

Darlington Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2014/15

SPORTS FACILITIES FACT SHEET



WHAT THE LOCAL PLAN SETS OUT TO DO

Protect and where appropriate enhance Darlington's sport and recreation facilities to provide a range of quality, accessible and safe facilities to meet the needs of the community.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

Darlington's adult participation rate in sport continues to increase year on year. By October 2013, 35% of Darlington's adult population participated at least once a week in sport or physical activity. This is an increase of 3% since 2006. Creating a healthy and physically active lifestyle is a key objective of the Core Strategy (2011) and the Council leads on the production of a number of strategies that inform policy making on indoor and outdoor sports facilities within the Local Plan.



Eastbourne Sports Complex
Synthetic Pitch



Eastbourne Sports Complex Track



Dolphin Centre Leisure Centre

Consultants have been commissioned to undertake work which will update the **Playing Pitch** and **Sports Facilities Strategies** for the Borough. A first draft of the final report has been produced by the consultants (March 2015). Furthermore, the Darlington **Sport and Physical Activity Strategy** was adopted in summer 2014.

Investment is taking place in indoor and outdoor sports across the Borough. For example: **Darlington Rugby Club** has been granted planning permission for remodelling works and formation of additional facilities at its grounds at Blackwell Meadows so as to accommodate shared use of the ground between Darlington Rugby Club and Darlington Football Club. **Darlington Mowden Park RFC** is seeking to install a **3g Artificial Grass Pitch** (AGP) inside the Darlington Arena to replace a grass pitch. This will be World Rugby Compliant and if this comes to fruition, the new facility will mean more sports can be sustained to maximise the potential of the arena. The club see this as a community facility as well as a resource for the rugby club itself. In 2014, Hurworth Primary School got planning permission for a new **Multi Use Games Area** (MUGA) which is now operational.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The consultants research mentioned above shows that the once a week participation rate in sport and physical activity for Darlington has increased by around 3% since 2006. This is a positive outcome. However, there is still some work to be done in moving towards a healthier and more physically active population as the research also shows that the rate of non-participation in any sport or physical activity

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in Darlington is 57.2% (this is based on the latest data in 2013). While this figure remains virtually unchanged over the 2006 – 2013 period, it still means over half of the Darlington adult population do no sports or physical activity.

There are steps to take towards encouraging and facilitating greater participation in sports and physical activity. A key part of this is improving and maintaining the accessibility, quantity and quality of sports facilities which is a key objective of the Core Strategy (2011). For example, the amount of playing pitches has increased and pitch provision is now more tailored to demand. However, there remain pressures on pitches in the borough and a need to ensure that existing quantities of pitches are protected.

A further example of where further progress can be made is in terms of availability of sports halls for community use. While supply of sports halls (measured in number of badminton courts) exceeds demand - four new sports halls have opened in the Borough since 2013 and there is overall a very modern stock of sports halls - the challenge lies with the accessibility of facilities. There is significant reliance on the education sector for sports halls use, however, school and college based sports halls vary in the amount of time they have available for community use and the prices charged. While there are examples of education facilities that provide extensive community use opportunities, such as Hummersknott and Longfield, price and opening times of other education facilities is a barrier to effective community use. In this instance, access improvements need to be the key priority, rather than the provision of additional facilities.

MOVING THINGS FORWARD: KEY ACTIONS

- Allocate land for playing fields as part of the residential development within the MGP policies for Eastern Urban Fringe and North West Urban Fringe.
- Seek provision or financial contribution to playing pitches and other sports facilities within new development as set out in the Council's Planning Obligations SPD. The new Playing Pitch Strategy is likely to recommend financial contribution to qualitative improvements of existing facilities as well as new quantitative provision.

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Contact Us: You can access more information on planning policy in Darlington at:
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<http://lis.darlington.gov.uk/>

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