



**Halton Borough Council**

**Playing Pitch Strategy –  
Post Consultation Draft**

**May 2013**

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**APPENDICIES**


## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 A Playing Pitch Strategy has been produced for Halton. The Strategy is based on survey work (a playing pitch assessment) undertaken in conjunction with Sport England, each sport's National Governing Body (NGB) and covers the provision, current formal use and future demand for Playing Pitches in Halton.
- 1.2 The Playing Pitch Strategy identifies existing pitch provision and future need and produces a series of recommendations and an action plan for how best to meet playing pitch requirements over the next five years. The document will be used to help direct investment to where improvements can make the most difference. Within the Playing Pitch Strategy, action plans identify specific proposals, costs, indicative timetables and possible funding sources for playing pitches.
- 1.3 Integral to the analysis that underpins this Strategy are the Team Generation Rates (TGR). These show the number of teams per 1,000 population within the relevant age groups. TGR provide a measure of the relative popularity of each sport (accepting that different sports have different sized teams) and allows comparisons to be drawn with the earlier Playing Pitch Strategy from 2004. TGRs are applied to population forecasts to estimate the effect of demographic changes on demand for playing pitches and to quantify the effects of predicted changes in participation levels from the NGBs for each sport,
- 1.4 Demographic change alone will result in little or no growth in the numbers playing adult sport to 2017. Section 9 shows the net balance between peak period demand and current provision. This assessment is based on teams playing on the correct sized pitch which currently is often not the case as many junior teams are playing on adult pitches.
- 1.5 Most sports have had static adult participation rates between 2004 and 2012, with the exception of cricket which saw a modest increase. Conversely, men's hockey saw participation rates (expressed as team generation rates) halved. Minor surplus capacity is evident for adult football, rugby union and rugby league. The National Governing bodies
- 1.6 There is an under provision of smaller pitches for junior teams across football, rugby union and rugby league in both Widnes and Runcorn, with significant numbers of junior teams regularly playing competitive matches on senior pitches. Training amongst football clubs is now predominantly on AGP surfaces whilst rugby tends to use grass pitches. Three sports now play competitively on AGP.
- 1.7 Junior boys' sports have seen mixed fortunes with participation in football increase by 49% and cricket increase by 53% since 2004. Junior rugby union fell by 32% and rugby league participation was down 18%. Participation in active sports amongst girls is a fraction of that amongst boys. There are now 4 girls' football teams (all playing outside the borough) and one additional rugby league team (now 2), however there is one less rugby union team.

- 1.8 Participation in mini-soccer has increased by 38% (from 41 to 56 teams) with further population driven growth anticipated in the future. Mini-rugby league has gone from no teams to 8 teams since 2004.
- 1.9 Section 10 of this Strategy highlights the key activities that should be undertaken to make provision for these sports over the next five years.

## **2. SCOPE AND PURPOSE**

- 2.1 This Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) has been prepared by Halton Borough Council in collaboration with Sport England with technical assistance provided by specialist consultants KKP. It replaces the previous Halton Playing Pitch Strategy, which was published in October 2004. It is intended to provide up-to-date information to inform the future development of sports pitch facilities across Halton. This strategy will inform the development of planning policy in the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan which will review and replace the current protections afforded to sports pitch provision currently set out in the Halton Unitary Development Plan.
- 2.2 The key objectives of this strategy are:
  - To analyse and assess the current level and quality of pitch provision in Halton;
  - Identify levels of demand for pitches and identify any surplus or deficit;
  - Provide strategic options and recommendations for future pitch provision.
- 2.3 The PPS is concerned with voluntary participation by both adults and young people in:
  - **Football (competitive association football)**
  - **Cricket**
  - **Rugby League**
  - **Rugby Union**
  - **Hockey**
- 2.4 This Strategy was overseen by a steering group comprising officers from the Council's Sport and Recreation, Open Space Service, and Planning function, together with Sport England and Specialist Consultants (KKP) assisting in the development of a new assessment methodology and an online toolkit.
- 2.5 Interim results were presented to a wider stakeholder group comprising representatives from local clubs, leagues, and private facilities providers together with National Governing Bodies (NGBs) representing the individual sports.

### 3. POLICY FRAMEWORK

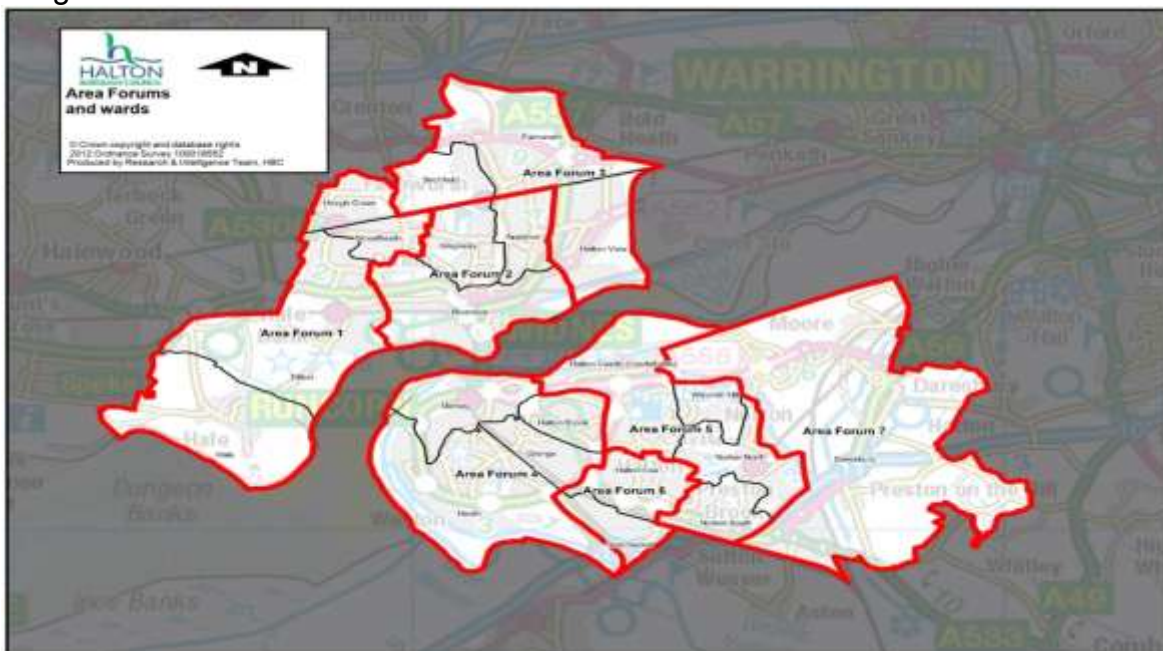
- 3.1 This strategy has been developed to complement the wider national policy and planning framework and has been developed with reference to Sport England's '*Developing a Playing Pitch Strategy: A Step by Step Guide*'.
- 3.2 Land use planning has a key role to play in delivering this strategy. National planning policy has been subject to significant change in recent years, with the replacement of copious detailed policy (including Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation) with the concise National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in May 2012. In relation to planning for sports provision NPPF (paragraph 73 & 74) states:
- 3.3 *“Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.*
- 3.4 *Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, 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 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 sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.”*
- 3.5 Local planning policies are set out in the recently adopted Core Strategy Local Plan and the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) of 2005. Despite pre-dating the new NPPF by some years, the general approach set out in the UDP is consistent with this national document and contains a number of policies that identify and seek to protect sports provision across the borough. As with the national guidance, the UDP whilst seeking to protect individual sites, does allow for certain changes, where this will facilitate a net benefit (new or improved facilities) or where it is demonstrable that an existing facility is no longer required.
- 3.6 The main policies of relevance are:
- GE5: Outdoor Sport and Recreation Facilities in the Urban Fringe & Open Countryside
  - GE8: Development Within Designated Greenspace
  - GE10: Protection Of Linkages In Greenspace Systems
  - GE12: Protection of Outdoor Playing Space for Formal Sport and Recreation
  - GE13: Intensifying Use of Existing Outdoor Sports and Recreation Provision
  - H3: Provision of Recreational Greenspace

- 3.7 The survey work underpinning this strategy will form a key part of the evidence base to inform the review of the UDP allocations and the above policy framework in the forthcoming Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

#### 4. INTRODUCTION TO HALTON

4.1 Halton is a heavily urbanised authority straddling the River Mersey. This PPS covers the whole of the borough with sub-area analysis for Widnes / Hale (north of the river), Runcorn (south of the river) and for the Council's seven Area Forum areas. Area Forums comprise the Council's neighbourhood level engagement, and provide an opportunity for the public to give views, comments and raise concerns on local issues and priorities directly to the Council. The Forums also represent the Health and Well Being areas as defined in Halton's Health and Well Being Strategy. Each Forum covers a grouping of electoral wards and these areas have been used as the basis for the calculation of previous open space standards and therefore allow simple comparisons to be drawn between areas. This being said, Halton's highly urbanised form and the average reported distance team members travel to their home grounds suggests a high level of travel across area forum boundaries for team sports. For this reason this report whilst being based on Area Forum Boundaries provides summaries at a Widnes/Hale and Runcorn level.

Figure 1: Halton's Area Forums

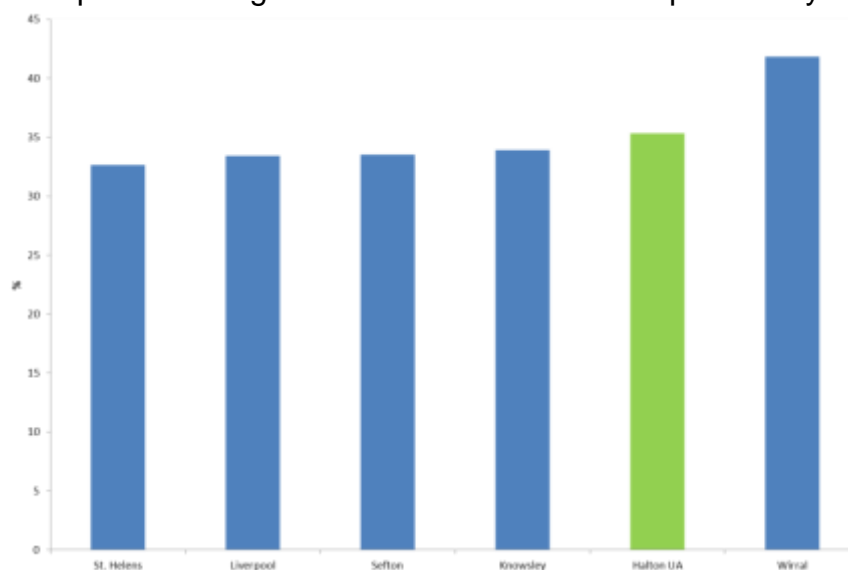


4.2 This strategy sits in a wider local policy framework. Related strategies include:

- Halton Sustainable Communities Strategy;
- Corporate Plan;
- Halton Sports Strategy;
- Health and Well Being Strategy and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

4.3 Sport England's *Active People Sports Survey* shows that Halton has the second highest participation rates in sport across the Liverpool City Region. This was defined as participation in one session per week (at least 4 consecutive sessions of at least moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes in the previous 28 days) over Oct 2011 – Oct 2012. For further information see [Sport England - Active People Survey](#).

Figure 2: Graph Illustrating Results from SE Active People Survey



4.4 Since the previous Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) in 2004 a number of key developments have taken place. These include:

- £1 million invested by Halton Council in a Pitch drainage programme to improve the quality of surfaces at key sites across Halton.
- New changing facilities provided at The Heath Park.
- Artificial Grass Pitch at The Bankfield School 2006.
- Artificial Grass Pitch at The Heath Secondary Schools 2006.
- There is a floodlit grass pitch, suitable for football finals at Halton Athletics Academy on Wade Deacon school site. This facility does has limitation due to its primary use as the infield for Athletics competition.
- Ted Gleave Sport Ground - ground remediation works, club house and changing rooms constructed now providing a new home ground for West Bank Bears RLFC.
- Widnes Parklands Sports & Social Club - received £50,000 from 'Peoples Million' for improvements to changing rooms and pitch drainage.
- Millbank Stadium - pitch improvement and football stadium constructed on Halton Sports site providing a new home for Runcorn Linnets FC and its associated community programmes.
- Stobart Stadium Halton – A 3G (third generation) pitch was installed during 2012. This all-new pitch is known as the 'i-pitch' (*intelligent pitch*) and is managed by Halton Council in partnership with Widnes Vikings. It is available for the community to hire for a whole range of activities. It has a full size football



pitch that transforms into five-a-side & seven-a-side football facility during the evening and can play host to a number of local competitions.

- Moorfield Cricket Club - received assistance from ECB to install new cricket nets.
- Widnes Cricket Club - recently received grant aid from a number of organisations and has improved access and changing facilities at its club house.

**5. SPORT AND HEALTH**

- 5.1 The World Health Organisation recognises the benefits of physical activity and identifies physical activity as one of the “best buys in public health”. Physical activity can reduce the risk of diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and coronary heart disease. It can also reduce the risk of anxiety, hypertension, stroke and various forms of cancer.
- 5.2 The Department of Health recognises that an active lifestyle is the key to better health. It estimates the cost of physical inactivity at £8.2 billion annually. It is estimated that 70% of men and 63% of women are overweight or obese and approximately 16% of two to 15 year olds are now obese.
- 5.3 The Council’s Sports Strategy supports the Health and Well Being Strategy’s aims to help improve the health of the borough by increasing participation and widening access to sport. In order to do this the Council ensures an adequate supply of playing pitches are available to the community and that these pitch facilities meet demand and are of suitable quality to sustain and support sporting activity in the long term.

**6. METHODOLOGY**

6.1 Both this Strategy and the assessment upon which it is based have been prepared and drafted in line with the Sport England guidance and methodology as set out in ‘*Developing A Playing Pitch Strategy: A Step by Step Guide*’. More information on this guidance can be found online at:  
[http://www.sportengland.org/facilities\\_\\_planning/playing\\_field/playing\\_pitch\\_strategy.aspx](http://www.sportengland.org/facilities__planning/playing_field/playing_pitch_strategy.aspx)

6.2 For the purposes of this document, and in keeping with planning and education guidance, a pitch is defined as:

6.3 “*A grass or artificial surface which is marked out as a pitch for at least part of the year and on which a match can be played, and has a minimum size of 0.2 hectares including run-off areas.*”

6.4 All playing pitches can be defined as being either secured, unsecured or not open for community use. Pitches in secured community use are pitches that are available for use by community teams and whose future use is secured for the coming season, in the case of school sites by a formal community use agreement or a booking agreement between the school and the LEA.

6.5 Survey and Time of Year

Survey forms were sent to representatives of each club and all know pitch providers during April 2012. The return received by mid-May was relatively low. Incentivisation of returns and information from other sources, such as, league handbooks and affiliation data ultimately yielded a 100% response rate. Pitch assessments took place on all Council pitches during Spring 2012 with a 77% response rate achieved from private pitch providers.

6.6 Pitches were assessed for their quality and ultimately their ‘carrying capacity’, i.e. the number of sessions they could reasonably accommodate per week (per season for cricket), without undue deterioration in the quality/safety of the playing surface. The following carrying capacities were assumed:

Matches per week		Basic – Below unsuitable	Standard	Good
Football	Senior	1	2	3
	Junior	1	2	4
	Mini	2	4	6
Rugby League		1	2	3

Matches per season		Natural Grass	Artificial Grass
Cricket		5	60

Rugby Union			
Maintenance / Drainage rating	Maintenance	Drainage	Matches per week
M0 / D0	Poor	Natural (inadequate) / unknown	1
M0 / D1	Poor	Natural (Adequate) / Pipe drained	2
M0 / D2	Poor	Pipe and Slit Drained	2 ½
M1 / D0	Adequate	Natural (inadequate) / unknown	2
M1 / D1	Adequate	Natural (Adequate) / Pipe drained	3
M1 / D2	Adequate	Pipe and Slit Drained	3 ½
M2 / D0	Good	Natural (inadequate) / unknown	3
M2 / D1	Good	Natural (Adequate) / Pipe drained	4
M2 / D2	Good	Pipe and Slit Drained	5

6.7 Source of Information about Supply and Demand

Various sources including [Spogo website](#)<sup>1</sup>, (Active Places) National Governing Bodies, local leagues, maps, previous 2004 survey data, booking data and other operational information were all used to identify all the pitches, sports and clubs currently being used, operated or played in Halton.

6.8 Teams / Users

Contact was made with each club to identify the number and type of teams they support, the location of home games, satisfaction with current facilities and future development intentions.

6.9 Pattern of Play / Leagues

In assessing the supply of Playing Pitches regard has to be had not only to the number of physical pitches within the borough, but also the number of games (or games equivalents i.e. training sessions) that each pitch can reasonably support without unacceptable deterioration.

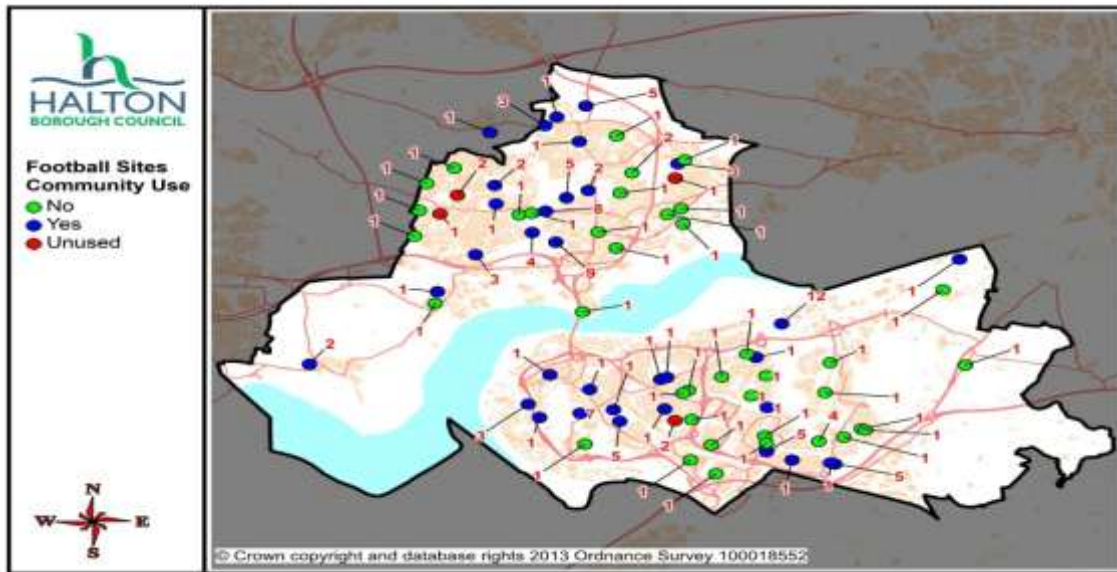
<sup>1</sup> [Spogo.co.uk](http://Spogo.co.uk)

## 7. ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An individual assessment has been completed for each of the five sports within the scope of this Strategy. For each of these sports a review has been undertaken of provision at three points in time: the current position; changes since 2004; and forecasting the position in 2017.
- 7.2 Data for pitches, teams and competitive and training use are drawn from the extensive survey work of teams and facilities undertaken in 2012. The calculation of future demand is initially based on applying current Team Generation Rates (TGR) to projected populations.
- 7.3 Team Generation Rates (TGR) are simply the number of teams expressed as teams per 1,000 head of population in the relevant age group. So if there are 50 teams arising from a population of 20,000 the team generation rate would be  $(50 / 20,000) \times 1,000 = 2.5$ .
- 7.4 This report utilises Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2010 based Mid-Year Estimates. Single year of age estimates of the population of each electoral ward in 2010 were projected forward to 2012 and 2017 with corrections applied for deaths, new housing developments (from Council Planning data), and with the results 'constrained' to ensure the borough-wide totals matched the relevant ONS projections for each year.
- 7.5 During the Study, initial results of the 2011 Census were released. These show the borough's population at 2011 as being 125,746, some 5% higher than the previous ONS projection of 119,800. This has negligible impact on this study as a higher base population simply means lower base team generation rates, i.e. if there are 50 teams generated from a population of 25,000 as opposed to 20,000 the team generation rate would be 2.0 rather than 2.5  $[(50 / 25,000) \times 1,000 = 2.0]$ . The key issue is the projected *change* in the populations from the study base date. The study methodology uses the Census data and producing only negligible differences. The results of this study will be reassessed when ONS issue their revised 2011 Census based population projections.

7a. **ASSESSMENT OF FOOTBALL**

Map 1: Provision of Football Facilities



7.6 **Context**

The Football Association is the governing body responsible for football in England. Facility improvement will be a focus in delivering their 'Whole Sport Plan 2013 – 2017' and will underpin the different programmes being rolled out to drive participation. A sum of £40 million has been set aside for investment in football and multi-sport facilities via the Football Association. The investment is subject to Sport England board approval and will be finalised in early 2013.

7.7 There are two County Football Associations (CFA) who have responsibility for football in Halton. Some affiliations cross boundaries, however the majority of Runcorn teams affiliate to [Cheshire CFA](#) and Widnes to [Liverpool CFA](#).

7.8 The CFAs objectives are in line with the FA's strategy for investment in facilities. The National Game Strategy launched in 2008 highlighted the key challenges in relation to facilities in football:

- Improving the quality of and access to existing facilities to support grassroots football;
- Understanding what is needed to meet the demand for quality facilities in every local authority area;
- Addressing increasing costs to clubs of hiring facilities for training and playing matches;
- Campaigning against the loss of playing fields.

7.9 The FA is committed to improving football facilities at all levels of the game and provides guidance to all clubs in the National Game. This includes having the correct pitch sizes, goalpost dimensions, outline maintenance plans, performance standards, design information and technical guidance.

7.10 The FA administers capital elements of its redistributions into grassroots football via the Football Foundation. The strategic lead for this investment is the role of The FA through the County Football Association’s development officers.

7.11 Every year the Football Association (FA) produce a local participation report showing how many people participate in football in the local area. According to the 2012/13 report, 4% of people over the age of 16 in Halton participate in football for at least 30 minutes once a week, compared to a national average of 4.96% (Sport England Active People Survey 2012). The report also shows that the number of teams in Halton has increased by 19 teams on the previous year.

7.12 The FA Youth Development strategy introduces mandatory changes to the small sided game starting from 2013/14 season. The key changes are under 7 and under 8 by 2014/15 to become 5v5 (5 a side) and under 11 and under 12 by the same season to become 9v9 (9 a side). There has been a strong level of support for 9v9 at under 13 too, but this will remain an optional format all the way up to U16 for teams, rather than mandatory at this stage.

7.13 **Number of Teams**

This survey has identified that in total there are 219 teams in Halton, the largest number being 95 junior boys’ teams.

FOOTBALL Age group	Population		Teams				Team Generation Rates			
	2012	2017	2004 Actual	2012 Forecast	2012 Actual	2017 Forecast	2004	2012 *		
Mini-Soccer Mixed (6-9)	6,240	6,720	41	45	56	60	6.50	8.97	9.00 8.65	W R
Junior Boys (10-15)	4,340	4,700	74	84	95	103	14.74	21.89	24.01 18.27	W R
Junior Girls (10-15)	4,300	4,480	0		4	4	0.00	0.93	0.00 0.00	W R
Senior Men (16-45)	22,520	22,200	64	73	63	62	2.72	2.80	3.18 2.34	W R
Senior Women (16-45)	23,600	22,900	0		1	1	0.00	0.04	0.09 0.00	W R
<b>TOTAL (exc. Mini)</b>	<b>54,760</b>	<b>54,280</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>2.32</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>3.76 3.10</b>	<b>W R</b>

Teams 2004 Actual and 2012 Forecast are from 2004 Halton Playing Pitch Study. 2012 Actual are as surveyed.

Team Generation Rates are expressed as Teams per 1,000 population in age group.

\* W = Widnes/Hale; R = Runcorn

7.14 The number of mini-soccer teams has increased from 41 in 2004 to 56 in 2012, a 38% increase in participation (team generation rate). Population change is expected to see a further increase to 60 teams over the next 5 years.

7.15 Participation in junior soccer amongst boys has increased by almost 49% with an additional 21 teams playing in 2012. There are now four Junior Girls’ teams when there were none in 2004 although all of these currently play outside of the borough giving zero TGRs for Widnes and Runcorn. There is also now a senior women’s football team.

- 7.16 The expected increase in senior football failed to materialise with static participation levels for males and one less team since 2004.
- 7.17 The Council has offered free pitch hire to juniors for competitive games since 2002 and is a contributing factor to the increased number of teams. This has led to high demand by junior and mini football teams for Council operated grass pitches.
- 7.18 With the expansion of academies, existing sports facilities on school sites automatically transfer to the academies concerned regardless of the original funding source. The Council is highlighting to academies that continued community access to such facilities is required under current guidance by the Secretary of State for Education. The future maintenance and running of the transferred facilities will rest with the academy and not with Halton Borough Council.

**7.19 Number of Pitches**

SUPPLY	SECURED USE PITCHES							SESSIONS AVAILABLE								
	Senior	Junior			Mini			AGP	Senior	Junior			Mini			AGP
		7v7	9v9	11v11	5v5	7v7	7v7			9v9	11v11	5v5	7v7			
(1) Broadheath, Ditton, Hale, Hough Green	11	0	2	1	0	7	1	29	4	0	4	0	26	50		
(2) Appleton, Kingsway, Riverside	15	0	0	1	0	4	1	38	0	0	3	0	18	84		
(3) Birchfield, Farnworth, Halton View	11	1	0	1	0	1	0	26	0	2	2	0	2	0		
(4) Grange, Halton Brook, Heath, Mersey	15	0	2	5	0	0	1	40	4	0	9	0	0	20		
(5) Halton Castle, Norton, Windmill Hill	10	0	4	4	0	10	1	28	14	0	7	0	42	50		
(6) Beechwood, Halton Lea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
(7) Daresbury	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0		
WIDNES	37	1	2	3	0	12	2	93	4	2	9	0	46	134		
RUNCORN	26	0	6	9	0	10	2	70	18	0	16	0	42	70		
<b>HALTON</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>204</b>		
	<b>63</b>	<b>21</b>			<b>22</b>			<b>4</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>49</b>			<b>88</b>		<b>204</b>	

- 7.20 The survey has identified 148 football pitches across Halton, of which 106 are available for community use. Overall there has been an increase in the total number of pitches with an increase of 22 junior pitches offsetting losses of 6 senior and 5 mini pitches since 2004.
- 7.21 The number of community use pitches has increased from 71 in 2004 (52% of the total) to 106 (72% of the total) with increases of 13 senior, 20 junior and 2 mini pitches. This provides total capacity for 300 games or training sessions per week, with AGP provision allowing for up to 204 training or competitive sessions.
- 7.22 The 2004 PPS recommended improvements to pitch drainage at local authority maintained sites. Over £1 million was invested 2006 – 2009 making considerable improvements to the quality of pitches. A new maintenance regime was introduced on completion of the works and this continues to be carried out by the councils



open spaces team. Line marking and grass cutting fortnightly and spiking and vertical drains to pitches is undertaken as required.

- 7.23 Site assessments suggest that the quality of pitches in Halton is generally good. With pitches able to sustain the required two games per week. However, due to the exceptionally wet summer of 2011 and 2012 issues are now arising on local authority pitches due to unauthorised casual play and training on these pitches during the summer months, added to that the Council were unable to prepare the pitches to a high standard for the 2012/13 season, due to extreme wet weather.
- 7.24 There continues to be vandalism (theft of pipe work/boilers), litter and dog fouling problems on open access sites and despite all Council sites having guards on duty during matches theft of personal items are still reported.
- 7.25 Changing rooms at some sites are insufficient for the number of pitches. Overall the changing rooms are clean and tidy, but in need of refurbishment to allow mixed gender and multi age groups to use a site simultaneously.
- 7.26 Car parking is an issue at some sites, especially when juniors move kick off times.
- 7.27 **Over Played (Deficit) / Under Played (Surplus)**

COMPETITIVE GAMES	By PITCH TYPE currently used							By TEAM TYPE						
	Senior	Junior			Mini		AGP	Senior	Junior			Mini		AGP
		7v7	9v9	11v11	5v5	7v7			7v7	9v9	11v11	5v5	7v7	
WIDNES	82	2	2	0	0	25	1	36	2	4	43	0	27	0
RUNCORN	60	0	12	13	0	13	0	27	1	3	38	2	27	0
<b>HALTON</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>0</b>

- 7.28 There is a continuing issue of non-senior teams using senior sized pitches for competitive games. Despite a 22 pitch increase in the number of community use junior and mini pitches, of the 142 competitive games recorded as being played on senior pitches, only 63 were by senior teams with the majority, some 79 being juniors, the problem being equally true in both Widnes and Runcorn. One team, Widnes Vikings FC, plays competitively on the Stobart Stadium AGP pitch.
- 7.29 The survey did not pick up significant training being undertaken on grass pitches with only 23 sessions per week declared. AGP pitches account for the vast majority of training with 158 sessions registered.

<i>Balance of provision to use – Overall (weekly total)</i>															
OVERALL SURPLUS / DEFICIT	By PITCH TYPE currently used							By TEAM TYPE							
	Senior	Junior			Mini			AGP	Senior	Junior			Mini		AGP
		7v7	9v9	11v11	5v5	7v7	7v7			9v9	11v11	5v5	7v7		
WIDNES	42	1	-1	9	0	32	40	65	1	-2	-13	0	31	40	
RUNCORN	34	18	-6	9	0	36	-12	51	18	-2	-4	-1	29	-12	
<b>HALTON</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>-7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>-17</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>29</b>	

7.30 Overall Halton appears to have a surplus of senior pitches which in general comes primarily from Council operated sites. However, the true picture is that these sites are at capacity on a Saturday, with a mix of senior and youth football

<i>Balance of provision to use – Peak</i>													
PEAK PERIOD SURPLUS / DEFICIT	By PITCH TYPE currently used						By TEAM TYPE						
	Senior	Junior			Mini			Senior	Junior			Mini	
		7v7	9v9	11v11	5v5	7v7	7v7		9v9	11v11	5v5	7v7	
(1) Broadheath, Ditton, Hale, Hough Green	0	0	1	1	0	-1	9	-1	1	-7	0	-1	
(2) Appleton, Kingsway, Riverside	-5	0	0	1	0	1	8	-1	-1	-10	0	1	
(3) Birchfield, Farnworth, Halton View	3	0	0	1	0	0	5	1	0	-2	0	-1	
(4) Grange, Halton Brook, Heath, Mersey	-1	0	1	4	0	0	8	0	2	-2	-1	-3	
(5) Halton Castle, Norton, Windmill Hill	-4	0	-1	-2	0	4	5	-1	3	-8	0	-1	
(6) Beechwood, Halton Lea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
(7) Daresbury	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

WIDNES	-2	0	1	3	0	0	21	0	0	-18	0	-2
RUNCORN	-4	0	0	3	0	4	13	-1	5	-10	-1	-4
<b>HALTON</b>	<b>-6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-28</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-5</b>

7.31 Analysing demand based on current pitch usage shows small surpluses across all formats except on senior pitches which are in deficit. Looking at demand based on team requirements rather than current pitch usage shows the reverse, with a surplus of senior pitches and deficits in juniors and mini.

7.32 To address the current peak period shortfall of 24 junior games on grass surfaces would require the provision of 3 additional pitches whilst the 6 mini-soccer games would require 0.5 additional grass pitches. The additional teams expected by 2017 will exacerbate the problem adding a requirement for a further 1.0 junior and 0.3 mini pitches based on no further increases in participation rates.

7.33 There is a problem towards the end of the season if there have been a large number of postponed matches to play.

7.34 **Recommendations and Priorities**

The peak demand for pitches is Saturday. The majority of youth football is now being played on Saturday. Demand for Council pitches is high in part due to the Council offering juniors free use of pitches for competitive matches. As a result this creates a short fall of pitches on Saturdays. It may be necessary to begin discussions with clubs and leagues to investigate moving junior and mini football fixtures to Sunday or alternatively, only providing free use on Sundays, leading teams to investigate use of sites with spare capacity or accessing other unsecured sites. Other options include the investigation of central venues for youth football and also ensuring kick off times are staggered to reduce car parking issues.

7.35 The current playing pitch stock should broadly be protected and consideration should be given to reformatting surplus senior pitches to cater for recent and anticipated increases in demand for youth football which requires smaller pitches.

7.36 Marking two 9v9 pitches on one senior pitch will help meet the shortfall of junior pitches identified. However, portable sized goalposts are required, which the FA in partnership with the Football Foundation are making available, but consideration needs to be given to their storage.

7.37 A further consideration is to invest in larger sites that benefit a larger number of teams. If dedicated pitch sites are provided it is easier to supply appropriate changing facilities where adults and juniors are not overlapping.

7.38 Any improvements to changing facilities should consider access, with appropriate segregation of gender and match officials and spectators.

7.39 Pitch improvements - Sport England's Protecting Playing Fields (PPF), funding programme is investing in community sports projects. Projects which involve the construction of new natural turf pitches or improvement of existing ones that need leveling or drainage works are likely to be supported.

**7b. ASSESSMENT OF CRICKET**

Map 2: Provision of Cricket Facilities



**7.40 Context**

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is the governing body for all cricket in England and Wales. The ECB has a dedicated team who work on all aspect of funding and facilities. Halton is covered by two county cricket governing bodies, the Lancashire Cricket Board and the Cheshire Cricket Board. Clubs have access to a number of leagues with Cheshire County League and Merseyside Youth League currently the main providers for competitive cricket.

7.41 The 4 main clubs are monitored via the Halton Cricket Development Forum. A well established and proactive forum, it has regular attendance by Clubs and Cricket County Development Officers. The forum provides an annual structured coaching and competition programme for Halton schools.

**7.42 Number of Teams**

The 39 teams in 2012 represents a significant increase on the previous study where there were 31 teams and a modest decline was anticipated due to a falling population.

CRICKET	Population		Teams				Team Generation Rates			
	2012	2017	2004 Actual	2012 Forecast	2012 Actual	2017 Forecast	2004	2012 *		
Junior Boys (7-17)	6,740	7,280	9	10	16	17	1.55	2.37	3.45	W
Junior Girls (7-17)	6,580	6,940	1		1	1	0.16	0.15	1.41	R
Senior Men (18-55)	29,220	28,980	21	20	21	21	0.71	0.72	0.90	W
Senior Women (18-55)	31,120	30,440	0		1	1	0.00	0.03	0.27	R
<b>ALL</b>	<b>73,660</b>	<b>73,640</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.67</b>	<b>W</b>
									<b>0.29</b>	<b>R</b>

Teams 2004 Actual and 2012 Forecast are from 2004 Halton Playing Pitch Study. 2012 Actual are as surveyed.

Team Generation Rates are expressed as Teams per 1,000 population in age group.

Total may not sum due to rounding.

\* W = Widnes/Hale; R = Runcorn

7.43 Senior cricket has grown with the addition of a women’s team at Runcorn Cricket Club, however the greatest growth has been in Junior Boys teams which have increased from 9 to 16 teams with the number of teams per 1,000 head of population increasing by over 52% from 1.55 to 2.37. 11 boys’ teams are located in Widnes with 5 in Runcorn. (NB the boys’ team data at U11s includes girls’ participation, this should be broken down in future surveys). Competitive female cricket is restricted to Runcorn Cricket Club which fields one girls and one senior team. All clubs report girl membership.

7.44 Projected demographic changes predict demand for 1 additional boys’ team by 2017, with the population growth in this age range being concentrated in Runcorn.

7.45 **Number of Pitches**

There are 4 Cricket clubs in Halton, Runcorn Cricket Club; Widnes Cricket Club; Moorfield Cricket Club; Birchfield Cricket Club and a small midweek league. These clubs accommodate 22 senior teams and 17 junior teams, and between them compete in 252 games per season.

Club Name	Open Age		Junior		Competitive	Training
	M	F	M	F		
Birchfield Park Cricket Club	3				Birchfield S&S	Widnes Cricket Club (x3)
Midweek League	8				Moorfields S&S (x1) Birchfield S&S (x2) Widnes Parklands (x1) <b>Outside Borough (x4)</b>	<b>No fixed location (x3)</b> <b>Train on football pitch (x1)</b>
Moorfield Cricket Club	3		3		Moorfields S&S	Moorfields S&S (x2) Widnes Cricket Club (x1)
Runcorn Cricket Club	4	1	5	1	Runcorn Sports Club	Runcorn Sports Club
Widnes Cricket Club	3		8		Widnes Cricket Club	Widnes Cricket Club

7.46 The four clubs play competitive matches on their home ground, with two also training on their home ground, whilst two clubs (4 teams) train away from home at Widnes Cricket Club.

7.47 Midweek League utilises a variety of Halton sites for competitive games with four teams using sites in Warrington (Stretton x3; Warrington Sports Club x 1). Four teams report no fixed training location with one of these reporting training on football pitches.

7.48 There are 8 sites in Halton with cricket pitches, with between one and 15 grass wickets each, providing a total of 48 wickets. There are no artificial grass pitches in the borough and none of the sites have floodlights installed (some cite planning issues associated with neighbour disturbance). Grass wickets are able to accommodate 5 games per season giving a capacity to host 240 games annually.

7.49 With the exception of Widnes CC the other clubs are multi-sport clubs, housing and providing for other sports teams. The Cricket Club take responsibility for ensuring the cricket facilities are maintained to a high standard. The grounds are all enclosed and do not experience high levels of vandalism or unauthorised access.

7.50 **Over Play (Deficit) / Under Played (Surplus)**

	SUPPLY (per season)			COMPETITIVE GAMES	SURPLUS / DEFICIT	
	Pitches	Wickets	Sessions Available		All	Peak Period
(1) Broadheath, Ditton, Hale, Hough Green	2	2	10	0	10	2
(2) Appleton, Kingsway, Riverside	0	1	5	0	5	0
(3) Birchfield, Farnworth, Halton View	4	34	170	169	86	-8
(4) Grange, Halton Brook, Heath, Mersey	1	11	55	83	12	-5
(5) Halton Castle, Norton, Windmill Hill	0	0	0	0	0	0
(6) Beechwood, Halton Lea	0	0	0	0	0	0
(7) Daresbury	0	0	0	0	0	0
WIDNES	6	37	185	169	101	-6
RUNCORN	1	11	55	83	12	-5
<b>HALTON</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>-11</b>

7.51 Analysis appears to indicate that there are peak time capacity issues affecting the sites with the highest capacities resulting in a borough wide shortfall. A degree of caution has to be exercised with regards to a simple numeric analysis of cricket as not all teams compete regularly over an extended season, with several teams actually competing only 4 or 8 times per year (juniors play shorter games with less wear on the wicket).

7.52 The clubs are expected to be at saturation point at their present venues in the next 5 years. The clubs have been working with partners to find solutions to their facility issues. Additional resources have been secured recently to make small improvements and discussions are on-going with local schools to relive some of the training provision pressures. The local midweek league has decreased due to lack

of local facilities and now most of the fixtures are played at facilities outside of Halton.

7.53 The main issue and major concern with all local cricketers and Cheshire and Lancashire Cricket Board is the demise of Council playing facilities. Maintaining good quality squares in public open spaces, particularly when they are exposed to public use and abuse created problems for maintenance with staff unable to find a solution, resulting in the loss of all Council run cricket facilities.

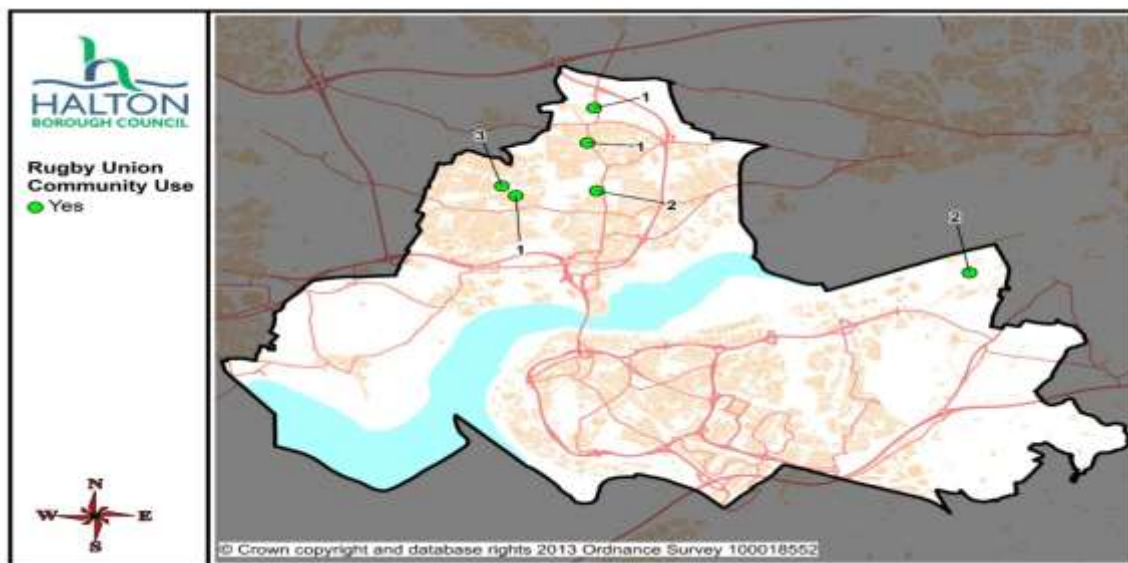
7.54 **Recommendations and Priorities**

The assessment has identified the following priorities for investment:

- New cricket nets will be installed at Runcorn Sports Club and negotiations are at an advanced stage with St Clements primary school to install an artificial cricket wicket for junior club use;
- Quality cricket facilities should be focused in key locations, such as, linking schools to cricket clubs;
- Look first at developing community use agreements with schools for club use, to support training and junior club development (fenced in and regulated use);
- Identify a Council site and seek resources to provide a secure artificial playing wicket. This could provide a central venue for midweek league and lead to an increase in recreational adult participation.

7c. **ASSESSMENT OF RUGBY UNION**

Map 3: Provision of Rugby Union Facilities



7.55 **Context**

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) is the national governing body for the development of Rugby Union in Halton. The RFU 'Whole Sport Plan 2013 – 2017' aims to use the Sport England funding to capitalise on hosting the Rugby World Cup in 2015 and generate more interest in the sport. The funding will be used over the 4 year period to support the RFU's 4 key priorities.

7.56 **Number of Teams**

UNION	Population		Teams				Team Generation Rates			
	2012	2017	2004 Actual	2012 Forecast	2012 Actual	2017 Forecast	2004	2012 *		
Mini rugby mixed (7-12)	9,000	9,660	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	W R
Junior Boys (13-17)	4,400	4,400	11	13	8	8	2.68	1.82	3.28	W R
Junior Girls (13-17)	3,356	1,360	1		0	0	0.30	0.00	0.00	W R
Senior Men (18-45)	20,300	20,800	7	9	8	8	0.32	0.39	0.61	W R
Senior Women (18-45)	21,500	21,540	1		1	1	0.04	0.05	0.10	W R
<b>TOTAL (exc. Mini)</b>	<b>50,440</b>	<b>50,980</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.49</b>	<b>W R</b>

Teams 2004 Actual and 2012 Forecast are from 2004 Halton Playing Pitch Study. 2012 Actual are as surveyed.

Team Generation Rates are expressed as Teams per 1,000 population in age group.

\* W = Widnes/Hale; R = Runcorn



7.57 There are now 17 Rugby Union teams in Halton, five fewer than was projected and three fewer than in 2004. This figure is mainly the result of a decrease of three junior boys clubs and the closing of the only junior girls club in Halton. The number of senior teams has risen by one. Forecasts show that these numbers will remain consistent in to 2017. There are still no mixed mini rugby union teams in Halton.

7.57 **Number of Pitches**

	SUPPLY				COMPETITIVE GAMES			
	PITCHES		SESSIONS AVAILABLE		By PITCH TYPE currently used		By TEAM TYPE	
	Senior	Mini / Midi	Senior	Mini / Midi	Senior	Mini / Midi	Senior	Mini / Midi
WIDNES	8	0	26	0	14	0	7	7
RUNCORN	2	0	6	0	3	0	2	1
<b>HALTON</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>

7.58 The majority of Rugby Union in Halton is played at private grounds, supplemented by one local authority pitch. There are 10 Rugby Union pitches all with secured community use. Wade Deacon School has plans to improve playing field drainage and reconfigure its pitches and this may allow some additional community access in the future.

7.59 There are no reported problems with pitch quality, but quantity and distribution is uneven. There is no dedicated mini provision with junior teams playing on senior pitches.

7.60 There has been a decline in participation with a reduction in the number of teams over the last 10 years. Rugby Union clubs tend to have their own grounds as their clubhouse and social facilities are an integral part of the clubs fund raising activity. The centralisation of club activities at a ‘home ground’ also helps to retain players as they move from junior to senior level.

7.61 Widnes Rugby Union Club is a large well-established club, which has had a number of improvements to club house facilities.

7.62 Moore Rugby Union is now the only rugby club based in Runcorn, situated on the outskirts of Halton and bordering Warrington, its current development plan focuses on junior development.

7.63 **Over Play (Deficit) / Under Played (Surplus)**

Generally there is sufficient supply of rugby union pitches within Halton, however there may be issues on two sites around peak period capacity. Widnes RUFC fields 12 teams across 4 pitches leading to potential peak period issues.

	<i>SURPLUS / DEFICIT</i>				<i>PEAK PERIOD SURPLUS / DEFICIT</i>			
	By PITCH TYPE currently used		By TEAM TYPE		By PITCH TYPE currently used		By TEAM TYPE	
	Senior	Mini / Midi	Senior	Mini / Midi	Senior	Mini / Midi	Senior	Mini / Midi
(1) Broadheath, Ditton, Hale, Hough Green	-3	0	1	-4	-2	0	2	-4
(2) Appleton, Kingsway, Riverside	4	0	4	0	2	0	2	0
(3) Birchfield, Farnwrth, Halton View	4	0	4	0	1	0	1	0
(4) Grange, Halton Brook, Heath, Mersey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(5) Halton Castle, Norton, Windmill Hill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(6) Beechwood, Halton Lea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(7) Daresbury	2	0	2	-1	1	0	1	-1
WIDNES	5	0	9	-4	1	0	5	-4
RUNCORN	2	0	2	-1	1	0	1	-1
<b>HALTON</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>-4</b>

7.64 **Recommendations and Priorities**

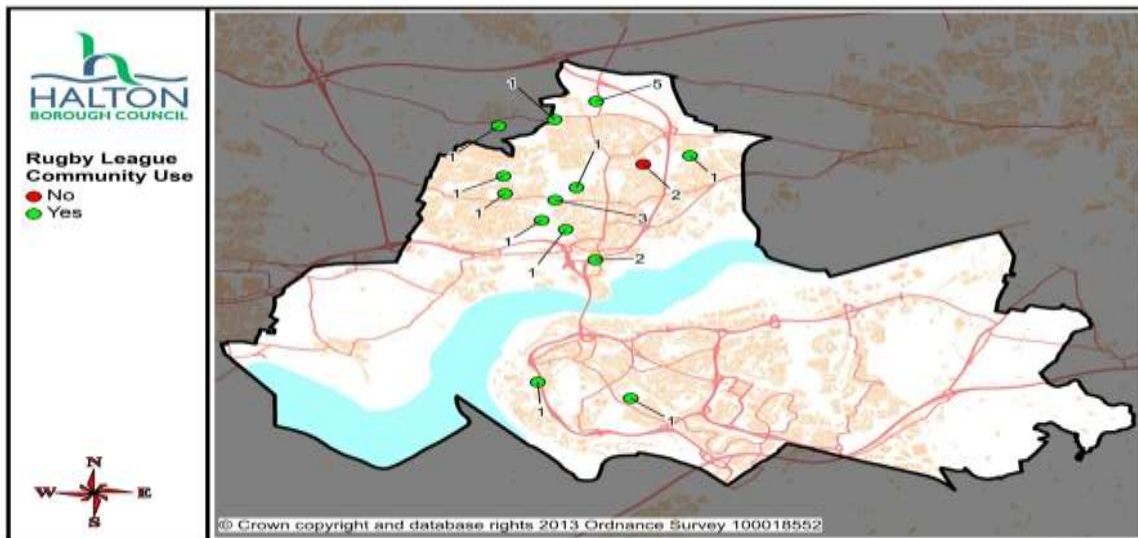
The current playing pitch stock should be protected and supported by a good pitch maintenance programme.

7.65 A lack of floodlit facilities at Birchfield was cited by the RFU as a limitation to their further development. Birchfield do rent a local authority pitch to supplement their facilities. Consideration should be given to relocating the local authority pitch.

7.66 Utilising population projections, an increase in rugby union teams is not envisaged.

7d. **ASSESSMENT OF RUGBY LEAGUE**

Map 4: Provision of Rugby League Facilities



7.67 **Context**

The Rugby Football League (RFL) is the governing body for Rugby League and together with British Amateur Rugby League Association (BARLA) assist with the development of the sport from grassroots to excellence. To reduce the number of games cancelled the RFL 'Whole Sport Plan 2013 – 2017' has allocated £1 million of capital funding to continue with its programme to improve and renovate pitches.

7.68 Widnes is still one of the strongholds of Rugby League in the country and for its population size and closeness to its Super League neighbours it continues to produce a depth of talented players and supporters that are both passionate and loyal. Widnes Vikings currently compete in the Super League competition. It has high aspirations to become a sustainable and dynamic club and aims to attract crowds of 10,000 plus on average over the next few years.

7.69 The club currently has five teams including an academy and scholarship programme. Its teams include: First team, Under 23's, Under 18's, Under 16's and Under 15's, and the club has shown great results in driving its own young talent to achieve high standards.

7.70 Widnes & District Amateur Rugby League Association (WARLA) are the voice for voluntary sector rugby league in Halton. Teams play in the North West Counties League and RFL Winter league.

7.71 There is a comprehensive development programme operating in primary schools delivered by the Valhalla Foundation and the majority of Secondary schools delivery Rugby League in and beyond the school day, with schools entering boys and girls teams in national competitions, for example Champion Schools. Cronton College works in partnership with the Widnes Vikings and has a centre for sporting excellence, providing sporting scholarships.

7.72 The Stobart Stadium Halton is Halton Borough Council’s flagship sporting, health and fitness facility. It is a major cultural asset of the borough, providing a first-class venue for multiple sports and leisure provision it also has successful and well-developed commercial activities and a time tabled programme to continue the excellent community use.

7.73 The Stobart Stadium Halton is a high quality community venue and will host the USA as they prepare to compete in the RL World Cup 2013.

7.74 Change to the game format cause uncertainty with current and future pitch provision with adult teams choosing to play either Winter or Summer rugby. Juniors have now all moved to Summer. This change in season has caused issues with pitch provision and in order to understand changes to football and rugby game formats, currently no reconfiguration of pitches has taken place.

7.75 The RFL has recently completed a pitch remediation project. The RFL paid for and conducted site assessments for a number of clubs. West Bank Bears received funding as part of the remediation to improve drainage on its new pitch facilities on the Ted Gleave Sports Ground.

7.76 **Number of Teams**

LEAGUE	Population		Teams				Team Generation Rates			
	2012	2017	2004 Actual	2012 Forecast	2012 Actual	2017 Forecast	2004	2012 *		
Mini rugby mixed (8-12)	7,440	7,980	0	0	8	9	0.00	1.08	2.30 W 0.00 R	
Junior Boys (13-17)	2,940	2,900	34	41	20	20	8.29	6.80	13.51 W 0.65 R	
Junior Girls (16-17)	1,400	1,360	3		4	4	0.68	2.86	5.89 W 0.00 R	
Senior Men (18-45)	21,040	20,800	16	18	16	16	0.73	0.76	1.56 W 0.00 R	
Senior Women (18-45)	22,200	21,540	0		2	2	0.00	0.09	0.19 W 0.00 R	
TOTAL (exc. Mini)	47,580	48,600	53	58	42	41	0.98	0.88	1.85 W 0.04 R	

Teams 2004 Actual and 2012 Forecast are from 2004 Halton Playing Pitch Study. 2012 Actual are as surveyed.

Team Generation Rates are expressed as Teams per 1,000 population in age group.

Totals may not sum due to rounding.

\* W = Widnes/Hale; R = Runcorn

7.77 Halton currently has 42 rugby league teams, 16 fewer than projected and 11 fewer than were hosted in 2004. This drop is mainly accounted for by a large drop in the number of junior boys’ teams from 34 to 20. Halton now has two senior women teams, previously in 2004 there were none. Projections for 2017 show consistency with 2012 figures. In mini mixed rugby league Halton now has 8 teams, previously there were none in 2004. Forecasts show an increase to 9 by 2017, given a growing population in this age group whilst assuming static participation rates.

7.78 **Number of Pitches**

	SUPPLY								COMPETITIVE GAMES							
	PITCHES				SESSIONS AVAILABLE				By PITCH TYPE currently used				By TEAM TYPE			
	Senior	Junior	Mini	AGP	Senior	Junior	Mini	AGP	Senior	Junior	Mini	AGP	Senior	Junior	Mini	AGP
WIDNES	16	1	1	2	42	2	3	134	32	5	5	7	13	21	8	7
RUNCORN	2	0	0	2	4	0	0	70	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
<b>HALTON</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>

Competitive games by team type adjusted to account of 5 senior and 2 junior teams playing on Stobart Stadium AGP

7.79 There are 18 grass rugby league pitches in Halton with capacity for 46 sessions per week, plus the AGP pitch at the Stobart Stadium that is used for both competitive play and training. Senior pitches are used by 13 senior teams plus 20 of the junior sides for competitive play. In addition, grass pitches are used extensively for training with 34 sessions reported, 29 on senior pitches and 5 on juniors with only 3 sessions recorded on AGPs. (Following the survey, there has been an increase in usage, for training, on the Stobart Stadium AGP).

7.80 **Over Play (Deficit) / Under Played (Surplus)**

	SURPLUS / DEFICIT						PEAK PERIOD SURPLUS / DEFICIT					
	By PITCH TYPE currently used			By TEAM TYPE			By PITCH TYPE currently used			By TEAM TYPE		
	Senior	Junior	Mini	Senior	Junior	Mini	Senior	Junior	Mini	Senior	Junior	Mini
(1) Broadheath, Ditton, Hale, Hough Green	5	0	0	8	-1	-2	2	0	0	5	-1	-2
(2) Appleton, Kingsway, Riverside	-3	-7	0	-3	-10	0	-1	-2	0	-1	-5	0
(3) Birchfield, Farnwrth, Halton View	-5	1	1	1	-4	1	-2	0	-2	4	-5	-2
(4) Grange, Halton Brook, Heath, Mersey	3	0	0	3	-1	0	2	0	0	2	-1	0
(5) Halton Castle, Norton, Windmill Hill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(6) Beechwood, Halton Lea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(7) Daresbury	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WIDNES	-2	-6	1	5	-15	-1	0	-2	-2	7	-11	-3
RUNCORN	3	0	0	3	-1	0	2	0	0	2	-1	0

HALTON	1	-6	1	8	-15	-1	2	-2	-2	9	-11	-3
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7.81 There is a small shortage of rugby league pitches in the borough to adequately meet the current pattern of usage. As with other sports the use of senior pitches by junior teams is prevalent.

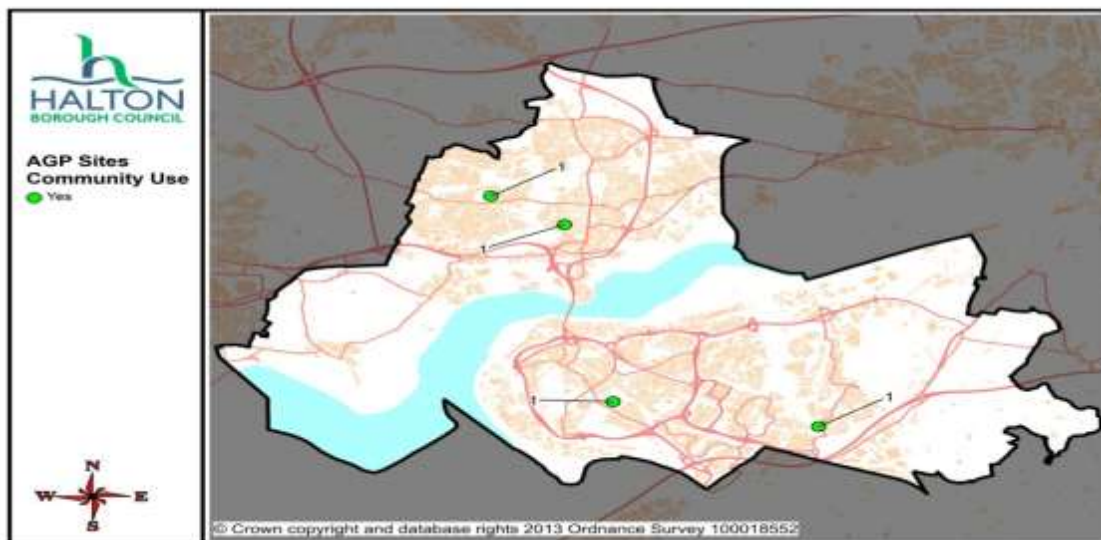
7.82 **Recommendations and Priorities**

The current playing pitch stock should be protected and consideration should be given to changing the designation of additional senior pitches to cater for recent and anticipated increases in demand for junior rugby and the new playing season, the location of these pitches should be reviewed.

7.83 Use of alternative provision for training could be promoted with clubs to avoid overuse and potential degradation of competitive playing surfaces.

7e. **ASSESSMENT OF HOCKEY**

Map 5: Provision of Hockey Facilities



7.84 **Context**

The England Hockey Board (EH) is the National Governing Body for all hockey in England. Their 'Whole Sport Plan 2013 -2017' aims to invest £2 million of its Sport England grant in hockey facilities, mainly for the refurbishment of grass pitches, the remaining £10 million will support the grassroots game and the development of gifted players with Olympic ambitions.

7.85 The game is currently played predominately on sand based AGP. Halton is an area with a low demand for Hockey. There is one club, Runcorn Hockey Club, who is working towards the local club accreditation scheme. The club has 1 Ladies, 2 men's and a small junior section.

7.86 There is limited hockey in Halton secondary schools, only one school plays competitively out of the whole borough. Halton secondary schools have not expressed a desire to develop a local competition.

7.87 There is an annual year 5/6 schools hockey tournament held at Bankfield, Widnes, less than 10% of schools take part. Club information is distributed at the event.

7.88 Rush Hockey is as new development programme introduced by EH aimed at increasing participation through a small sided game (5-a-side). This development may result in an increased number of teams needing access to AGP, for competition and training.



7.89 **Number of Teams**

HOCKEY Age group	Population		Teams				Team Generation Rates			
	2012	2017	2004 Actual	2012 Forecast	2012 Actual	2017 Forecast	2004	2012 *		
Junior Boys (11-15)	3,620	3,900	1	1	0	0	0.24	0.00	0.00	W
Junior Girls (11-15)	3,580	3,720	0		0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	R
Senior Men (16-45)	22,520	22,200	4	6	2	2	0.17	0.09	0.00	W
Senior Women (16-45)	23,600	22,900	2		1	1	0.08	0.04	0.00	R
<b>ALL</b>	<b>53,320</b>	<b>52,720</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>W</b>
								<b>0.11</b>		<b>R</b>

Teams 2004 Actual and 2012 Forecast are from 2004 Halton Playing Pitch Study. 2012 Actual are as surveyed. Team Generation Rates are expressed as Teams per 1,000 population in age group.

\* W = Widnes/Hale; R = Runcorn

7.90 There are currently three hockey teams in Halton, two senior men’s teams and one senior women’s team. This is less than half the forecast figure. Halton now has no junior hockey teams in Halton. However, membership numbers across the junior age groups have increased in recent years, providing larger training squads and the opportunity in future years to increase the number of competitive playing teams. These figures are forecast to remain consistent by 2017.

7.91 **Number of Pitches**

	SUPPLY			
	PITCHES	SESSIONS AVAILABLE		
		AGP	Hockey	Football
WIDNES	2	134		
RUNCORN	2	70		
<b>HALTON</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>204</b>		

COMPETITIVE GAMES		
By PITCH TYPE currently used		
Hockey	Football	Rugby League
0	1	7
3	0	0
<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>

7.92 There are 3 full sized sand dressed AGP suitable for Hockey, 2 located in Runcorn and 1 in Widnes, all pitches are floodlight and based on school sites (1 constructed in 2003 the other 2 in 2006).

7.93 The hours of usage on the AGPs are predominately football. Competitive Hockey is all played at the Heath AGP in Runcorn. Despite a number of development programmes with schools, only a small number of pupils attend the local hockey club. The key issue for hockey is increasing participation in the sport

7.94 The population of Halton generates a demand for 3.69 AGP. There are currently 4 AGP and a further 2 in construction on secondary school sites, all are of good



quality. There is spare capacity at evenings and weekends at the sand dressed AGP sites to accommodate an increase in Hockey usage. Residents are all within a 20 minute drive of a sand based AGP

7.95 Thus current demand for Hockey pitches is satisfied.

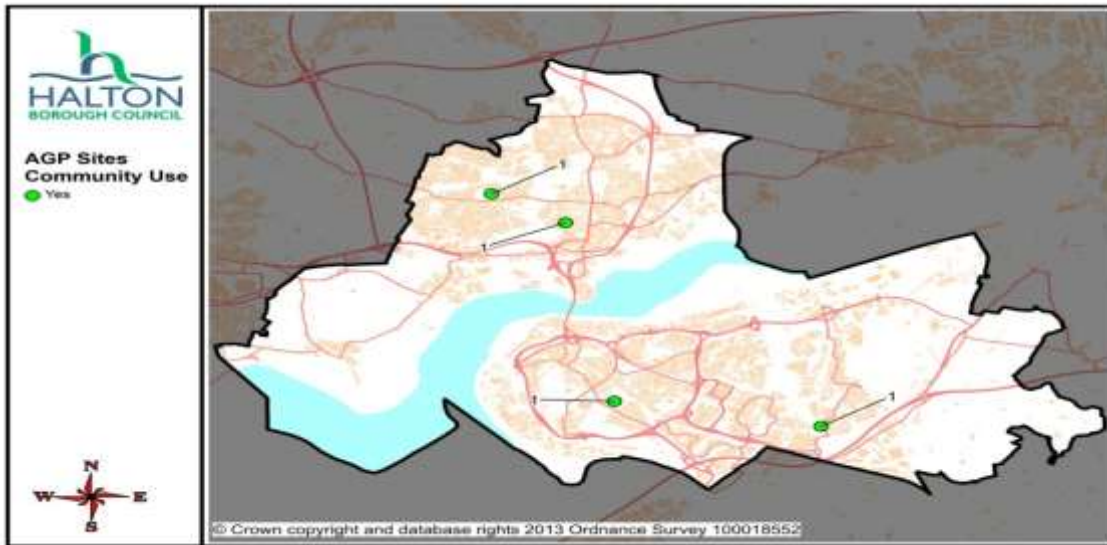
7.96 **Recommendations and Priorities**

Existing AGP are predominately used in the evening for football training, thus accessibility of existing provision should be rationalised if hockey participation rates increase significantly. It is recommended that a review of education provision and hockey club membership is undertaken annually.

7.97 From 2016 onwards the playing surface on the 3 sand filled AGP will require replacement. Consideration needs to be given to selecting the right artificial pitch surface to ensure that future hockey facility needs are met. Further information is available from Sport England online '[Selecting the Right Artificial Surface](#)'.

8. **ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES**

Map 6: Provision of AGP Facilities



- 8.1 Artificial pitches are increasingly used in competitive sport. In the *FA Guide to Artificial Pitches* the FA has produced guidance on the development and maintenance of AGPs. In the *Guide to Artificial Grass Pitches for Community Use: Part 1 – Performance Standards for Surfaces and Pitches used Outdoors*, the FA has produced additional guidance on the community use of artificial pitches. There are a number of performance tests based on the behaviour of a ball used on the surfaces. These standards should be used by developers when installing new artificial pitches.
- 8.3 8.2 There are 4 full sized AGP; of which 1 is third generation (3G). Football has the main usage at all these facilities, there is training capacity at all sites late in the evening. In order to assess if there is adequate AGP training provision the FA suggests that the number of teams located in an area should be divided by 56. There are 219 football teams in Halton suggesting an FA target provision of 4 (  $219 / 56 = 3.91$  ).
- 8.4 At present there are 2 full sized 3G pitches under construction, based on anticipated 3G provision and 2017 population projections, the current provision is adequate for the number of teams. However, consideration should be given to replacing the sand based surface on 2 pitches into 3G suitable for football.
- 8.5 The demand for AGPs is rapidly growing and the National Governing Bodies are responding to this increasing demand with new guidance and rules on their use in competitions. Sport England have provided a guidance document: *Selecting the Right Artificial Surface*.
- 8.6 The main benefits of quality Artificial Grass Pitches are:
- Looks and feels like natural grass;
  - Can be played on at all times;
  - Resilient and retains consistent characteristics;

- Easy and inexpensive to maintain; (exception new 3G competitive surfaces);
- Can save space and money – 1 AGP can have the usable capacity of 5 natural grass pitches;
- Environmentally friendly – no need to water, no mowing, no pesticides.

### 8.7 Pitch types

There are two types of Artificial Grass Pitches in Halton:

- Sand based/sand filled  
This surface has a short pile, most suited to hockey but can also be used for football and non-contact rugby training;
- 3G or rubber crumb pile  
This surface has a long pile and is suited to competitive football and rugby, multi sport training. It has a limited use for Hockey;

### 8.8 Current and Future Provision

The Sport England Facility Planning Model presents data from Sport England's National Facilities Audit Dataset as of January 2012. The resident population across Halton is estimated to generate a demand for 4 full sized Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP). The Sport England FPM analysis does not take into account the 2 AGP's that are planned and the 1 operational since January 2012:

- Wade Deacon High School rubber crumb 3G; this replaces the now closed sand based AGP (Peelhouse Lane) and will have secure community use when operational.
- The Grange School rubber crumb AGP will have secure community use when operational.
- Stobart Stadium iPitch rubber crumb 3G primarily used by Widnes Vikings Rugby Super League Team but also used by other community football team.

8.9 Once fully operational this will create a more even spread across Widnes and Runcorn. At the time of analysis there was only 1 AGP in Widnes and 2 in Runcorn. The report highlighted that there was a supply/demand deficit of 1 pitch equivalent to meet current demand. However, of all Halton residents who are able to use an AGP, the report highlighted a significant percentage of hockey users who do not use AGP's within their own boroughs (69%). A smaller proportion (39%) of football users who are residents of Halton use AGP's outside of the Borough. Further analysis will be required once all the pitches are operational.

- There are 3 sand based AGP all used for a combination of football and hockey;
- The operational 3G pitch is predominately used for Rugby League training and competition but also has football training and competition and recreational multi sports events such as cricket, school sport days;
- Of the sand based AGP 2 of them were built in 2006 and 1 in 2003 (Brookvale Recreation Centre). The AGP at Brookvale is almost 10 years old indicating a potential need for refurbishment during the lifetime of the Playing Pitch Strategy;

- 2 of the AGP's are located on school/education sites (Bankfield School and The Heath School), the other AGP is in Local Authority ownership (Brookvale Recreation Centre).
- All pitches are floodlit.

8.10 The majority of AGPs are assessed as good. The typical lifespan of an AGP is 10 – 12 years, but this does depend on the type of base used, the quality of the carpet, the amount of usage and the quality of on-going maintenance. All pitches are regularly maintained and a technical service assessment is undertaken to identify any remedial action required, such as, pitch rejuvenations due to contamination causing slippery surface or holding surface water. The 3 sand based AGP hire charges are set annually by the Council. The 2 AGP based on school sites have established a sinking fund. Approximately £150,000 to upgrade an existing sand filled AGP

**9. TURNING THE ASSESSMENT INTO STRATEGY**

9.1 This section reviews the information collected on pitch use to identify whether there are unused pitches (surplus position) or where demand is higher than availability of facilities (deficit position) during times of peak use.

<b>SURPLUS / DEFICIT AT COMPETITIVE PEAK (by TEAM size/type)</b>																	
	Senior	Football					Rugby Union		Rugby League			Cricket	AGP				
		Junior			Mini		Senior	Mini / M.A.J.	Senior	Junior	Mini		Hockey	Football	Rugby League	Baseball	
		7v7	9v9	11v11	5v5	7v7											
(1) Broadheath, Ditton, Hale, Hough Green	9	-1	1	-7	0	-1	2	-4	5	-1	-2	2	1	0	0	0	4
(2) Appleton, Kingsway, Riverside	8	-1	-1	-10	0	1	2	0	-1	-5	0	0	1	0	0	0	-6
(3) Birchfield, Farnworth, Halton View	5	1	0	-2	0	-1	1	0	4	-5	-2	-2	0	0	0	0	-1
(4) Grange, Halton Brook, Heath, Mersey	8	0	2	-2	-1	-3	0	0	2	-1	0	-2	-1	0	0	0	4
(5) Halton Castle, Norton, Windmill Hill	5	-1	3	-8	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1
(6) Beechwood, Halton Lea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(7) Daresbury	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>WIDNES</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>-11</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-3</b>
<b>RUNCORN</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-10</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>HALTON</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-28</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>-11</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

9.2 Halton has an adequate supply of pitches to meet current and future demand. Implementation of the recommendations that have been identified for each sport will ensure that the borough can meet demand for the next 5 years.

9.3 The identified level of junior pitches as being insufficient relates to the need to supply more small pitches as the size of a pitch should be appropriate for the age of the users. Currently a large number of junior matches are played on senior pitches.

9.4 Maintaining the quality of pitches is a main concern for providers and users. This suggests the provision of high quality pitches, changing and training facilities on suitable, centrally located sites has the potential to concentrate resources and reduce costs.

9.5 If dedicated pitch sites are provided for each type of play it is easier to supply appropriate changing facilities where adults and juniors are not overlapping. Any new/refurbished changing facility should be accessible and suitable for players, officials and spectators.

- 9.6 The Council is the main provider of pitches in Halton; these are generally located on open access facilities which are vulnerable to vandalism and misuse. Provision of sustainable sports facilities is a primary objective of this Strategy and consideration should be given to formalising agreements with local sports clubs to assist in the management and operation of sites.
- 9.7 In order to take the pressure off grass pitches and allow the ground time to recover, it is essential that teams use the alternative training opportunities in Halton such as AGPs. There is an adequate provision of AGPs in Halton, which will be further enhanced by the 2 3G pitches, currently under construction.
- 9.8 Educational establishments provide a valuable resource for both curriculum and community use. This usage needs to be managed correctly to ensure that pitches are not overused and access is protected.
- 9.9 This Strategy provides a sound strategic approach to meet the need for playing pitches in Halton. It provides a framework in which decisions can be made and is based on statistical analysis of the current position. This information needs to be updated to maintain currency and validity. The strategy has established:
- the current level and quality of pitch provision
  - the usage
  - any deficiencies in current and future provision and makes recommendations to address them
- 9.10 It is expected to improve both participation and satisfaction level and provide an accessible distribution of pitches.
- 9.11 It is intended that the Strategy remains an active document. It needs to recognise all forms of change: supply, demand, trends and new developments, and for this reason the content will be reviewed annually.

**10. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN**

10.1 Existing Provision

- Halebank Recreation Ground - The club has plans to improve the hard standing area around the pitch, also improvements and extension to referees room which is waiting on planning permission. Area forum money has been secured; additional external funding is needed for this facility development (FF funding available).
- Pavillions – further research is required into future opportunities.
- Runcorn Boys Club - Had prepared plans, these are now on hold due to fire damage at existing facility.
- Birchfield Sports & Social Club - Improvements have been made to parking facilities.
- St Michaels Primary School – school governors are looking to develop the site and are undergoing further investigation work. External funding would be required to support this development.
- Millbank Stadium completed July 2010 with investment from football foundation, housing associations, the local authority and local sponsors. In addition refurbishments of a building to provide a club house and changing rooms. Runcorn Linnets have a lease for the facility and have a development plan to develop the site further. Plans include a new stand; toilet block and additional hospitality.

10.2 Key Actions

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Finance</b>
<i>What is the most important action?</i>	<i>What do we want to do?</i>	<i>How are we going to achieve it?</i>	<i>What and by when?</i>	<i>Who will be responsible?</i>	<i>What will it cost?</i>
Address deficiencies in pitch provision	Change pitch designations and remark	Central sites and funding assistance from County FA	Reconfigure pitches by August 2013	Open Space Service	£40,000
Secured use of pitches on school sites	Formally secure school sites	Initial agreement with schools that currently have some community teams	Increased use of school pitches to accommodate youth game changes	Leagues and community teams with support from LA	
Amend free pitch use criteria	More junior matches played on	Local League decision	August 2013	Open Space Service, Leagues,	

## HALTON PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

	Council pitches on Sundays			County FA	
Improve goal mouth quality	Improve quality of pitches in winter months	Restrict unauthorised access Site visits Lease agreements with clubs	Annual	Open Space Service	£12,000
Regulate casual use of grass pitches	Provide affordable and accessible training facilities	Work with the teams to identify provision	Pitches are rested		
Rugby League pitch usage	Clarity on summer/winter pitch seasons and usage	Local clubs, district league	March 2013	Open Space Service, WARLA, RFL	£40,000
Increase cricket pitch provision	Community access to cricket wicket on school site	Local club and school agreement	Summer 2013	Cricket dev forum	£1,000
Provide a new Multi Sport Facility	Draw up plans for 'new' Sports Hub at Widnes Rec	Work with local clubs, league, community consultation, NGB and apply to iconic facilities fund	Submit grant application Dec 2012	Community services	3 million
Rugby Union	Locate council pitch in area of highest need	Work with clubs to identify most appropriate site	Summer 2013	Open Space Service	£3,000
Artificial Grass Pitches	Provide suitable provision for recreation training for outdoor pitch sports	Maintain current provision.	Review annually	Sports and Recreation Team	
Artificial Grass Pitches	Select the right surface for AGP to	Work with facility providers and NGB	Annually review provision	Facility provides and Sport and	



**HALTON PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

	ensure Hockey retains a training/competitive venue			Recreation Team	
Coordination, planning and provision	Future provision meets the needs of the community	The council continue to take a central role	Annual review	Sport and Recreation Team	

**HALTON PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

10.3 DRAFT Proposals for Local Authority maintained sites

<b>Runcorn Venue</b>	<b>Draft Proposals 2013/14</b>		<b>Costs</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Heath Park</b> Football Pitches	<b>Winter Season</b>	Primarily for Adult Teams who have Priority use Locate all Runcorn Sunday Adult football at this venue	0 0 0	Ease parking issues from being all junior venue Cost Saving 2.5k + energy costs for 3 Venues
	<b>Summer Months</b>	Open access for informal recreational use/community events only Posts removed May – August Runcorn Adults only training site	0	No structured training sessions No unauthorised use/pitch protection One venue for Sunday adult Fixtures
<b>Woodside</b> Football Pitches	Winter Season	Junior and Youth Teams venue only	See 10	Reconfiguration of pitches required
	Summer Months	Open access for Free junior training Posts removed May – August Explore a potential lease for the site to reduce council staffing costs	0 0 0	HDJFL manage the Winter allocations for this site HDJFL manage the Summer Training for this site Pitch Protection Cost Saving
<b>Halton Sports</b> Football Pitches Baseball Pitches	Explore a potential lease for the site to reduce council staffing and energy costs Posts removed May – August Designated baseball facility (2 diamonds) Recro Cabin changing facility near end of usable life Improve car parking facility		? 0 0 ? £80,000	Potential Linnets lease extension? Lease for Baseball facility currently in negotiation, lease holder could access external funding opportunities
<b>Haddocks Wood</b> Football Pitches	Winter Season	Junior and Youth teams venue only	See 10	Reconfiguration of pitches required
	Summer Months	Open access for free Runcorn junior and Youth training	0 0	Junior Use Only (Child Protection) Pitch Protection

## HALTON PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

	Posts removed May – August Drainage works required (pitches 1,2, 7,8,9,10,11,12 and @ entrance)	0	HDJFL manage the winter allocations for this site HDJFL manage the Summer Training for this site
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<b>Widnes Venue</b>	<b>Draft Proposals 2013/14</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Leigh Rec</b> Football Pitches Rugby Pitch	Winter Season - Primarily all Widnes Adult Teams who will have priority use Summer Months – Open access for free Widnes junior and youth training Posts removed May - August	0 See 10 0	Ease parking issues Swap Rugby Pitch to Football/Move to Wilmere Lane Pitch protection
<b>King George V</b> Football Pitches Rugby Pitches	Winter Season - Football and Winter Rugby Football Posts removed May – August Explore a potential lease for the changing rooms to reduce council staffing costs	0 0 0	No unauthorised use/pitch protection
<b>Widnes Rec</b> Football Pitches Rugby Pitches	Site development for multi-sport facility – Football, Rugby League, Cricket and community	?	Maintain community use throughout
<b>Prescot Road</b> Rugby Pitch Football pitches	Convert rugby league pitch to a rugby union or junior Football pitches? Winter Season - Junior teams venue only Summer Months – Open access for free Widnes junior training	0 0	Reconfiguration of current pitches required
<b>Arley Drive</b> Football Pitches	Winter Season - Junior teams venue only Summer Months – Open access for junior training	0 0	Reconfiguration of pitches required
<b>Wilmere Lane</b> Football	Winter Season - Junior Football Venue Only and Winter Rugby	0	

**HALTON PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

<p>Pitches Rugby Pitches</p>	<p>Summer Season – Summer Rugby Relocate Leigh Rec Rugby Pitch Swap onto a football pitch Relocate the Rugby Union pitch here to Prescott Road and convert back to Rugby League Football Posts removed May – August Explore a potential lease for the changing rooms to reduce council staffing costs Explore car park improvements/extension</p>	<p>0 See 10 See 10  0 ? - £50,000</p>	
<p><b>Hale Park</b> Football Pitches</p>	<p>Winter Season - Junior teams venue only Summer Months – Open access for junior training?</p>	<p>See 10 See 10</p>	<p>Reconfiguration of pitches required Junior Use Only (Child Protection)</p>
<p><b>Halton Stadium</b> iPitch</p>	<p>5 v 5 Venue 9.30am – 11am Saturday – 4 pitches</p>	<p>?</p>	<p>Only Council venue to provide this size pitch</p>