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Consulting Ltd.



Maidstone Borough Council

Sports Facilities Strategy
FIRST REVIEW

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In Spring 2016 Ploszajski Lynch Consulting Ltd. (PLC) was commissioned by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) to produce a Sports Facilities Strategy (SFS) for the borough. This is part of a wider assessment of sport and leisure provision in the borough which also includes a playing pitch assessment. The SFS was finalised in January 2019 and adopted by MBC in February 2019..

The SFS was produced using a methodology advocated in Sport England's *'Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance'* (2014). This makes provision for regular reviews of facilities strategies, to ensure that they remain robust and up-to-date and this document comprises the first review of the Maidstone Sports Facilities Strategy, undertaken in June 2020. The review involved:

- Identifying any recent changes to the strategic context.
- Identifying any recent changes to the local context, in particular any revised housing/population targets.
- Consulting with the relevant governing bodies of sport to obtain updated demand data.
- Checking any changes to facilities supply.
- Consulting all parish councils and elected members of MBC to establish any localised developments.
- Reworking the supply-demand assessment based on the above.
- Adding a new section on gymnastics facilities.
- Adding a new section on archery facilities.
- Revising the action plan to take account of any completed actions, any changes in priority and any new needs that have emerged.

1.2 Strategic drivers

The primary purpose of the SFS is to provide a strategic framework which ensures that the provision of indoor and outdoor sports facilities meets the local needs of existing and future residents within Maidstone Borough. Development in the Borough has brought an increase in sports provision which is able to meet some of the needs of the area. However future development is likely to put a strain on the sporting infrastructure of Maidstone. The SFS will help to secure and safeguard sport in Maidstone now and in the future.

MBC is currently conducting the *'Making Maidstone More Active'* review, to help the council to understand exactly what residents want from their local leisure service and to enable it to incorporate as many of the identified needs as possible into the next leisure management contract, which will commence in 2024. The SFS will both be informed by, and contribute to, the *'Making Maidstone More Active'* review, to ensure that local sports facilities provision is adequate to meet the identified needs.

1.3 The aim and objectives of the strategy

1.3.1 Aim

The aim of the SFS is to provide Maidstone Borough Council with an assessment of all relevant indoor and outdoor built sport facilities in the Borough. This will provide a baseline for current and future supply and demand assessments and also set out a vision with a strategic approach to sport and recreation provision in the Borough in the short, medium and long term (to 2037).

The strategy will also establish the principles to help inform where future resources should be focussed to ensure that proposed provision of indoor and outdoor sport facilities will meet future demand and reflect sustainable development objectives.

1.3.2 Objectives

The objectives of the SFS are to:

- Provide an evidence base for use in planning, investment and sports development decisions.
- Refer to, and be in general accordance with, relevant national (including the National Planning Policy Framework), regional, sub-regional and local policies and priorities.
- Provide a clear picture of existing supply, surpluses, deficits and anticipated future demand for sports facilities.
- Assess the current supply of indoor and outdoor sports facilities, with insight into the quality of these facilities and services, identifying possible future supply, including broad location and opportunities for opening up private sites for community use.
- Make reference to provision of facilities immediately adjacent to the Borough to ensure a full picture of local provision is available.
- Identify ways to increase opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity.
- Consult with key established user groups such as local teams, the local Sport and Physical Activity Alliance, the governing bodies of sport (NGB's), schools and education establishments and local key partners to apply local feedback to contextualise the results.

1.4 **The review of the strategy**

The review of the Strategy document involved the following:

- Reviewing changes to the strategic context that occurred between 2018 and 2020.
- Reviewing changes to the local context that occurred between 2018 and 2020, in particular any revised housing/population targets.
- Liaising with key local stakeholders to obtain facilities demand data.
- Identifying and assessing the implications of any changes to facilities supply.
- Reworking the supply-demand assessment based on the above.
- Revising the action plan to take account of any completed actions, any changes in priority and any new needs that have emerged between 2018 and 2020.

1.5 **The scope of the strategy**

1.5.1 **The facilities included**

The sports facilities included in the Strategy are:

- Sports halls.
- Swimming pools.
- Health and fitness facilities.
- Squash courts.
- Indoor and outdoor tennis facilities.
- Indoor and outdoor bowls facilities.
- Athletics tracks.
- Gymnastics facilities.
- Archery facilities.

1.5.2 **The facilities excluded**

Facilities for sports not included in the Strategy are as follows, with the rationale for their exclusion. Consideration will be given to including these and the facilities needs of any other appropriate emerging sports when the strategy is next reviewed:

- Climbing facilities (on the basis that there is only one specialist facility in the district, although another is planned).
- Cycling facilities (on the basis that most participation involves the use of the public rights of way network rather than specialist provision).
- Golf courses (on the basis that there is no public or voluntary sector involvement in local provision other than the Cobtree Estate which is on a long-term lease to Maidstone Borough Council, but run by a trust).
- Rowing and Watersports (on the basis that there is only one rowing club in the borough - Maidstone Invicta - and only one Watersports centre - in Mote Park).
- Village halls and community centres (on the basis that whilst they cater for a wide variety of recreational-level sport and physical activity, they are non-specialist sports facilities).

1.6 The study methodology

The methodology for the study follows the 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance' (2014) approach (ANOG), developed by Sport England. The process involves two parts and three stages as follows:

- **Part One** - Undertaking the assessment.
 - **Stage A:** Prepare and tailor the assessment.
 - **Stage B:** Gather information on supply and demand.
 - **Stage B:** Bring the information together.
- **Part Two - Stage C:** Applying the assessment.

1.7 Strategy format

The structure of the Strategy document is as follows:

- Assessing sports facilities needs in Maidstone.
- The local context for facilities provision.
- Strategic influences on facilities provision.
- Sports halls.
- Swimming pools.
- Health and fitness facilities.
- Squash courts.

- Indoor and outdoor tennis facilities.
- Indoor and outdoor bowls facilities.
- Athletics tracks.
- Gymnastics facilities.
- Archery facilities.
- Policies and recommendations.
- Applying and reviewing the strategy.

2 **ASSESSING SPORTS FACILITIES NEEDS IN MAIDSTONE**

2.1 **Introduction**

This section explains the basis upon which the current sports facilities needs in Maidstone have been identified, along with the approach for identifying the additional provision that will be needed as a result of population growth.

The methodology applied to assess the needs and opportunities for sports facilities follows Sport England's recommended approach, advocated in *'Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance'* (2014).

2.2 **Preparing and tailoring the approach**

MBC convened a project steering group led by officers from the Planning and Development department and involving officers from Culture and Leisure and Grounds Maintenance and the Maidstone Leisure Trust, to devise:

- The aims and objectives of the review of sports and leisure facilities in the borough.
- The scope of the exercise, including the types of facilities to include, the geographical scope and the overall timeframe for the assessment.
- The local and wider strategic context.
- The project management arrangements for the study, including the decision to engage assistance from external consultants.

A project brief was produced, approved and signed-off to complete Stage A of the process.

2.3 **Assessing sports facilities supply**

The assessment of sports facilities supply at Stage B of the study involved four main elements:

- **Quantity:** Establishing what facilities there are in the borough, with details of their dimensions, technical information like playing surfaces and floodlighting. This included consideration of facilities not currently in use, not available to the community and significant provision in neighbouring areas that serves some needs of Maidstone residents.
- **Quality:** Auditing the quality of all aspects of all facilities. This involved assessing each facility in terms of its condition (its age, appeal, fabric and ancillary provision like changing and car parking - factors that will influence its attractiveness to users) and fitness for purpose (its technical specifications and ability to accommodate an appropriate standard of play).

- **Accessibility:** Determining spatial distribution of provision in the borough by GIS mapping of each facility type, including catchment analysis appropriate to the scale and role of each facility.
- **Availability:** Identifying how much each facility is used, whether there is any existing spare capacity and if there is any scope to increase capacity. This involved consideration of programming and usage data, opening times and pricing levels, which was secured through consultation with facility providers and operators.

The information was collated and analysed in a facilities supply report, which was evaluated and approved by the project steering group.

2.4 **Assessing sports facilities demand**

The assessment of sports facilities demand at Stage B of the study involved five main elements:

- **Local population profile:** Establishing the local demography, including the size, age profile, affluence/deprivation, health indices and growth projections.
- **Sports participation:** Identifying local sports participation characteristics, through analysing the results of Sport England's 'Active People' survey, market segmentation data, local facilities usage figures and a survey of local clubs to establish membership patterns and trends.
- **Unmet, displaced and future demand:** In addition to current expressed demand, analysis of unmet (demand which exists but cannot currently be satisfied), displaced (demand from within the borough that is satisfied elsewhere) and future demand (based on projected population and participation increases) was identified.
- **Local participation priorities:** Establishing and local priorities for the use of sports facilities, such as those relating to corporate health and well-being policies.
- **Sport-specific priorities:** Determining through consultation with Kent Sport, the governing bodies of sport and a local sports clubs survey, whether there are any sport-specific priorities for Maidstone.

The information was collated and analysed in a facilities demand report, which was evaluated and approved by the project steering group.

2.5 **Assessing the balance between sports facilities supply and demand**

To complete Stage B of the process, the supply and demand information was brought together for each type of facility to establish:

- **Quantity:** Are there enough facilities with sufficient capacity to meet needs?
- **Quality:** Are the facilities fit for purpose for the users?
- **Accessibility:** Are the facilities in the right physical location for the users?

- **Availability:** Are the facilities available for those who want to use them?

Where appropriate for some types of facility, the assessment included the use of Sport England planning tools, in particular:

- **Facilities Planning Model:** The Facilities Planning Model (FPM) comprises a spatial assessment of sports hall and swimming pool provision based on the nature of demand within an area and the available supply, taking into account issues such as capacity (hours of availability in the peak period) and accessibility.
- **Sports Facilities Calculator:** The Sports Facility Calculator (SFC) has been developed by Sport England to help local planning authorities quantify how much additional demand for the key community sports facilities (swimming pools, sports halls, indoor bowls and artificial grass pitches) is generated as a result of new growth linked to specific development locations

The information was collated and analysed in a supply and demand assessment report, which was evaluated, approved and signed-off by the project steering group to complete Stage B of the process.

2.6 **Applying the assessment - Developing the strategy**

The results of the assessment were applied to produce a Sports Facilities Strategy for the borough, which included:

- **Options for provision:** The options for meeting current and future facilities needs were identified under Sport England's recommended headings of 'Protect', 'Provide' and 'Enhance'.
- **Policy recommendations:** Arranged under the headings of 'Protect', 'Provide' and 'Enhance', planning policy recommendations were developed to ensure that the implementation of the strategy will be supported by the provisions of the Local Plan.
- **Action plan:** An action plan was developed for each type of sports facility, linking identified issues with specific actions, including the organisations responsible for lead and support roles, the resource implications and the respective priorities.
- **Delivery:** Mechanisms for securing developer contributions towards the costs of meeting additional facilities arising from housing growth in the borough were developed.
- **Monitoring and review:** The arrangements for ensuring that the SFS remains robust and up-to-date were specified.

2.7 Sources of information

Information was gathered throughout the process from a wide range of consultees including:

- **Sport England:** Guidance on the assessment methodology.
- **Maidstone Borough Council:** Consultation with officers from Leisure, Planning and Grounds Maintenance on their respective areas of responsibility.
- **Maidstone Leisure Trust:** Data on usage of the key facilities at Maidstone Leisure Centre.
- **Other local sports facilities providers:** Consultation with organisations such as the YMCA and commercial health and fitness operators on usage levels and spare capacity.
- **Neighbouring local authorities:** Information on their sports facilities assessments and the impact of any cross-border issues was obtained from Ashford Borough Council, Medway Council, Swale District Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
- **Kent Sport:** Information on local and wider strategic priorities.
- **Governing bodies of sport:** Information on local and wider strategic priorities and local supply and demand information.
- **Sports clubs:** Information on sports facilities provision and use, current and future needs and opinions on quality.
- **Parish Councils:** Information on the quantity and quality of facilities that they provide.
- **Schools:** Information on sports facilities provision and use, plus attitudes towards community use.

2.8 Summary

Assessing sports facilities needs in Maidstone borough using the approach advocated by Sport England in its *'Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance'* has ensured that the exercise is both robust and evidence-based and as a result complies with the provisions of the Government's planning policy framework.

Key findings:

- **Overall sports participation rates:** Sports participation rates in Maidstone are lower than the respective county, regional and national averages.
- **Geographical variations in participation:** There are significant differences in sports participation between the urban (where rates are lower) and rural (where rates are higher) parts of the borough, which will impact upon demand patterns.
- **Population growth:** The borough's population is projected to increase by 29,891 people by 2037. This will create significant additional demand for sports facilities.
- **'Dominant' market segments:** Swimming and fitness activities feature highly in the sporting preferences of the 'dominant' market segments in Maidstone, which will inflate local demand for facilities that provide for these sports.
- **Facilities supply:** Sports facilities are provided by a mosaic of owners and operators from the public, voluntary and commercial sectors, which highlights the need for and benefits of a strategic approach to co-ordinating provision.

3.1 Introduction

This section identifies the context within which sports facilities provision is made in Maidstone.

3.2 Background

Maidstone is the county town of Kent and occupies a central location in the county. It stands on the River Medway which links the town to the Thames estuary. The Borough of Maidstone is one of the most attractive areas in the country in which to live, work or to visit, lying between the North Downs and the Weald. The borough's easy access to both the attractions of rural Kent and of London means that Maidstone itself and the nearby towns and villages are highly desirable locations. Maidstone is at the centre of a good transport network with good rail and motorway access to London, the Channel ports and thence to Europe.

3.3 Population

The key population statistics are as follows:

3.3.1 Current population

Maidstone is the most populous Kent district. The population at the 2011 census was 155,143. 107,627 people live in the town of Maidstone, with the remainder located in surrounding villages. According to Kent County Council's '*Strategic Commissioning Statistical Bulletin*' (2020) the borough population increased to 171,800 by the middle of 2019, an increase of 16,657 (10.7%).

3.3.2 Age structure

Maidstone has a relatively elderly age structure. The borough has a slightly lower proportion of people aged under 25 years (29.0%) compared with Kent as a whole (29.4%).

3.3.3 Ethnicity

Maidstone's population is comparatively ethnically homogeneous with 94% of residents classifying themselves as White, 3.2% as Asian and 0.9% Black African or Black Caribbean.

3.3.4 Population growth

MBC's *'Strategic Housing Market Assessment'* (2015) confirmed the objectively assessed housing need for the borough over the period 2011 to 2031 as 17,660 dwellings. Of these 8,335 have already been built or granted planning permission. The 833 annual dwelling requirement stands for five years following the adoption of the Local Plan (i.e. to October 2022). Thereafter, the annual requirement increases by 353 dwellings to a need of 1,236 homes per annum. Current expectations are that the Local Plan Review will be rolled forward to the year 2037. Based upon the ONS 'Sub-national Population projections' (2014), this scale of development will increase the borough's population by 20,900 to 192,700 people by 2031 and by 29,891 to 201,691 by 2037. This will represent increases of 12.2% and 17.4% respectively over the mid-2019 estimated figure.

3.4 Deprivation

According to the Government's 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Maidstone is a comparatively prosperous area. It ranks 206th out of 326 English local authorities in terms of overall deprivation. However, this overall rating does hide some local inequalities. Public Health England estimates that 4,255 children (14.2%) in the borough live in poverty.

3.5 Health

Local health indices are recorded in Public Health England's *'Local Authority Health Profile for Maidstone'* (2019). These show that in general the health of people in Maidstone is better than in England as a whole:

- Life expectancy at birth is higher than the national averages by 0.9 years for men and 0.5 years for women. However, there is a life expectancy gap of 7.4 years for men and 4.5 years for women between the most and least deprived parts of the Borough.
- 16.9% of year 6 children in Maidstone are obese, compared with a 20.2% national average.
- Only 61.4% of adults in the Borough are overweight or obese, compared with a national average of 62.0%.

3.6 'Active Lives' survey

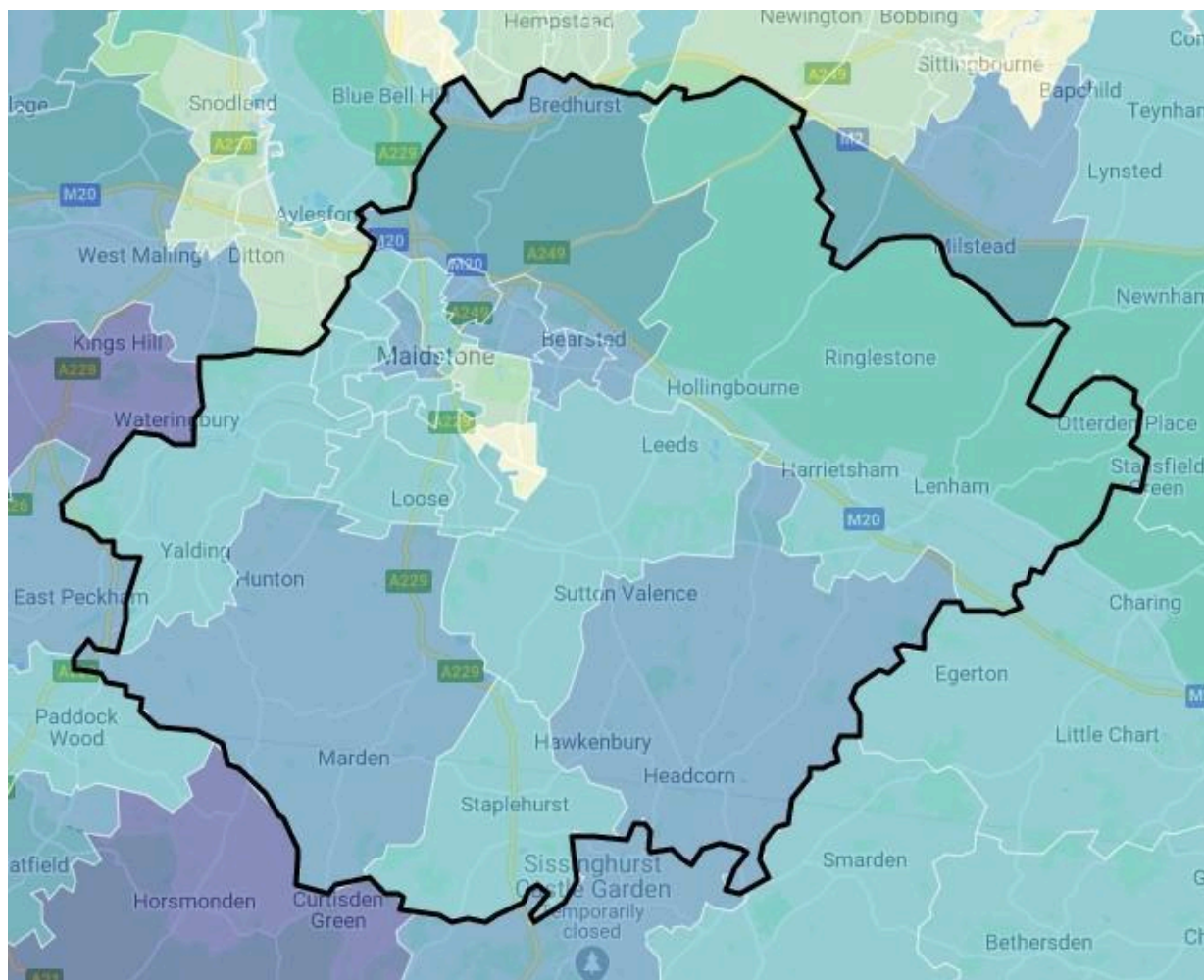
Sport England's *'Active Lives'* survey measures engagement in sport and physical activity. The definitions used in the survey are as follows:

- ***Sport and physical activity:*** At least 10-minutes of moderate or higher intensity sports activities, walking and cycling for leisure or travel, fitness activities and dance.
- ***Active:*** The ‘Active’ population is defined as those doing at least 150 minutes of the above activities per week.
- ***Fairly active:*** The ‘Fairly active’ population is defined as those doing at between 30 and 149 minutes of the above activities per week.
- ***Inactive:*** The ‘Inactive’ population is defined as those doing at 30 minutes or less of the above activities per week.

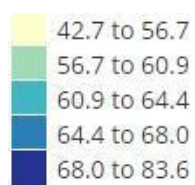
The key data for Maidstone from the 2018/9 survey is set out below:

<i>Area</i>	<i>Active</i>	<i>Fairly active</i>	<i>Inactive</i>
Maidstone	62.0%	9.9%	28.2%
Kent	63.9%	11.4%	24.6%
South-East	65.9%	12.1%	22.0%
England	63.3%	12.2%	24.6%

The map below illustrates that there are significant variations in activity levels at Middle Super Output Area level, with the highest levels of participation in the more affluent rural parts of the borough and the lowest levels in the south-east part of Maidstone town:



Key: Percentage of the population who are physically active for 150+ minutes per week



3.7 **The local sports facilities supply network**

Sports facilities provision in Maidstone comprises a mixed economy involving the public, voluntary and commercial sectors. The key providers are as follows:

- **Maidstone Leisure Trust:** The Leisure Trust manages the major community leisure facility in the borough at Maidstone Leisure Centre.
- **YMCA:** The YMCA provides a community-focussed sports centre in Maidstone with a range of indoor and outdoor facilities.
- **Schools:** Schools in the public and private sectors are major sports facilities providers in the borough, although not all provision is community accessible.
- **Sports clubs:** Voluntary sector sports clubs provide and run a range of mostly smaller facilities, in particular tennis courts and bowls greens.
- **Commercial providers:** The commercial sector is very active in Maidstone, from major national operators like David Lloyd, though to small local businesses. Health and fitness facilities comprise the main form of commercial provision, but some facilities also include tennis courts.
- **Parish councils:** Parish councils make some limited provision in the rural parts of the borough, principally tennis courts.

3.8 **The implications for sports facilities provision**

The implications of the local context for sports facilities provision in Maidstone are as follows:

- **A relatively elderly population:** A relatively elderly age structure is typically associated with lower rates of participation in sport and physical activity, so this may reduce demand for the pitch sports in Maidstone.
- **A predominantly white population:** Physical activity participation rates amongst the white population are typically higher than for other ethnic groups. The low proportion of Maidstone residents from black and minority ethnic groups may contribute to the relatively levels of involvement in sport locally.
- **Population growth:** The borough's population is projected to increase by 20,900 to 192,700 people by 2031 and by 29,891 to 201,691 by 2037. This will represent an increase of 12.2% and 17.4% respectively over the mid-2019 estimated figure. This will create significant additional demand for the pitch sports.
- **Overall sports participation rates:** Based upon the most recent 'Active Lives' Survey suggests that rates of participation in sport and physical activity are lower than the county regional and national averages.

- ***Geographical variations in participation:*** Analysis of participation rates at Middle Super Output Area level reveal significant differences between the urban and rural parts of the borough, which will impact upon demand patterns.

Key findings:

- **Maidstone Strategic Plan:** Encouraging the good health and well-being of Maidstone residents is a key action area. The key challenge for all sports facilities providers is to ensure that their 'offer' is sufficiently relevant and attractive to engage a wider participation base, including people who are currently inactive.
- **Maidstone Planning policy:** A robust, evidence-based assessment of sports facilities needs in the borough is required to inform planning policy, including the Local Plan Review and this SFS will provide this.
- **County priorities:** Kent Sport's Strategic Framework includes a priority for improving sports facilities provision based on strategic and community need, including those on school sites and highlights the need to tackle inactivity and encourage under-represented groups.
- **National sports policy shifts:** The move in national sports policy towards prioritising new participants will create a challenge for sport to ensure that the traditional facilities 'offer' is sufficiently relevant and attractive to engage a wider participation base, including people who are currently inactive.
- **Governing body of sport priorities:** There are no major identified strategic facilities needs or opportunities in Maidstone, but some potential to link with funding programmes that might enhance local provision.

4.1 Introduction

This section examines the influence of relevant policies and priorities on sports facilities provision in Maidstone, including the impact of national strategies.

4.2 Maidstone Council's Strategic Plan

The Council's work is guided by 'The Strategic Plan 2019-2045' (2019). The plan sets out the vision for the area of 'a vibrant prosperous urban and rural community at the heart of Kent, where everyone can realise their potential'. There are four priorities of which the most relevant to the SFS are:

- Homes and communities, which includes outcomes where 'a diverse range of community activities is encouraged' and 'community facilities and services are in the right place at the right time to support communities'.
- A thriving place, which includes an outcome where 'a vibrant leisure and culture offer, is enjoyed by residents and is attractive to visitors'.

One action of particular relevance to the SFS and upon which importance will be placed is ‘reviewing and delivering leisure and cultural services that meet future needs e.g. sports facilities’.

4.3 Maidstone Local Plan

The Local Plan sets out local planning policies and identifies how land is used, determining what will be built where. Adopted local plans provide the framework for development and must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. The Maidstone Borough Local Plan was adopted in October 2017 and sets out the spatial vision for the future as supporting the wider vision of the borough:

- The council’s vision for the borough is set out in the Strategic Plan (2015) and its 2017/18 refresh. The Maidstone Borough Local Plan is the spatial expression of the council's vision.
- Policy DM20 deals with Community Facilities, including sports provision and states that:
 - ‘Residential development which would generate a need for new community facilities or for which spare capacity in such facilities does not exist, will not be permitted unless the provision of new, extended or improved facilities (or a contribution towards such provision) is secured as appropriate by planning conditions, through legal agreements or through the Community Infrastructure Levy’.
 - ‘Proposals which would lead to a loss of community facilities will not be permitted unless demand within the locality no longer exists or a replacement facility acceptable to the council is provided’.
 - ‘The council will seek to ensure, where appropriate, that providers of education facilities make provision for dual use of facilities in the design of new schools, and will encourage the dual use of education facilities (new and existing) for recreation and other purposes’.

4.4 Kent Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Maidstone Borough Council is a member of the West Kent CCG Health and Wellbeing Board. This board is responsible for delivery in that area of the wider *‘Kent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2014-2017’* (2014). The health vision as set out in the strategy is ‘to improve health and wellbeing outcomes, deliver better coordinated quality care, improve the public’s experience of integrated health and social care services, and ensure that the individual is involved and at the heart of everything we do’. The strategy makes no mention of sport and physical activity is promoted only as a way of decreasing obesity. No specific targets for participation are set out.

4.5 Kent Sport’s Strategic Framework

Kent Sport (the Kent and Medway County Sports Partnership) produced a *‘Towards an Active County - Strategic Framework’* (2017), with nine key themes for sport and physical activity in the county to 2021:

- ***Supporting the inactive to become active:*** Based upon at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week.
- ***Maximising the benefits of sport and physical activity to other social agendas:*** This includes physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, social and community development, individual development and economic development.
- ***Increasing participation:*** In sport and physical activity and providing appropriate opportunities to help ensure habits become resilient and the core market is sustained.
- ***Providing appropriate opportunities for children and young people:*** To be active as they transition through different stages of their lives.
- ***Addressing the inequalities:*** In sport and physical activity engagement, with a particular focus on those in lower socio-economic groups, women and girls, disabled people and older people.
- ***Improving facilities:*** For sport and physical activity, ensuring they attract new customers, meet customer need and provide a good customer experience.
- ***Supporting the voluntary sector and volunteering:*** Ensuring diversity amongst volunteers.
- ***Supporting and developing talented performers:***
- ***Maximising the use of major events:*** To promote participation and volunteering opportunities.

Specific facilities objectives are as follows:

- Facilities should be welcoming and provide a varied programme, including traditional and non-traditional sport/physical activities, to encourage and support a diverse range of people to become active or engaged in sport. This should include investigating new and innovative facilities and equipment, and should also take account of access, cultural, or gender requirements of users.
- Partners should promote the outdoors environment, including the countryside, as a means for people to become and stay active.
- Partners should consider and promote the use of local community assets (e.g. community halls and open spaces) in order to provide local, accessible opportunities that people can build into their everyday life.
- The training of facility staff and volunteers should be undertaken to ensure high standards in health and safety, customer service and awareness of the needs of inactive people and under-represented groups, to ensure facilities cater for a wide range of customers.

4.6 ***The Government's Planning Policies***

In July 2018, the Government published revisions to the '*National Planning Policy Framework*' (2018), setting out its economic, environmental and social planning policies for England. Taken together, these policies articulate the Government's vision of sustainable development, which should be interpreted and applied locally to meet local aspirations. The policies of greatest relevance to sports facilities provision and retention are as follows:

- ***Sustainable development:*** ‘The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Sustainable development means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.
- ***Health and well-being:*** ‘Local planning authorities should work with public health leads and health organisations to understand and take account of the health status and needs of the local population, including expected future changes, and any information about relevant barriers to improving health and well-being’.
- ***Open space, sports and recreational facilities:*** ‘Access to good quality opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. The planning system has a role in helping to create an environment where activities are made easier and public health can be improved. Planning policies should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of sports and recreational facilities in the local area. The information gained from this assessment of needs and opportunities should be used to set locally derived standards for the provision of sports and recreational facilities’.
- ‘Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be built on unless:
 - An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
 - The need for and benefits of the development clearly outweigh the loss’.

The Government also issued ‘*National Planning Practice Guidance*’ in 2014 and the following is of particular relevance to sports facilities:

- ***Sport and recreation provision:*** ‘Open space should be taken into account in planning for new development and considering proposals that may affect existing open space. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby’.
 - ‘Authorities and developers may refer to Sport England’s guidance on how to assess the need for sports and recreation facilities’.
 - ‘Local planning authorities are required to consult Sport England in certain cases where development affects the use of land as playing fields. Where there is no requirement to consult, local planning authorities are advised to consult Sport England in cases where development might lead to loss of, or loss of use for sport, of any major sports facility, the creation of a site for one or more playing pitches, artificial lighting of a major outdoor sports facility or a residential development of 300 dwellings or more’.

- **Health and well-being:** ‘Local planning authorities should ensure that health and wellbeing, and health infrastructure are considered in local and neighbourhood plans and in planning decision making’.
- ‘Development proposals should support strong, vibrant and healthy communities and help create healthy living environments which should, where possible, include making physical activity easy to do’.
- ‘Opportunities for healthy lifestyles must be considered (e.g. planning for an environment that supports people of all ages in making healthy choices, helps to promote active travel and physical activity and promotes high quality open spaces and opportunities for play, sport and recreation).

4.7 **The Government’s Sports Strategy**

The Government’s sports strategy ‘*Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*’ (2015) sets the context for a national policy shift. It contains the following material of relevance to sports facilities provision in Maidstone:

- The Strategy seeks to ‘redefine what success looks like in sport’ by concentrating on five key outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development.
- The benefit of engaging those groups that typically do little or no activity is immense. Future funding will therefore focus on those people who tend not to take part in sport, including women and girls, disabled people, those in lower socio-economic groups and older people.

4.8 **Sport England Strategy**

Sport England’s strategy ‘*Towards an Active Nation*’ (2016) contains a significant policy shift to encourage more currently inactive people to become active, with a relative move away from support for programmes aimed at existing participants. Elements of particular relevance to sports facilities provision in Maidstone are as follows:

- More money and resources will be focused on tackling inactivity because this is where the gains for the individual and for society are greatest.
- There will be greater investment in children and young people from the age of five to build positive attitudes to sport and activity as the foundations of an active life.
- Sport England will work with those parts of the sector that serve existing participants to help them identify ways in which they can become more sustainable and self-sufficient.

In May 2020, Sport England published *‘Shaping our Future (2020)’* which sets out ways in which its current strategy might need to be adapted and updated for the decade ahead. Elements of particular relevance to sports facilities provision in Maidstone are as follows:

- ‘We are changing our national values around activity. Exercise is being redefined as a necessity, rather than a recreational choice or luxury’.
- ‘We plan to prioritise our resources around the people and the places that need it the most - especially those facing disadvantage or additional barriers, who have not had equal access to opportunities’.
- ‘We want to work to not only maintain but enhance the core infrastructure of sport and activity - the network of facilities, spaces and clubs that provide places to play’.

4.9 **Governing Bodies of Sport Strategies**

A number of the governing bodies of sport have produced facilities strategies, which are summarised below, to assess their implications for provision in Maidstone borough:

<i>Sport</i>	<i>Facilities priorities</i>	<i>Implications for Maidstone</i>
Archery	Archery GB’s <i>‘Facility Strategy 2015 - 2018’</i> (2015) is still regarded as current and the key priorities being addressed are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing facilities and toilets: 50% of clubs do not have access to a changing area or toilets. • Signage at club sites: 42% of clubs do not have any signage at their facility. • Indoor shooting spaces: 40% of clubs do not have access to an indoor practice area. 	The priority issues affect several local clubs in Maidstone.
Athletics	England Athletics’ <i>‘Facilities Strategy 2018 - 2025’</i> (2018) contains the following material of relevance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim: ‘To create an innovative and inspiring network of sustainable athletics facilities, with the capacity to meet current and future demand’. • Hierarchy: England Athletics recognises a hierarchy of facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compact Athletics Facilities: A new generation of affordable and sustainable satellite athletics facilities that provide a stepping-stone. - Club Venues: Track and field facilities with a strong club membership and provide appropriate training and competition opportunities. 	Existing athletics track provision means that there are no immediate needs for smaller-scale facilities.
Badminton	Badminton England’s <i>‘Discover Badminton 2017-2025’</i> (2017) identifies the following national targets for the sport by 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,000 additional under 11 players. • 5,000 additional 12-16 year old players in clubs. • 32,850 new players of all ages (an increase of 8.5%). 	Demand increases will create the need for more sports halls.
Basketball	The British Basketball Federation’s <i>‘Transforming Basketball Together in Britain 2016 - 2028’</i> (2016) contains an objective to ‘develop a clear facilities strategy for basketball, creating community hubs including, where appropriate, arenas that sit at the heart of communities and are homes for the leading elite and community clubs’.	Maidstone is not identified as a priority area.

Bowls	<p>Bowls England is currently finalising its Strategic Plan for the four-year period to 2023. The emerging policies are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To deliver a structure that supports bowlers, clubs and counties. • To develop the National Membership Register. • To invest in member services. • To develop stronger internal communication channels and share best practice. • To raise the profile of the sport with external stakeholders. 	There are no policies of specific relevance to bowls facilities provision in Maidstone.
<i>Sport</i>	<i>Facilities priorities</i>	<i>Implications for Maidstone</i>
Gymnastics	<p>British Gymnastics' <i>Facility Strategy 2017 - 2021</i> (2017) is being updated in 2020 and the emerging priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To move from a third of clubs in dedicated facilities to at least a half of clubs into dedicated facilities. • Increased use of modular buildings for specialist gymnastics facilities. • The conversion of former shops/retail units in town centres to specialist gymnastics facilities. <p>A new funding stream '<i>Club Capital</i>' has been launched. It is a low cost loan scheme rather than a grant £250,000 repayable over a 5-year period.</p>	Opportunities to create or enhance local gymnastics provision.
Netball	<p>England Netball remains committed to its 10-1-1 mission and vision to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish netball as a top ten participation sport. • Make netball the first choice of team sport for women and girls. • Achieve and maintain world number one status. <p>Its strategic goals are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow participation by at least 10,000 participants per annum. • Deliver a first-class member and participant experience. • Win the World Championships. <p>Lead an effective and progressive infrastructure.</p>	Demand increases will create the need for more local capacity in sports halls.
Squash	<p>England Squash and Racketball's '<i>Game Changer: Participation Strategy</i>' (2015) states that 'although we support the development of facilities, our resources cannot create a significant impact on the thousands of courts in the country. Our past efforts to support court development have been beneficial but limited'.</p>	Maidstone is not identified as a priority area.
Swimming	<p>Swim England's '<i>Towards a Nation Swimming: A Strategic Plan for Swimming in England 2017 - 2021</i>' (2017) has no facilities priorities but includes a commitment to 'working with providers to create a swimming environment that is more inclusive and exceeds the expectations of swimmers'.</p>	There is potential to optimise and rationalise the local pools.
Table tennis	<p>Table Tennis England's '<i>Facilities Strategy 2015 - 2025</i>' (2015) identifies that table tennis takes place in a variety of settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal club-led environments - Consisting of dedicated table tennis facilities (equipped for and predominantly used by table tennis), school halls, community halls, church halls, multisport clubs and leisure centres. • Informal social environments - Including bars, workplaces, parks, sport-specific clubs and community spaces. <p>To support sustainable clubs, the priorities are:</p>	Equipment packages may enhance local participation opportunities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish a minimum of one accessible, high quality dedicated multi-table facility in every active county. ● Support current clubs to ensure long-term security of use of their facilities and to develop facilities or access multisport and multi-use environments. <p>To support the social recreational game, the priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support the implementation of free-to-use outdoor tables, prioritising centres of population. ● Establish a network of social table tennis venues offering vibrant informal environments for all. 	
<i>Sport</i>	<i>Facilities priorities</i>	<i>Implications for Maidstone</i>
Tennis	<p>The Lawn Tennis Association's strategic plan 2019 - 2023 '<i>Tennis for Britain</i>' (2019) contains the following priorities:</p> <p>Vision: 'Tennis opened up - tennis is for everyone. All ages, all backgrounds, all levels of fitness. Anyone can pick up a racket, anyone can be part of the tennis family'.</p> <p>Mission: 'To grow tennis by making it more relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable'.</p> <p>Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visibility: Broaden relevance and increase visibility of tennis all year round to build engagement and participation with fans and players. ● Innovation: Innovate in the delivery of tennis to widen its appeal. ● Investment: Support community facilities and schools to increase the opportunities to play. ● Accessibility: Make the customer journey to playing tennis easier and more accessible for anyone. ● Engagement: Engage and collaborate with everyone involved in delivering tennis in Britain, particularly coaches and volunteers, to attract and maintain more people in the game. ● Performance: Create a pathway for British champions that nurtures a diverse team of players, people and leaders. 	Significant opportunities to improve local facilities, linked to tennis participation programmes.

4.10 *The implications for sports facilities provision*

The implications of the key strategic influences on sports facilities provision in Maidstone are:

- **Maidstone Strategic Plan:** Encouraging the good health and well-being of Maidstone residents is a key action area. The key challenge for many sports is to ensure that their 'offer' is sufficiently relevant and attractive to engage a wider participation base, including people who are currently inactive.

- ***Maidstone Planning policy:*** A robust, evidence-based assessment of sports facilities needs in the borough is required to inform planning policy, including the Local Plan review and this SFS will provide this to help ensure good future provision.
- ***County priorities:*** It is an identified priority to ensure that appropriate facilities provision is made to support an increase in sport and physical activity.
- ***National sports policy shifts:*** The move in national sports policy towards prioritising new participants will create a challenge for sport to ensure that the traditional facilities ‘offer’ is sufficiently relevant and attractive to engage a wider participation base, including people who are currently inactive.
- ***Governing body of sport priorities:*** There are no major identified strategic facilities needs or opportunities in Maidstone, but some potential to link with funding programmes that might enhance local provision.

5 SPORTS HALLS

Key findings:

- **Quantity:** There are ten community-accessible sports halls in Maidstone, plus one other facility without public access. There is no current spare peak-time sports hall capacity in the borough. Additional demand by 2037 will amount to the equivalent of 2.05 four-badminton court sized sports halls with full community access.
- **Quality:** The quality of most aspects of most sports halls is rated as ‘average’ or better. Only three sports halls comply with (or exceed) the dimensions recommended by Sport England for halls that can cater for a full range of multi-sports use.
- **Accessibility:** All the main populated areas of the borough are within 15-minutes driving time of a community-accessible sports hall with ‘pay-and-play’ access.
- **Availability:** Eight of the ten sports halls in the borough are on school sites, with limited midweek daytime access and only five halls offer regular weekend availability. None of the school facilities has secured community use.

5.1 Introduction

This section examines the provision of sports halls in Maidstone. Sports halls are defined as indoor halls with multi-sport markings and minimum dimensions equivalent to three badminton courts (27m x 18m). Sports halls cater for a wide range of sporting needs, including aerobics, indoor athletics, badminton, basketball, boxing, indoor cricket, five-a-side football, gymnastics, handball, korfball, netball, roller skating, table tennis, trampolining and volleyball.

5.2 Quantity

5.2.1 Sports halls with community use

The location and dimensions of sports halls with community use in Maidstone is as follows:

Facility	Address	Dimensions	Year built
Cornwallis Academy	Hubbard Lane, Coxheath ME17 4HX	33m x 18m	2011
Lenham School	Lenham ME17 2LL	33m x 17m	1972
Maidstone Grammar School	Barton Road, Maidstone ME15 7BT	33m x 17m	1965
Maidstone Grammar Sch. for Girls	Buckland Road, Maidstone ME16 0TJ	34.5m x 20m	2016
Maidstone Leisure Centre	Mote Park, Maidstone ME15 8NQ	32m x 26m	1991
New Line Learning Academy	Ham Lane, Lenham ME17 2LL	31m x 26m	2010
St Augustine Academy	Boughton Lane, Maidstone ME15 9QL	36.6m. x 18.3m	2007
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	Sutton Valence ME17 3HN	45m x 23m	2005
The Maplesden Noakes School	Buckland Road, Maidstone ME16 0TJ	33m x 18m	2008

YMCA	Melrose Close, Maidstone ME15 6BD	34.5m x 20m	2011
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5.2.2 Sports halls without community use

The location and dimensions of the sports hall without community use in Maidstone is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Year built</i>
St. Andrew's School	St. Andrew's, Maidstone ME16 0JP	34.5m x 20m	2005

5.3 Quality

5.3.1 The criteria assessed

The quality of sports halls was assessed by a non-technical visual inspection during a site visit to all facilities. The criteria that were evaluated were as follows:

- **Playing area:** The overall condition, playing surface, clear span roof height, lighting, spectator provision, equipment and fitness for purpose.
- **Changing facilities:** The capacity, condition and fitness for purpose.
- **Disability access:** The extent of full disabled access to the facility, including the provision of access ramps, dedicated changing, toilets and car parking.
- **Maintenance and cleanliness:** The quality of maintenance and cleanliness standards.
- **General access:** Including car parking, signposting, external lighting and proximity to public transport.

5.3.2 The basis of the ratings

The facilities were rated on a five-point scale, where 5 equates to 'very good' (highlighted in green below), 4 to 'good' (also highlighted in green below), 3 to 'average' (highlighted in yellow below), 2 to 'poor' (highlighted in red below) and 1 to 'very poor' (also highlighted in red below). The ratings for the sports halls in Maidstone are shown in the table below.

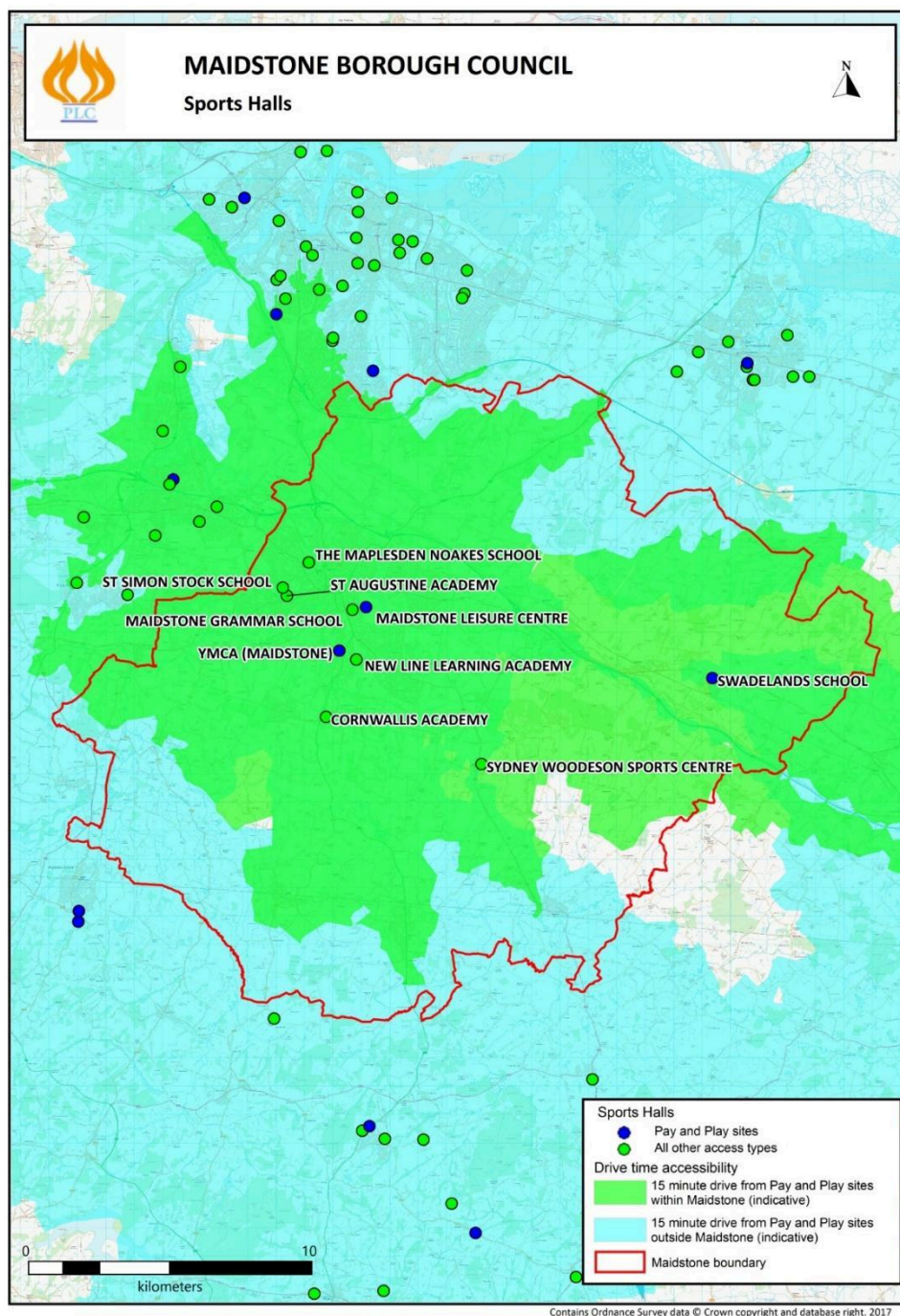
<i>Facility</i>	<i>Playing area</i>	<i>Changing</i>	<i>Disability Access</i>	<i>Maintenance</i>	<i>General access</i>
Cornwallis Academy	4	3	3	5	5
Lenham School	4	3	3	4	3
Maidstone Grammar School	4	4	4	5	4
Maidstone Grammar Sch. for Girls	5	5	5	4	5
Maidstone Leisure Centre	4	4	5	3	3
New Line Learning Academy	4	3	4	4	4
St Augustine Academy	4	2	2	3	4
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	5	4	3	5	2

The Maplesden Noakes School	3	3	2	4	3
YMCA	4	4	3	4	3

5.4 **Accessibility**

The map below shows the location of all sports halls in Maidstone:

- Based on Sport England research, the ‘effective catchment’ for sports halls (defined as the time/distance travelled and the prevailing mode of transport used by up to 90% of facility users) is 15 minutes driving time.
- Sports halls with ‘pay and play’ access are marked in blue, with their 15-minute drive time catchments, which are denoted in green for facilities within the borough and in pale blue for those in neighbouring areas with catchments that overlap the borough boundary.
- Sports halls with only block-booked access are marked in green.



5.5 Availability

The table below identifies the opening hours, usage arrangements, pricing, booking arrangements and used capacity in the peak periods.

Facility	Opening hours and basis of use	Pricing and booking arrangements	Peak period usage levels
Cornwallis Academy	Mon-Fri 6pm -10pm Block bookings only	Whole hall £30 Badminton court £7.50	75%

		Bookings by phone.	
Lenham School	Mon-Fri 5pm - 9pm Sat 8am - 4pm Sun 10am - 4pm	Whole hall £30 weekdays £40 weekends Badminton Court £7.50 Bookings on-line.	90% Mon - Thurs 50% other times
Maidstone Grammar School	Mon-Fri 6pm - 10pm Weekends by arrangement 'Pay-and-play' and block bookings	Whole hall £35 Badminton court £10 Bookings on-line.	80%
Maidstone Grammar School for Girls	Mon-Fri 5pm - 9pm Sat-Sun 9am - 5pm 'Pay-and-play' and block bookings	Whole hall £45 Badminton court £12 Bookings on-line.	75%
Maidstone Leisure Centre	Mon-Fri 6.30am - 10pm Sat-Sun 8am - 8pm 'Pay-and-play' and block bookings	Whole hall £136 (peak) £110 (off-peak) Badminton court £15.40/£12.40 Bookings in person, on-line or by phone.	85%
New Line Learning Academy	Mon-Fri 6pm - 10pm Block bookings only	Whole hall £55 Badminton court £7.50 Bookings in person or by phone.	80%
St Augustine Academy	Mon-Fri 6pm - 10pm Block bookings only	Whole Hall £35 Bookings in person or by phone.	100%
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	Mon-Fri 6pm - 8pm Block bookings only	Whole hall £40 Bookings by phone.	100%
The Maplesden Noakes School	Mon - Fri. 6pm - 9.30pm Sat 9am - 3.30pm Block bookings only	Whole hall £35 Badminton court £10 Bookings in person, or by phone after enquires on-line.	90%
YMCA	Mon - Fri 6.25am - 10pm Sat - Sun 8am - 6pm Membership required, then 'pay-and-play' and block bookings available.	Membership £41 per annum Whole hall £50 (peak) £38 (off-peak) Badminton court £11.50/£7.50 Bookings in person, or by phone.	95%

5.6 **Key findings on supply**

The key findings are as follows:

- With seven of the nine sports halls in the borough on school sites, there is limited midweek daytime access to sports halls and only four halls offer regular weekend availability.
- Only three of the community-accessible sports halls comply with (or exceed) the dimensions of 34.5m x 20m recommended in Sport England's '*Sports Halls Design and Layouts*' (2012) for halls that can cater for a full range of multi-sports use.

- Halls on school sites are typically provided as 33m x 17m or 33m x 18m to meet education needs, but have some limitation scattering for sports such as netball, handball, hockey and korfball.
- All the main populated areas of the borough are within 15-minutes driving time of a community-accessible sports hall with 'pay-and-play' access.
- Five of the halls are only available for block bookings, which mitigates against casual participants who may wish to play on an irregular or intermittent basis.
- Pricing is generally fairly consistent, with a full hall rate of £30 to £55 per hour at most facilities. Whilst the charges at Maidstone Leisure Centre are higher, the hall is 50% larger than the 'standard' four badminton court dimensions and under the Trust's membership scheme, a single badminton court can be hired for £10.50 which is comparable to charges elsewhere.
- Peak time utilisation rates are universally high. Sport England recognises a measure of 'comfortable capacity', where a sports hall is regarded as effectively fully utilised when peak usage levels reach 80%. This reflects the fact that changeover periods between bookings, particularly those that involve removing and/or installing equipment, will reduce the usage time available. Seven of the nine sports halls in Maidstone are used to above 'comfortable capacity'.

5.7 **The views of stakeholders**

Badminton England commented as follows:

- 'We do not have our own Capital Investment funding but we are keen to work with providers and leisure operators to ensure affordable, accessible and appropriate facilities are available locally to play our sport. We have partnerships with five of the major national leisure operators (Places Leisure, Fusion, Parkwood, Freedom Leisure, Everyone Active) and continually exploring how we work with local operators to improve experience'.
- 'Within Kent Maidstone is a key area for us and the County Association (Kent Badminton Ltd) are particularly keen to see improved provision and opportunities available in the County Town'.
- 'Working together this development work will see increased participation, particularly at junior level and hence increased demand on facilities and court access. We are particularly focused in supporting and developing our Core Market which will see more clubs and players joining clubs'.
- 'To support this, we have funding available to support existing clubs grow - which have proven very popular and successful - as well as supporting the setup of new clubs. Some of the demand for this is created by the continued expansion of our primary programme - Racket Pack - which is seeing an increased number of primary-aged pupils take up and play badminton'.

- In Maidstone there are currently four clubs that play at the Memorial Hall, St Augustine's Academy, Bower Grove School and slightly further afield at the RBLI (in Tonbridge). However, these are all senior clubs so we will be looking to increase the provision for junior clubs in the near future that will obviously increase demand on courts. Maidstone Leisure Centre offers pay and play and our recreational adult programme (No Strings Badminton) as does the Maidstone YMCA. The number of courts available in the area is good but as a number of these are in educational establishments, they are not always the easiest to access'.

5.8 *Current demand for sports halls*

5.8.1 *Expressed demand*

Expressed community use demand for sports halls in Maidstone is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Peak hours available</i>	<i>Peak hours utilised</i>	<i>% Peak utilisation</i>
Cornwallis Academy	20	15	75%
Lenham School	32	22	69%
Maidstone Grammar School	20	16	80%
Maidstone Grammar Sch. for Girls	32	24	75%
Maidstone Leisure Centre	32	27	85%
New Line Learning Academy	20	16	80%
St Augustine Academy	20	20	100%
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	10	10	100%
The Maplesden Noakes School	24	22	90%
YMCA	32	30	95%
TOTALS	242	202	83.5%

5.8.2 *Displaced demand*

Displaced demand relates to users of sports halls from within the study area which takes place outside of the area. The following sports halls with community 'pay-and-play' accessibility are located in adjacent local authority areas, close enough to the borough boundary to provide usage opportunities for Maidstone residents.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Distance from Maidstone boundary</i>
Angel Leisure Centre	Angel Lane, Tonbridge TN9 1SF	3 miles
Kings Rochester Sports Centre	ad, Rochester ME1 3QJ	3 miles
Lordswood Leisure Centre	Way, Chatham ME5 8AY	1 mile
Putlands Sports Centre	Mascalls Court Rd., Paddock Wood TN126NZ	2 miles
Swallows Leisure Centre	e, Sittingbourne ME10 4NT	4 miles
Tunbridge Wells Sports Centre	St. John's Road, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9TX	2 miles

Weald Sports Centre	Anglely Road, Cranbrook TN17 2PN	3 miles
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Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) 2017 run for sports halls in Maidstone, which is examined in greater detail below, estimates that 27.7% of all sports hall demand in the borough is exported to facilities in neighbouring areas.

5.8.3 Unmet demand

Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) also included an assessment of unmet demand for sports halls in the borough. This involves two components:

- Demand that cannot be met within a sports hall catchment due to excess demand for that facility.
- Demand that cannot be met because it is located outside the catchment of a sports hall.

The FPM estimates that 7.2% of all demand for sports halls in Maidstone is currently unmet, which is equivalent to demand for 3.4 badminton courts (equivalent to slightly less than one sports hall). 95.4% of the unmet demand is attributable to the population living beyond the catchment of a sports hall.

5.9 Local sports participation priorities

There are no specific local sports participation priorities in Maidstone, other than a general policy commitment to promote health and well-being through increased levels of physical activity. Sports halls have a role to play in this, given the breadth of appeal of the wide range of indoor sports and activities that they can accommodate.

5.10 Sport-specific priorities

Analysis of sport-specific strategies (summarised in section 4.9 above) and consultation with Kent Sport and the governing bodies of sport produced a limited range of priorities in relation to local sports hall provision:

- **Basketball:** Maidstone Warriors Basketball Club operates at the YMCA sports hall where it runs youth and disability sessions and Aylesford School which lies outside the borough.
- **Table Tennis:** Table Tennis England confirmed that Maidstone is not a priority area and local clubs are primarily based in village and community halls rather than larger sports halls
- **Volleyball:** Maidstone Volleyball Club is based at Maidstone Leisure Centre and is working with the Maidstone Leisure Trust to attract young players.

5.11 Future demand for sports halls

5.10.1 Population growth

MBC's 'Strategic Housing Market Assessment' (2015) confirmed the objectively assessed housing need for the borough over the period 2011 to 2031 as 17,660 dwellings. Of these 8,335 have already been built or granted planning permission. The 833 annual dwelling requirement stands for five years following the adoption of the Local Plan (i.e. to October 2022). Thereafter, the annual requirement increases by 353 dwellings to a need of 1,236 homes per annum. Current expectations are that the Local Plan Review will be rolled forward to the year 2037. Based upon the ONS 'Sub-national Population projections' (2014), this scale of development will increase the borough's population by 20,900 to 192,700 people by 2031 and by 29,891 to 201,691 by 2037. This will represent an increase of 12.2% and 17.4% respectively over the mid-2019 figure.

5.10.2 Participation rates

One factor in considering future sports participation rates is to track historical trends, as a guide to possible future developments.

- **National trends:** Sport England's 'Active People' survey recorded adult (16+) weekly participation rates for each sport at national level on an annual basis between 2005 and 2016. The results for those sports that use sports halls are tabulated below. Badminton, Basketball and Tennis experienced statistically significant decreases, whilst Netball and Table Tennis both achieved statistically significant increases:

<i>Sport</i>	<i>2005/06</i>	<i>2007/08</i>	<i>2008/09</i>	<i>2009/10</i>	<i>2010/11</i>	<i>2011/12</i>	<i>2012/13</i>	<i>2013/14</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2015/16</i>	<i>% Change</i>
Badminton	1.29%	1.24%	1.20%	1.24%	1.20%	1.26%	1.16%	1.13%	1.04%	0.97%	-0.32%
Basketball	0.39%	0.45%	0.46%	0.36%	0.36%	0.35%	0.36%	0.31%	0.36%	0.35%	-0.04%
Judo	0.04%	0.05%	0.04%	0.06%	0.03%	0.06%	0.04%	0.05%	0.04%	0.04%	No change
Netball	0.27%	0.29%	0.32%	0.34%	0.31%	0.37%	0.28%	0.35%	0.36%	0.42%	+0.15%
Table Tennis	0.17%	0.18%	0.20%	0.30%	0.32%	0.23%	0.25%	0.22%	0.23%	0.24%	+0.07%
Tennis	1.12%	1.18%	1.27%	1.04%	0.88%	1.03%	0.94%	0.97%	0.97%	0.90%	-0.22%
Volleyball	0.08%	0.12%	0.09%	0.09%	0.07%	0.06%	0.07%	0.06%	0.07%	0.08%	No change

Sport England's 'Active Lives' survey recorded adult twice monthly participation rates for those sports that use sports halls since 2016 and these continue to show a broadly downward trend:

<i>Sport</i>	<i>November 2015/16</i>	<i>May 2016/17</i>	<i>November 2016/17</i>	<i>May 2017/18</i>	<i>November 2017/18</i>	<i>May 2018/19</i>	<i>November 2018/19</i>	<i>% Change</i>
Badminton	2.1%	2.1%	2.0%	1.9%	1.9%	1.8%	1.7%	-0.4%
Basketball	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	-0.1%
Judo	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	No change
Netball	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.7%	No change
Table Tennis	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%	No change
Tennis	2.0%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%	-0.4%
Volleyball	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	-0.1%

- **Local trends:** Sport England's 'Active People' survey recorded adult (16+) weekly participation rates for Maidstone on an annual basis between 2005 and 2016. The results are tabulated below

and show that whilst rates have fluctuated over the survey period, there is an overall increase, although due to the small sample sizes at local authority level (550 people), this is not regarded as statistically significant:

<i>2005/06</i>	<i>2007/08</i>	<i>2008/09</i>	<i>2009/10</i>	<i>2010/11</i>	<i>2011/12</i>	<i>2012/13</i>	<i>2013/14</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2015/16</i>	<i>% Change</i>
34.9%	39.2%	34.5%	36.3%	35.0%	36.1%	32.1%	37.0%	35.6%	39.3%	+4.7%

5.10.3 Future projections

Sport England has developed the Sport Facility Calculator (SFC), to help to quantify how much additional demand for key community facilities like sports halls, will be generated by population increases. The SFC uses Sport England survey data on who uses facilities and applies this to the population profile of the local area. This builds up a profile of usage, which can be then applied to estimate how much demand any given population would generate.

This demand is then converted into the quantity of facilities needed and expressed as badminton courts to define sports hall needs. For the purposes of projecting future demand in Maidstone, population growth of 29,891 by 2037 was assumed, along with current participation rates, since there have been no statistically significant increases since 2005, either locally in Maidstone or collectively for the sports that use sports halls. Based upon this, the SFC calculates demand for an additional 8.18 badminton courts, which is equivalent to 2.05 four-badminton court sized sports halls with full community access.

5.12 *Key findings on demand*

The key findings are as follows:

- Expressed demand for sports halls in Maidstone is high. In the peak demand periods, seven of the nine sports halls in Maidstone are used to above Sport England's calculated 'comfortable capacity' figure of 80%.
- Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) 2017 run for sports halls in Maidstone, estimates that 27.7% of all sports hall demand in the borough is exported to facilities in neighbouring areas.
- The FPM estimates that 7.2% of all demand for sports halls in Maidstone is currently unmet, which is equivalent to demand for 3.4 badminton courts (equivalent to slightly less than one sports hall). 95.4% of the unmet demand is attributable to the population living beyond the catchment of a sports hall.
- Sport England's Sport Facility Calculator projects demand for an additional 8.18 badminton courts by 2037, which is equivalent to 2.05 four-badminton court sized sports halls with full community access.

5.13 *The balance between sports hall supply and demand*

Four criteria have been assessed to evaluate the balance between sports hall supply and demand in Maidstone:

- ***Quantity:*** Are there enough facilities with sufficient capacity to meet needs now and in the future?
- ***Quality:*** Are the facilities fit for purpose for the users now and in the future?
- ***Accessibility:*** Are the facilities in the right physical location for the users now and in the future?
- ***Availability:*** Are the facilities available for those who want to use them now and in the future?

5.14 **Quantity**

5.13.1 Current needs

Current sports halls in Maidstone are assessed to be at operating at over ‘comfortable capacity’, with a small shortfall in provision based upon the following evaluation:

- **Used peak capacity:** Average peak utilisation rates for sports halls in Maidstone are 83.5%, which is above Sport England’s ‘comfortable capacity’ figure of 80%. This suggests that the current number of community-accessible sports halls is inadequate to meet current needs, with a small capacity shortfall.
- **Satisfied demand:** The FPM supports this conclusion, calculating that 92.8% of demand for sports halls in Maidstone is met by current provision. The unmet demand is assessed to be equivalent to 3.4 badminton courts (0.85 of a sports hall).
- **Exported demand:** The FPM calculates that 27.7% of all sports hall demand in the borough is exported to facilities in neighbouring areas. This reflects both the lack of capacity in sports halls in Maidstone and the availability of some accessible spare capacity in adjacent local authorities.
- **Sports hall dimensions:** Only three of the sports halls comply with (or exceed) the dimensions of 34.5m x 20m recommended in Sport England’s ‘*Sports Halls Design and Layouts*’ (2012) for halls that can cater for a full range of multi-sports use. This does not cause immediate problems at present, because the smaller halls can cater adequately for recreational style play, but the needs of netball, handball, hockey and korfball, which rely on the larger halls should be kept under review and all new facilities should comply with the larger dimensions.
- **Unavailable facilities:** A sports hall at St. Simon Stock School in Maidstone is currently unavailable for community use and the school has indicated that this position is unlikely to change. It does, however, represent one option for addressing the current deficit.
- **Changes in supply:** There are no known proposals to provide additional sports halls in the borough at present. However, eight of the ten existing sports halls are on school sites with no formal community use agreements, so access could in theory be withdrawn at any time.

5.13.2 Future needs

The quantity of sports halls required to meet future needs has been assessed as equivalent to 2.05 four-badminton court sized sports halls with full community access, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Demand increases:** The borough's population is projected to increase by 29,891 to 201,691 people by 2037. This will represent an increase of 17.4% over the mid-2019 estimate.
- **Participation trends:** Based on national and local sports participation trends, for the purposes of forecasting future demand the likeliest scenario is for participation rates to remain at their current levels.
- **Additional needs:** Based upon a population increase of 29,981 people in the borough by 2037 and sports participation rates remaining at current levels, Sport England's Sport Facility Calculator projects demand for an additional 8.18 badminton courts, which is equivalent to 2.05 four-badminton court sized sports halls with full community access.

5.15 **Quality**

5.14.1 Current quality

There are no critical quality issues relating to sports halls in Maidstone, although the position should be kept under review based upon the following evaluation:

- **Existing quality issues:** Most sports halls rate from 'average' to 'good' across all quality categories, with the exception of 'poor' ratings for changing and disabled access at St. Augustine Academy, general access to the Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre and disability access at the Maplesden Noakes School. None of these quality issues has a significant impact upon either capacity or usage levels at present.
- **Ageing facilities:** The Maidstone Grammar School and Lenham School sports halls were built in 1965 and 1972 respectively and have not been extensively refurbished since. Both facilities are likely to be reaching the end of their planned life expectancy, which will reduce the available supply unless they are replaced.

5.14.2 Future quality

By the end of the plan period in 2037, the Maidstone Leisure Centre sports hall will be at the end of its design life. The current management contract with Maidstone Leisure Trust expires in 2024, which may provide an opportunity to assess the options.

5.16 **Accessibility**

5.15.1 Current accessibility

Some parts of the borough lie beyond the catchment of the nearest sports hall based upon the following evaluation:

- **Geographical spread:** All the main populated areas of the borough are within 15-minutes driving time of a community-accessible sports hall with 'pay-and-play' access. There is one

small area in the south-east of the borough near Ulcombe that is more than 15-minutes' drive from a community-accessible sports hall, although Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre is within 15-minutes for use involving block bookings by clubs.

- **Unmet demand:** The FPM estimates that 7.2% of all demand for sports halls in Maidstone is currently unmet, which is equivalent 728 visits per week in the peak period. This equates to demand for 3.4 badminton courts (equivalent to 0.85 of a sports hall). 95.4% of the unmet demand is attributable to the population living beyond the catchment of a sports hall.
- **Location of unmet demand:** The FPM calculates that the unmet demand is spread thinly across the district, rather than being focussed in a particular area.

5.15.2 Future accessibility

To ensure that there is adequate accessibility to sports halls in the future, an appropriate level of developer contributions will be required to upgrade existing facilities and/or to provide new ones, appropriately located in relation to the new population.

5.17 Availability

5.16.1 Current availability

There are a number of current impediments to sports hall availability in Maidstone:

- **'Pay and play' availability:** Because of the management arrangements at many of the sports halls on school sites in Maidstone, six of the halls are only available for block bookings by clubs or individuals, which mitigates against casual participants who may wish to play on an irregular or intermittent basis.
- **Off-peak availability:** With eight of the ten sports halls in the borough on school sites, there is limited midweek daytime access to sports halls and only five halls offer regular weekend availability.

5.16.2 Future availability

Addressing the current availability issues in the future will either involve providing sports halls on non-education sites, with appropriate management arrangements, or looking at innovative solutions to facilitate daytime community access to school sports halls.

5.18 The options for securing additional sports hall capacity

The options for securing existing and additional sports hall capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

5.17.1 Protect

Protecting existing sports halls through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing sports halls,

including any without current community access, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality and accessibility.

5.17.2 Provide

Ensuring that extra sports hall capacity is achieved by:

- Providing new facilities in conjunction with new housing developments, either on-site or through developer contributions that reflect the additional sports hall demand arising from the additional population.
- Encouraging the provision of sports halls that meet Sport England's recommended dimensions (34.5m x 20m), to offer maximum flexibility of use.

5.17.3 Enhance

Enhancing existing sports hall capacity by:

- Securing formal Community Use Agreements at existing and proposed future facilities on school sites, to enhance community accessibility.
- Encouraging schools with existing community use to extend opening hours, particularly those with limited or no weekend use at present.
- Negotiating community access to the existing sports hall at St. Simon Stock School.
- Supporting schools to improve their management of community use arrangements, to improve 'pay-and-play' access to sports halls.

5.19 **Action Plan**

5.19.1 Introduction

The tables below set out the action plan for sports halls to guide the implementation of the strategy. The capital cost estimates are based upon Sport England's *Facility Costs - Second Quarter of 2020* (2020).

5.19.2 Key strategic actions

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Protection of existing sports halls	Include a policy in the Local Plan to protect all existing sports halls.	MBC	-	-	High
Community access to sports halls	Pursue formal Community Use agreements at all existing and any future proposed sports halls on education sites.	MBC	Academies and schools	Possible funding for improvements to physical accessibility (e.g. dedicated entrance, site security etc.)	High

Funding for future sports hall needs	Include sports halls as ‘relevant infrastructure’ under CIL regulation 123.	MBC	-	-	High
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5.19.3 Site-specific actions

<i>Site</i>	<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Cornwallis Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No weekend community access. ● No 'pay-and-play' use. ● No formal Community Use Agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage Academy to provide weekend access and 'pay-and-play' use. ● Pursue a formal Community Use Agreement. 	MBC	Cornwallis Academy	-	High
Lenham School	No formal Community Use Agreement.	Pursue a formal Community Use Agreement.	MBC	Lenham School	-	Low
Maidstone Grammar School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited weekend access. ● No formal Community Use Agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage School to extend weekend access. ● Pursue a formal Community Use Agreement. 	MBC	Maidstone Grammar School	-	Medium
Maidstone Girls GS	No formal Community Use Agreement.	Pursue a formal Community Use Agreement.	MBC	Maidstone Girls GS	-	Low
Maidstone Leisure Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An ageing facility. ● Current management agreement expires in 2024. 	Feasibility study to establish the case for replacing or refurbishing all on-site facilities.	MBC	Maidstone Leisure Trust	£20,000	Medium
New Line Learning Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No weekend community access. ● No 'pay-and-play' use. ● No formal Community Use Agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage Academy to provide weekend access and 'pay-and-play' use. ● Pursue a formal Community Use Agreement. 	MBC	New Line Learning Academy	-	High
St Augustine Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 'Poor quality' changing and disabled access. ● No weekend community access. ● No 'pay-and-play' use. ● No formal Community Use Agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support the Academy to seek funding to improve facilities. ● Encourage Academy to provide weekend access and 'pay-and-play' use. ● Pursue a formal Community Use Agreement. 	MBC	St Augustine Academy	£100,000	High
St. Simon Stock School	No community access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage School to allow community access. ● Pursue a formal Community Use Agreement. 	MBC	St. Simon Stock School	-	High
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 'Poor' quality general access. ● No weekend community access. ● No 'pay-and-play' use. ● No formal Community Use Agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support the School to seek funding to improve access. ● Encourage School to provide weekend access and 'pay-and-play' use. ● Pursue a formal Community Use Agreement. 	MBC	Sutton Valance School	£50,000	High
The Maplesden Noakes School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 'Poor' quality disabled access. ● No Sunday community access. ● No formal Community Use Agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support the School to seek funding to improve facilities. ● Encourage the school to provide Sunday access. 	MBC	The Maplesden Noakes School	£50,000	Medium

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue a formal Community Use Agreement. 				
YMCA	No current issues	No action required	-	-	-	-

6 SWIMMING POOLS

Key findings:

- **Quantity:** There are nine swimming pools at five sites with community use in Maidstone which comply with the minimum dimensions, plus five smaller pools. Four of the five swimming pool sites in Maidstone are used to above 'comfortable capacity' at peak times. Additional demand by 2037 will amount to the equivalent of one 25m x 6-lane pool with full community access.
- **Quality:** The quality of most aspects of most pools is 'very good' or 'good'.
- **Accessibility:** Some areas on the edge of the borough are more than 20-minutes' drive from the Maidstone Leisure Centre pools, although there is some access in these areas to pools with unrestricted access in neighbouring local authorities and to membership-only pools.
- **Availability:** Only the Maidstone Leisure Centre pools offer 'pay-and-play' public access in the borough, with the remaining facilities accessible on a membership only basis.

6.1 Introduction

This section examines the provision of swimming pools in Maidstone. Swimming pools are defined as indoor facilities with minimum pool length of 20 metres, although smaller teaching and diving pools are included in the assessment where they are integral to a facility with a main pool.

6.2 Quantity

6.2.1 Swimming pools with community use

The location and dimensions of swimming pools with community use in Maidstone is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Year built</i>
Club (Maidstone)	Barker Road, Maidstone ME16 8LW	25m x 10m	2007
are Maidstone	St. Peter's Street, Maidstone ME16 0SX	20m x 10m	2004
Maidstone Leisure Centre	Mote Park, Maidstone ME15 8NQ	25m x 15m 25m x 10m 15m x 15m 9m x 9m 9m x 9m	1991
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	ton Valence ME17 3HN	25m x 12m	2008
Village Gym (Maidstone)	Forstal Road, Maidstone ME14 3AQ	25m x 10m	2016

6.2.2 Additional smaller pools

The location and dimensions of the smaller swimming pools that serve some supplementary needs in Maidstone is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Year built</i>
Allington Primary School	Hildenborough Crescent, Maidstone ME16 0PG	10m x 7m	2008
Feel Good Health Club	Ashford Road, Maidstone ME17 1RE	16m x 8m	2005
LivingWell Health Club	Bearsted Road, Maidstone ME14 5AA	19m x 9m	1998
Marriott Leisure Club	Ashford Road, Maidstone ME17 4NQ	16m x 12m	2008
Welcome Gym (Maidstone)	Buckland Road, Maidstone ME16 0SD	18m x 5m	2009

6.3 **Quality**

6.3.1 **The criteria assessed**

The quality of swimming pools was assessed by a non-technical visual inspection during a site visit to all facilities. The criteria that were evaluated were as follows:

- **Pool area(s):** The overall condition, lighting, aquatic activities provided for, temperature, spectator provision and fitness for purpose.
- **Changing facilities:** Capacity, condition and fitness for purpose.
- **Disability access:** Provision for disabled access throughout the facility.
- **Maintenance and cleanliness:** The quality of maintenance and cleanliness standards.
- **General access:** Car parking, lighting, signposting and proximity to public transport.

6.3.2 **The basis of the ratings**

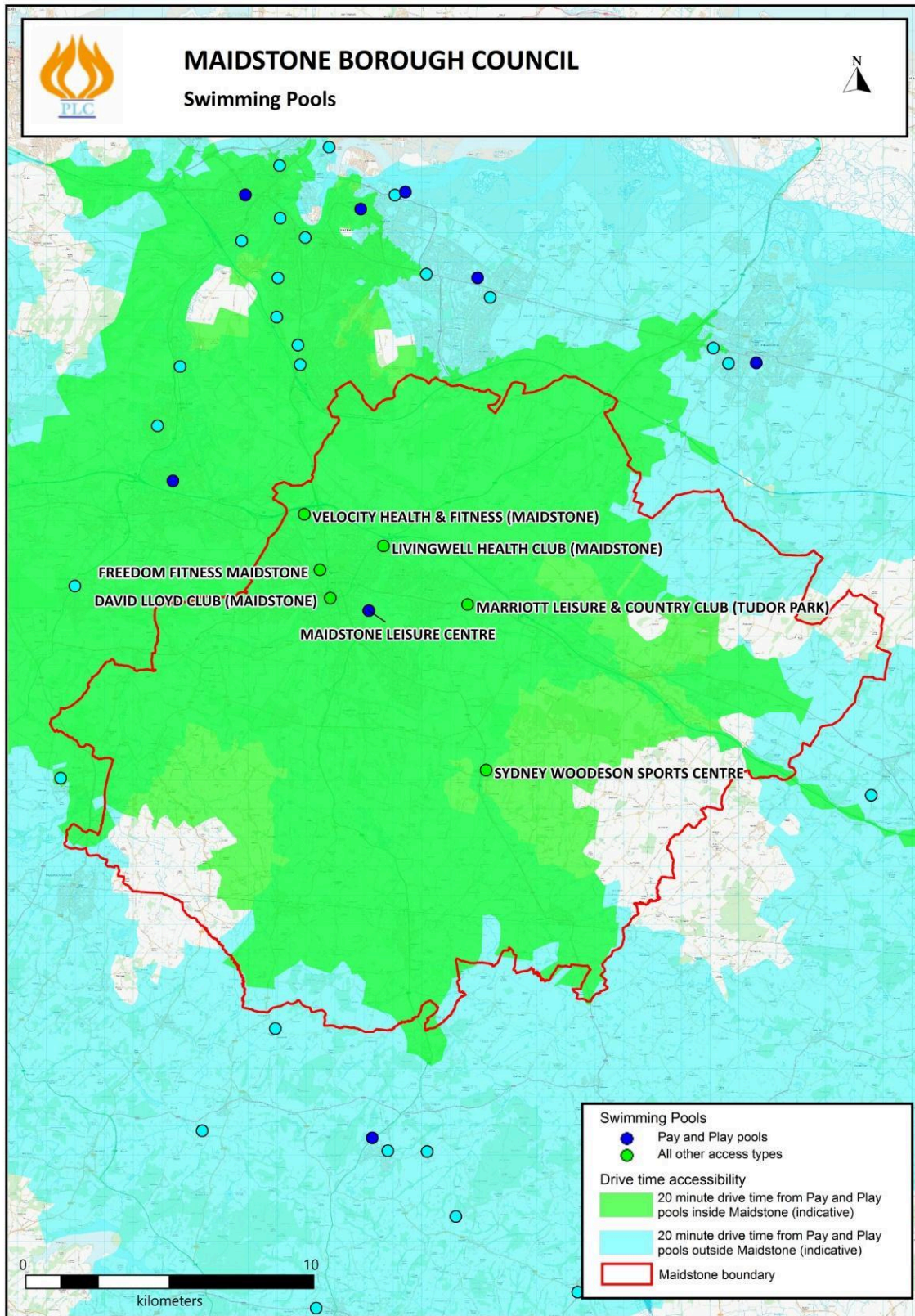
The facilities were rated on a five-point scale, where 5 equates to ‘very good’ (highlighted in green below), 4 to ‘good’ (also highlighted in green below), 3 to ‘average’ (highlighted in yellow below), 2 to ‘poor’ and 1 to ‘very poor’. The ratings for the swimming pools in Maidstone are shown in the table below.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Pool area</i>	<i>Changing</i>	<i>Disability Access</i>	<i>Maintenance</i>	<i>General access</i>
Club (Maidstone)	5	5	5	5	3
re Maidstone	5	5	5	5	4
Maidstone Leisure Centre	5	4	5	5	4
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	5	4	4	5	3
Village Gym (Maidstone)	5	4	4	5	4

6.4 **Accessibility**

The map below shows the location of all swimming pools in Maidstone:

- Based on Sport England research, the ‘effective catchment’ for indoor swimming pools (defined as the time/distance travelled and the prevailing mode of transport used by up to 90% of facility users) is 20 minutes driving time.
- Pools with open access are marked in blue, with their 20-minute drive time catchments, which are denoted in green for facilities within the borough and in pale blue for those in neighbouring areas with catchments that overlap the borough boundary.
- Pools with membership-only and other restrictive access are marked in green.



6.5 *Availability*

The table below identifies the opening hours, usage arrangements, pricing and used capacity in the peak periods.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Opening hours and basis of use</i>	<i>Pricing</i>	<i>Peak usage</i>
David Lloyd Club (Maidstone)	Mon - Fri 6am - 10pm Sat - Sun 8am - 6pm Membership only	£94.50 membership per month (adults peak) £79.50 membership per month (adults off-peak)	70%
Freedom Leisure Maidstone	Mon - Fri 6.30am - 10.30pm Sat - Sun 8am - 6pm Membership and 'pay-and-play'	£23.90 membership per month for adults Adult casual swim £6.50 Junior casual swim £3.00	70%
Maidstone Leisure Centre	Mon-Fri 6.30am -10pm Sat-Sun 8am - 8pm 'Pay-and-play' with membership arrangement offering discounts	Adult casual swim peak £6.65 Adult casual swim off-peak £5.65 Junior casual swim peak £4.60 Junior casual swim off-peak £3.60 Family swim £19.75 Monthly Swim direct debit £23.95	75%
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	Mon 6.30pm - 8.30pm Sat - Sun 1.00pm - 6.00pm Block bookings only	Price be negotiation with club and swim school users.	100%
Village Gym (Maidstone)	Mon - Fri 6am - 10pm Sat - Sun 8am - 8pm Membership only	£52 per month membership (adults peak) £46 per month membership (adults off-peak)	65%

6.6 *Key findings on supply*

The key findings are as follows:

- There are nine swimming pools at five sites with community use in Maidstone which comply with the minimum dimensions, plus five smaller pools.
- Only the Maidstone Leisure Centre and Freedom Leisure pools offer 'pay-and-play' public access in the borough, with the remaining facilities accessible on a membership only basis.
- Membership charges conform with market norms and include some discounts for junior membership but might still be regarded as prohibitive to lower income groups.
- The quality of most features of most pools is 'very good' or 'good'.
- Some areas on the periphery of the borough are more than 20-minutes' drive from the Maidstone Leisure Centre pools, although there is some access in these areas to pools with unrestricted access in neighbouring local authorities and to membership-only pools.

- Peak time utilisation rates are universally high. Sport England recognises a measure of ‘comfortable capacity’, where a swimming pool is regarded as effectively fully utilised when peak usage levels reach 70%. Four of the five swimming pool sites in Maidstone are used to above ‘comfortable capacity’.

6.7 *The views of stakeholders*

British Triathlon commented that ‘Maidstone Harriers train at David Lloyd in Maidstone. Triathlon clubs struggle for pool time, it is the same across the region’.

6.8 *Current demand for swimming pools*

6.7.1 *Expressed demand*

Expressed community use demand for swimming pools in Maidstone is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>% Peak utilisation</i>
Club (Maidstone)	70%
Leisure Maidstone	70%
Maidstone Leisure Centre	75%
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	100%
Village Gym (Maidstone)	65%
TOTALS	76%

Sport England’s Facilities Planning Model (FPM) 2017 run for swimming pools in Maidstone, estimates that expressed demand in the borough is equivalent to 10,707 visits per week in the peak period.

6.7.2 *Displaced demand*

Displaced demand relates to users of swimming pools from within the study area which takes place outside of the area. The following pools with community ‘pay-and-play’ accessibility are located in adjacent local authority areas, close enough to the borough boundary to provide usage opportunities for Maidstone residents.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Distance from Maidstone boundary</i>
Angel Leisure Centre	Angel Lane, Tonbridge TN9 1SF	3 miles
Kings Rochester Sports Centre	Ad, Rochester ME1 3QJ	3 miles
Swallows Leisure Centre	e, Sittingbourne ME10 4NT	4 miles
Tunbridge Wells Sports Centre	St. John’s Road, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9TX	2 miles
Weald Sports Centre	Angley Road, Cranbrook TN17 2PN	3 miles

The FPM run for swimming pools in Maidstone calculates that the borough is a net importer of swimming demand. It estimates that 14.7% of all swimming demand (1,434 visits per week in the peak period) is exported to facilities in neighbouring areas, whilst 2,215 visits per week in the peak period are imported. This indicates that most local demand can be accommodated within the borough, with some external demand also included.

6.7.3 Unmet demand

Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) also included an assessment of unmet demand for swimming pools in the borough. This involves two components:

- Demand that cannot be met within a pool catchment due to excess demand for that facility.
- Demand that cannot be met because it is located outside the catchment of a pool.

The FPM estimates that 8.6% of all demand for swimming pools in Maidstone is currently unmet, which is equivalent to demand for 153sq.m of pool space (equivalent to 0.47 of a 25m x 6-lane pool). 99.6% of the unmet demand is attributable to the population living beyond the catchment of a swimming pool.

6.9 Local sports participation priorities

There are no specific local sports participation priorities in Maidstone, other than a general policy commitment to promote health and well-being through increased levels of physical activity. Swimming pools have a role to play in this, given the breadth of appeal to all age groups.

6.10 Sport-specific priorities

Consultation with Swim England and Kent Sport identified the following:

- **Swim England:** The governing body of swimming assesses pool supply against a standard of 11sq.m of pool space per 1,000 population. This calculation assesses current supply at the peak time in Maidstone to be the equivalent of 1,462sq.m. The standard indicates a demand for 1,809sq.m of water space, suggesting a shortfall of 347sq.m (equivalent to 1.07 25m x 6-lane pools). Swim England is also concerned that there is only a single 'pay-and-play' pool in the borough. Maidstone Leisure Centre is a strategically important but ageing swimming facility. Any loss or closure of this building would have serious consequences for the future of the sport in the borough.
- **Kent Sport:** The County Sports Partnership also commented on the importance of the Maidstone Leisure Centre to swimming in the borough, particularly for 'pay-and-play'.

6.11 Future demand for swimming pools

6.10.1 Population growth

MBC's 'Strategic Housing Market Assessment' (2015) confirmed the objectively assessed housing need for the borough over the period 2011 to 2031 as 17,660 dwellings. Of these 8,335 have already been built or granted planning permission. The 833 annual dwelling requirement stands for five years following the adoption of the Local Plan (i.e. to October 2022). Thereafter, the annual requirement increases by 353 dwellings to a need of 1,236 homes per annum. Current expectations are that the Local Plan Review will be rolled forward to the year 2037. Based upon

the ONS 'Sub-national Population projections' (2014), this scale of development will increase the borough's population by 20,900 to 192,700 people by 2031 and by 29,891 to 201,691 by 2037. This will represent an increase of 12.2% and 17.4% respectively over the mid-2019 figure.

6.10.2 Participation rates

One factor in considering future sports participation rates is to track historical trends, as a guide to possible future developments. Sport England's 'Active People' survey recorded adult (16+) weekly participation rates for swimming at national and local level on an annual basis between 2005 and 2016. The results are tabulated below and show that participation rates fell over the decade, both in England and Maidstone:

<i>Area</i>	<i>2005/06</i>	<i>2007/08</i>	<i>2008/09</i>	<i>2009/10</i>	<i>2010/11</i>	<i>2011/12</i>	<i>2012/13</i>	<i>2013/14</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2015/16</i>	<i>% Change</i>
England	8.04%	7.83%	7.57%	7.50%	6.62%	6.81%	6.77%	6.16%	5.70%	5.67%	-2.37%
Maidstone	8.05%	8.52%	6.38%	7.63%	-	-	8.57%	5.61%	-	-	-2.44%

Sport England's 'Active Lives' survey recorded adult twice monthly swimming participation rates since 2016 and these continue to show a downward trend:

<i>May 2016/17</i>	<i>November 2016/17</i>	<i>May 2017/18</i>	<i>November 2017/18</i>	<i>May 2018/19</i>	<i>November 2018/19</i>	<i>% Change</i>
10.8%	10.2%	10.0%	10.5%	10.4%	9.3%	-1.5%

6.10.3 Future projections

Sport England has developed the Sport Facility Calculator (SFC), to help to quantify how much additional demand for key community facilities like swimming pools, will be generated by population increases. The SFC uses Sport England survey data on who uses facilities and applies this to the population profile of the local area. This builds up a profile of usage, which can be then applied to estimate how much demand any given population would generate.

This demand is then converted into the quantity of facilities needed and expressed as pool water space to define swimming pool needs. For the purposes of projecting future demand in Maidstone, population growth of 29,891 by 2037 was assumed. Whilst swimming participation rates have fallen over the past decade, given the appeal of the sport to a broad cross-section of the community, it has been assumed that participation rates will remain static for the period until 2037. Based upon this, the SFC calculates demand for an additional 305sq.m of pool space by 2037, which is equivalent to one 25m x 6-lane pool with full community access.

6.12 Key findings on demand

The key findings are as follows:

- Expressed demand for swimming pools in Maidstone is high. In the peak demand periods, four of the five pool sites in Maidstone are used to above Sport England's calculated 'comfortable capacity' figure of 70%.

- Sport England's FPM estimates that only 14.7% of all swimming pool demand in the borough is exported to facilities in neighbouring areas.
- The FPM estimates that 8.6% of all demand for pools in Maidstone is currently unmet, which is equivalent to demand for just under half of a standard sized pool. 99.6% of the unmet demand is attributable to the population living beyond the catchment of a sports hall, rather than a lack of capacity in local facilities.
- Sport England's Sport Facility Calculator projects demand for an additional 305sq.m of pool space by 2037, which is equivalent to one 25m x 6-lane pool with full community access.

6.13 ***The balance between swimming pool supply and demand***

Four criteria have been assessed to evaluate the balance between swimming pool supply and demand in Maidstone:

- ***Quantity:*** Are there enough facilities with sufficient capacity to meet needs now and in the future?
- ***Quality:*** Are the facilities fit for purpose for the users now and in the future?
- ***Accessibility:*** Are the facilities in the right physical location for the users now and in the future?
- ***Availability:*** Are the facilities available for those who want to use them now and in the future?

6.14 ***Quantity***

6.13.1 ***Current needs***

Current swimming pools in Maidstone are assessed to be at operating at over 'comfortable capacity', with a small shortfall in provision based upon the following evaluation:

- ***Used peak capacity:*** Average peak utilisation rates for pools in Maidstone are 76%, which is above Sport England's 'comfortable capacity' figure of 70%. This suggests that there is a small capacity shortfall at present.
- ***Satisfied demand:*** The FPM supports this conclusion, calculating that 91.4% of demand for pools in Maidstone is met by current provision. The unmet demand is assessed to be equivalent to 0.47 of a swimming pool.
- ***Exported demand:*** The FPM calculates that the borough is a net importer of swimming demand. It estimates that 1,434 visits per week in the peak period is exported to facilities in neighbouring areas, whilst 2,215 visits per week in the peak period are imported. This indicates that most local demand can be accommodated within the borough, with some external demand also included.

- ***Unmet demand:*** The FPM estimates that 8.6% of all demand for swimming pools in Maidstone is currently unmet, which is equivalent to demand for 153sq.m of pool space (equivalent to 0.47 of a 25m x 6-lane pool). 99.6% of the unmet demand is attributable to the population living beyond the catchment of a swimming pool.
- ***Changes in supply:*** By the end of the plan period in 2037, Maidstone Leisure Centre will be at the end of its design life. Whilst the leisure pool was refurbished in 2010 and one of the learner pools in 2013, the current management contract with Maidstone Leisure Trust expires in 2024, which may provide an opportunity to assess the options

6.13.2 Future needs

The quantity of swimming pools required to meet future needs has been assessed as an additional 305sq.m of pool space by 2037, which is equivalent to one 25m x 6-lane pool with full community access, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Demand increases:** The borough's population is projected to increase by 29,891 to 201,691 by 2037. This will represent an increase of 17.4% over the mid-2019 estimate.
- **Participation trends:** Based on national and local sports participation trends, for the purposes of forecasting future demand the likeliest scenario is for participation rates to remain at their current levels.
- **Additional needs:** Sport England's Sport Facility Calculator projects demand for 305sq.m of additional pool space by 2037, which is equivalent to one 25m x 6-lane pool with full community access

6.15 Quality

6.14.1 Current quality

There are no critical quality issues relating to swimming pools in Maidstone, although the position should be kept under review.

6.14.2 Future quality

Maidstone Leisure Centre was built in 1991, so will be 50 years old by the end of the plan period in 2037 and in need of refurbishment. Whilst the leisure pool was refurbished in 2010 and one of the learner pools in 2013, The current management contract with Maidstone Leisure Trust expires in 2024, which may provide an opportunity to assess the options.

6.16 Accessibility

6.15.1 Current accessibility

Some parts of the borough lie beyond the catchment of the nearest swimming pool based upon the following evaluation:

- **Geographical spread:** Some areas in the south-west, south-east and east of the borough are beyond the catchment of the Maidstone Leisure Centre pools, although there is some access in these areas to pools with unrestricted access in neighbouring local authorities and to membership-only pools.
- **Unmet demand:** The FPM estimates that 8.6% of all demand for swimming pools in Maidstone is currently unmet, which is equivalent to demand for 153sq.m of pool space

(equivalent to 0.47 of a 25m x 6-lane pool). 99.6% of the unmet demand is attributable to the population living beyond the catchment of a swimming pool.

- **Location of unmet demand:** The FPM calculates that the unmet demand is spread thinly across the district, rather than being focussed in a particular area.

6.15.2 Future accessibility

To ensure that there is adequate accessibility to swimming pools in the future, an appropriate level of developer contributions will be required to upgrade existing facilities and/or to provide new ones, appropriately located in relation to the new population.

6.17 **Availability**

6.16.1 Current availability

Only Maidstone Leisure Centre offers ‘pay-and-play’ swimming on a non-membership basis, which mitigates against casual participants who may wish to swim on an irregular or intermittent basis.

6.16.2 Future availability

Ensuring that there are sufficient ‘pay-and-play’ swimming opportunities to meet future demand will entail the development of additional pool capacity. This may involve the redevelopment/expansion of Maidstone Leisure Centre or the development of a more geographically dispersed new network of provision. As at present, some additional capacity is likely to be provided by the commercial leisure sector.

6.18 **The options for securing additional swimming pool capacity**

The options for securing existing and additional swimming pool capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

6.17.1 Protect

Protecting existing pools through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing swimming pools, including those with membership-only access, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality and accessibility.

6.17.2 Provide

Ensuring that extra swimming pool capacity is achieved by:

- Providing new facilities in conjunction with new housing developments, either on-site or through developer contributions that reflect the additional swimming demand arising from the additional population.
- Encouraging the provision of swimming pools with a minimum length of 20m by commercial leisure providers to offer maximum flexibility of use.

6.17.3 Enhance

Enhancing existing swimming pool capacity by negotiating with:

- Commercial operators to provide casual swimming for non-members in off-peak periods.
- Negotiating additional community access, including casual swimming to the existing pool at the Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre.

6.19 Action Plan

6.19.1 Introduction

The tables below set out the action plan for swimming pools to guide the implementation of the strategy. The capital cost estimates are based upon Sport England's *Facility Costs - Second Quarter of 2020* (2020).

6.19.2 Key strategic actions

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Protection of existing swimming pools	Include a policy in the Local Plan to protect all existing swimming pools.	MBC	-	-	High
'Pay-and-play' access to commercial pools	Encourage the operators of commercial pools to provide off-peak 'pay-and-play' access.	MBC	Private health clubs	-	Medium
Funding for future swimming pool needs	Include swimming pools as 'relevant infrastructure' under CIL regulation 123.	MBC	-	-	High

6.19.3 Site-specific actions

<i>Site</i>	<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
David Lloyd Club (Maidstone)	No 'pay-and-play' use.	Encourage the operator to provide off-peak 'pay-and-play' access.	MBC	David Lloyd Club (Maidstone)	-	Medium
Freedom Leisure Maidstone	No 'pay-and-play' use.	Encourage the operator to provide off-peak 'pay-and-play' access.	MBC	Freedom Leisure Maidstone	-	Medium
Maidstone Leisure Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ageing facility. • Current management agreement expires in 2024. 	Feasibility study to establish the case for replacement or refurbishment of all on-site facilities.	MBC	Maidstone Leisure Trust	£20,000	Medium
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited community access. • No 'pay-and-play' use. • No formal Community Use Agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage Academy to provide more access and 'pay-and-play' use. 	MBC	Sutton Valance School	-	High

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pursue a formal Community Use Agreement. 				
Village Gym (Maidstone)	No 'pay-and-play' use.	Encourage the operator to provide off-peak 'pay-and-play' access.	MBC	Village Gym (Maidstone)	-	Medium

7 HEALTH AND FITNESS

Key findings:

- **Quantity:** There are 14 publicly accessible health and fitness facilities in Maidstone, collectively comprising 1,073 equipment stations. In addition, there are three school facilities with no public access. Additional demand by 2037 will amount to the equivalent of an extra 230 equipment stations.
- **Quality:** The quality of most aspects of most facilities is ‘very good’ or ‘good’.
- **Accessibility:** Some areas in the south-east and east of the borough are beyond the catchment of a ‘pay-and-play’ facility within Maidstone, although most in these areas have access to facilities with unrestricted access in neighbouring local authorities and/or to membership-only sites.
- **Availability:** Only three sites (comprising 24% of facility capacity) offer ‘pay-and-play’ public access in the borough, with the remaining facilities accessible on a membership only basis.

7.1 Introduction

This section examines the provision of health and fitness facilities in Maidstone. Health and fitness facilities are defined as dedicated community accessible facilities with a range of exercise equipment.

7.2 Quantity

7.2.1 Health and fitness facilities with community use

The location and number of stations at health and fitness facilities with community use in Maidstone is as follows:

Facility	Address	Stations	Year built
Bob Prowse Health Club	Armstrong Road, Maidstone ME15 6AZ	65	2006
Club (Maidstone)	Barker Road, Maidstone ME16 8LW	200	2012
Feel Good Health Club	Ashford Road, Maidstone ME17 1RE	33	2005
Freedom Leisure Maidstone	St. Peter's Street, Maidstone ME16 0SX	81	2004
Lenham Community Gym	Lenham ME17 2LL	26	2007
LivingWell Health Club	Bearsted Road, Maidstone ME14 5AA	28	2014
Maidstone Leisure Centre	Mote Park, Maidstone ME15 8NQ	115	2010
Marriott Leisure Club	Ashford Road, Maidstone ME17 4NQ	72	2008
Snap Fitness	High Street, Maidstone ME14 1JH	115	2017
truGym Maidstone	The Broadway, Maidstone ME16 8PS	110	2010
Village Gym (Maidstone)	Forstal Road, Maidstone ME14 3AQ	90	2016

Weald of Kent Golf Club	Maidstone Road, TN27 9PT	8	2016
Welcome Gym	London Road, Maidstone ME16 0DT	70	2017
YMCA	Melrose Close, Maidstone ME15 6BD	60	2011

7.2.2 Health and fitness facilities without community use

The location of health and fitness facilities with no community use in Maidstone is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Stations</i>	<i>Year built</i>
Bower Grove School	Fant Lane, Maidstone ME16 8NL	10	2011
St Augustine Academy	Boughton Lane, Maidstone ME15 9QL	17	2007
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	Sutton Valence ME17 3HN	24	2015

7.3 Quality

7.3.1 The criteria assessed

The quality of health and fitness facilities was assessed by a non-technical visual inspection during a site visit to all facilities. The criteria that were evaluated were as follows:

- ***Fitness facilities:*** The overall condition, mix of cardio-vascular and resistance equipment, lighting and ambience.
- ***Changing facilities:*** Capacity, condition and fitness for purpose.
- ***Disability access:*** Provision of disability-specific equipment and disabled access throughout the facility.
- ***Maintenance and cleanliness:*** The quality of maintenance and cleanliness standards.
- ***General access:*** Car parking, lighting, signposting and proximity to public transport.

7.3.2 The basis of the ratings

The facilities were rated on a five-point scale, where 5 equates to ‘very good’ (highlighted in green below), 4 to ‘good’ (also highlighted in green below), 3 to ‘average’ (highlighted in yellow below), 2 to ‘poor’ (highlighted in red below) and 1 to ‘very poor’.

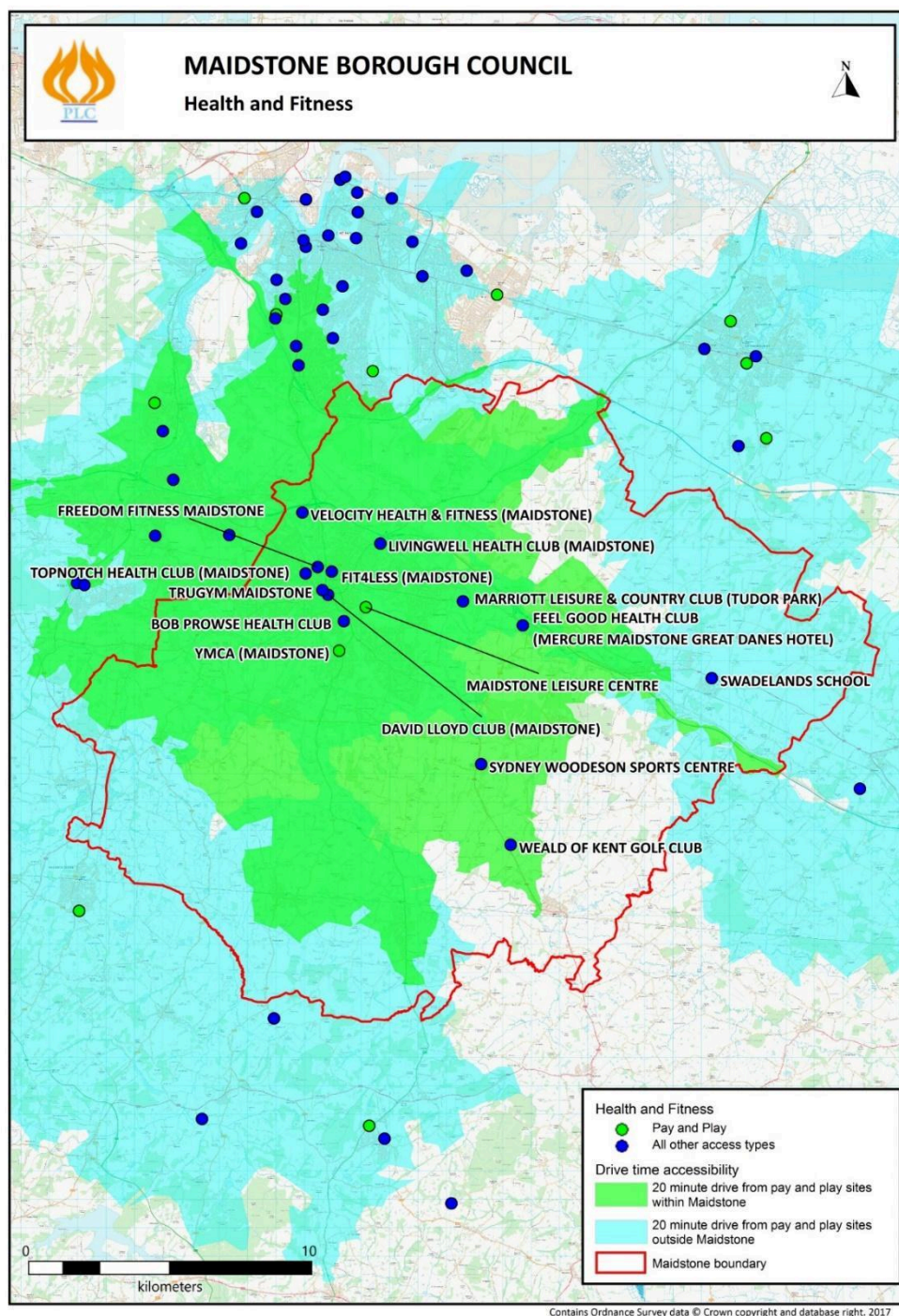
<i>Facility</i>	<i>Fitness facilities</i>	<i>Changing</i>	<i>Disability Access</i>	<i>Maintenance</i>	<i>General access</i>
Bob Prowse Health Club	4	4	3	3	2
Club (Maidstone)	5	5	4	5	4
Feel Good Health Club	5	5	4	5	5
Freedom Leisure Maidstone	5	5	4	5	4
Lenham Community Gym	4	4	4	4	4
LivingWell Health Club	5	5	4	5	5
Maidstone Leisure Centre	5	5	3	5	5
Marriott Leisure Club	5	5	4	5	5
Snap Fitness	5	5	4	5	4
truGym Maidstone	5	5	4	5	3
Village Gym (Maidstone)	5	5	4	5	5

Weald of Kent Golf Club	5	5	4	5	4
Welcome Gym	5	5	4	5	4
YMCA	5	5	5	5	5

7.4 **Accessibility**

The map below shows the location of all health and fitness facilities in Maidstone:

- Based on Sport England research, the ‘effective catchment’ for health and fitness facilities is 20 minutes driving time.
- Facilities with ‘pay-and-play’ access are marked in green, with their 20-minute drive time catchments, which are denoted in green for facilities within the borough and in pale blue for those in neighbouring areas with catchments that overlap the borough boundary.
- Facilities with membership-only and other restrictive access are marked in blue.



7.5 Availability

The table below identifies the opening hours, usage arrangements and pricing (shown as monthly direct debit costs to facilitate comparison).

Facility	Opening hours and basis of use	Pricing
Bob Prowse Health Club	Mon - Fri 6.30am - 10pm Sat - Sun 9am - 5pm Membership only	£35

David Lloyd Club (Maidstone)	Mon - Fri 6am - 10pm Sat - Sun 8am - 6pm Membership only	£60
Feel Good Health Club	Mon - Fri 6.45am - 10pm Sat - Sun 7am - 9pm Membership only	£40.99
Freedom Leisure Maidstone	Mon - Fri 6.30am - 10.30pm Sat - Sun 8am - 6pm Membership and 'pay-and-play'	£47
Lenham Community Gym	Mon - Fri 7am - 8.30am and 5pm - 9pm Sat 8am - 3pm Membership only	£28
LivingWell Health Club	Mon - Fri 6am - 10pm Sat 7am - 9pm Sun 8am - 10pm Membership only	£47
Maidstone Leisure Centre	Mon-Fri 6.30am -10pm Sat-Sun 8am - 8pm 'Pay-and-play' with membership arrangement offering discounts	£35.95
Marriott Leisure Club	Mon - Sun 6am - 11pm Membership only	£65
Snap Fitness	24/7 access for members only Staffed access Mon 9am - 8pm, Tue - Sat 10am - 8pm	£19.99
truGym Maidstone	Mon - Fri 5am - 12am Sat - Sun 8am - 8pm Membership only	£14.99
Village Gym (Maidstone)	Mon - Fri 6.30am - 10pm Sat - Sun 8am - 8pm Membership only	£52
Weald of Kent Golf Club	Mon - Sun 6.45am - 9.30pm Membership only	£34.95
Welcome Gym	Mon - Fri 6.30am - 10pm Sat - Sun 8am - 6pm Membership only	£24.99
YMCA	Mon-Fri 6.30am -10pm Sat-Sun 8am - 6pm 'Pay-and-play' with membership arrangement offering discounts	£21

7.6 **Key findings on supply**

The key findings are as follows:

- There are 14 publicly accessible health and fitness facilities in Maidstone, collectively comprising 1,073 equipment stations.
- Only the Maidstone Leisure Centre, Freedom Leisure and the YMCA offer 'pay-and-play' public access in the borough, with the remaining facilities accessible on a membership only basis.
- Membership charges vary between £19.99 and £65 per month, although there are discounted introductory offers at many facilities.
- The quality of most features of most facilities is 'very good' or 'good'.
- Some areas in the south-east and east of the borough are beyond the catchment of a 'pay-and-play' facility within Maidstone, although most have access in these areas to facilities with unrestricted access in neighbouring local authorities and to membership-only sites.

7.7 **Current demand for health and fitness facilities**

7.7.1 **Expressed demand**

The 2019 ‘*State of the UK Fitness Industry*’ report’ reveals that the UK health and fitness industry is continuing to grow. It has more clubs, more members and a greater market value than ever before. Over the twelve-month period to the end of March 2019, there were increases of:

- 2.9% in the number of fitness facilities.
- 4.7% in the number of members.
- 4.2% in overall market value.

For the first time ever, health and fitness members exceeded 10 million. 1 in 7 people in the UK is a member of a gym, an all-time penetration rate high of 15.6%. The low-cost market with its large membership numbers, online joining, long opening hours and low-prices has continued to expand rapidly.

7.7.2 **Displaced demand**

Displaced demand relates to users of health and fitness facilities from within the study area which takes place outside of the area. The following facilities with ‘pay-and-play’ accessibility are located in adjacent local authority areas, close enough to the borough boundary to provide usage opportunities for Maidstone residents.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Distance from Maidstone boundary</i>
Angel Leisure Centre	Angel Lane, Tonbridge TN9 1SF	3 miles
Kings Rochester Sports Centre	ad, Rochester ME1 3QJ	3 miles
Lordswood Leisure Centre	Way, Chatham ME5 8AY	1 mile
Putlands Sports Centre	Mascalls Court Rd., Paddock Wood TN12 6NZ	2 miles
Swallows Leisure Centre	e, Sittingbourne ME10 4NT	4 miles
Tunbridge Wells Sports Centre	St. John’s Road, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9TX	2 miles
Weald Sports Centre	Angley Road, Cranbrook TN17 2PN	3 miles

7.7.3 **Unmet demand**

All health and fitness facilities in the borough have indicated that they can accommodate some new users/members, so a lack facility capacity is not an issue even though usage is busy in the peak periods. Some of the population is outside the catchment of a ‘pay-and-play’ facility within Maidstone, although most have access in these areas to facilities with unrestricted access in neighbouring local authorities and to membership-only sites so there is no unmet geographical demand.

7.8 **Local sports participation priorities**

There are no specific local sports participation priorities in Maidstone, other than a general policy commitment to promote health and well-being through increased levels of physical activity. Health and fitness facilities have a particular role to play in this, given the breadth of appeal to all age groups.

7.9 **Sport-specific priorities**

There are no identified strategic priorities for developing health and fitness facilities in Maidstone.

7.10 **Future demand for health and fitness facilities**

7.10.1 Population growth

MBC's *'Strategic Housing Market Assessment'* (2015) confirmed the objectively assessed housing need for the borough over the period 2011 to 2031 as 17,660 dwellings. Of these 8,335 have already been built or granted planning permission. The 833 annual dwelling requirement stands for five years following the adoption of the Local Plan (i.e. to October 2022). Thereafter, the annual requirement increases by 353 dwellings to a need of 1,236 homes per annum. Current expectations are that the Local Plan Review will be rolled forward to the year 2037. Based upon the ONS 'Sub-national Population projections' (2014), this scale of development will increase the borough's population by 20,900 to 192,700 people by 2031 and by 29,891 to 201,691 by 2037. This will represent an increase of 12.2% and 17.4% respectively over the mid-2019 figure.

7.10.2 Participation rates

One factor in considering future sports participation rates is to track historical trends, as a guide to possible future developments. Sport England's 'Active People' survey recorded adult (16+) weekly participation rates for health and fitness at national and local level on an annual basis between 2005 and 2016. The results are tabulated below and show that participation rates increased significantly over the decade, both in England and Maidstone:

<i>Sport</i>	<i>2005/06</i>	<i>2007/08</i>	<i>2008/09</i>	<i>2009/10</i>	<i>2010/11</i>	<i>2011/12</i>	<i>2012/13</i>	<i>2013/14</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2015/16</i>	<i>% Change</i>
England	12.6%	14.1%	14.0%	14.3%	14.3%	14.6%	15.3%	15.4%	15.5%	16.0%	+3.4%
Maidstone	13.8%	15.0%	12.5%	13.2%	12.9%	13.7%	13.0%	10.4%	17.0%	16.3%	+2.5%

Sport England's 'Active Lives' survey recorded adult twice monthly health and fitness participation rates since 2016 and these continue to show a broadly upward trend, although there was a fall in the most recent figures:

<i>May 2016/17</i>	<i>November 2016/17</i>	<i>May 2017/18</i>	<i>November 2017/18</i>	<i>May 2018/19</i>	<i>November 2018/19</i>	<i>% Change</i>
29.5%	29.5%	29.7%	30.0%	30.4%	28.4%	-1.1%

7.10.3 Future projections

Local health and fitness participation rates have increased by an average of 0.25% per annum over the past decade. It would therefore be reasonable to assume a similar growth rate until 2037, which would increase demand by 4.0% by the end of the plan period. When combined with population growth of 17.4%, this would collectively increase demand by 21.4% by 2037. Based on current provision of 1,073 equipment stations and no effective spare capacity, there will be demand for 1,303 stations by 2037, an increase of 230 over the existing figure.

7.11 **Key findings on demand**

The key findings are as follows:

- In line with national trends, expressed demand for health and fitness facilities in Maidstone is high.
- Demand is projected to increase by 21.4% by the end of the plan period. This will lead to a need for an extra 230 equipment stations by 2037.

7.12 **The balance between health and fitness supply and demand**

Four criteria have been assessed to evaluate the balance between health and fitness facility supply and demand in Maidstone:

- **Quantity:** Are there enough facilities with sufficient capacity to meet needs now and in the future?
- **Quality:** Are the facilities fit for purpose for the users now and in the future?
- **Accessibility:** Are the facilities in the right physical location for the users now and in the future?
- **Availability:** Are the facilities available for those who want to use them now and in the future?

7.13 **Quantity**

7.13.1 Current needs

Current health and fitness facilities in Maidstone are assessed to be at operating at close to full capacity, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Used peak capacity:** Although no detailed figures are available, consultation with local operators indicates that most facilities are operating at close to full capacity in the peak periods.

- **Satisfied demand:** There is no evidence of unmet demand, with a good geographical spread of provision and ‘pay-and-play’ facilities providing almost 25% of the overall capacity in terms of equipment stations.
- **Changes in supply:** The site of the Heavenly Fitness Gym at Tovil has been confirmed as a housing allocation in the draft Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan Review (December 2020). In the event that the housing allocation is not carried forward to the final version of the Local Plan Review, supply figures will be updated at the next review of the Sports Facilities Strategy. Staplehurst Jubilee Fields Management Committee is considering health and fitness provision as part of wider facilities proposals and commercial sector providers are likely to respond to increases in demand by expanding local capacity.

7.13.2 Future needs

The quantity of health and fitness provision required to meet future needs has been assessed as equivalent to 1,303 fitness stations by 2037, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Demand increases:** The borough’s population is projected to increase by 29,891 to 201,691 people by 2037. This will represent an increase of 17.4% over the mid-2019 estimate.
- **Participation trends:** Local health and fitness participation rates have increased by an average of 0.25% per annum over the past decade. It would therefore be reasonable to assume a similar growth rate until 2037, which would increase demand by 4.0% by the end of the plan period.
- **Additional needs:** Based on current provision of 1,073 equipment stations and no effective spare capacity, there will be demand for 1,303 stations by 2037, an increase of 230 over the existing figure.

7.14 Quality

7.14.1 Current quality

There are no significant quality issues relating to health and fitness facilities in Maidstone, although the position should be kept under review.

7.14.2 Future quality

In a highly competitive market, commercial health and fitness providers place a high premium on equipment innovation and facility quality, so it seems reasonable to assume that local provision will continue to be upgraded regularly.

7.15 Accessibility

7.15.1 Current accessibility

Some areas in the south-east and east of the borough are beyond the catchment of a ‘pay-and-play’ facility within Maidstone, although most have access in these areas to facilities with unrestricted access in neighbouring local authorities and to membership-only sites.

7.15.2 Future accessibility

Commercial health and fitness operators are likely to ensure that additional facilities are provided that are well-located in relation to new housing developments.

7.16 **Availability**

7.16.1 Current availability

Only the Maidstone Leisure Centre, Freedom Leisure and the YMCA offer ‘pay-and-play’ public access in the borough, with the remaining facilities accessible on a membership only basis. Membership charges vary between £19.99 and £60 per month, although there are discounted introductory offers at many facilities.

7.16.2 Future availability

With a competitive local market including several low-cost commercial providers, it seems unlikely that cost will be a barrier to accessibility in the future. However, the inclusion of expanded ‘pay-and-play’ health and fitness provision as part of any redevelopment of Maidstone Leisure Centre would ensure that accessible facilities are available for the whole community.

7.17 **The options for securing additional health and fitness capacity**

The options for securing existing and additional health and fitness facility capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

7.17.1 Protect

Protecting existing health and fitness facilities through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, including those with membership-only access, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality and accessibility.

7.17.2 Provide

Ensuring that extra health and fitness capacity is achieved by:

- Providing new or expanded facilities at Maidstone Leisure Centre, to ensure that ‘pay-and-play’ access is available, funded through developer contributions that reflect the extra demand arising from the additional population.
- Encouraging the provision of health and fitness facilities by commercial leisure providers.
- Supporting the provision of outdoor fitness equipment and green gyms, particularly in village locations.

7.17.3 Enhance

Enhancing existing health and fitness capacity by negotiating with:

- Commercial operators to provide access for non-members in off-peak periods.
- Negotiating community access to the three facilities on school sites that have no external use at present.

7.18 **Action Plan**

The table below sets out the action plan for health and fitness facilities to guide the implementation of the strategy. All actions are generic, rather than facility specific.

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Protection of existing community health and fitness facilities.	Include a policy in the Local Plan to protect all existing health and fitness facilities.	MBC	-	-	High
Need for an additional 230 fitness stations by 2037.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand ‘pay-and-play’ capacity at Maidstone Leisure Centre.• Encourage additional provision by commercial providers.	MBC	Maidstone Leisure Trust Commercial providers	Dependent on the scale and nature of provision.	Medium
‘Pay-and-play’ access to commercial health and fitness facilities.	Encourage the operators of commercial facilities to provide off-peak ‘pay-and-play’ access.	MBC	Private health clubs	-	Medium
Provision in rural areas.	Support the provision of outdoor fitness equipment and green gyms, particularly in village locations.	MBC	Parish Councils	Dependent on the scale and nature of provision.	Medium
Funding for future health and fitness needs.	Include health and fitness facilities as part of CIL provisions.	MBC	-	-	High

8 SQUASH COURTS

Key findings:

- **Quantity:** There are two facilities with community use in Maidstone, collectively containing six squash courts, plus one facility on a school site with two courts and no public access. There is sufficient spare capacity at existing courts to meet all additional demand to 2037.
- **Quality:** The quality of both facilities is 'good'.
- **Accessibility:** Some areas in the south-west and north-east of the borough are beyond the catchment of a facility within Maidstone, although all have access in these areas to facilities in neighbouring local authorities.
- **Availability:** Only the Mote Squash Club offers 'pay-and-play' public access in the borough

8.1 Introduction

This section examines the provision of squash courts in Maidstone. Squash courts are defined as specialist courts for squash and racketball, complying with regulation dimensions.

8.2 Quantity

8.2.1 Squash Courts with community use

The location and number of squash courts with community use in Maidstone is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Courts</i>	<i>Year built</i>
Maidstone Squash Club	Union Street, Maidstone ME14 1EB	2	2009
Mote Squash Club	Mote Park, Maidstone ME15 7RN	4	2008

8.2.2 Squash Courts without community use

The location and number of squash courts with no community use in Maidstone is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Courts</i>	<i>Year built</i>
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	Sutton Valence ME17 3HN	2	1950

8.3 Quality

8.3.1 The criteria assessed

The quality of squash courts was assessed by a non-technical visual inspection during a site visit to all facilities. The criteria that were assessed to give a single overall score for each squash facility

were the court surface, changing provision, line markings, walls, disability and general access and fitness for purpose.

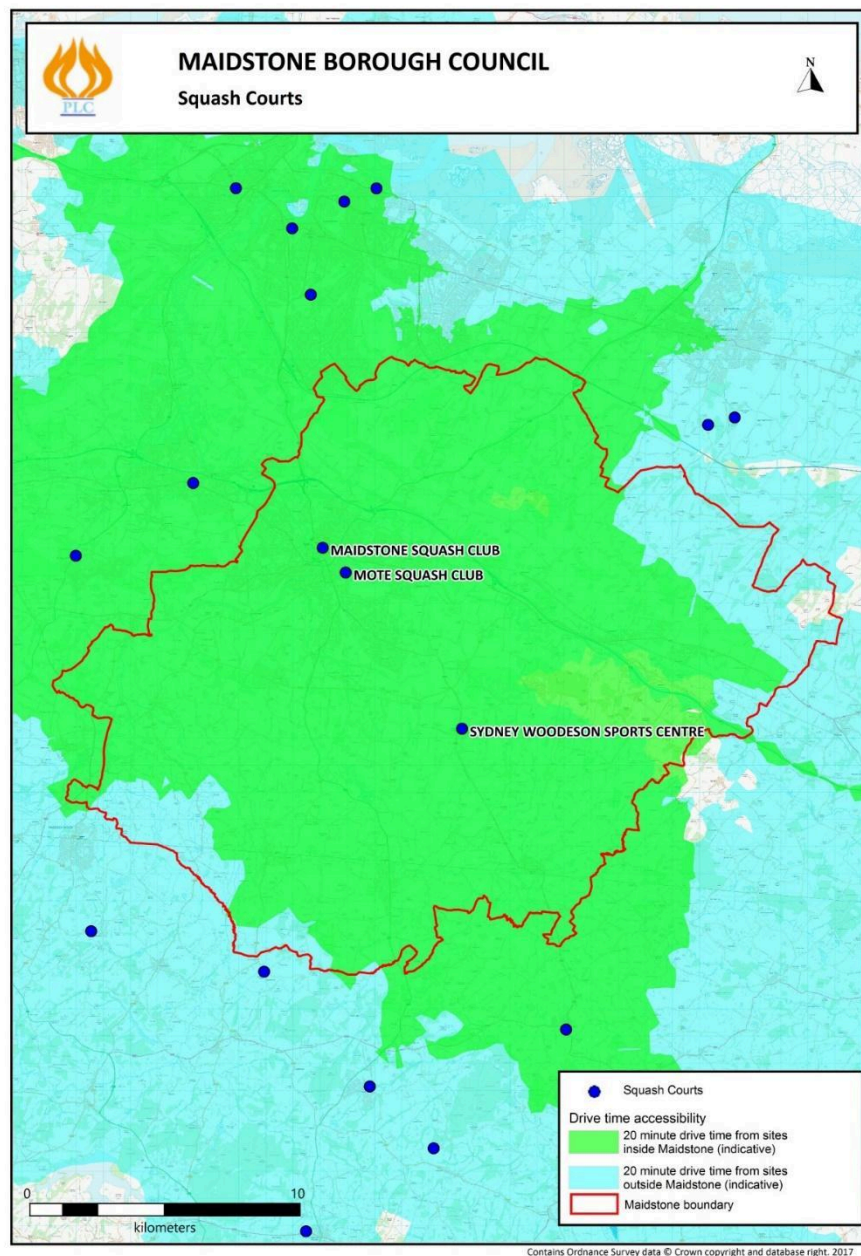
8.3.2 The basis of the ratings

The facilities were rated on a five-point scale, where 5 equates to ‘very good’, 4 to ‘good’ (highlighted in green below), 3 to ‘average’, 2 to ‘poor’ and 1 to ‘very poor’. The ratings for the squash courts in Maidstone are shown in the table below.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Score</i>
Maidstone Squash Club	4
Mote Squash Club	4
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	4

8.4 Accessibility

Based on Sport England research, the ‘effective catchment’ for squash courts is 20 minutes driving time. The map below shows the location of all squash courts in Maidstone, together with courts in neighbouring areas within the 20-minute drivetime catchment of the borough boundary.



8.5 Availability

The table below identifies the opening hours, usage arrangements and used capacity in the peak period.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Opening hours and basis of use</i>	<i>Pricing</i>	<i>Peak usage</i>
Maidstone Squash Club	Mon - Sun 7.00am - 11.00pm Membership only	Adult membership £115 pa Students £40 pa Juniors £25 pa	55%

Mote Squash Club	Mon-Sun 7.00am -10.30pm Membership only Casual 'pay-and-play' bookings	Adult peak membership £160 pa Adult off-peak membership £80 Students £35 pa Juniors £35 pa Casual £12 per session	60%
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8.6 **Key findings on supply**

The key findings are as follows:

- There are two facilities with community use in Maidstone, collectively containing six squash courts, plus one facility on a school site with two courts and no public access. Both the community accessible facilities are available for use on a membership basis only.
- Only the Mote Squash Club offers 'pay-and-play' public access in the borough.
- The quality of all facilities is 'good'.
- Some areas in the south-west and north-east of the borough are beyond the catchment of a facility within Maidstone, although all have access in these areas to facilities in neighbouring local authorities.

8.7 **The views of stakeholders**

Kent Squash commented as follows:

- 'Pre-lockdown, Squash in Maidstone was thriving. This was achieved by the continued implementation of Kent's development programmes primarily for juniors the Kent Junior Academy project and ladies Squashacise classes. By increasing junior participation it has allowed some of their parents to be introduced to squash thus increasing adult participation'.
- 'Maidstone Squash Club has now engaged the services of a coach who has started a junior section there based on the success of a schools programme. so hoping that this can be built on'.
- 'The Mote Squash Club has continued with its schools programmes since 2018 and as a result sees up to 200 juniors a week playing at the club. This means on weekdays in the peak period from 16.00 to 19.00 there are no courts free in the school term'.
- 'However all clubs, as with most squash clubs, have courts free during the day. Again this is where forming a partnership with the council to link with target groups such as 50 plus groups, mother and toddler groups would help the club and local communities'.
- 'On my last contact with Sutton Valence the courts at present are not being used for squash but are to be refurbished then made operational. Once this has been done a coach will be

installed to implement squash programmes to both engage with the school and community hopefully by mid-2021’.

8.8 **Current demand for squash courts**

8.8.1 Expressed demand

Squash participation has been in long-term decline and both clubs in the borough have experienced membership reductions in the past decade although both currently have stable membership numbers. Whilst the Mote Club courts are fully utilised during part of the peak period, overall peak-time court utilisation rates are 55% and 60% respectively, which indicates significant spare capacity.

8.8.2 Displaced demand

Displaced demand relates to users of squash courts from within the study area which takes place outside of the area. There is no evidence of exported demand from Maidstone, although the courts at the K-Club in Cobdown are close enough to the boundary to provide opportunities for Maidstone residents.

8.8.3 Unmet demand

Unmet demand involves two components:

- Demand that cannot be met within a facility catchment due to excess demand.
- Demand that cannot be met because it is located outside the catchment of a facility.

Both clubs in the borough have indicated that they can accommodate new users/members, so facility capacity is not an issue. Some of the population is outside the catchment of a facility within Maidstone, although all have access in these areas to facilities in neighbouring local authorities so there is no unmet geographical demand.

8.9 **Local sports participation priorities**

There are no specific local sports participation priorities in Maidstone, other than a general policy commitment to promote health and well-being through increased levels of physical activity. As a specialist activity, squash is likely to have limited appeal to new sports participants.

8.10 **Sport-specific priorities**

Kent Squash commented that the two clubs in Maidstone are strong with good facilities and a stable membership. The current strategic emphasis is on protecting the current supply of facilities and the development of players rather than promoting construction of new courts.

8.11 *Future demand for squash courts*

8.10.1 Population growth

MBC's 'Strategic Housing Market Assessment' (2015) confirmed the objectively assessed housing need for the borough over the period 2011 to 2031 as 17,660 dwellings. Of these 8,335 have already been built or granted planning permission. The 833 annual dwelling requirement stands for five years following the adoption of the Local Plan (i.e. to October 2022). Thereafter, the annual requirement increases by 353 dwellings to a need of 1,236 homes per annum. Current expectations are that the Local Plan Review will be rolled forward to the year 2037. Based upon the ONS 'Sub-national Population projections' (2014), this scale of development will increase the borough's population by 20,900 to 192,700 people by 2031 and by 29,891 to 201,691 by 2037. This will represent an increase of 12.2% and 17.4% respectively over the mid-2019 figure.

8.10.2 Participation rates

One factor in considering future sports participation rates is to track historical trends, as a guide to possible future developments. Sport England's 'Active People' survey recorded adult (16+) weekly participation rates for squash at national level on an annual basis between 2005 and 2016. The results are tabulated below and show that participation declined significantly over the decade, with the number of regular (at least once a week) players falling by more than 100,000, from 299,800 in 2005 to 199,500 in 2016. The adult participation rates are detailed below:

<i>2005/06</i>	<i>2007/08</i>	<i>2008/09</i>	<i>2009/10</i>	<i>2010/11</i>	<i>2011/12</i>	<i>2012/13</i>	<i>2013/14</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2015/16</i>	<i>% Change</i>
0.74%	0.71%	0.72%	0.69%	0.67%	0.61%	0.55%	0.45%	0.51%	0.45%	-0.29%

Sport England's 'Active Lives' survey recorded adult twice monthly squash participation rates since 2016 and these continue to show a reducing trend:

<i>May 2016/17</i>	<i>November 2016/17</i>	<i>May 2017/18</i>	<i>November 2017/18</i>	<i>May 2018/19</i>	<i>November 2018/19</i>	<i>% Change</i>
1.0%	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%	-0.3%

8.10.3 Future projections

Local squash participation rates have been stable in recent years and whilst this runs counter to national trends, it would be reasonable to assume static growth to 2037. Population growth of 17.4% will therefore increase demand for squash court capacity by a similar amount.

8.12 *Key findings on demand*

The key findings are as follows:

- Contrary to national trends, expressed demand for squash courts in Maidstone is stable.
- Population growth of 17.4% in Maidstone by 2037 is likely increase demand for squash court capacity by a similar amount.

8.13 *The balance between squash court supply and demand*

Four criteria have been assessed to evaluate the balance between squash court supply and demand in Maidstone:

- **Quantity:** Are there enough courts with sufficient capacity to meet needs now and in the future?
- **Quality:** Are the courts fit for purpose for the users now and in the future?
- **Accessibility:** Are the courts in the right physical location for the users now and in the future?
- **Availability:** Are the courts available for those who want to use them now and in the future?

8.14 *Quantity*

8.13.1 Current needs

Current squash courts in Maidstone are assessed to be at operating with significant capacity, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Used peak capacity:** The courts at Maidstone Squash Club are operating at 55% and those at Mote Park Squash Club at 60% in the peak periods.
- **Satisfied demand:** There is no evidence of unmet demand in the borough.
- **Changes in supply:** The courts at Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre are not currently being used for squash but are to be refurbished then made operational by 2021, with some potential for community use.

8.13.2 Future needs

Spare capacity at the existing courts should be able to accommodate all additional future demand, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Demand increases:** The borough's population is projected to increase by 29,891 to 201,691 people by 2037. This will represent an increase of 17.4% over the mid-2019 estimate.
- **Participation trends:** Local squash participation rates have been projected to remain static until 2037.
- **Additional needs:** With 45% spare peak time capacity at the Maidstone Squash Club courts and 40% at Mote Park Squash Club, all additional demand can be accommodated by current spare capacity.

8.15 **Quality**

8.14.1 Current quality

There are no significant quality issues relating to squash courts in Maidstone, although the position should be kept under review.

8.14.2 Future quality

Both local clubs continue to invest in maintaining and improving their facilities, so if this process can be assisted with funding from developer contributions in the future, it seems reasonable to assume that local provision will continue to be upgraded regularly.

8.16 **Accessibility**

8.15.1 Current accessibility

Some areas in the south-west and north-east of the borough are beyond the catchment of a facility within Maidstone, although all have access in these areas to facilities in neighbouring local authorities.

8.15.2 Future accessibility

Since the current facilities are geographically well-located to serve boroughwide needs, they will continue to serve future needs.

8.17 **Availability**

8.16.1 Current availability

Mote Park Squash Club offers casual use and both clubs have membership fees that are set at reasonable rates with discounts for off-peak use and juniors.

8.16.2 Future availability

It is reasonable to assume that similar membership arrangements will be offered in the future and if developer contribution funding is offered to enhance the facilities at both sites, it could be conditional on the provision of ‘pay-and-play’ access. Community use of the courts at Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre may be possible from 2021.

8.18 **The options for securing additional squash court capacity**

The options for securing existing and additional squash court capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

8.17.1 Protect

Protecting existing squash courts through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the

loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality and accessibility.

8.17.2 Provide

There is no identified strategic need to provide additional squash courts, although the position should be regularly reviewed over the lifespan of the strategy.

8.17.3 Enhance

Enhancing existing squash courts by ensuring that the courts and ancillary facilities receive regular maintenance and improvements.

8.19 **Action Plan**

The table below sets out the action plan for squash courts to guide the implementation of the strategy.

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Protection of existing squash courts.	Include a policy in the Local Plan to protect all existing squash courts.	MBC	-	-	High
Monitoring demand levels	Regular monitoring to ensure that changes in demand do not affect assessed needs.	MBC	-	-	Medium

9 INDOOR AND OUTDOOR TENNIS COURTS

Key findings:

- **Quantity:** There are four seasonally covered indoor tennis courts with community use in Maidstone, 48 outdoor courts with community access (of which 29 are floodlit) and 39 outdoor courts without community use (of which 30 are floodlit). There is sufficient spare capacity at existing indoor and outdoor courts to cater for all additional demand to 2037, although localised concentrations of demand in areas such as Bearstead and Staplehurst do justify some additional provision.
- **Quality:** The quality of courts is 'poor' at two sites and five of the 14 outdoor court sites have at least one element that is rated as 'poor'.
- **Accessibility:** The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of the indoor courts at Freedom Leisure Maidstone. Large areas in the east and west of the borough are more than 10-minutes' drive from the nearest 'pay-and-play' outdoor tennis court, although all areas are within 10-minutes of the nearest court if club facilities are included.
- **Availability:** 'Pay-and-play' tennis is available at all four of the indoor courts in the borough and at 32 (66.7%) of the 48 community-accessible outdoor courts.

9.1 Introduction

This section examines the provision of indoor and outdoor tennis courts in Maidstone.

- Indoor tennis halls are defined specialist permanent or temporary indoor facilities with appropriate playing surface, line markings, nets and court dimensions for tennis.
- Outdoor tennis courts are defined as specialist outdoor facilities with appropriate playing surface, line markings and nets for tennis.

9.2 Quantity

9.2.1 Indoor tennis courts with community use

The location and number of indoor tennis courts with community use in Maidstone is as follows. The courts are covered seasonally between September and March with two airdome structures:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Courts</i>	<i>Year built</i>
Freedom Leisure Maidstone	St. Peter's Street, Maidstone ME16 0SX	4	2008

9.2.2 Outdoor tennis courts with community use

The location and number of outdoor tennis courts with community use in Maidstone is as follows:

Facility	Address	Courts	Lights
Thurnham TC	Way, Bearsted ME14 4NE	5 Tarmac	Yes
Tennis courts	ad, Maidstone ME16 8JS	2 Tarmac	No
Health Club	, Hollingbourne ME17 1RE	2 Tarmac	No
Freedom Leisure Maidstone	St. Peter's Street, Maidstone ME16 0SX	5 Euroclay*	Yes
Tennis Club	Harrietsham ME17 1AP	3 Grass	No
Tennis Club	, Headcorn TN27 9LE	3 Tarmac	Yes
Tennis Club	ne Park, Maidstone ME16 0DE	4 Tarmac	Yes
s Club	ad, Marden TN12 9AE	4 Synthetic turf	Yes (2)
h Club	, Bearsted ME14 4NQ	2 Tarmac	Yes
th tennis courts	enenden Heath ME14 2DH	6 Tarmac	Yes
nnis courts	ad, Maidstone ME15 6AZ	4 Tarmac	No
nnis Club	ad, Staplehurst TN12 0DH	3 Grass 2 Tarmac	No Yes
e Tennis Club	Sutton Valence ME17 3HT	3 Tarmac	No

* Includes the four seasonally covered courts.

9.2.3 Outdoor tennis courts without community use

The location of outdoor tennis courts without community use in Maidstone is as follows:

Facility	Address	Courts	Lights
Kent Police	Sutton Rd, Maidstone ME15 9BZ	2 Tarmac	No
Maidstone Grammar School for Boys	Barton Road, Maidstone ME15 7BT	2 Tarmac	No
Maidstone Grammar School for Girls	Buckland Rd, Maidstone ME16 0SF	9 Tarmac	Yes
Mapleton Noakes School	Buckland Rd, Maidstone ME16 0TJ	5 Tarmac	No
New Line Learning Academy	Boughton Lane, Loose ME15 9QL	6 Synthetic turf	Yes
Saint Augustine Academy	Oakwood Rd, Maidstone ME16 8AE	2 Tarmac	Yes
Saint Simon Stock School	Oakwood Park, Maidstone ME16 0JP	7 Tarmac	Yes
Sutton Valence School	North St., Sutton Valence ME17 3HN	6 Synthetic turf	Yes

9.3 Quality

9.3.1 The criteria assessed for indoor courts

The quality of indoor tennis courts was assessed by a non-technical visual inspection during a site visit to all facilities. The criteria that were assessed were as follows:

- **The court:** The overall condition, playing surface, clear span roof height, lighting, spectator provision, equipment and fitness for purpose.
- **Changing facilities:** The capacity, condition and fitness for purpose.

- **Disability access:** The extent of full disabled access to the facility, including the provision of access ramps, dedicated changing, toilets and car parking.
- **Maintenance and cleanliness:** The quality of maintenance and cleanliness standards.
- **General access:** Car parking, signposting, external lighting and proximity to public transport.

9.3.2 The criteria assessed for outdoor courts

The quality of outdoor tennis courts was assessed by a non-technical visual inspection during a site visit to all facilities. The criteria that were assessed were as follows:

- **The court:** Court surface, line markings and fitness for purpose.
- **Fencing:** Condition and appearance.
- **Disability access:** Provision for disabled access to the courts.
- **General access:** Parking, signage and proximity to public transport.
- **Lighting:** The quality, illumination levels and evenness of floodlights.

9.3.3 The basis of the ratings

The facilities were rated on a five-point scale, where 5 equates to ‘very good’ (highlighted in green below), 4 to ‘good’ (also highlighted in green below), 3 to ‘average’ (highlighted in yellow below), 2 to ‘poor’ (highlighted in red below) and 1 to ‘very poor’ (also highlighted in red below).

9.3.4 Indoor court assessment

The ratings for the indoor tennis courts in Maidstone are shown in the table below.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Courts</i>	<i>Changing</i>	<i>Disability Access</i>	<i>Maintenance</i>	<i>General access</i>
Freedom Leisure Maidstone	5	4	4	4	4

9.3.5 Outdoor court assessment

The ratings for the outdoor tennis courts in Maidstone are shown in the table below.

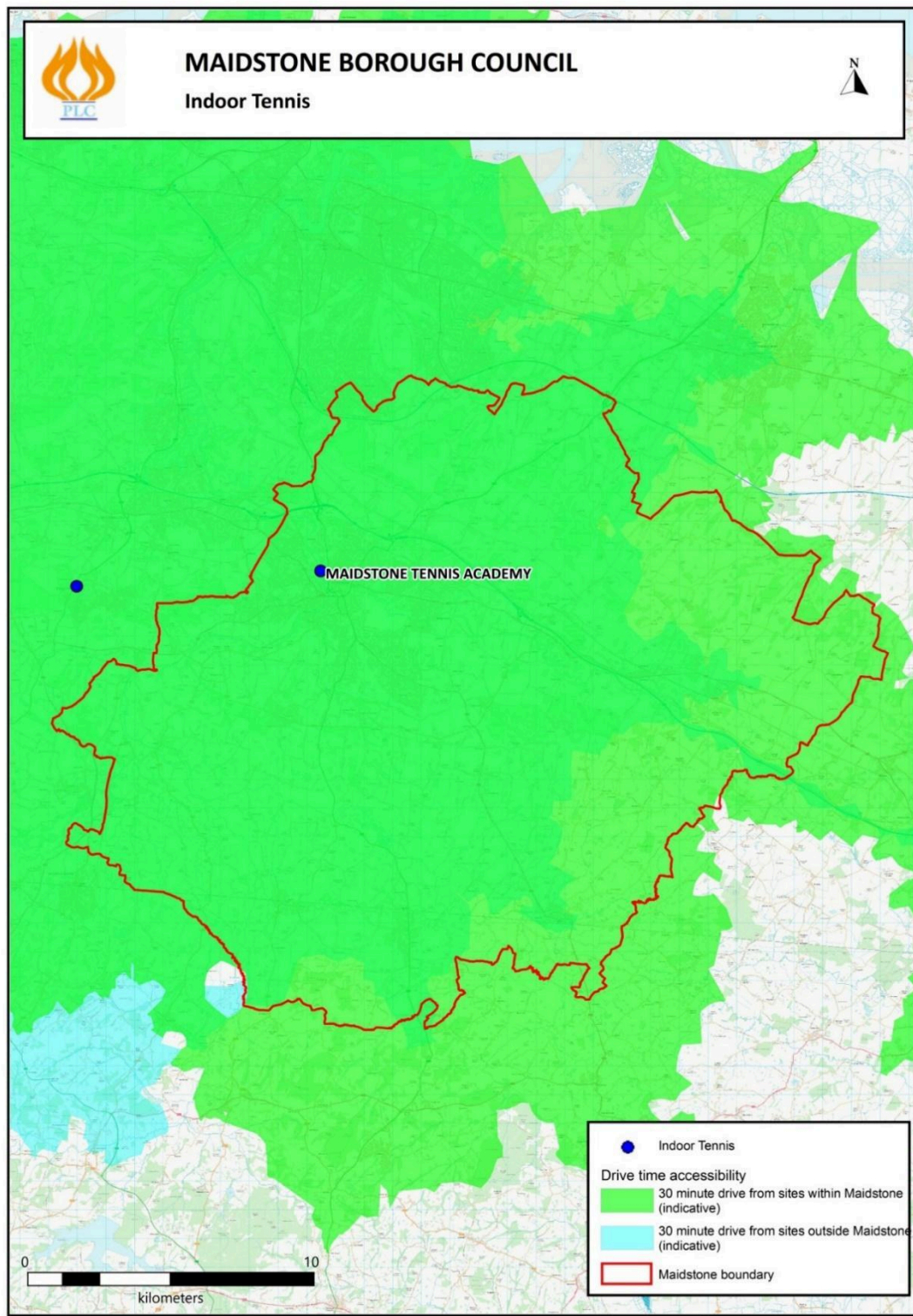
<i>Facility</i>	<i>Court</i>	<i>Fencing</i>	<i>Disability Access</i>	<i>General access</i>	<i>Lighting</i>
Thurnham TC	5	5	4	4	5
his courts	2	3	3	3	-
alth Club	3	3	3	2	-
Freedom Leisure Maidstone	5	5	4	5	5
ennis Club	4	3	3	3	-

nis Club	4	5	4	3	4
nis Club	5	5	2	3	4
courts	5	5	4	4	4
h Club	4	4	3	4	4
th tennis courts	5	4	3	4	5
nis courts	4	4	4	4	-
nnis Club	5	4	3	4	2
e Tennis Club	2	2	1	2	-

9.4 **Accessibility**

9.4.1 **Indoor courts**

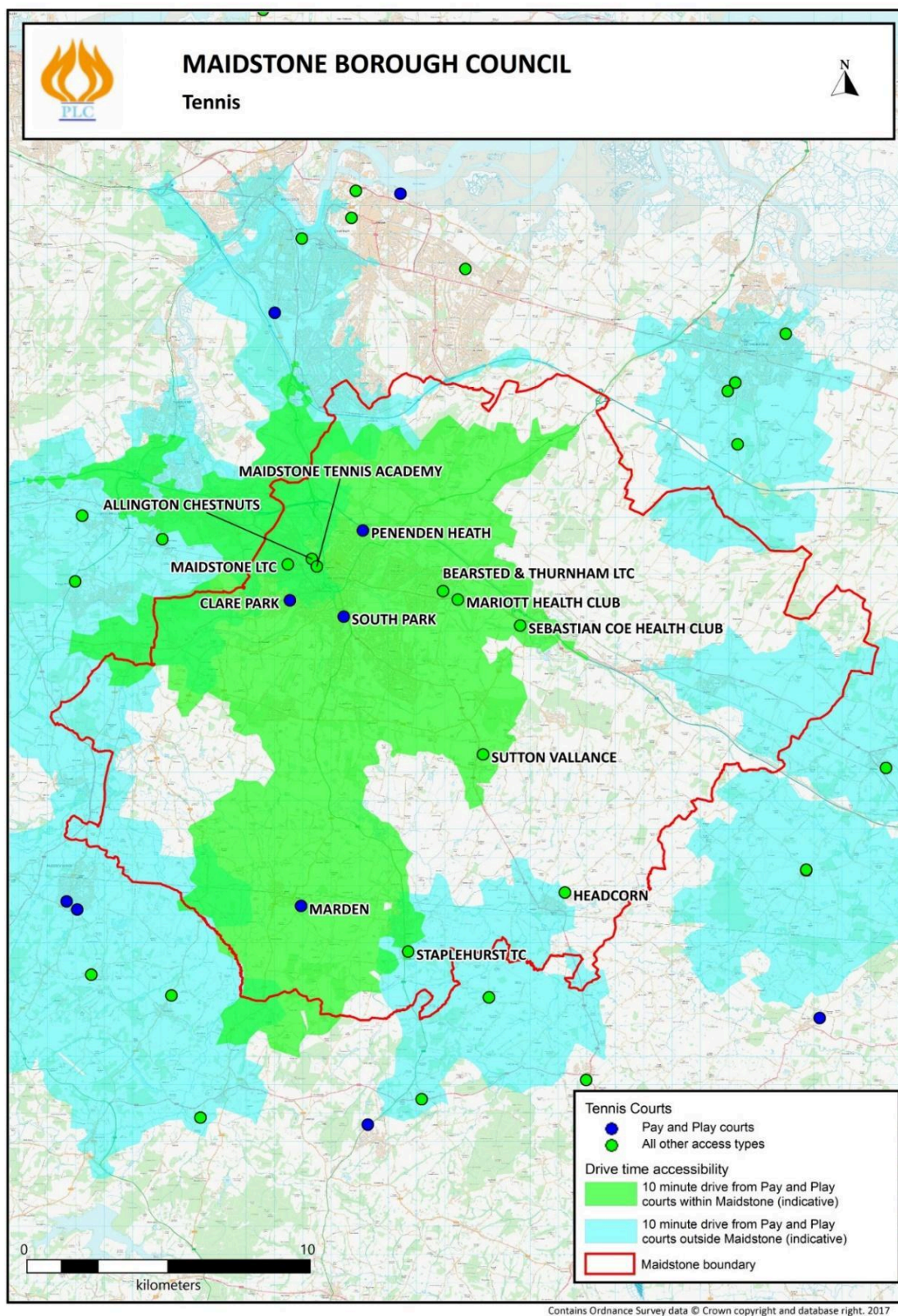
Based on LTA research, the ‘effective catchment’ for indoor tennis courts is 30 minutes driving time. The map below shows the location of the indoor tennis courts in Maidstone, together with courts in neighbouring areas which are within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of the borough boundary:



9.4.2 Outdoor courts

Based on Sport England research, the 'effective catchment' for outdoor tennis courts is 10 minutes driving time. The map below shows the location of the outdoor tennis courts in

Maidstone, together with courts in neighbouring areas which are within the 10-minute drivetime catchment of the borough boundary:



9.5 *Availability*

The table below identifies the basis of use and cost of tennis court usage in Maidstone:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Basis of use</i>
Thurnham TC	£140 per year membership	Membership only
nis courts	£8 per court per hour (adults) £4.40 per court per hour (concessions)	'Pay-and-play'
alth Club	£40.99 per month membership	Membership only
ire Maidstone	£5 per court per hour casual hire £47 per month membership	'Pay-and-play' Membership Coaching Academy
ennis Club	£30 per year adult membership £5 per court per hour casual hire	Membership only 'Pay-and-play'
nis Club	£100 per year membership £3 per court per hour casual hire	Membership only 'Pay-and-play'
nis Club	£130 per year membership	Membership 'Pay-and-play'
s Club	£85 per year membership	Membership only
h Club	£65 per month membership	Membership only
th tennis courts	£8 per court per hour (adults) £4.40 per court per hour (concessions)	'Pay-and-play' Coaching Academy
nis courts	£8 per court per hour (adults) £4.40 per court per hour (concessions)	'Pay-and-play'
nnis Club	£72 per year membership £5 per court per hour casual hire	'Pay-and-play' Membership only
e Tennis Club	£50 per year membership	Membership only

9.6 *Key findings on supply*

The key findings are as follows:

- There are four seasonally covered indoor tennis courts with community use in Maidstone, 48 outdoor courts with community access (of which 29 are floodlit) and 39 outdoor courts without community use (of which 30 are floodlit).
- The quality of courts is 'poor' at two sites and five of the 13 outdoor court sites have at least one element that is rated as 'poor'.
- The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of the indoor courts at Freedom Leisure Maidstone.
- Large areas in the east and west of the borough are more than 10-minutes' drive from the nearest 'pay-and-play' outdoor tennis court, although all areas are within 10-minutes of the nearest court if club facilities are included.

- 'Pay-and-play' tennis is available at all four of the indoor courts in the borough and at 32 (66.7%) of the 48 community-accessible outdoor courts.

9.7 *Current demand for tennis courts*

9.7.1 *Expressed demand*

Tennis participation has been in long-term decline and although most clubs in the borough currently have stable membership numbers. The LTA supplied the following data on the used capacity of selected courts in Maidstone, which indicates that whilst some sites are used to above theoretical capacity, overall utilisation rates are 63%:

<i>Club</i>	<i>No. courts</i>	<i>Floodlit courts</i>	<i>Capacity (players)</i>	<i>No. members</i>	<i>Surplus/ (deficit)</i>	<i>Utilisation rate (%)</i>
Thurnham TC	5	5	300	466	(166)	155%
Harrietsham Tennis Club	3	0	195	44	151	23%
Freedom Leisure Maidstone	5	1	620	318	302	51%
Headcorn Tennis Club	3	3	180	123	57	68%
Kent Police Tennis Club	2	0	80	96	(16)	120%
Maidstone Tennis Club	4	4	240	148	92	62%
Marden Tennis Club	4	2	200	102	98	51%
Penenden Heath	6	4	320	0	320	0%
Sutton Valence Tennis Club	3	0	120	43	77	36%
TOTALS	35	17	2,255	1,344	911	60%

9.7.2 *Displaced demand*

Displaced demand relates to users of tennis courts from within the study area which takes place outside of the area. There is no evidence of exported demand from Maidstone, although several courts are located in adjacent local authority areas, close enough to the borough boundary to provide usage opportunities for Maidstone residents.

9.7.3 *Unmet demand*

All clubs in the borough have indicated that they can accommodate new users/members, so facility capacity is not an issue. Some of the population is outside the catchment of a 'pay-and-play' facility within Maidstone, although all have access in these areas to facilities on club sites so there is no unmet geographical demand.

9.8 *Local sports participation priorities*

There are no specific local sports participation priorities in Maidstone, other than a general policy commitment to promote health and well-being through increased levels of physical activity. As an activity appealing to both genders and most age groups, tennis is likely to have some appeal to new and lapsed sports participants.

9.9 Sport-specific priorities

The Lawn Tennis Association commented that whilst Maidstone is not one of its priority areas for development, there is a healthy club network in the borough with several strong clubs with good junior development programmes. The Maidstone Tennis Academy at Freedom Leisure Maidstone and elsewhere has produced a number of elite players.

9.10 Future demand for tennis courts

9.10.1 Population growth

MBC's 'Strategic Housing Market Assessment' (2015) confirmed the objectively assessed housing need for the borough over the period 2011 to 2031 as 17,660 dwellings. Of these 8,335 have already been built or granted planning permission. The 833 annual dwelling requirement stands for five years following the adoption of the Local Plan (i.e. to October 2022). Thereafter, the annual requirement increases by 353 dwellings to a need of 1,236 homes per annum. Current expectations are that the Local Plan Review will be rolled forward to the year 2037. Based upon the ONS 'Sub-national Population projections' (2014), this scale of development will increase the borough's population by 20,900 to 192,700 people by 2031 and by 29,891 to 201,691 by 2037. This will represent an increase of 12.2% and 17.4% respectively over the mid-2019 figure.

9.10.2 Participation rates

- National trends:** One factor in considering future sports participation rates is to track historical trends, as a guide to possible future developments. Sport England's 'Active People' survey recorded adult (16+) weekly participation rates for tennis at national level on an annual basis between 2005 and 2016. The results are tabulated below and show that participation declined significantly over the decade, with the number of regular (at least once a week) players falling by more than 59,000, from 457,200 in 2005 to 398,100 in 2016. The adult participation rates are detailed below:

2005/0 6	2007/0 8	2008/0 9	2009/1 0	2010/1 1	2011/1 2	2012/1 3	2013/1 4	2014/1 5	2015/1 6	% Change
1.12%	1.18%	1.27%	1.04%	0.88%	1.03%	0.94%	0.89%	1.02%	0.90%	-0.22%

- Sport England's 'Active Lives' survey recorded adult twice monthly tennis participation rates since 2015 and these continue to show a reducing trend:

November 2105/16	May 2016/17	November 2016/17	May 2017/1 8	November 2017/18	May 2018/1 9	November 2018/19	% Change
2.0%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%	1.7%	-0.3%

- Local trends:** The LTA supplied the following data on club membership figures in 2018 and 2020, which show a 5.2% increase in members in local clubs since 2018:

<i>Club</i>	<i>No. members 2018</i>	<i>No. members 2020</i>	<i>Change 2018-20</i>
Thurnham TC	466	343	-123
Freedom Leisure Maidstone	318	349	+31
Headcorn Tennis Club	123	130	+7
Kent Police Tennis Club	96	106	+10
Maidstone Tennis Club	148	192	+44
Marden Tennis Club	102	195	+93
Staplehurst Tennis Club	145	155	+10
TOTALS	1,398	1,470	+72

9.10.3 Future projections

Local tennis participation rates have increased in recent years, although this runs counter to national trends so it would be reasonable to assume static growth to 2037. Population growth of 17.4% will therefore increase demand for tennis court capacity by a similar amount.

9.11 **Key findings on demand**

The key findings are as follows:

- Contrary to national trends, expressed demand for indoor and outdoor tennis courts in Maidstone is increasing.
- Population growth of 17.4% in Maidstone by 2037 is likely increase demand for indoor and outdoor tennis court capacity by a similar amount.

9.12 **The balance between tennis court supply and demand**

Four criteria have been assessed to evaluate the balance between indoor and outdoor tennis court supply and demand in Maidstone:

- **Quantity:** Are there enough courts with sufficient capacity to meet needs now and in the future?
- **Quality:** Are the courts fit for purpose for the users now and in the future?
- **Accessibility:** Are the courts in the right physical location for the users now and in the future?
- **Availability:** Are the courts available for those who want to use them now and in the future?

9.13 **Quantity**

9.13.1 Current needs

Current indoor and outdoor tennis courts in Maidstone are assessed to be at operating with spare capacity, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Used capacity:** The LTA supplied data on the used capacity of selected courts in Maidstone, which indicates that whilst some sites are used to above theoretical capacity, overall utilisation rates are 60%.
- **Satisfied demand:** There is no evidence of unmet demand in the borough.
- **Changes in supply:** Staplehurst Tennis Club recently provided two refurbished hard courts and has plans to upgrade the floodlights, in part to address the needs of population growth in the area. Court quality at any courts which are currently rated as 'average'

should be kept under review to ensure that any further deterioration does not adversely affect usage capacity.

9.13.2 Future needs

Spare capacity at the existing indoor and outdoor tennis courts should be able to accommodate all additional future demand, based upon the following evaluation:

- ***Demand increases:*** The borough's population is projected to increase by 29,891 to 201,691 people by 2037. This will represent an increase of 17.4% over the mid-2019 estimate.
- ***Participation trends:*** Local tennis participation rates have been projected to remain static until 2037.
- ***Additional needs:*** With spare capacity at both indoor and outdoor courts, all additional demand can be accommodated by current spare capacity, although localised concentrations of demand in areas such as Bearstead and Staplehurst do justify some additional provision.
- ***Access to courts on school sites:*** In addition to the 48 courts that are currently community accessible, there are a further 39 courts on school sites, 30 of which are floodlit, where community use might be negotiated subject to additional demand.

9.14 Quality

9.14.1 Current quality

There are a number of quality issues relating to tennis courts in Maidstone, with the following elements rated as 'poor' quality:

- The court surfaces at Clare Park.
- General access at Feelgood Health Club.
- Disabled access at Maidstone Tennis Club.
- Floodlighting at Staplehurst Tennis Club.
- The court surface, fencing, disabled and general access at Sutton Valance Tennis Club.

9.14.2 Future quality

All court providers will need to continue to invest in maintaining and improving their facilities, so if this process can be assisted with funding from developer contributions in the future, it seems reasonable to assume that local provision will continue to be upgraded regularly.

9.15 Accessibility

9.15.1 Current accessibility

Whilst the whole population is within 30-minutes drivetime of the indoor courts, parts of the east and west of the borough are more than 10-minutes' drive from the nearest 'pay-and-play' outdoor tennis court. However, all areas are within 10-minutes of the nearest court of club facilities are included.

9.15.2 Future accessibility

It is unlikely that new outdoor tennis courts will be provided in the areas outside the catchment of the current facilities.

9.16 **Availability**

9.16.1 Current availability

'Pay-and-play' tennis is available at all four of the indoor courts in the borough and at 32 (66.7%) of the 48 community-accessible outdoor courts. Club membership fees are generally set at reasonable rates.

9.16.2 Future availability

It is reasonable to assume that a similar balance of 'pay-and-play' and membership arrangements will be offered in the future and if developer contribution funding is offered to enhance the facilities at club sites, it could be conditional on the provision of 'pay-and-play' access.

9.17 **The options for securing additional tennis court capacity**

The options for securing existing and additional tennis court capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

9.17.1 Protect

Protecting existing indoor and outdoor tennis courts through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality and accessibility.

9.17.2 Provide

There is no identified strategic need to provide additional indoor or outdoor tennis courts, although localised concentrations of demand in areas such as Bearstead and Staplehurst do justify some additional provision and the position should be regularly reviewed over the lifespan of the strategy.

9.17.3 Enhance

Enhancing existing tennis court capacity by:

- Ensuring that the courts and ancillary facilities receive regular maintenance and improvements, funded by developer contributions where appropriate.
- Negotiating community access to the 39 outdoor tennis courts on school sites.
- Encouraging clubs with spare court capacity to make them available for public 'pay-and-play' tennis.

9.18 Action Plan

9.18.1 Introduction

The tables below set out the action plan for indoor and outdoor tennis courts to guide the implementation of the strategy. The capital cost estimates are based upon Sport England's *Facility Costs - Second Quarter of 2020* (2020).

9.18.2 Key strategic actions

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Protection of existing tennis courts.	Include a policy in the Local Plan to protect all existing tennis courts.	MBC	-	-	High
Community access to school courts	Negotiate access to tennis courts on school sites.	MBC	Schools	-	Medium
Community access to club courts	Negotiate access to tennis courts with spare capacity on club sites.	MBC	Clubs	-	Medium
Funding for future tennis court needs.	Include tennis courts as part of CIL provisions.	MBC	-	-	High

9.18.3 Site-specific actions

<i>Site</i>	<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Bearsted and Thurnham TC	Courts used to over capacity	Review options for increasing capacity	B&TTC	LTA	-	High
Clare Park tennis courts	Poor quality court surface	Resurface courts	MBC	External funders	£20,000	Medium
Feel Good Health Club	Poor quality general access	Improve court access	Feel Good	-	£5,000	Medium
Freedom Leisure Maidstone	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Headcorn Tennis Club	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Maidstone Tennis Club	Poor quality disabled access	Improve disabled access	MTC	External funders	£5,000	Medium

Marden tennis courts	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Marriott Health Club	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Penenden Heath tennis courts	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
South Park tennis courts	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Staplehurst Tennis Club	Poor quality floodlighting.	Provide floodlights	STC	LTA	£40,000	High
Sutton Valance Tennis Club	Poor quality court surface, fencing, disabled access and floodlighting.	Improve court surface fencing, disabled access and floodlighting	SVTC	External funders	£50,000	Medium

10 INDOOR AND OUTDOOR BOWLS FACILITIES

Key findings:

- **Quantity:** There is one 8-rink indoor bowls hall and 11 outdoor bowls greens in Maidstone. There is sufficient spare capacity at existing indoor and outdoor facilities to cater for all additional demand to 2037.
- **Quality:** The quality of facilities is generally good, with the only 'poor' elements being disabled and general access at Hunton Bowls Club.
- **Accessibility:** The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of Mote Park Indoor Bowls Club. A small area in the east of the borough is more than 15-minutes' drive from the nearest outdoor bowls green.
- **Availability:** All facilities operate on a membership basis, although several clubs run weekly introductory coaching sessions to attract new members

10.1 Introduction

This section examines the provision of indoor and outdoor bowls facilities in Maidstone.

- Indoor bowls halls are defined specialist indoor facilities with appropriate playing surface and rink dimensions for bowls.
- Outdoor bowls greens are defined as effectively flat, fine turf grassed areas, 40 yards x 40 yards, with regulation banks and ditches around the perimeter and ancillary facilities for changing and equipment storage.

10.2 Quantity

10.2.1 Indoor bowls halls with community use

The location and number of rinks at the only indoor bowls hall with community use in Maidstone is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Rinks</i>
Mote Park Indoor Bowls Club	Mote Park, Willow Way Maidstone ME15 7RN	8

10.2.2 Outdoor bowls greens with community use

The location and number of outdoor bowls greens with community use in Maidstone is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>
Thurnham BC	Way, Bearsted ME14 4NE
Bowls Club	ad, Maidstone ME16 8JS
Bowls Club	ad, Headcorn TN27 9RL
Bowls Club	untton ME15 0RR
Bowls Club	Maidstone ME15 9BZ
Bowls Club	ad, Lenham ME17 2QJ
Club	Maidstone ME15 9UA
Bowls Club	d, Maidstone ME16 0DT
Bowls Club	d, Marden TN12 9DR
Heath Bowls Club	ound, Penenden Heath ME14 2DH
Bowls Club	ose, London Road, Maidstone ME16 0LY

10.3 **Quality**

10.3.1 **The criteria assessed for indoor bowls halls**

The quality of the indoor bowls hall was assessed by a non-technical visual inspection during a site visit. The criteria that were assessed were as follows:

- ***The green:*** The overall condition, lighting, spectator provision, equipment storage and fitness for purpose.
- ***Changing facilities:*** The capacity, condition and fitness for purpose.
- ***Disability access:*** The extent of full disabled access to the facility, including the provision of access ramps, dedicated changing, toilets and car parking.
- ***Maintenance and cleanliness:*** The quality of maintenance and cleanliness standards.
- ***General access:*** Car parking, signposting, external lighting and proximity to public transport.

10.3.2 **The criteria assessed for outdoor bowls greens**

The quality of outdoor bowls greens was assessed by a non-technical visual inspection during a site visit to all facilities. The criteria that were assessed were as follows:

- ***The green:*** The quality of the grass, flatness and regulation ditches.
- ***Changing facilities:*** The capacity, condition and fitness for purpose.

- ***Disability access:*** The extent of full disabled access to the facility, including the provision of access ramps, dedicated changing, toilets and car parking.
- ***General access:*** Parking, signage and proximity to public transport.

10.3.3 The basis of the ratings

The facilities were rated on a five-point scale, where 5 equates to ‘very good’ (highlighted in green below), 4 to ‘good’ (also highlighted in green below), 3 to ‘average’ (highlighted in yellow below), 2 to ‘poor’ (highlighted in red below) and 1 to ‘very poor’.

10.3.4 Indoor bowls hall assessment

The ratings for the indoor bowls facility in Maidstone are shown in the table below.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Green</i>	<i>Changing</i>	<i>Disability Access</i>	<i>Maintenance</i>	<i>General access</i>
Mote Park Indoor Bowls Club	5	5	4	5	5

10.3.5 Outdoor bowls greens assessment

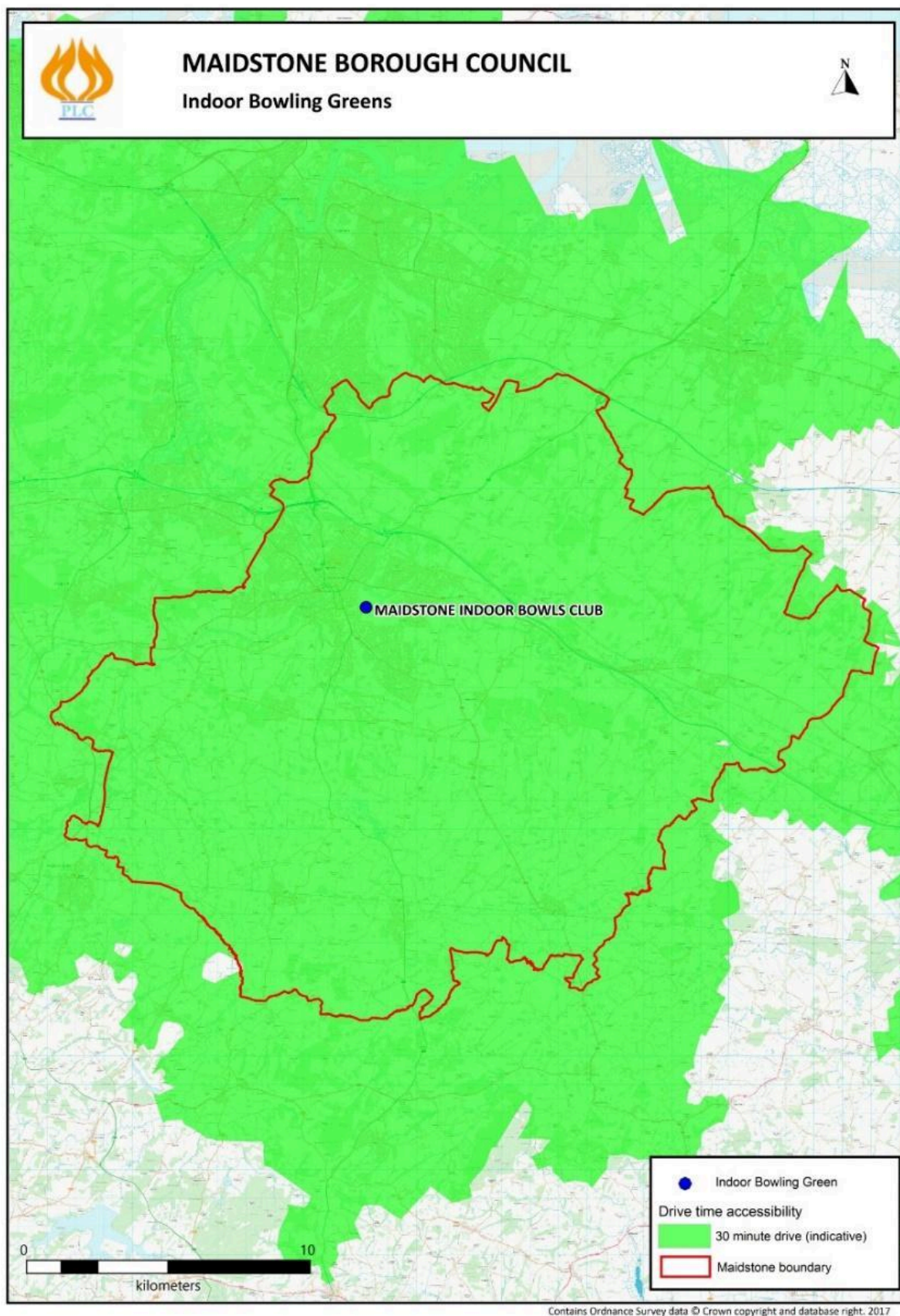
The ratings for the outdoor bowls greens in Maidstone are shown in the table below.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Green</i>	<i>Changing</i>	<i>Disability Access</i>	<i>General access</i>
Thurnham BC	5	5	4	5
	3	4	4	5
	5	4	4	5
	4	3	2	2
C	4	3	3	3
	4	5	4	4
	4	4	4	5
	5	4	4	5
	5	3	3	3
th BC	4	4	3	4
BC	4	4	3	3

10.4 Accessibility

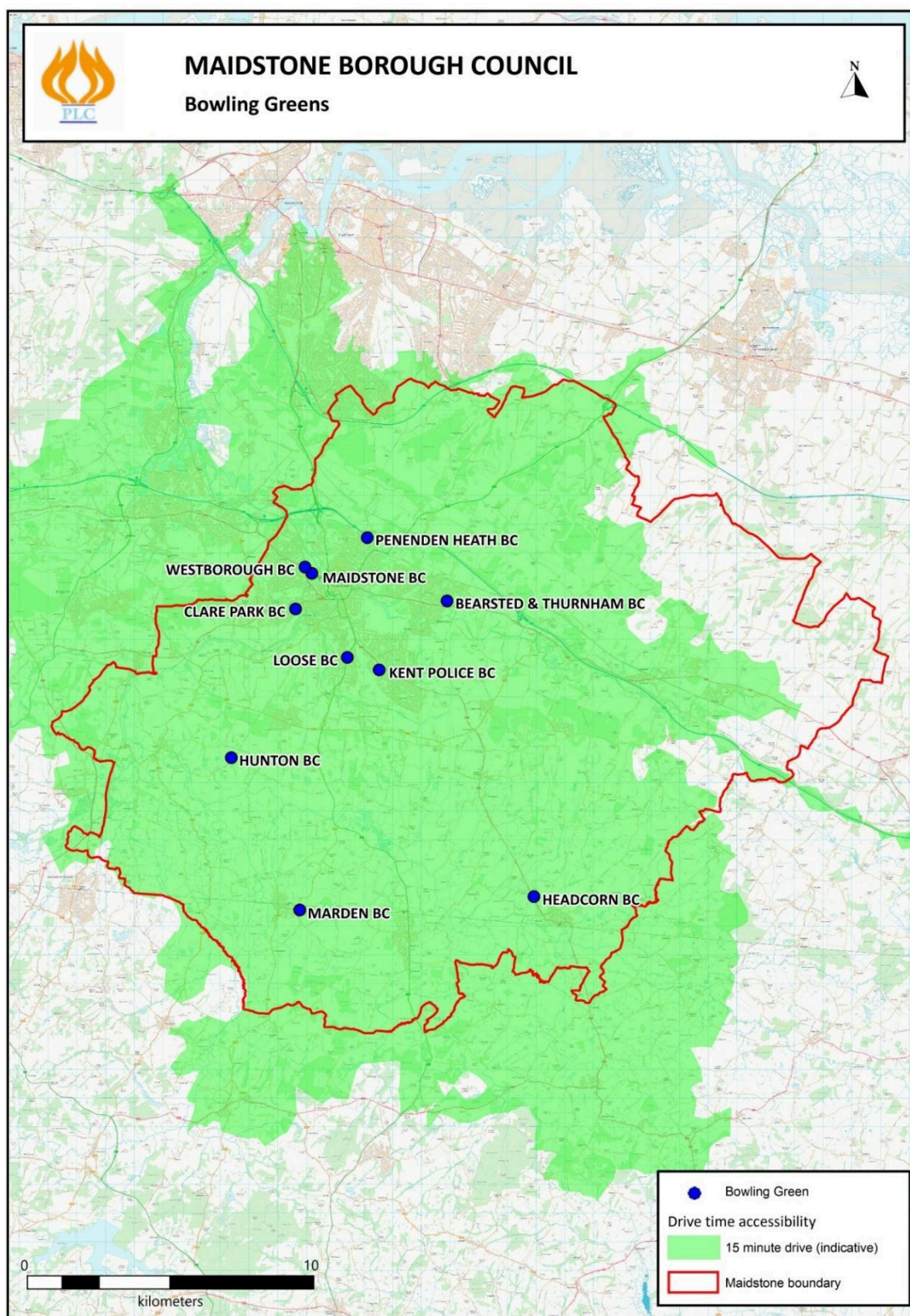
10.4.1 Indoor bowls hall

Based on Sport England research, the ‘effective catchment’ for indoor bowls facilities (defined as the time/distance travelled and the prevailing mode of transport used by up to 90% of facility users) is 30 minutes driving time. The map shows the location of the indoor bowls hall, with a 30-minute drivetime catchment:



10.4.2 Outdoor bowls greens

Based on Sport England research, the ‘effective catchment’ for outdoor bowls greens (defined as the time/distance travelled and the prevailing mode of transport used by up to 90% of facility users) is 15 minutes driving time. The map below shows the location of the outdoor bowls greens in Maidstone, with a 15-minute drivetime catchment:



10.5 **Availability**

10.5.1 Indoor bowls hall

The use of the facility is confined to members of Mote Park Indoor Bowls Club, although the club has an extensive programme of coaching and introductory sessions, including free open days.

10.5.2 Outdoor bowls greens

The table below identifies the basis of use of outdoor bowls greens in Maidstone:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Basis of use</i>
Thurnham BC	Membership only Junior coaching provided
	Membership only Introductory sessions provided
	Membership only
	Membership only Introductory sessions provided
C	Membership only
	Membership only Introductory sessions provided
	Membership only Introductory sessions provided
	Membership only
	Membership only Introductory sessions provided
th BC	Membership only
BC	Membership only

10.6 **Key findings on supply**

The key findings are as follows:

- There is one 8-rink indoor bowls hall and 11 outdoor bowls greens in Maidstone.
- The quality of facilities is generally good, with the only ‘poor’ elements being disabled and general access at Hunton Bowls Club.
- The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of Mote Park Indoor Bowls Club.
- A small area in the east of the borough is more than 15-minutes’ drive from the nearest outdoor bowls green.

- All facilities operate on a membership basis, although several clubs run weekly introductory coaching sessions to attract new members.

10.7 **Current demand for bowls facilities**

10.7.1 Expressed demand

- **Indoor bowls:** Mote Park IBC currently has 550 members. Sport England's *Indoor Bowls Guidance Note* (2005) stipulates that full capacity is reached at 80 - 100 members per rink, so as an eight-rink facility, the indoor hall can accommodate 640 - 800 members. This suggests that expressed demand amounts to around 69% based on 100 members per rink.
- **Outdoor bowls:** Bowls participation has been in long-term decline and the national picture of falling demand is reflected in the Maidstone area, with Tovil Bowls Club closing in 2016 due to a shortage of members. Four clubs have made significant efforts to attract new participants, in particular juniors, with some success, but all local outdoor clubs have indicated that they have significant spare capacity.

10.7.2 Displaced demand

Displaced demand relates to users of bowls greens from within the study area which takes place outside of the area. There is no evidence of exported demand for indoor or outdoor bowls facilities from Maidstone.

10.7.3 Unmet demand

All clubs in the borough have indicated that they can accommodate new users/members, so facility capacity is not an issue. The whole borough population is within the catchment of the indoor facility, but a small area in the east of the borough is outside the 15-minute drivetime catchment of an outdoor green, so there is a limited amount unmet geographical demand.

10.8 **Local sports participation priorities**

There are no specific local sports participation priorities in Maidstone, other than a general policy commitment to promote health and well-being through increased levels of physical activity. As an activity appealing primarily to older age groups, bowls is likely to have some appeal to new and lapsed sports participants in an expanding proportion of the population.

10.9 **Sport-specific priorities**

The Bowls Development Alliance commented that Maidstone is not a development priority area for bowls and that none of the clubs in the borough has been prioritised for support through its Club Development Programme, but all are eligible for support through its Play Bowls package.

10.10 **Future demand for bowls**

10.10.1 Population growth

MBC's 'Strategic Housing Market Assessment' (2015) confirmed the objectively assessed housing need for the borough over the period 2011 to 2031 as 17,660 dwellings. Of these 8,335 have already been built or granted planning permission. The 833 annual dwelling requirement stands for five years following the adoption of the Local Plan (i.e. to October 2022).

Thereafter, the annual requirement increases by 353 dwellings to a need of 1,236 homes per annum. Current expectations are that the Local Plan Review will be rolled forward to the year 2037. Based upon the ONS 'Sub-national Population projections' (2014), this scale of development will increase the borough's population by 20,900 to 192,700 people by 2031 and by 29,891 to 201,691 by 2037. This will represent an increase of 12.2% and 17.4% respectively over the mid-2019 figure.

10.10.2 Participation rates

One factor in considering future sports participation rates is to track historical trends, as a guide to possible future developments. Sport England's 'Active People' survey recorded adult (16+) weekly participation rates for bowls at national level on an annual basis between 2005 and 2016. The results are tabulated below and show that participation declined significantly over the decade, with the number of regular (at least once a week) players falling by more than 98,000, from 309,800 in 2005 to 211,900 in 2016. The participation rates are detailed below:

2005/06	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	% Change
2.21%	2.32%	2.10%	2.02%	1.54%	1.57%	1.73%	1.58%	1.33%	1.30%	-0.91%

Sport England's 'Active Lives' survey recorded adult twice monthly bowls participation rates since 2015 and these continue to show a reducing trend:

November 2015/16	May 2016/17	November 2016/17	May 2017/18	November 2017/18	May 2018/19	November 2018/19	% Change
0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	0.5%	-0.3%

10.10.3 Future projections

Sport England has developed the Sport Facility Calculator (SFC), to help to quantify how much additional demand for key community facilities like indoor bowls halls, will be generated by population increases. The SFC uses Sport England survey data on who uses facilities and applies this to the population profile of the local area. This builds up a profile of usage, which can be then applied to estimate how much demand any given population would generate. This demand is then converted into the quantity of facilities needed and expressed as rinks to define indoor bowls needs. Based upon this, the SFC calculates demand equivalent to an additional 2.1 indoor bowls rinks by 2037.

10.11 **Key findings on demand**

The key findings are as follows:

- Expressed demand for indoor and outdoor bowls in Maidstone has fallen in the past decade.
- Population growth of 17.4% in Maidstone by 2037 is likely increase demand for indoor and outdoor bowls green capacity by a similar amount, assuming static participation rates in the future.
- In terms of indoor bowls, the Sport Facility Calculator assesses that the extra demand is equivalent to 2.1 indoor rinks.

10.12 **The balance between bowls supply and demand**

Four criteria have been assessed to evaluate the balance between indoor and outdoor bowls green supply and demand in Maidstone:

- **Quantity:** Are there enough greens with the capacity to meet needs now and in the future?
- **Quality:** Are the greens fit for purpose for the users now and in the future?
- **Accessibility:** Are the greens in the right physical location for the users now and in the future?
- **Availability:** Are the greens available for those who want to use them now and in the future?

10.13 **Quantity**

10.13.1 **Current needs**

Current indoor and outdoor bowls facilities in Maidstone are assessed to be at operating with significant spare capacity, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Used capacity:** All local clubs have indicated that there is significant spare capacity to attract additional members.
- **Satisfied demand:** There is no evidence of unmet demand in the borough.
- **Changes in supply:** There are no know planned changes to bowls green supply, although Lenham Bowls Club may be affected by housing development proposals in the area.

10.13.2 **Future needs**

Spare capacity at the existing indoor and outdoor bowls facilities should be able to accommodate all additional future demand, based upon the following evaluation:

- ***Demand increases:*** The borough's population is projected to increase by 29,891 to 201,691 people by 2037. This will represent an increase of 17.4% over the mid-2019 estimate.
- ***Participation trends:*** Local bowls participation rates have been projected to remain static until 2037.
- ***Additional indoor bowls needs:*** The Sport Facility Calculator assesses that the extra demand for indoor bowls is equivalent to 2.1 indoor rinks (accommodating 168 - 210 members) Existing spare capacity at Mote Park. IBC amounts to the equivalent of 2.5 rinks (or 250 members), so additional demand to 2037 can all be accommodated by the current facility.
- ***Additional outdoor bowls needs:*** There is sufficient spare capacity at existing bowls clubs to accommodate all additional demand to 2037 and this should add to the long-term viability of the current clubs.

10.14 **Quality**

10.14.1 Current quality

Disability and general access are rated as 'poor' at Hunton Bowls Club, but all other aspects of all other facilities are rated as at least 'average' quality.

10.14.2 Future quality

All providers will need to continue to invest in maintaining and improving their facilities, so if this process can be assisted with funding from developer contributions in the future, it seems reasonable to assume that local provision will continue to be upgraded regularly.

10.15 **Accessibility**

10.15.1 Current accessibility

The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of Mote Park Indoor Bowls Club, but a small area in the east of the borough is more than 15-minutes' drive from the nearest outdoor bowls green.

10.15.2 Future accessibility

It is unlikely that new outdoor bowls greens will be provided in the areas outside the catchment of the current facilities.

10.16 **Availability**

10.16.1 Current availability

Sessions for non-members are run at five of the ten outdoor bowls clubs in the borough. Club membership fees are generally set at reasonable rates.

10.16.2 Future availability

It is reasonable to assume that a similar balance of arrangements for use by non-members will be offered in the future and if developer contribution funding is offered to enhance the facilities at club sites, it could be conditional on the provision of ‘pay-and-play’ access.

10.17 *The options for securing additional bowls capacity*

The options for securing existing and additional bowls capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

10.17.1 Protect

Protecting existing indoor and outdoor bowls facilities through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality and accessibility.

10.17.2 Provide

There is no identified strategic need to provide additional indoor or outdoor bowls facilities, although the indoor bowls position in particular should be regularly reviewed over the lifespan of the strategy.

10.17.3 Enhance

Enhancing existing bowls facility capacity by:

- Ensuring that the greens and ancillary facilities receive regular maintenance and improvements, funded by developer contributions where appropriate.
- Making the provision of access for non-members a condition of any developer contribution funding offered towards bowls facilities improvements.

10.18 *Action Plan*

10.18.1 Introduction

The tables below set out the action plan for indoor and outdoor bowls facilities to guide the implementation of the strategy. The capital cost estimates are based upon Sport England’s *Facility Costs - Second Quarter of 2020* (2020).

10.18.2 Key strategic actions

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
---------------	---------------	-------------	-----------------	------------------------	-----------------

Protection of existing bowls facilities	Include a policy in the Local Plan to protect all existing bowls facilities	MBC	-	-	High
Funding for future bowls facilities needs.	Include bowls facilities as part of CIL provisions.	MBC	-	-	High

10.18.3 Site-specific actions

<i>Site</i>	<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Bearsted and Thurnham BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Clare Park BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Headcorn BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Hunton BC	Poor quality disabled and general access	Improve disabled and general access	HBC	-	£5,000	Medium
Kent Police BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Loose BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Maidstone BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Marden BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Penenden Heath BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Westborough BC	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-

11 ATHLETICS TRACKS

Key findings:

- **Quantity:** There is one 8-lane synthetic athletics track in Maidstone. There is sufficient spare capacity at the existing track to cater for all additional demand to 2037.
- **Quality:** The quality of the facility is generally good, although general access to the track is rated as only 'average'.
- **Accessibility:** The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of the track.
- **Availability:** The track is only accessible by Medway and Maidstone Athletics Club on a membership basis, although as a specialist facility type athletics tracks generally attract minimal casual usage.

11.1 Introduction

This section examines the provision of athletics tracks in Maidstone. Athletics tracks are defined as 400m synthetic surfaced tracks with full field events provision.

11.2 Quantity

The location and number of lanes at the athletics track with community use in Maidstone is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Lanes</i>
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	Sutton Valence ME17 3HN	8

11.3 Quality

11.3.1 The criteria assessed for athletics tracks

The quality of the athletics track was assessed by a non-technical visual inspection during a site visit. The criteria that were assessed were as follows:

- **The track:** The overall condition of the track surface, line markings, lighting, spectator provision, equipment storage and fitness for purpose.
- **Changing facilities:** The capacity, condition and fitness for purpose.
- **Disability access:** The extent of full disabled access to the facility, including the provision of dedicated changing, toilets and car parking.

- **Maintenance and cleanliness:** The quality of maintenance and cleanliness standards.
- **General access:** Car parking, signposting, external lighting and proximity to public transport.

11.3.2 The basis of the ratings

The facilities were rated on a five-point scale, where 5 equates to ‘very good’, 4 to ‘good’ (also highlighted in green below), 3 to ‘average’, 2 to ‘poor’ (highlighted in red below) and 1 to ‘very poor’.

11.3.3 Athletics track assessment

The ratings for the athletics track in Maidstone are shown in the table below.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Track</i>	<i>Changing</i>	<i>Disability Access</i>	<i>Maintenance</i>	<i>General access</i>
Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre	4	-	2	4	2

- **Changing:** No changing facilities are available for community users.
- **Disability access:** Access to the track from local parking is across fields and rutted muddy path. And when at the track site, access to the toilets is across grass. This means that access for people with physical mobility issues or visual impairment is poor.
- **General access:** There is no dedicated parking for community users of the track and hirers have to use the free of charge parking at the Sutton Valance Village Hall. This causes issues if there is an event on at the village hall, as there is no other local parking available. The car park is unlit and the 0.5km walk from the car park to the track is also unlit.

11.4 Accessibility

As a specialist facility, athletics tracks typically attract users from within a 30-minute drivetime catchment. The catchment of the track at the Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre covers the whole of the local population and the facility at Medway Park just to the north of the borough boundary is also used by the local club. Accessibility by public transport is more problematic, however, for prospective users who do not have access to a car.

11.5 Availability

The track is not available to the general public on a ‘pay-and-play’ basis but is hired by Medway and Maidstone Athletics Club for junior squad training sessions two evenings per week and by Maidstone Harriers for one evening per week. There is no security of tenure for this arrangement. Medway and Maidstone Athletics Club’s main base is at the Medway Park Track in Gillingham.

11.6 Key findings on supply

The key findings are as follows:

- There is one 8-lane synthetic athletics track in Maidstone.
- The quality of the track is ‘good’, but disabled and general access rated as only ‘poor’ and there is no changing available to community users.
- The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of the track.
- The track is only accessible by members of Medway and Maidstone Athletics Club and Maidstone Harriers, although as a specialist facility type athletics tracks generally attract minimal casual usage.

11.7 **The views of stakeholders**

Maidstone Harriers commented as follows:

- ‘Maidstone Harriers has an agreement with Medway and Maidstone to sublet the track for one evening session per week’.
- ‘The track is not easy to access at all times of day by public transport, and therefore excludes club members who do not drive from being able to make use of the facility during our weekly training session’.

11.8 **Current demand for athletics tracks**

11.7.1 Expressed demand

Medway and Maidstone Athletics Club currently has 300 members and runs teams at age groups from Young Athletes to veterans. As its name suggests, in addition to Maidstone residents it also serves athletics demand from the Medway area (Gillingham, Chatham, Rochester and Rainham). The club has currently closed its waiting list for prospective members aged 7 - 11 due to the high demand, although the key constraint is a shortage of coaches rather than a lack of facility capacity.

Maidstone Harriers is a road running and triathlon club with around 200 members, which uses the track at the Sydney Wooderson Sports Centre on Tuesday evenings and the Maidstone Hockey Club pavilion as the base for training runs on Wednesday evenings.

11.7.2 Displaced demand

Displaced demand relates to users of athletics tracks from within the study area which takes place outside of the area. With the local athletics club’s main base being in Gillingham, all athletes from Maidstone make extensive use of the Medway Park track.

11.7.3 Unmet demand

There is significant unmet demand from 7 - 11 year olds, but no evidence of surplus demand from other age groups.

11.9 **Local sports participation priorities**

There are no specific local sports participation priorities in Maidstone, other than a general policy commitment to promote health and well-being through increased levels of physical activity. Track and field athletics is a specialist subset of activities, which whilst increasingly appealing to participants from the older age groups is still a relatively minority interest.

11.10 **Sport-specific priorities**

England Athletics has not identified Maidstone as a priority area for development. As per the England Athletics *Facilities Strategy 2018 - 2025* (2018), it believes that there are sufficient 400m tracks in the area to meet current and future needs. A new track is being built in Folkestone which will provide additional capacity in Kent.

11.11 **Future demand for athletics**

11.10.1 Population growth

MBC's *Strategic Housing Market Assessment* (2015) confirmed the objectively assessed housing need for the borough over the period 2011 to 2031 as 17,660 dwellings. Of these 8,335 have already been built or granted planning permission. The 833 annual dwelling requirement stands for five years following the adoption of the Local Plan (i.e. to October 2022). Thereafter, the annual requirement increases by 353 dwellings to a need of 1,236 homes per annum. Current expectations are that the Local Plan Review will be rolled forward to the year 2037. Based upon the ONS 'Sub-national Population projections' (2014), this scale of development will increase the borough's population by 20,900 to 192,700 people by 2031 and by 29,891 to 201,691 by 2037. This will represent an increase of 12.2% and 17.4% respectively over the mid-2019 figure.

11.10.2 Participation rates

One factor in considering future sports participation rates is to track historical trends, as a guide to possible future developments. Sport England's 'Active People' survey has recorded adult (16+) weekly participation rates for running (which includes track and field athletics) at national level on an annual basis since 2005. The results are tabulated below and show that participation has increased significantly over the past decade, with the number of regular (at least once a week) runners growing by 864,000. The participation rates are detailed below:

2005/06	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	% Change
3.33%	3.89%	4.16%	4.45%	4.47%	4.72%	4.65%	4.96%	5.29%	5.37%	+2.04%

Sport England's 'Active Lives' survey recorded adult twice monthly track and field athletics participation rates since 2015 and these continue to show a reducing trend:

<i>November 2105/16</i>	<i>May 2016/17</i>	<i>November 2016/17</i>	<i>May 2017/1 8</i>	<i>November 2017/18</i>	<i>May 2018/1 9</i>	<i>November 2018/19</i>	<i>% Change</i>
0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%	-0.2%

11.10.3 Future projections

Whilst demand for running in general is growing, this primarily involves recreational running on roads and footpaths, rather than participation in track and field athletics with its dependence on specialist track facilities, where participation has fallen. In relation to additional future demand for tracks, therefore, it seems reasonable to project needs based on the current participation rates.

11.12 **Key findings on demand**

The key findings are as follows:

- Expressed demand for athletics is relatively high in Maidstone, with unmet demand amongst 7 - 11 year olds that relates to a shortage of coaches rather than a lack of track capacity.
- Population growth of 17.4% in Maidstone by 2037 is likely increase demand for athletics track capacity by a similar amount, assuming static participation rates in the future.

11.13 **The balance between athletics supply and demand**

Four criteria have been assessed to evaluate the balance between athletics track supply and demand in Maidstone:

- **Quantity:** Are there enough tracks with sufficient capacity to meet needs now and in the future?
- **Quality:** Are the tracks fit for purpose for the users now and in the future?
- **Accessibility:** Are the tracks in the right physical location for the users now and in the future?
- **Availability:** Are the tracks available for those who want to use them now and in the future?

11.14 **Quantity**

11.13.1 Current needs

The current athletics track in Maidstone is assessed to be at operating with significant spare capacity, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Used capacity:** The track is used by Maidstone and Medway AC on two evenings per week and by Maidstone Harriers on one evening per week. This represents 35% of the available capacity in the peak period.
- **Satisfied demand:** Whilst there is unmet demand amongst the younger age groups, this is due to a lack of coaching capacity rather than a shortage of track capacity.
- **Changes in supply:** There are no know planned changes to athletics track supply, although the lack of secured community use at the Sydney Wooderson track means that access could, in theory, be withdrawn at any time.

11.13.2 Future needs

Spare capacity at the existing tracks in Sutton Valance and Gillingham should be able to accommodate all additional future demand, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Current spare capacity:** Current peak time spare capacity at the Sydney Wooderson track is 65%.
- **Demand increases:** The borough's population is projected to increase by 29,891 to 201,691 people by 2037. This will represent an increase of 17.4% over the mid-2019 estimate.
- **Participation trends:** Local athletics participation rates have been projected to remain static until 2037.

11.15 **Quality**

11.14.1 Current quality

The quality of the track is 'good', but disabled and general access rated as only 'poor' and there is no changing available to community users.

11.14.2 Future quality

Tracks need to be resurfaced regularly to Sutton Valance School will need to continue to invest in maintaining and improving the facilities.

11.16 **Accessibility**

11.15.1 Current accessibility

The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment Sydney Wooderson and Medway Park tracks. Accessibility by public transport is more problematic for prospective users who do not have access to a car.

11.15.2 Future accessibility

Assuming that both tracks remain operational and have community use, the whole population will continue to have access to an athletics track, subject to the above caveat.

11.17 **Availability**

11.16.1 Current availability

The track is not available to the general public on a 'pay-and-play' basis but is hired by Medway and Maidstone Athletics Club and Maidstone Harriers for training sessions three evenings per week. There is no security of tenure for this arrangement.

11.16.2 Future availability

Although there is no reason to suppose that community access will be withdrawn in the future, there is no guarantee at present that this will not happen. Efforts should be made to secure community access.

11.18 ***The options for securing athletics track capacity***

The options for securing existing and additional athletics track capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

11.17.1 Protect

Protecting the existing athletics track through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality and accessibility.

11.17.2 Provide

There is no identified strategic need to provide an additional track.

11.17.3 Enhance

Enhancing existing athletics track capacity by:

- Securing community use through a formal Community Use Agreement.
- Improving disabled and general access.
- Negotiating access to changing facilities for community users.

11.19 *Action Plan*

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Protection of existing athletics tracks	Include a policy in the Local Plan to protect the existing athletics track	MBC	-	-	High
Securing community use of the track	Pursue a formal Community Use Agreement with Sutton Valance School	MBC	Sutton Valance School	-	High
Poor quality disabled and general access	Improve disabled and general access	Sutton Valance School	-	£15,000	Medium
Funding for future athletics needs	Include athletics tracks as part of CIL provisions.	MBC	-	-	High

12 GYMNASTICS FACILITIES

Key findings:

- **Quantity:** There is one specialist gymnastics facility in Maidstone and three other clubs use non-specialist facilities. Additional provision is needed to meet demand to 2037.
- **Quality:** The quality of the specialist facility is generally good.
- **Accessibility:** The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of the facility.
- **Availability:** The Pegasus Gymnastics Club facility is available to members from 09.00 until 20.30 daily, although there is a waiting list.

12.1 Introduction

This section examines the provision of gymnastics facilities in Maidstone. Gymnastics facilities are defined as permanently rigged, built facilities that cater for the needs of gymnastics. Sports halls accommodate some gymnastics activity as non-specialist facilities and this demand is assessed in the sports halls section.

12.2 Quantity

The location of the only specialist gymnastics facility in Maidstone is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>
Pegasus Gymnastics Club	Mill, Tovil, Maidstone ME15 6RG

Gymnastics also takes place in the following non-specialist facilities:

<i>Club</i>	<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>
Dhama Gym for All	Maidstone Leisure Centre	Maidstone ME15 8NQ
Maidstone Gym Club	Coxheath Village Hall	Coxheath, Maidstone ME17 4PY
More Gymnastics Academy	Maidstone Leisure Centre	Maidstone ME15 8NQ

12.3 Quality

12.3.1 The criteria assessed for gymnastics facility

The quality of the specialist gymnastics facility was assessed by a non-technical visual inspection during a site visit. The criteria that were assessed were as follows:

- **The hall:** The quality of the activity space, including lighting and storage facilities.

- **The equipment:** The quality of the equipment, matted areas and foam-filled pits.
- **Changing facilities:** The capacity, condition and fitness for purpose.
- **Disability access:** The extent of full disabled access to the facility, including the provision of access ramps, dedicated changing, toilets and car parking.
- **General access:** Parking, signage and proximity to public transport.

12.3.2 The basis of the ratings

The facilities were rated on a five-point scale, where 5 equates to ‘very good’ (highlighted in green below), 4 to ‘good’ (also highlighted in green below), 3 (‘average’), 2 (‘poor’) and 1 (‘very poor’).

12.3.3 Gymnastics facility assessment

The ratings for the gymnastics facility in Maidstone are shown in the table below.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Hall</i>	<i>Equipment</i>	<i>Changing</i>	<i>Disability access</i>	<i>General access</i>
Pegasus Gymnastics Club	5	5	4	5	4

12.4 Accessibility

As a specialist facility, gymnastics facilities typically attract users from within a 30-minute drivetime catchment. The catchment of the Pegasus Gymnastics Club covers the whole of the local population.

12.5 Availability

The use of the facility is confined to members of Pegasus Gymnastics Club.

12.6 Key findings on supply

The key findings are as follows:

- There is one specialist gymnastics facility in Maidstone, supplemented by gymnastics club activity in two other non-specialist facilities.
- The quality of the specialist facility is generally ‘good’.
- The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of the facility.
- The facility is only accessible by members of Pegasus Gymnastics Club.

12.7 Current demand gymnastics facilities

11.7.1 Expressed demand

Pegasus Gymnastics Club currently has 2,194 members, with a waiting list of 1,230 and provides international level facilities, with a full range of Olympic apparatus for both men's and women's Artistic Gymnastics. It offers gymnastics opportunities for children of all ages and abilities, from pre-school children in the Kindergym classes through to school age children and teenagers in general gymnastics classes as well as Floor and Vault and Artistic Squads for more able gymnasts. Its facility is based in part of a former supermarket building.

Dhama Gym Club operates from the sports hall at Maidstone Leisure Centre and has 122 members. It provides recreational and competitive trampolining opportunities on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. It is seeking to raise funds for a dedicated facility in a modular building.

Maidstone Gym Club is based at Coxheath Village Hall and has around 150 members. It provides a full range of gymnastics activities for all age groups.

More Gymnastics Academy operates from the sports hall at Maidstone Leisure Centre, providing a gymnastics programme for 4-11 year olds.

11.7.2 Displaced demand

Displaced demand relates to users of gymnastics facilities from within the study area which takes place outside of the area. There is no evidence of any displaced demand from Maidstone.

11.7.3 Unmet demand

All the local clubs operate a waiting list, so there is evidence of unmet demand for gymnastics in the borough.

12.8 **Local sports participation priorities**

There are no specific local sports participation priorities in Maidstone, other than a general policy commitment to promote health and well-being through increased levels of physical activity. Gymnastics particularly appeals to children and young people..

12.9 **Sport-specific priorities**

British Gymnastics' *Facility Strategy 2017 - 2021* (2017) is being updated in 2020 and the emerging priorities are:

- To move from a third of clubs in dedicated facilities to at least a half of clubs into dedicated facilities.
- Increased use of modular buildings for specialist gymnastics facilities.
- The conversion of former shops/retail units in town centres to specialist gymnastics facilities.

12.10 **Future demand for gymnastics**

12.10.1 Population growth

MBC's 'Strategic Housing Market Assessment' (2015) confirmed the objectively assessed housing need for the borough over the period 2011 to 2031 as 17,660 dwellings. Of these 8,335 have already been built or granted planning permission. The 833 annual dwelling requirement stands for five years following the adoption of the Local Plan (i.e. to October 2022). Thereafter, the annual requirement increases by 353 dwellings to a need of 1,236 homes per annum. Current expectations are that the Local Plan Review will be rolled forward to the year 2037. Based upon the ONS 'Sub-national Population projections' (2014), this scale of development will increase the borough's population by 20,900 to 192,700 people by 2031 and by 29,891 to 201,691 by 2037. This will represent an increase of 12.2% and 17.4% respectively over the mid-2019 figure.

12.10.2 Participation rates

One factor in considering future sports participation rates is to track historical trends, as a guide to possible future developments. Sport England's 'Active People' survey recorded adult (16+) weekly participation rates for gymnastics at national level between 2005 and 2016. The results are tabulated below and show that participation regular participation on at least a weekly basis has increased very slightly. Figures supplied by British Gymnastics suggest that participation in gymnastics is increasing more rapidly. British Gymnastics membership reached 390,500 in 2017 and increased by about 12% in the period 2013-17.

2005/06	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	% Change
0.14%	0.15%	0.12%	0.12%	0.11%	0.12%	0.11%	0.09%	0.10%	0.15%	+0.01%

Sport England's 'Active Lives' survey recorded adult twice monthly gymnastics participation rates since 2015 and these show a fluctuating trend:

November 2105/16	May 2016/17	November 2016/17	May 2017/18	November 2017/18	May 2018/19	November 2018/19	% Change
0.6%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	-0.1%

12.10.3 Future projections

Local demand for gymnastics is strong, with a waiting list at all clubs. In relation to additional future demand for gymnastics facilities, therefore, it seems reasonable to project needs based on the current participation rates.

12.11 Key findings on demand

The key findings are as follows:

- Expressed demand for gymnastics facilities is high in Maidstone, with unmet demand at all clubs.

- Population growth of 17.4% in Maidstone by 2037 is likely increase demand for gymnastics facilities capacity by a similar amount, assuming static participation rates in the future.

12.12 *The views of British Gymnastics*

British Gymnastics commented as follows:

- ‘Development of dedicated gymnastic provision will support the growth of the sport and also provide an opportunity to increase the range of activity to other physical activities and other users’.
- ‘The British Gymnastics Facilities Strategy highlights the key benefits that British Gymnastics will work towards to improve facilities for gymnastics particularly by supporting clubs with their plans for improvement of their spaces and to relocate to better spaces. Dedicated gymnastics facilities allow for a wide range of potential benefits including:
 - Increased participation opportunities.
 - Wider range of equipment.
 - Greater diversity of activity delivery.
 - Improved governance and operations.
 - Additional coaching and other gymnastics careers.
 - Venue for local events and competitions.
 - Ability to focus on performance pathways’.
- ‘Clubs moving into dedicated facilities will be able to increase their membership and diversify their range of activities including to the local community and by working with other organisations offering physical activity opportunities’.

12.13 *The balance between gymnastics supply and demand*

Four criteria have been assessed to evaluate the balance between gymnastics facilities supply and demand in Maidstone:

- **Quantity:** Are there enough gymnastics facilities with sufficient capacity to meet needs now and in the future?
- **Quality:** Are the gymnastics facilities fit for purpose for the users now and in the future?
- **Accessibility:** Are the gymnastics facilities in the right physical location for the users now and in the future?

- **Availability:** Are the gymnastics facilities available for those who want to use them now and in the future?

12.14 **Quantity**

12.14.1 Current needs

The current gymnastics facility in Maidstone is assessed to be at operating with no spare capacity, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Used capacity:** The Pegasus Gymnastics Club facility is fully used in the peak period. There is also no effective spare capacity in the non-specialist facilities that accommodate gymnastics.
- **Satisfied demand:** There are waiting lists at all local clubs.
- **Changes in supply:** Dhama Gymnastics Club is currently seeking to create a new specialist facility in a modular building. Pegasus Gymnastics Club is currently applying for a British Gymnastics Club Capital Loan for internal improvements at its facility. Weald of Kent Gymnastics Club, which is currently based at a sports hall in Tonbridge, is exploring the scope to relocate to an industrial unit within the MBC boundary.

12.14.2 Future needs

Additional provision will be required to accommodate future demand, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Current spare capacity:** There is no current spare capacity
- **Demand increases:** The borough's population is projected to increase by 29,891 to 201,691 people by 2037. This will represent an increase of 17.4% over the mid-2019 estimate.
- **Participation trends:** Local gymnastics participation rates have been projected to remain static until 2037.

12.15 **Quality**

12.15.1 Current quality

The current quality of all aspects of the Pegasus Gymnastics Club facility is 'good'.

12.15.2 Future quality

The facility will need to be maintained and equipment replaced on a regular basis to preserve the existing quality in the future.

12.16 Accessibility

12.16.1 Current accessibility

The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of the existing facility.

12.16.2 Future accessibility

Assuming that the facility remains operational, the whole population will continue to have access to a specialist gymnastics facility.

12.17 Availability

12.17.1 Current availability

The Pegasus Gymnastics Club facility is available to members from 09.00 until 20.30 daily, although there is a waiting list.

12.17.2 Future availability

It has been assumed that the specialist facility and the sports halls that accommodate non-specialist gymnastics use, will continue to be available in the future.

12.18 *The options for securing gymnastics capacity*

The options for securing existing and additional gymnastics facility capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

12.18.1 Protect

Protecting the existing specialist facility and the sports halls that accommodate non-specialist gymnastics use, through the Local Plan will be key both to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality and accessibility.

12.18.2 Provide

Additional provision will be required to accommodate the current unmet need and the extra demand arising from population growth in the borough. This could be made either through an extension to the existing facility, the provision of a new facility (as planned by the Dhama and Weald of Kent clubs) or accommodating gymnastics activity through extra sports hall capacity.

12.18.3 Enhance

Enhancing existing gymnastics facilities, as planned by Pegasus Gymnastics Club.

12.19 *Action Plan*

The tables below set out the action plan for gymnastics facilities to guide the implementation of the strategy. The capital cost estimates are based upon Sport England's *'Facility Costs - Second Quarter of 2019'* (2019).

12.19.1 Key strategic actions

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Protection of existing gymnastics facilities	Include a policy in the Local Plan to protect the existing specialist gymnastics facility	MBC	-	-	High
Funding for future gymnastics needs	Include gymnastics facilities as part of CIL provisions.	MBC	-	-	High

12.19.2 Site-specific actions

<i>Site</i>	<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Pegasus Gymnastics Club	Need for internal improvements	Apply for Club Capital Loan	Pegasus Gym Club	British Gymnastics	£25,000	High
Dhama Gym Club	Need for a dedicated facility	Apply for funding for a modular building	Dhama Gym Club	British Gymnastics	£75,000	High
Maidstone Gym Club	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-

More Gymnastics Academy	No current issues	No action	-	-	-	-
Weald of Kent Gymnastics Club	Need an industrial unit to convert to a specialist facility.	Assist the club to identify an industrial unit for conversion	Weald of Kent Gym Club	British Gymnastics	£100,000	Medium

13 ARCHERY FACILITIES

Key findings:

- **Quantity:** There are two indoor and three outdoor facilities used for archery in the borough, plus one further facility in Aylesford used by a club that draws many of its members from Maidstone. Additional provision is needed to meet demand to 2037.
- **Quality:** The quality of most aspects of most facilities is at least 'average'.
- **Accessibility:** The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of the current facilities.
- **Availability:** All facilities are shared with other activities, which limits their availability for archery.

13.1 Introduction

This section examines the provision of indoor and outdoor archery facilities in Maidstone.

- **Outdoor archery facilities:** These are defined as flat, grassed areas 175m x 70m (or 70m x 40m with a backstop net), with a no public use area at the end of the range, on-site storage and car parking.
- **Indoor archery facilities:** These are defined as indoor halls with minimum dimensions of 27m x 18m (a three-badminton court-sized sports hall), with adequate lighting and storage.
- **Field archery facilities:** Typically a large woodland or quarry area with temporary targets installed, where public access can be restricted during periods of use.

13.2 Quantity

- **Indoor archery facilities:** Indoor facilities currently used for archery in Maidstone are as follows.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Club user</i>
Maidstone Grammar School	Maidstone ME15 7BT	Archery Club
Lockmeadow Market	Maidstone ME16 8IW	De Archers

- **Outdoor archery facilities:** Outdoor facilities currently used for archery in Maidstone are as follows. Aylesford Bulls Rugby Club is just outside Maidstone boundary, but draws the majority its members from the borough:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Club user</i>
Aylesford Bulls Rugby Club	Hall Road, Aylesford ME20 7DS	wmen
Civil Service Sports Club	Recreation Close, Maidstone ME14 5AZ	s
Kent Police Sports Ground	Sutton Road, Maidstone ME15 9BZ	rchery Club
West Borough Primary School	Greenway, Maidstone ME16 8TL	le Archers

13.3 **Quality**

13.3.1 **The criteria assessed for indoor archery facilities**

The quality of the facilities used for indoor archery was assessed based upon the following criteria:

- **The hall:** The dimensions and lighting.
- **Storage:** The availability of self-contained, secure storage.
- **Changing facilities:** The capacity, condition and fitness for purpose.
- **Disability access:** The extent of full disabled access to the facility, including the provision of access ramps, dedicated changing, toilets and car parking.
- **General access:** Parking, signage and proximity to public transport.

13.3.2 **The basis of the ratings**

The facilities were rated on a five-point scale, where 5 equates to ‘very good’ (highlighted in green below), 4 to ‘good’ (also highlighted in green below), 3 (‘average’), 2 (‘poor’) and 1 (‘very poor’).

13.3.3 **Indoor archery facilities assessment**

The ratings for the facilities used for indoor archery in Maidstone are shown in the table below.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Hall</i>	<i>Storage</i>	<i>Changing</i>	<i>Disability access</i>	<i>General access</i>
Maidstone Grammar School	4	4	4	5	4
Lock Meadow Market	4	2	-	3	4

13.3.4 **The criteria assessed for outdoor archery facilities**

The quality of the facilities used for outdoor archery was assessed based upon the following criteria:

- **The range:** The dimensions and safety features.

- **Storage:** The availability of self-contained, secure storage.
- **Changing facilities:** The capacity, condition and fitness for purpose.
- **Disability access:** The extent of full disabled access to the facility, including the provision of access ramps, dedicated changing, toilets and car parking.
- **General access:** Parking, signage and proximity to public transport.

13.3.5 The basis of the ratings

The facilities were rated on a five-point scale, where 5 equates to ‘very good’ (highlighted in green below), 4 to ‘good’ (also highlighted in green below), 3 (‘average’), 2 (‘poor’) and 1 (‘very poor’).

13.3.6 Outdoor archery facilities assessment

The ratings for the facilities used for outdoor archery in Maidstone are shown in the table below.

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Storage</i>	<i>Changing</i>	<i>Disability access</i>	<i>General access</i>
Aylesford Bulls Rugby Club	4	4	4	4	4
Civil Service Sports Club	4	3	4	3	4
Kent Police Sports Ground	4	4	4	3	3
West Borough Primary School	4	4	-	2	3

13.4 Accessibility

Archery facilities typically attract users from within a 30-minute drivetime catchment. The catchment of the facilities used for archery in Maidstone cover the whole of the local population.

13.5 Availability

- **Indoor facilities:** The availability is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Availability</i>
Maidstone Grammar School	Available due to covid-19 restrictions.
Lockmeadow Market	Occasional use on Friday evenings and rare weekend use, but storage facility is due to be lost.

- **Outdoor facilities:** The availability is as follows:

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Availability</i>
Aylesford Bulls Rugby Club	Facilities shared with rugby, so not available on Saturday afternoons or Sunday mornings.
Civil Service Sports Club	Facilities shared with football, so not available on Sundays and there is a possibility of a Saturday team in the future.
Kent Police Sports Ground	Facilities no longer used for football, but the site is currently for sale so usage will be lost.

West Borough Primary School	Facilities available term-time evenings and weekends but limited in school holidays.
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13.6 **Key findings on supply**

The key findings are as follows:

- None of the facilities used for archery in Maidstone is dedicated to the sport, so in all cases usage is compromised to some extent by the needs of other users.
- The quality of provision is generally at least ‘average’, although disabled provision at West Borough Primary School is ‘poor’.
- The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of an archery facility.
- There are significant availability issues with all the facilities used for archery in Maidstone. In particular, the Maidstone Grammar School sports hall is not currently available and the loss of storage at Lockmeadow Market will render that venue unusable.

13.7 **Current demand for archery facilities**

13.7.1 Expressed demand

National participation rates: Sport England’s ‘Active Lives’ survey recorded adult annual archery participation rates since 2015 and these show a generally increasing trend:

<i>November 2105/16</i>	<i>May 2016/17</i>	<i>November 2016/17</i>	<i>May 2017/1 8</i>	<i>November 2017/18</i>	<i>May 2018/1 9</i>	<i>November 2018/19</i>	<i>% Change</i>
1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.2%	1.5%	+0.3%

There are three clubs in Maidstone Borough, plus one that is based just outside the borough but which draws most of its members from Maidstone:

- **Allington Castle Archers:** The club recently celebrated its 50th anniversary and is one of the longest established archery clubs in Kent. It uses outdoor facilities at West Borough Primary School and indoor facilities at the Agricultural Hall at Lockmeadow Market. The club currently has 75 members, including a junior section.
- **Crown Archers:** The club is part of the Civil Service Sports Club in Maidstone and is based at the Sports Club’s ground. It has around 40 members including a small junior section. The club has early proposals for an indoor hall at its site, that could be hired by other clubs.
- **Ferryfield Bowmen:** The club is based at Aylesford Bulls Rugby Club in Tonbridge and Malling district, but draws many of its members from within Maidstone borough. The club shoots on Saturday mornings and runs courses for beginners.
- **Kent Police Archery Club:** Membership is restricted to serving and retired members of the Kent Police Force and their families. The club was founded in 2011 and is based at the

Police Sports Ground where it shoots on Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings. The site is currently being sold, so the club will need to relocate.

13.7.2 Displaced demand

Displaced demand relates to users of archery facilities from within the study area which takes place outside of the area. Ferryfield Bowmen is an example of displaced demand from Maidstone.

13.7.3 Unmet demand

Unmet demand takes a number of forms:

- Clubs may have access to a facility for matches but nowhere to train or vice versa.
- Some facilities may be unavailable to the community.
- The poor quality and consequent limited capacity of facilities in the area and/or a lack of provision and ancillary facilities which meet a certain standard of play/league requirement.

There is clear evidence of unmet demand for archery in Maidstone borough, due to the issues arising from the sharing of facilities with other sports, whose usage restricts the time available for archery to take place and the threats to access to existing facilities.

13.8 **Local sports participation priorities**

There are no specific local sports participation priorities in Maidstone, other than a general policy commitment to promote health and well-being through increased levels of physical activity. Archery appeals to a wide range of ages so has a general attraction to the community.

13.9 **Sport-specific priorities**

The Archery GB *Facility Strategy 2015 - 2018* (2015) is still regarded as current and the key priorities are:

- **Access to changing facilities and toilets:** ‘50% of clubs do not have access to a changing area or toilets. The absence of these at outdoor shooting grounds will inhibit further growth in the sport and it will prevent making the sport more equitable. Therefore, we will support clubs who do not have access to these facilities’.
- **Signage at club sites:** ‘42% of clubs do not have any signage at their facility. This is a simple but effective method by which the club can advertise its location and it also helps us promote the sport. We will work with clubs to help them erect signage. We will explore the possibility of approaching a sign manufacturer to see if they can provide tailored signs for our clubs in a cost effective way’.

- ***Access to indoor shooting spaces:*** ‘40% of our clubs do not have access to an indoor practice area and this has consequences for the development of the club and the sport. We will work with those clubs to help them find access to indoor spaces’.

Archery GB’s Regional Development Officer made the following comments:

- ‘Archery as a whole is quite well attended but clubs struggle with retaining members. Every year there is a huge churn of people leaving the sport but also joining. We believe this is partly due to clubs not being engaging enough and having a pathway of development for these members’.
- ‘Beginners have to complete a beginners course which shows that they are safe to shoot and join a club but after this stage the majority of clubs don’t offer a formal form of coaching. So naturally people progress quickly at the start but once this stalls and the club aren’t interested in further coaching people tend to leave unless they show a real talent and great interest’.
- ‘There are plenty of offerings out there for further coaching and club development but archery clubs are historically happy as they are and don’t like change until it unfortunately too late for the club and they fold’.
- ‘Length of facilities archers will always want as far as they can and as many targets as possible, but usually their main facilities challenge is being able to store their equipment. As you can imagine most of their equipment is large bulky items. When shooting outdoors they must also have sufficient safe zones and barriers for stray arrows which can be challenging’.

13.10 *Future demand for archery facilities*

13.10.1 Population growth

MBC's 'Strategic Housing Market Assessment' (2015) confirmed the objectively assessed housing need for the borough over the period 2011 to 2031 as 17,660 dwellings. Of these 8,335 have already been built or granted planning permission. The 833 annual dwelling requirement stands for five years following the adoption of the Local Plan (i.e. to October 2022). Thereafter, the annual requirement increases by 353 dwellings to a need of 1,236 homes per annum. Current expectations are that the Local Plan Review will be rolled forward to the year 2037. Based upon the ONS 'Sub-national Population projections' (2014), this scale of development will increase the borough's population by 20,900 to 192,700 people by 2031 and by 29,891 to 201,691 by 2037. This will represent an increase of 12.2% and 17.4% respectively over the mid-2019 figure.

13.10.2 Participation rates

One factor in considering future sports participation rates is to track historical trends, as a guide to possible future developments. Archery GB's membership trends between 2000 and 2013 showed an increase from 20,419 members at the start of the period, to 43,405 by the end of the period. Sport England's 'Active Lives' survey recorded adult annual archery participation rates since 2015 and these too show a generally increasing trend:

<i>November 2105/16</i>	<i>May 2016/17</i>	<i>November 2016/17</i>	<i>May 2017/1 8</i>	<i>November 2017/18</i>	<i>May 2018/1 9</i>	<i>November 2018/19</i>	<i>% Change</i>
1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.2%	1.5%	+0.3%

13.10.3 Future projections

Local demand for archery is buoyant. In relation to additional future demand for gymnastics facilities, therefore, it seems reasonable to project needs based on the current participation rates.

13.11 *Key findings on demand*

The key findings are as follows:

- Expressed demand for archery facilities is buoyant in Maidstone, with unmet demand at all clubs.
- Population growth of 17.4% in Maidstone by 2037 is likely increase demand for archery facilities capacity by a similar amount, assuming static participation rates in the future.

13.12 *The balance between archery facilities supply and demand*

Four criteria have been assessed to evaluate the balance between archery facilities supply and demand in Maidstone:

- **Quantity:** Are there enough archery facilities with sufficient capacity to meet needs now and in the future?
- **Quality:** Are the archery facilities fit for purpose for the users now and in the future?
- **Accessibility:** Are the archery facilities in the right physical location for the users now and in the future?
- **Availability:** Are the archery facilities available for those who want to use them now and in the future?

13.13 **Quantity**

13.14.1 Current needs

Facilities used for archery in Maidstone are assessed to be at operating with no spare capacity, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Used capacity:** All clubs with the exception of the Kent Police Archery Club have limited capacity due to sharing their facilities with other sports.
- **Changes in supply:** Allington Castle Archers may lose the use of the indoor facilities at Lockmeadow Market and there is uncertainty over the retention of the outdoor facilities at the Kent Police Sports Ground. Crown Archers has initial proposals for an indoor hall at its site, that could be hired by other archery clubs and also used by other sports.

13.14.2 Future needs

Additional provision will be required to accommodate future demand, based upon the following evaluation:

- **Current spare capacity:** There is no current spare capacity
- **Demand increases:** The borough's population is projected to increase by 29,891 to 201,691 people by 2037. This will represent an increase of 17.4% over the mid-2019 estimate.
- **Participation trends:** Local archery participation rates have been projected to remain static until 2037.

13.14 **Quality**

13.14.1 Current quality

The current quality of most aspects of most facilities used for archery is at least 'average', although there are no available changing facilities at Lockmeadow Market or West Borough Primary School, and no storage at Lockmeadow Market.

13.14.2 Future quality

All facilities will need to be maintained and on a regular basis to preserve the existing quality in the future.

13.15 Accessibility

13.15.1 Current accessibility

The whole population is within the 30-minute drivetime catchment of the existing facilities.

13.15.2 Future accessibility

Assuming that the facilities remain operational, the whole population will continue to have access to a facility used for archery.

13.16 Availability

13.16.1 Current availability

Availability of all the current indoor and outdoor facilities used for archery is limited by the other (primary) users of the sites.

13.16.2 Future availability

For archery to accommodate the additional demand arising from population growth in the borough, additional facility availability will need to be secured, either at current or alternative sites.

13.17 The options for securing archery facilities capacity

The options for securing existing and additional archery facility capacity to meet current and future needs are as follows:

13.17.1 Protect

Protecting the existing facilities used for archery through the Local Plan will be key to securing local provision by ensuring that planning policy supports the retention of existing facilities, unless the loss of a facility would involve its replacement with a facility of at least the equivalent size, quality and accessibility.

13.17.2 Provide

Additional provision will be required to accommodate the current unmet need and the extra demand arising from population growth in the borough. This could be made through developing new dedicated sites for archery, such as the proposed indoor facility at the Civil Service Sports Club or through improved availability of the existing facilities used.

13.17.3 Enhance

Enhancing provision at the existing facilities used for archery, in particular access to changing and storage facilities, would improve the operational aspects.

13.18 Action Plan

The tables below set out the action plan for archery facilities to guide strategy implementation.

13.18.1 Key strategic actions

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Protection of existing archery facilities	Include a policy in the Local Plan to protect the existing archery facilities unless a superior replacement facility is provided.	MBC	-	-	High
Funding for future archery needs	Include archery facilities as part of CIL provisions.	MBC	-	-	High

13.18.2 Site-specific actions

<i>Site</i>	<i>Issues</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Estimated costs</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Maidstone Grammar School	No current access to sports hall due to covid-19	Reinstate access once regulations allow	Kent Police AC	-	-	Medium
Lockmeadow Market	Loss of storage facilities	Investigate alternative on-site storage arrangements	Allington Castle Bowmen	MBC	-	High
Civil Service Sports Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No indoor facility • Limited access for outdoor archery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the feasibility of a low cost hall. • Negotiate extra outdoor access 	Crown Archers	-	£500,000 for a low cost hall	High
Kent Police Sports Ground	Site currently for sale, so access will be lost	Identify an alternative site for outdoor archery	Kent Police AC	MBC	-	High
West Borough Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access for outdoor archery • No access to changing facilities 	Negotiate additional access	Allington Castle Bowmen	West Borough Primary School	-	Medium

14 POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 *Introduction*

This section contains policies and recommendations for the protection, enhancement and provision of sports facilities in Maidstone.

14.2 *Policy context*

The recommendations made in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which stipulates that existing sports facilities, should not be built upon unless:

- An assessment has taken place which has clearly shown the facility to be surplus to requirements, or;
- The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality, in a suitable location, or;
- The development is for alternative sport and recreation provision, the needs for which clearly outweighs the loss.

14.3 *Protect*

14.3.1 *Recommendation 1: Safeguarding existing provision*

The Maidstone Sports Facilities Strategy comprises a robust and evidence-based assessment of current and future needs for sports facilities in the district. The Strategy has identified a need for all current facilities to be retained, on the basis of the specific identified roles that each can play in delivering the needs of sport in the borough both now and in the future. It is therefore recommended that existing planning policies continue to support the retention of all sites, based upon the evidence in the Sports Facilities Strategy.

14.3.2 *Recommendation 2: Community access to education sports facilities*

A significant proportion of some types of sports facility in Maidstone are located on school sites (in particular eight out of ten sports halls and the only athletics track in the borough). None of these facilities are subject to formal Community Use Agreements and external use could, therefore in theory be withdrawn at any time. Some education sports facilities have no community use at all at present, which does not optimise the use of public resources. Furthermore, the management arrangements for many school sports facilities with external use are not conducive to maximising that use. It is therefore recommended that:

- Efforts are made to secure formal Community Use Agreements at existing education sports facilities.

- Where appropriate, Community Use Agreements become a condition of planning consent at new education sports facilities, along with a design and specification that is consistent with maximising school and community use.
- Encourage schools with their community use management arrangements.

14.4 **Enhance**

14.4.1 **Recommendation 3: Capacity improvements**

Some of the current and future demand for sports facilities in Maidstone can be accommodated through enhancements to existing facilities. Improvements to playing surfaces to increase carrying capacity, provision of floodlights for some outdoor facilities, extended and reconfigured changing facilities to cater for simultaneous adult/junior and male/female usage will all facilitate extra usage at existing sites. It is recommended that the site-specific action plan in the Maidstone Sports Facilities Strategy be used as the basis for prioritising facilities enhancements that will help to alleviate the current identified and future projected deficits.

14.4.2 **Recommendation 4: Developer contributions (enhancements)**

Some of the additional demand arising from the proposed housing development in Maidstone, can be accommodated through enhancements to existing sports facilities. It is therefore recommended that:

- The site-specific action plan in the Maidstone Sports Facilities Strategy be used as the basis for determining facility enhancements that demonstrably relate to the scale and location of specific developments.
- An appropriate level of financial contributions should then be sought under Section 106 or CIL arrangements, using Sport England's Sports Facility Calculator tool as a guide, to cover the capital and revenue implications of the enhancements.

14.5 **Provide**

14.5.1 **Recommendation 5: Maidstone Leisure Centre**

Maidstone Leisure Centre is the major community sports facility in the borough, of key strategic significance for swimming, but also 'pay-and-play' health and fitness provision. By 2037, the Centre will have reached the end of its planned lifespan. The current management contract with the Maidstone Leisure Trust expires in 2024, which will give the Council an important opportunity to review the scale and location of the facilities mix provided, to determine whether the current configuration is the most appropriate to deliver community leisure needs over the next few decades: It is therefore recommended that Maidstone Borough Council commissions a review of Maidstone Leisure Centre to examine whether:

- The current scale and configuration of swimming facilities is appropriate to current and future needs and if not, what alternatives should be provided.
- Other facilities should be considered for inclusion in a new or refurbished leisure centre.
- Provision of community sports facilities at the current site in the centre of the borough is the most appropriate way to meet current and future needs, compared with a more dispersed model of provision.
- The Council is the most appropriate provider of the facilities or whether other providers such as the education and/or commercial sectors could meet all identified needs.

14.5.2 Recommendation 6: Other new sports facilities

Whilst spare capacity in most types of sports facility can meet current and future needs to 2037, specific shortfalls identified in the Maidstone Sports Facilities Strategy by an evidence-based needs assessment, that would best be met through new provision include:

- The equivalent of two 4-badminton court-sized sports halls with full community access.
- The equivalent of one 25m x 6-lane pool with full community access.
- 230 health and fitness equipment stations.
- Additional specialist gymnastics facilities.

It is recommended that Maidstone Borough Council should play an active role in encouraging the provision of these facilities, in conjunction with education providers and the commercial sector.

14.5.3 Recommendation 7: Developer contributions (new provision)

Some of the additional demand arising from the proposed housing development in Maidstone, can be accommodated through the provision of new sports facilities. It is therefore recommended that:

- The site-specific action plan in the Maidstone Sports Facilities Strategy be used as the basis for determining new facility provision that demonstrably relates to the scale and location of specific developments.
- An appropriate level of financial contributions should then be sought under Section 106 or CIL arrangements, using Sport England's Sports Facility Calculator tool as a guide, to cover the capital and revenue implications of providing the facilities.

15 APPLYING AND REVIEWING THE STRATEGY

15.1 Introduction

This section identifies the applications of the Maidstone Sports Facilities Strategy (SFS) and the mechanisms for reviewing it to ensure that it remains robust and up-to-date.

15.2 Strategy applications

The success of the SFS will be determined by how it is used. While the use of the SFS should be led by the Maidstone Borough Council, its application and delivery should be the responsibility of the project steering group involving other key local stakeholders including Sport England, Kent Sport and the Maidstone Sports Trust. The SFS has a number of applications:

15.2.1 Sports development planning

The SFS can be applied to help:

- Highlight, justify and make the case for sports development activities with particular sports, groups and clubs and in particular areas.
- Identify current and future trends and changes in the demand for individual sports and how they are played.
- Inform the work, strategies and plans of sporting organisations active in the area.
- Advocate the need to work with specific educational establishments to secure community use of their site(s).
- Develop and/or enhance school club links by making the best use of school sites where they have spare capacity and are well located to meet demand.

15.2.2 Planning policy

The SFS can be applied to help:

- Develop new, and review the effectiveness of existing, local planning policy (e.g. Local and Neighbourhood Plans) in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- The implementation of local planning policy to meet the needs of the community in line with the NPPF.

15.2.3 Planning applications

The SFS can be applied to help:

- Inform the development of planning applications which affect existing and/or proposed new sports facilities provision.
- Inform pre-application discussions to ensure any subsequent planning applications maximise their benefit to sport and are developed in line with national and local planning policy.
- Sports clubs and other organisations provide the strategic need for development proposals thereby potentially adding support to their application(s) and saving them resources in developing such evidence.
- Maidstone Borough Council to assess planning applications affecting existing and/or proposed new playing sports facilities provision in line with national and local planning policy.
- Sport England and other parties respond to relevant planning application consultations.

The SFS can also be applied to help Maidstone Borough Council to meet other relevant requirements of the NPPF including:

- Taking account of and supporting local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.
- Delivering the social, recreational, cultural facilities and services the community needs..
- Planning positively for the development and infrastructure required in the area to meet the objectives, principles and policies of the framework.
- Working with public health leads and health organisations to understand and take account of the health status and needs of the local population, including expected future changes, and any information about relevant barriers to improving health and well-being.

15.2.4 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The SFS can be applied to help:

- Advocate the need for sports facilities provision to be taken into account when the local authority is developing and/or reviewing an approach to the CIL and Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the wider benefits of doing so (e.g. improving health and wellbeing).
- Provide prioritised infrastructure requirements for sports facilities provision including deliverable sport, area and site-specific projects with costings (where known).

15.2.5 Funding bids

The SFS can be applied to help:

- Provide the evidence base and strategic need to support funding bids by a range of parties to a variety of potential funding sources.
- Inform potential bidders of the likely strategic need for their project.

15.2.6 Facility and asset management

The SFS can be applied to help:

- Ensure a strategic approach is taken to the provision and management of sports facilities.
- Inform the current management, strategies and plans of sports facility providers e.g. local authorities (within the study area and neighbouring areas), leisure trusts and educational establishments.
- Share knowledge of how sites are managed and maintained, the lessons learnt and good practice.
- Highlight the potential of asset transfers and ensure any proposed are beneficial to all parties.
- Provide additional protection for particular sites over and above planning policy, for example through deeds of dedication.
- Resolve issues around security of tenure.

15.2.7 Public health

The SFS can be applied to help:

- Understand how the community currently participates in sport, the need for sports facilities and how this may evolve.
- Raise awareness of and tackle any barriers to people maintaining and increasing their participation.
- Highlight and address any inequalities of access to provision within the study area.
- Provide evidence to help support wider health and well-being initiatives.

15.2.8 Co-ordinating resources and investment

The SFS can be applied to help:

- Raise awareness of the current resources and investment (revenue and capital) going into the management, maintenance and improvement of sports facilities provision.
- Co-ordinate the current and any future resources and investment to ensure the maximum benefit to sport and that value for money is secured.
- Ensure the current and any future resources and investment are complimentary and do not result in their inefficient use.

15.2.9 Capital programmes

The SFS can be applied to help:

- Provide the evidence base to justify the protection and investment in sports facilities provision.
- Influence the development and implementation of relevant capital programmes (e.g. school refurbishment and new build programmes).

15.3 Monitoring delivery

A process should be put in place to ensure regular monitoring of how the recommendations and action plan are being delivered. This monitoring should be led by Maidstone Borough Council and supported by all members of, and reported back to, the steering group. Understanding and learning lessons from how the SFS has been applied should also form a key component of monitoring its delivery.

15.4 Keeping the strategy robust and up-to-date

Along with ensuring that the SFS is used and applied, a process should be put in place to keep it robust and up to date. This will expand the life of the SFS providing people with the confidence to continue to both use it and attach significant value and weight to its key findings and issues, along with its recommendations and actions.

Sport England advocates that the SFS should be reviewed regularly from the date it is formally signed off by the steering group. This will help to maintain the momentum and commitment built up when developing the SFS. Taking into account the time to develop the SFS this should also help to ensure that the original supply and demand information is no more than two years old without being reviewed.

The Sport England guidance advocates that reviews should highlight:

- How the delivery of the recommendations and action plan has progressed and any changes required to the priority afforded to each action (e.g. the priority of some may increase following the delivery of others).

- How the SFS has been applied and the lessons learnt.
- Any changes to particularly important facilities and/or sites in the area (e.g. the most used or high-quality sites for a particular sport) and other supply and demand information, what this may mean for the overall assessment work and the key findings and issues.
- Any development of a specific sport or particular format of a sport.
- Any new or emerging issues and opportunities.