



# A Playing Pitch Strategy for Rother District Council

2012 - 2018

# **A PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY FOR Rother District Council**

**OCTOBER 2012**

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## Introduction

This document has been produced by Rother District Council to set out the provision of playing pitches in Rother, to highlight deficiencies in this provision, identify opportunities for its enhancement and provide information for decision-making. The strategy covers the following key areas:

- **Use:** why produce a playing pitch strategy?
- **Context:** strategic background and local population data
- **Methodology:** the research and analysis process
- **Supply & Demand:** playing pitch facilities and associated sports activities
- **Future Provision:** recommendations and priorities

The document sits alongside the Leisure Facilities Strategy for Hastings and Rother and the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study. It complements and helps inform other council documents including the Active Communities Strategy, Local Plan and leisure strategies to help support and more active, healthier district.

The lifespan for the strategy is 6 years from adoption in 2012 to 2018 but will be subject to review in response to significant changes to housing supply data.

## Executive Summary

This strategy is primarily concerned with provision for football, rugby, cricket and hockey within the district. The key findings are:

- Active People data suggests over 50% of adult residents in Rother want to start sport or do a bit more.
- Generally, the need in the rural communities is to improve the current provision rather than providing additional pitches and pavilions.
- The pressure put on existing provision as a result of population increases and the growing need for people to lead active lifestyles for health reasons will be significant in Bexhill, Battle and Rye.
- Improving “hub” sites in the first instance will be the most effective way of alleviating pressure on sites and enabling more individuals and groups to participate in sport.
- Many existing facilities have shortcomings in terms of inclusion.
- There is a lack of good quality training facilities to support team development.
- There is a need for creative solutions and joint working between clubs in order to meet demand and raise standards.
- There are potential mutual benefits to be gained by clubs and educational establishments sharing resources to sustain and increase participation.

## Why Produce a Playing Field Strategy?

Rother District Council embarked on developing a playing pitch strategy for the following reasons:

### **Corporate and Strategic**

- It ensures a strategic approach to playing pitch provision.
- Providing robust evidence for capital funding.
- Providing information for decision-making and future development proposals in the Rother District including the local plan & community plan
- Exploring community need linking with the Local Strategic Partnership's aspirations for a more active, healthier community.

### **Planning – Protection and Provision**

- Provides a basis for establishing new pitch requirements arising from new housing developments.
- It is one of the best tools for the protection of pitches.
- Linking closely to open spaces policies to provide a holistic approach to the improvement of outdoor areas.

### **Operational – Making Savings**

- Improving asset management which should result in more efficient use of resources and reduced overheads.

### **Sports Development – Maximising Benefit**

- Identifies community uses of sports pitches and key locations for community and school sport.
- Highlighting locations where the quality of provision can be enhanced.
- Provides better information on over or under demand for pitches and where there may be opportunities through sports development policies to address the problem.

## National Context

There are many different agencies and policies that set the national context in regard to playing pitches, the key ones being:

- Department for Communities and Local Government
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Sport England
- Department of Health & National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)

### **Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)**

This government department aims to foster prosperous and cohesive communities that offer a safe, healthy and sustainable environment for all.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

The National Planning Policy Framework was published by the DCLG on 27 March 2012. Policy on the protection and provision of high quality open spaces for sport and recreation is set out under the banner of 'Promoting Healthy Communities'. Pertinent points include:

- 1) The need for Planning policies to be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision informed through the identification of quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities.
- 2) The need to replace playing fields lost through development with equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality where a deficit in provision has been identified
- 3) 'Local Green Space' designation as a means for local communities to protect green areas of particular importance to them.

Relevant excerpts from the document are found under Appendix A.

### **Sport England**

Sport England is a government agency accountable to Parliament through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It supports sports development at all levels nationally and also has a role in protecting sports provision. It must be formally consulted on any planning applications in England that affect playing fields.

The Sport England document 'Towards a level playing field' sets out guidance for producing a playing pitch strategy. Other Sport England documents of relevance are detailed in Appendix B.

### **Department of Health (England), NICE guidelines**

The Department of Health and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) help set guidance around public health. This covers the health, economic and social benefits of more active lifestyles and the importance of outdoor spaces supported by a public health evidence base (NICE 2008, Faculty of Public Health 2010, CABE 2010) demonstrating the contribution the outdoor environment can play in enhancing health and wellbeing.

Key documents include 'Start Active, Stay Active' published in 2011 and the Government's public health strategy 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People' which emphasise the importance of physical activity for people of all ages in terms of the health benefits people can achieve by taking regular physical activity throughout their lives. Other relevant publications are listed in Appendix C.

### **The Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge**

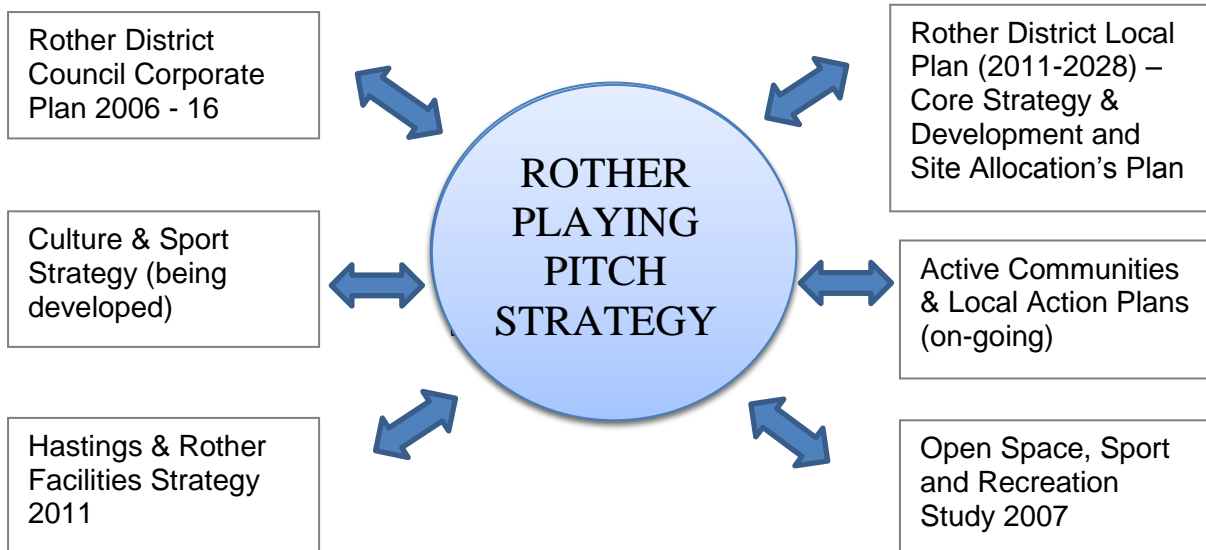
Delivered by Fields in Trust (FIT) under the patronage of The Duke of Cambridge, this nationwide initiative seeks to safeguard 2,012 valuable outdoor spaces in local communities as a legacy from 2012, a Diamond Jubilee and Olympic year.

The Challenge provides an opportunity to create a grassroots legacy for local communities by preserving parks, playing fields and recreation spaces to ensure future generations of sportsmen and women continue to have their first taste of sport near home.

A number of pitches and facilities in the Rother District are subject to applications for QEII status in a bid to promote their importance and protect them into the future. The Challenge links to the localism agenda around encouraging people to value and protect local pitches.

## Local Context

The playing pitch strategy fits with other strategic documents produced by Rother District Council and its partner organisations.



### **Rother District Council Corporate Plan 2006 - 2016**

The Corporate Plan sets out the council's vision derived from the vision set out in the Rother Community Plan 2004-2009 developed by the Local Strategy Partnership.

Included in the vision is the aspiration for more leisure and cultural opportunities as a basis for healthy community life. The outcomes of sport and recreation also link to other elements of the vision including valuing the role of the countryside in contributing to quality of life, creating a youthful demographic profile, reducing anti-social behaviour and promoting tolerance of diversity within communities. These aspirations are also central to the playing pitch strategy and link to the Active Communities Strategy.

### **Active Communities Strategy 2012-2015**

Active Communities is one of the priorities for Local Strategic Partnership which works closely with the community to encourage more healthy and active lifestyles and reflects NICE guidance at a local level. Key priorities include looking at better use of public open spaces and recreational areas as well as encouraging under-represented groups to be more active.

### **Rother District Local Plan (2011-2028) – Core Strategy & Development and Site Allocations**

In line with the central government reforms set out in the Localism Act and the National Planning Policy Framework, the suite of documents formerly known as



the Local Development Framework, is now known as the new 'Local Plan (2011-2028)'.

Rother's Local Plan provides the basis for delivering the spatial planning strategy of the district and will guide future development and change. The playing pitch strategy will help inform the Local Plan and assist with planning policies and spatial planning. The key policy influencing the provision of sports and recreation is Policy CO3 which states how the provision of sufficient, well-managed and accessible open spaces, sports and recreation facilities, including indoor sports facilities, will be achieved. Further detail is set out in Appendix D.

### **Rother District Council's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study 2007**

The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study undertaken in-line with PPG17 and adopted by the council in June 2007 sets local standards for access to different types of green space including outdoor sports facilities on natural and artificial surfaces.

In terms of quantity, it was recommended that 2.97 hectares of sports facilities be provided per 1000 people in the urban areas i.e. Bexhill, Battle and Rye and that 4.84 hectares be provided in rural Rother. The adopted accessibility standard was a 20 minute walk-time in urban areas and a 20 minute drive-time in rural areas.

The Study did not differentiate between sports or whether facilities were public or private. Nor did it take into account how the demand for particular sports provision varies in different communities. Therefore, the adopted local standards are useful as a general guide only. This strategy builds upon the findings of the Study looking in more detail at pitch-based sports, primarily football, rugby and cricket.

The Study made two clear recommendations regarding outdoor sports facilities:

- Produce a playing pitches strategy
- Develop plans for additional pitches in Bexhill.

This document follows up both of these actions including focusing on the needs of additional pitches in areas such as Bexhill.

### **Hastings & Rother – Leisure Facilities Strategy (2009 – 2020)**

The strategy identified optimum locations and levels of provision to help establish sustainable facilities for a range of leisure facilities, predominantly those based indoors such as swimming pools, fitness suites. There is no duplication in the sports facilities covered in the Leisure Facilities Strategy and this strategy. However, the strategies complement each other in highlighting the recreational needs of the district. Additionally, providing “hubs” in terms of pitches alongside club houses, pavilions and leisure facilities can be beneficial.

### **Local Action Plans**

Local Action Plans (LAPs) pull together community priorities through consultation and detail the actions (e.g. who, when, how) required to address community needs and deliver improvements in the quality of life of localities.

Between 2005 – 2010 the Rother Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) sponsored the Rother Local Action Plans Support Programme, which delivered community development and capacity building support to local communities in the Rother area wishing to consider, develop or implement Local Action Plans. There are a number of funding streams to support the implementation of improvements to playing pitches, namely:

- RDC's Community Grant Scheme
- Awards for All
- Sport England Protecting Playing Fields Fund – applications by 07 January 2013)

Appendix E details LAP actions relating to playing pitches and recreation grounds.

## The Nature of the District and its Population

Population data from a number of sources has been drawn upon to assess the needs of communities across the district.

### General Demographics

The population of Rother is approximately 90,192 (2012 Census projection East Sussex in Figures) spread across an area of over 200 square miles. The main towns in the district and the respective populations of them are listed below.

- Bexhill: 43,414 (48% of Rother's population)
- Battle Town: 4,874 (5% of Rother's population)
- Rye: 4,503 (5% of Rother's population)
- Rural Rother: 38,417 (42% of Rother's population)

A breakdown per ward is provided in Appendix F. These often contain several villages.

It is important to note that population in Rother is due to increase to approximately 91,087 in 2026 and by 1.4% between 2010 to 2026, one of the higher growth rates in East Sussex (source: East Sussex County Council). Much of the housing growth is planned for North Bexhill and this could affect the age dynamics.

Currently the district has an ageing population with a high percentage of residents aged 65 years and above; 11% above the national average. There are a relatively low number of residents aged between 16 and 29 years; the lowest in the region. This is expected to remain constant with projections showing a decline in younger age groups (especially residents aged 15-19 and 25-29 years) and a significant increase (approximately 10,000) in the number of residents aged between 60 and 85 years.

East Sussex overall has a low percentage of people who identified themselves as belonging to a non-white ethnic group. Rother is one of the lowest with just 1.9%. This is against a national percentage of over 12.5%.

### Ward Data

Population and estimated growth figures per ward are taken from the Rother District Council Core Strategy. It is thought there will be around 72 additional small allocations in wards in the next 5 years. The greatest growth will be in Bexhill and Battle. Of the other wards, growth in Ticehurst & Etchingam, Rother Levels, Eastern Rother, Brede Valley and Rye is likely to have the greatest impact on the current capacity of pitch provision.

Much of the council's current work through its local strategic partners is to reduce inequalities in the most deprived wards. This additionally links with Active Rother

and Health Improvement Partnership objectives based on the Marmot Review. Increasingly market segmentation and targeting of resources will influence resource allocation which is another reason why the report is based on resources in that ward.

### **Sport England Market Segmentation Data**

Sport England market segmentation provides those working in community sport with an insight into the sporting behaviours, barriers and motivations for people over 18 years of age to taking part or not taking part in sport. Appendix G shows the dominant segmentation groups in Rother.

The profile for Rother includes a significant number of older people, Ralph and Phyllis and Elsie and Arnold. Whilst it is important to keep these residents active and independent, lower impact forms of physical activity are more appropriate than team sports such as football and rugby. There is also a sizeable number of “Tim’s”, who have a younger profile interested in a variety of more active leisure pursuits and who are likely to have families.

### **Sport England Active People Survey**

The Active People Survey is the largest ever survey of sport and active recreation to be undertaken in Europe and consists of telephone surveys of around 363,724 adults in England (aged 16 plus).

The aim is to provide reliable statistics in the fields of participation, volunteering and satisfaction with local provision for all 354 local authorities in England. A minimum of 1,000 interviews were completed in every authority in England.

Detailed figures are available for a Local Authority area but not for wards. This limits the confidence levels, but headline figures from the Sport England Local Authority Profile for Rother in 2012, Appendix H include:

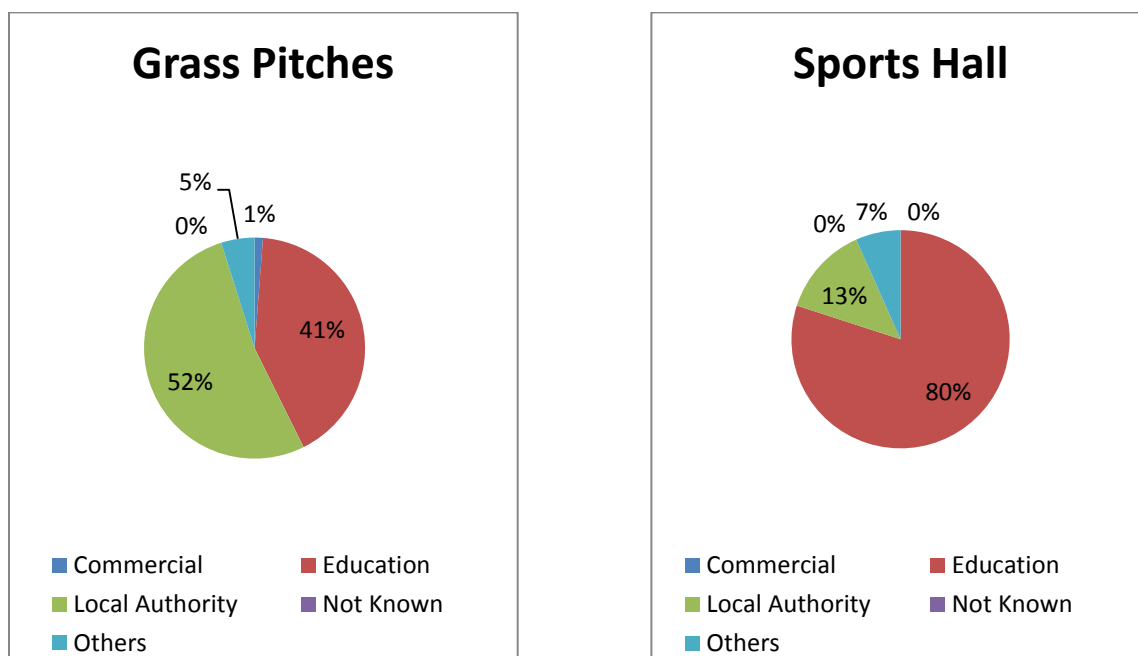
- 50% of adult residents in Rother want to start sport or do a bit more.
- Rother has 21.9% of residents involved in at least 3 days a week x 30 minutes of moderate participation (all adults) in 2012. This compares to the national average of 21.8%. This has risen from 19.1% in Rother in 2008 compared to a national average in 2008 of 21%.
- 9.9% of Rother residents are regular volunteers compares to the national average of 7.3% nationally. Numbers volunteering have risen from figures from 2008.
- 23.5% of Rother residents are sports club members compared with 23.3% nationally but this has dropped from a figure of 25.1% in 2008.
- 70.5% of Rother residents were satisfied with local sports provision. This

compares with the national average of 69%. This has risen from a figure of 67.1% for Rother in 2008.

Rother therefore appears to have improved scores in 3 of the indicators and has risen from below the national average to slightly above. This indicates measures to develop more active communities are having an effect. Continued investment is required if the momentum is to be maintained. Supporting data can be found in Appendix I.

### Ownership of Grass Pitches and Sports Halls

In-line with the national trend, the majority of artificial pitches (100%) and sports halls (80%) are on educational sites. This is an important factor for policy and access particularly in relation to current Sport England priorities. In addition, 52% of grass pitches are on school sites. None of these are operated by the council although it has supported the development of MUGAs at some educational establishments.



Appendix J shows sites surveyed and ownership of the sites.

## Scope, Methodology and Limitations

### Scope

The methodology followed the Playing Pitch Methodology (PPM) of covering voluntary participation in competitive pitch sports by adults and young people and therefore this strategy is primarily concerned with the following sports:

- association football (football)
- rugby union (rugby)
- cricket
- hockey

The main report focuses on football and cricket as there are few clubs or areas for hockey or rugby. Additional needs for hockey are likely to be on artificial pitches and these are not a focus of this strategy.

Reference is made to artificial pitches and MUGA's and these facilities also form part of the Leisure Facility Study for Hastings & Rother 2011.

The standard of outdoor bowls greens visited in the survey is noted in Appendices K and O, but does not form part of the recommendations in the main body of the report.

There is a distinction between playing pitches and open spaces because although open spaces can be important for activity and informal sport generally they do not have the requirements for formal games which could include a specified surface, safety margins or markings for matches.

### Methodology

To produce this report surveys were carried out of pitches and with clubs and other partners. This helped determine the existing quality and demand on pitches. Appendix L & M show the club survey and how pitches were assessed. Pitch assessment included support facilities and aspects such as litter and graffiti not just physical aspects such as grass cover and drainage.

Alongside this data, analysis was provided on where the pitches were located and indications on how the likely increase in active populations in those areas could impact on playing pitch demand.

Educational establishments can provide valuable facilities and through government guidance are encouraged to open up facilities to the community. Clubs that use school sites (private and public) are included as are the pitches they use, but pitches used only for the school curriculum are excluded from this report. It is likely that changes in Rother with new academies in Bexhill and recent changes in Rye have affected what sports facilities there are for both community and curriculum use.

### **Pitch Quality**

Visits were carried out to sites across Rother to capture data on the quality and use of pitches. Visits included one during the summer and one during the winter. The assessments used the template in Appendix M – Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment. This enabled each pitch to obtain a score ranging from 90% for an excellent pitch to less than 30% for a poor pitch.

Elements for the assessment included grass cover, sizes, evenness, line markings, problems such as dog fouling and litter and the changing accommodation.

### **Changing Accommodation**

In addition to the site assessment on pitch quality a similar exercise was carried out on changing accommodation – Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment. Again, a score was recorded enabling the pavilion to be scored from over 90% for excellent to less than 30% for very poor. Elements included showers, toilets, parking, vandalism, links to public transport, segregated changing and security.

### **Club Data and Questionnaires**

Club contacts on the Active Rother database, Appendix L, were sent a questionnaire regarding the nature of their club to help find out their views on pitches and facilities. Elements included numbers of members, number of games, pitches used, issues for the club and comments on the quality of the pitch. These comments are included in Appendix O. The Active Rother database does not contain all the clubs using pitches in Rother (100% coverage) and therefore there are limitations to the application of the full Playing Pitch Methodology though it does follow the guidelines.

### **Data for Population and Demand**

Various internal and external sources provided data on the nature of Rother. This includes East Sussex in Figures, Active People data, planners and importantly National governing bodies for football and cricket.

### **Limitations – Identifying Teams**

The success of understanding current use depends on obtaining an accurate tally of the number of teams and pitches in each local authority. Due to resources it was not possible to achieve a full audit of the number of teams. Only a percentage of teams are on Active Rother and the return rate for the surveys was around 60%. All of the submitted comments have been recorded and used. Positively, a thorough audit of sites was completed which has informed a number of other strategies notably the Hastings & Rother Facilities Strategy and Rother District Council's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study 2007.

### **Limitations – Accuracy of Data**

Housing figures are based on Rother District Council Core Strategy: 'Housing land supply & housing trajectory at April 2012', issued July 2012. This is based on 5 year housing supply figures which are subject to revision. Numbers are based on large site commitments including those subject to Section 106 agreements and allocations.

Active population statistics and future population statistics per ward are estimates based on housing supply figures and estimated numbers living in those wards. This is particularly useful in pinpointing areas of development in the district and future need.

Active People data is based upon Sport England Active People data which whilst gives a good base for market segmentation and highlighting trends has limitations due to survey numbers. This is particularly true when broken down to ward levels.

Data is based on visits carried out 2010 and 2011. Changes to conditions or to facilities at this site may have happened since this time which limits the accuracy for certain wards. In addition, there was only one winter and one summer visit to the sites.



## Supply and Demand by Sport

### Football

#### Overview

Football is the sport played the most in the district and has the most clubs. Data from the County Football Association indicates there are of 54 affiliated clubs with a total of 152 teams of which 149 play matches in Rother. Of the 149 teams operating in Rother, 53 (35.6%) are adult teams, 58 (38.9%) are youth teams (all formats) and 38 (25.5%) are Mini-Soccer teams.

#### Participation

Only 2.6% of the adult population (16+) in Rother participate in football for at least 30 minutes once per week, as compared to a national average of 4.96% (Sport England Active People Survey, 2011). The demographics of the district may be a contributing factor. The low percentage alone does not necessarily imply more capacity is needed and indeed and Apart from mini-soccer teams, there has been a decline in the number of teams between the 2010/11 and 11/12 seasons including a big decrease in men's Sunday teams.

#### Inclusion

The sport is predominantly played by males and not many of the facilities cater for female and male sports happening on the same grounds on the same day. Bexhill has a ladies team and the 1066 area has the 1066 Specials Football Club who train and raise sides to play competitive matches. This has included junior and senior teams in the Kent League and their own club tournament. Little Common facilities were used by the club last year and training takes place at Bexhill College. There are few specialist facilities for disabled footballers.

#### Pitch locations, Ownership and Maintenance

There are few pitches in the main urban hub of Bexhill and few junior pitches in the main towns of Battle and Rye. There might however be scope to work with the schools and colleges to identify options for the development of sport in Bexhill. The proposed age profile of a developed Bexhill is likely to match the segment of the population who would play football.

The council owns the main pitches in Bexhill and Rye but outside these areas the parishes are important providers of pitches and support facilities. The council has considered options to devolve management or services and Little Common is a prime example of where a management committee runs the facility.

Overall there are key hubs for football around the main senior clubs and a few notable clubs with large numbers of junior teams. This matches the pattern of chartered standard clubs with 50.0% or 48 of the 96 Youth and Mini-soccer teams play in a club that having achieved a Charter Standard Award as compared to a national average of 75.6%.

### **Cricket**

There are 25 Senior Clubs registered in Rother of which 6 have a Colts Section. There are no identified new clubs that have requested pitches but needs have been highlighted by partners such as Sussex Cricket Board including:

- Limited capacity in terms of pitches around Bexhill meaning clubs are not able to play home matches.
- Improving pitches would be encouraged including linking into ground maintenance courses.
- There are needs to improve support facilities such as pavilions and indoor and outdoor training areas.
- Consider options for developing the game including areas for Street 20, ladies and disability cricket.
- Support to focus club development.

### **Rugby**

There is one main Rugby Club at Rye with Hastings & Bexhill Rugby Club that previously played at the Polegrove, but is now settled at William Parker. There have been enquiries in the past from Cinque Ports Rugby Club about the availability of pitches. Currently they use the Grove School just over the border in Hastings and proposals are for them to develop a base at Bulverhythe. There are no further possibilities at the Polegrove but with the additional growth of houses in Bexhill there could be options for creating facilities there in the future.

In the past there has been activity in the Robertsbridge/Battle area and there could be options working with the colleges in those areas who have been active with the Rugby Association in developing the sport.

Rye additionally has developed both the number of teams and facilities in the last 10 years. However this has mainly been refurbishments and the club would still like to expand especially to utilise pitches and land in the old Freda Gardham School.

### **Hockey**

There are no identified clubs based in Rother but clubs such as Saxons have used facilities such as Bexhill College. Currently this is identified as being used 5% of their time. Currently their main base is at Horntye in Hastings. Other places mentioned by the Hockey Association include Vinehall, a private school with a sand based pitch, but currently no clubs have indicated using it.

The NGB identifies Bexhill College as the main site but has indicated the pressure on Horntye does mean that improvements there such as refurbishments or capacity elsewhere will be needed in the future. There are initiatives that take place in schools and the development of this area will very much determine what is required in the future. People living in the northern part of Rother such as Hurst Green do utilise clubs in Kent such as Tunbridge Wells.

Most hockey is played on artificial pitches and the growth of pitches at Bexhill High, Bexhill College, and Claverham do provide options for hockey to be played to a certain level though the surfaces chosen at these sites are either multi-use or more suitable for football. Provision in the eastern part of Rother and Rye is more limited.

### **Temporal demands**

Data returned reinforced that most senior games were played at weekends, predominantly Saturday afternoon. This creates problems for new teams starting up especially in the larger towns. Bexhill Cricket Club has problems finding pitches and this is limiting the growth of the club. Likewise team increases in wards such as Battle further stretched what was available.

Cricket is played midweek in the summer and some football matches are also played during the week especially if clubs needed to catch up on postponements (often due to drainage issues) or are involved in several cup competitions. However, there is still spare capacity in the week especially during the day.

Junior football continues to be popular and also tends to be played at weekends. Whilst there is some flexibility at established sites in terms of using small scale pitches and goals there is a need to reconsider the mix of junior pitches and markings, especially with the development of 9 v 9 matches.

Several of the clubs also train on site through the winter. Clubs especially football are increasingly using artificial training pitches. At 3 locations artificial cricket pitches are also in place and several clubs including those at Bexhill, Rye and Crowhurst have recently upgraded net practice areas. Developing improved practice facilities is something mentioned by clubs and could mean existing sites could be used more often without excessive wear on pitches. Increasingly larger artificial areas are also going in, such as facilities at Bexhill High School and Claverham Community College. Smaller multi-use games areas facilities could provide local opportunities for training and informal play. Sedlescombe is looking at such an option. Similarly, an indoor cricket space would assist winter training.

## Recommendations for Future Provision by Ward

The following recommendations are based on an assessment of the current quantity and quality of provision together with local need and aspirations. The assessment draws upon ward data, pitch visits, national governing body comments, club responses and temporal demand. Appendix K sets out the detailed analysis that informed these recommendations.

<b>Bexhill</b>	
General	1. Increase opportunities for community use of existing and future facilities at educational establishments.
Cricket	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve existing pitches to accommodate the needs of clubs seeking to play to a high standard.</li> <li>2. Pursue opportunities to develop an accessible, high quality cricket facility at a new site in order to relocate Bexhill Cricket Club from the Polegrove and to address the shortfall in provision for juniors and seniors. If unsuccessful, consider improving accommodation at the Polegrove.</li> <li>3. Support initiatives to bring accommodation at St. Mary's Recreation Ground up to NGB standards if the demand arises.</li> <li>4. Pursue opportunities to develop training areas to alleviate pressure on pitches. These could be indoor facilities as part of new leisure developments.</li> </ol>
Football	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve pitch quality across Bexhill when opportunities arise, prioritising those pitches used for higher standards of play in order to facilitate club progression.</li> <li>2. Support initiatives to improve accommodation at the Downs, Sidley, St. Mary's Recreation Ground and the Polegrove. Consider combined accommodation with other sports where possible.</li> <li>3. Through the Planning process, ensure that additional provision is made, including indoor provision for 5-a-side and/or that accommodation at existing sites is upgraded to encourage increased use where capacity exists.</li> <li>4. Pursue opportunities to develop training areas to alleviate pressure on pitches, particularly the Polegrove and Little Common. These could be MUGAs or dedicated small-scale facilities.</li> </ol>
Hockey	1. No further provision needed at current time.
Rugby	1. Consider pitch opportunities as part of the North Bexhill development as a possible alternative to Bulverhythe.

<b>Battle</b>	
General	1. Ensure initiatives for new or improved provision are inclusive i.e. suitable for all abilities and genders.
Cricket	1. Support Battle Cricket Club where possible to develop junior teams and related training facilities. 2. Focus resources on improving existing provision.
Football	1. Seek to provide an additional senior pitch, particularly if new residential areas are developed and additional junior provision if demand increases. 2. Improve drainage at North Trade Road Recreation Ground.
Hockey	1. No action is recommended at the current time.
Rugby	1. No action is recommended at the current time.

<b>Brede Valley</b>	
General	1. Ensure that there is at least one high quality football facility and also a good quality cricket facility in the area (possibly joint use) with associated training provision.
Cricket	1. Pursue the opportunity for a new pavilion in Westfield, shared with the football club. 2. Support club/community initiatives in Udimore to improve facilities and develop the club as they arise.
Football	1. Support Westfield Football Club's aspiration for higher quality facilities at a new local site to be shared with the cricket club. 2. Support the Brede community in setting up a club and developing facilities if aspirations emerge.
Hockey	1. No action is recommended at present.
Rugby	1. No action is recommended at present.

<b>Crowhurst</b>	
General	1. Support initiatives to increase the quality of existing facilities, particularly for training.
Cricket	1. Support the junior developments at clubs such as Crowhurst Park. 2. Support initiatives to increase the quality of existing facilities, particularly for training.
Football	1. Support Clubs in increasing the quality of existing facilities, particularly for training including artificial surfaces or MUGAs.
Hockey	1. No action is recommended at present.
Rugby	1. No action is recommended at present.

<b>Darwell</b>	
General	1. Improve existing provision rather than creating new facilities.
Cricket	1. Improvements to changing accommodation needed at Brightling.
Football	1. Support improvements to pitches, particularly at Solomon's Lane. 2. Support improvements to changing accommodation, particularly at Solomon's Lane.
Hockey	1. No action is recommended at present.
Rugby	1. No action is recommended at present.

<b>Eastern Rother</b>	
General	1. See detailed recommendations below.
Cricket	1. Support improvements to pavilions at Icklesham, Iden and Winchelsea.
Football	1. Improve existing pavilions. 2. Support initiatives to set up junior and senior teams in Camber and Rye Harbour which are isolated communities. 3. Consider the changing needs of Rye Bay FC based at Winchelsea Beach as small-sided football changes e.g. the introduction of 9 v 9. 4. Support clubs wishing to improve the quality of existing pitches and in providing training facilities including MUGAs.
Hockey	1. Improve pavilions and greens when opportunities arise.
Rugby	1. No action recommended at present.

<b>Ewhurst &amp; Sedlescombe</b>	
General	1. Improve existing provision rather than creating new facilities.
Cricket	1. Provide local all-weather training facilities in Sedlescombe.
Football	1. New accommodation needed at Ewhurst Green. 2. Provide local training facilities (artificial surfacing / MUGAs) in Sedlescombe. 3. Support clubs in improving existing pitches.
Hockey	1. No action is recommended at present.
Rugby	2. No action is recommended at present.

<b>Marsham</b>	
General	1. Explore options to link with educational establishments or youth clubs for coaching and training across all sports.
Cricket	1. Provide better changing accommodation across the ward. 2. Support clubs in upgrading pitch provision and support/training facilities such as nets at Pett.
Football	1. Improve the quality of existing pitches. 2. Provide better changing accommodation and support facilities. 3. Pursue opportunities to bring Panel Lane facilities back into public use. 4. Explore opportunities for mutually beneficial arrangements with Buckswood School. 5. Identify additional sites for pitch provision in the ward.
Hockey	1. Support clubs in maintaining and improving the quality of existing provision.
Rugby	1. No action is recommended at present.

<b>Rother Levels</b>	
General	1. See general recommendations below.
Cricket	1. Renew/replace cricket pavilion at Beckley.
Football	1. Consider providing a pitch and pavilion in Beckley, possibly at the existing recreation ground. 2. Support improvements to changing accommodation at Peasmarsch and Northiam. 3. Support clubs in upgrading pitches at Peasmarsch and Northiam. 4. Provide outdoor training facilities in the area and develop opportunities for junior play.
Hockey	1. No action is recommended at present.
Rugby	1. No action is recommended at present.

<b>Rye</b>	
General	1. Consider how the former Freda Gardham School site could address quantitative issues for all sports in Rye. 2. Build on relationships with Rye College and Rye Leisure Centre. Work in partnership to further aid the growth of junior and adult sport.
Cricket	1. Support the provision of additional training facilities on the Cricket Salts or elsewhere locally.
Football	1. Consider creating pitch and training facilities on the neighbouring Town Salts if resources permit. 2. Pursue options for additional provision on old school sites if the opportunity arises.
Hockey	1. No action is recommended at present.

### Rye (continued)

Rugby	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to support Rye Rugby Club which serves as the main club in the district.</li> <li>2. Look at options to develop facilities on the neighbouring former Freda Gardham school site.</li> </ol>
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### Salehurst

General	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. See detailed recommendations below.</li> </ol>
Cricket	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with Robertsbridge Community College on facility provision for community use.</li> <li>2. Improve existing pitch provision including training facilities at Bodiam.</li> <li>3. Support improvements to pavilion facilities, particularly at Bodiam. Work with Robertsbridge Community College on facility provision for community use.</li> <li>4. Improve existing pitch provision including training facilities at Bodiam. Support improvements to pavilion facilities, particularly at Bodiam.</li> </ol>
Football	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Investigate options for Robertsbridge juniors to utilise facilities at the Community College and/or support drainage improvements at The Clappers.</li> <li>2. Support improvements to pitches across the area.</li> <li>3. Improve pavilion facilities, particularly at Bodiam and Hurst Green.</li> </ol>
Hockey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No action is recommended at present,</li> </ol>
Rugby	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support Robertsbridge Community College in working with the community if the need for provision arises in the future.</li> </ol>

### Ticehurst & Etchingam

General	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve the quality of existing provision.</li> </ol>
Cricket	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Investigate opportunities to meet the demand for cricket provision within or close to Etchingam.</li> <li>2. Improve changing accommodation and pitch provision where possible, prioritising Stonegate and Ticehurst subject to demand.</li> </ol>
Football	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support the upgrade of existing changing accommodation at Stonegate and Bell Field (Ticehurst).</li> <li>2. Support improvement to existing pitches.</li> </ol>
Hockey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No action is recommended at present.</li> </ol>
Rugby	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No action is recommended at present.</li> </ol>



## **Priorities for Action and Key Recommendations**

Further to the recommendations for each sport per ward, key principles for prioritising and addressing them are set out below. These include ensuring that action dovetails with existing council policies and community priorities, protecting existing provision, maximising the benefits of existing resources through partnership working and sound practice in planning and designing new facilities such as considering equality issues.

### **Integrating With Existing Council Policy**

An overall approach would be to improve access and opportunities for all ages to play sport formally and informally. This fits with aims and objectives of Rother District Council for Active Communities and with current planning policies. Additionally both Sport England and the Government have targets to increase the number of people who are active and involved in sport including legacy targets for the Olympics & Paralympics.

The council should work with local, regional and national partners to protect existing provision and to provide opportunities for more people to be active. This includes outdoor spaces, pitches and the promotion of sport and leisure through sports development.

### **Protecting Existing Provision**

In line with national policy, the council should prevent the loss of existing pitches and outdoor facilities. This is covered in the Rother District Local Plan (2011-2028) Core Strategy CO3. If this is unavoidable these should be replaced with areas and facilities that are better than the existing allowing for a net community gain for community sport.

The loss of playing fields on school sites is likewise covered by national planning policy. It is recommended that the disposal of playing fields on academy sites or sites seen as disused is resisted if there is evidence that these areas are still beneficial to the local community or could be used by local clubs.

### **Targeted Investments in Local Communities**

It is suggested that the recommendations per ward are used as the basis for targeted investments. This should be done in partnership with the local community, sports clubs and with governing bodies of sport. Further, targeted investments should complement corporate and active community priorities around improving the health and wellbeing of residents living in deprived wards and Sport England data on low participation groups.

Communities should be encouraged to ensure playing pitches are seen as community assets and a resource for all residents. It is recommended that open space and playing fields are included in asset registers and consideration is given to the long term protection of these sites. Fields in Trust is one mechanism

to do so. Additionally, local communities should be encouraged to highlight the use of playing fields and how they could be used to encourage active and healthy communities in local plans.

### **Under-Represented Groups in Sport**

Currently the stock of facilities and pitches tend to be used by adult males. Where there are limited options or justification for increasing facilities consideration should be given to improving existing facilities in a way that will encourage more use from other sections of the community.

Based on Sport England data, current under-represented groups and low participant groups include disabled people, women and girls, 14 – 25 year olds, the BME community and people living in deprived areas. The analysis shows few of the pavilions allow for mixed gender changing and whilst the local disability football club has used council facilities at Little Common, investment should be considered to upgrade existing sites focussing initially on the hub sites i.e. the Polegrove and Little Common Recreation Ground in Bexhill and the Salts at Rye.

All new developments should consider guidelines from bodies such as Sport England on areas such as changing or access to pitches and a sports development plan on how to include all sections of the community.

### **Increasing Participation in Football**

To increase participation it will be necessary for facilities to be improved and at first, priority needs to go to the hub sites that can more easily accommodate additional participants. Charter standard clubs need to take the lead on this working with the Football Association at county level and seeking support through funding mechanisms such as the Football Foundation and Football Trust for improvements.

### **Planning Gain Agreements**

It is recommended that the council and its partners, through the policy framework of encouraging more Active Communities, use planning agreements to secure improvements to playing pitches and support facilities.

### **Recommendations Based on Population Growth**

The analysis per ward is based on predications for increases in the active population against the current provision in line with principles of Sport England Playing Pitch models. The main population growth areas should be prioritised.

Bexhill is the main area predicted to experience growth. The additional need for sport and leisure in the Bexhill area must be considered including indoor and outdoor spaces with support facilities to enable a wider range of the community to be active. Currently Bexhill-based cricket clubs are struggling for pitches, there are no rugby pitches and there is limited access to outdoor council training pitches or multi-use games areas.

### **Recommendations by Sport**

In terms of the main four sports surveyed, apart from the areas where there is expected population growth, the main recommendation is to support existing sites and any changes required for the development of their sports such as small scaled games.

There are pavilions across the district desperately in need of upgrade and some needing improvements to encourage a wider range of participants to take part in sport. Improving training facilities would additionally enable sites to be used more regularly both formally and informally. For cricket and football focused and club-marked clubs should take priority especially where junior development is concerned.

### **Use of Educational Establishments**

There may be opportunities to work with other partners especially public and private educational facilities to open up facilities for community use, to maximise the community sports potential within any new development or in utilising playing fields no longer required. This includes changes to schools in Bexhill and playing fields from school relocations in Rye. The high percentage of sports halls and pitches on educational sites means that use or loss of access significantly affects total provision.

It is recommended that educational facilities develop community use agreements to secure access for the community and for sports clubs. This is particularly relevant when those sites have received external investments and to reduce the risk of losing facilities due to future changes of ownership.

### **Improving Quality**

All providers of pitches should be encouraged to follow National Governing Body guidelines and industry/research institute guidelines on improving pitches to meet the needs of their sports.

### **Sharing Skills and Resources**

Clubs and providers are encouraged to consider options to share resources, expertise and equipment for maintaining pitches or joint procurement opportunities to improve provision and/or to reduce operational costs.