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Bedfordshire

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Chapter one: Leisure Facilities Strategy

Technical guidance

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Prepared by Neil Allen Associates in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council

Neil Allen Associates Registered Office:

20 Brook Road, Lymm, Cheshire, WA139AH

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

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1. Introduction and Background

The Leisure Strategy

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

Planning Status

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

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

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

Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy

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

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

Purpose and Functions of Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy

- 1.11. The primary purpose and function of Chapter 1 is as Technical Guidance which will expand upon and provided guidance on the application of Policy 22 'Leisure and Open Space Provision' in the pre submission Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire 2013.
- 1.12. It provides the evidence base and policy standards/facility requirements to secure new or improved indoor facility provision as a result of new housing development. It will apply to both new on-site facilities provided within a new housing development site, and developer contributions secured to provide / improve off-site facilities which are required to mitigate the additional demand placed upon them by development.
- 1.13. In addition, the facility assessment and identification of need in this Chapter can be used by facility providers such as town and parish councils, sports clubs etc. as evidence to assist them in securing external funding to improve/deliver the facilities within their ownership.

Planning Obligations / Community Infrastructure Levy

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

The Role of Central Bedfordshire Council

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

Vision and Objectives

Vision

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

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

Objectives

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

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

2. Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy

Scope

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

Methodology

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

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

Population Forecasting

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

3. Context

General Context

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

Population

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

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

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

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

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

Other Socio Economic Indicators

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

Participation in Sport

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

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

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

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

Market Segmentation

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

Planning Policy Context

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Implications for Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy

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

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

4. Summary of Audit and Assessment

Audit and Assessment

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

Sports Halls

Overview

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

Summary of 2012 Situation

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

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

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

Summary of 2022 Situation

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

Possible Facility Scenarios 2022

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

Consultation

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

Consultation 1

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

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

Key Issues

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

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

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

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

Consultation 2

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

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

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

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

Swimming Pools

Overview

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

Summary of 2012 situation

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

Summary of 2022 situation

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

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

Possible Facility Scenarios 2022

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

Consultation

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

Consultation 1

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

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

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

Key Issues

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

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

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

Consultation 2

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

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

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

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

Health and Fitness

Overview

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

Summary of 2012 Situation

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

Future Provision

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

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

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

Consultation

Consultation 1

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

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

Key Issues

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

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

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

Consultation 2

No comments were received specifically on health and fitness facilities.

Squash

Overview

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

Summary of 2012 Situation

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

Future Provision

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

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

Consultation

Consultation 1

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

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

Key Issues

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

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

Consultation 2

No comments were received specifically on squash facilities.

Indoor Bowls

Overview

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

Summary of 2012 Situation

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

Future Provision

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

Consultation

Consultation 1

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

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

Key Issues

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

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

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

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

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

Consultation 2

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

Indoor Tennis

Overview

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

Summary of 2012 Situation

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

Future Provision

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

Consultation

Consultation 1

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

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

Key Issues

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

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

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

Consultation 2

No comments specifically on indoor tennis were received.

Specialist Facilities

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

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

5. Leisure Facilities Strategy

Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy - Policies

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



Dunstable & Houghton Regis (DHR) Placemaking Area

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

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

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

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

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

North Placemaking Area (comprising former East and West areas)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Specialist Facilities

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

- SF1** Identify in consultation with NGBs the sites that provide an existing specialist function and seek to protect and enhance this specialist role, and identify existing or new centres (that are proposed elsewhere in strategy) that could be designed to meet specialist needs where appropriate. NGBs are not often in the situation of being able to meet their own specialist needs for facilities, and the design of existing and proposed halls and other venues should take into account any reasonable specialist facilities so identified. Sport England and NGB technical design guidance should be utilised in the planning and design.
- SF 2** Incorporate where appropriate the specialist needs of other indoor sports at existing centres or when developing and designing new sports halls. NGBs are not often in the situation of being able to meet their own specialist needs for facilities, and the design of existing and proposed halls and other venues should take into account any reasonable specialist facilities so identified. Sport England and NGB technical design guidance should be utilised in the planning and design.
- Specialist requirements for archery, badminton and other sports not highlighted in consultation (table tennis, netball, cricket nets or other sports) should be incorporated in a hierarchy of sports halls) in a coordinated manner, particularly on school sites where management would be facilitated.

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

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

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

6. Delivery of the Strategy

Funding

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

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

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

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

Housing Growth

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

Developer Contributions

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 Planning Obligations

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

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

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

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

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

- 6.12 There are different ways that swimming pool and sports hall needs directly related to housing development can be assessed. Sport England has developed the sports facility calculator (SFC) which projects a scale of need for each facility type based on the projected population change over a defined period. It is demand based and simply setting out what a total population increase will generate in terms of the scale of demand for each facility type based on applying this population increase to current rates and frequencies of sports participation in swimming and hall sports.
- 6.13 Central Bedfordshire Council has set out the proposed level of housebuilding to take place in the area to 2022 which, in turn, will increase the Central Bedfordshire population over the plan period. In 2012 the total population is x people and by 2022 it is projected to increase to y total population. So an increase of z people (rounded). Application of the Sport England sports facility calculator (SFC) assessment to a population increase of z to identify the scale of sports facility provision it will generate is set out below in the table below.
- 6.14 As Central Bedfordshire Council has yet to approve its approach to the Community Infrastructure Levy, the Leisure Strategy action plan will identify the requirement to develop the methodology for calculating contributions for CIL and S106 for inclusion in Leisure Strategy when the Council's approach has been decided.

Action Planning

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. Design Guidance

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

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

Sport England

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

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

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

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

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

8. Monitoring and Review

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

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

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

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

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

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

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

CB - Central Bedfordshire

CBC - Central Bedfordshire Council

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

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

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

Unmet demand - demand for a facility that is not satisfied

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

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

HRLCAG – Houghton Regis Leisure Centre Action Group

HRHCBC – Houghton Regis Hard Core Badminton Club

LA – Local authority

LTA – Lawn Tennis Association

NGB – national governing body of sport

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

ONS – Office of National Statistics

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

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

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

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

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