

# Northampton Playing Fields Report

## Key Issues and Recommendations

April 2011



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# Key Issues and Recommendations

## Introduction

Northampton Borough contains a diverse wealth of parks, open spaces and sporting facilities. These spaces cover over 1670 hectares and vary between historical parks and gardens, local amenity spaces, equipped and natural play, manmade corridors along the River Nene and sports facilities.

The aspirations of the authority and the County Sports Partnership are to raise participation levels in physical activity across Northampton. Active People surveys (Sport England 2007 – 2010) indicate that sports participation in the Borough is declining.

It is predicted that Northampton's population will grow to 225,000 by 2021 and 232,000 by 2026. The Council considers that sufficient planning policy controls exist to protect Northampton's existing open space and playing pitches. However, the need for these spaces, in particular pitches, is required to be sufficiently evidenced to protect them from the pressure for alternative land uses that might exist to meet development needs associated with growth. At the same time, demand for pitches is likely to increase as the population grows. In order to meet these needs and reverse the trend in declining sports participation, there is also a need to provide evidence to support effective planning of additional pitch provision to ensure that there are sufficient pitches of the right quality, and in the right place.

The strategic and policy context for sport and recreation provision continues to evolve. Investment is under close scrutiny and there is significant pressure to achieve more and better services with fewer resources. As Sport England has stated: 'alongside this is a fresh drive for localism, promoting greater accountability for service delivery and improvement and giving more flexibility and responsibility for delivery to both local authorities and their communities'. This presents challenges as well as exciting opportunities for thinking innovatively about how services are delivered.

Neil Allen Associates was therefore commissioned in November 2010 to produce a Playing Fields Report for Northampton Borough Council. The study updates the existing strategy (Northampton Borough Council March 2005) which identified a mixture of poor quality pitches and some key areas of unmet demand.

## Scope

The report considers the adequacy of provision for key pitch sports in Northampton, specifically:

- Football, including Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs)
- Cricket
- Rugby
- Hockey.

For clarity and readability, this document is split into two sections, specifically:

- Local Needs Assessment Evidence Base
- Playing Fields Issues and Recommendations report.

The local needs assessment provides a full background to pitch provision in Northampton, the demand for the identified pitches and a full evidence base for the recommended strategy and actions.

This is the issues and recommendations report. It draws upon the key findings of the needs assessment. It also identifies the issues and summarises the actions that it is recommended Northampton Borough Council and partners should adopt in moving forwards.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Report**

The objective of developing a playing fields strategy is to ensure that the following issues are managed:

- The need to provide sufficient number, location and quality of pitches associated with a growing population both within and on the edges of the Borough. This is likely to both increase the demand for playing pitches overall and also place extra pressures on some existing pitches
- The national and local objectives to increase participation in physical activity
- The change in sporting trends and improvements in sports technology that create new demands for different facilities.

In conjunction with the local needs assessment the issues and recommendations report seeks to meet the following aims:

- Provide a robust and up to date picture of supply and demand, taking into account the changes that have taken place in the Borough, particularly with regards the rationalisation of school playing field facilities and the signing of one of the largest Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts in the country
- Inform decision making on the need for new and enhanced pitch provision both now, and as the population grows and the profile of the population changes
- Support the creation of appropriate policy within the Local Development Framework, including those related to levels of developer contributions and facilitate decisions on the protection, enhancement, creation and, where appropriate, the disposal of playing fields
- Guide a strategic and innovative approach to the delivery of playing pitches in the Borough up to 2026, linking with National Governing Body, regional and local priorities and in the context of the challenging financial environment.

This issues and recommendations report and needs assessment has been developed following the methodology outlined in 'Towards a Level Playing Field – A Manual for the Production of Playing Pitch Strategies' (TaLPF) (Sport

England 2002). It also draws on the principles of National Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) 'Planning for Open space, Sport and Recreation' (Department for Communities and Local Government 2002). As well as forming part of the Local Development Framework evidence base, the strategy can contribute to the achievement of many local strategic aims and objectives. These links are summarised in Table 1.

*Table 1- Contribution of Playing Pitch Issues and recommendations report towards local and regional priorities*

Report	Key Aims and Objectives	Links to this Report
<p><b>Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 - 2011</b> (Northampton Borough Council)</p>	<p>The key objectives of the strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living and thriving – deliver sustainable growth, promote sustainable transport, ensure that green infrastructure meets the needs of residents, improve the quality of life for residents and develop and enhance the cultural and leisure offer</li> <li>• Fit and healthy – improve people’s health and lifestyle and design health into new growth and regeneration</li> <li>• Safe and secure – reduce crime and anti social behaviour, improve the environment that people live in, improve cohesion and pride in communities and improve the quality of life for children and young people</li> <li>• Children and young people – promote positive activities for children and young people.</li> </ul>	<p>Will contribute to the targets set out in the Community Strategy.</p>
<p><b>Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for Northampton</b> (Northampton Borough Council 2009)</p>	<p>The aims of the strategy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justify and prioritise improvement, management, maintenance and retention of open spaces</li> <li>• Deliver diverse and multi functional green spaces</li> <li>• Provide a framework for community, voluntary sector and private engagement</li> <li>• Provide a basis to secure appropriate and justified planning contributions</li> <li>• Enable the Council and partners to respond strategically and invest in parks and open spaces</li> <li>• Monitor and evaluate open spaces to support continuous improvement.</li> </ul>	<p>Updates the existing evidence base; supports the aims and objectives.</p>
<p><b>Cultural Strategy 2008 - 2013</b> (Northampton Borough Council)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to lobby for sustainable public transport networks linked to cultural facilities</li> <li>• Encourage the development of older people in cultural activities and identify and remove the barriers to participation by socially excluded groups and individuals</li> <li>• Make it easier for individuals and communities to participate in cultural activities and actively encourage and increase participation</li> <li>• Ensure that public buildings, facilities and spaces are well maintained and sufficient funds set aside for long-term maintenance and refurbishment and to encourage other agencies to do likewise</li> </ul>	<p>Will contribute to the targets set out in the Cultural Strategy.</p>

**Context**

## Population

Up to 2026, the total population in Northampton Borough is projected to increase by 10%. When splitting Northampton's population into age bands based on five year intervals, the three bands containing the most people are those covering 20 to 34 year olds. This is in principle the 'adults playing pitch sports' range. Taking into account the natural growth and change in the population profile, this means that the peak time for adults playing pitch sports is now (up to 2015). At this point the three bands will 'move on' to be replaced with what are currently the 'junior playing pitch sports' a range which contains a lower number of people.

In theory, this future lower number of people of the age likely to play pitch sports could mean reduced demand for pitches. However, it could also be said that if there is an increase in the proportion of people actively engaging with pitch sports, it will not result in such a drop in demand. Therefore the demand for pitches will be dependent on activity rates within each of the population bands, allied to the overall size of the population.

Natural population growth in Northampton points towards an ageing population. However, the Borough will see the development of some significant new housing areas and will also be affected by population growth in developments on its borders. The population of these is likely to be a younger demographic and as a consequence, could actually drive increases in participation.

Housing developments that may have significant impact upon the demand for playing fields include:

- Dallington Grange 3,500 homes
- Upton Lodge/ 1,688 homes
- Northampton Upton Park 1,000 homes
- Pineham 946 homes
- St Crispin and Princess Marina Hospital 774 homes
- Nunn Mills and Ransome Road 1,800 homes
- Northampton South 1,000 homes
- Northampton South of Brackmills 1,000 homes
- Norwood Farm 781 homes
- Northampton North of Whitehills 1,004 homes
- Northampton West 1,500 homes
- Northampton North 2,000 homes

## Adult Sports Participation in Northampton

The Northampton rate of adult sports participation rose from 20.4% up to 24.1% before declining to 18.4% over the course of 2006-2010 according to surveys undertaken annually by Sport England (Active People Surveys 1 – 4, 2006 – 2010) that measure the number of people taking part in 3 x 30 minutes of moderate sporting or physical activity 3 times a week. Northampton is now below the County average at 21.4%. There is not a consistent pattern of increases in adult sports participation across all sports. This in part can be explained by the profile of the dominant population groups in Northampton.

Based on the Active People Surveys, Sport England has developed a tool to measure the profile of the population of an area by dividing the population into 19 market segments, based on their characteristics. These segments help us to understand individuals likely participation in sport and physical activity and determine peoples attitudes and reasons for playing (or not playing sport).

Analysis of the profile of the population in Northampton indicates that 3 of the 6 highest market segments have lower rates of sports participation when compared to national averages. These groups are Elsie and Arnold (60+ age group), Roger and Joy (50+ age group) and Philip (male aged 40+), whilst the 4th segment Elaine (aged 46-55) has a participation rate in line with national averages. This suggests that overall, the population of Northampton has a lower than average propensity to participate in sport and physical activity, justifying the lower levels of participation. Added to this, these 4 market segments are not groups that typically participate in pitch sports, meaning that fewer residents are likely to play pitch sports than the national average. That said, there are some sectors of the population who do have a propensity to play pitch sports and who will benefit from effective provision.

The Sport England Active People 4 Survey estimates the number of people playing each of the four sports reviewed and also estimates the amount of people that “would like to play” for each sport. This total sport population is then expressed as a percentage of the overall Northampton population.

Despite lower levels of participation overall, the Active People 4 Survey (Sport England 2010) estimates that the amount of residents participating in football, or wanting to play, is marginally above the national averages. Football is the dominant sport, and far exceeds the participation numbers of the other sports. For cricket and hockey participation is only just below and participation in rugby is in line with averages. This is illustrated in Table 2.



*Table 2: Total adult sport population for football, cricket, hockey and rugby union and then expressed as a percentage of the total Northampton population (2011).*

Sport	Adult Population who do play	Adult Population who would like to play	Total adult sport population	Adult Sport population as % of the 2011 Northampton population	Adult Sport population as % of the 2011 England population
Football	11,470	2,270	13,740	6.3%	6.2%
Cricket	1,440	685	2,125	0.97%	1.1%
Hockey	525	340	865	0.39%	0.4%
Rugby Union	545	600	1,145	0.52%	0.52%

Table 2 above indicates that there are small levels of latent demand for each of the pitch sports (for each sport there are adults who would like to play who currently do not) based on current participation and projected levels. This suggests that there are opportunities to increase participation in pitch sports in the Borough.

## Summary of Issues identified and Recommendations

The key recommendations for the delivery of a strategy are set out in the pages that follow. Each recommendation will contribute to the achievement of the Vision, which is:

*"An accessible, high quality and sustainable network of playing fields that provides opportunity for residents of and visitors to Northampton to play pitch sports. The network caters for all standards of play, from grass roots to elite"*

Recommendations are derived from a detailed programme of analysis of the existing situation and consultations, as well as calculations and scenario testing. All contribute to the achievement of the key objectives of the study and seek to address the issues identified.

Together, these priorities and recommendations guide decision making on the future delivery of playing fields across the Borough. The local needs assessment provides full background to all the issues identified and includes all calculations used to produce these conclusions.

To initiate the issues and recommendations report development process, Analysis Areas were established for the borough. These were based on neighbourhood areas, and helped us manage the consultation, audit and overall analysis of the results. It also allows examination of data at a more detailed local level and provides a geographical background to the analysis.

Map 1 illustrates the analysis areas used for this Playing Pitch Report.



"Northampton  
Analysis Areas.pdf"

## Football

### Overview

74% of all pitches in Northampton are grass pitches dedicated to football. Of these, more than half cater for youth or junior participants. The full stock of pitches comprises:

- 92 adult football pitches (of which 88 are available for community use)
- 60 junior football pitches (of which 55 are available for community use)
- 36 mini soccer pitches (of which 34 are available for community use).

Northampton Borough Council are the largest provider of football pitches (92 pitches / 57%) and the majority of pitches are multi pitch sites. As well as facilities provided by the Borough Council, pitches are also provided by Parish Councils, voluntary sports clubs and private / corporate sites. 30% of all football pitches are located at schools, emphasising the importance of school sites. 93% of all football pitches are available for community use, which is a high proportion in comparison with most other authorities. The location of pitches is illustrated in Map 2 below.



"Northampton  
Football Pitches.pdf"

The Active People 4 Survey (Sport England 2010) analyses participation on an Output Area Basis (using Office of National Statistics boundaries and providing an understanding of participation at a very local level). It indicates that across Northampton with the exception of 2 Output Areas (there are 129 in total), between 5% -10% of adults participate in football. The exceptions are one output area in the centre of the borough where the percentage of adults participating in football is between 10% - 20%, and an area to the north east of the borough where only 2.1% - 5% adults participate.

Overall this shows that the rate of participation in football is consistent across the Borough. Analysis of the participation profile (Sport England Market Segmentation 2010) indicates that participation is by young adult males who play team sports on a very regular basis and for competitive sporting reasons. It is not casual irregular football participation. Confirming these findings, data collected as part of this playing fields report reveals that, reflecting the amount of space dedicated to pitch provision, football is the most popular sport in Northampton, with just over 70% of the total number of teams in the Borough playing. There are 329 formal community teams, split as follows;

- 154 adult football teams
- 110 junior football teams
- 65 mini soccer teams.

While demand for senior football has remained relatively static, there have been recent booms in mini and junior soccer, from 82 teams in total in 2004 / 2005 to 175 teams now. For senior teams, there is a focus on Sunday morning

football (70% of teams), while participation in junior soccer is more evenly spread across the day.

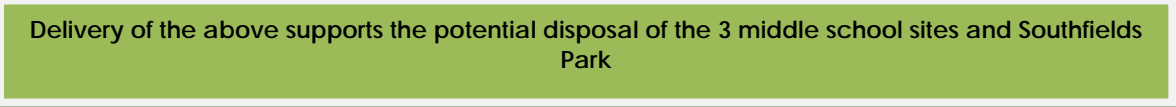
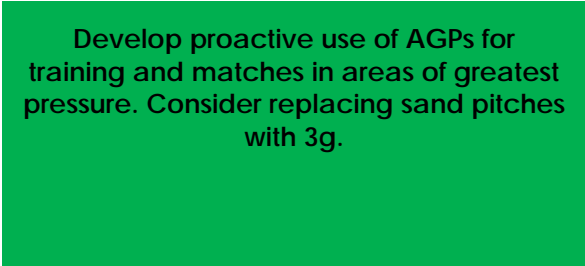
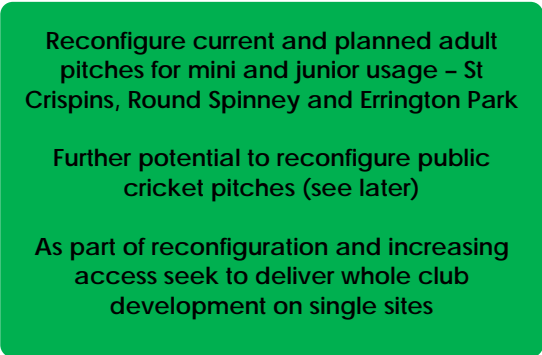
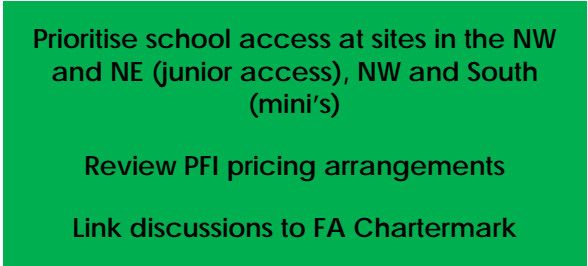
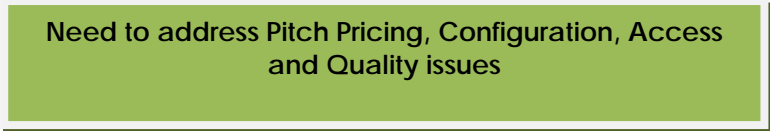
When considering the proportion of residents who would like to participate in football (Sport England Market Segmentation and Active People 4), almost universally across the Borough, between 1.1% and 2% of the Northampton adult population would like to play. The same 2 output areas as with current participation are the exceptions, with the central output area showing a “would like to” participation rate in football of between 2.1 – 5% of the adult population (indicating that in line with the higher participation rates, there are more people in this area who are of the right population profile to play football) whilst the output area to the NE of the borough has a lower “would like to” participation rate of between 0.1% - 1% of the population.

Overall, this suggests that there is limited latent demand for football. The profile of Northampton Borough residents means that the higher than average participation rate is particularly good, as residents have perhaps a lower propensity to participate than in some other areas of the country.

### **Key Issues and Recommendations**

The key issues emerging from the local needs assessment for football are summarised overleaf. The pages that follow then provide a summary of the evidence collected and further detail to support the issues identified.

Key Issues - Football



## Key Issues and Recommendations

**KEY ISSUE 1** - There are pressures on existing junior and mini football pitches but more than sufficient adult football pitches to meet current and future requirements.

### Summary of Evidence collated

When taking into account all playing pitches in Northampton Borough that are available for community use (public provision including PFI schools), and the demand from community teams, there is more than enough provision. This is summarised in Table 3.

*Table 3 – Adequacy of Pitch Provision across Northampton Borough 2011*

Scenario	Adequacy of Pitch Provision (Shortfall / Surplus – number of pitches)		
	Adult Football - Shortfall / Surplus	Junior Football - Shortfall / Surplus	Mini Football - Shortfall / Surplus
Central	2.4	2.0	8.0
West	13	8.9 <sup>10</sup>	-4.0
South	7	9.4	-7.5
East	12.5	6.1	5.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>1.5</b>

While Table 3 demonstrates significant surpluses, research indicates that prices at PFI school sites (set at a level to ensure that the pitches can be reinstated to the required level for school curricular use) are considered by users to be high, and restrict use of these facilities. Evidence to suggest that the pricing is a barrier to access includes:

- 40% of clubs highlight price as an issue, with many specifically referencing the community use schools and PFI schools;
- Several schools indicate that they have been approached for community use, but been turned down due to the costs involved
- There is only one PFI school currently being used by community teams (Delapre Primary School) despite pressures on existing pitches
- There is some limited evidence that clubs are travelling to use Parish Council and other pitches rather than using nearby schools.

To support this, analysis of pricing at PFI schools demonstrates that at £60, the fee to hire a pitch at a PFI school is almost double that to hire a senior Council pitch (including changing) and for juniors, is 77% higher. Prices at community schools are not substantially different to PFI schools. This price is higher than all comparators for both adult and junior pitches.

According to the PFI agreement, these prices should be set at a level that is 'affordable' and at a price similar to the national average as published annually by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability (CIPFA). The charging policy for the PFI schools is not in line with the CIPFA national average 2009-2010 which records an average of £50 hire of adult pitch with changing facilities. The £60 charge levied by the PFI schools is 17% higher.

Table 4 illustrates the implications of this barrier to use of these schools on the adequacy of pitches by providing an understanding of surpluses and deficiencies when all pitches at PFI schools are removed from the supply base. Pitches at community schools that are currently sustaining community use are included in calculations below.

**Table 4 – Adequacy of Community Use Provision 2011 (excluding PFI schools – except those of known use i.e. Northampton Academy, Delapre Primary School).**

Area	Adult Football - Shortfall / Surplus (no of pitches)	Junior Football - Shortfall / Surplus (no of pitches)	Mini Football - Shortfall / Surplus (no of pitches)
Central	1.4	1.0	8.0
North West	9.0	-2.1	-5.0
South	3.0	4.4	-7.5
North East	10.5	0.1	1.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>-3.5</b>

Table 4 illustrates that when removing the PFI Schools from the equation;

- The surplus of adult pitches decreases from 34.9 to 23.9;
- There are only just enough junior pitches to meet demand. This is made worse by the fact that almost half of junior play takes place during the peak times for senior football, meaning that many of the pitches are already in use by senior teams limiting pitch availability for junior games;
- Mini pitch provision falls from a surplus of 1.5 to a deficiency of -3.5.

While in the short term there remain sufficient pitches overall, it is clear that without the intended community use of school sites, pressures will increase. The figures in Table 4 are also reliant on the flexibility of kick off times for junior

football being maintained i.e. that demand is spread. Consultation with junior leagues and clubs identified perceived shortages of pitches, meaning that the balance between supply and demand is already narrowing.

There are 4 other (none PFI) schools with pitches that are also available for community use. Prices to hire these facilities are not significantly different from the PFI schools and some of these are not being utilised either. This could lead to questioning over the long-term security of the community use agreements. When the other school pitches are subtracted from the provision in association with the PFI schools (Delapre Primary and Northampton Academy still included):

- The surplus of adult pitches decreases to 21.9
- There becomes a shortfall of junior pitches (-2.6)
- The deficiency of mini pitches increases (-5.5).

#### *Future*

When taking into account projected future population growth, the importance of the school facilities becomes more apparent. Table 5 summarises the shortfalls and surpluses assuming that PFI schools remain inaccessible, while table 6 includes the PFI schools. Both tables include the other schools that are available for community use currently.

**Table 5 – Projected Shortfalls and Surpluses for Football in Northampton Borough (excluding PFI Schools) assuming current playing pitches are not added to through development.**

Area	2016			2021			2026		
	Adult Football	Junior Football	Mini Football	Adult Football	Junior Football	Mini Football	Adult Football	Junior Football	Mini Football
Central	1.4	1.0	8.0	1.4	1.0	8.0	1.5	1.0	8.1
West	8.8	-2.3	-6.2	8.2	-2.5	-6.6	7.4	-3.3	-7.2
South	2.0	3.4	-8.1	0.4	3.0	-9.5	-0.8	2.0	-10.3
East	10.5	0.1	1.0	10.6	0.2	1.1	10.7	0.2	1.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>-5.3</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>-7.0</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>-0.1</b>	<b>-8.1</b>



*Table 6 – Projected Shortfalls and Surpluses for Football (including PFI Schools) assuming current playing pitches are not added to through development.*

Area	2016			2021			2026		
	Adult Football	Junior Football	Mini Football	Adult Football	Junior Football	Mini Football	Adult Football	Junior Football	Mini Football
Central	2.4	2.0	8.0	2.4	2.0	8.0	2.5	2.0	8.1
West	12.8	8.7	-4.2	12.2	8.5	-4.6	11.4	8.0	-5.2
South	6.0	8.4	-8.1	4.4	8.0	-9.5	3.2	7.2	-10.3
East	12.5	6.1	5.0	12.6	6.2	5.1	12.7	6.2	5.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33.7</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>31.6</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>-1.0</b>	<b>29.9</b>	<b>23.5</b>	<b>-2.1</b>

As demonstrated in Tables 5 and 6, as the population grows, supply will become more closely balanced with demand if PFI schools are not used to accommodate community matches, and there will be shortfalls of mini and junior pitches (although these are offset by adult pitches). The balance of play, with a peak day of Sunday for both adults and juniors, will mean that there is a concentration of demand all at the same time. Increases in participation will intensify this situation and a lack of available pitches may start to inhibit club growth, particularly if appropriate improvements are not secured through S106 agreements and other proactive pitch improvement strategies. If PFI schools are made available and accessible, there are more than sufficient pitches across the Borough to support future need, although there may be localised deficiencies.

In addition to the growth within Northampton Borough, housing development on the periphery of the Borough is also likely to impact on demand for football pitches. Tables 7 and 8 illustrate the impact of this and demonstrate that the additional population growth will increase the demand for pitches.

*Table 7 – Projected Shortfalls and Surpluses for Football in Northampton Borough consider the growth on Northampton's Periphery (excluding PFI Schools) assuming current playing pitches are not added to through development.*

Area	2016			2021			2026		
	Adult Football	Junior Football	Mini Football	Adult Football	Junior Football	Mini Football	Adult Football	Junior Football	Mini Football
Central	1.4	1.0	8.0	1.4	1.0	8.0	1.4	0.9	8.0
West	8.7	-2.4	-6.2	7.7	-2.8	-7.0	6.6	-4.0	-7.5
South	1.9	3.3	-8.2	0.0	2.8	-9.8	-0.8	1.6	-11.0
East	10.4	-0.0	0.9	10.0	-0.2	0.6	9.8	-0.5	0.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>-5.4</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>-8.1</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>-1.9</b>	<b>-10.0</b>

*Table 8 – Projected Shortfalls and Surpluses for Football in Northampton Borough consider the growth on Northampton's Periphery (including PFI Schools) assuming current playing pitches are not added to through development.*

Area	2016			2021			2026		
	Adult Football	Junior Football	Mini Football	Adult Football	Junior Football	Mini Football	Adult Football	Junior Football	Mini Football
Central	2.4	2.0	8.0	2.4	2.0	8.0	2.5	2.0	8.1
West	12.7	8.6	-4.2	11.7	8.2	-5.0	10.6	7.5	-5.8
South	5.9	8.3	-8.2	4.0	7.8	-9.8	2.9	7.0	-10.5
East	12.4	6.0	4.9	12.0	5.8	4.6	11.8	5.7	4.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33.4</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>30.1</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>-2.1</b>	<b>27.7</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>-3.8</b>

While the Playing Pitch Model identifies the minimum number of pitches that are required to meet demand, a degree of spare capacity is required to allow rest and recovery of pitches and to accommodate peaks and troughs in demand. A strategic reserve of up to circa 10% is the usual norm. It must also be noted that while the supply of football pitches in the Borough is above that needed to meet current demand, there are opportunities to look across the sports and to use existing facilities to accommodate demand for cricket / rugby.

### Football 1

Respond to existing pressures on junior and mini pitches by re-designating surplus adult pitches into junior and mini facilities. The North West, South and East of the Borough, should be the focus for this action. Round Spinney and Errington Park should be considered, as they are positioned in appropriate locations and already provide for a mixture of senior and junior football. Upton County Park could provide further opportunities and the new pitches at St Crispins. Opportunities exist to designate additional junior and mini football pitches at Dallington Park; this is currently a central venue for girls soccer, which is an FA 'key priority'. Any re-designation of pitches should be undertaken in consultation with clubs.

### Football 2

To respond to projected future pressures on pitches, and to maximise the use of existing resources, review community use arrangements and pricing for PFI and community schools with the aim to secure affordable community use. There is a pitch booking system in place that can be used to provide an efficient and centralised approach to booking. Junior clubs in particular prefer local access to pitches and schools provide an important means of resourcing this.

Particular pressures are likely to be evident in the North West and North East (junior pitches) and the North West and South (mini pitches).

Given the location of projected pressures, access at the following sites should be a priority focus for reviewed arrangements:

- Millway Primary School
- Kingsthorpe Village School PFI school (pitches currently being re-laid but likely to be open for community use)
- Northampton High School for Girls
- Kingsthorpe College (pitch improvements required)
- Kingsthorpe Grove Primary School
- Weston Favell School
- Boothville Primary School
- Northampton School for Boys
- The Duston School.

### Football 3

Review pricing policies and bring PFI pricing in line with averages as published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountability. Consideration should be given to the introduction of concessionary rates for Charter Standard Clubs. This would encourage the development of high quality club environments and is a key priority of the FA moving forwards.

### Football 4

Given the surplus in adult pitch provision, provide junior and mini football pitches at the new St Crispin Playing Fields (currently being prepared in the South area) to address existing and future shortfalls in this type of provision.

**KEY ISSUE 2** – There are changing trends in how football is played and the types of facilities that are required.

## Summary of Evidence Collated

### *Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs)*

AGPs are now an approved surface for football and have been sanctioned for use in competitive games (3g pitches) by the Northamptonshire County FA (the FA). Such surfaces are able to sustain more games per week than traditional grass pitches without detriment to the quality of the facility and therefore, particularly where leagues permit flexibility with kick off times, can reduce pressures on grass pitches enormously.

There are five 3g AGPs in Northampton that are suitable for football. Four of these sites are floodlit. Most AGPs are booked for training during the week, but there is more limited use at weekends, meaning that they are available to accommodate football matches at peak match play times.

The Sport England Facility Planning Model (FPM) concludes that in 2010, the supply and demand for AGPs is almost in balance. The Sport England estimate is that there is unmet demand for around half a full size pitch, based on the catchment area of the current pitches and the 2010 sports participation and frequency of participation in AGPs, predominantly for football.

The FPM reveals that the number and location of the AGP sites provides very good access to pitches, based on where the population lives and the catchment area of pitches. Around 93% of the total demand for pitches is within the catchment area of an existing pitch (not all located in Northampton). The FPM excludes the facility at the Goals Centre and Thomas Beckett School (built after the run of the model) and therefore indicates that overall provision is currently adequate. The Goals Centre provides small-sided pitches and therefore has a significant impact on demand for AGPs.

The FPM estimates that 20% of users of AGPs travel to pitches on foot. This is a high proportion -the East Midlands regional average is for less than 14% of visits to AGPs to be on foot. This means that for any changes in provision of pitches or in selection of new sites it is important to consider the 'walk to' catchment area for the site and the potential usage from a 20 minute /1 mile radius of the site.

Housing growth in Northampton and the net inward migration of the new population will in itself create additional demand for AGPs and other sports facilities.

While AGPs play an important role in training (only 3 clubs in Northampton train on grass), there is minimal evidence that AGPs are used in competitive situations; only the pitch at Northampton Academy is regularly used for competitive matches. Consultation with leagues demonstrates that there is some resistance to the use of AGPs for competitive fixtures; primarily focused around price of hire, fear of injuries and competitive advantage against teams who are not used to playing on such pitches. The use of 3g pitches for competition is however something that the FA are keen to encourage, and something that will be essential if demand continues to grow.

The identified pressures on football pitches (Football Issue 1) however mean that the role that 3g pitches can play in football across the Borough and should be investigated further.

### **9 v 9 Football**

As well as encouraging increased use of 3g pitches, consultation reveals that the FA are currently working alongside the John Henry League and Northampton Borough Council to deliver 9 v 9 football next season. The full implications of this move are unknown at this stage. It is likely to replace, or run alongside, U11 and U12 junior football and will act as a transition to junior football from 7 v 7 mini soccer. While in reality this is unlikely to generate additional demand in the short term (it will shift demand from junior football), a new set of pitches (or different pitch markings and goal posts) will be required. 9 v 9 is to be phased in across the country, as one of the key initiatives to improve football participation, and has the full support of the Northamptonshire FA.

#### **Football 5**

Work in partnership with the Northamptonshire FA to promote 3g pitch use for competitive adult and junior football. Those 3g pitches located in areas of higher deficiency should be promoted for formal match play, namely:

- The Duston School
- Thomas Beckett School
- Weston Favell School Sports Centre

Pitches at the Duston School will be particularly important in the event of population growth, as this is located between two major areas of housing development.

**Football 6**

Support the development of the planned AGP at St James CEVA School and ensure that community use of the facility is negotiated. Any further additional AGP provision should be located to the South or West of the Borough, in the Upton area, to accommodate demand from the areas of high population growth.

**Football 7**

Work alongside the FA and the John Henry League to identify an appropriate way of delivering 9 v 9 football in Northampton.

**KEY ISSUE 3** – There are issues with the quality of junior and senior pitches which impact upon the long term capacity of pitches to sustain matches.

## Summary of Evidence Collated

### *Changing facilities*

Pitch quality assessments and consultations with the FA, league secretaries and clubs identify that for senior football, rectifying pitch quality issues is of greater priority than increasing the amount of pitches available.

League representatives for senior football suggest that a lack of changing accommodation is their main issue, and some clubs are unable to meet league requirements for provision. Around 25% of clubs indicated that a lack of changing accommodation is a key priority and 23% of all football pitches are located on sites without any changing accommodation (e.g. Acre Lane and Parklands). Added to this, there are sites that do not have enough changing accommodation to cater for all pitches (the Racecourse and Lings). Junior clubs and leagues indicated that the provision of toilets is a key priority and suggest that changing facilities are also beneficial.

The provision of appropriate changing and toilet accommodation is a key priority of the FA, and is essential if more women and girls are to play football, as well as to improve the player and spectator experience for participants and officials of all ages. Northampton FA identifies the provision of additional changing accommodation as the key priority for football pitch improvements in Northampton.

### *Pitch Maintenance*

Pitch maintenance and quality issues have perhaps greater significance on the capacity of a pitch to meet short and long term demand than changing accommodation. For senior clubs and the senior leagues, the quality of pitches is a greater issue than the amount of facilities.

Site visits reveal that the quality of pitches is good overall (all public sites rated good or average), although some site-specific issues are identified. It is also clear that the timing of site assessments impacted upon these results, as they followed a cold spell which caused a series of cancellations, hence pitches had received little previous use, meaning that quality may appear higher than in reality it is. As well as a lack of changing accommodation, issues raised during the site visits include:

- Damage to surface
- The quality of equipment (posts, corner flags etc)
- The slope of pitches
- Evenness of pitches.

Clubs and leagues highlighted issues with evenness of pitches, line markings and pitch surfaces. These issues were evident, although to a smaller degree, during site visits.

There is a clear disparity of views between Saturday afternoon teams and those who play on a Sunday morning, with much more positive views held by those playing on a Saturday than those who play on a Sunday. There is no maintenance regime in between. Almost 50% of clubs playing on a Saturday suggest that the quality of pitches is good, while less than 5% on a Sunday hold this opinion, indicating that quality deteriorates after Saturday games.

For junior clubs, and the John Henry Football League, while the amount of pitches is an issue, the slope of many current pitches, as well as dog fouling were highlighted as problems.

In addition to the pitch quality issues that have been raised, research reveals several other concerns that emphasise the importance of improving pitch quality:

- The number of pitches has recently increased to accommodate rising demand, however pitch maintenance budgets have not, meaning that spend per pitch on maintenance is lower
- Budgets and staffing are likely to decline further, meaning that maintenance will need to be more targeted
- The level of play that some pitches are required to sustain means that quality is imperative, otherwise the longer-term sustainability of the pitch is in question. If PFI schools remain underused, the level of use that will be required of other pitches in future years will mean that quality is substantially effected
- The Council pitches, which are over half of the total pitch stock (and the vast majority of community pitches that are currently used) are maintained using specialist equipment for just three months of the year, due to access to equipment and budgetary issues, this lack of specialist equipment use effects pitch quality

- Informal use of pitches for training during the summer season means that the reinstatement period for pitches is limited.

One of the main issues attributed to concerns with the cost of pitches was the perception that pitches are poor and declining. They are not considered to be value for money.

Some clubs also raise concerns regarding overuse and it is clear that although the number of games per week that on average each pitch sustains is reasonable, there are some pitches which in reality take more than this and some that are used less, meaning that there may be longer term quality issues. In addition, while limited training takes place during the football season on grass pitches, many clubs train on pitches during the summer months, which impacts upon the reinstatement process.

Quality could be enhanced through the use of the RFU verti drainer, which provides specialist pitch maintenance and levelling. The use of this equipment on Council pitches may provide an interim solution (or potentially longer term proposition) and discussions with the RFU over equipment hire should be prioritised.

<b>Football 8</b>	<p>Provide changing accommodation at principle NBC pitch sites, and support the development of changing facilities at other sites. Priority locations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acre Lane Playing Fields (large multi pitch site with no changing accommodation)</li> <li>• Parklands Recreation Ground (large multi pitch site with no changing accommodation – FA priority)</li> <li>• Northampton Academy (currently under discussion with the FA).</li> </ul> <p>New developments providing outdoor sports facilities should include changing facilities that meet recognised quality standards.</p>
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<b>Football 9</b>	<p>High quality maintenance of pitches for NBC is an ongoing challenge.</p> <p>Football 2 seeks to maximise the use of existing resources meaning that S106 contributions may not always be required to provide new facilities where improvements to existing facilities could be more appropriate. For example, securing capital investment for the laying out and maintenance of pitches; the purchase of specialist maintenance equipment and for the development and application of new management regimes will maximise pitch quality and ensure long-term sustainability.</p> <p>Seek to improve the quality of Council pitches by securing levels of investment to improve the quality of pitches and their long term maintenance.</p>
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	Funds from the capital receipt raised on the disposal of the surplus school sites (Parklands, Kingsthorpe, and St Marys) and / or S106 contributions from housing developments, could be used to finance this.
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<b>Football 10</b>	Continue to work with users of NBC pitches through the existing playing pitch forum for league representatives to improve pitch provision in the Borough and to understand the key issues that are arising.
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<b>KEY ISSUE 4</b> – There are some issues with the pitch booking system, which has a knock on impact to pitch quality and if these are not addressed they will further impact upon the longer-term capacity of pitches to sustain matches.
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### Summary of Evidence Collated

Building on evidence outlined in Key Issues 1 and 3 (pitch quantity and pitch quality) it appears that the pitch booking system also impacts upon the quality of the pitch stock. Clubs and league secretaries suggest that some pitches are overused and that the quality of facilities suffers as a consequence. Analysis of the number of matches that pitches are required to sustain to meet demand however suggests that on average, this should be 1 game per week for senior pitches, and 2.5 for junior pitches, neither of which is an unsustainable level.

Accepting some degree of variation both weekly, and due to preferred venues of teams, further analysis of patterns of use demonstrates that some of the more popular pitches are heavily used (with bookings in each slot) while others receive more limited use, with only one or fewer games per week.

Wootton Hall and Parklands for example are heavily used while Eastfields Recreation Ground and Southfields have comparatively low levels of use (less than 1 game per week). Far Cotton Recreation Ground, the Racecourse and Lings Wood are also popular sites, although there is capacity at all of these pitches and use is between 1 – 2 games per week. Most of the private facilities are also heavily used.

Analysis of current patterns of play indicates that several (club) teams are spread across different venues, due to availability of pitches. This dispersion can restrict club development and does not support the creation of effective player pathways. Moreover, it can mean that access to funding is more difficult if there is no club base. Kingsthorpe Jets, Northampton Falcons, Gregory Celtic and Thorplands United are examples of clubs who are regularly dispersed across the Borough. Northampton Falcons in particular indicate that they are keen to have their own ground. Northampton Harlequins FC (currently senior club only) have also expressed an interest in developing as a club and running a junior section but suggest that they are currently unable to do so as they have no secure venue. Many clubs indicated that at least some of their teams are not playing at their preferred venues.

<b>Football 11</b>	Review pitch booking methods to ensure a strategic approach is taken to pitch bookings. This should ensure that pitches are rotated, and set a maximum allowance (suggest 2 games per pitch/week) to promote more consistent use of all pitches.
<b>Football 12</b>	Replace the existing paper based system with an on-line tool enabling clubs to book pitches and pay for pitches electronically. This will improve monitoring of pitch usage trends, as well as cancellations and other issues and promote strategic management of the overall pitch stock.

<b>Football 13</b>	Establish a strategy for booking that promotes the development of club bases (i.e. all teams in a club playing at one site). This may involve the relocation of some teams.
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**KEY ISSUE 5** - There are currently vacant / derelict playing pitches dispersed across the Borough which are fulfilling no recognised sports facilities role in their current format.

### Summary of Evidence Collated

There are three surplus former middle school sites, all located in the North of the Borough, specifically Parklands, St Marys and Kingsthorpe schools. All three schools are a legacy of the former 3-tier school system and contain sufficient space for one outdoor junior pitch, or two mini pitches.

As highlighted under Key Issue 1, there are substantial surpluses of adult pitches in the Borough, which are more than sufficient to outweigh shortfalls of junior facilities. These shortfalls will decrease as the population grows and in the event of participation increases, there will remain surplus provision when taking into account school facilities. Even when excluding facilities at school sites and assuming that no future access will be provided there are just enough pitches to meet demand.

Despite the overall adequate supply in the Borough, all three sites are located in the North West of the Borough, which is characterised by higher participation in junior football. As a result, this area is likely to experience higher levels of pressure on pitches than most other parts of the Borough, particularly given the higher population growth that will be taking place in this area.

There are many other factors that need to be taken into account when determining the future of these pitches, including:

- Ensuring that the pricing structure for PFI and community use school playing pitches is more affordable and in line with average prices
- The benefits of maximising the use of existing resources i.e. existing school sites, rather than creating new facilities

- The sustainability of the sites under NBC management, all of which are single pitch sites, with no associated changing accommodation and limited long term potential
- The likely impact of moving towards 3g pitches will mean that fewer grass pitches are required
- Investment to bring the pitches into a useable standard would be costly, and
- The presence of several other sites that are designated as outdoor sports facilities (grass pitches) within the PPG17 study, which do not currently contain football pitches, specifically:
  - Briar Hill Playing Fields (South)
  - Hardingstone Recreation Ground (South)
  - Princess Marina Hospital (South)
  - Melbourne Playing Fields (North West).

Site visits reveal that all of the above are suitable to accommodate playing fields and could therefore be brought into use if this was required

- Plans are already underway to provide additional facilities at St Crispin's Hospital and the British Timkin Site that will reduce pressures on pitches.

#### Football 14

Parklands, Kingsthorpe, St Mary's former school sites and Southfields Park are single pitch sites, without changing accommodation or associated facilities. Managing them in their current condition is not sustainable in the long term and their retention is not a key part of the delivery of this report. Future shortfalls will primarily be met by improving the affordability of and resulting access to PFI school facilities.

As part of the planning consent for Parklands, Kingsthorpe and St Mary's, the capital receipt raised from the disposal of their pitches is to be reinvested into pitch quality and facility improvements elsewhere in the Borough (See R9)

The pitch at Southfields Park could be lost diverting the maintenance costs to the upkeep of pitches offering better provision. Alternatively, the site could provide an opportunity for a community asset transfer providing benefactor club(s) with a lease. This will enable them to improve, manage and run the site more efficiently and provide an opportunity for club development.

If quality, affordability and access issues continue on existing pitches, shortfalls will occur in the future. A commitment must be made on the disposal of the school sites to review the PFI arrangements in terms of the pricing structure to improve accessibility to the PFI sports facilities. It

	will be difficult to justify the release of Parklands, Kingsthorpe and St Mary's if this commitment is not secured.
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<b>Football 15</b>	The Council should adopt a policy on asset transfer of sites. The policy should set out the circumstances in which this should be considered and the overall benefit to the community and club.
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## Cricket

### Overview

Demand for cricket across Northamptonshire is growing and there is an annual increase of teams across the County. Since the previous Playing Pitch Strategy, participation patterns have changed and cricket is now focused around a club structure. This club environment provides a sustainable baseline for the sport moving forwards and facilitates junior development as well as higher quality cricket at a senior level.

The former Northampton Town Cricket League that made use of public pitches folded, meaning that there is a lower reliance on public facilities. This has resulted in changing requirements for pitch provision, with a focus on higher quality club based facilities, and very little reliance on public facilities.

Overall the Active People survey findings show that the borough is split geographically in terms of the location of the adult population that plays cricket. In the northern half of the borough up to 1% of the Northampton adult population play cricket whilst in the southern half of the authority up to 2% of the population play cricket.

According to Market Segmentation (Sport England 2010), cricket participation is focused in the same market segments as football and is primarily by young adult males who play team sports on a very regular basis and for competitive sporting reasons. Around 20% of the total cricket played is by groups who participate for more social and recreational reasons. The total cricket population in Northampton as projected by Active People 4 (Sport England 2010) is 1,440 people.

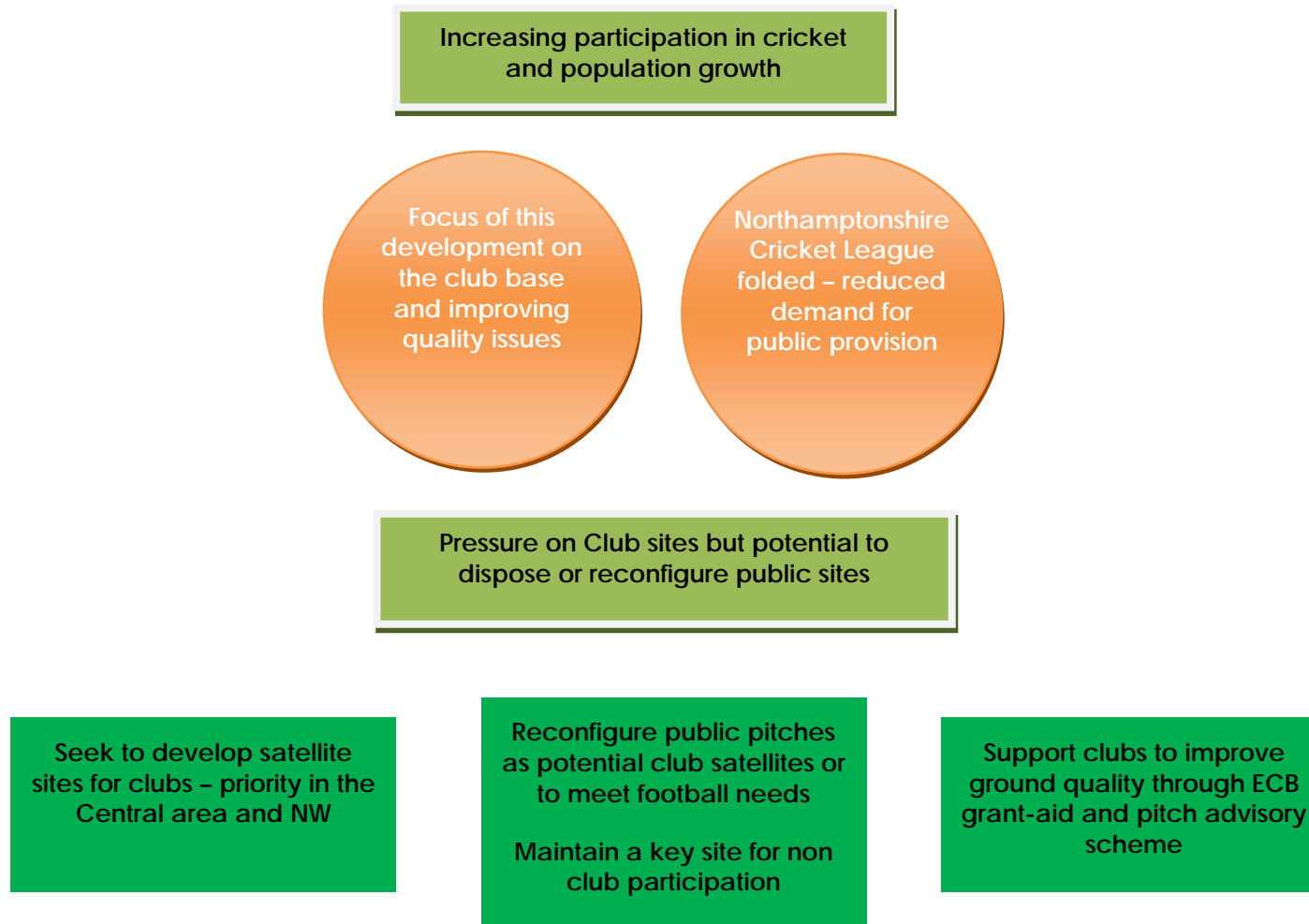
The Active People survey findings show a very low latent demand for cricket of only between 0.1% – 1% of the adult population across Northampton. There are no noticeable adult female cricket participation/segments. The total latent demand for cricket across all market segments is 685 people.

There are 22 cricket pitches in the Borough, of which 9 are in public ownership and 4 are at school sites. Clubs run a total of 19 senior and 14 junior teams, and also enter into a 20 – 20 midweek competition. Interestingly, the location of these facilities contrasts with the areas of high participation in cricket, with most clubs being based in the North of the Borough, although residents in the South have a higher propensity to participate.

### Key Issues and Recommendations

The key issues emerging from the local needs assessment for cricket are summarised overleaf. The text that follows then expands upon the issues identified, and provides a summary of the evidence collected.

## Key Issues - Cricket



## Key Issues and Recommendations

**KEY ISSUE 1** - There are only just enough pitches of the right quality to meet demand for cricket in Northampton and a likely shortfall in appropriate provision once population grows and if participation increases.

### Summary of Evidence Collated

#### *Meeting Current Demand*

There are more than sufficient pitches to accommodate the needs of community teams at peak times. When accounting for the quality of pitches however, this picture changes. The Northamptonshire Cricket League has specific requirements for quality, which have been implemented to improve the standard of the games played and all pitches used in the league must meet minimum criteria over a season. These criteria have been implemented in partnership with the Northamptonshire Cricket Board.

The Northampton Borough Council owned pitches at the Racecourse, Abington Park and Kingsthorpe Recreation Ground do not meet these key quality criteria (in terms of changing accommodation, pavilion, bar etc and in relation to the quality of the pitch and wicket) and are therefore unable to meet club demand. The location of these sites on public grounds, where they are open to casual and informal use means that even with improved maintenance, they are unlikely to reach required standards. Since the Northampton Town Cricket League folded, there has been no formal use of public facilities.

With the exception of Northampton School for Boys, school sites also do not currently contain the required levels of ancillary provision and pitches are not of appropriate quality for use in the league. Table 9 demonstrates the adequacy of provision (shortfalls and surpluses) of the overall stock of pitches, and also outlines the implications of removing public pitches and school sites from the equation.

**Table 9 – Adequacy of cricket pitches in Northampton to meet demand 2011.**

Area	Shortfalls / Surplus (number of pitches)	
	All Cricket Pitches	Excluding Public Pitches and School Sites
Central	3.0	0.0
West	3.6	-0.4
South	2.8	2.8
East	4.5	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>3.9</b>

This concludes that in the Central and North West areas of the Borough there are shortages of pitches for teams who need to play on grounds that meet these quality criteria. An additional problem for Northampton is the lack of spare cricket facilities in close proximity to the Borough boundaries. The identified spare capacity in the South of the Borough, even when removing school sites, is largely down to the recent folding of St Andrews Cricket Club and the lack of team playing at Collingtree Playing Fields. The pitch at St Andrews is now no longer available, although it is included in the above figures.

Supporting this, recent ECB analysis indicates that wickets at all club sites in the Borough are currently used towards their maximum capacity of 4 times per season (Northampton Saints – 3.8, Old Northamptonians – 3 and St Crispin Rylands 3.14).

### **Meeting Future Demand**

TGRs indicate that there is some latent demand for cricket (for all age groups except junior male), and the Northamptonshire Cricket League identify increasing demand across the county. Any significant increases in participation will be constrained by the lack of appropriate facilities.

As well as participation increases, population growth is likely to generate increases in demand, particularly to the west of the borough.

Table 10 summarises the implications of population growth and participation (assumed 1% increase per year) on provision for cricket and indicates that without new sites, pressures on existing pitches in Northampton Borough will increase, particularly in the central and west parts of the Borough. The table takes into account only those pitches that meet the standards required for the Northamptonshire Cricket League. When including all facilities, there are relatively large surpluses.



**Table 10 –Adequacy of Provision (excluding public pitches) to meet future demand**

	Shortfalls / Surpluses of Pitch Provision (no. of pitches)		
	2016	2021	2026
Central	-0.4	-0.9	-0.1
West	-1.0	-1.3	-0.9
South	3.4	3.4	1.4
East	1.8	1.9	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1.9</b>

When taking into account the implications of population growth just outside the district, the above shortfalls will increase, and the surpluses will decrease marginally.

<b>CRICKET 1</b>	<p>The existing public cricket pitches at the Racecourse, Abington Park and Kingsthorpe Recreation Ground do not fit with the club based structure of cricket in the Borough and have not been used formally for several years.</p> <p>Actively implement the removal of two of the three facilities below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abington Park</li> <li>• Kingsthorpe Recreation Ground and</li> <li>• The Racecourse</li> </ul> <p>And accommodate additional football pitches to replace these spaces where appropriate. Retain one of the cricket wickets at one of these locations to accommodate the informal and occasional friendly cricket matches that are played.</p>
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<b>CRICKET 2</b>	<p>In partnership with the Northamptonshire Cricket Board, support clubs in obtaining satellite facilities of appropriate quality when demand exceeds supply at the club base. This may include the improvement of existing school facilities to meet club requirements (as well as negotiation of access arrangements) or the creation of new sites. This may be a particular priority for clubs in the centre and south of the Borough.</p>
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<b>CRICKET 3</b>	<p>Any new cricket pitches should only be created in partnership with existing clubs and not be developed in isolation. There are opportunities to link with other sports, as well as with the education sector in the provision of cricket facilities.</p>
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**CRICKET 4**

Ensure the new cricket pitch to be provided as part of the British Timkin development is of sufficient quality to meet with Northamptonshire Cricket League criteria and ensure club engagement in development and future management of the site.

**KEY ISSUE 2** - Pitch quality is inhibited by high levels of use on some wickets. The Northamptonshire Cricket League quality scores demonstrate decline in the quality of some pitches in the Borough from last season, as well as some clubs only just achieving minimum site scores. While much of this high usage is influenced by the lack of pitches, it will have short and long term implications for pitch quality.

***Summary of Evidence Collated***

Northamptonshire Cricket League measures pitch quality using a technical specification after each match and averages scores over the season. Clubs not meeting minimum criteria are required to improve their grounds. Scores for pitch quality demonstrate that clubs achieving lower quality scores during the 2010 season include:

- Bold Dragoon 1st and 2nds (play at Old Scouts)
- Northampton Saints 3rd
- St Crispins Ryelands 1st and 3rd
- Old Northamptonians 3rd

Furthermore, Northampton Saints and Old Northamptonians both demonstrate a decline in pitch quality from previous seasons. Alongside improving the amount of pitches available to clubs, the Northamptonshire Cricket Board target ongoing qualitative improvements. The quality of pitches is of paramount importance if cricket in Northampton is to be maintained.

**CRICKET 5**

Where appropriate, work in partnership with the Northamptonshire Cricket Board to support clubs in improving the quality of pitches, and in accessing funding through the ECB Grant Aid and Pitch Advisory Scheme.

## **Rugby Overview**

There is a strong rugby culture in Northampton. For a rugby club, the facilities are one of the most important components of a club. They drive the club ethos and spirit and facilitate high quality participation and club development.

The Active People 4 Survey (Sport England 2010) indicates that across Northampton, without variation in any geographical area, between 0.1% -1% of adults currently play rugby union. This is in line with national averages. Research undertaken as part of this playing field report suggests that there are 6 rugby union clubs based in Northampton, 5 of which own / lease their own facilities.

Including midi teams (30), there are 78 rugby union teams in Northampton, and several rugby clubs located just outside the Borough boundaries in South Northamptonshire and Daventry. With the exception of Northampton Heathens (who rent their pitch) all clubs have access to training floodlights. There are a total of 28 rugby pitches in the Borough, 17 of which are based on club sites.

In addition to the rugby union clubs, there is one rugby league club (Northampton RLFC) who are based at the Northampton Casuals Ground during the summer months.

The Sport England tools also measure the percentage of the population who would like to play rugby. Like actual participation, there are no clear variations across the Borough, and percentages are very similar, although a slightly higher number of people would like to play than currently do. This suggests that there is some latent demand for rugby in Northampton Borough.

### **Key Issues and Recommendations**

The key issues emerging from the local needs assessment for rugby are summarised overleaf. The text that follows then summarises the information collected to support the issues identified.

## Key Issues - Rugby

Heavy pitch use at club sites and increasing pressures

Maintain public rugby pitches at Racecourse to provide flexibility for club use to absorb pressure points

Consider the development of a 3g surface for rugby to provide opportunities for training and matches

Seek to continue to support the development and improvement of the club base

## Key Issues and Recommendations

**KEY ISSUE 1** – There are pressures on the pitches at existing club bases, population growth and participation increases will generate further demand for rugby.

### Summary of Evidence Collated

When taking into account all rugby pitches that are available, there are more than sufficient rugby pitches in Northampton to accommodate the needs of community teams at peak times, with pitches used on average just over once per week. This is summarised in Table 11. Table 11 assumes that midi teams are playing across adult pitches, and that 2 midi team matches are equivalent to half an adult match. Junior teams are separated for information, but use adult pitches in reality.

*Table 11 – Adequacy of Rugby Pitches in Northampton 2011*

Number of pitches	Total Number of Matches per week	Total Number of Adult / Youth Matches	Total Number of Junior team Matches	Total Number of Midi Matches	Shortfall / Surplus at Peak Time
28	27.75	15 (30 teams)	9 (18 teams)	3.75 (30 teams) (equivalent)	11.75

As well as use of pitches for competitive purposes, rugby pitches in the borough are also used for training. The Rugby Football Union (the RFU) have calculated the training that takes place at each of the club bases and this has been converted to team equivalents (ie. the number of competitive matches that training is equivalent to) as follows:

- Northampton BBOB RFC - 6
- Northampton Casuals RFC - 4
- Northampton Old Scouts RFC - 6
- Northampton RFC - 6
- Old Northamptonians RFC - 6

This means that there is the equivalent of an additional 14 matches per week (28 team equivalents). Based on the above calculations, this suggests that there are the equivalent of 41.5 matches per week (27.5+14), indicating that pitches are used just under twice per week.

Given that all pitches are included in calculations above, and not solely pitches at club sites, it is also necessary to evaluate the implications of school use. Based on the assumptions that:

- Each school with a rugby pitch runs 2 hours outdoor PE per week on pitches per year group – equivalent of 5 teams
- Each school with a rugby pitch also has 5 school teams that compete and use pitches for this purpose

There are the equivalent of 60 teams generated from schools (30 matches per week). When adding this to the 41.5 matches generated by clubs, pitches sustain the equivalent of 71.5 matches, meaning that they are used 2.5 times per week. This level is above the optimum usage of 2 games per week.

In reality, facilities at Quinton House School, Northampton University and the main stadium pitch and associated training pitches at Franklin Gardens (Northampton Saints) are not available for community use. This means that supply is actually reduced by 7 pitches. Given that pitches at Northampton Saints are secured for use by the professional club, and similarly with the Northampton University pitches for the university teams, but are not available for use by others the teams based here have also been excluded from calculations below. The adequacy of community rugby pitches is therefore summarised in Table 12.

**Table 12 – Adequacy of Community Rugby Pitches in Northampton 2011**

Number of pitches	Total Number of Matches	Total Number of Adult / Youth Matches	Total Number of Junior Matches	Total Number of Midi Matches	Shortfall / Surplus at Peak Time
21	24.75	12 (24 teams)	9 (18 teams)	3.75 (30 teams) (equivalent)	4.75

The above calculations include 6 school pitches that are available for community use but in reality are not used (due mainly to pricing at PFI sites, but also the reliance on the club base rather than satellite facilities by clubs) If school pitches are removed, the surpluses become shortfalls. Furthermore, the above calculations exclude the implications of training and school use. Including these would see shortfalls rise.

The club-based nature of rugby means that for most clubs, the adequacy of provision at the club base is of paramount importance and clubs rarely use school or satellite facilities. Satellite facilities offer a useful short-term solution but do not fit into the club ethos and can inhibit club development if they become permanent features.

Table 13 therefore illustrates the adequacy of provision at the club bases (including all clubs and teams). It also considers the implications of training at

the club base. It indicates that pitches are used on average 2.7 times per week, meaning that use is higher than optimum levels (2 times per week). There are only just enough facilities at peak time.

**Table 13 – Adequacy of Club Based Pitches in Northampton**

Number of pitches	Total Number of Matches	Total Number of Team Equivalentents (training)	Shortfall / Surplus at peak time	Pitch Use per week
18	26.25 (excludes University)	14	1.75	2.3 times per week

While clubs did not themselves highlight shortages of pitch provision at the current time, analysis of site specific issues clearly indicates that all club bases are at capacity, and that new pitches may be required to support existing clubs in the longer term.

Realistically this is constrained by the ties of the clubs to their existing facilities, and the restricted footprints of their current sites. The RFU Activity v Facility Continuum (which measures the adequacy of facilities in light of the activity that is played) supports this, indicating that Northampton Casuals and Northampton Old Scouts already have activity just above the level of facilities provided. With the exception of Northampton Saints, all clubs are currently sustaining usage of greater than 2 games per week on each pitch. When calculating the adequacy of just club pitches to meet club demands, there is a shortfall of 2 pitches. Adding to this, Northampton Rugby League Club play at Northampton Casuals Ground. With 2 senior teams and 6 junior teams, they generate an additional 3.5 games per week at the site, as well as training, placing further pressure on the existing facility. Although the seasons are largely different, there is some cross over and more limited opportunities for reinstatement.

Site specific issues are summarised in Table 14.

**Table 14 – Rugby Site Specific Issues**

Club	Total Demand	Total Supply (Pitches)	Position on Activity V Facility Continuum	Adequacy of Provision
Northampt on BBOB	10 teams 8 midi teams 6 team equivalents	3 pitches, 2 of which are floodlit (one match floodlights one training floodlights)	Activity levels above facilities available	Club identify need for pitch renovations to two pitches at the end of the season, which is annual practice. Facilities considered excellent, changing accommodation only 3 years old. Pitches used 3 times per week, club consider provision to be sufficient. Location means that club can grow. Currently, the club is considering the creation of a ladies team.
Northampt on Casuals	6 teams, 6 midi teams 4 team equivalents	2 senior pitches, 1 of which is floodlit	Activity very slightly above facility provision. Northampton Rugby League Club also use ground, meaning that additional pressures are placed on facilities.	Training floodlights – RFU priority. Club identify need for pitch renovations, particularly levelling, improved drainage and maintenance. Pitches used circa 2.5 times per week. Infrastructure of buildings and ancillary facilities also in need of upgrade. When taking into account impact of rugby league use, pitches can be used up to 5 / 6 times per week when both codes are using the site..
Northampt on Old Scouts	12 teams 8 midi teams 6 team equivalents	4 senior pitches	Activity very slightly above facility provision	There is a need to improve the pitch quality, particularly levelling and draining. This is identified as an RFU priority.  Changing rooms and club house is ageing and in need of upgrade.  Lack of long term security of tenure  Pitches used circa 2.5 times per week.
Northampt on Saints RFC	3 teams 6 team equivalents	4 senior pitches, 2 of which are floodlit	Not included	Pitch provision of good quality, verti drainer used to enhance performance. Pitches used circa 1 time per week



Club	Total Demand	Total Supply (Pitches)	Position on Activity V Facility Continuum	Adequacy of Provision
Old Northamptonians	13 teams 8 midi teams 6 team equivalents	4 senior pitches, only one of which is floodlit	Activity equivalent to facility provision	Training floodlights – RFU priority (perhaps provided 2009 – 2010). Pitches used circa 2.5 times per week, significant amount of use during summer months.
Northampton Heathens	1	Club rent pitches	N/ A – club do not have access to own facilities	Current pitch provision meets needs. Club indicate that they have good relationship with NBC and are happy with their current facilities.

RFU participation targets set a target increase of 2% per annum (i.e. 10% growth over 5 years). Active People surveys and Market Segmentation also suggest that there is a degree of latent demand for rugby. Assuming that participation targets are achieved, an extra 4 – 5 teams will be generated up to 2016. This may rise further if these targets continue to be achieved over the back end of the period (2016 – 2026).

Taking into account the amount of projected population increase in Northampton, pitch capacity could be severely constrained. Population growth alone may generate up to an additional 10 teams across the age groups (primarily junior / midi), equivalent to another 5 games per week (above that caused by participation increases). Population growth just outside of the Borough may generate further interest in rugby.

By 2026, assuming that no additional pitches are provided, there will be sufficient pitches when including all community use sites. When considering club pitches only, shortfalls are likely to reach 3 pitches at club sites. If assuming that training will also increase as a result of growth in number of teams, pitch usage is likely to exceed 3 times per week at all sites.

Furthermore, the RFU is increasingly trying to develop midweek floodlit competitions and matches to meet the needs of people who cannot or do not wish to play on weekends (particularly in the age ranges of 16-24). There is also a drive around the non-contact version of the game, which will target large conurbations such as Northampton for summer time use of existing pitches. This will place further pressures on the existing pitch stock and reduce the amount of time available for reinstatement.

Although there are increasing shortfalls, the club based nature of rugby means that the provision of satellite facilities is of limited value and unless a club relocates, there is limited scope to increase the number of facilities provided, although opportunities linked with club bases should be taken.

There are several clubs on the periphery of Northampton that are seeking to relocate or provide extra pitches (Brackley, Northampton Mens Own RFC, Bugbrooke and Towcestrians). If successful, these clubs may be able to accommodate additional demand, otherwise, it is likely that increases in

participation will need to be absorbed primarily through improvements in the capacity of existing facilities. Brackley, Towcester and Bugbrooke are all currently over capacity and so their ability to absorb more players is limited unless additional pitches and changing rooms are provided at these sites.

<b>RUGBY 1</b>	Retain the public rugby pitch at the Racecourse to meet the needs of Northampton Heathens. Provide additional facilities at this site if club development means that additional facilities are required.
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<b>RUGBY 2</b>	Progress discussions with the RFU in relation to providing a 3g pitch suitable for rugby at Northampton High School for Boys, a school with a strong rugby playing history and located adjacent to two rugby clubs (Old Northamptonians and Old Scouts) to accommodate the training needs of nearby clubs and reduce the pressures on existing pitches.  The conversion of sand based pitches (under hockey section) will provide further opportunities to increase the supply of suitable pitches, albeit further from the club bases.
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<b>RUGBY 3</b>	Support proposals of any existing clubs to relocate / provide extra playing fields at club sites where they fit in with overall club development plans. Engage in negotiations with schools (including PFI sites) to facilitate access to existing sites where this is required by the clubs as a satellite facility (potential sites include Weston Favell School, The Duston School, Thomas Becket, Northampton School for Boys, Malcolm Arnold Academy).
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<b>RUGBY 4</b>	Ensure security of tenure at Northampton Old Scouts RFC – this is particularly important in the context of the pressures on existing pitches. Where NBC lease facilities to clubs that rent, rent reviews should take into account the club’s role in the community and the service they provide, along with the costs associated with this.
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<b>KEY ISSUE 2</b> – The pressure on existing pitches means that quality of these sites is of particular importance if pitches are to sustain the required levels of participation. Improvements to pitch and ancillary facility quality are required to ensure long-term sustainability.
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The number of games / training sessions that pitches are required to sustain each week means that the quality of these sites is of paramount importance. Well-maintained pitches that have specialist drainage systems and appropriate out of season reinstatement are able to sustain higher numbers of matches without detrimental impact. Improvements at sites both within and on the edge of Northampton will be essential if clubs are able to accommodate more players.

Site visits confirm that despite sustaining over 2 games per week, the quality of rugby pitches in Northampton is good. Reflecting this, consultation with clubs also demonstrates satisfaction with the quality of existing provision although areas for improvement, required to ensure the long-term sustainability of the venues, are identified (Table 14). These priorities are all supported by the RFU, through the East Midlands Regional Facilities Plan (RFU).

<b>RUGBY 5</b>	<p>Improvements to the following club venues are required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northampton BBOB – pitch renovations including drainage and levelling</li> <li>• Northampton Casuals – floodlights and pitch renovations</li> <li>• Northampton Old Scouts – pitch renovations, drainage, levelling and new club house</li> <li>• Old Northamptonians – improved floodlighting</li> </ul>
<b>RUGBY 6</b>	<p>Promote the availability and use of the Northampton Saints and RFU tractor and vertidrainer to rugby clubs to raise awareness and support the overall quality improvements identified in Rugby 3 priority.</p>

## Hockey Overview

Little hockey is played within the Borough Boundaries at the current time, with Northampton Hockey Club (20+ teams) travelling to Moulton to play. Towcester Ladies Hockey Club (3 teams and 40 juniors) currently use the facilities at Northampton Girls School, however they are looking to relocate back to Towcester. The Northamptonshire Mixed Hockey League also includes teams from the Northampton area, although all matches are located just outside the Northampton BC boundaries at Moulton Sports Complex, Caroline Chisholm School and Campion School.



"Northampton  
AGPs.pdf"

There are four AGPs in the Borough suitable for hockey (sand based pitches), specifically Kings Heath Recreation Ground (which due to its location and condition is rarely used), Northampton High School for Girls, Kingsthorpe College and Malcolm Arnold Academy. Nearby venues in Daventry and South Northamptonshire are also used for hockey. The AGPs, and their interrelationship with the 3g pitches suitable for both hockey and football are illustrated in Map 3 above.

The Active People 4 survey shows that between 0.1% and 1% of the population participate in hockey. According to Sport England Market Segmentation, the profile of participants is much more balanced across the segments than for any other sport, however the numbers of people projected to be playing hockey are low. Current participation rates project that 540 people play hockey across Northampton (Active People).

When evaluating participation rates, the population profile suggests that there is limited latent demand.

### Key Issues and Recommendations

The key issues emerging from the local needs assessment for hockey are set out overleaf. The text that follows provides a summary of the evidence to support the issues identified.

## Key Issues - Hockey

No hockey club infrastructure in Northampton

Currently four sand based pitches, two of poor quality – not required (outside curriculum) for hockey

As a minimum (subject to school / curriculum discussions) keep one dedicated surface for hockey development at Malcolm Arnold School

Consider reconfiguration or closure and relocation of current sand based pitch stock in line with Sport England Surface Selection guidance

Consider reconfiguration / relocation of current sand based pitches as 3g subject to discussions with schools, FA and RFU

## Key Issues and Recommendations

**KEY ISSUE 1** – Outside of curricular time, there is no hockey played in the Borough, however there are four AGPs that, as sand based facilities, are primarily designed for hockey. The quality of two of these facilities is low.

### Summary of Evidence Collated

Moulton College and Moulton Sports Complex are the first choice venue of Northampton Hockey Club. They are currently applying for funding for the creation of an additional pitch at this site to meet current and future demand. Located only just outside Northampton, the club does not currently require facilities within Northampton Borough, as they anticipate remaining at their home ground, where significant investment has already been made into their facilities, and there are strong relationships between the club and the facility. The Northampton based teams playing in the mixed league are also part of Northampton Hockey Club. The main hockey base is therefore to the north of the borough.

Towcester Ladies Club are seeking to relocate back to Towcester, and do not have long term plans to remain playing in Northampton Borough. They are currently based in the south of the Borough at Northampton School for Girls.

Northampton University (2 teams) also travel to Moulton College to play. As a club based sport with limited informal participation, this means that there is no long term demand for facilities suitable for hockey within Northampton from existing clubs.

Three of the four AGPs suitable for hockey are located to the north of the Borough, and only the facility at Northampton School for Girls serves the south. Two of the four existing sand based facilities in the Borough are of poor quality (Kingsthorpe College (due for refurbishment within 2 years) and Kings Heath AGP – a facility located on an unmanned site, with undulating carpet and broken floodlights. The quality of both other facilities is high. Clubs reinforce the need to ensure that facilities are appropriately maintained and cite examples of AGPs that have not received appropriate maintenance. They indicate that quality is deteriorating.

There is limited use of these AGPs for hockey meaning that moving forwards, the role of sand based facilities, which are not suitable for competitive football or rugby, is more limited. Adding to this, two of the four pitches already have a limited role due to their quality.

As illustrated earlier, the FPM concludes that in 2010, the supply and demand for AGPs is almost in balance and the satisfied demand for pitches is around 93% of total demand, which is very high. The Sport England estimate is that there is unmet demand for around half a full size pitch, based on the catchment area of the current pitches. It also indicates that participation and use of AGPs is largely for football. Analysis of the distribution of AGPs suggests that the main deficit in provision is in the south of the Borough.

The FPM does not take into account Thomas Beckett School and the impact of Goals), meaning that provision is currently sufficient. As population grows therefore, and as demand increases, it will be essential to retain this level of provision. In the context of high demand for rugby and football facilities, as well as the move towards 3g pitches for both of these sports, there is evidence to suggest a need to review the balance of existing pitches.

England Hockey do not identify any facility related priorities within Northampton Borough itself, although both Northampton Hockey Club and Towcester Hockey Club are Focus Clubs, and have targeted growth of 65 players per club (to be sustained within the existing facility set up). If Towcester Hockey Club is successful in relocating to Towcester, there will be no hockey played in the south of the Borough, and there is potential for some drop out, as 40% of the clubs members are now Northampton based.

<b>HOCKEY 1</b>	<p>Consideration should be given to the scale, surface and function of any new or refurbished AGP in partnership with Clubs and NGBs and utilising Sport England guidance on 'Selecting the Right Artificial Surface (2010).' This approach should also be utilised when considering refurbishment and re-surfacing as well as new provision.</p> <p>Given the lack of demand for hockey in the Borough, it may be more appropriate to relay a 3g surface at Kingsthorpe College than relay the sand based surface (the carpet is due for replacement in 2 years and the site is located in an area of high demand for football).</p> <p>As a minimum, and subject to curriculum discussions, retain at least one sand based facility in the Borough to ensure there are opportunities for hockey. Malcolm Arnold Academy, may be suitable for this, at is located in close proximity to Northampton University, and could provide an opportunity to develop a partnership with the university. The retention of one facility would also provide the opportunity to capitalise on any unmet / latent demand (through the creation of a local club) which arises as a result of the move back to Towcester for Towcester Ladies and the location of Northampton Hockey Club to the north of the town. Given the location of Northampton High School for Girls in the South of the Borough, as an alternative option, it may be appropriate to retain this.</p>
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<b>HOCKEY 2</b>	<p>The Kings Heath AGP has undulating surface and has no floodlights or changing accommodation. It's location on an unmanned site means that it is rarely used and is considered unsafe by clubs. This facility should be relocated to a site where it is better able to meet demand. The existing distribution of facilities, along with population growth, would suggest that this should be to the South or West of the Borough. This could link with Rugby R2, which proposes a new AGP at Northampton High School for Boys.</p>
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**HOCKEY 3**

Educate providers on the importance of establishing a sinking fund for AGPs to ensure that facilities are maintained to a consistently high standard.



## Partnership working

While each sport is considered separately within this report, implementation of recommendations and the delivery of pitches across Northampton should be looked at strategically, considering opportunities for partnerships between sports, as well as evaluating each sport in isolation.

In addition to proactive improvement of pitches, this also relates to the allocation of S106 funding, which should consider the strategic need for playing fields.

Sport England are soon to launch a 'Protection of Playing Fields programme' which will fund new, under threat, disused playing fields and pitch improvement schemes. Successful applicants will be required to demonstrate a strategic need, partnership working and positive impacts for sports participation. This scheme may provide opportunities for the further improvement of pitches across the Borough and this report provides a strong evidence base of the key priorities.

## Planning issues

The identified deficiencies of certain pitch types (and pressures on the stock of pitch sports in other areas) emphasise the importance of protecting many of the existing areas of playing pitch land and open space in public, private and educational ownership, as playing pitches can be under threat from other, non sport development.

Policies should therefore protect all playing fields from development, unless it can be proven that the site is surplus to requirements, using the findings of this Playing Fields assessment. Sport England are a statutory consultee on playing field assessments. In 'A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England: Policy on Planning Applications for Development on Playing Fields' (Sport England, 1997), it is indicated that Sport England will oppose any developments that will result in the loss of playing field space in all but exceptional circumstances, whether the land is in public, private or educational use. Sport England considers the definition of a playing field to be "the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch".

Sport England will not object to the loss of playing fields where one or more of the following exception criteria are met:

- An assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport;
- The proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields, and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use;
- The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any playing pitch;

- Lost playing fields would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development; and
- The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.

Due to the current levels of demand and the pressures on pitches to cope with this demand, all known playing fields sites should therefore be afforded protection within specific policies that benefit sport and physical activity in Northampton, drawing upon the above criteria, and the key recommendations within this report for decision making.

### **Local Standards**

Local standards can be used to determine the requirements of new developments, as well as to evaluate improvements required to the existing facility stock. The population growth that is forecast in and around Northampton means that ensuring appropriate contributions from new developments will be essential if the facility stock is to continue to meet local need.

PPG17 recommends that local standards should include:

- Quantitative elements (how much new provision may be needed)
- A qualitative component (against which to measure the need for the enhancement of existing facilities)
- Accessibility (including distance thresholds and consideration of the cost of using a facility).

Local standards will:

- Underpin negotiations with developers over their contributions towards new pitch provision to meet the needs of new residential developments
- Provide an additional overview of the general supply of pitches/level of provision
- Assist in protecting land in playing field use
- Assist in benchmarking with other areas/authorities.

### **Quantity Standards**

Fields in Trust standard for pitch provision states that for every 1,000 people, 1.2 hectares of playing pitches should be provided. However, this is a national benchmark and it is important to also consider the local context and local variations that may impact.

The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment for Northampton (PMP 2009), sets a standard of 1.62 ha per 1000 population. This standard takes into account all types of outdoor sports facilities, including bowling greens and tennis courts and includes the whole site, rather than just the pitch space.

The Playing Pitch Methodology (PPM) used in the development of this report outlines where current shortfalls and surpluses exist for each type of sport and suggests potential solutions to ensure that provision meets the needs of the community. It takes into account the additional pitches needed (or surplus pitches identified) to meet demand and enables the calculation of the area of this required level of provision. Given that it is derived directly from a robust calculation of local need, it is compliant with the principles of PPG17.

The findings of this Playing Pitch Issues and Recommendations Report have therefore been used to inform the development of a revised local quantity standard specifically for pitches which will reflect local demand and supersede the standard set in the PPG17 study and green space strategy.

The existing supply per 1000 population of **community use pitches including PFI schools**, as well as the additional pitches required (or surpluses of provision) for community use are set out in Table 15 below. This forms the basis of the calculations of a local standard.

*Table 15 – Local Standard Calculations*

Area	Senior Football	x 0.9ha	Junior Football	x0.6	Mini Football	*0.22	Cricket	x 1.6ha	Senior Rugby	x 1.2ha	Total (Ha)	Existing Ha/000 (current population 210,600)	Future Ha /Per 1000 (Future Population)
Central	21	18.9	3	1.8	8	0.66	6	9.6	15	18	48.96	1.45	1.47337
North West	22	19.8	24	14.4	7	5.28	4	6.4	0	0	45.88	0.78	0.69386
South	17	15.3	18	10.8	10	3.96	6	9.6	6	7.2	46.86	0.85	0.65447
North East	28	25.2	10	6	9	2.2	5	8	0	0	41.4	0.67	0.57821
<b>TOTAL SCU</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>33</b>		<b>9.9</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>147.7</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>0.63774</b>
Additional Pitches in SCU required to meet demand to 2026	-29	-26.1	-23.5	-14.1	2.1	-14.1	-11.5	-18.4	3	3.6	78.6	0.37	0.23

0.23 ha per 1000 population is therefore required to meet **community** demand by 2026. This constitutes a minimum level of provision to ensure that supply and demand are aligned, and does not take into account the need to have a strategic reserve. It reflects the amount of pitches that are required for community use. This considers only the pitch area and does not account for changing accommodation / pitch run off and changing or parking.

When taking these issues into account:

- Changing room / pavilion -provision of around 200m<sup>2</sup> – 0.02 ha would provide sufficient space for a small multi functional pavilion with four changing rooms, match officials space, showers, toilets, circulation space and a small kitchen

- Parking and access -0.025 ha would provide sufficient for a parking area of 10m x 25m.

Both of these requirements should be added onto the overall pitch figure of 0.23 ha per 1000 population making a total requirement of 0.275 ha per 1000 population.

As well as ensuring that deficiencies are met for each sport and each pitch type, some degree of spare capacity is an integral part of playing pitch provision for the following reasons:

- To accommodate latent and future demand for existing pitch sport teams
- To enable the development of new clubs and teams
- For the development / expansion of new pitch sports (such as mini-soccer and 'tag' rugby)
- To accommodate backlogs and for rest and recovery periods.

For the reasons highlighted above, it is important to ensure that a strategic reserve of facilities is maintained. An additional 10% has been added onto the standard to accommodate this. The overall standard therefore equates to 0.30 ha per 1000 population and represents the amount of playing fields required to meet community need only. Additional provision is required for school purposes.

### Quality Standards

When determining the required quality of pitches, it is important to consider

- The standard of play at the site and expectations of users (including league requirements)
- The demand on the site (the number of games played per week)
- The need to facilitate concurrent usage by young people, women and other
- Target groups through appropriate ancillary facilities
- Facility specifications from National Governing Body (NGB) strategies.

Reflecting this, PPG17 highlights that there are several factors integral to the successful delivery of a network of high sports facilities, stating that: *"Quality depends on two things: the needs and expectations of users, on the one hand, and design, management and maintenance on the other".*

Given that most pitches in Northampton are multi pitch sites, as a minimum, all sites should include:

- High standard of maintenance, enabling the pitch to be played at least twice per week without detrimental impact

- Adequate changing facilities that:
  - are flexible, fit for a variety of purposes and
  - which fully comply with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act
  - provide for a number of different groups to use the facility at the same time, in safety and comfort
  - meet current standards - Sport England & NGB guidelines
- Managed community access
- Easily accessible by public transport and by car
- Sufficient car parking
- Size of pitches and run offs must meet NGB specification
- Located in a no flood zone
- Security of tenure (at least 10 years) if a club is to be based at the site
- For rugby clubs in particular, sites should include floodlit training facilities.

Each National Governing Body (NGB) provides detailed guidance on the design of facilities and changing accommodation as follows:

***Rugby Pitches*** -

<http://www.rfu.com/ManagingRugby/ClubDevelopment/FacilitiesAndEquipment.aspx>

***Football Pitches*** -

[http://www.thefa.com/GetIntoFootball/~/\\_link.aspx?id=2B126098B0014E32A550A5560117734E&z=z](http://www.thefa.com/GetIntoFootball/~/_link.aspx?id=2B126098B0014E32A550A5560117734E&z=z) (currently being updated)

***Cricket Pitches*** - <http://www.ecb.co.uk/development/facilities-funding/technical-specifications/>

***Artificial Grass Pitches*** -

[http://www.sportengland.org/facilities\\_planning/design\\_guidance\\_notes.asp](http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/design_guidance_notes.asp)

All new sites within Northampton Borough and any modifications to existing facilities should be undertaken in line with this guidance.

***Accessibility***

The Northampton Open Space Strategy (Northampton Borough Council 2009), drawing upon the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit and Assessment (PMP Consultancy 2009) set an accessibility standard of a 15 minute walk time to a grass pitch, equivalent to 720m.

Consultation undertaken as part of this report demonstrates that:

- Football pitches are expected to be relatively local to the home, and most clubs are playing on their preferred pitch, which is situated in the area that they are from
- Cricket is more club based, and people travel from slightly further afield. All clubs indicate that their members live within a maximum of a five mile radius of the site
- Like cricket, rugby is club based and residents travel from further afield, and the sport is very club based
- Members of Northampton Hockey Club travel across the Borough to reach the club home ground.

This suggests that when planning new facilities, particularly as part of new developments, while football facilities are required locally; there is a need to retain a club base of cricket and rugby grounds (and avoid the provision of dispersed pitches). New provision should therefore be located off a development site, or in conjunction with the development of a new club, or satellite club to an existing facility.

## Monitoring and Review

### Introduction

The recommendations draw out the key priorities for the future delivery of playing fields in Northampton.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of a strategy is as important as the creation of the initial strategy and is essential if the strategy is to successfully deliver improved playing fields in Northampton Borough.

This 2011 Playing Pitch Issues and Recommendations report draws upon participation data collected at a point in time. While this provides a robust basis on which to evaluate current and future issues, it is essential to keep this under review and to monitor changes, and the implications of these changes. Priorities will change over time as new technologies are introduced and patterns of demand alter. Furthermore, it is essential to evaluate the implications of actions taken and the consequences. While the vision should therefore remain consistent over the defined period, the action plan should be dynamic and responsive to change.

### Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and review should be undertaken as follows:

- Ongoing monitoring of changes to the pitch stock in the Borough both qualitative and quantitative, using the tools provided as part of this assessment
- Annual review of participation, with support from National Governing bodies, to identify any key changes to participation trends in the Borough, and the likely implications of these changes
- Commitment to review progress by NBC, NCC and Northamptonshire Sport on the delivery, identification of additional priorities and drawing on the data collated as part of the above two actions, to ensure the strategy remains relevant and current
- The amount of funding for pitches or provision of additional pitches delivered in association with new development will be monitored through the Planning Divisions AMR (Annual Monitoring Report)
- Periodical full refresh (every five years).

## Glossary

Acronym	Definition
3g	Third generation synthetic pitch (AGP). The technology used in 3g pitches far exceeds that used in 1st and 2 <sup>nd</sup> generation pitches (sand based). 3G looks like natural grass and possesses many similar characteristics during play.
Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)	The document is used to assess progress on the delivery of the Local Development Framework and to review policy effectiveness.
Active People Survey (AP)	<p>The Active People Survey is the largest ever survey of active participation in sport and recreation and is conducted annually by Sport England. The first survey was undertaken in 2005 / 06 (Active People 1). The survey allows analysis of how participation varies from place to place and between different groups in the population.</p> <p>The survey also measures; the proportion of the adult population that volunteer in sport on a weekly basis, club membership, involvement in organised sport/competition, receipt of tuition or coaching, and overall satisfaction with levels of sporting provision in the local community.</p>
Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP)	Synthetic / artificial playing pitch. These facilities are provided in a variety of surfaces. 3g pitches are the most technologically advanced.
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
England Hockey (EH)	The National Governing Body for Hockey
Facility Planning Model (The FPM)	A theoretical model devised by Sport England, which evaluates the adequacy of demand for artificial grass pitches. The model is run annually at a national level and bespoke local runs are available as required. Also available for sports halls and swimming pools.
Local Development Framework (LDF)	The Local Development Framework or 'LDF' is the term used to describe the set of documents, which will eventually include all of the planning authority's local development documents. The documents set out the spatial vision for Northampton Borough and are currently being developed. Once complete, the LDF will supersede the Northampton Borough Council Local Plan.
Multi Use Games Area (MUGA)	A facility with a synthetic or tarmac surface that is designed to accommodate a range of sports. These are predominantly used informally.



Acronym	Definition
National Governing Body (NGB)	<p>A National Governing Body of Sport (NGB), oversees the vision and delivery of a particular sport. Governing Bodies are responsible for: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a National directive and structure</li> <li>• Providing support and insurance to those clubs that affiliate,</li> <li>• Increasing the quality and quantity of coaches, volunteers and officials,</li> <li>• Organise and/or provide information on competitive opportunities,</li> <li>• Assist with facility developments,</li> <li>• Provide information and advise on funding and</li> <li>• Provide clear objectives and actions for clubs and individuals in assist in the development of that sport.</li> </ul>
Northampton Borough Council (NBC )	Local Authority for the Northampton Town Area. This playing field report considers the adequacy of provision within the NBC Borough Boundaries.
Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 – Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17) and it’s companion guide.	Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17)sets out the policies needed to be taken into account by local planning authorities in the preparation of development plans (or their successors) in relation to open space and sport and recreation facilities. The Companion Guide provides advice on the application of the policy.
Playing Pitch Methodology (PPM)	The 8 stage methodology set out in the Towards a Level Playing Field methodology produced by Sport England.
Playing Pitch Report	A report evaluating the adequacy of playing pitches in a given area and setting out the key priorities for future delivery.
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
S106	Section 106 (S106) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority (LPA) to enter into a legally-binding agreement or planning obligation with a landowner in association with the granting of planning permission. The obligation is termed a Section 106 Agreement. This may involve the provision of new playing fields, and / or contributions towards the improvement of

Acronym	Definition
	existing facilities.
Sport England Market Segmentation	The market segmentation data builds on the results of Sport England's <u>Active People Survey</u> , the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's Taking Part survey and the Mosaic tool from Experian. It divides the population into 19 segments, based on their participation habits in relation to sport and physical activity. It helps to understand the motivations of the population for doing sport and helps to tailor facilities to meet local needs and aspirations.
Team Generation Rate (TGR)	Team Generation Rates are used to measure participation in a particular sport. They indicate how many people in a specified age group are required to generate one team and are derived by dividing the appropriate population age band in the area by the number of teams playing within that area in that age band. The higher the number, the lower participation in that sport is.
The Activity v Facility Continuum	Devised by the RFU, the Activity v Facility Continuum evaluates the adequacy of rugby club bases to meet club needs based on the amount of activity (play) that takes place at the club site.
The English Cricket Board (the ECB)	The National Governing Body for Cricket.
The Football Association (The FA)	The National Governing Body for Association Football.
The Rugby Football Union (The RFU)	The National Governing Body for Rugby Union
Towards a Level Playing Field (TaLPF)	Sport England's guidance document that sets out the methodology that should be used in the preparation of a Playing Pitch Strategy. The document was used in the development of this report.

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Appendix A - Pitch Audit

Pitches with secured community use

Site	Actual nr of adult football pitches	Actual nr of junior football pitches	Actual nr of mini football pitches	Actual nr of cricket pitches	Adult Rugby Pitches	Ward
Abington Park Sports Pitches	4		3	2		Park
Bernard Weston Pavilion Playing Fields - Great Billing	2		1	1		Billing
Collingtree Playing Fields	1			1		Nene Valley
Dallington Park Football and Cricket	4	1	1			Spencer
Eastfield Park	1	2				Eastfield
Ecton Brook Playing Fields	2					Billing
Errington Park Football	1	1				New Duston
Far Cotton Recreation Ground	3	1	3			Delapre + Briar Hill
Fernie Fields, Clubleigh Close	1					Boothville
Kings Heath Recreation Football		3				Sunnyside
Kingsthorpe Recreation Ground	5	1		2		Sunnyside
Lady Bridge Drive Playing Fields	2	2	5			West Hunsbury
Lings Wood	8	1				Brookside
Northampton Old Scouts RUFC - Rushmere Road Rugby Field				1	4	Abington
Northampton Saints Cricket Club				1		Westone
Northampton Spencer FC - Studland Road Football	1					Semilong
Old Northamptonians	2			2	4	Abington
Parklands Recreation Ground	2	5	4			Parklands
Racecourse Park	15	2	8	2	1	Trinity
Rectory Farm Playing Field	3			1		Rectory Farm
Round Spinney	1	1				Talavera
Rushmills - Northampton Casuals Rugby / Football Ground					2	Nene Valley
Southfields Recreation Ground	1					Talavera
Spring Park - Welford Road Recreation Ground / Ac	5					Sunnyside
St Andrews Road Rugby Club - Northampton BBOB	1				2	Semilong
St Crispin Hospital Cricket Pitch				1		Upton
Upton Country Park	2	1			1	Upton
Victoria Park Football	2					St James
Wootton Hall Park	1	2	1	1		East Hunsbury
Wootton Playing Field	1	2	1	1		Nene Valley
St Andrews Hospital	1			1		Rushmills
Northampton School for Boys	1			1	2	Abington
Ecton Brook Primary School		1				Billing
Ecton Brook Primary School Bellinge Campus						Billing
Lings Primary School		1				Brookside
Lumbertubs Primary School			1			Brookside
Spring Lane Primary School		1				Castle
Abbeyfield School	2					Delapre + Briar Hill
Briar Hill Primary School		1				Delapre + Briar Hill
Queen Eleanor Primary School		1				Delapre + Briar Hill
The Abbey Primary School						Delapre + Briar Hill
Simon de Senlis (PFI)		1				East Hunsbury
Boothville Primary School		2				Eastfield
Eastfield Primary School						Eastfield
Kings Heath Primary School						Kings Heath
Kingsley Primary School		1				Kingsley
Kingsthorpe Village Primary School		2				Kingsthorpe
Duston Eidean Primary School			1			New Duston
Sunnyside Primary School			1			Obelisk
Chiltern Primary School		1				Old Duston
Hopping Hill Primary School		1				Old Duston
Lyncrest Primary School						Old Duston
Millway Primary School		3				Old Duston
Abington Vale Primary School			1			Park
Bridgewater Primary School		1				Park
Northampton School for Girls	2			1		Parklands

Parklands Primary School		2				Parklands
Cedar Road Primary School						Phippsville
Rectory Farm Primary School						Rectory Farm
Standens Barn Primary School			1			Riverside
Earl Spencer Primary School						Spencer
Green Oaks Primary School						St David
Kingsthorpe College	2	1			1	St David
Blackthorn Primary School -						Talavera
Blackthorn Primary School / Rectory Farm Remote Field						Talavera
Greenfields School and Sports College						Talavera
Woodvale Primary School						Talavera
St Lukes Church of England		1				Upton
The Duston School	2				1	Upton
Hunsbury Park Primary School		1				West Hunsbury
The Arbours Primary School		1				Westone
Weston Favell Primary School			1			Westone
Weston Favell School	2			1	1	Westone
Northampton Academy	3				1	Brookside
Malcolm Arnold Academy	1				1	Trinity
Thomas Becket Catholic High School	1	2			1	Parklands
Kingsthorpe Grove Primary School (Share with Good Shepherd)						St David
Thorplands Primary School:			1			Talavera
Northampton High School		4				Nene Valley
Delapre Primary School		1				Delapre + Briar Hill
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>219</b>

Pitches without secured community use

Site	A f c o l u l a b l a i n l r p o l f t c a h d e u s l t	A f c o l u l a b l a i n l r p o l f t c a h d e u s l o r	A f c o l u l a b l a i n l r p o l f t c a h d e u s l i	A c r t i u e a k l e t n r p i o t f c h e s	A d u l i t R u g b y P l t c h e s	Ward
Kings Meadow School						Boothville
East Hunsbury Primary School						East Hunsbury
St Gregorys Catholic Primary School		1				Eastfield
St Marys Catholic Primary School						Kings Heath
All Saints CEVA Primary School		1				Obelisk
University of Northampton	2					2 Obelisk
St James CEVA			2			Spencer
Northgate School Arts College	1					Trinity
Quinton House School		2				1 Upton
Headlands Primary School		1				Westone
County Cricket Ground - Kingsthorpe				1		Abington
Sixfields Leisure Complex + Stadium Athletics Track	1					Abington
Franklin Gardens Rugby Football Club - Northampton Saints					4	St James
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>