities and contributions will not be required if the development will only accommodate adults such as in a sheltered housing scheme or retirement housing, as children will not be living in these types of development. For this type of development, facilities or contributions will only be sought towards appropriate types of sporting facilities, e.g. bowls, health and fitness.

In the north of Central Bedfordshire the adopted standards in the Core Strategy will apply until the Development Strategy is adopted.

Developers will be required to consider the respective requirements for indoor and outdoor sporting facilities and recreation and open space facilities when designing the layout of their development.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

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 a detailed methodology for calculating contributions for CIL and S106 for inclusion in Leisure Strategy when the Council's approach has been decided.

Spending/Release of Developer Contributions

Where contributions are secured from development, these will be used in one of two ways, as follows:

1. Where contributions are secured to provide or improve facilities owned by Central Bedfordshire Council - contributions will be used by the Council to carry out the identified works to the named facility/facilities. The respective Leisure Strategy Chapter identifies the schemes/priorities for Council-owned facilities; or
2. Where contributions are secured to provide or improve facilities owned by a Town/Parish Council, sports clubs etc. - the contributions will be released in accordance with the Sustainable Communities S106 Planning Obligations Guidance and with the schemes/priorities identified for each parish/area in the respective Leisure Strategy Chapter.

7. Funding and Implementation

Funding

Local authority finances are under pressure and previous national funding programmes such as Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Regional Development Agency funding 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.

Using assets innovatively will be a key feature of the next few years, as will working in partnership on a multi-agency approach. The Government is also seeking to ease planning bureaucracy and encourage local communities to realise assets to deliver community benefits. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) also provides opportunities for investment through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Given the potential level of funding required to refurbish or redevelop the leisure facility infrastructure across Central Bedfordshire it is therefore likely that investment will only be achieved through a combination of opportunities.

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

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 developer contributions: The Leisure Facilities Strategy aims to secure developer contributions in association with new development to provide or improve infrastructure.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Council funding: including use of capital receipts from the sale of existing assets.
- Prudential Borrowing: or 'spend 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.

- 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.

Developer Contributions

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 Planning Obligations

Previously local authorities have sought and secured developer contributions for physical and social infrastructure through Section 106 legal agreements. These obligations are secured 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.

The legislation covering Section 106 developer contributions is being 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 only 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.

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. Development and refinement of the CIL regulations is currently ongoing and Central Bedfordshire Council is working with Government and consultants to produce its Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule and carried out initial consultation in January 2013. A date for adoption by Central Bedfordshire Council is not known at the time of writing.

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 with many calls upon it 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. 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

Leisure Strategy Approach to CIL/S106

For projects that may be candidates to be funded in whole or part from CIL contributions it is important for estimated costings to be provided (which can be refined and reviewed over time) for inclusion in the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule. This document will be used to demonstrate both the need for important local infrastructure and the existence of a substantial funding gap between the cost of such projects and the funding currently available.

The Leisure Strategy chapter action plans will be used to determine local priorities and highlight projects for inclusion in CIL or the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Documents for the north and south of Central Bedfordshire.

8. Adoption Standards and Commuted Maintenance Sums

The council's Countryside Access Service and Leisure Services Section 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 department's 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.

Leisure Strategy Chapter 2 typologies suitable for adoption by CAS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country Parks • Large Recreation Areas (Informal) • Urban Parks (dependant on nature and location of site)
Criteria for adoption of new sites by CAS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

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.

7. 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 visits per year	£40.00	25	£1,000.00	£10,000.00	£20,000.00
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
Hard Surface and Perimeter Weed Spraying	£0.80	2500	£2,000.00	£20,000.00	£40,000.00
Ground cover Maintenance	£0.40	1000	£400.00	£4,000.00	£8,000.00
Tree Maintenance x 2 visits per year	£3.00	100	£300.00	£3,000.00	£6,000.00
	£0.20	1000	£200.00	£2,000.00	£4,000.00
Seats/Benches	£50	1	£50.00	£500.00	£1,000.00
Fencing, Gates & Boundary Treatments	£12	1000	1200	£12,000.00	£24,000.00
Notice Boards and Cabinets	400	1	40	£400.00	£800.00
Special Features					
X As appropriate and to be costed accordingly.					
Totals for Site			£8,720.00	£87,200.00	£174,400.00

*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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Play Spaces • Facilities for Young People
Criteria for adoption of new sites by Leisure Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
- (ii) 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

- £0.10 per square metre
 - 16 cuts per year
 - 15 years
 - e.g. 100 sq.m of grass
- Total cost for 15 years' grass cutting would be £2,400

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

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.

Litter Bin Emptying

- £15 per bin per year (weekly empty)
 - 15 years
- Total cost of Bin Emptying for 15 years would be £225 per bin, Plus;

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 £1,162.50 per bin

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

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

Litter Picking

- 0.055p per square metre
- 17 visits per year
- 15 years
- e.g. 100 square metre site
Total cost for 15 years' maintenance would be £1,402.50

Shrub Maintenance

- £60 per 100 sq.m per cut
- two cuts per year
- 15 years
- e.g. 100 sq.m of shrubs
Total cost of shrub maintenance for 15 years would be £1,800

Tree Maintenance

- £10 per tree per visit
- 2 visits per year
- 15 years
- e.g. 10 trees
Total cost of tree maintenance for 15 years would be £3,000

Hedge Maintenance

- 1.60p 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 £2,400

In some instances the cost of maintenance will be calculated individually by the Council's Tree & Landscape Manager.

Fencing

To Fencing Standard BS1722

Metal fencing will be painted once every 5 years.

- £11.25 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 £6,750

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 @ £2,354 at 2004 prices

- £8.60 per linear metre per year
- 15 years
- 40 Linear Metres
Total Cost of Timber Fence maintenance per 40Lin M. for 15 years would be £5,160, plus £2,354 = £7,514

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.

9. Next Steps

Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy

In order to detail the facility requirements identified in Chapter 1, Part 5 and to prepare CIL and S106 calculations, a costed Action Plan will be prepared for the first phase of the strategy delivery 2013-2018. The tables below set out the next steps for completion of the Leisure Facilities Strategy, and the delivery of its short and medium term strategic objectives.

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

Chapter 1 Appendix 1. Draft Action Plan Short and Medium Term 2013-2018 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

Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy

In order to apply the respective open space typology standards the Parish Schedules will be produced. These will identify the surpluses/shortfalls of each open space type in each parish of Central Bedfordshire. In order to develop delivery priorities the Parish Schedules will be presented to Town and Parish Councils and other stakeholders to determine their priorities for the sites in their ownership which will inform the Chapter 2 action plan together with S106 and CIL.

Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy

In order to demonstrate the local requirements arising from the Strategy's priorities, site specific facility requirements and recommendations will be produced for consultation with facility providers, Town and Parish Councils and other stakeholders. Their feedback will inform the Chapter 3 Action Plan together with S106 and CIL.

Chapter 4: Physical Activity Strategy

In order to deliver the five strategic priorities an annual programme of activity is being developed with the appropriate partners. This will identify the types of activities the Team will deliver in addition to the supplementing the activity database and forging links with other providers to provide a one-stop-shop for physical activity information.

10. Glossary of Terms / Definitions

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 sport s 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

Household Occupancy

For the purpose of calculating requirements, the following occupancy levels will be used:

1 bed - 1.3 persons
2 bed - 1.9 persons
3 bed - 2.6 persons
4 bed - 3.0 persons
5+ bed - 3.4 persons

(source: DCLG Survey of English Housing 2002/03 & 2005/06) (updated with Census figures released in 2011 census)

Appendix A. Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy - site and sport specific priorities

Table 13.1 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> <p>Eaton Bray Totternhoe Tilsworth Leighton Buzzard (longer term depending upon closure of pitches following opening of Astral Park).</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Amphill Arlesey Flitwick (proposed developments currently underway will address existing deficiencies) Langford Maulden Potton Shefford Stotfold (proposed developments currently underway will address existing deficiencies)</p>
	<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 the borough. 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> <p>Toddington / Harlington area Stotfold / Arlesey Biggleswade</p>
<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.		
	Dunstable and Houghton Regis Dunstable Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Eaton Bray Leighton Buzzard Slip End	North Cranfield Biggleswade Harlington Lidlington Marston Shillington Northill Westoning
Support 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		
	Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place including evaluation of success of football forum.		
	Support the principles of asset transfer where this will result in positive club and football development outcomes		
	To be evaluated on a club specific basis.		

Strategic Priorities – Cricket

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 13.2

Table 13.2 - 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 the borough, 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 appropriate leadership and structures in place.</p>		
	<p>Dunstable and Houghton Regis</p> <p>Additional provision required in</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South</p> <p>Areas where provision needs to be</p>	<p>North</p> <p>Capacity issues in the following</p>

	<p>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>addressed are as follows;</p> <p>Caddington CC currently at capacity (impacted by lack of training facilities too) C4</p> <p>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>	<p>settlements:</p> <p>Biggleswade Blunham Amphill Flitwick</p> <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 Dunstable Cricket Club</p>	<p>Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Page Park / Mentmore Gardens</p>	<p>North Biggleswade CC Sandy CC Wrest Park (Silsoe) Lidlington CC Henlow CC Milton Bryan CC Steppingley CC Aspley Guise</p>

Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements	<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) Amphill Flitwick Henlow</p>
Support Club Development	<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>		

Strategic Priorities – Rugby

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 13.3.

Table 13.2 - 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 • Use of school facility by club (may require qualitative improvements) – Stratton Upper School / Redborne Upper School
	<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>		

Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements	<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 		
	Dunstablians RUFC – Recent improvements to clubhouse undertaken. Priority should now been given to improving the capacity of the facility	Leighton Buzzard RUFC – require additional training floodlights. Quality improvements should be prioritised over additional capacity in the short term.	Biggleswade RUFC – improvements to clubhouse Amptill RUFC – improvements to clubhouse Quality improvements should be prioritised over existing capacity in the short term.
Support Club Development	<p>R4: Support aspirations to increase participation in rugby across Central Bedfordshire Council and manage the impact of these aspirations on facility development.</p>		
	Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary		
	<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>		
	Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary		

Strategic Priorities – Hockey

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 13.4

Table 13.4 - 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	H1: To support hockey development, ensure that the surfaces currently used for hockey are retained as sand based pitches.		
	Dunstable and Houghton Regis No facilities required for hockey	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Pitches at Van Dyke School should remain sand based surface	North Sandy Sports Centre should remain sand based surface
	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.		
	New provision likely to be required within reasonable distance of club base to support existing club structures.		
	H3: Ensure priority access for hockey clubs at sand based facilities		
	Dunstable and Houghton Regis No facilities required for hockey	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Van Dyke School	North Sandy Sports Centre
	H4: Ensure that the impact of housing growth is taken into account and that contributions towards hockey are required		
The two hockey clubs will both be impacted upon by population growth and will serve residents across Central Bedfordshire			
Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements	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		
	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North

	No facilities required for hockey	Pavilion / clubhouse at Van Dyke School	Pavilion / clubhouse at Sandy Sports Centre
	H6: Maintain the quality of existing sand based AGPs, ensuring that facilities are refurbished every 10 years		
	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
	No facilities required for hockey	Van Dyke School	Sandy Sports Centre
Support Club Development	H7: Support the introduction of new forms of hockey through the provision of appropriate facilities for the new form of the game		
	Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary		

Strategic Priorities – Bowls

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 13.5.

Table 13.5 Strategic Priorities and Site Specific Implications – Outdoor Bowls

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand	BG1: Protect all current bowling greens		
	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.		
	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		
	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.		
	BG3: Monitor the impact of attempts to increase participation as well as population growth on club membership.		
	Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary		
Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements	BG4: Seek to maintain the quality of facilities and where issues are identified, improve the quality and consistency of bowling greens		
	Dunstable and Houghton Regis No facilities required for hockey	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Leighton Buzzard Bowls Club	North Biggleswade St Andrews Bowls Club

Support Club Development	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.
	Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary

Strategic Priorities – Tennis

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 13.6

Table 13.6 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	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.		
	Dunstable and Houghton Regis n/a	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Studham TC	North Barton le Clay TC Langford TC
	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		
Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
	T3: Address quality issues identified at club sites prioritising areas where club development is limited by quality constraints, specifically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floodlighting (linked with increasing capacity above) • Covering existing courts (linked with increasing capacity above) • Surfacing • Pavilion / Changing. 		

	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
		Linslade TC Studham TC (Impacting upon capacity) Eaton Bray TC Slip End Tilsworth Billington	Langford (impacting upon capacity) Barton le Clay (impacting upon capacity) Potton Westoning
Support Club Development	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.		
	Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary		

Strategic Priorities – Athletics

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 the borough 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 13.7.

Table 13. 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
	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
Ensure Pitch Quality	A4: Ensure that appropriate changing and meeting facilities are available for road running clubs		

Meets Requirements	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
	Dunstable	Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre (or alternative venue)	Flitwick Leisure Centre / Redborne School Sandy Sports and Community Centre
	A5: Maintain the quality of the existing track		
	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
	n/a	n/a	Sandy Sports and Community Centre
Support Club Development	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

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 13.8

Table 13.8 - Strategic Priorities and Site Specific Implications – Netball

Aim	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
Ensure that there are enough pitches to meet demand	N1: Ensure that there are sufficient appropriate venues for club based netball training		
	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)		
	N2: Facilitate the requirement for any competitive netball venues longer term in the event of significant participation increases and the creation of new leagues		
Ensure Pitch Quality Meets Requirements	Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary		
	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		
	Dunstable and Houghton Regis Dunstable Leisure Centre	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South n/a	North Stratton Upper School
Support Club Development	N4: 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		
	N5: Support initiatives designed to increase player retention and participation.		
	Ongoing monitoring and review of strategy to take place and additional requirements to be added where necessary		

Tables in the previous pages have served to highlight the priority areas for new and improved provision by sport. Table 13.9 provides a brief summary of areas where action is required, bringing together the findings for all sports.

Table 13.9 – Key Priority Summary

	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
New Pitch Provision	<p>Football 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 Dunstable / Houghton Regis</p> <p>Rugby Dunstable RUFC (increased capacity)</p>	<p>Football Eaton Bray Totternhoe Tilsworth Leighton Buzzard (longer term depending upon closure of pitches following opening of Astral Park).</p> <p>3g AGP Totternhoe / Eaton Bray</p> <p>Cricket Caddington</p> <p>Rugby n/a</p> <p>Tennis Studham TC</p>	<p>Football Amphill Arlesey Flitwick (proposed developments currently underway will address existing deficiencies)</p> <p>Langford Maulden Potton Shefford Stotfold (proposed developments currently underway will address existing deficiencies)</p> <p>3g AGP Toddington / Harlington area Stotfold / Arlesey Biggleswade</p> <p>Cricket Biggleswade Blunham Amphill Flitwick</p>

	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
			Rugby n/a Tennis Barton le Clay TC Langford TC
Quality Improvements	Football Dunstable Houghton Regis Cricket Dunstable Rugby n/a Athletics Dunstable	Football Eaton Bray Leighton Buzzard Slip End Cricket Leighton Buzzard Rugby Leighton Buzzard RUFC (floodlights) Hockey Van Dyke School Bowls Leighton Buzzard Bowls Club Tennis Linslade TC Studham TC (Impacting upon capacity) Eaton Bray TC Slip End Tilsworth Billington	Football Cranfield Biggleswade Harlington Lidlington Marston Shillington Northill Westoning Cricket Biggleswade Sandy Silsoe Lidlington Henlow Milton Bryan Steppingley Aspley Guise Rugby Amphill RUFC Biggleswade RUFC Hockey Sandy Sports Centre Bowls Biggleswade St Andrews

	Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	North
		Athletics Leighton Buzzard	Tennis Langford (impacting upon capacity) Barton le Clay (impacting upon capacity) Potton Westoning Athletics Sandy Biggleswade Netball Biggleswade

