

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**



**A**

**REPORT**

**BY**

**PMP**

**JUNE 2009**

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**SECTION 1**  
**INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

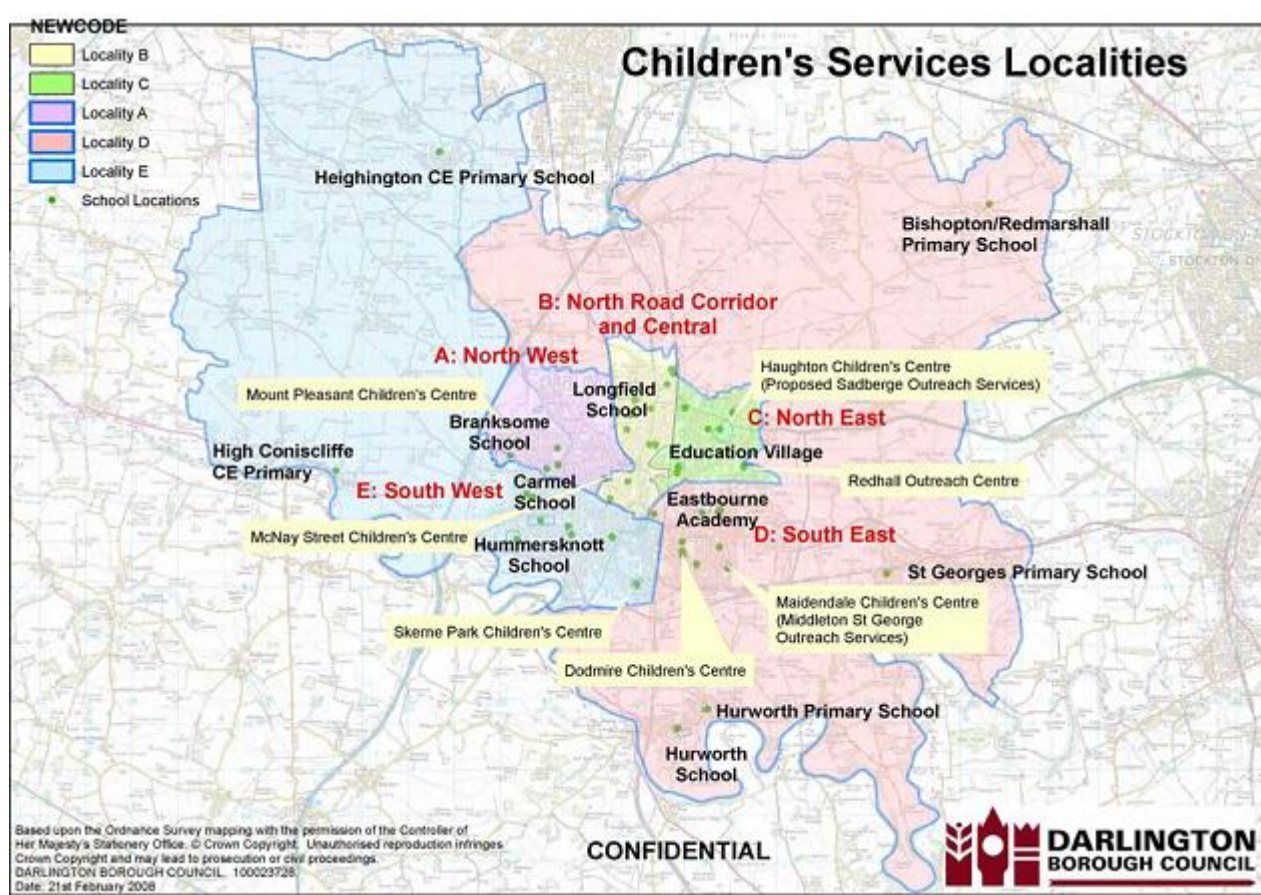
- 1.1 PMP was commissioned during November 2008 to develop a Playing Pitch Strategy for the Borough of Darlington.
- 1.2 This Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) has been developed alongside a PPG17-compliant Sport and Physical Activity Facilities Strategy which considers the provision of a wide range of sports facility types and evaluates the demand for these facilities in Darlington.
- 1.3 The PPS has been developed following the methodology outlined by Sport England in “Towards a Level Playing Field – A Manual for the Production of Playing Pitch Strategies”.
- 1.4 The key objectives of this Playing Pitch Strategy are to:
  - analyse the current level of pitch provision, including the geographical spread and quality of pitches
  - identify the demand for pitches in Darlington
  - evaluate levels of over / under supply through the application of the Playing Pitch Methodology (PPM - explained in detail in section five)
  - identify how facilities for pitch sports can be improved to meet the needs of residents
  - provide strategic options including
    - provision to be protected
    - provision to be enhanced
    - relocation of pitches
    - proposals and opportunities for new provision
    - sites considered to be surplus.
  - provide information to inform the decision making process and evaluate future development proposals including the production of specific local standards relating to playing pitch provision.
- 1.5 Ultimately, the aspirations of the authority and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) are to raise participation levels in physical activity across the Borough. It is therefore intended that the findings of this strategy will help to ensure that the quantity and quality of playing pitches, and accessibility to pitches, meets the needs of the local population, now and in the future, thus maximising the opportunity for participation.
- 1.6 This PPS is primarily concerned with voluntary participation by adults and young people in competitive association football (referred to in this document as ‘football’), cricket, rugby union and hockey. It presents the key findings arising from extensive survey work and consultation, highlighting areas of both concern and opportunity and sets a vision and strategy for the future delivery of sports pitches across the Borough.

- 1.7 It is important to emphasise that this document examines the provision of playing pitches (i.e. the playing surface, safety margins and the wider area for repositioning the pitch within the playing field) and not playing fields or open spaces (which include grass or other areas which are not used for sport). This is a key distinction as some of the areas surrounding pitches are not used for sport but are important in terms of open space.
- 1.8 The strategy is structured as follows:
- **Section 2 – The Current Picture**
    - a review of key documents, policies and initiatives on a national, regional and local level
    - an examination of key contextual and demographic information
    - evaluation of current participation trends and playing pitch provision at a national and local level
  - **Section 3 – Methodology for Assessing Supply and Demand**
    - a summary of the process that has been followed
  - **Section 4 – Supply and Demand Analysis**
    - a quantitative and qualitative appraisal of current playing pitches across Darlington, and an evaluation of demand for pitches in the borough
  - **Section 5 – Key Findings**
    - the results of the application of the PPM with detailed analysis across the geographical areas (see below) and the calculation of Team Generation Rates across various sports
  - **Section 6 – Strategy for the Delivery of Playing Pitches across Darlington**
    - The vision, aims and objectives for pitch provision across Darlington.
  - **Section 7 – Action Plan for Future Delivery.**
- 1.9 The adequacy of provision is analysed both on a Borough wide level and within five sub/locality areas. The use of these areas is consistent with the Children's Services Localities which are based on the clusters of schools and Children's Centres. This enables a more detailed understanding of the adequacy of pitches to meet demand across the borough.
- 1.10 The geographical areas used are illustrated in Figure 1.1 overleaf. Table 1.1 identifies the wards that fall into each locality area and the population of the area. Population statistics are based on 2006 sub-national population projections from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) - the most reliable population data source available.

**Table 1.1 Locality area breakdowns**

Locality Area	Population	Wards included
A	16,790	Cockerton East, Cockerton West, Faverdale, Pierremont
B	19,960	Central, Harrowgate Hill, North Road, Northgate
C	12,785	Haughton East, Haughton North, Haughton West
D	26,295	Bank Top, Eastbourne, Hurworth, Lascelles, Lingfield, Middleton St George, Sadberge and Whessoe
E	23,645	College, Heighington and Coniscliffe, Hummersknott, Mowden, Park East, Park West
<b>Total</b>	<b>99,475</b>	

**Figure 1.1 Analysis area map**



1.11 All data collected as part of this study has been inputted into a complex Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet has also been provided to the Council, enabling analysis of supply and demand issues at a geographical level. This allows detailed analysis and testing of future scenarios.

## **SECTION 2**

### **THE CURRENT PICTURE**

### The current picture

2.1 This section of the report assesses the current context for playing pitch provision both nationally and locally within Darlington Borough. It comprises the following:

- **national context** – a review of key relevant national policies, initiatives and programmes
- **regional context** – a brief review of key documents and strategies across the North East region
- **local context** – an examination of relevant local policies, plans and guidance related to playing pitch provision in the Borough of Darlington
- **local demographics and profile** – a summary of the key local population demographic features and their potential implications for the provision of playing pitches
- **participation trends** – detail on the demand for pitch sports both nationally and locally
- **summary** – a summary of the key issues to arise from the analysis of the context.

#### National context

##### *Making the case for sport*

2.2 The role of sport and active recreation in delivering quality of life benefits is being increasingly recognised at a national level.

2.3 This has been driven by **Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government’s sport and physical activity objectives (DCMS/Strategy Unit, December 2002)**. This report outlines the Government’s long term vision for increasing participation and high performance in sport:

*“by 2020 to increase significantly levels of sport and physical activity, particularly among disadvantaged groups, and to achieve sustained levels of success in international competition”.*

2.4 Building on the key objectives of Game Plan, Sport England has recently published its **Strategy for 2008-2011, Grow, Sustain, Excel**. The strategy was developed following detailed consultation with a range of stakeholders and aims to ensure that:

- a substantial – and growing – number of people from across the community play sport
- talented people from all backgrounds are identified early, nurtured and have opportunity to progress to the elite level; and
- everyone who plays sport has a quality experience and is able to fulfil their potential.

2.5 At the heart of the delivery of these stated objectives is a focus on the roles of the Youth Sport Trust, UK Sport and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to provide a pathway from school to community to elite sport. Additional focus will be put on developing coaching, maximising the role of volunteers and creating a modern network of clubs.



- 2.6 Sport England is committed to delivering:
- 1 million people doing more sport by 2012-13
  - a reduction in post-16 drop-off in at least five sports by 25% by 2012-13
  - a quantifiable increase in satisfaction (actual measure to be determined)
  - improved talent development systems in at least 25 sports
  - a major contribution to the delivery of the Five Hour Sport Offer.
- 2.7 Sport England states that its focus in the future will be solely on sport, whilst still recognising the wider socio-economic benefits that sporting participation brings to society.
- 2.8 One such benefit of sport is the affect it has on improving the health of the nation. The recently published **Health Profile of England (2007)** indicated that in the decade ending 2005, the proportion of obese children rose by over 50%. In addition, in 2005 almost a quarter of the adult population was obese.
- 2.9 In response to this, the government has recently produced a **Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives (2008)** strategy to reduce overall childhood obesity to those seen in the year 2000 by 2020. The Department of Health is responsible for overall policy on obesity and is jointly responsible with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) for tackling child obesity. However, according to the report, a number of sectors must play a part in tackling obesity, from individuals and families, gym and sports facilities to food retailers and the media.
- 2.10 The Choosing Health White Paper (**Choosing Health, Making Healthier Choices easier 2004**) emphasises that 21st century citizens should seek a healthier approach to life. It highlights three core principles towards making healthy choices easier, specifically:
- informed choice – people able to make their own decisions
  - personalisation – support for individuals
  - working together – effective partnerships.
- 2.11 Increasing exercise was seen to be a key means of achieving some of the objectives in the White Paper. **Choosing Activity: A Physical Activity Action Plan** identifies some key targets which will support increases in physical activity, in particular:
- improve information and raise awareness of the benefits of activity
  - support activity in the community by addressing barriers such as safety, cost and locality
  - support activity in early years and schools and improve community access to school facilities
  - support and encourage everyday activities like walking and cycling.
- 2.12 The effective provision of sports pitches in Darlington will contribute to the achievement of some of the key objectives of this document.

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- 2.13 Major investment to date and continuing investment relevant to this project has been made into schools through the Physical Education, School Sport and Club Link Strategy (PESSCL). **DfES: Learning through PE and Sport (2003)** stresses the importance of PE and sport in schools (curricular and extracurricular) and reinforces the role of schools in serving the community.
- 2.14 The case is further illustrated in **Sport Playing Its Part: The Contribution of Sport to Building Safe, Strong and Sustainable Communities (Sport England, 2005)**. This is one of a series of documents published by Sport England outlining how sport can enrich people's quality of life, raise self-esteem and confidence levels and provide enjoyment to individuals. Sport and active recreation also has the potential to contribute to strengthen community involvement, engagement, identity and civic pride.
- 2.15 Sport and other cultural (or leisure) services can be powerful tools to engage all sections of the community and break down barriers between them. Marginalised groups are often more willing to engage with such activities than other government funded activities.
- 2.16 The provision of high quality playing fields in the right location is clearly an important component in driving forward the health and physical activity agenda and increasing participation nationally. This playing pitch strategy will guide the effective distribution of playing pitches across Darlington and seek to maximise opportunities to meet local, regional and national objectives.
- 2.17 The **Building Schools for the Future (BSF)** programme, the largest investment into school estates for over 50 years, aims to bring radical changes to the way that education takes place in schools. In addition, through the extended schools programme, it will provide significant opportunities to improve community resources.
- 2.18 BSF offers the opportunity to:
- modernise and enhance school facilities, ensuring they are fit for purpose
  - create and enhance school club links and provide home grounds for more sports clubs (provided there is no direct cost to BSF)
  - facilitate the growth of youth sports
  - support and improve opportunities to play sport in school.
- 2.19 Darlington was originally allocated to start their BSF project in Waves 10-12 (BSF is currently in Wave 5-6). However, following the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) consultation on the second half of the BSF programme, there will be a reallocation exercise of those local authorities not yet in the programme. The revised list will be published early in 2009 and opportunities specific to the BSF programme will be considered later in this strategy.

### ***Spatial Planning for Sport and Active Recreation (2005)***

- 2.20 This document sets out Sport England's intention to provide advice on what type of sports facilities are needed for communities in the future, and to advise on how to protect and improve the current stock of facilities, in particular protecting playing fields.
- 2.21 Sport England takes the definition of spatial planning as set out in Planning Policy Statements 1 (PPS1) as its starting point. This states that:

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*‘Spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they function’.*

2.22 Sport England sees the new UK spatial planning system as an opportunity to deliver its own aspirations for sport and recreation, whilst contributing to the goals of partners in public, private and voluntary sectors. With this there is the opportunity to deliver a planned approach towards the provision of facilities helping to reach sustainable development goals.

2.23 These are:

- taking a broader view of the role of spatial planning as an enabling function which goes beyond the setting and delivery of land-use policy
- identifying opportunities for delivering an enhanced quality of life for communities, in the short, medium and longer term
- recognising and taking full advantage of the unique ability of sport and active recreation to contribute to a wide array of policy and community aspirations
- the development of partnership working stimulated by, and perhaps centred on, sport and active recreation as a common interest
- using sport and recreation as one of the building blocks of planning and delivery of sustainable communities.

***Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002).***

2.24 Planning Policy Guidance Notes set out the government's policies on different aspects of planning.

2.25 PPG17 states that *“the government expects all local authorities to carry out assessments of needs and audits of open space and sports and recreational facilities”.*

2.26 Well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, which include:

- supporting an urban renaissance
- supporting a rural renewal
- promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion
- health and well being
- promoting more sustainable development.

2.27 The policy guidance highlights the requirement for local authority decisions regarding open space, sport and recreation to be informed by local needs assessments and an audit of existing provision. Such audits should incorporate qualitative, quantitative and accessibility considerations as well as the overall non-monetary value of the land and the level of use.

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2.28 The findings of this Playing Pitch Strategy will form part of the Darlington Borough PPG17 study.

***A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England: Policy on Planning Applications for Development on Playing Fields (Sport England, 1997)***

2.29 Sport England is a statutory consultee with regards to any developments on playing fields. They state that they will oppose any developments that will result in the loss of playing field space in all but exceptional circumstances.

2.30 There are exceptions to this where loss is deemed to be acceptable:

- an assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport
- the proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields, and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use
- the proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any playing pitch
- lost playing fields would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development
- the proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.

2.31 Sport England has adopted this position because the loss of any part of a playing field may represent the irretrievable loss of an opportunity for participation in pitch sports, and with it the many benefits which sport brings. This playing pitch strategy will provide an evidence base for informed decision making with regards to playing pitches in the Borough.

### Regional and sub-regional context

- 2.32 There are a number of regional and sub-regional strategies that set the context for sports facility provision across the North East and the Tees Valley. The main findings of these relevant to the Playing Pitch Strategy for Darlington are summarised below.

#### ***North East of England Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), July 2008***

- 2.33 The RSS is the planning framework for North East England which sets out the long term strategy as to where, when and how development will be encouraged in the region. The plan influences and shapes many of the key decisions to be taken in the region over the next 15-20 years providing a vision to deliver jobs, homes and infrastructure to the region up to 2021.

- 2.34 The overall vision for the North East is to be:

*“a region where present and future generations have a high quality of life. It will be a vibrant, self reliant, ambitious and outward looking Region featuring a dynamic economy, a healthy environment, and a distinctive culture. Everyone will have the opportunity to realise their full potential”.*

- 2.35 The key challenges facing the region if it is to realise the Vision include:

- Improving health & tackling health inequalities – The provision of health, sport and leisure facilities in new communities can contribute to a better and healthier quality of life
- Increasing participation rates and entrepreneurialism – Participation in sport and recreation can contribute to workforce health and reducing worklessness
- Stemming and reversing population decline – People will only want to stay in the region if it offers them economic stability, good quality housing, and living environments that meet their aspirations
- Protecting and enhancing key environmental assets – it is imperative that development and growth are managed to protect and enhance the environment
- Capitalising on tourism – the qualities of the region’s built heritage and natural environment need to be conserved and enhanced by improving both the quality and range of facilities and destinations
- Improving accessibility – focussing development in the conurbations and major settlements can help to maximise access to facilities and jobs by non-car modes and by improved public transport services and infrastructure.

- 2.36 Policies contained within the Regional Spatial Strategy of specific relevance to this playing pitch strategy include:

- Policy 8 – Protecting and enhancing the environment: Strategies, plans, programmes and planning proposals should seek to maintain and enhance the quality, diversity and distinctiveness of the environment
- Policy 16 – Culture & Tourism: Strategies, plans and programmes and planning proposals should promote culture and tourism, including provision for sport and leisure and the resources which support these

- Policy 24 – Delivering Sustainable Communities: Strategies, plans and programmes and planning proposals, should assess the suitability of land for development and the contribution that can be made by design.
- 2.37 Darlington (along with Middlesbrough) is identified in the Regional RSS as Strategic Public Transport Hub it exhibits high levels of public transport accessibility by a range of transport modes, and provide key links into wider regional, national, and international transport networks. Darlington would therefore meet the requirements in terms of being a potential location for a regional sports facility.<sup>1</sup>

### ***North East Regional Facilities Strategy 2008***

- 2.38 This strategy provides a tool for improving the quantity and quality of sports facilities in the region. In addition to this, the strategy aims to encourage an increase in participation and build upon the opportunities provided the Olympic Games.
- 2.39 The strategy provides a high level assessment of sports facilities at a regional level and highlights that there is an abundance of grass and synthetic turf pitches across the North East. It states that assessment of adequacy of grass pitch provision is best undertaken at a local level.
- 2.40 In relation to synthetic turf, the number of STPs in the North East is below the national average and is the lowest of all regions. When supply is looked at in terms of provision per 1000, it shows that the North East continues to have less provision per head of the population than the national average.
- 2.41 The regional strategy also identifies that greatest proportion of STPs in the North East are sand based. The region however has a higher number of third generation (3G) pitches than other regions (most suited to football). The data also shows that the region has a newer stock of STPs compared to other regions and that the education sector owns the majority of the STPs in the region ( 71%).
- 2.42 Future need and policy implications relating to STPs as outlined in the regional strategy are as follows:
- there is a need for more STP provision in the North East to bring it in line with the national average
  - refurbishment of existing old stock is necessary to maintain the standard of provision
  - facilities on school sites are not always accessible to the local community which may significantly reduce the overall ‘accessible’ supply. Local authorities and partners should endeavour to improve access to STPs on education sites to help address the low level of provision,
  - consider the provision of commercial 5-a-side centres to cater for the high demand for football in the region.

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<sup>1</sup> A regional sports facility is a facility that is capable of hosting major events and/or training facilities. Alternatively a regionally significant facility may be one that attracts visitors and tourists from across the North East and outside of the region. These facilities need to be supported by excellent transport networks. Such facilities are often a commercial concern or a partnership between the private and public sector.

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- 2.43 In addition to the above, the strategy identifies the opportunity to improve both grass and synthetic provision via BSF.

### ***Tees Valley Sport Sub Regional Facilities Strategy (2009)***

- 2.44 The sub-regional strategy builds upon the North East Regional Facilities Strategy and identifies what facilities currently exist in Tees Valley, where there are gaps in provision, issues with current provision, what the sporting infrastructure should look like in the future and what opportunities are available for investment.
- 2.45 In relation to Darlington specifically, the sub-regional strategy indicates that there is an undersupply of synthetic turf pitches and a lack of indoor football facilities. The strategy identifies the increased provision of synthetic turf pitches as an opportunity for the future along with the opportunity to explore the provision of indoor football facilities, perhaps in partnership with the private sector.
- 2.46 The sub-regional strategy does not cover grass pitch provision as this is best assessed at a local level. It does however identify where there are already plans in place to provide more STP facilities across Tees Valley.
- 2.47 Durham Cricket Board has also produced a Facilities Strategy (2008) which aims to assess the quality of facilities in the County for its Focus Clubs. This main findings of this document are outlined in section 3.

### **Local context**

- 2.48 Whilst consideration of the national and regional context is important, the local context of the Darlington is pivotal in ensuring that the Playing Pitch Strategy is representative of the needs of the local area. Table 2.1 overleaf summarises the key issues arising from the local strategic context in relation to the playing pitch strategy.

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Table 2.1 – Local context

Document	Key issues in relation to the playing pitch strategy
<p><b>Darlington Local Plan (adopted 1997)</b></p>	<p>The Local Plan for Darlington was adopted in 1997 and contains several policies on recreation, leisure and community facilities. However this was produced before PPG17 was published and there is now an urgent need for a PPG17 assessment and playing pitch strategy to be undertaken to provide an up to date basis to inform the Council’s Local Development Framework (LDF). The previous Local Plan set out a number of policies of relevance to playing pitches as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy E3 - an open space will not be permitted if it inflicts harm on facilities for sport or facilities for other recreation and leisure activities.</li> <li>• Policy R4 - the Council aims to provide a minimum of 1.6 hectares per 1000 population of playing pitches</li> <li>• Policy R5 - development on detached school playing fields that are surplus to educational requirements may be permitted if the land is not needed for recreation use by the school or local community in the future and the development is acceptable with policies E3 and R9</li> <li>• Policy R9 protects playing fields from development, unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- new or improved facilities related to the use of the playing field are provided</li> <li>- the development is on a small part of the playing field and the remainder of the field will be enhanced, improving the overall quality of the site</li> <li>- alternative provision is provided</li> <li>- there is an excess of playing fields in relation to demand.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Policy R10 encourages the development of artificial turf playing surfaces.</li> </ul> <p>Over time the LDF will replace the Local Plan. The LDF implements the spatial planning elements of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed and will consist of the Core Strategy which has as an objective ‘to safeguard, enhance and provide a wide range of sporting and recreational facilities to contribute to the happiness, fulfilment and well-being of people who live and work in the Borough, including children and young people’. The findings of this strategy will provide a robust evidence base in which to develop future policies in relation to playing pitches.</p>
<p><b>Young People - Our Future: Darlington’s Local Area Agreement 2006</b></p>	<p>The Local Area Agreement (LAA) outlines four areas of priority for improvement in Darlington. Those areas and their outcomes of most relevance to this study are:</p>



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Document	Key issues in relation to the playing pitch strategy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• safer and stronger communities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to have cleaner, greener and safer public spaces</li> <li>- to improve the quality of life for people</li> <li>- to increase the number of children and young people that are positively engaged in their free time.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• healthier communities               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- improving behaviour and promoting the mental well being of children and young people</li> <li>- reducing childhood obesity.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainable Communities Strategy 2008 – 2021</b></p>	<p>Providing quality sport and physical activity facilities is a key area for the Borough’s Sustainable Community Strategy, One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. It has the potential to contribute to its five delivery themes: Prosperous Darlington, Aspiring Darlington, Healthy Darlington, Greener Darlington and Safer Darlington. The clearest link is considered to be with Healthy Darlington with short and medium term work-strands including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reducing health inequalities,</li> <li>• creating easy access to sport and leisure,</li> <li>• creating healthy workplaces,</li> <li>• tackling obesity in young people,</li> <li>• promoting emotional health and well-being and</li> <li>• planning for and ageing population.</li> </ul> <p>This playing pitch strategy will help to address the health improvement agenda by improving the quality, quantity and accessibility to pitch facilities which should subsequent have a positive impact on physical activity levels and thus and health improvement.</p>
<p><b>Darlington Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2007 - 2011</b></p>	<p>The Council’s Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (2007-2011) reflects the themes outlined in the Sustainable Community Strategy in its strategic development priorities which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to increase participation in sport and physical activity</li> <li>• to develop a high quality sporting infrastructure</li> <li>• to ensure that residents have access to health enhancing sport and physical activity</li> </ul>

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Document	Key issues in relation to the playing pitch strategy
	<p>opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to enhance the take-up of sport and physical activity by 5-16yr olds, and</li> <li>• to contribute to the provision of safer and stronger communities.</li> </ul> <p>Development of a robust playing pitch strategy will ensure that the borough can improve the infrastructure of its pitch stock by having an evidence base that identifies local need and ensures priorities are set for future improvement. Improving the accessibility to pitches, as well as the quantity and quality, is likely to increase participation levels across the borough.</p>
<p><b>Darlington Open Spaces Strategy 2007 - 2017</b></p>	<p>The aim of the strategy is to provide, protect and enhance a variety of high quality, accessible open and green spaces in the Borough.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 11 recommends that all residents in the urban area should be within 1000m of outdoor sports facilities</li> <li>• Policy 12 outlines the recommended standard for playing pitch provision in Darlington. The policy states that playing pitches should be maintained and improved to achieve 1.05 hectares of accessible playing pitches per 1000 population.</li> </ul> <p>The Open Spaces Strategy provides the context for the preparation of this more specific related playing pitch strategy. The PPS will provide locally derived standards of playing field provision, to inform the LDF in allocating new land for playing pitches as appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Darlington Children and Young People's Plan 2008 – 2011</b></p>	<p>The plan identifies five priorities for improvement. Those of relevance to this playing pitch strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting positive health and wellbeing</li> <li>• enabling children and young people to aspire, to have fun and maximise their full potential through learning</li> <li>• enabling children and young people to contribute to their community and environment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Darlington Play and Free-time Strategy 2007-2012</b></p>	<p>Enhancing opportunities for children to sport and physical activity is also identified as important in the recently published Play Strategy for the Borough. The strategy expects increased numbers of children and young people to access play and free time provision in parks and natural places by July 2011. A priority is identified to increase access for children and young people from areas of deprivation and children with disabilities. Accessibility to playing pitches is considered within this PPS.</p>

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- 2.49 As well as the above documents, increasing sport and physical activity and improving facilities is also reflected in Tackling Health Inequalities in County Durham and Darlington. The role of sport and physical activity in improving quality of life and reducing social inequalities is also implicit in All Together Now: A Social Inclusion Strategy for Darlington.
- 2.50 The effective delivery of playing pitches across the Borough will contribute to the achievement of the aims and objectives outlined in the local plans and strategies identified above.

### **Local geography**

- 2.51 In analysing the need and demand for any new sport and recreation facilities it is important to assess the size and composition of the local leisure markets and the impact they will have upon facility usage.
- 2.52 The Borough of Darlington is situated in the North East of England in the west of the Tees Valley sub region. The Borough covers an area of approximately 76 square miles and 85% of this area is classified as countryside.
- 2.53 Darlington comprises of a mix of both urban and rural neighbourhoods. The Borough contains an historic market town with associated urban areas and to the south and west of the Borough are extensive rural neighbourhoods. Darlington Town Centre is recognised as a sub regional centre and the town centre attracts visitors from the neighbouring areas of North Yorkshire and County Durham.
- 2.54 The age profile, unemployment rates, mobility and ethnic breakdown of Darlington residents all affect their propensity to use pitches and sports provision in general. For example, the cost of using facilities is a barrier for using facilities for people with low incomes whilst the locality of provision is a barrier for people without their own transport. Table 2.2 overleaf summarises the key demographic trends and the likely implications on pitch usage across the Borough.

**Table 2.2 Demographic analysis summary**

<b>Demographic Indicator</b>	<b>Impact on facility usage</b>
The total population is approximately 99,475 (2006 estimate). Compared to the 2001 Census (97,838) the population has increased marginally by 2%. However, 2021 population projections indicate that the population is expected to increase by 10% to 109,300 (compared to the 2006 estimate).	Such a population growth rate in the Borough is likely to result in increasing demand for pitches in the future.
The proportion of residents aged 65 and above (17%) is slightly above the national average (16%). The proportion of residents aged 40 and below is less than the national average. These figures are consistent with the regional averages.	Darlington has an older population than the national average and population projections show this is set to increase in the future. This reinforces the need to cater for the ageing population in terms of the facilities provided. For example, older residents are more likely to take part in less strenuous activities.
31% of households in Darlington do not have a car or van, compared with 36% regionally and 27% nationally.	The number of households without a car or van is above the national average. This indicates that a number of residents may have difficulty travelling to access facilities.
98% of residents within Darlington are classified as white. The figure is similar to the regional average (98%) but significantly higher than the national average (90%).	There is little diversity in the make up of the Borough. Despite this, sports facility providers will need to ensure facilities remain accessible to all sectors of the community as well as reflecting the specific sport demands of various ethnic groups.
Unemployment within Darlington (4%) is below the regional (4.5%) average, but above the national average (3.4%).	Unemployment in Darlington is marginally above the national average. This may impact on the propensity to participate and cost in particular may be a barrier to access.

2.55 It will be essential that the strategy takes into account these key demographic indicators and that facility provision is tailored to meet the needs of the local area.

**Participation trends - National**

2.56 Despite the explosion of local authority provision during the 1970's and the private health and fitness boom of the 1990s, participation in sport and recreation has remained generally static over the past 30 years.

**Active People survey**

2.57 Government initiatives to increase participation in sport and active recreation prompted the Active People survey in 2005/6, the largest ever survey of its kind to be undertaken in Europe. Comprising telephone surveys of 363,724 adults in England (aged 16 plus), it has provided reliable statistics on participation in sport and active recreation for all 354 local authorities in England at a local level (a minimum of 1,000 interviews were completed in every local authority in England).

2.58 The survey was repeated during 2007/08 allowing analysis of changes and trends in participation.

2.59 The survey revealed that in 2007/08, 6.85 million adults (aged 16 and over) participated in sport three times a week for 30 minutes at moderate intensity (16.5%). In 2005/6, this figure was 6.3 million adults (15.5%), so there has been a statistically significant increase of 552,000 adult participants in the two years between 2005/06 and 2007/08. It is important to note that these figures relate to the target of getting an additional one million residents to participate in sport by 2012 / 2013 and therefore exclude recreational walking.

2.60 In addition to providing an overview of overall participation, the survey results enable analysis of sport specific participation. The survey reveals that in the two-year period between 2005/6 (Active People Survey 1) and 2007/8 (Active People Survey 2), 14 of the 46 sports that are eligible for four-year funding from Sport England have shown a statistically significant increase in participation. Of particular significant to this playing pitch strategy is that the evidence suggests that football is one of the top three sports in terms of the increase in participation, with an additional 122,000 people taking up the game.

2.61 The breakdown of participation by sports affecting this playing pitch strategy, and the change between Active People Survey One and Active People Survey Two is shown in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3 - Sport by sport results – Active People Survey 1 and 2**

<b>Sport and recreational activities</b>	<b>% of the adult population (16 plus) taking part at least once a week – 2006</b>	<b>% of the adult population (16 plus) taking part at least once a week – 2008</b>	<b>% change in participation</b>
Football (all)	4.97	5.15	+0.21 (statistically significant)
Cricket	0.48	0.49	+0.01 (not statistically significant)
Rugby Union	0.48	0.49	+0.10 (statistically significant)
Hockey-field	0.23	0.24	+0.01

## SECTION 2 – THE CURRENT PICTURE

2.62 Key national statistics, trends, issues and implications for future demand for playing pitches are outlined in Table 2.4. This information is based on Sport England NGB guidance packs that outline the participation status for each sport.

**Table 2.4 National trends in pitch sports**

	Key facts	Key trends	Implication for pitches and ancillary facilities
Football	1.47 million young people aged 11-15 participate in football regularly	More children are playing due to popularity of mini soccer	More mini soccer and junior pitches are needed
	Female participation has risen 21%, equating to 35,000 more players.	More women are playing the game	Improved quality of ancillary facilities and in particular dedicated changing facilities
	Informal 5-a-side football has grown in popularity in recent years	More mid-week fixtures (often 5-a-side leagues) and more non-grass pitches	Players defecting to five-a-side, therefore additional synthetic turf and indoor space may be required
	The Active People survey indicates that 7.1% of the active population now play football regularly, making football the 5th most popular sport in the UK in terms of participation, with 2.9 million participants	More pitches will be needed	The vast number of children playing mini-soccer will result in the need for more junior and mini pitches in the future.
Cricket	28% of cricketers are aged 16-19, compared to 12% who have participated in any sport or active recreation	Increased participation by young people	More pitches used for Kwik cricket and new mobile pitches introduced in schools
	Female participation has risen from 0.14% to 0.19%, a rise of 0.05 percent. This represents a change from 16,000 to 29,000 participants, 13,000 additional female participants.	Increased participation by women	Improved access needed to quality training pitches and improved ancillary facilities in smaller clubs is required
	England won The Ashes in 2005 and subsequently lost the series in 2007.	The England and Wales Cricket Board has reported a 50% increase in participation across all forms of cricket	Increased pressure on pitch availability, and requirements for additional ancillary accommodation

## SECTION 2 – THE CURRENT PICTURE

	Key facts	Key trends	Implication for pitches and ancillary facilities
Rugby	<i>Rugby - Making An Impact</i> is the most comprehensive study into participation trends in rugby union in England. 254 ex-players, 193 people involved in rugby at all levels, and 1,708 members of the public were interviewed between January and April 2003.	Rugby union is predicted to grow by 0.1% from 0.6% to 0.7% between 2005 and 2013. This represents a 17% change	Clubs will be targeted to ensure they can run additional teams, therefore the demand for pitches will remain static or potentially increase (positive outcome of Rugby World Cup 2007 may have an impact)
	The Active People survey indicates that rugby is the 21st most popular sport in the UK, with participation rates of 0.7%.	Many initiatives are in place to increase opportunities and promote the sport	May require better quality pitches with ancillary facilities and increased promotion of junior rugby
	Women's participation has increased significantly in recent years.	Increase in participation by women. Women's rugby is still a minority sport but is stronger than ever, particularly in universities	Improved clubhouse facilities and increased access to pitches
Hockey	Hockey is one of top five most popular games in schools, although adult participation has declined recently and the number of children citing it as enjoyable has dropped from 13% to 10%. The Active People survey indicates that 0.3% of the population participate in hockey.	Slight decline in youth participation. Emphasis therefore is placed on promoting hockey among young people to secure the future of the game. However, many clubs still do not have access to STPs	Continuing requirement for STPs and improved clubhouse facilities to meet league requirements and to encourage club/team formation may be required

2.63 Whilst the above provides a useful indication as to the changing nature of pitch sports, it must be acknowledged that trends vary across the country. Therefore the local context is discussed below.

### Local trends in participation

2.64 Sport England's Active People Survey has researched the participation rates of adults. The survey measures levels of participation in sport and active recreation and its contribution to improving the health of the nation. It includes walking and cycling for recreation in addition to more traditional formal and informal sports. Regular participation is described as three days a week for a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate intensity.

2.65 In addition a range of other important sport related measures are included such as club membership, involvement in competition, receiving tuition or coaching and contributing to sport through voluntary activity.

2.66 The survey results for Darlington, taken from the 2005-2006 survey, revealed a participation rate of 21%. This means that Darlington fell within the middle 50% of

## SECTION 2 – THE CURRENT PICTURE

authorities at a national level, where the average rate of participation is 21%. The regional average is 20.5%.

- 2.67 This above data indicates that participation in Darlington is in line with the national average but above the regional average. The level of volunteering in the Borough (4.3%) is above the regional average (4.2%), but below the national average 4.7%.
- 2.68 The Active People Survey 2 (was completed in October 2008. National results indicate that participation (21.3%) and volunteering (4.9%) have risen marginally. Within the North East participation has increased by 0.8%, however, satisfaction with local sports facilities has decreased significantly by 2%.
- 2.69 Within Darlington, participation has increased by 2% to 23% (however this increase is not significant). This means that participation in Darlington is the highest of all authorities in the Tees Valley sub region. Volunteering and competition have also increased, however club membership and satisfaction with sports facilities have decreased.
- 2.70 Participation in football will be measured against other local authorities using data derived from the FA County Administration System. This is explored in more detail in Section 4.

### Market Segmentation

- 2.71 Sport England has developed nineteen sporting segments to help us understand the nations' attitudes and motivations – why they play sport and why they don't. This is particularly important to understand in order to ensure that the facilities in Darlington cater for the needs and expectations of local residents.
- 2.72 Residents are classified according to their key characteristics. The dominant groups in the Borough are explained in Table 2.5.

**Table 2.5 – Dominant Population Groups in Darlington**

Label	Age	Status	Characteristics	% of population
Elsie & Arnold	66+	Widowed Retired	Health problems and disability being major inhibitors to activity Those that do participate tend towards low intensity activities, such as walking, bowls or dancing (traditional ballroom), safe environments would encourage this group to walk more often.	10.6
Philip	45 - 55	Married Professional Older children	Sporty Has more time for himself Most active type within this Peer Group, enjoys participating in a number of activities, including team sports, racquet games and technical sports.	7.7
Tim	26 – 35	Single/ married May have children Professional	Sporty Settling down with partner, buying a house. Enjoys technical sports. Likely to have private gym membership, and compete in some sports.	6.7



## SECTION 2 – THE CURRENT PICTURE

Label	Age	Status	Characteristics	% of population
Elaine	46-55	Married Professional	Reasonably active Enjoys swimming, exercise classes, going to the gym & walking Motivations include keeping fit, losing weight and to help with injury.	

- 2.73 Analysis of the profile of the Borough therefore suggests that while not all residents have the propensity to participate in pitch sports, the provision of high quality and appropriate facilities may encourage several sectors of the population to participate.

### Summary

- 2.74 Table 2.6 summarises the main implications that the contextual review has on Darlington and the provision of playing pitches.

**Table 2.6 - Darlington contextual summary**

Key Issues	Role of this strategy in achieving these objectives
<b>National context</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the importance of meeting wider national policy objectives, particularly:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- provision of opportunities for identified target groups</li> <li>- promoting the health related benefits of sport and leisure activities</li> <li>- increasing mass participation levels</li> </ul> </li> <li>• the importance of closely reflecting National Governing Body of Sport priorities</li> <li>• the importance of delivering sustainable communities.</li> </ul>	<p>Effective provision of playing pitches can play a key role in meeting these objectives.</p> <p>The strategy will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• highlight geographical deficiencies in provision and participation (through the number of teams) and provide suitable recommendations</li> <li>• recognise initiatives aimed at increasing participation levels to look at the future provision</li> <li>• the strategy will contribute to the delivery of good quality playing pitches that will enhance local green space and subsequently the overall quality of the environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Regional context</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is a high emphasis placed on sport in the North East region and the importance of providing opportunities for all to progress and improve their quality of life and health is recognised</li> <li>• the vision for the region is to increase participation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The playing pitch strategy guide the improvement of pitches within Darlington</li> <li>• the playing pitch strategy will integrate with regional documents and provide an evidence base for decision making.</li> </ul>

## SECTION 2 – THE CURRENT PICTURE

Key Issues	Role of this strategy in achieving these objectives
<b>Local context</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the need to ensure that outdoor sports provision takes into account the context of the area, specifically the urban and rural mix of the Borough</li> <li>• a desire to increase the number of people who have the opportunity to take part in various sporting activity, in particular in disadvantaged groups and areas</li> <li>• the need to ensure that facility provision is sufficient to provide a basis for meeting local and national targets</li> <li>• the role of playing pitches in meeting wider local corporate aims and objectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the strategy will provide an understanding of the level of pitch provision required to stimulate increased participation in pitch sports across all sectors and to accommodate this increased demand in future years</li> <li>• the strategy will provide an awareness of local need and will ensure that local facilities are delivered to meet the needs of all residents</li> <li>• the strategy will consider the provision of pitches in the context of the character of the Borough.</li> </ul>

- 2.75 Darlington’s LSP and the local authority are aspiring to increase physical activity levels amongst residents, and as a result, hope to reduce health inequalities and incidences of poor health that are associated with leading a sedentary lifestyle eg obesity.
- 2.76 In order to do this, it is fundamental that the right amount of high quality facility/ pitches are provided in the right places that are accessible to all. It is important that the stock of facilities/pitches not only meets the needs of the population now, but also in the future.
- 2.77 Given that the aim is to increase participation levels in the future, it is important that more capacity is built in to the existing stock. In relation to pitches, this also allows a period of rest and recovery time ensuring pitches remain playable.

**SECTION 3**  
**THE METHODOLOGY**

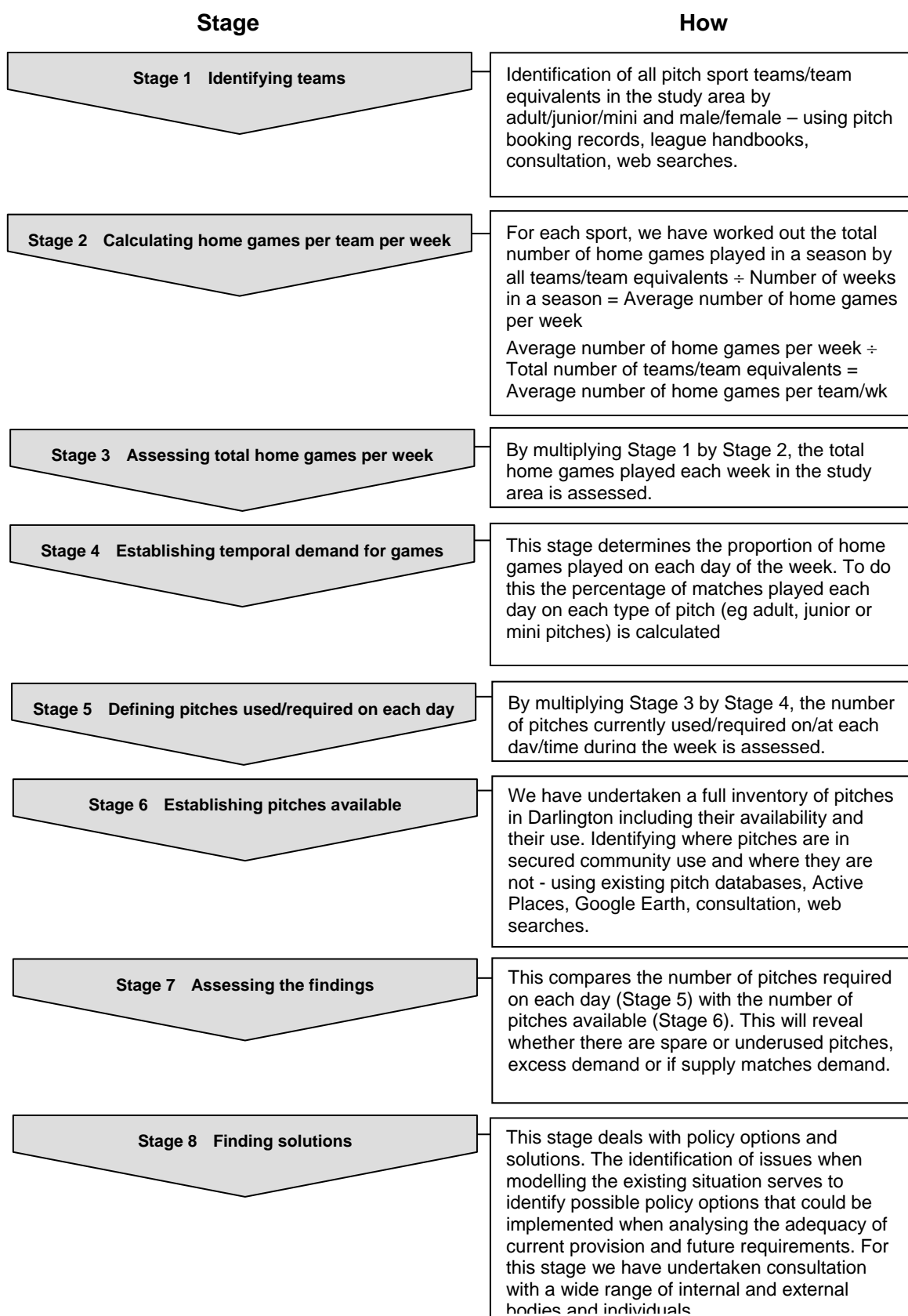
## **Methodology for assessing supply and demand**

### **The Playing Pitch Methodology (PPM)**

- 3.1 *'Towards a Level Playing Field: A manual for the Production of a Playing Pitch Strategy'* was launched in Spring 2003 and updated the previous methodology from 1991.
- 3.2 This revised methodology was produced by PMP following widespread consultation, in conjunction with a steering group comprising representatives from the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR), Local Government Association, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Loughborough University and Sport England.
- 3.3 The aim of the Playing Pitch Methodology (PPM) is to determine the number of pitches required for each activity based on demand in an actual or predicted set of circumstances.
- 3.4 The essential difference between the methodology and previous approaches based on standards is that, instead of using land area per head of population as the basic unit, it measures demand (at peak times) in terms of teams requiring pitches and then compares this with the pitches available, thus providing a tangible measure of the adequacy of existing supply.
- 3.5 The particular advantage of this methodology is that it is related precisely to the local situation and the task of collating and analysing the information highlights problems and issues from which policy options and solutions can be explored.
- 3.6 The revised methodology incorporates:
  - a more holistic view of pitch provision as one element of open space
  - the concept of 'team equivalents' and 'match equivalents' to reflect the requirements of the small-sided games
  - the refinement of team generation rates
  - the revised definition of a pitch
  - the refined quantitative audits of pitches by the use of multiplication factors for:
    - availability/accessibility
    - quality (to include the importance of ancillary provision at pitch sites as well as pitches themselves)
    - carrying capacity.
- 3.7 The PPM comprises eight stages, shown in Figure 3.1. Stages one to six involve numerical calculations, whilst Stages seven and eight develop issues and solutions. The methodology is employed to analyse the adequacy of current provision and to assess possible future situations, in order that latent and future demand (identified through Team Generation Rates), and the problems with quality, use and capacity of existing pitches can be taken into account. The expected increase in population is taken into account through the modelling of a future year – in this case, 2021.

3.8 Figure 3.1 shows the eight stages of the PPM and how each stage has been delivered upon.

**Figure 3.1 The key stages of the Playing Pitch Methodology**



- 3.9 PPM calculations take into account only those pitches that are secured for community use, in line with Sport England guidance. Although other pitches that exist but do not have secured community use have been identified.
- 3.10 The Football Association (FA) has recently begun collecting participation data through the county administration systems, enabling accurate benchmarking against like authorities and more accurate assessments of latent demand. The information available has been used to add value to the findings of the strategy, enabling more detailed investigation of the reasons behind key issues. This is shown in Section 5.

### **Our approach**

#### ***Demand***

- 3.11 The success of the methodology outlined above depends largely on obtaining as accurate a tally as possible of the number of teams and pitches within Darlington. To achieve this, a full audit of pitches, users and providers within the authority boundary and those on the periphery was conducted.
- 3.12 In order to ascertain demand and understand key issues for in the local area questionnaires (which can be found in Appendix A) were sent to:
- all known football, cricket, rugby and hockey clubs based within the authority boundaries (identified in governing body and county association handbooks, league handbooks, pitch booking records, websites, local press, the previous PPS and local knowledge)
  - all known colleges and schools within the Borough
  - Parish Councils.
- 3.13 Whilst a high response rate is desired, a 100% questionnaire response rate is not needed from clubs. This is because missing club information along with other views on the adequacy of supply can be attained through a variety of sources including:
- telephone calls to league secretaries, clubs and schools all providing qualitative information as well adding to the quantitative detail. The league secretaries were particularly helpful in providing the missing club information
  - current league handbooks
  - extensive internet research, through national databases including the Football Association, Rugby Football Union, England and Wales Cricket Board and England Hockey
  - consultation with local clubs, other sporting organisations and individuals via a workshop event
  - key issues emerging from individual stakeholder consultations.
- 3.14 The purpose of the club surveys was to cross check information and gather qualitative information from clubs. The total response rate for the number of returned surveys was approximately 26%, which is an average response to a postal survey. However, we are aware that some of the clubs that were sent surveys play outside of the borough and therefore may not have responded for this reason. In addition, some clubs sent one survey response on behalf of all of their teams which impacts on the

percentage response rate eg. Spraire Lads and Lasses FC have more than ten teams but just sent one survey response. In reality therefore, the percentage of survey responses is much higher than at first glance.

- 3.15 In addition, attempts were made to contact representatives from hockey, cricket, rugby and football clubs who did not respond to the questionnaire. This was through several means such as :
- the NGB
  - sports development officers
  - sports specific forums
  - league secretaries
  - a workshop event held for clubs and other sporting organisations and representatives on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009.
- 3.16 This additional information has been fed into the audit and qualitative analysis to ensure that sufficient data is collected to undertake PPM calculations and also to provide clubs with a further opportunity to comment. These consultation methods combined have allowed us to be able to make robust assessment of needs.
- 3.17 To ensure accurate auditing of football teams in Darlington, FA Local Area data for the 2007/08 season was studied to ascertain the total team numbers. This was further supplemented by studying fixture lists to find home pitch locations. Together with the returned club questionnaires and follow up consultation outlined above, the figures therefore provide an accurate indication of teams who play in the Borough.
- 3.18 As mentioned, in addition to the distribution of postal surveys, consultation has been undertaken with officers, league secretaries and relevant National Governing Bodies of sport.

### *Team equivalents*

- 3.19 The Towards a Level Playing Field methodology suggests that the concept of a 'team equivalent' or 'unit of play' is used to indicate discrete groups of demand for a pitch, in particular to reflect the requirements of small-sided games. However, Towards a Level Playing Field states that team equivalents and match equivalents do not need to be used if mini-soccer is played on its own dedicated pitches. The PPM spreadsheet for Darlington is based on the fact that dedicated mini soccer pitches are available.
- 3.20 School pitches available to community teams will not only be used for pitch sports, but also for school PE and 'breaktime' activity. Such activity will produce wear and tear and influence the capacity of pitches to accommodate competitive games. The demand for school pitches from school teams however will **not** impact upon the demand for pitches on the peak day. The demand for pitches therefore from school teams has not been included in the model. The model does, however, consider the fact that such activity will produce wear and tear of pitches and thus, the carrying capacity of school pitches is reduced accordingly.
- 3.21 A similar logic is applied to casual use of community pitches. Training on grass pitches produces wear and tear and reduces the capacity of pitches for competitive play. The carrying capacity of those pitches that are known to be used for casual play

are reduced. Casual use of parks pitches for training, does not however, affect the demand for pitches on the peak day.

***Supply***

3.22 As well as understanding the demand for pitches, a full audit of the supply of pitches is an essential component of a Playing Pitch Strategy.

3.23 Detailed data on the current pitches in Darlington was compiled by:

- drawing on the findings of the audit of open spaces and outdoor sports facilities
- undertaking site visits to all identified pitches using the site assessment matrix provided in the Towards a Level Playing Field toolkit
- analysing pitch bookings
- internet searches and local consultation.

***Availability and accessibility***

3.24 The ownership and accessibility of pitches will influence their actual availability for community use. The term 'secured community use' has been adopted to define this. This embraces:

- all local authority facilities
- school facilities where they are subject to formal community use agreements
- other institutional facilities that are available to the public as a result of formal community use agreements
- any facilities that are owned, used or maintained by clubs/private individuals and which, as a matter of policy and practice, are available to large sections of the public through membership of a club or through an admission fee.

3.25 All pitches have been identified as part of the audit process, however the following categorisation in Table 3.1 overleaf has been used to identify the differences in community access.



**Table 4.1 Categories of pitches**

Category	Definition	Supplementary information
A	Secured community pitches	Pitches in local authority or other public ownership or management
		Pitches in the voluntary, private or commercial sector which are open to members of the public
		Pitches at education sites which are available for use by the public through formal community use arrangements
B	Used by community, but not secured	Pitches not included above, that are nevertheless available for community use, eg school/college pitches without formal user agreements
C	Not open for community use	Pitches at establishments which are not, as a matter of policy or practice, available for hire by the public

3.26 Pitches in secured community use are pitches that are available for use by community teams and whose future use is secured for the coming seasons by one or more of the following:

- a formal community use agreement
- a leasing/management arrangement between the school and LEA requiring the pitch(es) to be available to community teams
- a policy of community use minuted by the school or LEA, including tariff of charges, etc
- minutes of the board of school governors allowing use of pitches by community teams
- written commitment from the school to the current community team(s) using the pitch(es) and where it is the intention of the school to maintain access for community teams to its pitch(es) at peak times (ie evenings, weekends and/or school holidays) for the next two or more years.

3.27 An assessment of the data obtained from the above research and consultation is detailed in Section 4.

**SECTION 4**  
**SUPPLY AND DEMAND**

## **Supply of Pitches**

### **Introduction**

4.1 This section outlines the current situation in Darlington in terms of pitch provision and demand for football, cricket, rugby and hockey pitches. This section therefore takes into consideration:

- overall pitch stock
- community pitches and non-community pitches
- location of pitches
- quality of pitches via site visit assessments
- clubs and teams in Darlington
- consultation feedback with regards to current and future needs.

### **Supply: playing pitch provision in Darlington**

#### ***Pitch stock***

4.2 The research methods outlined in Section 3 have identified 104 individual playing pitches in Darlington. This figure includes all known public, private, school and other pitches whether or not they are in secured community use. The full audit of pitches can be seen in Appendix B. These pitches comprise:

- 43 adult football pitches
- 25 junior football pitches
- 10 mini soccer pitches
- 11 cricket pitches (6 main club grounds)
- 13 adult rugby union pitches
- 2 full sized Synthetic Turf Pitches (STPs).

4.3 Of these 104 pitches, 69 (66%) are full-size adult football, cricket, rugby and hockey pitches. This equates to circa one pitch for every 1150 adults (16 plus) in Darlington. This ratio of pitches to adults compares poorly with many other authorities for which data is currently available (from PMP's database) as shown in Table 4.1. The ratio of pitches to adults is 16% lower than the national average. It must also be noted that the number of junior and mini pitches is lower than in many other authorities.

**Table 4.1 Ratio of adult pitches per 1,000 adults**

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Ratio (Pitches: adults)</b>
Kennett District Council	1:365
St Albans City and District Council	1:540
Chichester District Council	1:599
South Somerset District Council	1:608
Halton Borough Council	1:677
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	1:761
Lichfield District Council	1:766
North Lincolnshire Council	1:773
North Wiltshire District Council	1:804
Derwentside District Council	1:815
Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council	1:867
South Ribble Borough Council	1:891
Swindon	1:926
Adur District Council	1:947
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	1:968
<b>England</b>	<b>1:989</b>
Ipswich Borough Council	1:992
Northamptonshire County	1:1,015
St Helens	1:1,050
Portsmouth City Council	1:1,100
<b><i>Darlington Borough Council</i></b>	<b><i>1:1,150</i></b>
Sandwell MBC	1:1,327
Wolverhampton City Council	1:1,537

- 4.4 Using the data in Active Places Power, we have also compared the total number of grass pitches per 1000 people in Darlington, with the number of pitches per 1000 in each of Darlington’s ONS ‘nearest neighbour’ authorities, as shown in table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2 Comparison of grass pitches per 1000 population**

	<b>Grass pitches per 1000 population</b>
England	1:1,099
North East	1:1,982
Stockton on Tees	1:998
<i>Darlington</i>	<i>1:1,012</i>
Chesterfield	1:1,214
North Tyneside	1:1,268
Dover	1:1,653

## **SECTION 4 – SUPPLY AND DEMAND**

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- 4.5 The table shows that Darlington compares favourably to three out of four of its ONS nearest neighbours in terms of the total number of grass pitches for every 1000 people. This comparison does not however, consider quality of or accessibility too pitches.
- 4.6 In addition to the grass pitches that have been identified, there are two full size synthetic turf pitches (STPs) within Darlington. However, only one of these is suitable for hockey due to its type of surface (sand based); this is located at Eastbourne Sports Complex. While sand-based synthetic facilities are considered suitable for football training, they are rarely used in competitive match play due to local and national football league regulations.
- 4.7 The other facility is a third generation (3G) pitch at Hummersknott School. The STP at Hummersknott School is suitable for football and rugby training but is not suitable for hockey. This facility is relatively new (built in 2008) and at the time of writing, has relatively limited community use as the programme has not yet been fully developed and building works on the school grounds are still ongoing. However, from September 2009 the pitch will be fully accessible to the public outside of school hours with long term agreements for community use of this facility in place. This is necessary as the pitch was part funded through the Football Foundation. The FA has recently approved the use of 3G synthetic facilities for competitive football matches.

### **Community pitches**

- 4.8 In line with '*Towards a Level Playing Field: A manual for the Production of a Playing Pitch Strategy*' (Sport England and CCPR 2003), our definition of 'community pitches' is those pitches with 'secured community use' – also referred to as category A pitches.
- 4.9 In practice this definition embraces:
- pitches which are in local authority management or other public ownership or management
  - any facilities owned, used or maintained by clubs/private individuals which as a matter of policy or practice are available for use by large sections of the public through membership of a club or admission fee. In either case the 'cost of use' must be reasonable and affordable for the majority of the community. 'Reasonable cost' implies that pitch hire rates are broadly similar to other public sector provided pitches.
  - pitches at education sites which are available for use by the public through formal community use arrangements
  - any other institutional facilities which are available to the public as a result of formal dual/community agreements.
- 4.10 In line with '*Towards A Level Playing Field*', pitches at educational establishments are only considered to be 'secured' for community use if one or more of the following is applicable:
- there is a formal community use agreement in place
  - there is a leasing management arrangement between the Council and the school, requiring the pitch to be available to community teams

## **SECTION 4 – SUPPLY AND DEMAND**

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- a policy of community use minuted by the school, including the provision of a tariff of charges
  - minutes of the board of school governors allowing use of pitches by community teams
  - written commitment from the school
  - where it is the proved intention of the school to maintain access for community teams to its pitch(es) at peak times for the next two or more years.
- 4.11 ***For the purposes of this strategy, only schools who indicated that they have a formal community use agreement for use of their pitches are considered as accessible community pitches – category A pitches.*** While several schools provide access for local community teams, the only formal agreements in place are at the Education Village, Harrowgate Hill Primary School and Hummersknott STP. The issue of formally securing pitches for community use will be returned to in Section 6.
- 4.12 This links to the opportunities offered through the Extended Schools programme and the Building Schools for the Future programme (Darlington was originally allocated to start their BSF project in the later Waves 10-12 Darlington; at the time of writing, BSF is currently in Wave 5-6).
- 4.13 School sites cannot always offer the same opportunities as other pitch sites because most do not have separate changing facilities and pitch hire is frequently impacted by school holidays. Furthermore, there is a cost to schools to open up their sites and this must be recouped through fees payable for the use of the pitch. Some schools also cite the increased risk to school property in terms of damage to pitches, buildings and ancillary accommodation if they were to open for community use outside of school hours.
- 4.14 Of the 104 pitches identified, **52 (50%) are category A pitches ie are secured for use by the local community.** As demonstrated in Table 4.2 below, 50% ranks Darlington lower than average in comparison to other local authorities in PMP's database. School pitches that are used by the community but where there is no formal community use agreement in place (ie category B) are not included within the 50%. It is important to note that comparisons are made for information only, from a sample of other authorities that PMP has completed work for.
- 4.15 In addition to those pitches that are secured for community use, there are 24 category B pitches across eight sites where community use is permitted but there are no formal use agreements in place. These are;
- Branksome School
  - Longfield Comprehensive School
  - Hurworth House School Playing Fields
  - Heighington C Of E Primary School
  - Mount Pleasant Primary School
  - Abbey Junior School
  - Gurney Pease Primary School
  - Eastbourne Church Of England Academy.

**Table 4.2 Percentage of secured community pitches**

<b>Local authority</b>	<b>% of pitches secured for community use</b>
Ipswich Borough Council	84%
North Lincolnshire Council	77%
Wolverhampton City Council	73%
Croydon Borough Council	72%
South Somerset District Council	69%
Sandwell MBC	67%
Worcestershire County	66%
Lichfield District Council	65%
Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council	64%
Maidstone Borough Council	61%
Mid Devon District Council	57%
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	56%
Swindon Borough Council	55%
Halton Borough Council	54%
Adur District Council	53%
<b><i>Darlington Borough Council</i></b>	<b><i>50%</i></b>
St Albans City and District Council	49%
Derwentside District Council	47%
South Ribble Borough Council	47%
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	44%
Chichester District Council	43%

- 4.16 Unfortunately, without access to the playing pitch strategies for Darlington’s ONS nearest neighbours, it has not been possible to compare the percentage of secured community use pitches.
- 4.17 The full breakdown of these pitches can be seen in Appendix B. As highlighted earlier, school sites have been divided appropriately into those that are currently used by the community with secured community use (category A), those that are currently used by the community without formal use agreements (category B), and those that do not permit access at all at the current time (category C).

***Location of pitches***

- 4.18 The location of the existing pitches in Darlington has been considered, using the locality areas outlined in Section 1.
- 4.19 Table 4.3 illustrates the area of playing pitches (in hectares) available for community use in each area and the proportion of the total pitches available.

**Table 4.3 Distribution of pitches in Darlington Borough**

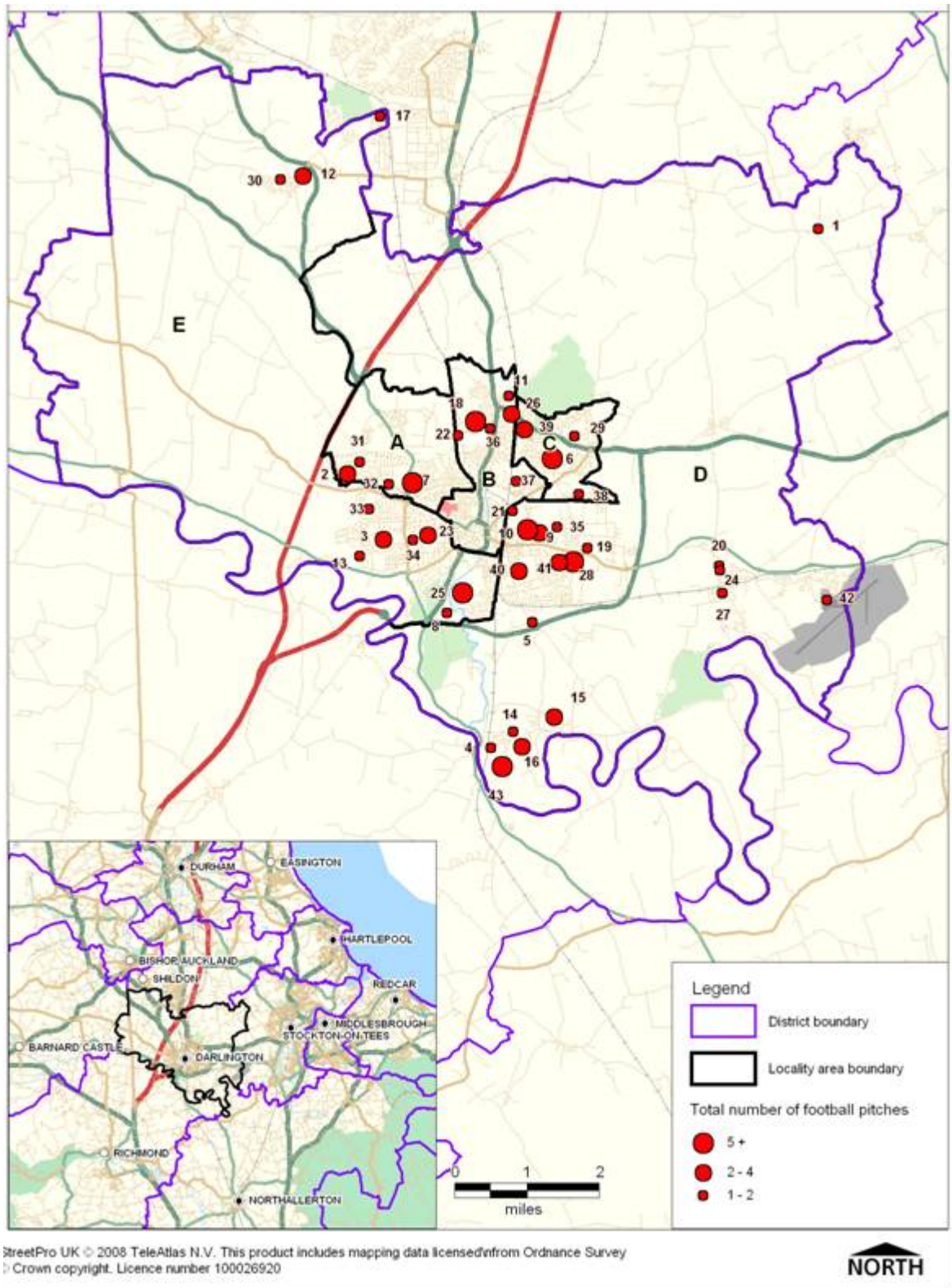
Locality area	Total number of pitches	Total playing pitch area (ha)	Total playing pitch area with secured community use (ha)	% of playing pitch area with secured community use
A	12	14.06	5.16	36.7%
B	15	21.50	3.58	16.7%
C	11	6.38	4.88	76.5%
D	35	37.54	15.56	41.4%
E	31	28.04	12.50	44.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>107.52</b>	<b>40.18</b>	<b>38.8%</b>

*NB. The number of pitches has been translated into total pitch area using National Playing Field Association (NPFA) data for pitch area sizes – see appendix B)*

- 4.20 In total there are 107.52 hectares of playing pitches across Darlington. However, only 39% of this total area is secured for community use.
- 4.21 The largest total area of playing pitches is found in locality D, with a total area of 37.54 hectares. The smallest supply within the borough is found within locality area C with only 6.38 hectares.
- 4.22 When looking at community accessible playing pitches, it can be seen that locality areas D and E have the greatest amount of community accessible playing pitch space (15.56 and 12.50 hectares respectively).
- 4.23 Although the areas D and E have both the highest amount of pitch space and community pitch space, area C contains the highest proportion of site area which is available for community use (77%). Only 17% of the total playing pitch area in area B is available for community use.
- 4.24 The distribution of pitches by locality area is set out in Appendix B. The locations of grass pitches across the borough are illustrated in Figures 4.1 - 4.3 on the following pages. The locations of the STPs and other small sided training areas are included later in the report.



Figure 4.1 Provision of football pitches in Darlington



## SECTION 4 – SUPPLY AND DEMAND

### Key – Football pitches within Darlington

ID	Name	Area	Number of pitches			Cat
			Adult	Junior	Mini	
1	BISHOPTON REDMARSHALL CE PRIMARY SCHOOL	D	0	1	0	C
2	BRANKSOME SCHOOL	A	3	0	0	B
3	CARMEL ROMAN CATHOLIC TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE	E	3	0	0	C
4	CROFT WORKING MENS CLUB	D	1	0	0	A
5	DARLINGTON ARENA	D	1	0	0	C
6	DARLINGTON EDUCATION VILLAGE	C	3	2	2	A
7	DARLINGTON RAILWAY ATHLETIC CLUB	A	2	0	2	A
8	DARLINGTON RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB	E	1	0	0	A
9	EASTBOURNE CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY	D	2	0	0	B
10	EASTBOURNE SPORTS COMPLEX	D	4	0	0	A
11	GLEBE ROAD	B	1	0	0	A
12	HEIGHINGTON PLAYING FIELDS	E	1	2	0	A
13	HUMMERSKNOTT SCHOOL & LANGUAGE COLLEGE	E	1*	0	0	A
14	HURWORTH GRANGE COMMUNITY CENTRE	D	1	0	0	A
15	HURWORTH HOUSE SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS	D	2	0	0	B
16	HURWORTH SCHOOL	D	1	1	0	C
17	INEOS SPORTS FACILITIES	E	1	0	0	C
18	LONGFIELD COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL	B	4	2	0	B
19	MCMULLEN ROAD	D	1	0	0	A
20	MIDDLETON ST GEORGE CRICKET CLUB	D	0	1	0	A
21	NEW DARLINGTON COLLEGE SPORTS CENTRE	D	1	0	0	C
22	NORTH PARK	B	1	0	0	A
23	QUEEN ELIZABETH SIXTH FORM COLLEGE PLAYING FIELDS	E	3	0	0	C
24	SAINT GEORGE PLAYING FIELD	D	0	1	0	A
25	SOUTH PARK	E	2	1	4	A
26	SPRINGFIELD PARK	B	1	1	0	A
27	ST GEORGES CE AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL	D	0	1	0	C
28	TOMMY CROOKS PARK	D	4	0	0	A
29	WHINFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL	C	0	1	0	C
30	HEIGHINGTON C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL	E	0	1	0	B
31	MOUNT PLEASANT PRIMARY SCHOOL	A	0	1	0	B
32	COCKERTON C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL	A	0	0	1	C
33	MOWDEN JUNIOR SCHOOL	E	0	1	0	C
34	ABBAY JUNIOR SCHOOL	E	0	1	0	B
35	HEATHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL	D	0	1	0	C
36	HARROWGATE HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL	B	0	1	0	A
37	GURNEY PEASE PRIMARY SCHOOL	B	0	1	0	B
38	RED HALL COMMUNITY AND CHILDRENS CENTRE	C	1	0	0	A
39	ST BEDE'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL	C	0	2	0	C
40	DODMIRE JUNIOR AND INFANTS SCHOOL	D	0	1	1	C
41	ST TERESA'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL	D	0	1	1	C
42	TEESSIDE AIRPORT	D	1	0	0	C
43	MIDDLESBROUGH FC TRAINING GROUND	D	8	0	0	C

- 4.25 In addition to the above sites, there used to be two senior football pitches at Lingfield Point in locality D. Currently, however these are not used but the playing field still exists. This site could potentially be brought back in to use in the future should demand require.

**Figure 4.2 Provision of cricket pitches in Darlington**

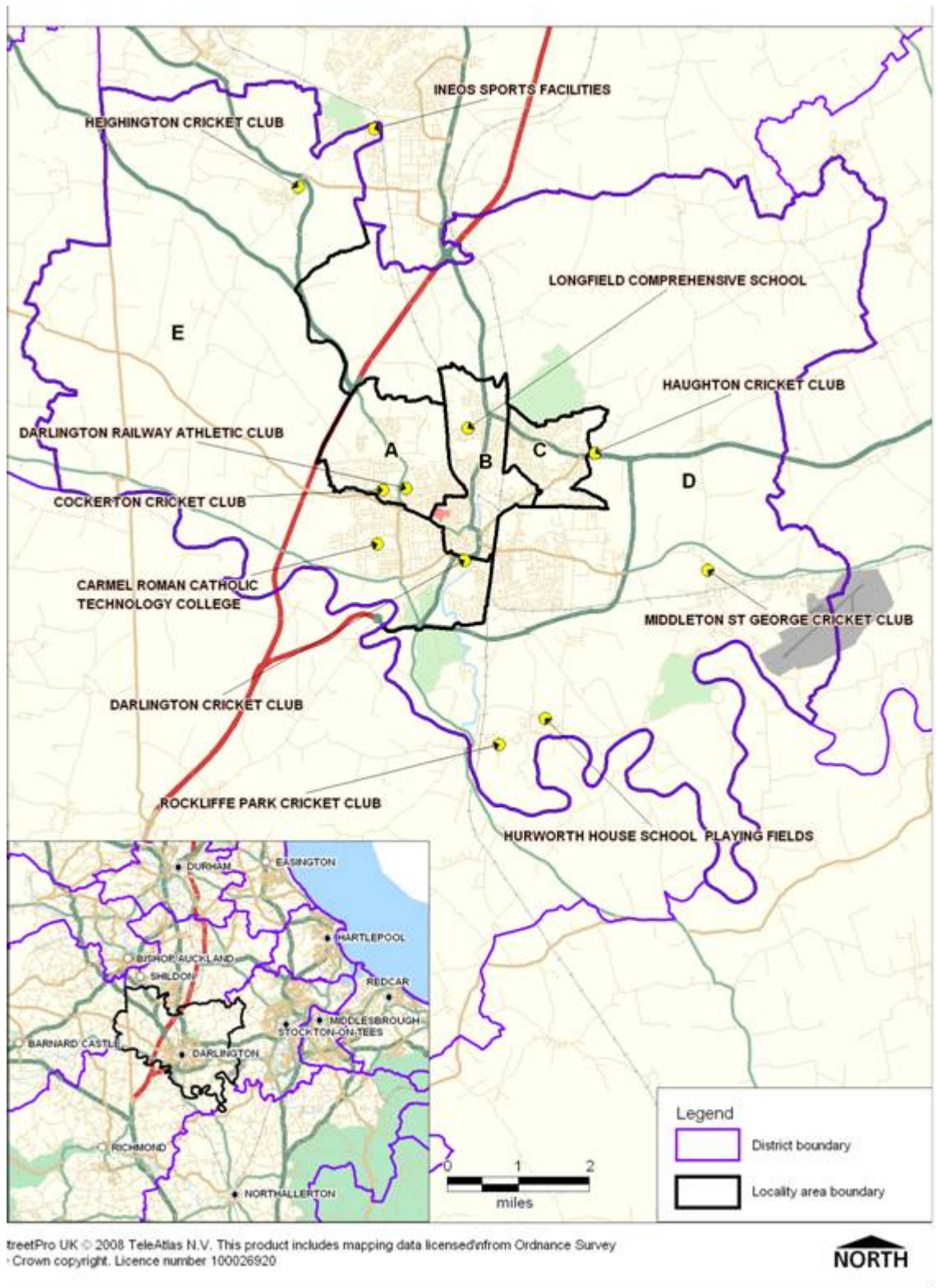
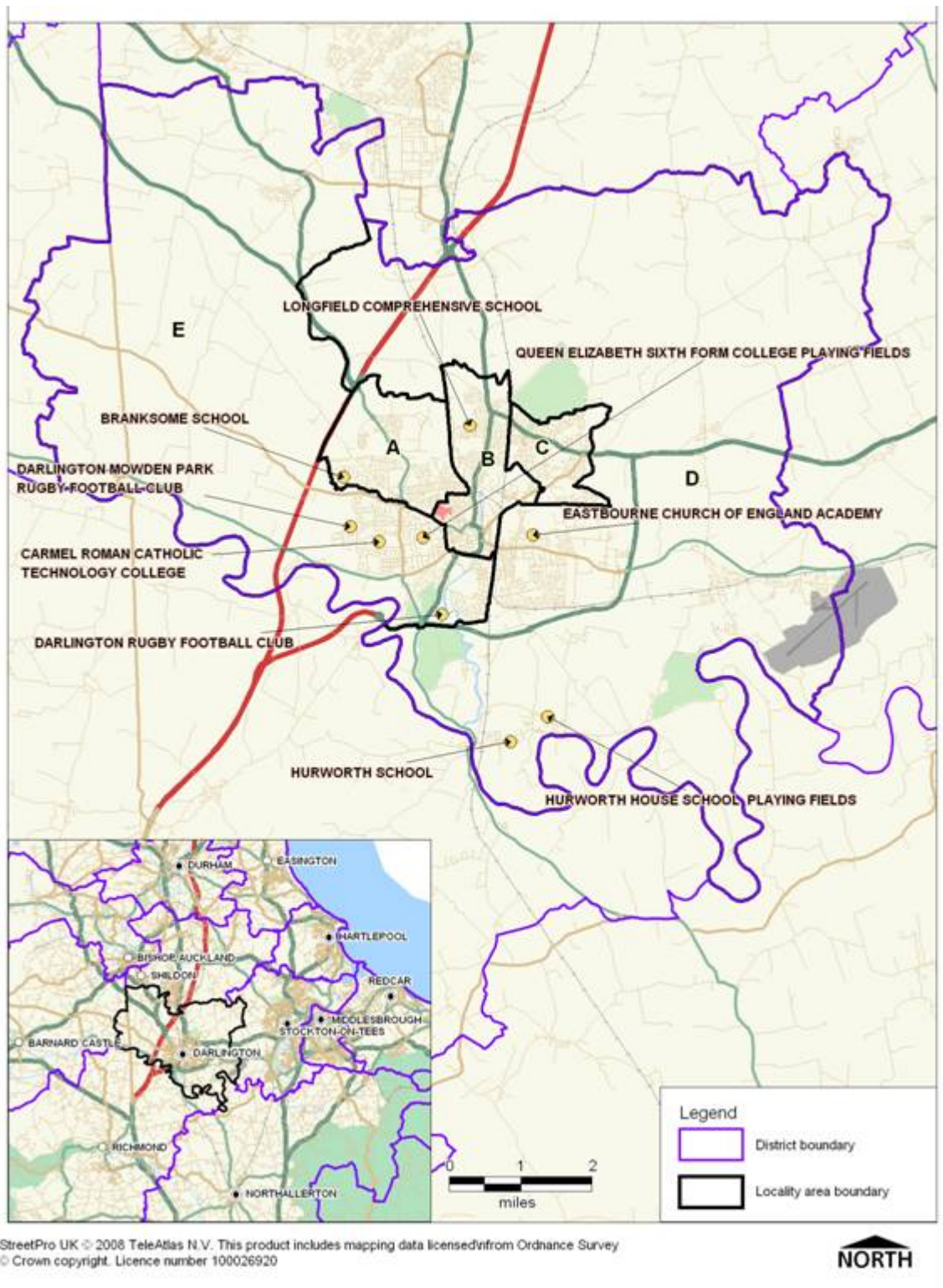


Figure 4.3 Provision of rugby pitches in Darlington



**Ownership**

4.26 Table 4.4 below illustrates the ownership of all pitches. It can be seen that the LEA are the largest overall providers across the borough followed by the local authority and private clubs and the voluntary sector.

4.27 Nine pitches are owned by other education establishments eg colleges and independent schools and five are owned by Parish Councils.

**Table 4.4 Ownership of all playing pitches within Darlington**

<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Nr of adult football pitches</b>	<b>Nr of junior football pitches</b>	<b>Nr of mini football pitches</b>	<b>Nr of cricket pitches</b>	<b>Nr of adult rugby union pitches</b>	<b>Nr of artificial pitches</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Local authority	13	2	4	0	0	1	20
LEA	16	19	4	2	6	1	48
Other education	6	0	0	1	2	0	9
Parish council	2	3	0	0	0	0	5
Private/voluntary	6	1	2	8	5	0	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>104</b>

4.28 Table 4.5 overleaf summarises the ownership of community pitches across Darlington.

**Table 4.5 Ownership of playing pitches with secured community use in Darlington**

<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Nr of adult football pitches</b>	<b>Nr of junior football pitches</b>	<b>Nr of mini football pitches</b>	<b>Nr of cricket pitches</b>	<b>Nr of adult rugby union pitches</b>	<b>Nr of artificial pitches</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Local authority	13	2	4	0	0	1	20
LEA	3	3	2	0	0	1	9
Other education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Parish council	2	3	0	0	0	0	5
Private/corporate	4	1	2	6	5	0	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>52</b>

4.29 The key points arising from Tables 4.4 and 4.5 regarding the ownership of pitches are:

- the providers of the greatest amount pitches available for community use are Darlington Borough Council (20) and private or voluntary clubs (18). This equates to 36.5% of the total stock of pitches in the Borough and 73% of pitches available for community use. This highlights the important role of these providers in meeting the needs of the local community, and in particular, reinforces the importance of the voluntary sector in pitch provision
- it can be seen that whilst the LEA are important providers of pitches, there are only nine pitches with formal dual use agreements. These are at the two PFI schools (Education Village and Harrogate Hill Primary) and the STP at Hummersknott. There are 24 pitches located at school sites (including one independent school) where schools have indicated that community use is permitted but that there are no secure community agreements in place. This demonstrates that there are schools in the borough that present a particular opportunity for securing community use of pitches
- five pitches with community access are owned by Parish Councils. Parish Councils are particularly important providers in the rural settlements of Heighington and Middleton St George
- none of the pitches at independent schools or sixth form/further education colleges have formal agreements for community use of their pitches.

### **Quality of pitch and ancillary facilities**

- 4.30 Pitch quality is a key issue. Perceived quality of pitches (and ancillary facilities) is almost as important as actual quality as the perceptions of users or potential users can easily be affected, changing usage patterns accordingly.
- 4.31 The quality of pitches in Darlington has been evaluated through site assessments undertaken by PMP, as well as through consultation with users and other interested parties.

### **Site assessments**

- 4.32 The site assessments are designed to evaluate the degree to which specific sports pitches are fit for purpose. An assessment matrix (Appendix C) was used to assess the overall site and the quality of the pitches and ancillary facilities where available.
- 4.33 As assessments were made during the winter months, many cricket pitches were not in use and could therefore not be assessed. Assessments were only made for pitches that have some community access.
- 4.34 It is important to note that the assessments represent a snap shot in time and therefore any natural influences such as the weather may affect the quality of the pitches. Likewise, the time of the visits for cricket pitch assessments (winter) should be used to qualify any assessments made. In particular, many of the pitches were quite frosty at the time of visiting and had limited use in the preceding weeks due to severe wet weather conditions.
- 4.35 Site specific improvements will be covered in Section 6, and scores for each pitch are provided in Appendix D. Key issues emerging from site visits include:
- several pitch sites do not have any changing facilities
  - the quality of changing facilities was deemed to be average at the majority of sites where changing facilities were provided. However, there were very few sites which complied with modern design guidelines enabling participation by juniors and women at the same time as men's teams
  - voluntary club and privately owned pitch sites generally appear to be better quality than public pitches
  - there is evidence of unofficial use of playing pitches, particularly in public parks eg dog walking, tyre tracks, litter etc
  - there are a high number of poor quality single pitch sites
  - car parking facilities are insufficient at several sites with only street parking available
  - there was evidence of overuse at several pitch sites eg stud damage to pitch surface, bare goal mouths etc
  - public pitches generally appeared poorly drained with evidence of standing water
  - primary school pitches were generally of average quality – nets are usually dismantled after the game to prevent unofficial use.

### **Site facilities**

- 4.36 The site assessment matrix rates both the overall facilities (changing rooms, parking, etc) as well as the pitches themselves. The percentage scores for the overall site are broken down as follows:
- over 90% - excellent
  - 60% to 89% - good
  - 40% to 59% - average
  - 30% to 39% - poor
  - less than 30% - very poor.
- 4.37 The following sites scored 90% or higher for quality of ancillary facilities:
- Darlington Education Village
  - Mowden Park Rugby Club
  - Darlington Rugby Club
  - Hummersknott School
  - Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College
  - Carmel School.
- 4.38 None of the sites above are owned by Darlington Borough Council (leisure service) which suggests that ancillary accommodation at private facilities is of higher quality.
- 4.39 The following sites scored 30% or below – an indication of the facilities at the overall site being considered very poor:
- Glebe Road
  - McMullen Road
  - North Park
  - Middleton St George Playing Field
  - Springfield Park
  - Tommy Crooks Park
  - Redhall Community Centre
  - Teesside Airport Pitch Site
  - Hurworth House School Sports Ground
  - Eastbourne Academy.



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- 4.40 In addition to the above, many of the primary school sites do not have appropriate (or any) changing provision and many have limited car parking and therefore several of them have a quality score of 30% or less.
- 4.41 The main reasons for the above sites scoring poorly are due to a lack of changing facilities and poor car parking.
- 4.42 The mean score across all sites was 51% indicating that changing provision and car parking may be a key future priority. It is important to note that these ratings are deemed to be reflective of what could be reasonably expected given the site's current use or status – for example, a site with one pitch would be expected to have a lower quality changing facility compared with a multi-pitch hub site. The score for each takes this into account. We will return to this issue in Section 6.

### ***Pitch Quality***

- 4.43 The percentage scores for pitches are broken down as follows:
- over 90% - excellent pitch
  - 65% to 90% - good pitch
  - 55% to 64% - average pitch
  - 30% to 54% - below average pitch
  - less than 30% - poor pitch.
- 4.44 The ratings for the individual pitches at each site can be found in Appendix D. Table 4.6 summarises the ratings awarded to pitches across Darlington.

**Table 4.6 Quality of playing pitches across Darlington**

<b>Quality of pitch</b>	<b>Proportion of pitches in this category</b>
Excellent	1%
Good	30%
Average	40%
Below average	30%
Poor	1%

- 4.45 The overall results for pitch quality indicate that the majority of pitches in the borough are rated as average. 30% of pitches are rated as good and 30% below average. One pitch achieved a poor quality score on the day of the site assessments; this was Redhall Community Centre. There were, however, a number of other pitches that received lower than a 50% quality score. These included the local authority owned pitches; North Park, Tommy Crooks Park, Glebe Road and MacMullen Road.
- 4.46 The sites with pitches scoring highest were:
- Darlington College (91%)
  - Darlington Mowden Park Rugby Club (84%)

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- Darlington Rugby Club (82%)
- Darlington Railway Athletic Football Club (80%).

4.47 The (community accessible) pitches with the lowest scores were:

- Redhall Community Centre (29%)
- North Park (33%)
- McMullen Road (34%)
- Haughton Cricket Club (36%)
- Carmel School (37%)
- Heighington Primary School (46%)
- Longfield High School (46%)
- Glebe Road (47%)
- Tommy Crooks Park (47%)

4.48 Site specific issues raised on Council owned and managed pitches include:

- Glebe Road - this single pitch has been unplayable for the majority of the 2008-2009 season. Whilst it is relatively flat it requires major drainage works
- McMullen Road - this single pitch was new for 2008-2009 however it has not really been used. It is built on very wet land and has had standing water for six months. This pitch will never be used by clubs unless it has major works, however, feedback suggests that investment would be better spent elsewhere
- South Park - there are no adult pitches and no adult teams play here. It is understood that the Council has marked one full size pitch, however, this is over the largest size allowed even for adults. Pitches & changing facilities are available but league secretaries suggested that they thought these were only available for junior team use due to an agreement with residents. The intended use of the facility however, was to provide changing accommodation for football and other sports, in particular Spraire Lads and Lasses, but this usage was not meant to be exclusive. The changing facilities are in relatively good condition however the pitches that were in closest proximity to the changing provision have been damaged by the annual fireworks display, these are now unusable. The changing facilities that do exist therefore are now on the other side of the park to the remaining pitches
- Springfield Park - overused pitch. These two pitches are on a slight slope and suffer from a high water table. Goal posts are good quality (new for 08/09) however, they are left up all year round which encourages informal use of the pitches
- Tommy Crooks Park - Pitches 2-4 need major works. Pitch 1 would be good quality if drainage installed. One pitch has been unplayable for most of the 2008-2009 season due to water logging

## SECTION 4 – SUPPLY AND DEMAND

- North Park - this single pitch, although being relatively flat, is poor quality with poor drainage and evidence of wear and tear on the goal mouth. Goal posts are good quality (new for 08/09) however, they are left up all year round which encourages informal use of the pitches
- Eastbourne Sports Complex - stated to be the best of the local authority pitch sites, however it is used by lots of teams and leagues and therefore overuse is potentially an issue.
- Redhall Community Centre - this was new for the 2008-2009 season. Grounds maintenance officers suggested that this is one of the better pitches, however this contradicts with the site assessment which identified a low percentage of grass cover, damage to the pitch surface due to tyre tracks, exposure of pitch to the elements and missing goal posts. This is the only pitch that is fenced off although there has been some vandalism to the fence which had not been replaced at the time of writing.

4.49 In summary, the vast majority of local authority pitches have no changing facilities, and drainage is a significant issue. As a consequence, there is big demand from teams to play on the few pitch sites that do have changing facilities and that are of adequate quality. This subsequently leads to overuse of these pitches. Feedback also suggests that pitches are poorly maintained.

4.50 There is a lot of informal use of the local authority sites due to their location within parks and this is not controlled at all.

4.51 One of the big issues identified by clubs is the loss of pitches over the years for building developments. Eastbourne Sports Complex which is the main public site for football, previously had ten football pitches, however, six of these have been lost to development. At the time of writing there are only four pitches at this site, meaning a temporary loss of six pitches. Two of these pitches will be reinstated when the adjacent Eastbourne Academy opens and two more will be reinstated on the Academy site itself, resulting in an overall net loss of two pitches.

4.52 Teams that previously played at Eastbourne have been relocated to other pitch sites across the borough, primarily Tommy Crooks Park. However, consultation suggests that these pitches are of a much poorer quality with no changing provision. Teams have therefore voiced dissatisfaction with this situation.

### **School Pitches**

4.53 Surveys were distributed to schools in order to obtain feedback on the quality of pitches at school sites and the degree to which they meet curriculum needs. The key issues arising in relation to playing pitches from those schools that responded are summarised in table 4.7 below.

**Table 4.7      Playing pitch issues identified by schools**

Name of school	Playing pitch issues identified
Longfield School	Sports College with facilities available for community use and are extensively used. Pitches are poor quality with drainage problems, there are not enough indoor facilities to cater for pupils and parking is a major problem. Outdoor pitches are extensively used by the school and community but are of very poor quality

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Name of school	Playing pitch issues identified
Education Village	This is a PFI site run by Kajima and all pitches are available to hire. The school is generally very satisfied with the quality of its pitches
Hurworth Comprehensive School	Poor quality pitches suffering from poor drainage, poor changing facilities
Hummersknott School	The main issue stated is the ease of booking and value for money. The school is currently not staffed to manage the sports facilities easily and caretaker payments exceed income
Hurworth House School	Changing rooms are some distance from the pitches
Gurney Pease Primary School	Main issue is with indoor space and car parking
Heathfield Primary School	Dissatisfied with the quality of playing fields as they are always waterlogged
High Coniscliffe Primary School	Maintenance agreement for the grounds unreliable ie grass cutting , markings etc. The playing field is very uneven and is a persistent problem. The school has recently purchased field adjustment to the site to be used to extend the playing field
St Georges Primary	New school, waiting for playing fields to mature before they can be used
Mount Pleasant Primary School	has significant playing fields that are underused. Parking can sometimes be an issue when pitches are in use by community teams at weekends
Mowden Junior School	Condition of both outdoor pitches, changing facilities and indoor space is rated poorly
Reid Street School	This is one of only two schools in Darlington without a playing field and the only one currently without a MUGA as an alternative
Holy Family Primary School	Has a gravel pitch that needs re-surfacing.

4.54 In general, primary schools have an area of playing field that is marked out for different sports at different times of the year. Pitches are therefore often temporary and goals posts are usually dismantled after use. Those schools that did not respond to the survey were audited through site assessments and through the Active Places data check undertaken by Leisure Database Company on behalf of Sport England in January 2009.

### Demand

4.55 Table 4.8 below illustrates the clubs and teams for football, cricket, hockey and rugby union currently playing in Darlington. A full list of teams can be found in Appendix B.

**Table 4.8 – The spread of teams across Darlington**

Sport	Number of clubs	Number of teams*
Football	53	121
Cricket	6	18
Rugby Union	2	34
Hockey	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>177</b>

\* includes mini teams

## **SECTION 4 – SUPPLY AND DEMAND**

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- 4.56 There are 62 clubs across Darlington of which 20 contain more than one team. At least one football, cricket and rugby club runs junior and adult teams, offering opportunities for progression between the age groups. The only sport that does not run junior teams is hockey.
- 4.57 Of the 177 teams currently playing within Darlington, 68% are playing football. Of these 121 football teams, 40% (49) are adult teams. The other 60% (72) teams are junior or mini sides. This is reflective of the national trends, which indicate that participation in mini and junior football is growing.
- 4.58 Participation in junior cricket is increasing nationally, however, only a third of cricket teams in Darlington are junior teams. Three clubs offer junior cricket, these are Darlington CC, Darlington Railway Athletic CC and Rockcliffe Park CC.
- 4.59 There are two rugby clubs in Darlington and both are both strong clubs evident by the number of teams that they are producing at all age groups. Rugby participation is focused around these key clubs and the development opportunities these clubs offer. Residents living in all areas of the Borough therefore travel to the home venues of these clubs. Both clubs are located in locality E, which may mean that there are transport issues for residents living on the opposite side of the borough.
- 4.60 There is only one hockey club in Darlington. Hockey participation is focused around this club and the development opportunities that it offers. Both men's and women's teams currently train and play at Eastbourne Sports Complex. Currently however, the club does not produce any junior teams but it does run weekly junior training sessions during the main season. These sessions are open to any young people who would like to play or have a go at playing hockey.
- 4.61 There are a number of teams that are currently playing at a site that is not their preferred pitch venue, these are:
- Model T FC – currently play at Eastbourne Sports Complex however their preferred venue is Hummersknott School. This should be possible once the pitches at Hummersknott and building works are complete
  - Darlington Longfield AFC – currently play outside of the borough at Shildon Sunnydale leisure Centre in Sedgfield, however, they would prefer to play their matches in Darlington but have struggled to find an available quality venue on a Sunday morning.
  - The match day venue for AFC 147 Rileys has had to be transferred to Tommy Crooks Park from Eastbourne Sports Complex due to the loss of pitches at Eastbourne. They would prefer to play their home matches at the Eastbourne venue in the future.

### **User Perceptions**

- 4.62 The key issues in terms of participation, facilities used, issues experienced by clubs and development opportunities are summarised in tables 4.9 – 4.12 overleaf. The issues raised in local strategic documents relating directly to each sport are also highlighted in these tables.

**Table 4.9 Football in Darlington**

<b>Method of Consultation</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Status in Darlington</b>
<b>Club &amp; league consultation</b>	Membership	Football is the most popular team sport in terms of participation in Darlington with a total of 121 teams, excluding the professional sides. Just over half (53%) of responding clubs indicated that membership had remained static over the past five years. 27% said membership had increased with 20% stating that their membership numbers had declined. Five responding clubs identified increasing their adult membership as a key target area and four wish to increase the number of junior members.
	Standard of play	<p>There are a number of leagues that have teams from the Darlington area. Some of these leagues extend into the rest of the sub-region, particularly Sedgefield. Whilst there is some cross border travel, it is minimal. The three primary leagues from which teams play in are the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Darlington Sunday Invitation League</b> which plays on Sunday mornings</li> <li>• <b>Darlington and District Church and Friendly League</b> which plays on Saturday afternoons</li> <li>• <b>Teesside Junior Football Alliance</b> which plays on Sunday afternoons</li> <li>• <b>The Frank Hudson Transport and Cook District League</b> which plays on Saturday afternoons</li> <li>• <b>Jack Hatfield Sports Teesside League</b> which plays on Saturday afternoons.</li> </ul> <p>The leagues above are considered to be part-time social leagues. A number of semi-professional teams also play within the borough boundary. There is also a professional club, Darlington FC who play in the Coca Cola Football League 2.</p> <p>The majority of adult football in Darlington is played on Sunday mornings (because of the number of teams in the Sunday Invitation League) and the majority of junior football on Sundays afternoons. This means that demand for pitches is highest at these times.</p>
	Facilities used	<p>The main public site for football is at Eastbourne Sports Complex which is the only public facility with changing provision. This previously had ten football pitches, however, six of these have been lost to development. At the time of writing there is now only four pitches at this site, meaning a temporary loss of six pitches. Two of these pitches will be reinstated when the adjacent Academy opens and two more will be reinstated on the Academy site itself, resulting in a net loss of two pitches. The pitches at Eastbourne were assessed and deemed to be generally of average quality.</p> <p>The Council also provides a number of other pitch sites but none of these have changing facilities. These are Glebe Road, McMullen Road, North Park, South Park, Springfield Park, Tommy Crooks Park and Redhall Community Centre. These pitches were assessed and deemed to be of a quality that is below average. A full audit of scores is provided at appendix D.</p> <p>In addition, there is a network of pitches in the rural settlements which are used by football teams. Many of</p>

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Method of Consultation	Issue	Status in Darlington
		<p>these pitches, owned by Parish Councils or voluntary clubs, provide a home for one or two local teams. There are two schools with formal community use agreements for there pitches and eight schools permitting informal use of their sites.</p>
	Quantity/quality	<p>The main quality, quantity and accessibility issues highlighted through site assessments and consultations were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the football clubs that responded to the survey (that are from within Darlington), 80% indicated that the quantity of pitches was poor or very poor and 20% indicated that it was good or average</li> <li>• Three clubs that responded indicated that they are not currently able to play at their preferred venue</li> <li>• The top three issues affecting clubs are prohibitive cost of hiring appropriate facilities, lack of appropriate local match facilities and lack of external funding</li> <li>• Clubs often train on match day pitches leading to overuse of pitches; this is a particular problem on parks pitches</li> <li>• The main issues relating to the pitches themselves are poor drainage followed by line markings, evenness of pitch and length of grass. Poor standard of maintenance was also stated as an issue by many clubs</li> <li>• Main aims for the majority of clubs in the future are to increase the number of members followed by relocation to different premises</li> <li>• Due to the poor quality of provision, pitches are not deemed to be value for money.</li> </ul> <p>It is clear from consultation and site assessments that there are not enough good quality pitches in Darlington and particularly not enough pitches with changing facilities.</p>
<b>Sports Network Workshop</b>	<p><b>What's good?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good changing facilities at South Park</li> <li>• Eastbourne - mixed use, good changing facility, accessible facilities</li> <li>• Education village – new and modern and new school development – disabled friendly</li> <li>• Darlington football stadium - quality</li> <li>• New Hummersknott development – quality</li> </ul>	<p><b>What needs improving?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drainage and maintenance</li> <li>• More and better changing facilities – clean not dirty, modern not outdated</li> <li>• Increased no of pitches and changing facilities</li> <li>• Increase in training areas</li> <li>• Parking, emergency access, general access</li> <li>• Cost – needs to reflect quality</li> <li>• Improve access to school &amp; college facilities beyond the school day</li> <li>• Replace pitches lost through building new schools</li> </ul>

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Method of Consultation	Issue	Status in Darlington
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi use games areas are all tarmac, need grass areas</li> <li>• Separate changing rooms for children/adults using same location</li> <li>• Darlington FC secure taking quality facilities for its youth squads preventing usage by others</li> <li>• Security to prevent mis-use</li> <li>• Structured development cost affordable</li> <li>• More football facilities – outdoor &amp; indoor</li> <li>• Pricing structure more consistent across Darlington</li> <li>• More quality sports pitch provision with changing facilities</li> <li>• Appropriate maintenance of STPs &amp; general upkeep of facilities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Durham County Football Association</b></p>	<p>The core priorities identified for football in Darlington are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to develop more grass pitches</li> <li>• to improve quality of existing provision.</li> </ul> <p>The County FA is currently in discussions with the following regarding new/upgraded facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Darlington Education Village – full size, floodlit 3G pitch</li> <li>• Middleton Rangers JFC - Middleton St George Cricket and Social Club, pitch works and changing improvement</li> <li>• Heighington Parish Playing Field – changing provision.</li> </ul>	



**Table 4.10 Cricket in Darlington**

<b>Consultation Type</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Status in Darlington</b>
<b>Cricket Clubs – surveys &amp; workshop</b>	Membership	There are 18 cricket teams playing within Darlington, spread across six clubs. 12 of these teams are adult male sides, the remainder are junior teams. Of the two clubs that responded to the questionnaire, both indicated that membership had remained static over the last five years. Both clubs indicated that they wish to increase the number of adult and junior members in the future.
	Standard of play	<p>There are two main leagues in which Darlington (adult) teams compete. These are the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Yorkshire &amp; South Durham Cricket League (NYSD) - Darlington CC &amp; Darlington RA CC</li> <li>• Darlington &amp; District Cricket League (D&amp;D League) - Rockcliffe Park, Haughton, Cockerton &amp; Middleton St George.</li> </ul> <p>League fixtures are played on Saturday afternoons. Three of the six clubs have junior sections, demonstrating effective player pathways from junior through to adult sport. Darlington and Darlington RA are both focus clubs. Darlington CC ground is used for both county and district cricket.</p> <p>Neither the NYSD or D&amp;D league are part of the pyramid system for Darlington. For the purposes of the County facilities report however, NYSD is placed at level 2 and D&amp;D league at level 4, with level 1 being the highest standard of play and level 4 being the lowest.</p>
	Distribution of teams	Cricket clubs are well spread across the Borough. Locality areas B and C however are without a club, nevertheless Darlington CC and Haughton CC are on the edge of these areas and therefore provide for the residents located within these areas.
	Facilities used	<p>The majority of cricket clubs are owned privately by clubs themselves. Both responding clubs indicated that their venues meet local league requirements.</p> <p>The quantity of pitches was rated as sufficient however the quality of pitches at some grounds was rated as only average. Both responding clubs indicated that they intended to expand the range of facilities provided. The main issues identified by responding clubs were a lack of funding, a lack of local training facilities and a lack of voluntary assistance.</p> <p>Carmel Technology College is currently used by Darlington CC for indoor training; it has 3 net lanes. Darlington RA CC however travel out of the borough to use the indoor net facilities at Greenfield School in Sedgfield.</p>
	Issues	<p>Quantity of provision was generally considered to be sufficient by clubs. The six cricket grounds were seen to be a positive element of the sports facility network in Darlington. There was one specific club, Cockerton CC, that identified that it requires improvements to fencing to improve security</p> <p>General comments suggested that the smaller cricket clubs need assistance to improve their changing</p>

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Consultation Type	Issue	Status in Darlington
		provision. Clubs indicated that indoor nets are vital for training and stated that there are limited indoor cricket facilities in Darlington and those that are available are quite expensive. Carmel High School sports hall and Hurworth School gym were sites identified as used by the responding teams.
<b>Durham Cricket Board – facilities strategy</b>	<p>Durham Cricket Board aims to ensure a high quality level of cricket provision within clubs and schools and in particular works with Focus Clubs to improve the quality of facilities and improve player pathways and developmental opportunities. Durham County Cricket Board has produced a facilities report which includes the following top three priorities relating to Darlington based Focus Clubs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Darlington CC – 1) develop practice facility, 2) disabled facilities, 3) new covers</li> <li>• Darlington RA CC – 1) renovate score box, 2) renovate pavilion, 3) off field non turf practice facilities.</li> </ul> <p>There are no 4 lane indoor centres at present for cricket. The only two lane centre that is used by focus clubs is Carmel School, used by Darlington CC, however Darlington RA have to travel outside of the area for training. The Durham Cricket Board indoor facility report identifies the requirement for a quality indoor facility within the South – West districts of the County, this encompasses Darlington, Sedgfield, Teesdale and Wear Valley. The facility would require a minimum of 4 net lanes to cover our Player Pathway Programme and serve the demands of 8 Focus Clubs.</p>	

**Table 4.11 Rugby in Darlington**

Consultation Type	Issues	Status in Darlington
Club	Membership	There are two rugby clubs in Darlington – Darlington Mowden Park & Darlington RUFC. Both clubs have several adult male teams, a ladies team, colts teams and junior and mini teams.
	Standard of play	Darlington Mowden Park plays in the Rugby Union English National Division 3. Darlington Rugby Club has played in National league 3 for the past three years. However, for the 2008/09 season it will be playing in North 1 but is keen to gain immediate promotion back to the National leagues.
	Facilities used	<p>The clubs main match venues are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Darlington Mowden Park – Yiewsley Drive in the West End of Darlington</li> <li>▪ Darlington RUFC - Blackwell Meadows.</li> </ul> <p>Both clubs have their own facilities and both are located in locality area E.</p>
	Issues and	No significant issues have been raised by rugby clubs in Darlington. The two rugby clubs were seen to be of

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Consultation Type	Issues	Status in Darlington
	constraints	quality and an asset to the borough.
<p><b>Rugby Football Union (RFU)</b></p>	<p>Darlington is served by two rugby clubs both with access to more than two pitches. This meets the demand for players of all ages who wish to play at club level. The majority of the secondary schools have access to a rugby pitch. There are two colleges one has access to pitches, whereas the other has no pitches available onsite.</p> <p>All of the pitches that are mentioned above are of a good standard, also there has been a new 3G pitch opened at Hummersknott School, however it is not IRB approved and therefore for rugby it can only be used for training, not match play.</p> <p>With having two rugby clubs in the town there is a lot of access available for all players if they wish to play at club level, there is a lot of information posted in all of the schools and on the internet from the rugby clubs, however location of rugby clubs could pose a transport problem. Also with the creation of the already mentioned 3G pitch there is a place for players to use if they are not part of a club, however the cost of hiring the facility might be a problem. The key priorities for improving rugby provision in Darlington are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping facilities in good shape</li> <li>• Regular updates and checks</li> <li>• Keeping prices low if they are needed so it is assessable for all</li> <li>• Making information widely available.</li> </ul> <p>The key sports development initiatives for rugby at the moment are focussed on the 16-24 age group. The main focus is on increasing participation and reducing drop out at this age group. This might create an increase in players playing at senior level therefore creating a possible problem with number of pitches at the clubs. There is also Community Rugby Coach for the town who is delivering sessions in schools which again, may increase the demand for rugby within the borough.</p> <p>The RFU is currently in the process of carrying out a facilities audit and will therefore be able to provide more input into the need for facilities in future revisions of the PPS.</p>	
	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Clubs with Junior sections (Darlington Mowden Park are Seal of Approval)</li> <li>• 3G training pitch</li> <li>• Majority of Secondary Schools in borough have a rugby pitch onsite</li> <li>▪ Both Rugby Clubs, Darlington Mowden Park and Darlington RFC are seen as good practice in terms of facilities as they have access to a number of pitches onsite with club houses with changing rooms onsite.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No rugby provision at the north of the Town, as clubs are at south of town, however there are a number of pitches in schools.</li> <li>• No college rugby facilities at Darlington College</li> <li>• Few public access pitches.</li> </ul>

**Table 4.12 Hockey in Darlington**

Consultation Type	Issues	Status in Darlington
Surveys/workshop	Membership	Darlington Hockey Club is the only hockey club in the borough. The club is comprised of two adult male teams and two adult female teams. The Club also runs junior training sessions during the main season on Tuesday evenings at Eastbourne Sports Complex. These sessions are open to any young people who would like to play or have a go at playing hockey. There are however no junior teams playing in local leagues.
	Standard of play	Darlington Hockey Club has two men’s teams playing in The North East Hockey League. The 1st XI play in Division 2 & the 2nd XI in The Conference South. The Ladies section has two teams. The 1st XI play in The Feeder League East of The North Womens Hockey League, while the 2nd XI play in Division 2 of The Durham Clubs League.
	Facilities used	The club’s main match venue is a synthetic turf pitch based at Eastbourne Sports Complex. This pitch is owned by Darlington Borough Council. Both the men’s & women’s teams play their home games at Eastbourne Sports Complex. The club also holds separate junior, senior training sessions during the main season at Eastbourne.
	Issues and constraints	<p>Consultation indicated that there are not enough synthetic turf pitches in the area (to cater for all sports not just hockey). The provision of synthetic turf pitches is important as a requirement of the hockey leagues is that the clubs use this type of facility and not grass pitches.</p> <p>The changing facilities at Eastbourne Sports Complex were stated to be inadequate to cater for the number of teams playing on peak match days eg when a number of different sports are playing simultaneously.</p> <p>Maintenance of the STP and costs relating to maintenance and risk assessments was also highlighted during consultation.</p>

### Summary

- 4.63 The key issues emerging from supply and demand data detailed in Section 4 are:
- the ratio of pitches to adult population is 1 to 1,150. This does not compare favourably with the national figure and indicates that the supply of pitches in Darlington is lower than the national average. The ratio of pitches to adults is also poor when compared to many other local authorities for which data is currently available (from PMP's database) – **suggests an undersupply of pitches**
  - the proportion of the overall pitch stock that is available for community use (category A) is low in comparison to the majority of known local authorities, with only 50% of pitches deemed to have secure public access – **these accessibility issues will further increase the undersupply**
  - almost a quarter (23%) of pitches (24 across eight sites) are classed as category B pitches which means that they allow community access but there are no formal agreements in place – **this lack of secure access will further increase the undersupply**
  - the largest overall provider of pitches is the LEA (48 pitches), however, only 19% of these (9 pitches) have secure community use – **these accessibility issues will further increase the undersupply**
  - the main providers of pitches that are available for community use are Darlington Borough Council and local clubs, who between them own 38 pitches (73% of all community use pitches in the borough). This reinforces the role of these providers
  - site visits revealed that the quality of pitches across the Borough was average (40% of pitches scored as average). However, several local authority pitch sites fall well below this average score, in the main these are Redhall Community Centre, North Park, Tommy Crooks Park, Glebe Road and MacMullen Road. In general, private pitches were deemed to be higher quality than public pitches, especially those located in parks – **poor quality public pitches**
  - the findings from site visits were supported by feedback from clubs and league representatives who felt that quality of public pitches was generally poor across the borough. Greater dissatisfaction was exhibited by football clubs than any other sport. Particular issues raised included poor drainage, evenness of pitches, severe lack of changing facilities and misuse and it is clear that these are specific issues on several pitch sites. These will be returned to in Sections 5 and 6 – **poor quality public pitches, especially football**
  - ancillary accommodation was rated as average through site assessments and consultation feedback. However, this score was elevated by the presence of good quality club and private facilities. Indeed, 10 sites scored below 30% (not including primary school facilities which generally have insufficient ancillary accommodation for community use) highlighting the need for significant improvements to a number of sites. The majority of the sites that scored lower than 30% were local authority pitch sites – **lack of ancillary provision**

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- of the public sites, only Eastbourne Sports Complex has sufficient changing accommodation, the majority of the other sites do not have any facilities at all with the exception of South Park (however this is some confusion as to the availability of this for junior and adult teams and the facility is some distance away from the majority pitches) - ***lack of ancillary provision***
- sports development initiatives are aiming to increase participation in the borough in all sports. In particular, it is expected that more young people are becoming involved and this is placing increasing pressure on the current pitch supply. Increases in population in future years will also add to this demand. – ***increasing demand will further impact upon pitch quantity and quality requirements.***
- there is a need to ensure that more capacity is built in to the existing pitch stock to allow for increases in participation and to allow fallow periods for rest and recovery.

4.64 The supply and demand data contained in this section will be set in context by applying the *Playing Pitch Methodology* in Section 5.

**SECTION 5**  
**METHODOLOGY FINDINGS**

### **The findings**

- 5.1 This section explores the findings arising from the application of the playing pitch methodology.
- 5.2 As detailed in Section 3, the Playing Pitch Methodology (PPM) comprises eight stages. Stages 1 to 6 involve numerical calculations, whilst Stages 7 and 8 develop issues and solutions. The methodology is employed to analyse the adequacy of current provision and to assess possible future situations, in order that latent and future demand (identified through Team Generation Rates), and the problems with quality, use and capacity of existing pitches can be taken into account. The increase in population is considered by modelling a future year scenario – in this case, 2021. Potential changes to the pitch stock over that time are also taken into consideration.
- 5.3 It is implicit to the methodology that each sport is dealt with individually with a specific set of calculations for each because, despite some superficial similarities, they exhibit very different patterns of play.
- 5.4 We have further subdivided the analysis of some sports to deal with specific sub-sectors of activity within them, eg junior play or adult play, in order that important aspects are not submerged in aggregated data. Football has been subdivided in this manner, whereas no differentiation has been made between junior and senior cricket and junior and senior rugby teams as they play on pitches of similar dimensions.
- 5.5 As the playing pitch strategy is a peak day model, we have determined on which day teams/leagues wish to play their fixtures, as well as the peak time (AM or PM). The methodology also considers the ability of pitches to sustain play on the peak day and at the peak time. In Darlington, the majority of adult football teams play on a Sunday, meaning that demand at that time is particularly high.

### **Carrying capacity**

- 5.6 The methodology set out in 'Towards A Level Playing Field' encourages local authorities to take into account carrying capacity (ie the number of games that pitches are adequately able to sustain per week) when calculating the playing pitch methodology.
- 5.7 There is no formula for calculating the carrying capacity of pitches, as it is dependent on a wide range of factors such as weather conditions, age/weight of users, quality of players etc. However, through local knowledge, user surveys, site visits, interviews and an analysis of usage patterns from the previous season, it is possible to estimate the approximate capacity of each pitch.
- 5.8 In calculating the carrying capacity of a pitch, the following should be considered:
- what proportion of games are cancelled on the pitch due to poor pitch condition?
  - is the condition of the pitch declining over the season?
  - what is the maintenance regime for the pitch at present?
  - could the capacity of the pitch be improved by enhanced maintenance?
  - to what extent are pitches required to accommodate training activity?



- 5.9 In addition to considering the degree to which pitches meet existing demand, it is important to take into account the long-term life of pitches. The importance of rest and recovery of pitches should not be underestimated in order to maintain pitch quality and to prevent the longer-term deterioration as a result of constant use. Consultation feedback demonstrates a perception that the quality of many pitches in Darlington has deteriorated as a result of overplaying.
- 5.10 The weighting system used to account for the carrying capacity of pitches and the resulting audits is outlined in Table 5.1. The standard PPM assumes that pitches are able to take two games per week. However, if a pitch is of particularly good quality, it may be able to accommodate more than two matches per week, hence a higher weighting. If, on the other hand, the pitch in question is only able to accommodate one match, it is equivalent to half a pitch – able to take one game per week.
- 5.11 Increasing the quality of a pitch will therefore increase the capacity of a pitch and reduce the overall number of facilities required. Qualitative improvements are therefore likely to be as important as the provision of additional pitches.

**Table 5.1 Carrying capacity for each type of pitch**

<b>Carrying Capacity</b>	<b>Multiplication Factor</b>
Three matches (or more) per week	1.5
Two matches	1.0
One match per week	0.5
One match or less per fortnight	0.25

- 5.12 Decisions regarding the carrying capacity of pitches were based on the scores achieved during site assessments as well as consultation with clubs, leagues and other sources.
- 5.13 Drainage is a particular problem in the borough and hence no pitches were identified as being able to take three or more matches per week. We have therefore used the standard PPM assumption that all pitches (of reasonable quality) are able to take two matches per week.
- 5.14 All pitches of poor quality have been given a multiplication factor of 0.5, assuming that the quality is only suitable to take one match per week. School pitches are also given a multiplication factor of 0.5 to take account of school usage and the impact that will have on pitch quality. A number of pitch sites have been given a multiplication factor of 0.25 as they have been unplayable for the majority of the season.
- 5.15 In light of lower levels of wear and tear generated by young players, and the short duration of matches, mini football teams are considered able to sustain three or four games per week without detrimental impact on the pitches.
- 5.16 Pitches considered unable to sustain two adult games week per due to their condition are:
- Glebe Road (0.25)
  - Hurworth Grange Community Centre (0.25)

## **SECTION 5 – METHODOLOGY FINDINGS**

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- McMullen Road (0.25)
  - North Park (0.5)
  - Springfield Park (0.5)
  - Tommy Crooks Park (0.25)
  - Redhall Community Centre (0.5).
- 5.17 Synthetic hockey pitches are not affected by the conditions discussed above as wear and tear on these pitches does not occur to the same degree as grass. These pitches have therefore been considered able to take four games on the peak day, although this is dependent on flexible programming of matches to ensure this is feasible. Grass hockey pitches are no longer used for competitive senior matches and have therefore been excluded.
- 5.18 As illustrated in Section 4, consultation highlighted that there are 24 schools/colleges which have grass pitches. However, only three of these sites have formal dual use agreements (includes Hummersknott STP). Another eight, have informal community use of their pitches. PPM calculations take into account only those pitches with secured community use, in line with Sport England guidance.
- 5.19 Table 5.2 overleaf shows the calculations undertaken to determine the surplus/deficit of pitches in Darlington. Explanatory notes for Table 5.2 are outlined below.
- as per PPM guidance, it is assumed that all football and rugby teams play a home match every fortnight. However, for cricket teams it is assumed that many teams play home matches more than every fortnight (ie mid-week matches, ground hire to work teams etc), hence the figure of 0.7
  - data has been determined by a combination of questionnaire responses, telephone interviews and discussions with league secretaries. Figures are approximate and it is acknowledged that these may change weekly
  - the figures highlighted in **Red** or **Green** represent the peak-day demand.

**Table 5.2 PPM calculations for Darlington Borough Council**

		Football	Mini-soccer	Cricket	Rugby Union	Hockey		
STAGE ONE		Adult games	49	12	11	4		
Identifying teams		Junior teams	53	6	11	0		
STAGE TWO		Adult games	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.5		
Calculate home games per week		Junior teams	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.5		
STAGE THREE (S1 x S2)		Adult games	25	8	6	2		
Assessing total home games per week		Junior teams	27	4	6	0		
STAGE FOUR		Adult games	0%	0%	0%	0%		
Establish temporal demand for pitches		Saturday AM	0%	0%	0%	0%		
		Junior teams	0%	0%	0%	0%		
		Saturday PM	37%	0%	90%	100%	100%	
		Junior teams	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
		Sunday AM	59%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
		Junior teams	0%	0%	100%	100%		
		Sunday PM	4%	100%	0%	0%	0%	
		Junior teams	100%	50%	0%	0%		
		Mid week 1- Specify day	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	
		Junior teams	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	
		Mid week 2- Specify day	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
		Junior teams	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
		STAGE FIVE (S3 x S4)		Adult games	0	0	0	0
		Defining pitches used each day		Saturday AM	0	0	0	0
Junior teams	0			0	0	0		
Saturday PM	9			0	8	6	2	
Junior teams	0			0	0	0	0	
Sunday AM	14			0	0	0	0	
Junior teams	0			0	0	6	0	
Sunday PM	1			10	0	0	0	
Junior teams	27			2	0	0		
Mid week 1- Specify day	0			0	1	0	0	
Junior teams	0			0	2	0	0	
Mid week 2- Specify day	0			0	0	0	0	
Junior teams	0			0	0	0	0	
STAGE SIX				Adult games	15	6	5	2
Establishing pitches currently available				Junior teams	8	12	6	5
STAGE SEVEN (S6-S5)		Adult games	15.3	6.0	5.0	2.0		
Identifying shortfall (-) and surplus (+)		Saturday AM	8.0	12.0	6.0	5.0	2.0	
		Junior teams	8.0	12.0	-1.6	-0.5	0.0	
		Saturday PM	6.2	12.0	-1.6	-0.5	0.0	
		Junior teams	8.0	12.0	6.0	-0.5	2.0	
		Sunday AM	0.8	12.0	6.0	-0.5	2.0	
		Junior teams	8.0	12.0	6.0	-0.5	2.0	
		Sunday PM	14.3	2.5	3.9	5.0	2.0	
		Junior teams	-18.5	2.5	3.9	5.0	2.0	
		Mid week 1- Specify day	15.3	12.0	3.1	5.0	2.0	
		Junior teams	8.0	12.0	3.1	5.0	2.0	
		Mid week 2- Specify day	15.3	12.0	6.0	5.0	2.0	
		Junior teams	8.0	12.0	6.0	5.0	2.0	

5.20 Key issues arising from the PPM calculations (Table 5.2) are:

- there is **just enough adult football pitches** at peak time (Sunday AM) to cater for demand – very small oversupply of less than one pitch (0.8)
- there is a **significant undersupply of junior football pitches** at peak time (Sunday PM) of 18.5 pitches
- mini football usage is also a Sunday afternoon activity. There is currently **just enough mini pitches** to meet demand

- **supply is almost in balance with demand for cricket pitches** at peak time (Saturday PM) – small shortfall equal to 1.6 pitches
- **supply is almost in balance with demand for rugby pitches** at peak time (Saturdays for adults & Sundays for juniors) – small shortfall equal to 0.5 pitches
- the presence of Eastbourne Sports Complex STP **meets the demand for hockey** – it must be recognised however, that this pitch is also used for training and for hockey and for football.

5.21 These results are based on the assumption that teams wish to play on pitches which meet the national governing body of sport recommendations for their age category. However, we are aware that in Darlington, some junior football teams play on senior sized pitches. The Council purposely marks out all their pitches as adult pitches for increased flexibility and are aware that junior teams also use these pitches. This means that the small oversupply of adult pitches may not be borne out in reality and indeed, ***when amalgamating the total supply of adult and junior pitches, on the peak day, and balancing this against total demand, there is an undersupply of c. 4 football pitches.***

5.22 The figures in Table 5.2 take into account the carrying capacity of pitches and some football pitches have been considered able to sustain less than two games per week (the optimum). If all community pitches in Darlington were able to sustain two games or more per week, PPM calculations suggest that there would be a surplus of adult football pitches (c. 7.5 pitches) and the undersupply of junior pitches would reduce slightly (17.5 pitches).

5.23 In addition to the community facilities offering full public access, eight schools in Darlington offer casual access for teams and therefore contribute to the overall supply of pitches in the district. As highlighted, these sites do not fall under the definition of secured community use and have therefore been excluded from calculations. A lack of secured community use agreement means that there is no long term guarantee that the pitch will be always available. When including these pitches within an alternative scenario PPM calculations their potential is clear:

- the oversupply of adult football pitches increases to 5.3 pitches and the undersupply of junior pitches decreases to 15.5 pitches. This suggests that pitch provision would be sufficient for adults if access to school sites was secured, but there would still be an undersupply of junior pitches
- there are sufficient mini pitches to meet demand
- the undersupply of cricket pitches reduces
- there are sufficient rugby pitches to meet demand.

Nb this scenario considers the carrying capacity of pitches. Should carrying capacity of community pitches be improved and access to school/college sites secured, this will further reduce any shortfalls in provision. A shortfall in junior pitches however, would remain (c12 pitches). There would be a sufficient amount of all other pitch types to meet demand.

**Analysing provision in Darlington in more detail**

- 5.24 Analysing pitch provision in Darlington as a whole disguises the patterns of supply and demand within different geographical areas. This is important to consider in a borough like Darlington, which contains the main towns supported by a variety of rural settlements.
- 5.25 For pitch sports there is an accepted need for players to travel to games. Despite this, consideration of local needs as part of the household survey indicated that residents expect to find a grass football pitch within a 10 minute walk time from their home. This reinforces the expectation that facilities are relatively local to residential areas and highlights the importance of providing pitches in villages.
- 5.26 Although valuable, analysis on a borough-wide basis implies (perhaps wrongly) that all residents are willing and able to travel to pitches. Consideration has therefore been given to supply and demand at a local level. Local access or effective public transport networks are vital in particular for junior pitches, as players are unable to travel to matches themselves.
- 5.27 The adequacy of provision firstly in the five locality areas is therefore set out below. Recommendations, solutions and a strategy for the future delivery of pitch provision across Darlington are discussed in Section 6.
- 5.28 Table 5.3 reveals the shortfall/surplus by each area. Negative numbers indicate a shortfall of provision and are highlighted in red whereas surpluses are shown in black.
- 5.29 Demand has been classified according to the home ground at which a club plays. This means that consideration of the table in isolation may disguise areas of shortfall arising as a result of ‘invisible need’ ie areas where there are no pitches but demand is present. This will be returned to later in this section.

**Table 5.3 Summary of PPM results by area**

Locality area	Shortfall of adult football	Shortfall of junior football	Shortfall of Mini-soccer	Shortfall of cricket	Shortfall of rugby union	Shortfall of hockey	Total pitches
A	-0.7	-6.0	1.0	-1.2	0.0	0.0	-6.8
B	-1.1	-4.0	-2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	-7.6
C	2.6	2.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.6
D	-0.6	-7.0	-1.5	-0.2	0.0	0.0	-9.2
E	0.5	-3.5	2.5	-0.3	-6.0	0.0	-6.7
	0.7	18.5	0	-1.7	-6.0	0.0	-22.7

- 5.30 Analysis of the information presented in Table 5.3 suggests that:
- there is an undersupply of adult football pitches in three locality areas. In reality this may be made worse as a number of junior teams play on adult football pitches. This is coupled with shortfalls of junior football in four out of five areas in Darlington. The supply of adult football pitches in areas C and E is almost in balance with demand however, this does not allow for resting of pitches
  - overall supply of junior pitches is not sufficient to meet demand indicating pressure on pitches. The only locality area where there is not an undersupply of junior football pitches is locality area C
  - overall the supply of mini pitches is almost in balance with demand, however there is a slight undersupply in areas B and D
  - there are no major issues with quantity of cricket pitches with only a small shortfall in locality A
  - there is a small undersupply of rugby pitches in the borough. All teams are based in locality E and due to the amount of both adult and junior teams there is a theoretical undersupply equivalent to 6 pitches. This assumes all adult, junior and mini teams play on the same pitch area
  - the STP at Eastbourne is sufficient to meet the demand for hockey in the borough
  - overall there is an undersupply of pitches within four of the five locality areas. The greatest shortfall of pitches is found within locality D (9.2 pitches)
  - only within locality C is the provision of pitches sufficient to meet local demands.
- 5.31 Table 5.4 overleaf summarises the findings of the application of the Playing Pitch Methodology when also including those school facilities that are available for community use but where usage is not secure.

**Table 5.4 Summary of PPM results by area including schools offering community use (alternative scenario)**

Locality area	Shortfall of adult football	Shortfall of junior football	Shortfall of Mini-soccer	Shortfall of cricket	Shortfall of rugby union	Shortfall of hockey	Total pitches
A	0.8	-5.5	1.0	-1.2	0.5	0.0	-4.3
B	0.9	-2.5	-2.5	0.5	1.0	0.0	-2.6
C	2.6	2.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.6
D	0.4	-7.0	-1.5	0.4	0.5	0.0	-7.2
E	0.5	-2.5	2.5	-0.3	-6.0	0.0	-5.7
	<b>5.2</b>	<b>-15.5</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>-0.6</b>	<b>-4.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>-12.2</b>

- 5.32 The above table emphasises the important role that school facilities play as undersupplies are reduced in all areas of the borough.
- 5.33 While this analysis provides an indication of the ability of pitches to meet existing demand, it does not consider latent demand. This is represented by teams that are not able to play in an area where there are no facilities, or teams not playing in the locality, which they wish to play in. In light of a fairly even distribution of pitches across the borough, there are few, if any teams who are required to travel (excluding those who travel intentionally). Three teams expressed dissatisfaction with their current location, specifically:
- Model T FC – would like to play at Hummersknott School but currently play at Eastbourne Sports Complex due to building works at the school
  - Darlington Longfield AFC – currently play outside of the borough at Shildon Sunnydale Leisure Centre in Sedgfield, however, they would prefer to play their matches in Darlington but have struggled to find an available quality venue on a Sunday morning
  - AFC 147 Rileys - would prefer to play their home matches at the Eastbourne Sports Complex but have been transferred to Tommy Crooks Park due to the loss of pitches at Eastbourne.

**Predicting the future**

**Team Generation Rates**

- 5.34 Team Generation Rates (TGRs) indicate how many people in a specified age group are required to generate one team. TGRs are derived by dividing the appropriate population age band in the area by the number of teams playing within that area in that age band. Calculating TGRs enables fair comparison of participation to be made between different areas where similar studies have been undertaken.
- 5.35 TGRs can be calculated for each of the individual disciplines, eg adult men’s football, adult women’s football, mini-soccer. Once these TGRs have been calculated, they can be brought together to form one TGR for each sport.
- 5.36 The TGRs for football, rugby union, cricket and hockey in the borough of Darlington are shown in Tables 5.6 to 5.9, and are compared to the national average based on the Sport England database of Playing Pitch Strategy information.
- 5.37 The following examples help clarify what TGRs mean:

1:100 people	→	high TGR	→	relatively low latent (unmet) demand
1:1000 people	→	low TGR	→	relatively high latent (unmet) demand

- 5.38 These figures are only a guide and do not specify the sport or refer to local conditions. For example, the national popularity of football will mean that it will almost always have the highest TGR. Equally, hockey usually has the lowest. Therefore, it is more useful to compare Darlington TGRs with other areas.

**Table 5.6 Football Team Generation Rates**

Age group	Darlington TGR	National average
Senior male	1:399	1:314
Senior female	1:10,153	1:10,593
Junior male	1:78	1:71
Junior female	1:1031	1:818
Mini soccer	1:271	1:141

- 5.39 Table 5.6 indicates that the number of people required across each age group to generate a team is higher than the national average, with the exception of senior female teams, which is slightly lower. This may give an indication that there is latent demand (or unmet) demand for pitches in Darlington.



**Table 5.7 Cricket Team Generation Rates**

Age group	Darlington TGR	National Average
Senior male	1:1,980	1:1,333
Senior female	0	1:72,518
Junior male	1:730	1:1,481
Junior female	0	1:15,926

- 5.40 Table 5.7 shows that the population required to generate one senior male team is higher than the national average whilst the population required to generate one junior male team is lower than the national average. This indicates that there is high participation in junior cricket in the district.

**Table 5.8 Rugby Union Team Generation Rates**

Age group	Darlington TGR	National Average
Senior male	1:1,948	1:10,315
Senior female	1:9,499	1:43,770
Junior male	1:345	1:1,864
Junior female	1:654	1:19,529

- 5.41 Across all levels of rugby union, the population required to generate one team for both senior and junior rugby is significantly less than the national average. This suggests that participation levels in rugby are high in Darlington.

**Table 5.9 Hockey Team Generation Rates**

Age group	Darlington TGR	National Average
Senior male	1:9,372	1:7,595
Senior female	1:10,153	1:10,292
Junior male	0	1:4,239
Junior female	0	1:5,115

- 5.42 Table 5.9 indicates that the populations required to generate one male team at senior level is higher than the national average. This highlights a lower demand for senior male hockey in the area compared to the national average. The TGR figures for female hockey show that demand is similar to the national average.

***Football conversion rate modelling***

- 5.43 Over recent years The Football Association (FA), together with the County FAs and Local Football Partnerships, has been developing a robust system to accurately measure levels of affiliated football participation across the country. This system, known as CAS (County Administration System) produced the first set of data for the season 2005/06. The system tracks how many people are taking part in affiliated football throughout the country and can be analysed down to a local authority level.

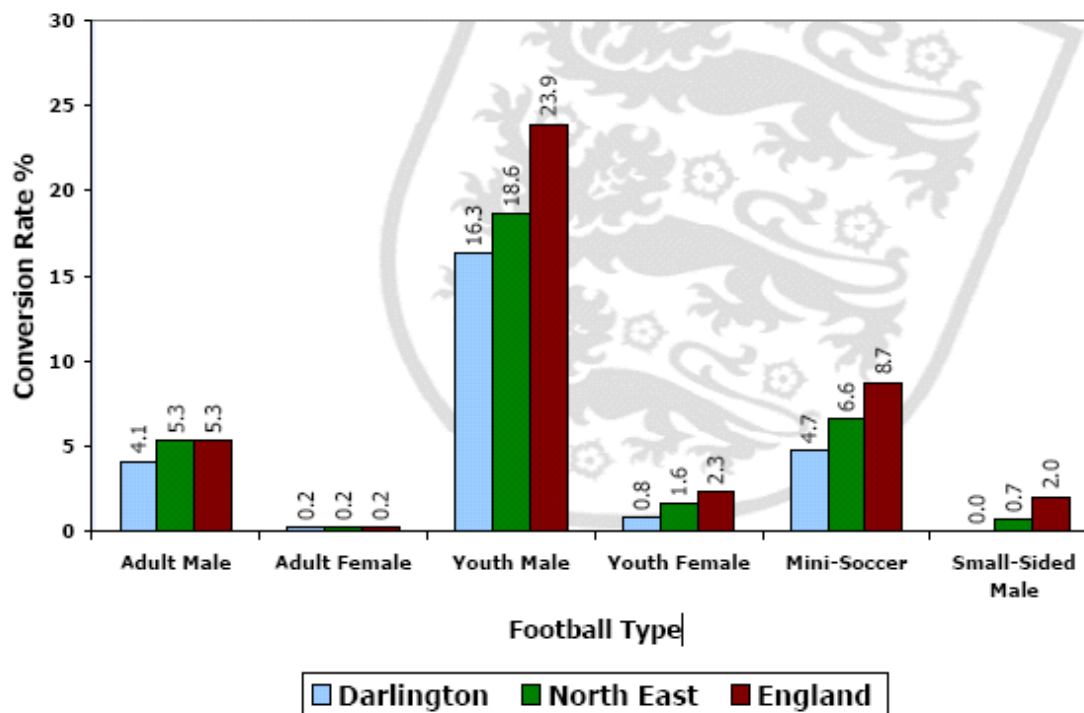
## SECTION 5 – METHODOLOGY FINDINGS

- 5.44 The data collected by the FA enables accurate benchmarking across the country and has been used to provide an indication of participation in Darlington compared to other similar boroughs, and also as a means of determining latent demand. They provide a more up to date comparison than TGRs.
- 5.45 The FA data measures participation in terms of conversion rates. Conversion rates are defined as the percentage of the relevant population actively playing affiliated football (they are therefore different to TGRs).
- 5.46 Conversion rates are calculated by dividing the number of teams by an assumed number of players per team (eg 15 players per 11-a-side team). This gives a figure for the total number of players and is then divided by the relevant population to provide the percentage of affiliated players within that relevant population.
- 5.47 The conversion rates for Darlington are illustrated in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 overleaf. These figures have been taken from the Darlington Local Area Data Report 07/08. It is important to note that the figures used to create this data differ slightly from the figures collated for this report.

**Figure 5.1 - Teams, players and conversion rates for Darlington**

	Adult 11-a-side		Youth 11-a-side		Mini-Soccer	Adult Small-sided		Youth Small-sided		All Forms
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Mixed	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
No of Teams 07/08	49	2	43	2	24	0	0	0	0	120
No of Teams 06/07	55	2	43	2	21	0	0	0	0	123
Variance	-10.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-2.4%
No of Players 07/08	735	30	645	30	240	0	0	0	0	1680
No of Players 06/07	825	30	645	30	210	0	0	0	0	1740
Conversion Rate 07/08	4.1%	0.2%	16.3%	0.8%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%
Conversion Rate 06/07	4.6%	0.2%	16.3%	0.8%	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%
Variance	-0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-0.1%

Figure 5.2 – Conversion rates for Darlington



Participation data is based on:

- 15 players in an 11-a-side team, 10 in a mini-soccer team and 8 in a small sided team
- Adult= 17-44 years, Youth = 11-16 years, Mini = 7-10 years, Small sided = 17-44yrs.

5.48 As can be seen in Figures 5.1 and 5.2:

- overall, the number of male adult football teams has fallen slightly since 06/07 and the number of mini teams has increased slightly
- the conversion rate across all forms of football has decreased minimally by 0.1%. However, this decrease can be attributed to the reduced conversion rate for senior male football
- the conversion rates for Darlington are significantly below the national and regional averages.

5.49 While the above conversion rates provide an indication of current participation, it is possible to use this data to assess latent demand. This will be returned to when assessing future pitch requirements later in this section.

**Active People data**

5.50 It is interesting to note that the TGRs generally show that in Darlington, a greater number of people are required to create a team compared to the national average. The Active People Survey however, shows that participation levels in Darlington are higher than average. This suggests a squeeze with regards to the quantity of pitches and suggests that latent demand exists across the borough.

**Projections for 2021**

- 5.51 By applying TGRs to population projections for 2021, we can project the theoretical number of teams that would be generated over the LDF period and gain an understanding of the adequacy of current pitch provision to meet future demand.
- 5.52 In addition to considering the impact of the projected population increases, Table 5.10 also considers the impact of increased participation (estimated at a rate of 10% for football and 5% for the other sports).

**The impact of potential developments in Darlington**

- 5.53 Major levelling and drainage improvements are underway at Hummersknott School to improve pitch quality. There is currently one grass pitch in use at the school, however, there will be four pitches in total when building works are complete. There are also plans to develop pitches at the new Eastbourne Academy and Eastbourne Sports Complex (four pitches in total to replace previously lost pitches). It is anticipated that these sites will provide significantly higher quality facilities.
- 5.54 Darlington Football Club has submitted a planning application to the local planning authority to develop a Community Sporting and Educational Village on redundant land at the Darlington Arena. The application includes development of three outdoor pitches and an indoor facility accommodating 10 five a side pitches. The status of the application is one of Minded to Approve subject to a 106 agreement (not yet signed). Whilst this has been identified as a potential development, plans have been put on hold and it appears unlikely that this will go ahead in the near future.
- 5.55 Table 5.10 overleaf therefore takes account of the likely impact of the proposed increase in adult football pitches at Eastbourne and Hummersknott.

**Table 5.10 Summary of PPM results by locality area for 2021**

Locality area	Shortfall of adult football	Shortfall of junior football	Shortfall of Mini-soccer	Shortfall of cricket	Shortfall of adult rugby union	Shortfall of hockey	Total pitches
A	-1.4	-7.7	0.4	-1.8	0.0	0.0	-10.5
B	-1.5	-4.9	-2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	-9.3
C	2.5	2.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.5
D	1.4	-9.5	-1.9	-0.9	0.0	-0.4	-11.4
E	4.3	-4.5	2.0	-0.4	-7.0	0.0	-5.7
	5.3	-24.6	0.5	-3.1	-7.0	-0.4	

NB columns may not sum exactly due to rounding

## **SECTION 5 – METHODOLOGY FINDINGS**

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- 5.56 Table 5.10 indicates that, as expected, the demand for pitches in the borough will grow by the year 2021. Specifically, pressure on junior pitches will increase with the shortfall of pitches increasing from 18.5 (2001) to 24.6 (2021). The overall shortfall of pitches will increase the most in locality D.
- 5.57 In the case of adult pitches, the two future pitches at Eastbourne Academy and the additional two pitches at Eastbourne Sports Complex, coupled with the four additional pitches at Hummersknott, will cater for this increased demand (assuming that they have secured community access).
- 5.58 Table 5.10 has assumed that the structure of the population remains the same. While it is difficult to project ahead accurately, in all likelihood, by 2021 there will be a larger total older population (aged around 50+).
- 5.59 This changing population structure may impact on the demand for certain pitch sports, although this change will happen gradually. It is important for pitch providers to be aware of these changing demographics and be prepared and able to respond.
- 5.60 These changes will also be influenced by housing projections and additional developments in the borough which affect the growth of the population. We have used planned housing commitments (supplied by Darlington Borough Council) to estimate where significant population growth is most likely to occur. The greatest population growth is expected to be in locality areas A and D.

- 5.61 Predictions of demand up to 2021 should be treated with particular caution in light of the number of unknown entities, specifically:
- the impact of the 2012 Olympics – this may stimulate higher demand for sport
  - the impact of the any new proposals that may come to fruition such as facilities at Darlington FC
  - changing popularity of sports – this is often linked to the success of national teams or the popularity of Twenty20 cricket for example
  - changing versions of sports. For example, smaller sided versions of football are gaining in popularity – compared with traditional 11-a-side adult football
  - impact of the emphasis on alternative physical activities rather than formal sports
  - the reduced financial income of clubs due the current economic climate
  - the impact of local investment in facilities.

### **Mini sports**

- 5.62 The popularity of mini sports (both rugby and football) must also be taken into consideration when assessing the level of under/oversupply in Darlington. Participation in mini soccer is growing rapidly both nationally and locally and demand for pitches is therefore likely to continue to increase.
- 5.63 Mini soccer is popular in Darlington, with 19 mini soccer teams in the borough, equal to 16% of the total number of football teams in Darlington. There are twelve mini rugby teams in the borough, part of the two main clubs.
- 5.64 A growth in the numbers of participants at a young age may also generate increased levels of participation in junior and senior sports in future years.
- 5.65 The key issues for future pitch provision from this growth are:
- the high growth in mini soccer is likely to place further demand on existing facilities. Although there is sufficient provision to meet this demand currently, there may be a requirement to provide a central venue dedicated to mini soccer. Similar growth in junior football is also likely to generate further shortfalls of junior pitch provision
  - shortages of junior rugby pitches are likely to rise in light of participation increases. Junior rugby development will have to be monitored to ensure pitch supply meets demand
  - as the majority of growth in participation in all sports is at junior level, this may result in increases in participation at adult level in future years.
- 5.66 These issues will be returned to in Section 6.

### **The role of synthetic pitches and training provision**

- 5.67 Common problems with pitch provision are often related to a lack of training/practice facilities. If players are to improve and clubs develop, they require access to training facilities as well as match pitches. Training on match pitches can degrade the quality of the playing surface. Several teams stated that they train on their match pitch. The use of match pitches for training is a particular problem on parks pitches.
- 5.68 Difficulties in accessing pitches for training were highlighted as a key issue by the majority of football clubs that responded to the survey. It was also highlighted as a key issue during the workshop event on the 24<sup>th</sup> February.
- 5.69 Artificial surfaces provide more consistent playing and practice conditions than grass and function as both competition and training venues. The development of synthetic turf pitches (STPs) has fundamentally changed the way hockey matches are played, and frequently games can only be accommodated by sequential programming on match days. In time, the development of third generation STPs for football may have a similar effect. There is currently one sand based and one 3G pitch in Darlington. The Football Foundation also identified the potential for an additional 3G pitch at the Education Village in the future. However, synthetic pitches cannot necessarily simply replace natural grass pitches because of the other open space functions that natural turf provides. The replacement of any grass pitches with synthetic provision should be considered carefully in light of the loss of open space, taking into account the need for other types of open space as well as the demand for sports provision.
- 5.70 Up to this point, analysis of the demand for synthetic pitches has focused primarily on demand arising from hockey teams. The need for additional pitches to meet the demand from hockey teams will be considered in Section 6. In light of the growing role of synthetic pitches for football training, it is essential to also consider the need for additional facilities for this purpose.
- 5.71 The capacity of artificial pitches is greater than grass pitches; however this is dependent on opening hours and the availability of floodlighting. One of the greatest impacts of artificial training areas and 5-a-side courts is that they free up sports hall space for other sports by accommodating 5-a-side football. Additionally, the provision of 5-a-side facilities may reduce the demand and programming issues on full size synthetic pitches that are required for hockey training.
- 5.72 Artificial training areas can provide for the casual needs of various sports and reduce pressure on existing grass pitches from casual use and training. Currently there are no dedicated 5-a-side pitches (indoor or outdoor) in Darlington. Consultation suggests that there is a gap in the market in Darlington for a facility of this type. During the consultation phase, several teams and individuals have stated that they travel to Stockton to use the 5-a-side facilities there; namely Soccer Sensations and Powerleague.
- 5.73 As mentioned, there are two synthetic pitch surfaces in Darlington, one of which is located on a school site (Hummersknott) and will be available from 6pm – 10pm midweek, and at weekends, once the programme is fully established and building work at the school is complete. The other is the public facility at Eastbourne. Given that competitive matches take place at weekends, the majority of requirement for training is midweek. Each pitch therefore offers (or will offer from September 09) a maximum of four one hour training slots a night (20 per week) and assuming that pitches are not used for hockey, there are therefore 80 slots available. When taking into account the number of teams who are based in Darlington, this reinforces the

clubs' perceptions that training facilities can be difficult to access. This issue will be returned to in Section 6.

### ***Active Places Power – Strategic planning tool***

- 5.74 Sport England's Active Places Power provides a planning tool for sports facilities. It is designed to assist in investment decisions and the development of infrastructure improvement strategies for sport. The online facility enables analysis of different types of sports facilities per 1000 of the population.
- 5.75 There are currently 0.2 STPs per 1,000 people in Darlington. This is compared to a regional and national average of 0.3. This provides additional evidence to suggest there is demand for at least one more STP in Darlington to bring it in line with the national and North East averages.

### **Summary**

- 5.76 Application of the PPM suggests that when considering adult and junior football pitches together, overall there is a significant shortfall of pitches across the borough. Whilst there are pressures on all types of football pitches, the pressure is greatest for junior pitches.
- 5.77 Shortfalls in provision are significantly reduced when the pitches of those schools' that permit informal community access (ie category B pitches) are taken into account. Shortfalls in provision are also reduced when the carrying capacity of pitches is increased so that all pitches can sustain at least two games per week. This is currently not the case due to the poor quality of provision.
- 5.78 The qualitative issues and lack of accessibility to many football pitch sites further impacts on the quantity of pitch stock. It is important that there are more pitches available than meet the demand from teams to allow for the rest and recovery and therefore maintenance of pitch quality. At present there is no 'slack' in the pitch stock to allow pitches to lay fallow and recover, which is impacting on the quality of pitches.
- 5.79 The findings for the PPM application support the feedback from consultation with the County FA who stated that the most contact they get from football clubs in Darlington is in relation to the lack of junior pitches and the poor quality of facilities.
- 5.80 The supply of cricket and hockey pitches is most in balance with demand whilst there is a small undersupply of rugby pitches.
- 5.81 Team Generation Rates (TGRs), show that participation in football is lower in Darlington than the national average. Participation levels are also lower than average for adult cricket and senior male hockey. Rugby participation at all levels is higher in Darlington than the national average.
- 5.82 Current national and local agendas relating to increasing physical activity and sports participation may have a significant impact on participation in pitch sports in future years and may increase the overall demand for pitches. Similar increases in population growth will also increase demand for pitches, especially in locality areas A and D.
- 5.83 There are three football teams (that we are aware of) in the borough that cannot play at their preferred pitch, indicating that there is latent demand.



## **SECTION 5 – METHODOLOGY FINDINGS**

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- 5.84 The proposed additional pitches at Eastbourne Sports Complex, Eastbourne Academy and Hummersknott School will improve the quantity and quality of pitch provision and will go some way towards meeting projected unmet demand (provided these facilities have secure community access).
- 5.85 Further analysis and recommendations based on the calculations set out in this section will be discussed in Section 6.

**SECTION 6**  
**FUTURE DELIVERY**

## **The future delivery of playing pitch provision in Darlington**

- 6.1 The aspirations of the LSP and the local authority to increase levels of participation in physical activity across the borough, means that the quantity, quality and accessibility of playing pitches must not only meet the needs of the local communities now, but also in the future.
- 6.2 The application of the Playing Pitch Methodology (PPM) and a detailed analysis of the supply and demand for pitch sports across Darlington has been set out in sections 4 and 5. This section considers the key findings of this analysis and provides solutions to address the key issues outlined.
- 6.3 Ensuring the appropriate distribution of pitches across Darlington to meet local needs and existing and future demand is particularly important in light of:
- the future expected population growth which may generate additional demand for pitches in future years
  - the rural nature of parts of the borough, which means that more pitches may be required in order to maximise accessibility compared to an urban area
  - the increasing participation levels within Darlington - the effective provision of pitches will be a key vehicle to increase this participation further in the future
  - Healthier Darlington – one of five theme groups within the LSP. Provision of a high quality sporting infrastructure that is accessible and affordable for all will help to increase participation thus helping to reduce health related diseases such as obesity, heart attack and stroke. It will also help to promote wellbeing and generally increase quality of life for residents of Darlington.
- 6.4 As concluded in sections four and five, the key issues for pitches in Darlington are:
- there is a significant under supply of junior football pitches in the borough. Pressures on junior pitches will increase by 2021 due to future population increases and Team Generation Rates (TGRs) and predicted increasing participation in the junior game
  - school pitches are of particular importance if facilities for community football are to improve, application of the playing pitch methodology highlights that shortfalls decrease significantly when taking into account schools that permit informal community use
  - generally, the quality of pitches in the borough is poor with several pitches that are unable to sustain the level of use that is required
  - the key quality issues at Council sites primarily relates to poor drainage and lack of changing provision. Issues relating to the unevenness of pitches and general maintenance have also been highlighted
  - several sites, especially parks pitches are misused eg by motorbikes, dog walkers and are also used for training – this further impacts on the quality of pitches
  - several pitches have been lost in recent years due to development – whilst some of these have been replaced elsewhere, they are of poorer quality. Overall there has been a net loss of pitches

## **SECTION 6: FUTURE DELIVERY OF PLAYING PITCH PROVISION IN DARLINGTON**

- changing facilities are severely lacking and the majority of Council sites do not have any facilities at all. The exception is Eastbourne Sports Complex and South Park (although consultation suggests that the changing facility at South Park is not currently being used to its full potential).
- 6.5 It is essential that this playing pitch strategy is not considered in isolation, but that links with other strategies are recognised and the opportunities to achieve wider objectives through pitch provision are sought.
- 6.6 The vision for this strategy is to:

***Ensure that the quality and quantity of pitches meets the needs and aspirations of residents of Darlington now and in the future.***

- 6.7 The aims of the strategy are to:
- provide opportunities for participation in pitch sports for people of all abilities
  - improve and make accessible, playing pitches throughout the borough
  - support the development of sports clubs and individuals
  - improve the health and wellbeing of residents by providing high quality opportunities for sporting activities.
- 6.8 The objectives that support the vision and aims and will underpin successful delivery are as follows:
- ensure that the quantity of facilities is sufficient to meet local need
  - ensure that the quality of facilities is fit for purpose and ensures a high level of user and resident satisfaction
  - maximise access to existing facilities
  - ensure that facilities provide value for money and are efficiently managed.
- 6.9 The remainder of this section considers the priorities and key recommendations for pitch provision in Darlington. The principles behind each of the above elements is considered generally across the borough and then specific issues within each of the locality areas and potential solutions to address the issues are discussed in the appendix E.

### **A hierarchical approach to pitch provision**

- 6.10 In view of the need to achieve higher standards of pitch and ancillary provision across the borough, a hierarchy of pitch provision is proposed.
- 6.11 Sport England recommends a playing pitch "hub" approach where pitches for an area are concentrated on fewer sites with a greater number of pitches on each site. This is with a view to providing a higher standard of facilities on fewer sites. A hub site may be a local authority, school or university facility.
- 6.12 The second tier of the hierarchy comprises of smaller satellite sites, located strategically to serve communities across the borough. Satellite sites are able to add

## **SECTION 6: FUTURE DELIVERY OF PLAYING PITCH PROVISION IN DARLINGTON**

value, as additional, complementary opportunities through their being associated with the hub facilities. A better use of limited resources will arise from investment and management in more sustainable sites.

- 6.13 This hierarchy has been used to identify the pitches providing for higher level adult and junior competition, and those for lower level adult competition, casual play and training.
- 6.14 One of the key principles of the hierarchy is that changing facilities should only be provided on managed sites.
- 6.15 A set of qualitative standards have been recommended for each tier in the hierarchy. Based on an appraisal of sites Table 6.1 below identifies existing sites that are most suitable for inclusion in each tier of the hierarchy.

**Table 6.1 Proposed hierarchy of pitch provision**

<b>Tier</b>	<b>Qualitative standards</b>	<b>Example pitch sites</b>
Tier 1 - Flagship/hub sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi pitch site (at least 4 pitches)</li> <li>• Multi sport site where possible</li> <li>• Adequate changing facilities that:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- are flexible, fit for a variety of purposes and which fully comply with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act</li> <li>- provide for a number of different groups to use the facility at the same time, in safety and comfort</li> <li>- meet current standards - Sport England &amp; NGB guidelines</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Managed community access</li> <li>• High standard of maintenance</li> <li>• Provision of adult, junior pitches &amp; mini pitches where possible</li> <li>• Provision of floodlit synthetic training facility</li> <li>• Quality of site – should score 90% or above using site assessment matrix</li> <li>• Easily accessible by public transport and by car</li> <li>• Sufficient car parking</li> <li>• Size of pitch must meet NGB specification</li> <li>• Provides for the higher level adult and junior competition.</li> <li>• User committee</li> </ul>	Eastbourne Sports Complex  One new hub site required (ideally on the opposite side of the borough to Eastbourne) – does not necessarily need to be a local authority site – it could be a school/ college/university site, but it must have secure community access.
Tier 2 - Satellite sites	Multi pitch site (at least 2 pitches) Adequate changing facilities (new builds must meet current standards) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managed community access</li> <li>• Quality of site – should score 70% or above using site assessment matrix</li> <li>• Lower standard of maintenance compared to hub sites</li> <li>• Easily accessible by public transport and by car</li> </ul>	South Park Education Village Longfield School Branksome School Hummersknott School (Once secure community use agreements are in place)

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<b>Tier</b>	<b>Qualitative standards</b>	<b>Example pitch sites</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking distance from a high proportion of residents</li> <li>• Some level of car parking – to lesser extent</li> <li>• Size of pitch must meet NGB specification</li> <li>• Provides for lower level adult competition.</li> </ul>	Heighington Playing Fields (subject to changing provision being provided)
Tier 3 – Single pitch sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides for casual play and training</li> <li>• Access for general recreational use is permitted</li> <li>• No changing required</li> <li>• Quality of site – should score 50% or above using site assessment matrix</li> <li>• Car parking nearby but not necessarily on site</li> <li>• Continue maintenance as reserve sites to cater for teams displaced from normal playing venues, to provide informal recreational space once Tier 2 and 3 sites are established and meet demand for formal matches.</li> </ul>	Tommy Crooks Park (would could potentially be a tier 2 site with investment) Springfield Park McMullen Road North Park Glebe Road Red Hall Community Centre

6.16 The initial priority is for the achievement of community use agreements on school sites, coupled with the creation of one more hub site. Both these factors will enable increased facility capacity and use, and take the pressure off existing pitches. The tier 1 and 2 sites should be priorities for improvement.

6.17 Further development of pitch sites in the future should be assessed in line with the above hierarchy.

### **Quantity**

#### ***Protection of existing provision***

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

6.19 Due to the current levels of demand and the pressures on pitches to cope with this demand, all known playing fields sites should be afforded protection within specific policies that benefit sport and physical activity in Darlington.

6.20 PPM calculations indicate that there is a theoretical shortage of pitch provision within four of the five locality areas. Only within locality C is the quantity of pitches sufficient to meet demand. The greatest shortfalls are for junior football pitches, again with four out of the five locality areas having insufficient provision, equating to a theoretical overall shortfall of 18.5 pitches. The supply of adult pitches is almost in balance with demand, however, many junior teams do currently play competitive matches on adult pitches. When the supply of adult and junior pitches are considered together, there is an overall shortfall of c18 pitches in Darlington. (This takes in to consideration the current carrying capacity of pitches).

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- 6.21 Based on the current shortfalls in provision revealed by the playing pitch methodology, and in light of the fact that pitches are often under threat from other, non sport development, protection of pitches is of paramount importance.
- 6.22 Although the importance of protecting pitches is clear, Sport England policy outlined in *A Sporting Future for Playing Fields in England* outlines five conditions that may allow for development on a playing field. If one of these five conditions is met then disposal of a site may be permitted if the overall change to the pitch provision has positive repercussions for pitch provision in the borough. The five conditions are:
- a carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport
  - the proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields, and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use
  - the proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins), a reduction in the size of the playing areas of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting/ancillary facilities on the site
  - the playing field or playing fields, which would be lost as a result of the proposed development, would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development
  - the proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.

<b>PPS 1</b>	All pitch sites should specifically be afforded protection within the Local Development Framework. Protection policies should link with policies for other types of open space.
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- 6.23 As well as protecting pitches, consideration should be given to the implications of new development and consequential population growth on the demand for pitches. Where new development places additional demands on open space, sport and recreation facilities, planning obligations can help ensure that development does not have an adverse impact on existing sport, recreation and open space infrastructure. This will be achieved through policies in the Core Strategy and subsequent Development Plan Documents and through detailed guidance in the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document.
- 6.24 It should be clear when developers will be required to provide facilities on site, where developer contributions or works in kind will be secured for new infrastructure and/or for the improvement to existing infrastructure and where maintenance contributions will be required to meet the additional demands placed upon it by new development.

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- 6.25 Planning conditions or S106 agreements should also be used where appropriate to secure community use agreements at school sites and private facilities to provide an enhanced range of facilities for the community.

<b>PPS 2</b>	The Council should develop policy to secure developer contributions to improve the quality of existing outdoor playing pitches or alternative sporting provision in the borough and provide new playing pitches where a shortfall has been identified. Developers cannot be asked to make up existing deficiencies, only to contribute to those caused by or exacerbated by their development.
<b>PPS 2A</b>	The Council should create a standard planning condition to be attached to a planning permission to enable the effective use of community use agreements.

### ***Providing a minimum level of provision***

- 6.26 An important outcome from a playing pitch strategy is the development of local standards of provision, in accordance with PPG17. Such standards will:
- underpin negotiations with developers over their contributions towards new pitch provision to meet the needs of new residential developments
  - provide an additional overview of the general supply of pitches/level of provision
  - assist in protecting land in playing field use
  - assist in benchmarking with other areas/authorities.
- 6.27 Fields in Trust Standard for pitch provision states that for every 1,000 people, 1.2 hectares of playing pitches should be provided. However, this is a national benchmark and it is important to also consider the local context and local variations that may cause this.
- 6.28 PPG17 advocates the development of local standards that consider the local population and local community needs. As part of the open space strategy, local standards have been set for all types of open space and a broad overarching standard has been set for outdoor sports facilities:

*Policy 11: Outdoor Sports Facilities - The Council will work towards securing outdoor sports facilities within 1000m of every home in the urban area, and will work with local schools to secure greater community access in the evenings and at weekends to school playing fields, and with private sports clubs to increase the opportunities for general public use of their facilities.*

- 6.29 As part of the open spaces strategy, a quantity standard for playing pitches has also been set:

*Policy 12: Playing Pitch Standard – Playing pitches will be maintained and improved to achieve 1.05ha of accessible playing pitches per 1000 people for the Borough as a whole.*

NB The playing pitch standard within the open space strategy includes golf courses and horse riding provision.



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- 6.30 The findings of this playing pitch strategy will inform the development of a local quantity standard for pitches which will reflect local demand for football, cricket and rugby pitches in the Borough. Golf courses and horse riding provision are not included. Synthetic turf pitches are also not included in this standard due to the range of pitches (eg sand based, 3G) and the fact that they are only used for competitive play by hockey clubs. STPs and golf courses are covered separately in the sport and physical activity facilities strategy report.
- 6.31 The current level of provision and the proposed local standard has been calculated below. The existing level of provision is based upon the current supply of community accessible pitches (measured in area) in the borough, divided by the population. The current level of all playing pitches is equivalent to 0.86 hectares per 1000 population. The current level of community accessible playing pitches however is only equivalent to 0.42 hectares per 1000 population.
- 6.32 The PPM outlines where current shortfalls and surpluses exist for each type of sport and suggests potential solutions to ensure that provision meets the needs of the community.
- 6.33 The local standard calculation is based upon the findings of this report. The local standard takes into account the additional pitches needed (or surplus pitches identified) to meet demand and calculates the area of this required level of provision. This method of calculating the standard is based on local need and is therefore compliant with the principles set out in PPG17.
- 6.34 For Darlington, a minimum of 0.69ha of accessible playing pitches per 1000 people is required to meet local demand by 2021.
- 6.35 This figure constitutes a minimum level of provision to ensure that supply and demand are aligned, and does not take into account the recommended strategic reserve.
- 6.36 While it is important to ensure that deficiencies are met for each sport and each pitch type, some degree of spare capacity is an integral part of playing pitch provision for the following reasons:
- to accommodate latent and future demand for existing pitch sport teams
  - to enable the development of new clubs and teams
  - for the development / expansion of new pitch sports (such as mini-soccer and 'tag' rugby)
  - to accommodate backlogs and for rest and recovery periods.
- 6.37 The playing pitch methodology considers the minimum supply of pitches needed to meet demand. For the reasons highlighted above, it is important to ensure that a strategic reserve of facilities is maintained.
- 6.38 It is therefore suggested that an additional 10% is added onto the standard to allow for this. It is therefore recommended that the local standard is set at 0.76 ha per 1000 population.

<b>PPS 3</b>	Increase the existing level of community accessible pitch provision from 0.42 ha per 1000 to 0.76ha per 1000 population.
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## **SECTION 6: FUTURE DELIVERY OF PLAYING PITCH PROVISION IN DARLINGTON**

6.39 The local standard should be used in order to ascertain the level of input from developers as it states the required amount of land per 1000 population. For example, a development providing housing for 1000 people would be expected to provide sufficient funding for 0.76 hectares of playing pitch provision. The most appropriate type of provision (ie the sport where there is the highest need) should then be determined using the results of the playing pitch methodology. In some cases where there are no deficiencies it may be appropriate to fund the enhancement of existing pitches. A developer should only be asked to fund the additional shortfalls their development will create. They cannot be asked to make up existing deficiencies. This relates to recommendation PPS 2, which highlights the need to include standards of provision in a Supplementary Planning Documents.

### ***Development of new pitches***

6.40 There are a number of planning applications identified by the planning authority that include potential new pitches. These are summarised in table 6.2 below.

**Table 6.2 Potential new pitch proposals**

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Lingfield Point (Rothmans) – the LPA has received a planning application for a full size football pitch, cricket pitch, MUGA, climbing wall and community hall at this site. There are playing fields on site (2.4ha) but they are not currently used by teams. There is also changing provision on the site. The planning authority has not identified the spaces as surplus to requirements, but felt that relocating equivalent provision elsewhere on the site, with full community access would enhance the provision of sport and recreation facilities in this area (locality D). Changing facilities were not identified in the proposal but the Council recommended that the existing facility should be upgraded/replaced. After consultation with the sports development team, planners recommended that there might not be a need for a MUGA/climbing wall but perhaps the equivalent sports provision could use the community hall for sports/recreation where there was an identified need	The PPS has not identified a need for additional cricket pitches at present. The space would be best used to meet the undersupply of football pitches. Changing provision is critical and could potential be provided as part of the community hall. A new MUGA should be provided with a synthetic turf surface suitable for football training.
Darlington Football Club has submitted a planning application to the local planning authority to develop a Community Sporting and Educational Village on redundant land at the Darlington Arena. The application includes development of three outdoor pitches and an indoor facility accommodating 10 five a side pitches. The status of the application is one of Minded to Approve subject to a 106 agreement (not yet signed).	Whilst this has been identified as a potential development, plans have been put on hold and it appears unlikely that this will go ahead in the near future. The development of this site was part of the Councils original plan to re-provide for pitches lost at Hundens (Eastbourne). As this has not come to fruition, there is still a net loss of pitches in Darlington that need to be re-provided.  If the Darlington FC proposals were to develop, this could provide an additional hub site, subject to community access. The indoor facility would fill a gap in the borough for football training.

6.41 A number of other facility development opportunities have been identified but as yet, no formal planning applications have been made. These include:

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- interest from a private football centre operator - we would urge the Council to explore the potential to bring such a facility to Darlington
- interest from an existing sports club to expand its grounds to provide extra outdoor pitches
- opportunities for facility development in conjunction with Darlington College and the University.

6.42 The Council should consider development of new pitches to work towards meeting the standard of 0.76ha of accessible pitch provision per 1000 people. The priority for the Council should be development of multi-pitch sites with quality pitches and changing provision, as opposed to single pitch sites.

### ***Ensuring provision meets demand in the longer term***

6.43 As part of this study, we have looked at what could happen in the future, taking into account demographic and participation changes. The spreadsheet provided to the Council ensures that changes to both the pitch stock and the demand for those pitches can be updated. The continual updating of this spreadsheet to reflect changes to provision and demand will be particularly important in the coming years in light of the projected population increase and the proposed increase in pitches.

<b>PPS 4</b>	Ensure the modelling spreadsheet is kept up to date to reflect the ongoing changes in population, housing developments and sports development initiatives in addition to improvements made to the pitch stock.
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### **Quality**

#### ***Enhancement of existing provision***

6.44 Provision of quality facilities is essential to encourage people to participate. In addition, the quality of pitches impacts not only on the quality of play, but also on the potential capacity of a pitch and hence numerical surpluses and deficiencies.

6.45 Improvements to pitch quality will be essential to maintain and increase participation rates in the borough. Site specific issues and priorities for improvement are highlighted later in appendix E.

6.46 Deficiencies identified by the PPM and highlighted in section 5 can be addressed through the improvement of existing pitches (as this increases the carrying capacity of pitches). Key issues highlighted by consultation and site assessments with regards to the quality of pitches include:

- the quality of public pitches is generally perceived to be poor by sports clubs, however private/club facilities are considered to be of better quality
- the highest quality pitches in the borough are located at private sites, such as Darlington College, the two rugby clubs and Darlington Railway Athletic FC
- the quality of pitches at the Education Village were also rated highly whereas the quality pitches on other school sites was generally rated poorly

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- the lack of suitable drainage and poor maintenance is the most fundamental issue concerning pitch quality
  - the majority of public facilities do not have any ancillary facilities, which makes them unsuitable for clubs competing in local league competitions. This also leads to issues accommodating female teams and problems of providing for junior teams alongside senior teams due to child protection issues
  - there is limited on site parking at some sites which creates problems on match day, for example Tommy Crooks Park.
- 6.47 There is an immediate opportunity to develop a multi pitch site (tier 2) in Heighington Village. Heighington Sports Field currently comprises of a senior football pitch, two junior pitches and associated car parking. This has been made possible through the hard work of the parish council and through Football Foundation funding. There is also a childrens' play area on the site. The pitches are currently used by both adult and junior teams at weekends and for training. There is a need to develop suitable changing facilities to support the pitches. The parish council is currently in discussions with the Football Foundation to explore the opportunity for grant funding for changing provision. Strategically, this type of development, fits in to the hierarchy at tier 2.
- 6.48 Implementation of this playing pitch strategy should drive a rolling programme of improvements across Council pitch sites. This will improve capacity, drive increases in participation, improve access for all groups and enable higher participation levels to be maintained over a sustained period.
- 6.49 Any programme of improvements should bear in mind the following issues:
- the standard of play at the site (including league requirements)
  - the demand on the site (the number of games played per week)
  - the need to facilitate concurrent usage by young people, women and other target groups through appropriate ancillary facilities
  - facility specifications from National Governing Body (NGB) strategies.
- 6.50 All facilities should meet with National Governing Body Standards in terms of both the quality of pitches and ancillary facilities. Condition surveys should be undertaken in order to determine the quality of existing ancillary facilities and establish any necessary improvements.
- 6.51 PPG17 highlights that there are several factors integral to the successful delivery of a network of high quality sport and recreation, stating that:
- “Quality depends on two things: the needs and expectations of users, on the one hand, and design, management and maintenance on the other”*
- 6.52 The Sport England Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) accessibility indicator reinforces the importance of quality through the implementation and application of the standard:
- “% of population that are within 20 minutes travel time (urban areas – by walking; rural areas – by car) of a range of three different sports facility types of which one has achieved a quality assured standard, specifically;”*

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- *Quest*
- *Green Flag*
- *ISO 9001:2000*
- *Investors in Excellence*
- *Chartermark.”*

- 6.53 A park containing sports pitch provision can be one such means of achieving the above quality standard. All new pitches developed should meet the quality standards detailed above. Only two of eight Borough Council owned pitches in Darlington currently contain changing facilities (Eastbourne and South Park) and only one of these (Eastbourne) is available for use by adult teams.
- 6.54 In order to facilitate the delivery of higher quality sites, multi pitch sites should be considered. Multi pitch sites provide the opportunity for more effective management and maintenance and can also provide a more sociable experience. In the rural settlements, pitch sites with fewer pitches are likely to be required.
- 6.55 In order to drive a programme of improvements, a minimum quality standard should be applied, measured by the score according to the site assessment matrix. It is recommended that this is set at:
- 60% for the site and ancillary facilities (the percentage score required to be categorised as good)
  - 65% for the pitch area (the score currently required to be categorised as a good pitch). This should reflect a minimum standard of provision.
- 6.56 The proportion of pitches and ancillary facilities meeting this requirement should be monitored annually. The site assessment matrix can be found in Appendix C.
- 6.57 The Council should act as an enabler and support all partners in maintenance, improvement and enhancement of their facilities. Table 6.3 overleaf identifies a priority list of pitches for facility improvements (Council owned). This includes both pitches and ancillary accommodation. A more detailed way forward for each locality area which includes pitch sites in across all ownership types is provide later in the section.

<b>PPS 5</b>	<p>The focus for the Council should be on the development of one additional hub site and other multi pitch satellite sites. Construction of changing facilities on single pitch sites is not recommended.</p> <p>Furthermore, a policy of rest and recovery should be brought into operation at all pitch sites ensuring that the quality of pitches does not deteriorate over the course of a season or from season to season.</p> <p>The programme of improvement should concentrate on tier 1 and tier two pitch sites.</p>
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**Table 6.3 Priority list of (Council) pitch improvements**

Pitch site	Current provision	Improvements required
Eastbourne Sports Complex/Eastbourne Academy	Currently classified as the only tier one site in Darlington. Four pitches with changing and shower facilities. Teams pay to use pitches. Playing surface good standard. Previously 10 pitches at this site.	<p>Ensure that 2 or 3 pitches (preferably junior) are reinstated on the Eastbourne Academy site for the 09-10 season. Ensure these pitches have secured community access &amp; use of the Eastbourne SC changing facilities.</p> <p>There is a new football pitch project in the final stages of completion in the centre of the athletics track at ESC. Ensure that this pitch and all others at Eastbourne are continually maintained to a high standard.</p> <p>Refurbish the changing facilities so that they meet league guidelines and undertake a DDA audit.</p>
Tommy Crooks Park	Four pitches no changing facilities. Teams are not charged for uses of these pitches. Pitches are basic park pitches and not a good standard of playing surface. Pitches 2-4 need major works. Pitch 1 would be very good if drainage installed	<p>If the Council wishes to upgrade this site to a tier two facility it will require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved drainage to improve the overall quality of pitches to increase the carrying capacity of this site</li> <li>- investment in sufficient changing facilities</li> <li>- appropriate car parking facilities are provided.</li> </ul> <p>(see qualitative standard in table 6.1)</p>
South Park	Mini & junior pitches. One adult pitch is marked out but is over largest size allowed. Some pitches ruined by fireworks display. Changing facilities but not been used to full potential.	Re-align pitches on this site in conjunction with Spaire Lads & Lasses & league secretaries. Ensure changing facilities are used to their full potential.
Springfield Park	One pitch no changing facilities. Teams not charged to use pitch. Basic park pitch playing surface reasonable standard.	Once tier one and tier two sites have been established, classify these pitches for training and casual play only, re-locate teams to better quality tier 1 and 3 pitch sites.
McMullen Road	One pitch no changing facilities. Teams are not charged to use pitch. Basic park pitch playing surface, very poor standard. This will never be used unless has major works, however money would be better spent elsewhere. Has had standing water for 6 months.	As an alternative, consider long term lease contracts for single pitch sites. Enquire with football clubs whether a long-term lease option is possible. Priority should be given to clubs who have written development plans; run teams in a range of age groups from youth to adult; and have a financial and management ability to undertake this responsibility. Enabling clubs to manage their own facility in return for a long-term lease of the site reduces the demand for publicly managed sites while increasing the overall level of provision and offers benefits of reduced responsibility for the Council in terms of maintenance; increased likelihood of the club receiving funding for

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Pitch site	Current provision	Improvements required
North Park	One pitch no changing facilities. Teams not charged to use pitch. Basic park pitch playing surface reasonable standard.	development (assuming that a long term lease is in place); establishment of a home ground for clubs, enhancing the social element of participation; and a long term shift in focus for the Council from provider to enabler.
Glebe Road	One pitch no changing facilities. Teams are not charged to use pitch. Basic park pitch playing surface not good standard -has been unplayable for majority of 08/09 season. Needs major drainage works.	
Red Hall Community Centre	New for the 08/09 season.	

NB. All of the above pitches are adult size although junior teams play on the pitches at Eastbourne Sports Complex.

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### **Accessibility**

- 6.58 It is important to ensure that all residents are able to access a pitch within an appropriate distance of their home and that a lack of facilities does not does not inhibit demand for pitches.
- 6.59 Although the guidance set out in Towards a Level Playing Field does not consider the accessibility of pitches in relation to distance thresholds, consideration of access is an essential tool in effective planning of pitch provision.
- 6.60 There are three elements to accessibility of playing pitches:
- How easy it is to get there
  - Whether access on to the site is controlled or not eg by agreement, membership, cost
  - Local knowledge and perceptions of sites and what they have to offer.
- 6.61 The open spaces strategy states that most people expect to travel 30 minutes to outdoor sports facilities. However, the surveys undertaken as part of the playing pitch strategy suggest that most clubs expect to drive to a grass pitch with a drivetime of c15 minutes.
- 6.62 Within Darlington however, the main issue is not with travel time to pitches, but it is in relation to access to pitch sites. Indeed of all the grass pitches in Darlington, half do not have secure community access.

### ***Improving access to school/college pitches***

- 6.63 According to PPG17, access to outdoor sports facilities are only considered high valued if they are accessible to the local community. An inaccessible facility is of limited value to the local community as a sports facility, regardless of the quality of the space.
- 6.64 Access to school and college sites is a frequently raised issue across the UK, with many good quality playing fields sitting unused on peak days. Of the 104 pitches identified in Darlington, 50% are secured for use by the community. Schools that are used by the community (but have no formal agreements) are not included within the 50%.
- 6.65 Table 6.4 below identifies a number of school/college sites which should have a community use agreement. All of the applications, with the exception of Abbey Road and Eastbourne Academy had a condition with the planning permission requesting community use of facilities. As yet none of the conditions have been discharged. However, we know that some of the schools/colleges do provide community access but have not formally sought to have the condition discharged. Some schools may not be aware that the LEA agreed to this as a condition of planning permission.
- 6.66 This has information has been used as background information to inform the strategy and has helped with prioritising PPS6.



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**Table 6.4 Schools requiring community use agreements**

Site	Justification for community use	Comments on community access
Abbey Road Playing Fields, QE VI Form College	Required as mitigation for loss of playing field on main site	Playing pitches let to local teams only, free of charge - Spray FC and Reid St School. No formal agreement in place.
Harrowgate Hill Primary School	Requested (on a non-stat basis) as part of the school's redevelopment	Formal community use agreement (managed by Kajima) in place but limited use of pitches by teams at present.
Alderman Leach Primary School	As mitigation for playing field shortfall between new school and old school to allow disposal of old site. MUGA is NOF funded.	No evidence of community use.
Skerne Park Primary School	MUGA was NOF funded. Statutory application	No community use of pitches evident.
Darlington College	Scale of new facilities	No community access allowed.
Dodmire Primary	Stat application. In accordance with E5, condition required to address statutory objection. NOF funded	No evidence of community use. Large fence surrounds entire site with CCTV.
Whinfield Primary	Statutory application – condition on CUA required to address objection. NOF funded MUGA	The school do let the pitch to a local team. School does not provide changing facilities. MUGA – unsure of community use but gates locked at the time of the site visit (8/1/09). No formal agreement.
Branksome Comprehensive	Stat application. No objection subject to imposition of condition requiring CUA. NOF funded	Community use at present but no evidence of formal agreement in place.
Carmel Comprehensive	Staff application. No objection subject to imposition of condition requiring CUA. NOF funded.	No formal community use agreement evident
Abbey Juniors	Statutory application. No objection subject to imposition of CUA condition.	The school has existing hire arrangements in the evenings (for the hall) but not weekends. Stated that they would have to employ somebody to enable weekend hire – not adverse to this idea.
Eastbourne Academy	Statutory application. No objection subject to imposition of CUA condition. DCSF funding requirement.	Building due to open Sep 09

6.67 The role of education institutions that offer informal access in Darlington cannot be underestimated. When schools that offer informal access to their facilities are included in calculations, the shortfall of junior pitches is reduced by three pitches, and more pitches are available for adult and mini use. Whilst shortfalls of both cricket and rugby pitches are reduced, these sports are primarily focussed around clubs. However, opening up school pitches, especially for rugby, lends itself to establishment of satellite clubs, particularly when considering the two rugby clubs are located in the same locality area. Securing community access of school rugby pitches in the east and north of the borough, could potentially facilitate development of a satellite club (s) for rugby to feed in to the main clubs in the west of Darlington.

6.68 Whilst these school pitches are currently available for use by teams, a lack of security surrounding the agreements means that this can change at any time, placing

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significant pressure on the remaining pitch stock. Long term security of these agreements is therefore essential.

6.69 *Encouraging schools to permit community use may require genuine financial commitment from the local authority to improve playing surfaces and capacity, provide or improve changing accommodation.*

6.70 The BSF programme may offer opportunities to enhance and upgrade facilities in future years. The extended schools agenda may also facilitate the use of school facilities for community use. Increasing access to pitches at school sites ensures that resources are maximised.

<b>PPS 6</b>	<p>Explore the potential to secure community access at the following school sites in the first instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Branksome School</li> <li>- Hummersknott School</li> <li>- Hurworth House School Playing Fields</li> <li>- Longfield Comprehensive School</li> <li>- Eastbourne Church Of England Academy (new)</li> <li>- Mount Pleasant Primary School</li> </ul> <p>Secondly, explore the potential to secure community access at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carmel Technology College</li> <li>- QE VI Form College</li> <li>- New Darlington College</li> <li>- Hurworth School</li> <li>- Heighington C of E Primary School</li> <li>- Abbey Junior School</li> <li>- Gurney Pease Primary School.</li> </ul> <p>Schools in areas of greatest deficiency of pitch provision should be prioritised.</p>
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6.71 These sites have been prioritised because they either currently have community use of their pitches but it is not formalised, they should have community use due to a previous condition or they have good quality facilities but no community access at present.

6.72 While community use of school pitches should be encouraged in order to maximise the use of assets, it must be acknowledged that school pitches are required to meet curricular demand during the week as well as sustaining community use at weekends. It is essential that they can effectively meet this role first, as their primary purpose, and therefore wear and tear on these sites should be minimised.

<b>PPS 7</b>	<p>Where possible, any school pitches available for community use should be assigned for youth/junior/mini games to protect the site and ensure it is able to serve its primary purpose – curriculum use.</p>
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6.73 This links with the PPM findings, which indicate that the greatest shortfall of all pitches in the borough is junior football pitches. The development of community use

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agreements could help to offset some of the unmet demand for junior pitches, and therefore create capacity at some of the principal senior pitch sites in the borough.

6.74 In addition to making better use of corporate resources, the development of formal long term community use agreements will also help to:

- improve school club links
- develop extended school links
- maximise public assets
- aid junior progression and development routes.

6.75 Where community use agreements are negotiated it should be ensured that these facilities are accessible to community teams and that a clear booking system is in place. Where possible, prices should also be standardised. The inclusion of parish pitches and pitches owned by other providers would further improve the ease of access to pitches within Darlington. This links with the section below.

<b>PPS 8</b>	Consider the inclusion of school pitches available to community within the existing pitch booking system – possibly a tiered pricing approach dependant on quality of pitch in the short term.
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### ***Improving the current and future management of facilities***

6.76 There is a wide range of providers of playing pitches in the borough which makes it difficult to provide a consistent approach to the management, cost and booking of pitches.

6.77 The Council should facilitate the effective delivery of pitches through:

- ensuring the pitch booking system remains simple and efficient to use – this should be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with users. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of school facilities with formal agreements in the system to facilitate access to these sites
- ensuring that facilities offer value for money. More than half of clubs that responded to the survey indicated that currently, value for money is poor. Almost half of clubs suggested that they would be willing to pay more if the quality of pitches was to be improved. Following pitch improvements the current charging policies should be reviewed and consideration should be given to the implementation of a hierarchy of prices, where higher quality facilities are available at a higher fee (building on the current approach where very poor pitches are available free of charge)
- promoting joint and partnership working across the Council and with key stakeholders in the provision of playing pitches through the development of a joint working group. The group should involve key stakeholders including leisure and grounds maintenance contractors, Parish Councils, Education, Sports Development, Key Clubs and the Council Planning department.

6.78 This playing pitch strategy provides an assessment of all playing pitches in the borough. The creation of a working group should be considered to implement the findings of this strategy and ensure a consistent approach to the management of

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playing pitches in Darlington. The management of pitches could also include synthetic turf pitches given that there are currently only two in the borough (Council owned and the new facility at Hummersknott).

### ***Improving disabled access to pitches***

- 6.79 It is important that sports facilities can cater for disabled as well as able bodied participants. In order to achieve this, it will be essential that facilities meet with DDA requirements
- 6.80 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) of 1995 received additional powers in October 2004 when an additional phase came into force. The implications of this are considerable as all goods, services and facilities – whether charged for or provided free of charge – are covered by the legislation which requires providers to ensure that:
- disabled people are not treated less favourably
  - service providers must make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities, such as providing extra help or making changes to the way they provide their services
  - service providers may have to make other reasonable adjustments in relation to the physical features of their premises to overcome barriers to access.
- 6.81 The full Code of Practice is downloadable from <http://www.disability.gov.uk..>

<b>PPS 9</b>	<p>Promote joint and partnership working across the Council and with key stakeholders in the provision of playing pitches through the development of a joint working group (all pitch sports). Focus should be on identifying priorities for improvement in relation to quantity, quality and accessibility.</p> <p>A full access audit should be undertaken ensuring that pitch facilities are accessible to all community groups. This should include an assessment of compliancy with DDA.</p>
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### **Use of facilities for training**

- 6.82 Common problems with pitch provision are often related to a lack of training/practice facilities. This is particularly an issue in Darlington and is linked to the lack of (and lack of access to) sports halls. If players are to improve and clubs develop they require access to training facilities as well as match pitches. Training on match pitches further exacerbates the quality issues at pitch sites and generates wear and tear. This is a key issue for pitches within parks particularly.
- 6.83 Artificial surfaces provide more consistent playing and practice conditions than grass. The development of synthetic turf pitches (STPs) has fundamentally changed the way some sports are played and matches are programmed. Few (if any) hockey matches are now played on grass, and frequently games can only be accommodated by sequential programming on match days. In time, the development of 'third generation' STPs for football may have a similar effect.

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- 6.84 Sport England research into the use of STPs indicates that they play two principal roles, midweek training for football and weekend matches for hockey. Additionally, the popularity of five a side football as a game in its own right is increasing.
- 6.85 Throughout this report, the analysis of the demand for synthetic pitches has primarily focused on the demand for hockey pitches. In light of the growing role of synthetic pitches for football training, it is essential to consider the need for additional facilities for the purposes of football training.
- 6.86 The capacity of artificial pitches is greater than grass pitches. However, this is dependent on opening hours and the availability of floodlighting. One of the greatest impacts of artificial training areas and 5-a-side courts is that they free up sports hall space for other sports by accommodating 5-a-side football. It is necessary therefore that links are created between this playing pitch strategy and consideration of indoor sports facilities. Additionally, the provision of dedicated 5-a-side facilities may reduce the demand and programming issues on full size synthetic pitches that are required for hockey training. Artificial surface training areas can provide for the casual needs of various sports and reduce pressure on existing grass pitches from casual use and training.
- 6.87 There are a number of Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) across the borough. Whilst these facilities are meeting *some* demand for casual play (although access issues to these facilities do exist), they do not offset the demand for facilities for competitive fixtures and formal training. The MUGAs that have been developed through NOF funding in recent years have all been installed with a tarmac surface and so are not really suitable for football training. Nevertheless, as these MUGAs are floodlit, they could offset some demand particularly in those areas where access to local training facilities is most problematic (if they were accessible).
- 6.88 The role of artificial training areas, multi use games areas and 5-a-side courts should therefore be recognised in terms of provision for informal/casual use and all-weather training for football. Current behaviour patterns are not necessarily a good means of assessing demand for training, as demand is constrained by supply.
- 6.89 A lack of access to training facilities was a key issue raised by clubs and other consultees throughout consultation as highlighted during Section 5.
- 6.90 This lack of access to training facilities was determined to be detrimental to club development. This was particularly highlighted by football clubs who identified a lack of access to training facilities, as problematic. Football clubs considered there to be a lack of floodlit, all weather facilities in the borough and specifically a need for dedicated 5-a-side facilities.
- 6.91 Provision for training is an important part of pitch provision. Without this, clubs may use match day facilities meaning deterioration in the overall quality of pitches due to the number of matches that they are required to sustain.

<b>PPS 10</b>	Explore the opportunity to develop dedicated 5-a-side football facilities in Darlington, in conjunction with a private operator, potentially in conjunction with a school/college.
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- 6.92 The PPM and consultation suggests that there is no need for increased provision of synthetic pitches for hockey in the area. The Club uses the sand based pitch at Eastbourne which is floodlit and available for use daily.

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- 6.93 Consultation with other sport clubs and consultees however, indicated that the provision of synthetic turf pitches in the borough is insufficient, and that another synthetic pitch and/or dedicated 5-a-side provision would help to meet the needs of local clubs. This is backed up with the number of STPs in Darlington per 1000 people (0.02) which is less than both the regional and national average (0.03).

<b>PPS 11</b>	The Council should seek to work with the Football Foundation to explore the potential of developing a second third generation pitch in Darlington.
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- 6.94 In relation to the existing STP at Hummersknott School, the Council should ensure community access to the facility is maximised, however this should be the case from September 09 anyway once building works at the school are complete and the programme of use has been fully developed.
- 6.95 The suggested key actions and areas for further investigation in each locality area are set out in Appendix E. This outlines the key issues and the way forward for the provision of playing pitches within each of the five locality areas.

### **Dealing with site over use**

- 6.96 The greatest provision of playing pitches is locality area C. Currently, within this area there is a small oversupply of football pitches (7.6). However, this oversupply is catering for overspill from other areas of the borough. Given the relatively short distances between locality areas, the theoretical oversupply of pitches in this area is not seen to be significant. Indeed the main pitch site in locality C is at the Education Village which provides some of the best quality pitches in the borough. There does appear to be some capacity at the Education Village however to cater for more matches.
- 6.97 There are a number of sites in the borough that are currently being over used:
- Eastbourne Sports Complex – this has the best quality pitches of all the local authority sites and is the only public pitch site with changing provision. For this reason, the pitches are in big demand and are often played on more than twice in a weekend
  - Springfield Park – The quality of this pitch means that it can only hold one match per week, however three adult teams play matches on this pitch over the weekend
  - Longfield School – whilst not in secure community use, both adults and junior teams play matches on these pitches. This is as well as them being used for school use. Consultation suggests these are also use for training. This is likely to be impacting significantly on pitch quality.
- 6.98 Consultation with football league secretaries supported the findings that a number of pitches in Darlington are over used. It was stated that this results in the quality of the pitches deteriorating rapidly as the season progresses.
- 6.99 There are a number of pitch sites that have hardly been used this season (2008/09) due their poor quality. These are:
- Glebe Rd

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- MacMullen Road
- Redhall Community Centre
- Hurworth Grange
- Tommy Crooks Park (pitches 2-4).

6.100 To help reduce pressures on over used pitches, the Council should seek to either:

- develop new pitches
- move teams currently playing on over used pitches to other pitches in the borough that are currently under used (eg Education Village or other school sites)
- improve the quality of existing pitch sites so that carrying capacity is increased and the pitch is able to sustain more matches per week.

6.101 However, before moving teams it is important to consider the quality of sites to ensure they can meet the increased demand. This is something that has been overlooked in the past eg teams were transferred from Eastbourne Sports Complex when pitches were lost to others sites around the borough (primarily those named above). However, these pitches were of a much poorer quality and could not meet the demand from the teams. They also do not have any changing provision, therefore teams were left with a much poorer facility per se.

<b>PPS 12</b>	Consider reallocation of teams to pitches which are currently underused in order to reduce overplaying and maintain the quality of pitches. The Council should look to do this in conjunction with schools/colleges.
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### **Summary and conclusions**

6.102 This assessment of pitches provides a greater level of detail on the provision of pitches in Darlington and has been carried out following the methodology set out in Towards a Level Playing Field (Sport England 2002).

6.103 The key issues arising from the application of the methodology include:

- drainage of pitches and the provision of ancillary accommodation are particular priorities with regards the quality of pitches
- the PPM suggests that there is an undersupply of football pitches in the borough, with particular pressure on junior pitches. Junior teams are currently playing on adult sized pitches, meaning there is not enough adult pitches to cater for need of local teams
- there is a significant undersupply of junior pitches (-18.5) on the peak day (Sunday even though some juniors are playing on adult pitches)
- the PPM suggests that supply is almost in balance with demand in relation to mini football pitches on the peak day across the borough, however capacity must be built to allow for pitches to rest and recover

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- there is a small theoretical shortfall of cricket pitches (-1.7) on the peak day (Saturday), however, consultation suggests that the currently supply at the six cricket clubs is sufficient to meet demand
- there is an theoretical undersupply (6.0) of rugby union pitches on the peak day (Saturday). These is due to the number of adult, youth and junior teams that play on the pitches
- there are not enough training facilities within the borough
- in order to maximise resources, increasing access to school facilities should be a key priority going forward, particularly with regards to the large shortfall of junior football pitches and qualitative improvements of other facilities.

6.104 The key priorities in each of the areas are:

- enhance the quality of existing grass pitches at Council pitch sites and provide changing provision (at multi pitch sites)
- focus on development of multi pitch sites as opposed to single pitch sites, consider leasing single pitch sites to clubs
- identify locations for new pitches in areas of most deficiency
- focus on securing community use agreements at school and college sites that currently offer important non-secure community access - qualitative improvements are essential to increase the capacity of these existing pitches
- consider the provision of a new synthetic turf pitch within Darlington, perhaps as further enhancement to the Education Village (to cater for the east of the borough) or in conjunction with the Darlington College/University project
- consider the development of a dedicated 5-a-side facility in conjunction with the private sector
- monitor the demand for increased provision in grass pitches in the future
- ensure pitches are appropriately maintained through consultation with clubs - through the development of a joint working group.

6.105 The key implications of these findings for the Local Development Framework are to:

- protect all pitches from development unless at least one of the criteria identified in the Sport England planning guidance document, *A Sporting Future For Playing Fields in England*, is met
- a local standard of 0.76ha per 1000 population specific to community accessible pitch provision in Darlington should be applied
- seek to improve the quality of pitches at the tier 1 and tier 2 Council sites. Any new sites should meet National Governing Body criteria and be developed within the hierarchy set out. This includes the provision of appropriate changing facilities and installation of drainage where required
- support the development new pitches where opportunities arise with a focus on developing one new hub site and satellite sites



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- support Heighington Parish Council and Middleton St George Junior Football Club in their bids to the Football Foundation for funding to improve their facilities
- attempt to secure additional school facilities for community use
- allow for a strategic reserve of 10% of pitches to ensure that rest and recovery can take place and to accommodate latent demand.

**SECTION 7**  
**ACTION PLAN**

**Playing Pitch Action Plan for Darlington (working document)**

- 7.1 This five year action plan is intended to be a working document which will evolve over time. The plan must be reviewed and updated on a regular basis and the Community Sports Network is an ideal forum in which this document can be monitored and updated. The sport and physical activity facilities strategy as a whole has a lifespan of ideally three, but no more than five years after which time it should be updated (ie 2014).
- 7.2 The action plan reflects the aims and ambitions of the authority and its partners, however it is recognised that the success of a number of these actions is dependant upon financing and being able to address funding shortfalls.

Ref.	PROPOSED ACTION	STRATEGY REFERENCE	LEAD	PARTNER AGENCIES	TIMESCALE	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
A1	Ensure all pitches are afforded protection through the planning system and incorporated, overtime, within the LDF.	PPS1	DBC - Planning	-	Short	Specific reference to the protection of pitches within the LDF
A2	Develop a policy to secure developer contributions to improve the quality and quantity of existing outdoor playing pitches.	PPS2 PPS2A	DBC Planning	DBC - Leisure	Medium	Developer contributions policy in place.
A3	Create a standard planning condition to be attached to a planning permission to enable the effective use of community use agreements.	PPS2 PPS2A	DBC Planning	DBC - Leisure	Short	Standard planning condition in place. Developer contributions & community use of facilities secured in the medium-long term
A4	Explore the opportunities identified in this PPS to improve the provision of community accessible pitches as a way to address under-supply for football – including securing access to facilities on school sites Explore opportunities available through BSF to provide improved pitch facilities	PPS3 PPS6 PPS7	DBC – Planning, Leisure	Local clubs Pitch providers DBC – Childrens Services Sport England	Short-Medium  Long	Improved provision of community accessible pitches and a reduction in the shortfall of provision Achievement of community use agreements on school sites
A5	Identify & prioritise one more strategically placed hub site in line with the hierarchy	PPS5	DBC	Local clubs, Leagues, Providers, CSN	Short-Medium	Identification of one more hub site in addition to Eastbourne SC

## SECTION 7: ACTION PLAN

Ref.	PROPOSED ACTION	STRATEGY REFERENCE	LEAD	PARTNER AGENCIES	TIMESCALE	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
A6	<p>Improve quality of pitches by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- developing a policy of rest and recovery across pitch sites</li> <li>- developing a prioritised and costed programme of site improvements in line with the hierarchy &amp; identify associated sources of external funding</li> <li>- Once tier 1 &amp; 2 sites are established, continue to provide playing pitches within Parks to enable informal play and training</li> <li>- Supporting clubs to apply for external funding to improve their facilities.</li> </ul>	PPS5 PPS9	DBC	Local Clubs, Local Leagues, Providers, NGBs	Short-Medium    Long term  Ongoing	<p>Policy of rest &amp; recovery developed</p> <p>Improved pitch quality &amp; fewer games cancelled due to pitch problems</p> <p>More clubs securing external funding for facility improvement with support from DBC</p>
A7	Explore the opportunity to include school pitches within the existing booking system including a tiered pricing approach	PPS 8	DBC Leisure & Childrens Services	Local clubs Leagues Providers CSN	Short – Medium term	Conclude investigation of development of a streamlined booking system incorporating all pitches available for community use
A8	Undertake an audit of facilities to assess compliancy with DDA & identify areas to be addressed.	PPS 9	DBC Leisure	Local clubs Leagues	Medium	Audit of facilities undertaken and priorities for action identified
A9	<p>Develop a joint working group to promote partnership working across the Council and with key stakeholders in the provision of playing pitches.</p> <p>Focus should be on agreeing, developing and delivering planned improvements</p>	PPS9	DBC Leisure	CSN Providers Clubs & leagues	Short-Medium	Joint working group established
A10	Ensure that the changing facility at South Park is used to its full potential	PPS5 PPS9	DBC	DBC Leisure Services DBC Planning, League Secretaries,	Short	Changing facilities are used by adult, junior and mini teams as required

## SECTION 7: ACTION PLAN

Ref.	PROPOSED ACTION	STRATEGY REFERENCE	LEAD	PARTNER AGENCIES	TIMESCALE	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
				Spraire Lads & Girls Club		
A11	Explore the opportunity to develop dedicated 5-a-side football facilities in Darlington.	PPS10	DBC Leisure & Planning	Private sector	Long	Conclude investigations in to the provision of a dedicated 5-a-side facility in Darlington
A12	Support partners with applications to the Football Foundation for funding to improve facilities where there is evidence of local need and where proposals are in line with the pitch hierarchy.	PPS5	DBC Leisure & Planning	Durham County FA, Parish Councils, local clubs	Short - medium	Relevant applications for external funding supported by DBC (where there is evidence of local need and where proposals are in line with the pitch hierarchy).
A13	Hold discussions with Durham County FA to agree and align priorities for future improvements to football facility provision and agree short, medium and long term priority projects. Explore the potential of developing a second third generation pitch suitable for football and rugby training	PPS11	DBC	Durham County FA, RFU	Short  Long	Discussion held with County FA & priorities agreed Discussion held with the RFU Development of another 3G STP in Darlington in the medium-long term to cater for football and rugby
A14	Update the PPM modelling spreadsheet to reflect ongoing changes in population & changes to the pitch stock.	PPS4	DBC Leisure	Clubs/providers DBC Planning	Ongoing	PPM spreadsheet & pitch database is regularly updated.
A15	Provide email updates/bulletins to update the community with progress on implementation of the strategy.	-	DBC Leisure	All partners	Ongoing	Regular email updates provided to community

7.3 For the purposes of this action plan, short term is equal to 0-1 year, medium is 1-3 years and long term is 3-5 years. Implementation of the action plan should be in conjunction with the key issues identified in each locality which is presented in Appendix E.

7.4 Further information relating to this project can be obtained from Mike Crawshaw at Darlington Borough Council (01325 388431).