

South Oxfordshire District Council

EXTRACTS FROM THE LEISURE FACILITIES

ASSESSMENT & STRATEGY 2023 – 2041

FOR DIDCOT GARDEN TOWN & AREA OF INFLUENCE

Based on the LFAS document prepared by:



Produced for:



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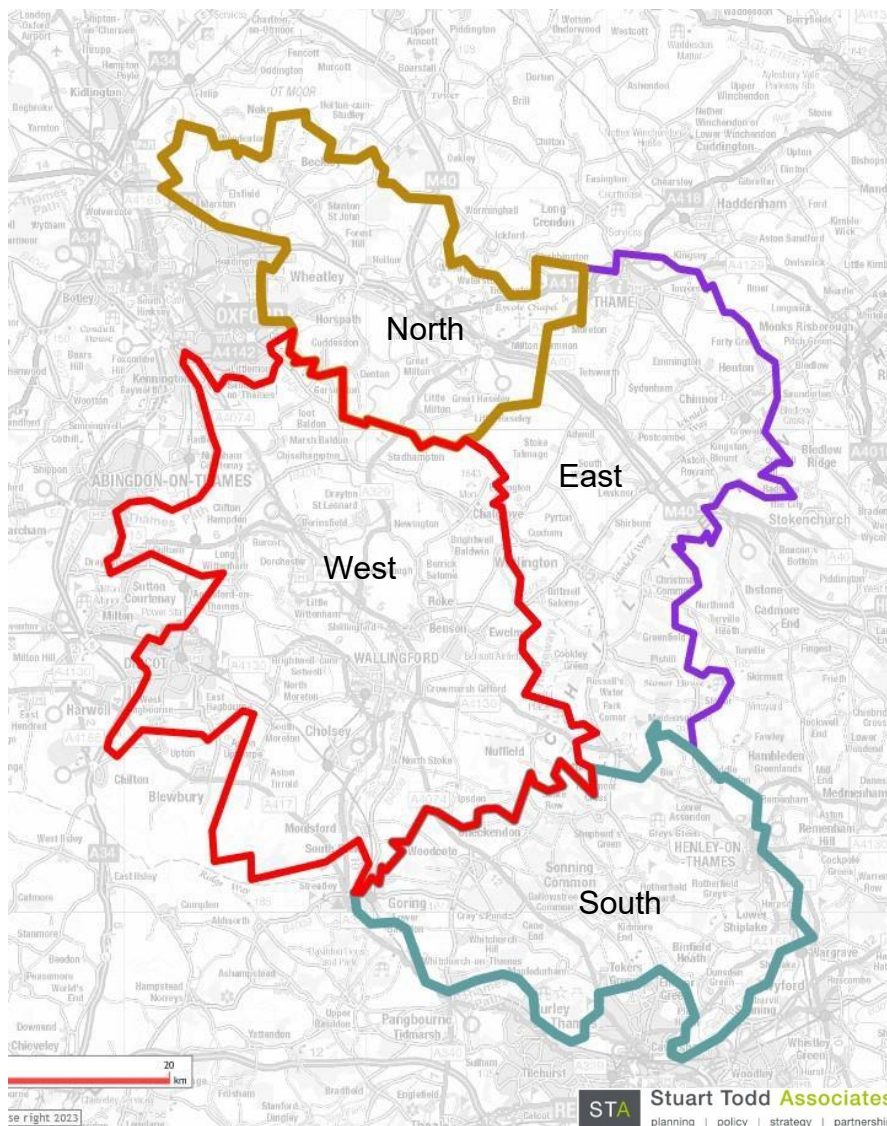
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Introduction to Didcot extracts

The data included below is extracted from the Cabinet approved version of the district-wide Leisure Facilities Strategy and should be read in conjunction with that document, and the Leisure Facilities Assessment for an understanding about context and methodology. All introductory text has been removed from this extract.

Figure EX1: The Study Area and Sub-Areas

Didcot is one of the largest settlements and sits in the sub area West.



Leisure Facilities Key Issues

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

Swimming pools

- Didcot BSC reports a lack of pool time and a reliance on swimming pools at education sites.
- All South Oxfordshire residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a large

swimming pool (at least a 4 lane 25m pool). However, all public leisure centre pools are 'uncomfortably busy' during peak periods. It is recommended that a new learner pool be considered further at Didcot Wave Leisure Pool.

Sports halls

- All South Oxfordshire residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a large sports hall (four courts or more). However, education sites play an important role and should these sites be removed from the model there would be insufficient supply to meet demand.
- To meet high future demand for sports-hall sports activities, it is recommended that a new sports hall at Didcot North East Leisure Facility (L:34.5m x W:20m x H:7.5m) be provided. This new hall should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development with CUAs.

Activity halls, village halls, community centres and studios

Activity halls (i.e. sports halls that are less than 4 badminton courts in size), village halls, community centres and studios are an important element of the wider health, fitness and conditioning market. All residents in the district can access provision within a 15-minute drive-time of a facility that has secured community use and there is recorded sport / physical activity taking place.

Health and fitness suites

All South Oxfordshire residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a gym. However, gyms including Didcot Wave Gym are 'uncomfortably busy' during weekday evenings.

Squash courts

There were no issues with capacity, availability, cost or security of tenure raised by squash clubs as part of this study, and it is expected that future demand can be met within existing squash facilities / club capacities.

Gymnastics facilities – artistic, rhythmic and trampolining

All South Oxfordshire residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a gymnastics facility. However, clubs located in the South and the West sub areas have large waiting lists. A continual ambition for the clubs is to each have a dedicated single facility in order to offer more time/space to meet demand.

Archery ranges

- There are no archery clubs in the East, North and South sub areas of the district.
- New sports hall provision at Didcot North East Leisure Facility should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development (including archery).

Tennis courts – outdoor and padel

To meet the current demand for tennis, new outdoor tennis courts at Culham Science Centre should be considered further, as well as re-reinstating courts at Edmonds Park and Ladygrove Park. These courts should be available for public use; managed via

online bookings and have the ability to accommodate 'pay as you play' sessions (e.g., through use of ClubSpark).

Netball courts

New sports hall provision at Didcot North East Leisure Facility should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development (including netball).

Cycling facilities – off-road circuits

A key initiative for British Cycling is to provide dedicated cycling facilities in safe, traffic-free environments for any cyclist of any ability to participate, train and compete. The nearest outdoor cycle circuit is beyond a 40-minute drive-time.

Athletics facilities

There are no gaps in provision in South Oxfordshire for a 400m synthetic surfaced track with full field events provision (all residents are within a 40- minute drive-time). However, there are no Compact Athletics Facilities in the district and no dedicated running tracks, and therefore residents have little exposure to Sprint Run, Throw, Jump athletics.

Bowls facilities – flat Green - No Didcot issues included

Croquet lawns

There were no issues with capacity, availability, cost or security of tenure raised by croquet clubs as part of this study, and it is expected that future demand can be met within existing croquet club capacities.

Water sports facilities – rowing, canoeing, sailing, jet skiing and water skiing

No Didcot issues included.

Skateparks

Existing skateparks are located in most of the largest villages and towns.

Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs)

Existing MUGAs are located in most of the towns and largest villages in South Oxfordshire.

Parkour facilities

There are no parkour facilities in South Oxfordshire. The closest facilities are located in Littlemore (Oxford City), Faringdon (Vale), Rickmansworth and Milton Keynes.

Climbing walls

There are no climbing walls in South Oxfordshire. However, the majority of residents in South Oxfordshire are within a 30-minute drive-time of the existing climbing walls in Oxford, Reading and High Wycombe.

Horse-riding centres

The majority of residents in South Oxfordshire are within a 30-minute drive-time of the existing horse-riding centre. However, centres are running at 75%

capacity due to issues around workforce, both paid and volunteer, suitable and affordable horsepower, and skyrocketing costs.

Golf courses

The majority of residents in South Oxfordshire are within a 30-minute drive-time of the golf courses and facilities. There were no issues with capacity, availability, cost or security of tenure raised by England Golf as part of this study and it is expected that future demand can be met within existing golf course facilities / club capacities.

Main Recommendations by District and Sub-area

EX8 The main recommendations which apply across the district, are set out below.

These set out only “headlines” and full detailed recommendations are presented in the main body of the Strategy. Sub-area recommendations are limited, in this Executive Summary, to presenting headlines for future provision.

District

- Avoid, where possible the loss of strategically valuable sports facilities that are available for community use or could contribute to meeting future community needs, unless replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.
- Improve access to meet demand, and to continue to develop the community use of sport facilities on private and education sites.
- Ensure, as far as possible, that any new sports facilities, provided as part of future educational provision in South Oxfordshire, are designed for curricular, extra-curricular, community and sports development use and made available for community use out of school hours.
- Support proposals that help address the need for sports facilities in the district (subject to the outcome of any options appraisal and feasibility study for the development of sports facilities across the district).
- Ensure that new facilities and their use are planned, managed and promoted to ensure that they lie at the heart of their local communities.
- Ensure they are easily accessible to all, thus reducing the need to travel, and / or work is progressed to help ensure that transport connectivity (while prioritising low carbon and active modes of travel first) are delivered in South Oxfordshire.
- When planning for major new developments and links to sports facilities, planning officers should consider the principles established by Sport England / Public Health England’s Active Design Guidance.
- Ensure that new developments (e.g. residential, commercial and retail) contribute where appropriate towards the development and enhancement of financially viable sports facilities to meet identified needs, priority being given to projects identified in this Strategy. Develop costed facility priorities and incorporate these into the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Priority recommendations

EX9 The following recommendations are to ‘provide’ new facilities to meet demand / expansion of existing ones to meet new demands that cannot be met by existing

provision.

West Sub-Area

- New learner pool (20m x 10m) at Didcot Wave Leisure Pool.
- New 4-court sports hall at Didcot North East Leisure Facility (L:34.5m x W:20m x H:7.5m).
- New dedicated gymnastics facility in Didcot.

Leisure Facilities Key Issues

This section presents a summary of the key issues for each sport facility type, providing context for the sections which follow. Headlines only are provided to give brief context for each sport facility type, with much more detail provided in the Assessment Reports.

Swimming pools

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Didcot BSC reports a lack of pool time is the first barrier to club expansion. It must run its Swim School at Oratory Prep School in order to meet demand.
- All South Oxfordshire residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a large swimming pool (at least a 4 lane 25m pool). However, there is a need to enhance the security of community use at swimming pools on education sites and use agreements should be sought for Didcot BSC.
- SODC recognises the potential of developing a 20m x 10m teaching pool at the existing Didcot Wave Leisure Pool site. The existing Leisure Pool is full 90% of peak times and therefore a new teaching pool will alleviate these capacity issues.

Sports halls

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- The vast majority of sports clubs using sports halls in South Oxfordshire report a lack of availability at peak times is the first barrier to club expansion. Other barriers for clubs include having enough coaches and the rising costs to hire halls, which is prohibiting new members joining.
- As a guide, the Sport England suggests that when 80% of a hall's capacity is used then this indicates that sports halls are becoming uncomfortably busy. This should be seen only as a guide to help flag when facilities are becoming busier, rather than as a 'hard threshold.' Park SC has the busiest sports hall in South Oxfordshire. Didcot Leisure Centre is full-to-capacity during 50% of the hours open during peak periods. Didcot Leisure Centre c.50% of the hours available during peak periods.
- Didcot Girls' School has scope to increase availability in the weekly peak period to reduce the proportion of capacity used to a comfortable level.
- All South Oxfordshire residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a 4+ court sports hall. However, education sites play an important role and should these sites be removed from the model there would be insufficient supply to meet demand.

- Across the district there are number of sports halls with cricket nets that are of an acceptable standard for indoor cricket, however securing access to these facilities has been identified as difficult. This is a challenge for both the Oxfordshire Pathway planning and the clubs, whose winter programmes are restricted. Quality does need to improve but access is the biggest issue. The other issue is that new sprung-loaded floors are unsuitable for cricket, so the Oxfordshire Cricket Board should be consulted in the design phase of any new sports hall to ensure an appropriate multi-use flooring is installed.
- Sports clubs are reliant on the education sector for the supply of halls. Community use agreements should be sought at Didcot Girls School.
- New sports hall provision needed to meet high future demand for sports- hall sports activities in West sub area. It is recommended that a new 4- court (L:34.5m x W:20m x H:7.5m) sports hall be provided at Didcot North East Leisure Facility. New sports facilities should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development with CUAs.

Activity halls, village halls, community centres and studios

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Activity halls (ie sports halls that are less than 4 badminton courts in size), village halls, community centres and studios are an important element of the wider health, fitness and conditioning market. They vary in size, shape, quality, access to sprung wooden floors and level of ancillary facilities. Activity types vary from low-impact to high intensity classes.
- Although all village/community halls rely mainly on volunteers to operate, many offer facilities to local communities at the times needed i.e. morning, afternoon and evening. The majority of facilities are available 7 days a week for community use but must be pre-booked as they do not have extensive opening hours.
- The village halls and community centres have an important role enabling local people to access a range of local activities. They cater for older people as well as those living in more rural areas. Given the rural nature of the district, the importance of village halls and community centres cannot be underestimated. Activity programmes within facilities can contribute to getting the inactive active or retaining the already involved. These facilities can meet the needs of the ageing population and/or those suffering from rural isolation.
- There are no geographical gaps in the provision of activity hall, village hall, community centre and studios in South Oxfordshire. Catchment mapping (using a 15-minute drive-time) shows all residents can access provision that has secured community use and there is recorded sport / physical activity taking place.

Health and fitness suites

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- There are residents in the western part of the South sub area and in the southern part of the East sub area that are not within a 20-minute drive- time of a public leisure centre gym. However, the gym at Oratory Sports Centre is

within a 20-minute drive-time of these residents.

- There were no issues raised with disability access of facilities as part of this study. The gym at Didcot Wave is 'uncomfortably busy' (ie. 80% or more used capacity) from 17:00 to 21:00 on Monday to Friday.

Squash courts

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- There are squash courts located in all sub areas and no geographical gaps in provision (ie, all residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a court).
- Didcot Leisure Centre squash courts were unaffordable for Didcot Squash Club so the club moved to Wallingford Sports Park.
- Analysis of peak-time usage shows there is spare capacity at all of the public leisure centres with squash courts. Park Sports Centre squash courts have the most used-capacity during weekly peak periods (43%), followed by Henley Leisure Centre (35%) and then Didcot Leisure Centre (22%).
- The quality of the squash courts at Park LC and Didcot LC should be improved as they do not meet customer expectations.

Gymnastics facilities – artistic, rhythmic and trampolining

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- There are gymnastics facilities located at eight sites across all four sub areas. However, seven of these sites are shared facilities (with other sports) – there are five sports halls, one community centre and one church hall. The only dedicated gymnastics venue is located at Abingdon Gymnastics Club (West sub area).
- All South Oxfordshire residents are within a 20-minute drive-time of a gymnastics facility. There is high demand for new dedicated provision for Kinetics Gymnastics in the West sub area.

Archery ranges

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Wallingford Castle Archers are based at Wallingford Sports Park in the West sub area (with unlimited length of tenure) during the summer and use the sports halls (hired on an hourly basis) at Didcot Girls' School and Wallingford School during the winter for indoor training sessions.
- The club is struggling to keep up with demand for new members due to limited space at all three sites. The club would like to have a single venue (outdoor and indoor range) where all demand can be accommodated and take place all year round.
- New sports hall, including at Didcot North East Leisure Facility (4-courts) should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development (including archery).

Tennis courts – outdoor and padel

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the

following key issues are most prominent:

- There are no indoor tennis courts in South Oxfordshire.
- Future demand for tennis is highest in the West sub area and this could be met by improving the quality of the tennis courts at Edmonds Park and Ladygrove Park.
- Current and future demand for tennis (including Padel) could be met in part with new 'pay and play' courts at Culham Science Centre.
- Clubs across South Oxfordshire are a total of 502 tennis players over-capacity. The clubs in the South sub area are the most over-capacity (594 in total and 85 on average).

Netball courts

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- New sports hall at Didcot North East Leisure Facility (4-courts) should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development (including netball).

Cycling facilities – off-road circuits

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- A key initiative for British Cycling is to provide dedicated cycling facilities in safe, traffic-free environments for any cyclist (including disabled cyclists) of any ability to participate, train and compete. British Cycling's latest facility strategy aims for no one to travel more than 40 minutes to an 'off-road' cycle circuit. The nearest outdoor cycle circuit is beyond a 40-minute drive- time in the London Borough of Hillingdon.

Athletics facilities

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- England Athletics has confirmed that a 40-minute drive time is realistic for 400m synthetic surfaced track with full field events provision. When considering neighbouring provision, there are no geographical gaps in athletics provision in South Oxfordshire.

Bowls facilities – flat Green

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- That there are gaps in provision of outdoor bowling greens in the North and the West sub areas. However, residents in the West sub-area are within a 20-minute drive-time of outdoor bowling greens in Abingdon, Milton and Harwell (Vale of White Horse). There are no outdoor bowling greens in the North sub area.

Croquet lawns

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- There is a gap in community club croquet lawn provision in the East and in the West sub areas. However, residents in these areas are within a 20-minute drive-time of Thames Valley Croquet Club (Abingdon) and High Wycombe Croquet Club. There were no issues with capacity, availability, cost or security of tenure raised by croquet clubs as part of this study and it is expected that future demand can be met within existing croquet club capacities.

Water sports facilities – rowing, canoeing, sailing, jet skiing and water skiing

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- The majority of residents in South Oxfordshire are within a 30-minute drive-time of the water sports facilities. There were no issues with capacity, availability, cost or security of tenure raised by water sports clubs as part of this study and it is expected that future demand can be met within existing water sports facilities / club capacities.

Skateparks

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Existing skateparks are located in most of the largest villages and towns.
- Skateparks in the district are available for use during daylight hours only. None of the skateparks have sports-lights. Consideration should be given to sports-lighting the existing skateparks, but this is dependent upon local demand being identified.

Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs)

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Existing MUGAs are located in most of the towns and largest villages in South Oxfordshire.
- The provision of new MUGAs should also be considered at the Strategic Housing site at Culham Science Centre (North sub-area)
- Consider improving the condition of MUGAs with open access that are 'Poor' or 'Below Average' quality, including; Little Milton Recreation Ground, Edmonds Park and Ladygrove Park.
- Also consider increasing the number of hours available for use at existing MUGAs by installing sports-lights where appropriate, including Southern Community Centre, Edmonds Park, Ladygrove Park and Great Western Drive Park.

Parkour facilities

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- Parkour is primarily a non-competitive physical discipline of training to move freely over and through any terrain using only the abilities of the body, principally through running, jumping, climbing and quadrupedal movement. Parkour provision may be indoor (with high ceilings and a part sprung floor,

static bars and box equipment) or outdoor. Generally an outdoor training area would have a spongy floor (i.e., rubbery material – the same as in a children's Play Area) and have posts, metal bars and concrete walls/ramps installed.

- There are no parkour facilities in South Oxfordshire. The majority of residents in the West and North sub areas are within a 30-minute drive- time of the existing parkour provision at Oxford Academy in Littlemore. However, the majority of residents in the East and South sub areas are more than a 30-minute drive-time from parkour provision in Faringdon, Rickmansworth and Milton Keynes. New indoor / outdoor parkour provision in South Oxfordshire would meet current demand that is leaving the district to access provision.

Climbing walls

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- There are no climbing walls in South Oxfordshire. However, it is likely that residents of South Oxfordshire are using the five indoor climbing centres in neighbouring authorities: Oxford, Reading (two centres), Newbury and High Wycombe. There is also a new climbing centre due to open in Oxford in late 2023. The majority of residents in South Oxfordshire are within a 30-minute drive-time of the existing climbing walls in neighbouring authorities.
- All neighboring centres have extensive opening hours (typically 1:00-22:00 on weekdays and 09:00-18:00 at weekends) with permanent equipment set up for climbing. It is likely that facilities are available to users that want to use them.

Horse-riding centres

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- A horse-riding centre is an equestrian facility created and maintained for the purpose of accommodating, training or competing equids, especially horses. Based on their use, they may be known as a barn, stables, or riding hall and may include commercial operations described by terms such as a boarding stable, livery yard, or livery stable.
- The majority of residents in South Oxfordshire are within a 30-minute drive-time of the existing horse-riding centre.
- British Equestrian research data shows over two-thirds of centres are currently struggling to keep up with enquiries and take on new clients, creating a barrier to increasing participation. Conversely, on average, centres are running at 75% capacity due to issues around workforce, both paid and volunteer, suitable and affordable horsepower, and skyrocketing costs.
- There is a need to support existing horse-riding centres in addressing capacity issues caused by a lack of suitable workforce, horsepower and costs. There are horse-riding centres in all sub areas, but the West sub area has the fewest number and this is where future demand is highest.

Golf courses – 18-hole courses, driving ranges and Par-3 (practice / coaching)

The assessment data and discussion with members of the steering group suggest the following key issues are most prominent:

- The majority of residents in South Oxfordshire are within a 30-minute drive-time of the golf courses and facilities. There were no issues with capacity, availability, cost or security of tenure raised by England Golf as part of this study and it is expected that future demand can be met within existing golf course facilities / club capacities.
- There has been a proposal for outline planning permission at Waterstock golf course (North sub area). The demolition and clearance of existing buildings and structures to allow for the construction of up to 120,000sqm of Use Class E employment floorspace comprising Research and Development units, Light Industrial units, ancillary offices, ancillary amenity buildings (up to 2,400sqm), Creche (up to 600sqm), Forest School (up to 150sqm), along with new site accesses, internal roads and footpaths, surface and multistorey car parking and open space.

District-wide Recommendations

The general district-wide strategic recommendations and the actions required to deliver them are presented below. These recommendations have been identified as common themes following research and stakeholder consultation.

PROTECT

- Avoid, where possible the loss of strategically valuable sports facilities that are available for community use or could contribute to meeting future community needs, unless replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location. Continue to review plans for developments involving strategically valuable sports facilities. Ensure any loss in provision is replaced by equivalent or better provision.
- Protect and enhance community use of sports facilities on educational sites, where required. Promote partnership working between schools, Council and other facility operators in the district to develop community use and maximise utilisation of existing facilities.

ENHANCE

- Develop a funding strategy to maintain / enhance facility stock. Identifying lead personnel to drive this and confirm requirement for funding strategy. It is also recommended that the Council with partners could commission a full buildings survey on the swimming pools and sports halls, where necessary, to understand the cost and feasibility of bringing the stock up to date, if possible.
- Improve access to meet demand, and to continue to develop the community use of sport facilities on private and education sites. It is recommended that further work be completed to ensure longer-term community access at sites with unsecured access for community use.
- The Active Partnership for Oxfordshire; Oxfordshire Activity and Sports Partnership (OASP), have a dedicated team that engage with education facilities across the county and work with local authorities to improve access to current facilities and invest in new facilities that meet the needs of both the schools and local residents. It is suggested that further support is sought

from OASP to deliver this recommendation.

- Ensure that sports facility charges are reasonable in terms of affordability to residents, and are comparable with similar facilities elsewhere. To keep community accessible sports facility charges under review and benchmark against nearest neighbouring authorities.

PROVIDE

- Ensure, as far as possible, that any new sports facilities, provided as part of future educational provision in South Oxfordshire, are designed for curricular, extra-curricular, community and sports development use and made available for community use out of school hours. Statement to be included within appropriate planning policy, if possible, so it can be carried through into decisions on development. Check that any proposed school sports facilities in South Oxfordshire have appropriate external lighting, car parking and changing facilities to enable community use.
- Support proposals that help address the need for sports facilities in the district (subject to the outcome of any options appraisal and feasibility study for the development of sports facilities across the district). Provide support to ensure development meets the needs of the district. Help guide investment into new facilities and the expansion of existing ones to meet new demands that cannot be met by existing provision. Consideration should also be given to the delivery of Sport England's Local Leisure Offer to give a greater spread of provision within the district in part to reduce reliance on car/reduce the length of journeys required to access a facility.
- Ensure that new facilities and their use are planned, managed and promoted to ensure that they lie at the heart of their local communities. Ensure they are easily accessible to all, thus reducing the need to travel, and / or work is progressed to help ensure that transport connectivity (while prioritising low carbon and active modes of travel first) are delivered in South Oxfordshire.
- When planning for major new developments and links to sports facilities, planning officers should consider the principles established by Sport England / Public Health England's Active Design Guidance. Good design incorporating low carbon and carbon-reducing measures and innovations such as sustainable drainage systems, rainwater recycling, electric car and bike charging points, biomass boilers, the greater use of natural light / Passivhaus design and underfloor heating, solar power for electricity generation should be considered wherever feasible.
- Ensure that new developments (e.g. residential, commercial and retail) contribute where appropriate towards the development and enhancement of financially viable sports facilities to meet identified needs, priority being given to projects identified in this Strategy. Develop costed facility priorities and incorporate these into the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- Explore opportunities for collaborative working between neighbouring authorities to maximise cross-boundary usage. Maintain and develop relationship with Oxford City, Reading and Buckinghamshire councils.
- Develop partnerships working between Council departments, health agencies, facility operators, schools, colleges, NGBs, and local sports clubs to expand the range of affordable and accessible opportunities for both residents and visitors to South Oxfordshire.

Strategic Site On-site / Off-site Provision

As already noted above, strategic housing allocation sites present a significant opportunity to host facilities required as a result of demand which arises from their population, and also as locations for new facilities to help address wider demand across the sub-area or reasonable functional or spatial catchment.

The tables below include recommendations for the contribution that the strategic housing sites in all sub-areas can make to provision of facilities. These are based on the sites that we have been advised can still be influenced / informed by the outcomes of the LFAS. Off-site contributions for some sports are also summarised here, but are set out in detail in the assessment reports.

Recommendations for non-pipeline sites are flexible, however, as opportunities presented are a starting point which should continue to be informed by detailed discussions during the delivery phase of the strategy (Stage E).

Summary of On-site / Off-site Sport and Leisure Facility Provision at Strategic Housing Sites

Strategic Site	On-site requirements	Off-site requirements
Culham (West sub- area)	New MUGA, tennis and netball courts: explore opportunity for a new multi-use games area that can be used for netball and tennis, and can be made available for extensive public use. Consideration should be given to sports-lighting the MUGA, in order to maximise the community use throughout the year.	Financial contributions should be secured towards the off- site leisure facilities including swimming pool improvements at Abbey Sports Centre in Berinsfield.
Didcot North-east (West sub area)	A new 4-court (L:34.5m x W:20m x H:7.5m) sports hall at this site. New sports facilities should be able to provide for all sports at the recreational level and for club development with CUAs.	Financial contributions should be secured towards the off- site leisure facilities including new learner pool at Didcot Wave Leisure Pool.

Strategy Recommendations by Sub Area

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

In practice, the objectives are to:

- Protect existing facilities: Sport England seeks to help protect sports and recreational buildings and land, and expects these to be retained or enhanced as part of redevelopment unless an assessment has demonstrated that there is an excess of provision and they are surplus to requirements or clear evidence supports their relocation.
- Enhance the quality, accessibility and management of existing facilities: to make the best use of existing sports facilities through improving their quality, access and management. Using the supporting advice of Sport England and NGBs, ensure efficient facility management for community access to school sites.
- Provide new facilities to meet demand: Sport England seeks to ensure that communities have access to sufficient, high-quality sports facilities that are fit for purpose. Guiding investment into new facilities and the expansion of existing ones to meet new demands that cannot be met by existing provision.

The following tables contain a list of the priority recommendations to 'enhance' existing facilities and 'provide' new facilities, where necessary, relating to facilities in each sub area and the actions required to deliver them. The facilities to be 'protected' as part of this strategy have been included in the full Action Plan shown in Appendix 2.

Indicative time frames and/or priorities could be as follows (although it is recognised that many actions will run concurrently and/or take advantage of opportunities arising):

- Short term (1-3 years): Ongoing and very important; to be addressed now.
- Medium term (3-8 years) and long term (8+ years): Important: to be addressed and planned for in Council decision making and policy.

Priorities in North Sub-area

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
Little Milton Recreation Ground	MUGA	MUGA is worn and/or damaged, barely usable and does not meet basic expectations.	Protect and Enhance – Maximise the use of existing assets by improving the quality of existing MUGA.	SODC	Medium	CIL

Priorities in West Sub-area

Site Name	Facility Type	Issue / Opportunity	Key Action(s)	Lead Partners to deliver action	Timescale (Priority)	Resources
Culham	New MUGA	In order to meet future demand from new residents, a new MUGA should be considered at this Strategic Housing site.	Provide – Continue to support the development of a new multi-use games area that can be used for netball and tennis, and can be made available for extensive public use.	SODC	Medium	S106
Didcot Wave Leisure Pool	Swimming pool Gym	Swimming pool and gym are ‘uncomfortably busy’ (above 80% used capacity) during peak periods. Didcot BSC are regular users, but must also use pool at Oratory Prep. School to meet demand.	Protect and Enhance – Continue to retain the attractiveness of facilities to residents. Provide – Explore the opportunity for a new 20m x 10m teaching pool annexed to the current Leisure Pool building, to provide additional water	SODC SODC	Ongoing Short	Various resources (see Funding Opportunities in Appendix 1)

			space on-site that can free up space in the Leisure Pool.			
Didcot Leisure Centre	Sports hall Squash courts	<p>The squash courts are 'Below Average' quality and need to be improved to meet the expectations of users.</p> <p>Kinetics Gymnastics use the sports halls and have a large waiting list. A dedicated single facility is a continual ambition for the club in order to offer time/space to meet demand.</p>	<p>Protect and Enhance – Squash courts should be retained and the quality enhanced to meet the demand for 'pay and play' squash in the West sub area. Courts should be retained to meet future demand for squash.</p> <p>Provide - Explore opportunities for Kinetics Gymnastics to have a dedicated single facility in order to offer more time/space to meet demand.</p>	<p>SODC</p> <p>British Gymnastics</p>	<p>Short</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p>CIL</p> <p>Officer time</p>
Didcot Girls' School	Sports hall	<p>Didcot Girls' School has scope to increase availability in the weekly peak period to reduce the proportion of capacity used to a comfortable level.</p>	<p>Protect and Enhance – Continue to support user clubs and work with facility provider to secure CUAs for existing users.</p> <p>Enhance –Work with the school to increase the number of hours available for community use.</p>	SODC	Short	Officer time
Didcot North- East Leisure Facility	Sports hall	<p>There is high future demand for sports-hall activities in the West sub-area.</p>	<p>Provide – Explore opportunity for a new 4-court (L:34.5m x W:20m x H:7.5m) sports hall at this site.</p> <p>New sports facilities should be able to provide for all</p>	SODC	Medium	Various resources (see Funding Opportunities in Appendix 1)

			sports at the recreational level and for club development, and have CUAs.			
Edmonds Park (Didcot)	Tennis courts Netball court MUGA	Tennis courts, netball courts and MUGA are old and outdated. The facilities are unattractive to consumers and do not meet basic expectations.	Protect and Enhance – Maximise the use of existing assets by improving the quality of existing facilities.	LTA, Didcot Town Council	Short	CIL
Europa School	Sports hall	Oxfordshire National Badminton are the main junior badminton providers in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. The organisation runs weekly county-level sessions for 100 junior (5-18-year-olds) at Europa School.	Protect and Enhance – Continue to support user clubs and work with facility provider to secure CUAs for existing users.	SODC	Short	Officer time
Great Western Drive Park (Didcot)	MUGA	MUGA is 'Below Average' quality. Usable but does not meet consumer expectations.	Protect and Enhance – Maximise the use of existing assets by improving the quality of existing MUGA.	Didcot Town Council	Medium	CIL
Ladygrove Park (Didcot)	Tennis courts Netball court MUGA	Tennis courts, netball courts and MUGA are old and outdated. The facilities are unattractive to consumers and do	Protect and Enhance – Maximise the use of existing assets by improving the quality of existing facilities.	LTA, Didcot Town Council	Short	LTA, CIL
Southern Community Centre	MUGA	Install sports-lights where appropriate (i.e., demand identified) to increase availability of MUGAs.	Protect and Enhance – Maximise the use of existing assets by installing sports-lighting for all-year utilisation of MUGA.	Didcot Town Council	Medium	CIL
Willowbrook Leisure	Sports hall	Issues with staffing means the hall	Protect and Enhance –	SODC	Short	Officer time

Centre (Didcot)	Studios	must be booked by clubs well in advance. At weekends, the sports hall is used solely for the 'Bounce Park'.	Investigate whether the Centre would increase opening hours of facilities. It may be difficult due to the nature of this site, but this increased community offer may help to meet demand.	Didcot Town Council		
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Scenarios

For this study we have used Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) data for swimming pools and sports halls in South Oxfordshire. The FPM is a computerised model which helps assess the strategic provision of community sports facilities. It has been developed as a means of assessing requirements for different types of community sports facilities on a local, regional or national scale; and helping local authorities determine an adequate level of sports facility provision to meet their local needs.

The FPM uses census information at output area level to help establish the profile of the population, including, age, gender, and Index of Multiple Deprivation scores. These are all used in the model to estimate the demand for sports facilities.

The FPM also uses the information on the road network (Ordnance Survey MasterMap Highways Network) to estimate how people are prepared to travel. This is essential in helping to understand whether the current supply of sports facilities are in the right place to meet the potential demand.

An important feature of the FPM is that it's prescriptive and not predictive in that it does not provide precise estimates of the use of proposed facilities. Instead, it prescribes an appropriate level of provision for any defined area in relation to demand – this reflects national expectations and policies. The actual usage of a facility will be determined by a range of factors including management and promotional policies, programming and the quality or attractiveness of the facility concerned.

As the demand parameters are based on achieved levels of participation, Sport England believes this level of provision represents good practice rather than some unattainable ideal. This is because the levels of use/demand/throughput visits are what could be produced based on what has been observed at existing facilities. This makes the broad estimates of potential throughput generated by the FPM potentially useful when considering policy options.

The outputs from the FPM assessment provide a needs assessment and evidence base that contributes to securing inward investment for swimming pool and sports hall modernisation and possible further provision, and development of planning policies for the provision of indoor sports facilities. The main report (displayed in the LFAS Assessment Report Appendices) sets out the full set of findings under each of the assessment headings. It has provided a useful starting point and baseline for understanding the supply and demand balance for these sports facilities.

The 'local bespoke' FPM has tested different 'what if' scenarios in provision and changes in demand, this includes testing the impact of opening, relocating and closing facilities and the impact population changes would have on the needs of the sports facilities.

The FPM modelling runs are to provide:

- Run 1 – a baseline assessment of provision in 2023
- Run 2 – a forward assessment of demand for pools and halls and their distribution, based on the projected changes in population between 2023 and 2041 and changes in supply

- Run 3 – an assessment of the impact of the modelled options for changes in supply in South Oxfordshire (and Vale of White Horse) has in meeting the demand for pools and halls and their distribution up to 2041.

Swimming pools

The changes in swimming pool supply in South Oxfordshire included in the modelling runs are:

- Run 2 – Addition of a learner pool at Didcot Wave Leisure Centre, which is modelled to open in 2025.

INTERVENTIONS

Modernisation of the swimming pools is the key intervention. Based on the FPM findings the centres for modernisation, in order, are:

Sports halls

The changes in sports hall supply in South Oxfordshire included in the FPM modelling runs are:

- Runs 2 and 3 – Didcot North East Leisure Facility (4-courts) is modelled to open in 2028

The headline strategic overview is that South Oxfordshire's sports halls can comfortably meet the current and future demand. However, five sites are uncomfortably busy in 2041 (more than 80% of capacity used). South Oxfordshire's population and demand for sports halls increase significantly to 2041. Provision of Didcot North East Leisure Facility is supported. Didcot has the greatest demand in the district in 2023 and 2041 but in each run only one sports hall in the town is uncomfortably full. There is a large increase in demand in Berinsfield between 2023 and 2041.

There is no identified need to increase provision beyond that modelled. However, there is still a need to increase availability for community use in parts of the district. This will achieve a better overall balance between supply and demand. The educational supply offers the most scope.

Interventions and Next Steps

The quantitative findings identify that there is sufficient supply across the district to meet demand in 2023 and 2041. However, the distribution of demand and the hours the sports halls are available for community use, especially in the areas of highest demand in Didcot, mean that some sports halls are uncomfortably full at peak times. Therefore, the interventions in order are to:

- Increase access for community use at key sites and provide a more balanced distribution of met demand across the district.
- Protect the educational sports hall supply for community use by provision of community use agreements (CUA).

First Intervention

Based on the FPM findings, there are four sites that are uncomfortably full and have scope to increase availability and, therefore, capacity at peak times. The sites include:

Didcot Girls School:

- Four-court hall (33m x 18m) and activity hall (18m x 10m), which allow flexibility in programming activities and maximises occupancy

- Not been modernised, the main hall is currently 17 years old and the activity hall 43 years old
- Located in the area of highest demand in the district
- Estimated to be uncomfortably busy at peak times in Runs 2 and 3 and meet the fifth most visits at a site
- Scope to increase availability in the weekly peak period to reduce the proportion of capacity used to a comfortable level

Second Intervention

The educational sector is the largest provider of sports halls in South Oxfordshire, at 11 sites in 2023 and 12 sites in 2041, they account for between 65% and 67% of the total sites across the runs. As evidenced by the first intervention, the schools are important in meeting demand.

While there is sufficient capacity to meet demand across the district, this will be jeopardised if access to educational sites is not protected and enhanced selectively. Therefore, it is important to protect the educational sports hall supply for community use. If CUAs are not in place, these need to be negotiated and agreed.

If there are any new or replacement educational sports halls planned, then it will be important to negotiate a CUA as part of the planning process. Sport England will advise on the requirements as part of this. Beyond putting the CUA in place, it is essential that South Oxfordshire Council monitors the actual delivery of the CUA.

“Do nothing”

A “do nothing” or absence of a strategy scenario has major implications for providing for both formal and informal sport. Demand is not fully catered for by supply at the current time in most sport facility types, particularly swimming pools and sports halls. With projected population and participation growth there would be a very significant lack of provision with major impacts on physical, mental and social health. Doing nothing also implies no improvements to facility quality, meaning that capacity to accommodate even current levels of play would be substantially reduced over time, particularly as sports hall surfaces degrade and require replacement. Doing nothing also implies that new provision or financial contributions would not be sought from development, a key source of funding and locations of new additional facilities.

Action Plan Monitoring and Review

Following consultation on the draft strategy and any changes made as a result, confirmed recommendations and actions will be set out and monitored in a “live” action plan framework which members of the steering group will have a responsibility to update and implement.

As referred to in the strategy recommendations, it is important that the strategy and impact of its actions are monitored to ensure that supply matches demand “on the ground”. This is particularly important later during the strategy period given that future demand in the longer-term is less accurate given that it is based on projections. As actions are implemented, a “plan, deliver, monitor, manage” approach should be employed.

It is recommended that the strategy is reviewed after a period of 5 years or before this time should substantive changes be made to supply, demand or implications of change likely to take place during the strategy period (such as significant confirmed or adopted changes in levels of housing or population growth). Equally, other triggers for a review

before this time could be changes to planning or sports policy or the methodology used to assess facilities or the desire to better understand likely provision required beyond the current adopted development plan periods.