

Cabinet



Walsall Council

Wednesday 12 February 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting venue: Conference Room 2, Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall.

[Livestream Link](#)

Portfolios

Councillor G. Perry,
Leader of the
Council



Councillor A.
Andrew,
Associate Leader
Economic Growth
and Regeneration



Councillor M.
Statham, Deputy
Leader and Finance



Councillor G.
Flint,
Health and
Wellbeing



Councillor K.
Pedley, Adult Social
Care



Councillor E. Lee,
Internal Services



Councillor S. Elson,
Children and Young
People



Councillor P.
Kaur,
Education and
Skills



Councillor K.
Murphy, Street
Pride



Councillor A.
Garcha, Resident
Access and
Housing Support



Quorum 4 members

Democratic Services, The Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW
Contact name: Craig Goodall Telephone: 01922 654765 Email:

craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk

[Walsall Council Website](#)

**If you are disabled and require help to and from the meeting room,
please contact the person above**

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012

Specified pecuniary interests

The pecuniary interests which are specified for the purposes of Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 are the interests specified in the second column of the following:

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by a member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of a member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Regulations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority:</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to a member's knowledge):</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority;</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:</p> <p>(a) that body (to a member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either:</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities</p>

	<p>exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>
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Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
 - (a) to give any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.
8. Information being disclosed during a meeting of a Scrutiny and Performance Panel when considering flood risk management functions which:
 - (a) Constitutes a trades secret;
 - (b) Its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the risk management authority);
 - (c) It was obtained by a risk management authority from any other person and its disclosure to the public by the risk management authority would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that other person.

Part 1 – Public session

1. **Apologies**

2. **Minutes – 15 January 2025**

(Enclosed)

3. **Declarations of interest**

4. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):**

To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.

5. **Petitions**

(Note: For advice on how to submit petitions, contact Democratic Services. Contact details on the front page of the agenda).

6. **Questions**

(30 minutes will be allowed for pre-submitted questions from non-executive members and the public. All questions will have been submitted at least 7 clear days before the meeting. Answers will be provided at the meeting - no supplementary questions will be allowed.)

7. **Forward Plan**

(Enclosed)

Associate Leader, Economic Growth and Regeneration: Councillor Andrew

Key Decision

8. Provision of Operational Technical Advisors for Capital Construction Projects

(Enclosed)

Deputy Leader and Finance: Councillor Statham

Key Decision

9. Corporate Budget Plan 2025/26 – 2028/29, incorporating the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management and investment Strategy 2025/26

(Enclosed)

Non-key Decision

10. Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25

(Enclosed)

Health and Wellbeing: Councillor Flint

Key Decision

11. Walsall Net-Zero Climate Change Strategy

(Enclosed)

12. Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy

(Enclosed)

Resident Access and Housing Support: Councillor Garcha

Key Decision

13. Walsall Housing Allocations Policy

(Enclosed)

Education and Skills: Councillor Kaur

Key Decisions

14. Determination of the Scheme for coordinated admissions and the Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary Schools for the 2026/27 academic year

(Enclosed)

15. Early Years Funding Formula 2025/26

(Enclosed)

Adult Social Care: Councillor Pedley

Key Decision

16. All Age Carers Strategy 2024-2027

(Enclosed)

Feedback from Overview and Scrutiny

17. Recommendations from the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the utilisation of Council assets
(Enclosed)
18. Recommendations from the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding grass cutting.
(Enclosed)

Part II – Private Session

Resident Access and Housing Support: Councillor Garcha

Key Decisions

19. Private Rented Sector Offer to Landlords
(Enclosed)
(Exempt Information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended)

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Cabinet

Wednesday 15 January 2025

Minutes of the meeting held in Conference Room 2 at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall at 6pm.

Present

Councillor Perry	Leader of the Council
Councillor Andrew	Associate Leader – Economic Development and Regeneration
Councillor M. Statham	Deputy Leader – Finance
Councillor Elson	Children and Young People
Councillor Flint	Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Garcha	Resident Access and Housing Support
Councillor Kaur	Education and Skills
Councillor Lee	Internal Services
Councillor Murphy	Street Pride
Councillor Pedley	Adult Social Care

In attendance

E. Bennett	Chief Executive
K. Allward	Executive Director – Adult Social Care
D. Brown	Executive Director – Economy, Environment and Communities
J. Greenhalgh	Executive Director – Resources and Transformation
C. Male	Executive Director – Children’s Services
S. Darcy	Director – Finance and Assurance
S. Portman	Head of Law
E. Cook	Democratic Services Officer
I. Halford	Assistant Democratic Services Officer

Part 1 – Public Session

4317 Welcome

Councillor Perry opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explaining that the Cabinet was meeting that evening in person and that the agenda and reports for this meeting were available on the Council’s website. He explained that voting would be by way of a show of hands which would be witnessed and recorded by the Democratic Services officer in attendance.

4318 Apologies

No apologies were received.

4319 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2024 were submitted.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2024, a copy having been sent to each member of the Cabinet, be approved and signed as a correct record.

4320 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were received.

4321 Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985

Resolved

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items set out in the private part of the agenda for the reasons set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972

4322 Petitions

No petitions were received.

4323 Questions

No questions were received.

4324 Forward Plan

The forward plan as of December 2024 was submitted:

(annexed)

Resolved

That the forward plan be noted.

4325 Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29 - Update

Councillor Statham presented a report which provided an updated medium term financial outlook in relation to the draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29, including analyses of the Autumn Statement 2024, the

Local Government Finance Policy Statement 2025 and the Provisional Local Government Settlement published on 18 December 2024.

Members discussed achievements and shared updates within their portfolios.

It was **moved** by Councillor Statham and **seconded** by Councillor Flint and it was;

Resolved (unanimously)

That Cabinet:

1. **Note the main implications from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement announcement on 30 October 2024 as detailed at section 4.3 and 4.4, the Local Government Finance Policy Statement published on 28 November 2024 as detailed in section 4.5 and the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement published on 18 December 2024 as detailed at section 4.6 and 4.8.**
2. **Note the changes to the Medium-Term Financial Outlook (MTFO), to close the revenue funding gap of £11.05m reported to Cabinet in October 2024, as detailed at section 4.9 to 4.11.**
3. **Note the changes to the Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29 as detailed at section 4.12.**
4. **Note the risk to the MTFO projection from April 2025 as outlined in section 4.8 and 4.14 to 4.18.**
5. **Note the feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees at Appendix 1 and consider this feedback in preparation for the final budget recommendations in February 2025.**
6. **Note the update on public consultation and equality impact assessments outlined in section 4.28 to 4.37 and appendix 2 and 3.**

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7:04pm.

Chair:

Date:



Walsall Council

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

**Council House,
Lichfield Street,
Walsall, WS1 1TW**
www.walsall.gov.uk

4 February 2025

FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan sets out decisions that are termed as “key decisions” at least 28 calendar days before they are due to be taken by the Executive (Cabinet). Also included on the plan are other decisions to be taken by the Cabinet (“non-key decisions”). Preparation of the forward plan helps the Council to programme its work. The purpose of the forward plan is to give plenty of notice and an opportunity for consultation on the issues to be discussed. The plan is updated each month with the period of the plan being rolled forward by one month and republished. Copies of the plan can be obtained from Democratic Services, Walsall MBC, Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW Craig.Goodall@walsall.gov.uk and can also be accessed from the Council’s website at www.walsall.gov.uk. The Cabinet is allowed to make urgent decisions which do not appear in the forward plan, however, a notice will be included on the agenda for the relevant Cabinet meeting which explains the reasons why.

Please note that the decision dates are indicative and are subject to change. Please contact the above addressee if you wish to check the date for a particular item.

The Cabinet agenda and reports are available for inspection by the public 7 days prior to the meeting of the Cabinet on the Council’s website. Background papers are listed on each report submitted to the Cabinet and members of the public are entitled to see these documents unless they are confidential. The report also contains the name and telephone number of a contact officer. These details can also be found in the forward plan.

Meetings of the Cabinet are open to the public. Occasionally there are items included on the agenda which are confidential and for those items the public will be asked to leave the meeting. The forward plan will show where this is intended and the reason why the reports are confidential. Enquiries regarding these reasons should be directed to Democratic Services (Craig.Goodall@walsall.gov.uk).

“Key decisions” are those decisions which have a significant effect within the community or which involve considerable expenditure or savings. With regard to key decisions the Council’s Constitution states:

- (1) A key decision is:
 - (i) any decision in relation to an executive function which results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant, having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates or
 - (ii) any decision that is likely to have significant impact on two or more wards within the borough.
- (2) The threshold for “significant” expenditure/savings is £500,000.
- (3) A decision taker may only make a key decision in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
MARCH 2025 TO JUNE 2025 (04.02.2025)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reference No./ Date first entered in Plan	Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside the Council)	Decision maker	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Contact Member (All Members can be written to at Civic Centre, Walsall)	Date item to be considered
2/25 (6.1.25)	Operational Technical Advisors (Construction Projects): To appoint operational technical advisors for building contracts. The advisors' supply operational support for technical disciplines, such as architects, quantity surveyor, mechanical and electrical engineers. They do not provide strategic advice.	Cabinet Key Decision	Simon Tranter Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	12 February 2025
66/24 (7.10.24)	Corporate Budget Plan 2025/26 – 2028/29, incorporating the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management and investment Strategy 2025/26: To recommend the final budget and council tax for approval by Council.	Cabinet Council Key Decision	Shaun Darcy Shaun.Darcy@walsall.gov.uk	Council tax payers, business rate payers, voluntary and community organisations Internal Services	Cllr Statham	Cabinet 12 February 2025 / Council 27 February 2025
67/24 (7.10.24)	Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25: To report the financial position based on 9 months to December 2024.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Shaun Darcy Shaun.Darcy@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Statham	12 February 2025

77/24 (2.12.24)	All Age Carers Strategy 2024-2027: To approve the All-Age Carers Strategy, which highlights the role of Carers and outlines plans for improving the wellbeing of Carers living in the borough.	Cabinet	Andrew Osborn Andrew.Osborn@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services External Partners	Cllr Pedley Cllr Elson	12 February 2025
71/24 (7.10.24)	Net-Zero 2041 Strategy: To approve the draft Net-Zero 2041 Strategy and the establishment of a 'Walsall Net Zero Partnership' to deliver the borough-wide elements of the Strategy.	Cabinet Key Decision	Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Flint	12 February 2025
62/24 (7.10.24)	Adoption of the new Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy: To approve the new Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and establish a council-led steering group to undertake ongoing monitoring.	Cabinet Key Decision	Black Country PPOSS - Overarching Strategic Framework Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Flint	12 February 2025
35/24 (4.6.24)	Walsall Housing Allocations Policy: To approve Walsall's Housing Allocations Policy which details how the Council will prioritise applicants for nomination to housing association properties.	Cabinet Key Decision	Elise Hopkins Elise.Hopkins@walsall.gov.uk	Public Consultation Internal Services Housing Associations	Cllr Garcha	12 February 2025
1/25 (6.1.25)	Private Rented Sector offer to landlords: To approve the Council's policy detailing actions aimed at increasing	Cabinet Key Decision	Elise Hopkins Elise.Hopkins@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Garcha	12 February 2025

	access to private rented sector properties for homeless households. <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>					
68/24 (7.10.24)	Determination of School Admission Arrangements 2026-27: To set out the proposed scheme for co-ordinated secondary and primary admissions and mid-year admissions for the 2026/27 academic year and the proposed admission arrangements for primary community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2026/27 academic year.	Cabinet Key Decision	Sharon Kelly Sharon.Kelly@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Schools Forum	Cllr Kaur	12 February 2025
73/24 (4.11.24)	Early Years Funding Formula 2025/26: To approve the proposed Early Year Funding Formula for 2025/26.	Cabinet Decision	Sharon Kelly Sharon.Kelly@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Schools Forum	Cllr Kaur	12 February 2025
46/24 (5.8.24)	Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): To seek approval of a draft Planning Obligations SPD for consultation with key partners, stakeholders, infrastructure providers and the general public. The document will be consulted on a 6-week consultation.	Cabinet Key Decision	Simon Tranter Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	19 March 2025
3/25 (6.1.25)	West Midlands Local Transport Plan Settlement and Transport Capital Programme 2025/26:	Cabinet Key Decision	Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	19 March 2025

	To seek approval of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan Settlement and Transport Capital Programme 2025/26, to support the delivery of transport capital projects including the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP).					
74/24 (4.11.24)	High Needs Funding Formula 2025/26: To approve the proposed High Needs Funding Formula for 2025/26.	Cabinet Decision	Sharon Kelly Sharon.Kelly@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Schools Forum	Cllr Kaur	19 March 2025
5/25 (6.1.25)	Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2024/25: To note the Public Sector Equality Duty annual report which will be published in March 2025 in accordance with our obligations with the Equality Act 2010.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Keith Beech Keith.Beech@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Corporate Equality Group	Cllr Lee	19 March 2025
75/24 (4.11.24)	Adult Social Care and Children's Services Case Management System: To approve the renewal of the contract for Mosaic. The current contract ends on 31/07/2025.	Cabinet Key Decision	Andrew Osborn Andrew.Osborn@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services External Stakeholders	Cllr Pedley Cllr Elson	19 March 2025
70/24 (7.10.24)	Gasholders - Black Country Enterprise Zone: To approve entering a Funding Agreement with City of Wolverhampton Council for site preparation works and the approach to progressing project delivery.	Cabinet Key Decision	Simon Tranter Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	16 April 2025

	<i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>					
4/25 (6.1.25)	Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document: To approve the final version of the Supplementary Planning Document for adoption.	Cabinet Key Decision	Simon Tranter Simon.Tranter@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	16 April 2025
78/24 (2.12.24)	Waste Management Strategy, Fryers Road Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) redevelopment: To approve the pre-tender budget for the redevelopment of a larger Fryers Road HWRC and agree to the use of the Pagabo framework (design and build stages) for the procurement of Fryers Road HWRC.	Cabinet Key Decision	Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew Cllr Murphy	16 April 2025
6/25 (6.1.25)	Provision of HWRC Skips and Associated Plant Equipment: To award a contract for the provision of skips and associated equipment for the Middlemore Lane HWRC.	Cabinet Key Decision	Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Murphy	16 April 2025

Cabinet – 12 February 2025

Appointment of Operational Technical Advisors for Capital Construction Projects

Portfolio: Councillor Andrew - Associate Leader, Economic Growth & Regeneration

Related portfolios: All

Service: Corporate Landlord

Wards: NA

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

To provide the council with sufficient and competent technical resources commensurate with the provision of a wide-ranging scope of construction projects with diverse and complex technical specialism's. This diverse range of technical support cannot be provided in-house due to the high cost of maintaining such a provision.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Council proposes to enter into a contract with a single service provider AtkinsRealis Limited (AtkinsRealis) through the PAGABO Professional Services Framework, a national framework for the supply of a full range of professional services, including but not limited to, civil & structural engineering, architectural design services, landscape design services and sustainability & environmental consultancy related to the technical delivery of construction projects. The PAGABO Professional Services Framework Lot 1 is compliant with all procurement regulations and directives and open to public sector organisations.
- 2.2 AtkinsRealis is currently the appointed supplier on the PAGABO Professional Services Framework Lot 1 and act as project manager for all multi-disciplinary projects to ensure consistency of procedures and reporting and will provide other technical teams either directly or utilising sub-contractors under the terms of the PAGABO Framework.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 Approve the appointment of AtkinsRealis Limited, via the Pagabo Framework as the Professional Services Provider for Capital Construction Projects for a maximum period of up to 3 years (2+1) subject to satisfactory performance and delivery.
- 3.2 Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Economy Environment and Communities to enter into the contract, and to subsequently authorise the sealing, signing or variation of any deeds, contracts or other related documents for such services

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 Under the previous contractual arrangement, AtkinsRealis was appointed via the PAGABO Framework, following consultation with the procurement team, which considered all appropriate frameworks that were available at the time.
- 4.2 The previous contract has reduced the cost of services for larger contracts from 16% for professional fees and 11% internal charge to 11-15% for professional fees dependant on the complexity of the contract, and 1.5% internal charge. AtkinsRealis has also agreed to a further reduction on PAGABO rates equating to an average reduction over all disciplines of 2%.
- 4.3 The contract renewal will be for an initial period of 2 (two) years with the option to extend for a further 1 (one) year, subject to satisfactory performance
- 4.4 Over the life of the previous contract £5.6m was expended on a range of projects and it is predicted that spend will reduce over the life of the proposed new contract. Accordingly, a total 3 year spend of £4.5m is requested. This is a maximum value that can be awarded and there is no guarantee to the supplier of projects to this value being placed.
- 4.5 When considering options for the new arrangements a review of the known capital programme for the next 3 years was undertaken and the volume of works already issued to AtkinsRealis was noted.
- 4.6 Throughout the last 3 years the corporate landlord service has used this model for the provision of professional technical advisors to manage construction projects ranging from small minor works to large complex schemes. This has avoided the need for a separate procurement for each project requiring a technical team. Previously each new project required a separate procurement exercise to appoint technical advisors which had proved time consuming and extended lead times for commencement of projects.

- 4.7 The appointment of a single source arrangement was explored with reference to the current projects underway with the current supplier AtkinsRealis under the previous appointment via PAGABO Framework. This included the majority of the school expansion programmes, and the complexities and costs involved in transferring to a potential new supplier and the due diligence from new technical teams the works already undertaken with client departments and client department relationship management.
- 4.8 This cost of due diligence for any new supplier in assuming designs and specifications, delays to programmes, unfamiliarity with existing systems and potentially having to onboard technical teams if they did not exist on another framework would potentially result in a cost increase, in this case given many stakeholder meetings have taken place re-forging the current relationships would be time consuming.
- 4.9 It was considered that moving works already commenced to a new supplier would not be appropriate due to programmed delays that would be inevitable therefore AtkinsRealis will complete all works issued under the previous framework.
- 4.10 Although an open tender process could be pursued it would require the development of a detailed specification and due to the time required, uncertainty of the level of throughput and exact nature of some of the services that may be required going forward there is a risk that not all of the future requirements will be accounted for and therefore there is a possibility that not all of the Council's needs could be delivered through this contract.
- 4.11 Having considered the above options in conjunction with procurement, it is considered that the most appropriate route to market for this service is the PAGABO Professional Services Framework Lot 1. PAGABO undertook a PCR 2015 compliant procurement process and have selected the single provider who offered the best value solution based on 40% Price/60% Quality criteria. The Framework can accommodate all the disciplines needed, it can be engaged quickly, it has the benefit of flexibility around the use of specialist sub-contractors and local SMEs which widens the opportunity of expenditure and safeguarding employment within the borough of Walsall.
- 4.12 Current efficiencies will be maintained due to consistency of supply, established processes and a reduction in the need for meetings with multiple suppliers.
- 4.13 KPIs for performance elements will be further developed in line with the enhanced offer from AtkinsRealis and used for each project to include but not limited to task completion within agreed time frame, variance from cost estimates (both increases and decreases), engagement of local suppliers, added social value, work experience, etc.
- 4.14 AtkinsRealis has produced a social value commitment (see Appendix i). This includes targets for use of small to medium enterprises, work with local

economy, staff levels living within the borough, training placements engagement with schools.

- 4.15 This contract will ensure the project managers understand the council's policies and procedures, applying them and ensuring compliance for all client departments. This will also provide added governance for the programme management, monitoring, and reporting of pipeline projects.
- 4.16 All services and departments across the council who have commissioning requirements for programme and project works will be invited, engaged, and involved in the procurement of technical teams for their specific works or projects and will be invited to input into quality questions and evaluation scoring.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.17 The recommended actions support the ambition of "continuously improving" by ensuring that the council can deliver efficient and effective services. By appointing a single service provider through the PAGABO Professional Services Framework, the council can streamline processes, reduce procurement times, and maintain consistency in project management. This approach not only enhances the quality of service delivery but also ensures value for money, which is a core principle of the council plan.
- 4.18 The recommended actions contribute to the ambition of "prosperous and innovative" by facilitating the timely and cost-effective delivery of construction projects. The appointment of AtkinsRealis, with its comprehensive range of services including civil and structural engineering, architectural design, and environmental consultancy, ensures that the council can support business growth and infrastructure development. This is essential for creating a thriving local economy and attracting investment.
- 4.19 Additionally, the report aligns with the principle of "acting sustainably". The inclusion of sustainability and environmental consultancy services ensures that all construction projects consider carbon reduction and environmental impact. This supports the council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2041 and promotes the development of sustainable infrastructure, which is vital for the long-term wellbeing of the borough.

Risk management

- 4.20 The appointment is based on an initial period of two years with an option to extend for one making a total of three years. The option to extend will be subject to a strict performance and delivery review before any extension on the initial period is entered into.
- 4.21 The proposed arrangement is non-exclusive and Corporate Landlord Service can choose to deliver works via alternative arrangements should it be felt that this would provide better value for money or legislation requires it.

- 4.22 To accurately evaluate the value for money a baseline cost for similar projects undertaken in the past, for each service area, will be used for a comparison on overall costs.
- 4.23 All projects will be reported to the relevant service capital boards and will not proceed without their approval.

Financial implications

- 4.24 The costs of the advisors will be accommodated from the approved capital or revenue budget for each scheme.
- 4.25 There is no fixed capital expenditure for the next 3 (three) years, the total proposed length of the contract. Based on previous project history, it is anticipated with the average cost of engagement of consultants in the range of 10-15% of construction cost, dependant on complexity and value of the scheme, assuming all RIBA stages are used.
- 4.26 AtkinsRealis has also agreed a reduction in maximum hourly rates that will be charged under the contract giving a further reduction in cost.

Legal implications

- 4.27 The PAGABO Framework is compliant with the Public Contract Regulations 2015.
- 4.28 The Council will use the Framework terms and conditions which form part of the requirements of PAGABO to use the framework.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.29 The award of this contract is in accordance the Council's Contract Rules and is fully compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations.
- 4.30 Since 2016 PAGABO Framework projects have generated over £2.83bn of construction projects improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of the areas in which they have been delivered. Throughout the contract and by use of the Social Profit Calculator, PAGABO Framework can forecast the social value for client's projects at design stage, evaluate social value objectively using desired KPIs during tender stage, and monitor this throughout construction and post-completion.
- 4.31 AtkinsRealis has produced a Social Value commitment, Appendix i. This includes targets for use of Small to Medium Enterprises, work with local economy, staff levels living within the borough, training placements engagement with schools.

Property implications

- 4.32 The corporate landlord service will undertake a consistent project delivery approach across the estate, for school and non-school assets; adopt best practice business case methodologies (Full Business Case) and align gateways with RIBA Plan of Work.
- 4.33 The service will adopt a clearly defined governance process, setting out the responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders and the steps in the process where their engagement will be required.
- 4.34 The programme management function will take the lead on the delivery of capital projects across the estate from feasibility stage onwards, engaging with relevant stakeholders as appropriate, based on the brief provided by the client department.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.35 Compliance with health and safety legislation related to construction projects to ensure safe working sites and members of the public are not at risk from construction works
- 4.36 The proposal supports the principles of Walsall's Health and Wellbeing Plan and its priorities to increase economic prosperity through increased growth, and to create healthy and sustainable places and communities. The proposal will aid the delivery of strategic plan by facilitating timely and cost-effective access to a range of professionals and experts. Thereby supporting the objectives in the Health and Wellbeing Plan to build a strong business environment and develop a strong and sustainable infrastructures.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.37 The AtkinsRealis have detailed their approach, quantifiable and reportable outcomes for the duration of the contract. Appendix i.
- 4.38 Each project will be subject to an equalities impact assessment as part of the procurement process and AtkinsRealis will assist in ensuring best practice is used for each project.

Staffing implications

- 4.39 There is no staffing implications related to the recommendations in this report. The development, delivery, monitoring and reporting of this projects will be undertaken by existing staff (and budgets) within Corporate Landlord and Programme Management teams.

Climate Impact

- 4.40 All projects will be considered for carbon reduction with regard to the Corporate Climate Change Action Plan

- 4.41 All projects will consider a wide range of carbon reduction principles, from low energy lighting, alternative heating provision, solar PV and emerging technologies as they develop.
- 4.42 All procurements utilising this appointment will ensure that all procurements of contractors include sections on carbon reduction both directly and via the contractor's supply chain.
- 4.43 There is no way to quantify the reduction of carbon for this procurement as it is for the provision of technical services, however each project will report on the measures adopted as part of the technical solution.

Consultation

- 4.44 Consultation has been undertaken with, EE&C, Finance, and Procurement and legal services.
- 4.45 Each project undertaken by this appointment will be subject to further consultation and approval for such project from the client department via their established capital boards and reporting mechanisms.

5. Decide

- 5.1 The recommended option is the appointment of Atkinsrealis as the Construction Project Technical Advisor for a maximum period of up to 3 years (2+1) subject to satisfactory performance and delivery. This will aid with consistency of supply of services, facilitate rapid, compliant route for technical supplier commensurate with the project.
- 5.2 An alternative approach would be to procure a technical appointment for each individual project. This is not recommended as it will increase the delivery period of the projects and will increase the workload of all departments involved in the delivery.
- 5.3 Another alternative is to undertake an open tender approach to the procurement of operational technical support. This would involve significant officer time and is likely to result in a more expensive contract, due to the inherent economies of scale of using a framework.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Subject to Cabinet approval a contract will be made with Atkinsrealis via the PAGABO Framework

7. Review

- 7.1 Monitoring of the performance will be via a set of KPI's designed to capture both quality and delivery performance and will be reported to each Directorate via their capital boards.
- 7.2 An annual review of contract performance will be undertaken by Corporate Landlord, and a report to be compiled with a recommendation to continue the contract or terminate and reappoint a new supplier to the Executive Director of Environment, Economy and Communities.
- 7.3 Cost of the providing the services will be reported against the established averages previously achieved. This will be reported on an ongoing basis to the contracting department and annually across all projects to the Executive Director of Environment, Economy and Communities.

Appendices

Appendix A: Atkinsrealis Social Value Professional Service Walsall MBC 2024-25

Background papers

None

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David Brown
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31 January 2025



Councillor Andrew
Portfolio holder
31 January 2025

Cabinet – 12 February 2025

Corporate Budget Plan 2025/26 to 2028/29, incorporating the Capital Strategy; and the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2025/26

Portfolio: Councillor M. Statham – Deputy Leader of the Council (Finance)

Related Portfolios: All

Service: Finance – council wide

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To provide the revenue and capital resource envelope for delivery of the council's aims and objectives and ensure that the statutory framework is met by recommending the statutory determinations (gross expenditure and income and council tax requirement for the year) and council tax bands, the capital programme, the Capital Strategy, and the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy to Full Council for approval.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The report contains several sections as follows:

- The Revenue Corporate Budget Plan and Capital Programme; comprising the final revenue and capital budget following consideration of consultation feedback and equality impact assessment by Cabinet. This also includes the Capital Strategy and the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy.
- Treasury Management and Investment Strategy as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2017). It includes details on the Prudential Code Indicators (PCIs) for the next three years and asks Cabinet to approve them and recommend adoption of these to full Council. The Strategy both complies with the Local Government Act 2003 and also provides an additional framework over and above the statutory minimum for monitoring performance.
- Treasury Management Policy Statement as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2017).

3. Recommendations

3.1 That Cabinet note:

- a. That at the time of dispatch of this report, the final local government settlement for 2025/26 is awaiting the final parliamentary debate and vote to take place on 5 February. Any changes arising from this, will be included within the final papers to Council on 26 February 2025.
- b. That at the time of despatch of this report, the precepting authorities (fire and police) had not formally notified the authority of their final council tax precept levels for 2025/26. Draft figures have been included. Final figures will therefore be provided prior to or at the Council meeting of 26 February 2025 should they change.
- c. That at the time of despatch of this report, the levy authorities, (Environment Agency and West Midlands Combined Authority - Transport Levy) had not formally notified the authority of their final demand for 2025/26. Estimates have been used for the Transport Levy based on informal communication. (The final Transport Levy is expected to be approved early February and will be included within the final papers to Council).
- d. That the council tax base, set by the S151 Officer under officer delegations, is 74,375.36 for 2025/26.
- e. The amendments to the revenue budget arising from the provisional settlement, including changes to savings and investment proposals identified since the October Cabinet report, as set out in section 4.25 and Table 1.
- f. That Members must have due regard to consultation feedback and the public sector equality duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) when making budget decisions.

3.2 That Cabinet approve:

- a. That delegated authority be given to the S151 Officer to make any necessary amendments, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, to take account of the final local government settlement, final levies and precepts, final grant allocations and final technical guidance or legislation on the budget; and to make any necessary amendments to the statutory determinations and council tax bands to take account of those changes and the resulting final analysis of the budget and for these amendments to be submitted and therefore recommended to Council at its meeting on 26 February 2025.
- b. Approve the policy service changes as set out in Appendix 3 Section A of this report.

- c. That delegated authority be given to the S151 Officer, after consultation with the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive, to agree the council's final contribution to the West Midlands Combined Authority.

3.3 **That Cabinet approve and recommend to Council**, subject to receipt of the final local government settlement, final precepts and levies, receipt of and final changes arising from final grant allocations, technical/legislative guidance and final specific grant allocations (substitute figures and resolution to be provided to Council by the S151 Officer to take account of any changes arising from these) the following:

3.3.1 Revenue

- a. The financial envelope of resources for 2025/26 as set out in **Part 1** "The Revenue Corporate Budget Plan and Capital Programme".
- b. A Walsall Council net council tax requirement for 2025/26 of £162.78m and a 2.99% increase in council tax, plus a further 2% increase for Adult Social Care precept (total council tax increase of 4.99%).
- c. That the recommendations of the S151 Officer in respect of the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the budget calculations and the adequacy of reserves **be approved**, including the levels of central contingency and reserves and an opening general reserve of not less than £24.12m, as set out in the S151 Officer Section 25 statement in **Annex 12** of the Budget Plan.
- d. The (estimated) levies below for outside bodies and Cabinet approve that the final figures **be substituted** for these provisional ones once they are available at the Council meeting on 26 February 2025. (An estimate has been used within this report based on informal notification from the authorities).

LEVY	AMOUNT (£)
West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Levy	12,138,685
Environment Agency	87,443

- e. The following statutory determinations (references are to the Local Government Finance Act, 1992 as amended), and subject to any final changes arising from receipt of final precepts and levies, receipt of final grant allocations, technical/legislative guidance and final specific grant allocations, **and Cabinet approve that these will be substituted** at the Council meeting on 26 February 2025 for the final figures once received:
 - I. £847,301,134 being the aggregate gross expenditure, which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) (a) to (f) of the Act.
 - II. £684,524,743 being the aggregate income which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) (a) to (d) of the Act.

- III. £162,776,391 being the amount, by which the aggregate at (e) (I) above exceeds the aggregate at (e) (II), calculated by the council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year.
- IV. £2,188.58 being the amount at (e) (III) above, divided by the council tax base of 74,375.36, calculated by the council in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (average council tax at band D).
- V. Valuation bands
Being amounts given by multiplying the amount at (e) (IV) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5 (1) of the Local Government Act 1992, is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the council in accordance with Section 30 and 36 of the Act as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwelling listed in different valuation bands.

A	B	C	D
1,459.05	1,702.23	1,945.40	2,188.58
E	F	G	H
2,674.93	3,161.28	3,647.63	4,377.16

- f. The draft precept from the Fire and Rescue Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner, issued to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992, for each of the categories of dwelling shown below and Cabinet **approve** that the final figures **be substituted** once they are available at the Council meeting on 26 February 2025.

PRECEPTING AUTHORITY	VALUATION BANDS			
Police And Crime Commissioner	A	B	C	D
	153.00	178.50	204.00	229.50
	E	F	G	H
	280.50	331.50	382.50	459.00
Fire & Rescue	A	B	C	D
	53.46	62.37	71.28	80.19
	E	F	G	H
	98.01	115.83	133.65	160.38

- g. That having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at (e) (v) and (f) above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts of council tax for 2025/26 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below and Cabinet **approve** that the final figures **be substituted** once the final precepts are available at the Council meeting on 26 February 2025.

A	B	C	D
1,665.51	1,943.10	2,220.68	2,498.27

E	F	G	H
3,053.44	3,608.61	4,163.78	4,996.54

- h. That notice **be given** of the council tax within twenty one days of it being set by publishing details of the same in the “Express and Star” newspaper circulating in the Authority’s area.
- i. That the S151 Officer **be instructed** to take all necessary action in relation to council tax, and national non-domestic rates, including, where appropriate, the signing of all documents, billing, the giving of notices and the taking of necessary steps to ensure collection thereof.
- j. That the S151 Officer **be given delegated authority** to make transfers to and from reserves in order to ensure that reserves are maintained as necessary and in particular, adjusted when reserves are no longer required, or need to be replenished.
- k. That, pursuant to Section 52ZB and 52ZC of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the relevant basic amount of council tax for the Council is not excessive in relation to determining whether a referendum is required.

3.3.2 Capital

- a. The allocation of capital expenditure plans as set out in **Part 1** “The Revenue Corporate Budget Plan and Capital Programme” and that the capital and leasing programme as set out in **Annex 10 be approved**. Schemes funded from grant will commence when final allocations are published.
- b. That the S151 Officer be **given delegated authority** to determine how each source of finance is used to fund the overall capital programme and to alter the overall mix of financing as necessary, to maximise the flexibility of capital resources used and minimise the ongoing costs of borrowing to the council.
- c. That the S151 Officer, after consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council (Portfolio Holder for Finance), be **given delegated authority** to release capital resources held back for any contingent items that may arise (earmarked capital receipts for essential or emergency spend), and also for any match funding requirements that may be required of the council in order to secure additional external capital funding (e.g. bids for government or other funding).
- d. That the S151 Officer be **given delegated authority** to determine the use of capital receipts in relation to the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts to ensure that they meet the requirements set out by the Secretary of State.
- e. The Capital and Investment Strategy set out in **Annex 7** of the Budget Plan **be approved**.

- f. The Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy set out in **Annex 11** of the Budget Plan **be approved**.

3.2.3 Treasury Management

- a. **Part 2A** – The Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2025/26 onwards, including the council's borrowing requirement, borrowing limits, and the adoption of prudential indicators, **be approved**.
- b. That decisions to effect movements between conventional borrowing and other long term liabilities, such as leases, **be delegated** to the S151 Officer.
- c. That decisions to use capital receipts or borrowing within the framework of approved prudential indicators **be delegated** to the S151 Officer.
- d. **Part 2B** – Treasury Management Policies, **be approved**.

4. **Report detail – Know**

- 4.1 The council's budget is a financial representation of the organisation's plans. It is constructed as an integral part of the council's planning processes and aligned to its priorities and objectives. The attached Budget Plan at **Part 1** sets out the revenue and capital plans for service delivery for 2025/26 and beyond.

Council Corporate Plan priorities

- 4.2 The budget is the financial plan supporting delivery of the organisation's key objectives and priorities. The budget process is a four yearly cycle, updated annually, aiming to support delivery of council priorities and outcomes within the available resources. It aims to achieve this through the delivery of efficiencies, commercialisation and service reviews and redesign to redirect existing and reducing resources to areas of high priority in order to deliver the council's outcomes. This budget has been prepared to align resources to the delivery of the new Council Plan 2025-2029.

Risk management

- 4.3 The council reviews corporate financial planning and budget principles in accordance with the medium-term financial framework (MTFF). The budget setting process includes a comprehensive financial risk assessment to determine key risks and their potential impact on the budget. Services undertake risk assessments of their services and budgets by identifying risk factors, potential changes to service delivery and funding streams. This ensures that adequate budgetary provision is available to cover unforeseen future events. This successful approach is now embedded and is used to inform the level of earmarked and general reserves.
- 4.4 The identification of risks, and recommended level of reserves, is referred to in the Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) **Section 25 statement** at **Annex 12** of the Budget Plan.

The Council continues to operate in a challenging financial environment with uncertainty over funding beyond 2025/26. To ensure long term financial sustainability it is critical that the Council has an appropriate level of earmarked reserves and general reserve to be able to mitigate any risks that appear in year which cannot be contained within Directorate budgets. It is unlikely that all risks identified will arise, however new risks are likely to emerge. The level of reserves should be sufficient to cover all but the most unusual of events. Any in-year use of general reserves may require replenishment to ensure the opening level of reserves is as recommended by the MTF.

- 4.5 A number of our programmes and projects are heavily influenced and dependent upon process and governance at the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), for example our named projects in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) and UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). Such risk will be continually monitored by transport officers and via the WMCA S151 Finance Director group.

Financial implications

- 4.6 The council must set a balanced budget to meet its legal requirements as set out under 'legal implications'. This report fulfils that duty and proposes cash limits for services to enable them to deliver the council's key priorities.

Legal implications

- 4.7 The legal duty for a council's finances falls within S151 of the Local Government Act 1972. Arrangements for the proper administration of the council's affairs are secured by the S151 Officer.
- 4.8 Cabinet recommends the revenue budget and capital programme envelope to Council. Councils are responsible for making a calculation in accordance with sections 31A to 37 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended). This includes the statutory determinations (aggregate gross expenditure, gross income, council tax requirement for the year) and setting the council tax for a financial year.
- 4.9 Under the Local Government Act 2003 (s25), an authority must set a council tax and balanced budget, giving 14 days' notice of the council tax level prior to the date of billing. The Council must set a budget before 11 March of each year. This will include the S151 Officer's Section 25 statement that deals with the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of the reserves for which the budget provides, together with an assessment of risk. This is provided at **Annex 12** of the Budget Plan. The Council must have regard to this in setting the budget envelope.
- 4.10 The Local Government Act 2003 and supporting Regulations require the Council to have regard to the Prudential Code and to set prudential indicators for the next three years to ensure that the council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Act requires the Council to set out its Treasury Strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy (as required by investment guidance issued subsequent to the Act); this sets out the council's policies for managing its

investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. This is provided at **Part 2** of the Budget Plan.

- 4.11 In recent years Central Government has capped the level of council tax rises. For 2025/26, the Government have announced that local authorities will need to seek approval of their electorate via a local referendum if they propose to increase council tax levels by 5% or above as confirmed as part of the provisional local government settlement on 18 December 2024, inclusive of the 2% ring-fenced for Adult Social Care. This report proposes a 4.99% increase.
- 4.12 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 placed a general duty on every local authority in England to take such steps as it considers appropriate to secure that representatives of local persons (or of local persons of a particular description) are involved in the exercise of any of its functions, among other things by being consulted about the exercise of the function. The duty to consult that is imposed on councils comes from two other sources:
- Specific legislation, such as the education act duties to consult on certain services etc., and,
 - The common law duty, which is well established in law.

The approach to consultation was reported to Cabinet on 15 January 2025 as well as full details and feedback.

- 4.13 The 2010 Equality Act, whilst not imposing a specific duty to consult, lays a requirement to have due regard to the equality impact when exercising its function. As a public body, the council is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as set out in the Equality Act, 2010. The PSED requires the council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Failure to meet these requirements may result in the council being exposed to costly, time-consuming and reputation-damaging legal challenges.
- 4.14 An Equality and Health Impact Assessment (EHIA) is the chosen procedure, by the council, for checking the lawfulness of decisions in relation to the impact on people with certain characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. Equality and Health Impact Assessment of the budget proposals was reported to Cabinet in January 2025.
- 4.15 Saving plans, prior to implementation, will include consideration of equality and health impact, legislative and other requirements, duties or obligations imposed by statute, secondary legislation or guidance upon the council, specifically in the context of proposals which involve changes to service provision.

Procurement Implications / Social Value

- 4.16 There are no direct implications arising from this report. Any procurement implications as a result of the budget and the development of service redesign benefits will be set out within the relevant proposals as they are developed.

Property implications

- 4.17 There are no direct implications arising from this report. Any direct property implications as a result of service redesign will be set out within the relevant proposals as they are developed.

Health and Wellbeing implications

- 4.18 There are no direct implications arising from this report. Any direct health and wellbeing implications as a result of service redesign will be set out within the relevant proposal as they are developed.

Staffing implications

- 4.19 There will be some staffing implications arising from this report. The contribution of the trade unions is important to the council achieving its key aims and objectives, particularly in these challenging times. Officers will consult widely with them on the employee implications of service redesign and delivery.
- 4.20 Staff affected by proposals included in the budget will be supported as appropriate throughout the process and the number of redundancies will be minimised wherever possible.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.21 Equality and Health Impact Assessment (EHIA) are undertaken on proposals as they are developed and reported to Cabinet to allow them to consider any revisions required to the final budget for recommendation to Council. Assessing the impact of proposed changes to policies, procedures, services and organisational change is not just something the law requires; it is a positive opportunity for the council to ensure it makes better decisions, based on robust evidence. Equality and Health Impact Assessment analysis was reported to Cabinet in January 2025.

Climate Change

- 4.22 This report is prepared with consideration of the council's Climate Change Action Plan where applicable. Directors are required to ensure proposals are assessed, as appropriate, against the six key areas of the plan: strategy, energy, waste, transport, nature, resilience and adaptation.

Consultation

- 4.23 For our services to meet the needs of local residents, and of the community at large, it is essential that our plans and policies take into account the views of local people and others who use our services. We use a broad range of consultation methods to ensure as far as possible that people have sufficient information to comment, as well as the time and any necessary support they require to enable them to have their say. All feedback gathered is collated and carefully considered, along with other information, as part of the decision making process.
- 4.24 Stakeholder consultation has been undertaken with elected councillors through Overview and Scrutiny Committees, with trade unions via the council's Employee Relations Forum (ERF), national non-domestic ratepayers and voluntary and community organisations on the budget and draft council tax increases. Budget consultation has also been undertaken with residents and other stakeholders. Full details of the consultation process and findings were presented to Cabinet in January 2025.

Amendments to the Revenue Budget

- 4.25 Since the draft revenue budget was presented to Cabinet on 16 October 2024, with an update reported to Cabinet on 15 January 2025, there have been a number of funding announcements and technical and other changes to the budget; these can be summarised as follows:
- The provisional 2025/26 Settlement was received on 18 December 2024. This confirmed referendum principles for the increase in council tax of 2.99% along with a further 2% precept for social care authorities in 2025/26. A council tax increase of 4.99% is included in the proposed budget for 2025/26.
 - The Settlement also confirmed changes to other specific grants. The net impact of the settlement was a £14.19m net increase in funding compared to 2025/26 MTFO assumptions.
 - Additional investment in services, including; additional investment to support demand within adult social care following a review of existing and future forecasts; investment to fund shortfalls in income projections, impact of revised pay changes including changes to national insurance contributions and new grant allocations.
 - Finalisation and approval by the S151 Officer, under delegations, of the council tax base and NNDR1 (business rates) return in January 2025;
 - Details on the above are provided within the Budget Plan.

The changes resulted in a balanced budget for 2025/26, subject to the successful delivery of £29.04m of identified savings, as referred to in **Annex 3** of the Budget Plan. **Table 1** summarises the changes made to the MTFO reported to Cabinet in October 2024, full details are shown in **Annex 4**.

Table 1: Movement in MTFO since draft budget update report to Cabinet on 16 October 2024					
	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
Gap as per report to Cabinet 16 October 2024	11.05	7.47	0.00	0.00	18.52
Total changes to investments	15.55	(1.46)	0.63	4.26	18.98
Total changes to savings	(0.18)	(2.73)	2.13	(0.80)	(1.58)
Total service adjustments	(9.27)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(9.27)
Total central adjustments	(17.15)	0.72	1.79	(0.08)	(14.72)
Revised savings to be identified	0.00	4.00	4.55	3.38	11.93

Note: Figures in brackets refer to a reduction in expenditure; increase in savings or grant; or use of reserves.

Amendments to the Capital Programme

4.26 The revised draft capital programme was set out in the report to Cabinet on 16 October 2024, totalling £80.14m for 2025/26 and £207.16 across the four years to 2028/29. The programme has increased by £12.44m to £92.58m in 2025/26 (£63.57 across the four years to 2028/29) with the following additions:

- Inclusion of a number of proposed carry forward schemes from 2024/25 totalling £56.75m (£8.28m council funded and £48.63m external funded), now shown in a separate column on the capital programme at Annex 8 and Annex 9 of the budget plan. All carry forwards will be reported to Cabinet for approval alongside the outturn position for 2024/25 once finalised.
- Reprofiting of capital grant funded schemes, most significantly £10.00m of basic needs funding to be spent on schools and £1.72m of High Needs funding for the provision of facilities for children with special education needs and disabilities.

Details of the changes are shown in Annex 5.

Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2025/26 Onwards, and Capital Strategy

4.27 The Treasury Management Code of Practice requires regular reporting of treasury management performance and practice and sets out the minimum reporting requirements.

4.28 This report provides two of these requirements, in the form of the annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy at **Part 2A** and Treasury Management Policies at **Part 2B**. It also meets the requirement for the authority to produce and publish a Capital Strategy each year, which demonstrates how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of desired outcomes and takes account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability.

- 4.29 Borrowing and investment objectives have been updated to reflect both the current interest rate environment and the projected financial position for each year that the strategy covers.

5 Decide

- 5.1 **As set out in the legal section, Councils are required to set a legal budget. This report is the final stage in that process and Cabinet are asked to approve the recommendations as set out and recommend the budget to Council on 26 February 2025 for formal approval of the 2025/26 statutory determinations and council tax bands.**

6 Respond

- 6.1 **Following recommendation by Cabinet, this budget report and plan will be forwarded on for formal approval by Council on 26 February 2025.**

7 Review

- 7.1 **Following approval by Council on 26 February 2025, the 2025/26 budget will be formally set and monitored throughout the year. Council tax bandings will be set and bills formally produced and distributed in accordance with approved guidance.**

Background papers

Various financial and working papers.

Corporate Budget Plan 2024/25 to 2027/28, incorporating the Capital Strategy; and the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2024/25 – Council 22 February 2024.

Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25 and approach to Budget Setting for 2025/26 - Cabinet 17 July 2024.

Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29 - Cabinet 16 October 2024.

Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29 Update - Cabinet 15 January 2025.

Local Government Finance Settlement data.

Equality Impact and Health Assessments.

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Judith Greenhalgh
Executive Director – Resources & Transformation

12 February 2025



Shaun Darcy
Director – Finance, Procurement and Assurance / S151 Officer

12 February 2025



Councillor M Statham
Deputy Leader – Finance

12 February 2025

For Approval by Cabinet and Recommendation to Council:

Part 1 - Corporate Budget Plan 2026/27 – 2028/29, incorporating

- Budget and statutory determinations for 2025/26;
- Medium Term Financial Outlook for 2026/27 – 2028/29;
- Capital Strategy;
- Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy;
- Treasury Management and Investment Strategy;
- Treasury Management Policy Statement

February 2025

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Corporate Budget Plan 2025/26 – 2028/29

1. Financial planning and management: matching resources to our vision and delivering outcomes

Walsall Council exists to serve the people and communities of Walsall, by representing and working with them to protect and improve the quality of life for all, particularly the most vulnerable. Walsall Council will provide strong, fair, open and honest leadership for the borough and its people and work with any organisation willing to work in the best interests of Walsall. We do this with limited resources and must always work to ensure that public money is targeted to where it is most needed and used in the most efficient way possible. We are led by the communities we serve who help shape the services we provide, and we help those communities to make a positive difference to their own lives through active civic engagement and co-operation. We strive to be a continuously improving council, delivering excellence, reducing inequalities and improving life chances for all.

The council's budget is a financial representation of the organisation's plans for the forthcoming financial year and beyond. In times of economic uncertainty, it is imperative that the council plans over the medium term. This budget for 2025/26 and the financial framework set out in this report for the following three financial year ensures we have a clear financial strategy that underpins the delivery of the outcomes we set out in our Council Plan. The decisions proposed in this budget will ensure Walsall's finances are robust and sustainable whilst being ambitious to provide the best possible services to our communities.

This budget will tackle the financial challenges we continue to face as demand for services continue to increase much more quickly than our resources. It addresses the demographic growth in adult social care, the increasing number of children and families needing support, home to school transport and delivers on our commitments set out in the new Council Plan. We will do this by resourcing the additional costs we face now whilst retaining sufficient capacity to invest to be more efficient and effective in the future. We will drive cost reductions through investment in digital technologies and data, reducing demand through targeted prevention activity, adopting more commercial approaches setting financial returns and payback periods for our investments and continuing to support investment that provides for a buoyant taxbase.

This budget has been prepared using the council's high-level purpose and priorities as outlined in Our Council Plan 2025-2029. This sets out our vision and priorities for the next four years, where our resources will be prioritised, and how we will deliver against the We Are Walsall 2040 vision.

Our Ambitions



We have adopted the We Are Walsall 2040 ambitions as the overarching framework for our council priorities.

We have also identified cross-cutting principles that apply across everything that we do to enable us to deliver all our priorities more effectively.

Embedding these principles across all our services will support our future success.

The budget is aligned to the outcomes of the Council Plan:

- A clean and green future
- A quality experience for all
- A skilled and engaged workforce
- Accessible services and connected places
- Celebrating our culture and heritage
- Child Friendly Borough
- Homes for All
- Living active healthy lives
- Resilient and empowered communities
- Safer streets, safer people
- Skills and jobs for all
- Supported and cared for
- Supporting business and inclusive growth
- Value for money services
- Vibrant towns

Our budget proposals will recognise that we need to retain flexibility in what is an uncertain and rapidly changing economic and political environment. We continue to be dominated by fundamental financial uncertainties and our economic situation remains hugely challenging over both the short and medium term. In addition, global conflict is increasing economic uncertainty. We are faced with continuing inflationary risk and relatively high interest rates, predictions of low levels of economic growth alongside the uncertain timing and impacts of key national policy choices including adult and children's social care reform, DSG, the fair funding review of central government support for local authorities. We continue to see the emergence of long-term societal impacts of the global pandemic and rising demand for our services as households and communities struggle with the rising costs of living.

To ensure the finances of the Council are robust and sustainable we will invest:

- £25.21m in adult social care to protect our elderly citizens and vulnerable adults to fund additional demand and manage the cost of placements whilst continuing to make progress on our demand management initiatives.
- £13.95m in our Children's Services and Education including £3.55m in Home to School transport and £4.50m to support children in care.
- Up to £2.31m in waste management and recycling to deliver our commitment to a clean and green future for our communities.

We will build on the success of the Proud Transformation journey in recent years and use our short-term resources to deliver the next stage of transformation focusing on adult and children's social care and digital opportunities. We will make sure we make the best use of the funding available, ensuring investments are supported by business cases and realise benefits and help to address the long term issues of growing demand for the services we provide to vulnerable residents and the structural failures in the market for these services. Our transformation activities will be re-focused to support the organisation with evidence based decision-making through which we are looking to maximise impact without detriment to our medium-term financial sustainability. We will put in place even more rigorous prioritisation and evaluation process before funding allocations are confirmed, encompassing all allocations including both capital and revenue.

We will deliver £29.04m of budget reductions in 2025/26, increasing to £73.86m by 2029, through better procurement, improvements in efficiencies, increased income and delivering reductions in demand. We will ensure the services provided by the council deliver value for money for the taxpayers of Walsall.

We acknowledge the need for an increase in local council tax, which now amounts to 19.21% of our budget, and is necessary to fund statutory duties in the main demand driven service areas like social care and home to school transport. In the absence of other funding options, we will use the opportunity provided by the Government to levy additional council tax of 4.99% (2.99% core council tax plus up to 2% adult social care levy), to provide resources to fund rising costs and demand for our services. This is equivalent to an increase of £1.99 per week for a Band D dwelling.

2 The Medium Term Financial Framework (MTFF)

The MTFF is a strategic framework and policy document within which the council's finances are constructed and managed. It is part of a suite of policy documents that together comprise the council's approach to effective sound governance and good practice. It is the translation of our vision, aims and objectives into a financial plan, which thereby facilitates delivery of these through the portfolio planning process.

The MTFF is a key document in bringing together the level of available resources with the demands for service delivery and investment, facilitating sound financial and service risk and opportunity management. It also links to the impact on the council's capital resources and external funding opportunities.

Best practice financial management requires that the MTFF is regularly updated to take into account the changing environment within which we work. The last MTFF was updated and approved by Cabinet on 20 October 2021, which is currently being thoroughly reviewed and will be reported back to Cabinet for approval in due course.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the various components of the financial framework. The MTFF is the overarching corporate financial policy sitting below the Council Plan and above the other elements of the financial cycle. It is the driver for all other financial activity. Below the MTFF sit the other financial strategies; the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy.

Figure 1: THE FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK					
CATEGORY	OVERALL	REVENUE	CAPITAL	TREASURY MANAGEMENT	RISK MANAGEMENT
Strategies	Medium Term Financial Framework				
		Tax Strategy	Capital Strategy	Treasury Management (TM) Strategy	Risk Management Strategy
Guidance	CIPFA and technical guidance	Budget Guidelines	Capital Guidelines	CIPFA Code of Practice for TM	Risk Management Toolkit
Plans	MTFO	Annual Budget	Capital Programme and Asset Management Plan	Treasury Policy Statements	Risk Management Action Plans
Governance	Constitution	Budget Management and Control Manual and the Annual Governance Statement		Prudential Indicators & Annual Report	Risk Register reporting and regular review
	Contract and Finance Rules				Audit Committee Reports and Annual Report
	Internal and External Audit Plans and our response to inspection and audit				

The council adopts a policy-led, medium term approach to financial planning, seeking to ensure our budgets are clearly linked to our vision, aims and objectives. We are committed to maintaining financial stability and delivering value for money through effective and efficient services.

The main objective for the council is to maintain good long-term financial health. Achieving this allows us to deliver good quality, value for money services, shaped by our customer demand. Services that are modern, efficient, effective, and fit for purpose. This requires a framework that delivers both continuous, adaptive improvement and core strength. We will also ensure that we benchmark against the Financial Management Code of Practice.

How we will achieve this is through:

- Financial Governance and Leadership
- Financial Planning
- Finance for Decision making
- Financial Forecasting and Monitoring
- Financial Reporting

Financial governance and leadership

1. Our senior management will be financially literate and able to understand fully the financial environment in which the council operates.

Financial planning

1. Our financial planning will be inextricably linked to the council's strategic and corporate planning process. Our financial plans will reflect the council's key strategic priorities.
2. An annual medium term financial framework, covering a four-year time horizon, will integrate current expenditure plans and investment programmes, with cash-flow and

balance sheet projections, developed in the context of a longer-term strategy, which supports the council's strategic plan.

Finance for decision making

1. In developing our strategic and council plan we will consider the value for money achieved by allocating resources to different activities.
2. We will understand the financial implications of current and potential alternative policies, programmes, and activities.
3. We will analyse our cost profiles and cost drivers and how they will behave under different circumstances.
4. We will understand the whole-life costs associated with capital investment.
5. We will consider all tax related implications, as outlined in the council's tax strategy, in all decisions made.

Financial monitoring and forecasting

1. Management will assure itself that financial performance to date and forecast financial outturns are in line with the plan, including cash-flow and balance sheet projections.
2. Variances will be identified as soon as possible, so that management can either take corrective action to manage unfavourable variances or apply any favourable variances to corporate priorities.
3. The underlying costs of the organisation's key activities and how these are profiled over time will be monitored and reviewed.
4. Financial information will be integrated with non-financial performance and activity information. Together, such information forms the basis for financial forecasts and enables value for money to be monitored.
5. The financial information used both for setting the budget and internal accountability, monitoring and forecasting throughout the year is derived from the same systems that are used to generate the results reported externally in the organisation's statutory financial statements.

Financial reporting

1. To run the organisation effectively, management will have up-to-date financial and non-financial performance information on a timely basis.
2. Reports will be presented in a form that is tailored to user needs, are easy to understand and highlight the key financial issues that they need to be aware of.
3. For its part, management needs to provide timely, accurate and balanced information about its stewardship and use of resources and its non-financial performance to the organisation's different stakeholders. Such information will be presented in a form tailored to meet their needs

3. Summary of the 2025/26 Revenue Budget

DIRECTORATE	2024/25 REVISED FORECAST £	BASE BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS £	PAY CHANGES £	GROWTH AND DEMAND PRESSURES (Annex 2) £	INDICATIVE SAVINGS (Annex 3) £	2025/26 FORECAST BUDGET £
Adult Social Care & Public Health	92,503,798	(1,152,006)	900,001	25,208,416	(8,709,812)	108,750,397
Children's Services & Education	98,198,162	(3,098,372)	1,739,185	13,946,633	(7,621,214)	103,164,394
Economy, Environment & Communities	53,547,825	(5,705,560)	2,602,419	6,153,763	(3,749,535)	52,848,912
Resources & Transformation	47,110,929	(546,490)	2,683,214	2,065,591	(2,054,962)	49,258,282
TOTAL SERVICES	291,360,714	(10,502,428)	7,924,819	47,374,403	(22,135,523)	314,021,985
Non-service specific prudence/central items/capital financing	(135,283,847)	(30,989,772)	0	16,466,333	(6,909,276)	(156,716,562)
Levies:						
West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Levy	11,560,655	0	0	578,030	0	12,138,685
Environment Agency	87,443	0	0	0	0	87,443
NET REVENUE EXPENDITURE	167,724,965	(41,492,200)	7,924,819	64,418,766	(29,044,799)	169,531,551
(Use of) / contribution to reserves	(15,692,541)	8,937,381	0	0	0	(6,755,160)
TOTAL COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT	152,032,424	(32,554,819)	7,924,819	64,418,766	(29,044,799)	162,776,391

3.1 2025/26 Revenue Budget Headlines

To reflect the significant pressures on communities and the increasing demand for services we are responsible for, whilst ensuring we continue to develop so we can deliver the public services expected for the future, we are making allocations totalling £64.42m.

We will allocate £11.21m for the estimated cost of pay inflation, pension and national insurance increases in 2025/26.

In addition to meeting the estimated cost of pay increases we will also provide £53.21m to meet additional spending needs. Details of the allocations and how we expect the funding to be used are also detailed in Annex 2.

Allocations for future years, as listed in Annex 2, are indicative at this stage. They are detailed as part of ensuring that our budget proposals are robust and sustainable over the medium-term. We require the need for, and level of, all these allocations to be reviewed as part of the 2026/27 budget refresh.

Our plan for budget reductions will generate savings of £29.04m in 2025/26 and a further £44.82m over the period of the Medium Term Financial Outlook. Approval is given to the plans for the delivery of these savings detailed in Annex 3. If during 2025/26 any of the budget reductions do not materialise to the degree shown, the Director in conjunction with their Executive Director and Portfolio Holder should identify alternative proposals to ensure the required reductions in expenditure are delivered. We will report on this as part of quarterly monitoring reports to Cabinet.

We will use £478.70m of government grants to support the budget as shown in Annex 6. Any variations to the levels of funding received will be matched by an equivalent adjustment in the budget for the respective service.

We will use business rates funding of £84.25m to support the overall budget of the council. We recognise that the level of income we will receive from business rates remains a material financial risk. In the event of business rates funding being above or below this level the s151 Officer is authorised to make an adjustment to the Business Rates Reserve during the 2025/26 financial year.

We will use £6.75m of reserves in 2025/26 to fund time-limited costs and budget allocations. We recognise that the budget inherently includes financial risks that may materialise during the financial year, especially relating to the estimates used to forecast expenditure for demand led services and the assessment of timely and full delivery of budget reductions. To mitigate these risks specific earmarked reserves have been identified and the s151 is authorised to draw on these during the 2025/26 financial year if it becomes necessary. These reserves are in addition to the general reserve considered in the s25 statement in Annex 12.

The council tax will increase by 4.99% in 2025/26, comprising 2.99% core council tax and 2% adult social care levy. With the other funding resources identified above, this will fund the proposals contained within this resolution.

3.2 Government funding

The local government finance settlement is the annual determination of funding to local government from central government. The provisional local government finance settlement for 2025/26 was announced on 18 December 2024. We expect the final 2025/26 settlement to be laid before the House of Commons, for its approval, in early February 2025. Any material change in the final settlement will be included in the final budget proposals to Council on 26 February 2025.

The provisional settlement has been favourable for Walsall compared to the planning assumptions used when developing the budget for 2025/26. Details of the Provisional Settlement has been presented to Cabinet on 15 January 2025 and can be accessed [here](#). Details of government grants are available in Annex 6.

3.3 Council Tax – Referendum principles

In recent years Central Government has capped the level of council tax rises. Capping principles are determined on a year-by-year basis. Since 2012/13, each authority has been required to determine whether their council tax increase requires a referendum, which would require the seeking of support from the local electorate. Schedule 5 of the Localism Act introduced a new chapter into the Local Government Finance Act 1992, making provision for council tax referendums to be held if an authority increases its council tax by an amount exceeding a set of principles determined by the Secretary of State and agreed by the House of Commons.

The provisional local government settlement for 2025/26, as announced on 18 December 2024, confirmed the council tax referendum limit of up to 5%, inclusive of 2% for the social care precept. This would mean that if a local authority seeks to raise its relevant basic amount of council tax by 5% or more for 2025/26, local people would have the right to vote to keep council tax bills down through a binding referendum veto. Given the scale of the challenge in 2025/26, Walsall proposes to increase the council tax by the full 4.99% permitted.

This increase equates to a council tax increase of £1.99 per week or 28p a day for a band D property or a £1.33 increase per week (19p per day) for a band A. 67.39% of residents are in band A and B increasing to 83.44% including band C.

It is recognised that the above may have an impact on residents' income. Where residents are on low incomes, they may be entitled to council tax reduction, may be offered welfare benefits and/or money management advice. The council also has a discretionary scheme in place to help those who need support.

3.4 Levies and Precepts

Table 1 shows the levy to be made on Walsall Council by the West Midlands Combined Authority for transport, and the levy by the Environment Agency.

Table 1: Levies 2025/26				
Levy	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	Increase / (Decrease) £	Increase / (Decrease) %
West Midlands Combined Authority Levy (Transport)	11,560,655	12,138,685	578,030	5.00
Environment Agency	87,443	87,443	0	0

Walsall's precepting authorities are the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authorities, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Precepts 2025/26				
Precepting Authority	2025/26 Amount £	Band D 2025/26 £	Band D 2024/25 £	Band D Increase %
WM Police and Crime Commissioner	16,031,609	299.50	215.55	6.47
WM Fire and Rescue	5,964,282	80.19	75.20	7.97

Table 3 shows the council tax calculation at Band D.

Table 3: Net Council Tax Requirement and Council Tax Levels 2025/26		
Element of budget	2025/26 budget £	Council Tax Band D £
WMBC element - required from council tax	162,776,391	2,188.58
Police & Crime Commissioner precept	16,031,609	229.50
Fire & Rescue precept	5,964,282	80.19
Total from council tax	184,772,282	2,498.27

3.5 Net Council Tax Requirement

The gross revenue expenditure budget for 2025/26 will be **£847.30m**, and gross income will be **£684.52m**, resulting in a net council tax requirement of **£162.78m**.

The council tax requirement for the period 2025/26 to 2028/29 is shown in Table 4. The council tax requirement for 2026/27 to 2028/29 will be reviewed and updated as part of the budget setting process for each year, the figures presented here are estimates based on the best information currently available.

Table 4: Council Tax requirement				
	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Council tax Requirement	152.03	162.78	172.05	181.84
Cost Pressures:				
Growth and Demand Pressures (Annex 2)	64.42	29.17	25.43	28.98
Savings / efficiencies identified (Annex 3)	(29.04)	(21.69)	(10.23)	(12.90)
Other savings to be identified	0.00	(4.00)	(4.55)	(3.38)
Other movements / funding changes:				
Other changes including base budget adjustments, grants, income	(23.20)	(0.89)	0.94	(0.77)
Core Funding changes	(10.09)	1.05	(2.74)	(3.04)
Collection fund (surplus) / deficit	(0.12)	0.47	0.00	0.00
Transfer to / (from) reserves	8.79	5.16	0.94	1.45
Revised Council Tax Requirement	162.78	172.05	181.84	192.18
Council Tax Increase – General	2.99%	2.99%	2.99%	2.99%
Council Tax Increase – Adult Social Care precept	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%

3.6 Collection Fund

The collection fund is accounted for separately to the general fund and accounts for income collected from council tax and business rates. In January of each financial year, an in-depth appraisal is undertaken to assess the estimated level of collection (as aggregated to include that relating to the current and previous years) and the likely balance of the fund as at year end. This advises Walsall Council and the precepting authorities (Fire and Police) of their share of the surplus/deficit to enable them to take this into account in budget calculations for the following year. Any difference between the January forecast and the actual year end position then reconciles the following year.

Business Rates Estimates

The assessment undertaken in January 2025 for Business rates predicts a cumulative surplus of £1.90m (£1.88m for Walsall) which is carried forward into the 2025/26 budget setting process. This has been calculated as detailed in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Collection Fund Estimates – Business Rates			
	Walsall Council £m	Preceptors £m	Total £m
Brought forward deficit	2.60	0.02	2.62
Payments to collection fund	(5.22)	(0.05)	(5.27)
Estimated in year deficit	0.74	0.01	0.75
Cumulative carry forward surplus	(1.88)	(0.02)	(1.90)

Council Tax Estimates

The assessment undertaken in January 2025 for Council Tax predicts a cumulative surplus of £0.54m (£0.47m for Walsall) which will be carried forward into the 2025/26 budget setting process. This has been calculated as detailed in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Collection Fund Estimates – Council Tax			
	Walsall Council £m	Preceptors £m	Total £m
Brought forward deficit	1.04	0.14	1.18
Payments from collection fund	0.34	0.05	0.39
Estimated in year surplus	(1.85)	(0.26)	(2.11)
Cumulative carry forward surplus	(0.47)	(0.07)	(0.54)

Changes to council tax base

The Council tax base is to be set at 74,375.36 Band D equivalents (72,932.78 in 2024/25). The council tax base (which measures the number of Band D equivalent properties) has increased mainly due to the estimated number of new build properties in the borough.

Changes to collection rates

In year collection for council tax is expected to be 92.5% in 2024/25, this is a slight improvement on the 2023/24 collection rate of 92.3%. Collection rates remain slightly below pre Covid-19 levels of approximately 94.0%. Over the longer period 98.0% of debt is still expected to be collected, in line with budgeted expectations.

In year collection for business rates is expected to be 97.5% in 2024/25, up from 96.9% in 2023/24.

3.7 Growth and Demand Pressures

The following key financial planning assumptions are based on best professional estimates. The budget 2025/26 – 2028/29 includes provision for growth and demand pressures of £64.42m in 2025/26 and £148.00m across the four years as shown in **Annex 2** and summarised below.

Primarily, growth and demand pressures cover:

1. Provision for pay and pensions and contractual inflation:

- Annual pay increase of 3% for 2025/26 and provision for pay increments;
- Impact of pension auto-enrolment and tri-annual employer pensions contributions based on the latest valuation information;
- Provision for contractual increases of between 1.4% to 7.29%, depending on the individual contract;
- Social Care uplifts - based on average 7.29% across care types reduced for market management of new client rates for 2025/26, 3% for 2026/27 and 2.5% from 2027/28 onwards;
- Housing 21 – 2.5% for 2025/26 and then 2.5% from 2026/27 onwards;
- Intermediate Care - 4% for 2025/26 and then 4% from 2026/27 onwards;

- Internal carers and special guardians allowances – 6.88% (as per DfE guidance)
- External residential and Independent Fostering Agency framework placements – 4%
- Spot placements – 2%
- Waste, Traffic Control, Highways Maintenance and Coroners – 2.7% in 2025/26, 1.4% in 2026/27, 2% 2027/28 and 2% 2028/29.
- Managing the cost of energy and fuel price changes as a result of the cost-of-living impact.

2. Demand, demographic changes and managing market conditions within Services:

- Increases in placements/costs for children in care.
- Increased care packages/costs within Adult Social Care arising from an increased ageing population with more complex care needs.
- Investment to vulnerable residents in crisis.
- Support to the adult social care market.
- Increase in the number of clients requiring home to school transport.
- Increases in fostering and Special Guardianship Orders fees.

3. Other service-based growth and demand pressures:

- Reinstatement of some 2024/25 approved savings: Reduction in opening hours for Fryers Road and Merchants Way household waste recycling centres (£150k), Third Party Spend (£2.5m), Triple Value Impact (£2.7m), Integrated Care Board joint arrangements (£1.41m);
- Reductions in grants such as housing benefit administration grant;
- Increased property related costs including water, caretaking, cleaning and energy costs due to an increase in local buildings and deregulation;
- Increased costs within waste management as result of co-mingled waste and additional staffing costs;
- To fund reduced demand on cremations income due to a new local competitor;
- Recruitment and retention, particularly within adults and children's services;
- Review of Digital and Technology infrastructure requirements, Cloud/ licences, One Source and associated resources.

4. Other central provisions:

- Review of the capital financing, treasury debt and investment portfolio.
- Revenue implications of the capital programme.

Table 7 summarises growth and demand pressures identified for 2025/26 to 2028/29 by directorate.

Table 7: Growth and Demand Pressures by directorate					
Directorate	2025/ 26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
Adult Social Care and Public Health	25.21	12.01	11.58	12.34	61.14
Children's & Education	13.95	6.40	5.71	5.40	31.46
Economy, Environment & Communities	6.15	0.24	(0.81)	2.11	7.69
Resources and Transformation	2.07	0.44	(0.32)	(0.14)	2.05
Central / Capital Financing	17.04	10.08	9.27	9.27	45.66
Total	64.42	29.17	25.43	28.98	148.00

3.8 Savings requirement

For 2025/26 and future years, the council's medium term financial outlook has been updated to reflect the predicted changes to government funding, the collection fund and known growth and demand pressures set out in the previous sections of this report, resulting in a revised requirement to make changes to service delivery to meet a four-year funding shortfall of £85.58m as follows:

- 2025/26 - £29.04m savings have been identified and these are included within Annex 3 of this report. As stated above, £3.91m of 2024/25 savings will be carried forward for delivery in 2025/26, resulting in total savings to be delivered of £32.95m.
- 2026/27 – 2028/29 - £56.76m savings required of which £44.82m of savings have been identified, leaving a potential balance of £11.93m to identify.

The £29.04m identified for 2025/26 have been split into the following two categories;

A. Policy Proposals - which require an Executive (Cabinet) decision to proceed, and which has been referred for public consultation and equality and health impact assessment prior to any decision being made to include these in Cabinet's final budget proposals. These total £460k in 2025/26 only.

B. Operational Proposals – savings which officers have delegations to implement; examples include restructures, back office savings, operational efficiencies. These total £28.58m in 2025/26 (£73.40m over the four years).

Table 8 summarises savings identified for 2025/26 to 2028/29 by directorate.

Table 8: Summary of savings by directorate					
Directorate	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
Adult Social Care and Public Health	(8.71)	(7.94)	(7.40)	(7.48)	(31.53)
Children's & Education	(7.62)	(6.30)	(5.50)	(4.85)	(24.27)
Economy, Environment and Communities	(3.75)	(1.50)	0.28	(0.57)	(5.54)
Resources and Transformation	(2.05)	(0.11)	(0.11)	0.00	(2.27)
Central / Capital Financing	(6.91)	(5.84)	2.50	0.00	(10.25)
Total	(29.04)	(21.69)	(10.23)	(12.90)	(73.86)

Table 9 shows net investment (investment less savings) for each directorate indicating significant net investment overall of £35m in 2025/26, specifically into the key priority areas of Adult Social Care and Children's Services. Central investment includes £11.21m of additional pay and pension costs which will be allocated to services following a detailed review of salary budget requirements.

Table 9: Summary of net investment by directorate 2025/26			
Directorate	Growth and Demand Pressures - Annex 2	Savings - Annex 3	Net growth and demand pressures
	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care and Public Health	25.21	(8.71)	16.50
Children's & Education	13.95	(7.62)	6.33
Economy, Environment and Communities	6.15	(3.75)	2.40
Resources and Transformation	2.07	(2.05)	0.02
Central / Capital Financing	17.04	(6.91)	10.13
Total	64.42	(29.04)	35.38

Annex 1 outlines indicative cash limits by directorate over the four-year period to 2028/29, which will be amended following the identification of how ongoing savings are to be made to balance the budget in each year.

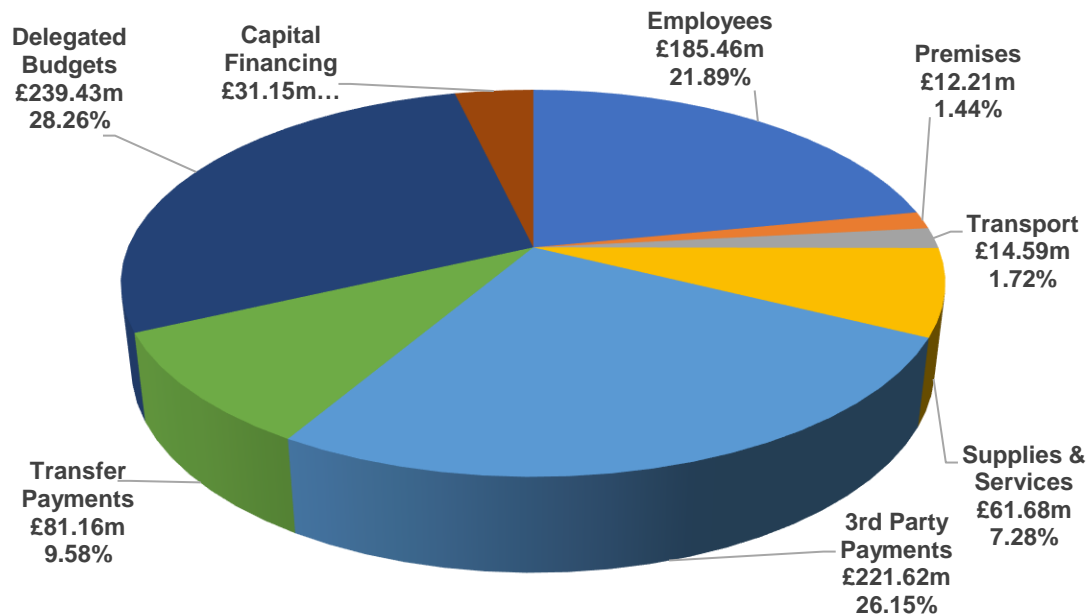
3.9 Expenditure and Income

Expenditure analysis

The council analyses its expenditure by category, as referred to in Table 10, and illustrated in figure 2.

Table 10: Expenditure by Category of Spend	
Type of Expenditure	£m
Employees	185.46
Premises and Transport	26.80
Supplies and Services	61.68
Third Party Payments	221.62
Delegated Budgets	239.43
Leasing and Capital Financing	31.15
Transfer Payments	81.16
Total Expenditure (excluding Internal Recharges)	847.30

Figure 2 – Spend by Type of Expenditure



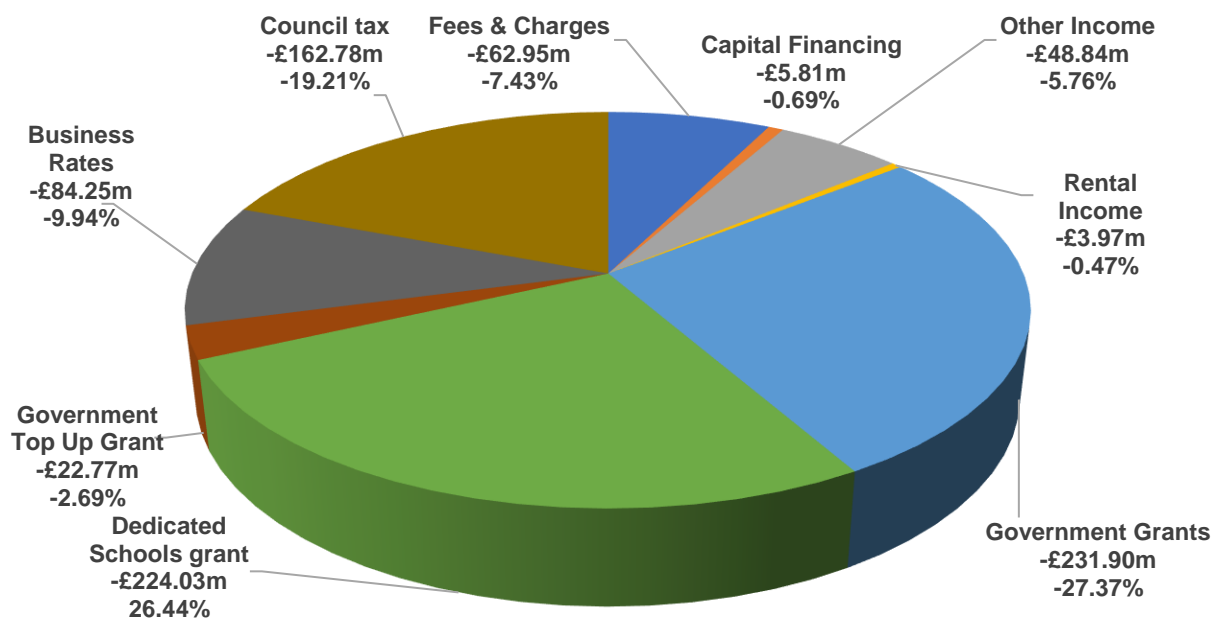
Notes

- *Transfer payments include expenditure such as housing benefits, rent allowances and social services direct payments – for example payments for which no goods or services are received in return by the local authority.*
- *Delegated budgets include budgets for schools, community associations and allotments.*
- *Third Party Payments include payments to external contractors.*

Income analysis

The council receives income from a number of sources including council tax, government grant and specific grants. The council also charges for some services, such as parking, use of leisure facilities, etc. In 2025/26 council tax will account for c19% of total income. Figure 3 shows all the main sources of income.

Figure 3 – Sources of income



As illustrated above, revenue grants total £478.70m (£224.03m Dedicated Schools Grant, £254.67m Government Grants), and are summarised at Annex 6.

Council services are required to annually review their fees and charges to ensure they remain relevant, competitive, and recover appropriate costs of running the service (where applicable). The fees and charges register for 2024/25 is a key document and can be accessed by the following link – [Schedule of Fees and Charges 2024-25 \(walsall.gov.uk\)](https://www.walsall.gov.uk/schedule-of-fees-and-charges-2024-25)

This document will be updated for 2025/26 charges once they have been finalised following approval of the 2025/26 budget.

3.10 General / Earmarked Reserves and Contingencies

The council's MTFF sets out how the council will structure and manage its finances now and in the future to ensure it continues to demonstrate financial stability and to ensure this facilitates delivery of the council plan objectives.

The council's S151 Officer produces the Framework and advises on the level of reserves, in accordance with statute, best practice, professional opinion and the council's MTFF. In accordance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 and to comply with CIPFA guidance on local authority reserves and balances, the S151 Officer is required to formally consider and report to members upon the adequacy of reserves in respect of the 2025/26 budget, as outlined in **Annex 12**. Additionally, this requirement covers reporting on the robustness of the estimates used for the purpose of calculating the budget. In accordance with statute and best practice, the level and nature of reserves have been reviewed as part of the budget process.

4 Summary of the 2025/26 Capital Budget

The council has an asset portfolio of £590m as at 31 March 2024. Each year we need to spend money to ensure these assets are still suitable for use in the provision of services and to invest in new assets to meet our changing needs and requirements and deliver the Council's vision.

Our Capital and Investment Strategy as set out at **Annex 7** and not only meets the requirements of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities 2017 but also sets out how we aim to use our capital resources and deliver our priorities.

The Capital Programme has been constructed within the principles outlined in our Capital Strategy. A strategic review of assets is currently being undertaken which will inform the revision of the Capital Strategy and formulation of future years capital programmes.

The 2025/26 capital programme totals £92.56m, as detailed in **Annexes 8 and 9**, and is presented below:

Table 11: Capital Programme by Outcome					
Outcome	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
Accessible services & connected places	10.39	6.95	8.45	8.45	34.24
Celebrating our culture and heritage	0.28	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.73
A quality experience for all	4.36	4.62	4.01	2.57	15.56
Homes for all	11.19	11.24	6.15	6.15	34.73
Vibrant towns	32.91	21.20	0.47	0.33	54.91
Safer streets, safer people	1.12	1.12	1.15	1.21	4.60
Supporting business and inclusive growth	2.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.18
Living active & healthy lives	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Child-friendly borough	19.54	15.93	9.60	9.31	54.38
A clean and green future	10.61	0.68	0.68	0.68	12.65
Capital Programme by Outcome	92.59	61.89	30.66	28.85	213.98

The capital programme will be financed by a mixture of capital grants, capital receipts, revenue and self-financed and corporate borrowing as detailed in Table 12.

Table 12: Financing of the Capital Programme					
	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
Capital grants and contributions	43.96	28.90	19.36	19.08	11.30
Capital receipts	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	6.00
Revenue contributions	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.08
Borrowing	47.11	31.47	9.77	8.25	96.60
Total capital financing	92.59	61.89	30.66	28.85	213.98

We recognise that the expansion of our investment programme in recent years will result in additional borrowing costs, and we have made full provision for this within our revenue budget resolution.

Our modelling of future debt levels leaves the Council with sufficient headroom against its Operational Boundary and Affordable Limit, two of the key indicators within the Prudential Framework.

Our approach of determining borrowing affordability from the position of ongoing revenue resource availability ensures that we will not commit the Council to future costs it cannot afford.

The Affordable Borrowing Limit and other Prudential Indicators consistent with the capital programme for 2025/26 are agreed as part of the Treasury Management and Investment Strategies.

In the appendixes of this report the capital programme is presented in the following structure:

A. Council funded programme - funded through borrowing and capital receipts (**Table 13**).

B. Non-council funded programme - funded from capital grants and other external contributions (**Table 14**).

In addition, the council's leasing programme for 2025/26 is £4.39m, the revenue costs of which are included in the revenue budget (**Table 15**).

4.1 Council Funded Programme: Funded from Walsall's own resources

Funding

The council funded element of the capital programme is normally financed from new borrowing, revenue contribution, capital receipts and the carry forward of unspent allocations from previous years.

Borrowing is required to be funded from the council's own resources – generated through savings, and/or paid for via council tax. Councils are allowed to borrow in accordance with the Treasury Management Code of Practice. The current capital financing / services cash limit is forecast to be able to support £47.11m of additional borrowing to fund high priority items in 2025/26 (excluding carry forwards from 2024/25).

Annex 11 sets out the council's Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy, which will utilise eligible new receipts to fund elements of the qualifying revenue costs that enables the generation of on-going savings. The provisional local government settlement on 18 December 2024 announced an extension to the current flexibility from March 2025 to March 2030 and included a wider set of eligible costs.

Carry forwards from 2024/25 are estimated based on the forecast position at December 2025, which are included in the capital programme at **Annexes 8 and 9**. All carry forwards will be reported to Cabinet for approval alongside the outturn position for 2024/25 once finalised.

Table 13: Capital Programme by Directorate (Council funded)				
Directorate	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Adult Social Care and Public Health	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00
Children's Services & Education	1.21	0.20	0.20	0.20
Economy, Environment and Communities	31.59	25.33	4.21	4.07
Resources and Transformation	14.08	5.96	5.38	4.00
Centrally held budgets	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
Total Council Funded Capital	48.63	32.99	11.29	9.77

Capital schemes funded from the council's own resources are recommended to go ahead for a number of reasons:

- Address policy including;
 - Accessible services & connected places
 - Celebrating our culture and heritage
 - A quality experience for all

- Homes for all
- Vibrant towns
- Safer streets, safer people
- Supporting business and inclusive growth
- Living active & healthy lives
- Child-friendly borough
- A clean and green future
- Return on investment / asset management - schemes that unlock external investment in the borough; drive out long term revenue savings; support the strengthening of the borough's economy; deliver an efficient and effective operational estate; and invests in assets to grow future income streams for the council;
- Supports the delivery of ongoing revenue savings;
- Priority schemes for which external funding can be drawn down and which may require a contribution from the council's own resources.

All capital schemes were reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team prior to formal consideration by Cabinet for recommendation to Council. The draft capital programme was also scrutinised by Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Whilst the overall demand for resources usually exceeds those available, schemes deemed to be a high priority in terms of reflecting the council's priorities can be funded, representing a balanced programme for 2025/26 with indicative allocations which are subject to further review for 2026/27 onwards.

4.2 Externally Funded Programme

Full details of externally funded schemes are found at **Annex 9** and are summarised in **Table 14** below for 2025/26. Many of these are indicative allocations pending formal notification from the respective funding bodies, and the capital programme will be adjusted in year to reflect final allocations. Grant funded schemes will only commence once confirmation of the funding is received.

Table 14: Capital Programme by Directorate (Externally funded)				
Directorate	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Adult Social Care and Public Health	0.89	0.89	0.89	0.89
Children's & Education	18.33	15.73	9.40	9.11
Economy, Environment and Communities	5.13	8.33	5.13	5.13
Resources and Transformation	19.61	3.95	3.95	3.95
Centrally held budgets	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Council Funded Capital	43.96	28.90	19.36	19.08

4.3 Leasing Programme

The 2025/26 leasing programme totals £1.42m, summarised in **Table 15** below. Leasing minimises the call on capital resources by spreading the acquisition cost over a number of years. Revenue funds are required to finance operating leases and are included in the revenue budget.

Table 15: Leasing Programme	Capital £m	Revenue £m
Equipment	0.00	0.01
Light Commercial vehicles	3.07	0.38
Refuse Vehicles	0.00	0.71
Tractors and Agricultural Implements	1.24	0.31
Welfare vehicles	0.08	0.01
Total	4.39	1.42

5 Medium term financial outlook – 2025/26 onwards

5.1 Revenue

Key sources of funding, in particular council tax and business rates and fees and charges, government core grant and specific grants are assessed on a regular basis, along with existing and emerging cost pressures. The focus is on forward planning to ensure financial risk is managed and mitigated and all known liabilities are funded, including the revenue cost of capital investment decisions.

We continue to await the governments fundamental review of local authority funding.

The new government set out plans to reform local government funding in December 2024. These will reset the funding model based on the latest data and redistribute resources to those authorities with the greatest need. The last reset of the local government funding system was in 2013/14 so these reforms are long overdue and much welcome by Walsall. Our expectation is that the review will have a favourable outcome for Walsall by increasing the available resources, it also introduces significant risk into the financial planning process until further details of the new proposals emerge.

The next Spending Review is on-going and we are expecting its results to be announced in Summer 2025. The Spending Review will set out the economic forecast and departmental budgets for a three year period 2026/27 to 2028/29 and recent comments from the Treasury indicated an expectation of a 5% efficiency target across all government departments. This would not only impact the council via the reduction in core funding from MHCLG but potentially through reduction in other specific grants from other departments too as they pass on the reduction in funding. Furthermore, reduced government spending could contribute to increased demand from individuals and communities for Council services.

Government also indicated a reset of the business rates system. The current system has been in place since 2013/24 and Walsall currently part of 100% rate retention agreement. Consultation on the parameters of the reset are expected to be launched in the Spring of 2025 with the new system in place by the provisional settlement in December 2025.

With regards to government grants, the assumption is that they will flatline in cash terms, this assumption will be revisited once more information becomes available.

The balanced budget for 2025/26 includes the delivery of savings of £29.04m with further saving requirement of £56.53m over the period 2026/27 to 2028/29, of which

indicative savings of c£44.82m has been identified leaving a further £11.71m to be found.

The management team continue to work on the delivery plans for future opportunities, along with identifying further options for Members consideration, including the implementation of the new transformation programme focusing on adult and children social care and digital opportunities. Further options to balance the budget beyond 2025/26 will be presented to members as part of the 2026/27 planning process.

5.2 Capital

Resources to fund the capital programme are limited. The financing for capital expenditure on new investment is heavily reliant on external funding, largely government grants. Walsall has a strong track record of attracting external capital funding for key regeneration and infrastructure projects, however the availability of government funding is expected to be constrained over the medium term.

Alternative funding sources include capital receipts and borrowing. Capital receipts are generated from the sale of council owned assets. Earmarking of capital receipts beyond what we are statutorily obliged to do is not recommended without overall strategic consideration of the entire capital programme.

The use of borrowing incurs ongoing revenue cost and impacts on council taxpayers. An in-depth review of the council's ability to take on additional debt to fund new capital schemes has been carried out as part of the budget setting process and identified the limits within which we must operate in order to remain within statutory requirements and prudential guidelines.

Despite the constraints, significant investment is planned and funded over the four years 2025/26 to 2028/29. The council is able to fund all existing commitments and has, through prioritisation of bids and resources and sound treasury management, been able to support new investment into key services, and areas of capital investment need.

Annex 1: Revenue Cash Limit 2025/26 to 2028/29 by Directorate

This annex outlines the indicative cash limits by directorate, including portfolio responsibilities. These will be updated in year to reflect any movement in directorate/portfolio responsibilities. Savings plans for 2025/26 onwards will be realigned to services when agreed.

1. Adult Social Care and Public Health Directorate

- **Adult Social Care Portfolio**

Social Care services for older people and people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health needs. Supporting people. Health partnerships, ICB health interface lead, protection for vulnerable adults, transition arrangements between Children's and Adult Social Care, early intervention and prevention, Ofsted and CQC and transformation and reform. Adult social care commissioning, brokerage, market shaping and management.

- **Health and Wellbeing Portfolio**

Public Health functions and activities including commissioning services that affect the long-term health of residents including: Health visiting & school nursing, Alcohol and drug services, wellbeing services, Health protection services for local outbreak and incident management, screening and immunisation and mental and emotional wellbeing.

	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £
Opening cash limit	92,503,798	108,750,397	111,949,108	115,255,977
Base budget adjustments				
- Increase in grant income - Public Health	(275,901)	(261,300)	(264,745)	(269,040)
- Increase in income - Better Care Fund	(624,785)	(608,058)	(608,058)	(608,058)
- Fall out of one of investment - single handed review	(137,000)	0	0	0
- Fall out of grant income - Supplementary drugs and alcohol	1,183,710	0	0	0
- Fall out of grant expenditure - Supplementary drugs and alcohol	(1,183,710)	0	0	0
- Transfer of staff budget to EE&C	(13,542)	0	0	0
- Transfer of staff budget to R&T	(56,200)	0	0	0
- Business rates budget returned to corporate	(44,578)	0	0	0
Pay Changes	900,001	0	0	0
Growth and Demand Pressures – see Annex 2	25,208,416	12,007,024	11,582,386	12,335,078
Less Proposed Savings Plans – see Annex 3	(8,709,812)	(7,938,955)	(7,402,714)	(7,479,999)
Adult Social Care and Public Health draft cash limit	108,750,397	111,949,108	115,255,977	119,233,958

2. Children's Services and Education

- **Children's Portfolio**

Services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, Family Safeguarding, involvement of children and young people, transition arrangements between Children's and Adult Social Care Walsall, Safeguarding, Corporate Parenting. Ofsted and CQC inspections. Early Help, Family Hubs, Youth Justice, Children's Strategic Alliance and Performance Improvement.

- **Education and Skills Portfolio**

Admissions and school place planning, quality and performance of schools and academies, governors of schools and governance, Early Years, Home Education, Alternative Provision, Access and Inclusion, Virtual School, Home to School Transport, Services to Children with Special Needs and disabilities and their families, Safeguarding. Walsall Learning Alliance. Ofsted and CQC inspections. Adult learning and skills.

	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £
Opening cash limit	98,198,162	103,164,394	103,110,375	103,320,182
Base budget adjustments				
- New grant income - Children's Social Care Prevention Grant	(2,884,555)	0	0	0
- Increase in grant income - Family Hubs Start for Life Programme	(90,637)	0	0	0
- Extended Rights to Home to School Transport grant income removed as rolled into general funding	78,900	0	0	0
- Removal of one off investment - placements	(181,000)	0	0	0
- Removal of one off investment - young people care costs	(198,299)	(148,894)		
- Funding of grant funded posts	188,371	0	0	0
- Pay budget returned to corporate	(11,152)	0	0	0
Pay Changes	1,739,185	0	0	0
Growth and Demand Pressures – see Annex 2	13,946,633	6,399,263	5,706,954	5,399,651
Less Proposed Savings Plans – see Annex 3	(7,621,214)	(6,304,388)	(5,497,147)	(4,846,484)
Children's Services and Education draft cash limit	103,164,394	103,110,375	103,320,182	103,873,349

3. Economy, Environment and Communities Directorate

- **Leader of the Council - Strategy, Partnerships and Communities Portfolio**

Strategic partnerships, community development and diversity, community associations, voluntary and community sectors, community cohesion, community safety, prepare and protect, emergency planning, community protection including anti-social behaviour, statutory, nuisance & environmental crime enforcement,

environmental health

- **Associate Leader - Economic Growth and Regeneration Portfolio**
Regeneration, economic development, planning policy, planning and building control service, employment growth, strategic housing, strategic use of assets, strategic transport, markets, corporate landlord.
- **Health and Wellbeing Portfolio**
Heritage, tourism and culture including New Art Gallery, Walsall Arena, museums, leisure, including Active Living Centres, bereavement and registration services, cemeteries/crematoria, healthy spaces (parks and open spaces), climate change/ net zero.
- **Education and Skills Portfolio**
Adult learning, skills, not in employment, education or training, apprenticeships and internships.
- **Resident Access and Housing Support Portfolio**
Libraries.
- **Street Pride Portfolio**
Operations - household waste collection, grounds maintenance, street cleansing, highway asset management, trees, flood risk management and fleet services. Waste infrastructure - trade waste, waste disposal, HWRCs, waste strategy and waste education. Highway network - street lighting, traffic signals, parking and moving traffic enforcement, street works permitting, permanent traffic manage and winter service. Transportation - road safety, highway structures and minor highway improvements. Environmental protection.

	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £
Opening cash limit	53,547,825	52,848,912	51,585,035	51,064,913
Base budget adjustments				
<i>Fall out of one off investment / savings</i>				
- Loss of income - Active living centres	(40,000)	0	0	0
- Biodiversity grant	10,000	0	0	0
- Vehicle fuel costs	(75,000)	0	0	0
- Active living income	180,000	0	0	0
- Waste services	280,000	0	0	0
<i>Other changes</i>		0		
- New grant income - Extended Producer Responsibility Grant	(5,877,000)	0	0	0
- Increase in grant income - Domestic Abuse Grant	(177,114)	0	0	0
- Pay budget returned to corporate	(19,988)	0	0	0
- Transfer of staff budget from ASC	13,542	0	0	0
Pay Changes	2,602,419	0	0	0
Growth and Demand Pressures – see Annex 2	6,153,763	237,575	(805,122)	2,114,878
Less Proposed Savings Plans – see Annex 3	(3,749,535)	(1,501,452)	285,000	(575,000)
Economy, Environment and Communities draft cash limit	52,848,912	51,585,035	51,064,913	52,604,791

4. Resources and Transformation Directorate

- **Leader of the Council - Strategy, Partnerships and Communities Portfolio**
Policy and strategy including Council Plan & Walsall 2040, transformation and change.
- **Deputy Leader - Finance Portfolio**
Strategic Financial Planning including: budget and medium term financial strategy, commercial strategy, budget management & accountancy, financial & transactional services, internal audit risk & insurance, treasury management, procurement and contract management, Walsall pound.
- **Internal Resources Portfolio**
Equalities, diversity and inclusion, human resources, organisational development, administration and business support, technology strategy and delivery, information governance and digital records management, business insights, communications, marketing and brand, legal and democratic services.
- **Resident Access and Housing Support Portfolio**
Customer access management, Walsall Connected, Customer experience centre, Revenue and benefits - Council Tax, Business Rates, household support and welfare, homelessness, asylum and migrant support, housing advice.

	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £
Opening cash limit	47,110,929	49,258,282	49,593,990	49,164,642
Base budget adjustments				
- Funding of grant funded posts	26,151	0	0	0
- Transfer of staff budget from ASC/ Corporate	129,718	0	0	0
- Removal of one off investment - Leadership training	(100,000)	0	0	0
- Removal of one off investment - Specialist services HR	(280,000)	0	0	0
- Increase in grant income - Homelessness Prevention Grant	(322,359)	0	0	0
Pay Changes	2,683,214	0	0	0
Growth and demand Pressures – see Annex 2	2,065,591	439,126	(316,165)	(139,162)
Less Proposed Savings Plans – see Annex 3	(2,054,962)	(103,418)	(113,183)	0
Resources and Transformation draft cash limit *	49,258,282	49,593,990	49,164,642	49,025,480

Annex 2 - Summary of Growth and Demand Pressures 2025/26 to 2028/29 aligned to the ambitions of the Council Plan

Directorate	Ref No	Details of Growth and Demand Pressures	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
A clean and green future							
Economy, Environment & Communities	37	Domestic and garden waste agency staffing costs	70,502	74,027	74,027	74,027	292,583
	38	Increase in disposal costs for mixed dry recycling waste	800,000	0	0	0	800,000
	41	Reduction in demand leading to income pressure on cremations income due to local competitor	680,000	(680,000)	0	0	0
	42	Reduction in opening hours for Fryers Road and Merchants Way household waste recycling centres saving in 2024/25 not being implemented - reversal of saving in 2025/26	150,000	0	0	0	150,000
	45	Vehicle lease costs for green waste previously funded by lease reserve - link to potential charge for green waste	170,000	0	0	0	170,000
	46	Greener Bloxwich - revenue impact of capital investment	80,000	40,000	20,000	0	140,000
	47	Increased rental hire for road sweepers	70,000	0	0	0	70,000
	48	Increase in landfill tax from Apr 25 (103p/tonne to 126p/tonne)	150,000	0	0	0	150,000
	NEW	Short term waste management contract	870,000	(430,000)	(440,000)	0	0
	NEW	Middlemore Lane - Equipment Lease	246,000	0	0	0	246,000
Total A clean and green future			3,286,502	(995,973)	(345,973)	74,027	2,018,583
Accessible services and connected places							
Economy, Environment & Communities	44	Traffic control - reduced income pressure	50,000	0	0	0	50,000
Resources & Transformation	52	Reduction in housing benefit administration grant	43,840	40,000	40,000	40,000	163,840
	53	One-off transformation programme investment to support savings within customer experience saving (linked to OP40)	347,662	26,091	(114,591)	(259,162)	0
	54	Additional revenue inspector post to enable property inspections to support the identification of any tax avoidance (linked to saving OP37)	47,179	0	0	0	47,179
	56	Additional posts required to meet the enhanced regulations around LA complaints handling	165,161	0	0	0	165,161
Resources & Transformation	52	Ongoing software costs following completion of Enabling technology capital project (linked to saving OP40)	0	0	0	80,000	80,000
	NEW	Continuation of Walsall Connected initiative	0	60,000	0	0	60,000
Total Accessible services and connected places			653,842	126,091	(74,591)	(139,162)	566,180
Child Friendly Borough							
Children's Services & Education	9	Children's young carers service	17,184	0	0	0	17,184
	10	Carer allowances uplifts	0	0	0	0	0

Directorate	Ref No	Details of Growth and Demand Pressures	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
	11	External framework placement uplifts	461,525	117,035	297,987	0	876,547
	12	Carer fee uplifts	78,000	81,000	84,000	0	243,000
Children's Services & Education	13	Children in care growth	2,477,099	1,507,875	1,257,611	811,947	6,054,532
	14	Children placement moves	2,019,917	2,520,942	2,604,212	2,690,814	9,835,885
	15	Home to school transport	3,551,850	883,369	859,501	1,061,369	6,356,089
	16	Increase staffing costs in education, health and care plan assessment team to meet increased demand	51,667	124,000	0	0	175,667
	17	Educational psychology service - staffing to meet demand change	(74,218)	14,658	36,947	40,000	17,387
	18	Short breaks increased costs and demand	200,000	0	0	0	200,000
	19	Independent visitor	20,000	0	0	0	20,000
	20	Family time services additional workers to meet increased demand	100,000	0	0	0	100,000
	21	Management team localities	155,000	0	0	0	155,000
	22	Transition and leaving care staffing team	72,200	0	0	0	72,200
	23	Development of a youth collaborative as part of the Children & Young People Alliance	125,993				125,993
	24	Regional adoption agency increases	50,000	0	0	0	50,000
	25	Framework placements inflation increase	38,584	37,856	39,013	344,000	459,453
	26	New adolescent service (linked to saving OP19)	5,701	0	0	0	5,701
	27	New internal residential home to open from 2026/27 (linked to saving OP23)	0	631,970	45,583	0	677,553
	28	Revenue costs for new internal residential home opened 2024/25 (linked to saving OP24)	677,553	0	0	0	677,553
	29	Internal residential career pathway to support recruitment and retention (linked to saving OP24)	61,000	0	0	0	61,000
	30	Emergency foster carer scheme (linked to saving OP 25)	121,000	4,840	5,034	5,235	136,109
	31	Housing project (linked to saving OP26)	58,000	25,000	(10,000)	0	73,000
	32	Independent fostering agency framework retender outcome	557,386	298,678	328,786	194,453	1,379,303
	33	Staying put allowance uplifts	24,000	24,960	25,958	26,997	101,915
	34	Carer fee uplifts	20,000	21,000	22,000	110,100	173,100
	35	Carer allowances uplifts	102,000	106,080	110,323	114,736	433,139
	NEW	Children's Social Care Prevention (fully funded from grant income)	2,884,555	0	0	0	2,884,555
	NEW	Family Hubs Start for Life Programme (fully funded from grant income)	90,637	0	0	0	90,637
Total Child Friendly Borough			13,946,633	6,399,263	5,706,955	5,399,651	31,452,502
Homes for all							

Directorate	Ref No	Details of Growth and Demand Pressures	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Resources & Transformation	NEW	Homelessness prevention (fully funded from grant income)	322,359	0	0	0	322,359
Total Homes for all			322,359	0	0	0	322,359
Cross Cutting							
Economy, Environment & Communities	36	Contractual inflation	530,147	373,548	440,851	440,851	1,785,397
Total Cross Cutting			530,147	373,548	440,851	440,851	1,785,397
Living active healthy lives							
Adult Social Care & Public Health	60	Public Health grant increase to meet pressures in sexual health services and the need to provide sustainable funding for the Young People's health and wellbeing service	225,901	211,300	214,745	219,040	870,986
	61	Pay award and increments for posts funded through Public Health grant	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	200,000
Total Living active healthy lives			275,901	261,300	264,745	269,040	1,070,986
Resilient and empowered communities							
Economy, Environment & Communities	62	Contribution to Black Country Armed Forces Covenant Officer	10,000	0	0	0	10,000
	NEW	Town Hall and events - reversal of 2024/25 saving	40,000	0	0	0	40,000
Total Resilient and empowered communities			50,000	0	0	0	50,000
Safer streets, safer people							
Economy, Environment & Communities	43	Fall out of street lighting private finance initiative grant when contract ends	0	0	0	1,600,000	1,600,000
	63	Increase in enforcement officer role to create a more effective and efficient service	60,000	0	0	0	60,000
	64	Increase in CCTV operator role to create a more effective and efficient service	50,000	0	0	0	50,000
	NEW	Domestic abuse (fully funded from grant income)	177,114	0	0	0	177,114
Total Safer streets, safer people			287,114	0	0	1,600,000	1,887,114
Supported and cared for							
Adult Social Care & Public Health	65	Additional social work capacity in localities and complex teams	298,910	0	0	0	298,910
	66	Community reablement internal team, external block contract premium, training and equipment (linked to saving OP59)	644,008	0	0	0	644,008
	67	Community reablement service (linked to saving OP59)	623,878	0	0	0	623,878
	68	Improve access and take up as part of prevention strategy (linked to saving OP65)	150,000	0	0	0	150,000
	69	Additional staffing resources in Safeguarding team	198,801	0	0	0	198,801

Directorate	Ref No	Details of Growth and Demand Pressures	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
	70	Contractual inflation for intermediate care service reablement contracts (funded through Better Care Fund)	0	412,053	412,053	412,053	1,236,159
	71	Uplift in care provider fees	8,094,314	3,253,202	2,986,472	3,283,721	17,617,709
	72	Pay award and increments for posts funded through Better Care Fund	229,456	196,005	196,005	196,005	817,471
Adult Social Care & Public Health	73	Social Care increase in existing service user placements costs following strength-based reviews	7,005,858	4,677,404	4,592,844	4,923,459	21,199,565
	74	Transforming care programme costs relating to service users care	219,254	130,357	0	0	349,611
	75	Inflationary increase for S117 Mental Health service users care costs	70,226	72,105	60,088	60,088	262,507
	76	Housing 21 - contractual uplift	164,645	295,861	303,257	310,839	1,074,602
	77	Co-production and consultation post	18,754	0	0	0	18,754
	78	Reprofiling of service development staffing resources	(88,623)	0	88,623	0	0
	79	Financial assessment & charging team	107,327	0	0	0	107,327
	80	Reduction and reprofiling of previous years staffing investments due to revised structures	(380,000)	190,000	0	0	(190,000)
	81	Adult social care management structure	49,230	0	0	0	49,230
	82	Social worker apprentice posts	42,500	0	0	0	42,500
	83	One-off staffing resources to provide support to existing teams and delivery of the adult social care continuous improvement programme	89,178	(89,178)	0	0	0
	84	Social care increase in demand pressures (inflow/attrition)	5,601,652	2,607,915	2,678,298	2,879,873	13,767,738
	85	Additional staffing for commissioning team	236,000	0	0	0	236,000
	86	Additional staff resources including debt recovery post in the adult social care client services finance team	150,000	0	0	0	150,000
	87	Income shortfall relating to Integrated Care Board joint funding arrangements	1,407,147	0	0	0	1,407,147
Total Supported and cared for			24,932,515	11,745,724	11,317,640	12,066,038	60,061,917
Supporting business and inclusive growth							
Economy, Environment & Communities	51	Saddlers Centre - regeneration project temporary impact on income generation	0	900,000	(900,000)	0	0
Resources & Transformation	55	Additional resources to support external funding team (linked to saving OP42)	122,123	(19,110)	(25,574)		77,439
Total Supporting business and inclusive growth			122,123	880,890	(925,574)	0	77,439
Value for money services							
Resources & Transformation	2	Cloud/ Microsoft licences and infrastructure costs	272,303	226,520	0	0	498,823
	4	One-off investment to fund additional resources within the procurement function	200,000	0	-200,000	0	0
	5	Administration staff in Children's locality teams to support social workers	288,964	0	0	0	288,964
	6	Contract with external company to provide 24/7 cyber security protection	110,000	0	0	0	110,000

Directorate	Ref No	Details of Growth and Demand Pressures	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
	7	Existing co-pilot licenses	110,000	0	0	0	110,000
	3	Online consultation tool	20,000	20,000	0	0	40,000
	NEW	Senior Partnership Officer to support Walsall 2040	16,000		(16,000)	0	0
	NEW	Additional HR advisory posts	0	85,625	0	0	85,625
Economy, Environment & Communities	49	Increased costs of water for corporate council buildings due to deregulation (linked to asset review)	180,000	0	0	0	180,000
	50	Energy reductions - removal of 2025/26 saving (linked to saving (OP29)	200,000	0	0	0	200,000
	39	Increase in number of local buildings and the increased cleaning and caretaking responsibilities	700,000	0	0	0	700,000
	NEW	Increase in energy costs	700,000	0	0	0	700,000
Central	8	Transport levy	578,030	606,931	637,278	669,142	2,491,381
	57	One off increase energy costs - fall out of 2024/25 investment	(1,360,000)	0	0	0	(1,360,000)
	58	Revenue implications of capital	170,000	210,000	230,000	250,000	860,000
	59	Revision to minimum revenue provision charges, Interest costs on capital programme and Interest income forecast	0	0	600,000	600,000	1,200,000
	88	Social Care Investment / Demand	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	6,000,000
	90	Contribution to West Midlands Growth Company	0	468,000	0	0	468,000
	NEW	Revenue implications of leasing	0	0	500,000	0	500,000
	NEW	Reprofiling of third party spend saving	2,250,000	(750,000)	(750,000)	(750,000)	0
	NEW	TVI	2,700,000	0	0	0	2,700,000
	1	Pay/pension provision	11,206,333	8,047,828	6,547,828	7,000,000	32,801,989
Total Value for money services			19,841,630	10,414,904	9,049,106	9,269,142	48,574,782
Vibrant Towns							
Economy, Environment & Communities	40	Pressure due to reduced demand for market stalls, reduction in opening days and loss of income due to reduced stall rates, (Walsall Market)	150,000	0	0	0	150,000
	89	Local Plan consultation & sustainability appraisal x 3 stages	20,000	(40,000)	0	0	(20,000)
Total Vibrant Towns			170,000	(40,000)	0	0	130,000
Total Growth and investment			64,418,766	29,165,747	25,433,159	28,979,587	147,997,259

Summary of Growth and Demand Pressures by Directorate

Directorate	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Adult Social Care and Public Health	25,208,416	12,007,024	11,582,385	12,335,078	61,132,903
Children's Services and Education	13,946,633	6,399,263	5,706,955	5,399,651	31,452,502
Economy, Environment and Communities	6,153,763	237,575	(805,122)	2,114,878	7,701,094
Resources and Transformation	2,065,591	439,126	(316,165)	(139,162)	2,049,390
Central	17,044,363	10,082,759	9,265,106	9,269,142	45,661,370
Total Growth and Demand Pressure Proposals	64,418,766	29,165,747	25,433,159	28,979,587	147,997,259

Summary of Growth and Demand Pressures by Outcome

Outcome	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
A clean and green future	3,286,502	(995,973)	(345,973)	74,027	2,018,583
A quality experience for all	0	0	0	0	0
A skilled and engaged workforce	0	0	0	0	0
Accessible services and connected places	653,842	126,091	(74,591)	(139,162)	566,180
Celebrating our culture and heritage	0	0	0	0	0
Child Friendly Borough	13,946,633	6,399,263	5,706,955	5,399,651	31,452,502
Cross Cutting	530,147	373,548	440,851	440,851	1,785,397
Homes for All	322,359	0	0	0	322,359
Living active healthy lives	275,901	261,300	264,745	269,040	1,070,986
Resilient and empowered communities	50,000	0	0	0	50,000
Safer streets, safer people	287,114	0	0	1,600,000	1,887,114
Skills and jobs for all	0	0	0	0	0
Supported and cared for	24,932,515	11,745,724	11,317,640	12,066,038	60,061,917
Supporting business and inclusive growth	122,123	880,890	(925,574)	0	77,439
Value for money services	19,841,630	10,414,904	9,049,106	9,269,142	48,574,782
Vibrant towns	170,000	(40,000)	0	0	130,000
Total Growth And Demand Pressures by Outcome	64,418,766	29,165,747	25,433,159	28,979,587	147,997,259

Annex 3 – Savings for 2025/26 to 2028/29 aligned to the ambitions of the Council Plan

A: Summary of Draft Policy Proposals by Outcome 2025/26 to 2028/29

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Policy Proposals by Outcome	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
A Clean and Green Future							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P3	Seek sponsorship for festive decorations - part	(10,000)	0	0	0	(10,000)
Total A Clean and Green Future			(10,000)	0	0	0	(10,000)
Celebrating Culture							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P5	Relocation of the leather museum	(190,000)	0	0	0	(190,000)
Total Celebrating Culture			(190,000)	0	0	0	(190,000)
Child Friendly Borough							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P2	Phased changes to school crossing patrols	(190,000)	0	0	0	(190,000)
Total Child Friendly Borough			(190,000)	0	0	0	(190,000)
Resilient and empowered communities							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P3	Seek sponsorship for festive decorations - part	(20,000)	0	0	0	(20,000)
Total Resilient and empowered communities			(20,000)	0	0	0	(20,000)
Vibrant Towns							
Economy, Environment & Communities	P1	Charge for amendments to planning applications	(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
Total Vibrant Towns			(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
Total Net Policy Proposals			(460,000)	0	0	0	(460,000)

B: Summary of Draft Operational Proposals 2025/26 to 2028/29

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Operational Proposals by Outcome	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
A clean and green future							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP1	Income from introduction of electrical vehicle charging points	0	0	0	(500,000)	(500,000)
	OP5	Commercialisation of services - potential to develop services to be self-funding - Registrars	(1,410)	(1,452)	0	0	(2,862)
	OP8	Increase in citizenship income	(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
	OP57	Increase bulky waste collection charges by 20%	(20,000)	0	0	0	(20,000)
	OP58	Reduction in costs linked to waste strategy/Sherbourne	(400,000)	(400,000)	0	0	(800,000)
	OP51	Leisure review and health initiative's part	(330,000)	0	0	0	(330,000)
Total A clean and green future			(801,410)	(401,452)	0	(500,000)	(1,702,862)
A skilled and engaged workforce							
Resources & Transformation	OP3	Employee Benefits - car leasing	(205,000)	0	0	0	(205,000)
	OP4	Employee Benefits - other salary sacrifice offers	(94,000)	0	0	0	(94,000)
	OP41	Reduction in human resources staffing resources	(108,348)	0	0	0	(108,348)
Total A skilled and engaged workforce			(407,348)	0	0	0	(407,348)
Accessible services and connected places							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP2	Introduce an annual administration charge to facilitate free parking permits for staff	(10,000)	0	0	0	(10,000)
	OP6	Alternative delivery model for the New Art Gallery	0	(210,000)	0	0	(210,000)
	OP7	Increase parking charges by 20%	(70,000)	(20,000)	0	0	(90,000)
	NEW	Bereavement services	0	0	0	0	0
Resources & Transformation	OP37	Reduction in customer engagement vacant posts	(102,749)	0	0	0	(102,749)
	OP40	Reduction in customer engagement costs enabled by technology	(198,089)	(113,183)	(113,183)	0	(424,455)
Total Accessible services and connected places			(380,838)	(343,183)	(113,183)	0	(837,204)
Celebrating our culture and heritage							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP9	Arts & Events income - Increased ticket sales	(10,000)	(25,000)	(25,000)	0	(60,000)
	OP55	Invest to save (capital funding) for 2025/26 to deliver a pilot partnership model for library services with savings from 2026/27	0	(600,000)	0	0	(600,000)
Total Celebrating our culture and heritage			(10,000)	(625,000)	(25,000)	0	(660,000)
Child Friendly Borough							
Children's Services & Education	OP10	Recruitment & retention of internal foster carers	(600,000)	(600,000)	(133,905)	0	(1,333,905)
	OP11	Specialist foster placements	(694,000)	(432,000)	0	0	(1,126,000)
	OP12	Extend the family safeguarding programme into corporate parenting	(698,167)	(863,605)	(863,605)	(863,605)	(3,288,982)
	OP13	Continued focus on placement step downs	(439,174)	0	0	0	(439,174)
	OP14	Adolescent service - early help	(1,724,981)	(1,724,981)	(1,724,981)	0	(5,174,943)
	OP15	Capitalise school organisational officer post	(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
	OP16	Home to school transport transformation programme	(388,111)	(102,000)	(56,000)	0	(546,111)

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Operational Proposals by Outcome	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Children's Services & Education	OP17	Reduced management costs following integration of early help into children's social care	0	(100,000)	0	0	(100,000)
	OP18	Recruitment & retention of Internal foster carers	0	0	(600,000)	(600,000)	(1,200,000)
	OP19	Adolescent service - increase existing sustainability and transformation plans linked to Family Pathfinder	(200,854)	(177,679)	(177,679)	(1,902,660)	(2,458,872)
	OP20	Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme - additional connected carers	(184,835)	(295,476)	(295,476)	(295,476)	(1,071,263)
	OP21	Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme - care avoidance	(297,525)	(550,523)	(550,523)	(550,523)	(1,949,094)
	OP22	Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme - lower cost placements	(247,467)	(634,220)	(634,220)	(634,220)	(2,150,127)
	OP23	New internal residential home to open from 2026/27 creating additional internal placements	0	(633,862)	(452,759)	0	(1,086,621)
	OP24	Placement sufficiency, an opportunity to open further internal residential homes from 2025/26	(999,078)	(87,542)	0	0	(1,086,620)
	OP25	Emergency foster carer scheme	(390,000)	0	0	0	(390,000)
	OP26	Housing project	(409,000)	(8,000)	(8,000)	0	(425,000)
	OP27	Development of a youth collaborative as part of the Children & Young People Alliance	(125,993)	0	0	0	(125,993)
	NEW	Integrate parenting offer within early help and children's social care as part of family help	(59,517)	0	0	0	(59,517)
	NEW	Deletion of quality assurance officer post	(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
	NEW	Review of statutory service provision	(37,066)	0	0	0	(37,066)
	NEW	Increase in traded services income	(5,446)	0	0	0	(5,446)
	NEW	Integrate customer facing activity within HAF to the customer experience centre	(20,000)	0	0	0	(20,000)
	NEW	Review of the Family Drugs and Alcohol model and provision	0	(94,500)	0	0	(94,500)
Total Child Friendly Borough			(7,621,214)	(6,304,388)	(5,497,148)	(4,846,484)	(24,269,234)
Cross Cutting							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP70	Increase in fees & charges	(150,000)	0	0	0	(150,000)
Total Cross Cutting			(150,000)	0	0	0	(150,000)
Living active healthy lives							
Adult Social Care & Public Health	OP49	Removal of 2024/25 investment over and above Public Health grant	(168,719)	0	0	0	(168,719)
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP50	Leisure health checks based on 5% forecast take up	(20,125)	0	0	0	(20,125)
	OP51	Leisure review and health initiatives	(220,000)	0	0	0	(220,000)
	OP52	Review of coffee shop operations	(10,000)	0	0	0	(10,000)
Total Living active healthy lives			(418,844)	0	0	0	(418,844)

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Operational Proposals by Outcome	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Resilient and empowered communities							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP53	Community Cohesion and Social Integration - aim to merge a Community Safety and Enforcement and Cohesion Management resource	(13,000)	0	0	0	(13,000)
	OP56	£100k capital investment in CCTV to support revenue savings - REMOVED	0	0	0	0	0
Total Resilient and empowered communities			(13,000)	0	0	0	(13,000)
Safer streets, safer people							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP54	Efficiencies within community safety and enforcement	(10,000)	0	0	0	(10,000)
Total Safer streets, safer people			(10,000)	0	0	0	(10,000)
Homes for all							
Resources & Transformation	OP48	Reduction in bed & breakfast costs linked to the capital investment to accelerate the acquisition of suitable self-contained accommodation for homeless families	(406,260)	0	0	0	(406,260)
Total Homes for all			(406,260)	0	0	0	(406,260)
Supported and cared for							
Adult Social Care & Public Health	OP59	Community reablement model refresh based on Impower throughput	(3,321,113)	(4,933,131)	(4,933,131)	(4,933,131)	(18,120,506)
	OP60	Enablement for Learning Disability, Mental Health and Transitions cohort	(438,702)	(258,533)	(257,137)	(237,800)	(1,192,172)
	OP61	Social care decrease in existing service user costs following strength-based reviews (Investment 73 linked to increased costs)	(984,208)	(647,087)	(664,550)	(714,566)	(3,010,411)
	OP62	Additional service user contributions based on net inflow of service users, price increases (uplifts) and benefit changes	(1,201,145)	(315,782)	(275,831)	(275,505)	(2,068,263)
	OP63	Health contributions - Section 117/ Continuing Health Care/ part health funded	(1,500,467)	(601,715)	(621,358)	(668,290)	(3,391,830)
	OP64	Review of high-cost home care packages post intermediate care services discharge	(159,542)	0	0	0	(159,542)
	OP65	Create opportunities within communities to keep people independent longer and Improve access and take up as part of prevention strategy.	(321,182)	(650,707)	(650,707)	(650,707)	(2,273,303)
	OP66	Partnership model between the council and care providers for delivery of care	0	(532,000)	0	0	(532,000)
	OP67	Reduction of Section 117 expenditure	(294,734)	0	0	0	(294,734)
	OP68	Discontinue use of Better Care Finance System	(100,000)	0	0	0	(100,000)
	OP69	Cessation of home care call monitoring service (CM2000) contract	(220,000)	0	0	0	(220,000)
Total Supported and cared for			(8,541,093)	(7,938,955)	(7,402,714)	(7,479,999)	(31,362,761)
Supporting business and inclusive growth							
Resources & Transformation	OP42	Generation of additional external funding to be used against existing costs (linked to investment 55)	(150,000)	0	0	0	(150,000)
Total Supporting business and inclusive growth			(150,000)	0	0	0	(150,000)

Directorate	Ref No	Detail of Operational Proposals by Outcome	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Value for money services							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP28	One public estate – income from partners	(250,000)	0	0	0	(250,000)
	OP29	Energy reductions	(200,000)	0	0	0	(200,000)
	OP30	Reduction in running costs as a result of rationalising the council's property portfolio	(500,000)	(150,000)	0	0	(650,000)
	OP31	Amalgamation of facilities management	(100,000)	0	0	0	(100,000)
	OP32	20% reduction in post room costs	(50,000)	0	0	0	(50,000)
	OP51	Leisure review and health initiatives	(95,000)	(95,000)	(90,000)	(75,000)	(355,000)
	OP33	Review of caretaking and cleaning services in council buildings.	(320,000)	0	0	0	(320,000)
Resources & Transformation	OP34	Cessation of Mayrise system	(40,000)	0	0	0	(40,000)
	OP38	Reduction in storage costs by digitalisation of records	(55,000)	0	0	0	(55,000)
	NEW	Removal of system support contract	(77,000)	(108,000)	0	0	(185,000)
	NEW	Staffing efficiencies to be identified as part of OneSource phase 2 implementation subject to the business case approval	(53,750)	(161,250)	0	0	(215,000)
	OP43	Reduction in Dynamic 365 Customer Relationship Management licenses	(95,940)	0	0	0	(95,940)
	NEW	One-off reduction in elections due to a fallow year in 25/26	(327,228)	327,228	0	0	0
	OP35	Additional income from an increase in outdoor advertising & sponsorship	(17,213)	(48,213)		0	(65,426)
	OP39	Reduction in vacant posts across the Hub	(124,385)	0	0	0	(124,385)
Central	OP46	Council wide redesign	(700,000)	0	0	0	(700,000)
	OP47	Increased income from airport dividends	(733,042)	(2,500,000)	2,500,000	0	(733,042)
	OP45	Reduction in borrowing costs due to review of capital programme	(1,592,519)	(3,342,171)	0	0	(4,934,690)
	OP44	Increase vacancy management across the council	(3,883,715)	0	0	0	(3,883,715)
Total Value for money services			(9,214,792)	(6,077,406)	2,410,000	(75,000)	(12,957,198)
Vibrant Towns							
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP71	Markets review	(60,000)	0	0	0	(60,000)
	OP72	Rental income from Park Place and Lex site	(400,000)	0	400,000	0	0
Total Vibrant Towns			(460,000)	0	400,000	0	(60,000)
Total Net Operational Proposals			(28,584,799)	(21,690,384)	(10,228,045)	(12,901,483)	(73,404,711)
Total Net Savings Proposals			(29,044,799)	(21,690,384)	(10,228,045)	(12,901,483)	(73,864,711)

Net Savings Proposals Summary by Directorate

Directorate	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Adult Social Care and Public Health	(8,709,812)	(7,938,955)	(7,402,714)	(7,479,999)	(31,531,480)
Children's Services and Education	(7,621,214)	(6,304,388)	(5,497,148)	(4,846,484)	(24,269,234)
Economy, Environment and Communities	(3,749,535)	(1,501,452)	285,000	(575,000)	(5,540,987)
Resources and Transformation	(2,054,962)	(103,418)	(113,183)	0	(2,271,563)
Central	(6,909,276)	(5,842,171)	2,500,000	0	(10,251,447)
Total Savings Proposals	(29,044,799)	(21,690,384)	(10,228,045)	(12,901,483)	(73,864,711)

Net Savings Proposals Summary by Outcome

Outcome	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
A clean and green future	(811,410)	(401,452)	0	(500,000)	(1,712,862)
A quality experience for all	0	0	0	0	0
A skilled and engaged workforce	(407,348)	0	0	0	(407,348)
Accessible services and connected places	(380,838)	(343,183)	(113,183)	0	(837,204)
Celebrating our culture and heritage	(10,000)	(625,000)	(25,000)	0	(660,000)
Child Friendly Borough	(7,811,214)	(6,304,388)	(5,497,148)	(4,846,484)	(24,459,234)
Cross Cutting	(340,000)	0	0	0	(340,000)
Homes for All	(406,260)	0	0	0	(406,260)
Living active healthy lives	(418,844)	0	0	0	(418,844)
Resilient and empowered communities	(33,000)	0	0	0	(33,000)
Safer streets, safer people	(10,000)	0	0	0	(10,000)
Skills and jobs for all	0	0	0	0	0
Supported and cared for	(8,541,093)	(7,938,955)	(7,402,714)	(7,479,999)	(31,362,761)
Supporting business and inclusive growth	(150,000)	0	0	0	(150,000)
Value for money services	(9,214,792)	(6,077,406)	2,410,000	(75,000)	(12,957,198)
Vibrant towns	(510,000)	0	400,000	0	(110,000)
Total Savings Proposals	(29,044,799)	(21,690,384)	(10,228,045)	(12,901,483)	(73,864,711)

Annex 4 - MTFO movements since reported to Cabinet 16 October 2025

	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
Gap as per report to Cabinet 16 October 2024	11.05	7.47	0.00	0.00	18.52
Changes to investments					
NEW – Energy cost	0.70	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.70
NEW - Remove third party spend saving	2.25	(0.75)	(0.75)	(0.75)	0.00
NEW - Remove TVI saving	2.70	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.70
NEW - Ongoing software costs following completion of Enabling technology capital project	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.08
NEW - Continuation of Walsall Connected initiative	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.06
NEW - Senior Partnership officer to support Walsall 2040	0.02	0.00	(0.02)	0.00	0.00
NEW – Additional HR advisory posts	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.09
NEW - Revenue implications of leasing	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.50
NEW - Waste short term contract	0.87	(0.43)	(0.44)	0.00	0.00
NEW - Middlemore Lane equipment lease	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25
NEW - Children's Social Care Prevention Grant	2.88	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.88
NEW - Family Hubs Start for Life Programme Income	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.09
NEW - Domestic Abuse grant	0.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.18
NEW - Homelessness Prevention grant	0.32	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.32
NEW - Increase in national insurance contributions	3.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.30
NEW - Pay Award (1%)	1.70	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.70
NEW – Remove Town hall and events saving	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04
No 2 Cloud/ Microsoft licences and infrastructure costs (reduce and re-profile)	(0.24)	0.20	0.00	0.00	(0.04)
No 10 Carer allowances uplifts (removed)	(0.11)	(0.12)	0.00	0.00	(0.23)
No 11 & 25 External framework placement uplifts (merged and one-off increase)	0.18	(0.18)	0.00	0.00	0.00
No 13 Children in care growth (re-profile and increase)	0.38	0.14	(0.34)	(0.11)	0.07
No 14 Children placement moves (re-profile and increase)	(0.26)	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.02
No 15 Home to school transport (increase)	0.07	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.09
No 32 Independent fostering agency framework retender outcome (increase)	0.10	0.06	0.07	0.05	0.28

	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
No 53 One-off transformation programme investment to support savings within customer experience saving (re-profile)	-0.04	0.00	0.05	-0.01	0.00
No 71 Uplift in care provider fees (impact of new living wage and national insurance contributions)	2.45	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.45
No 71 Uplift in care provider fees (re-profile and reduction)	(2.14)	(4.22)	(2.10)	0.81	(7.65)
No 73 Social Care increase in existing service user placements costs following strength-based reviews (re-profile and increase)	(0.18)	3.16	3.08	3.41	9.47
No 75 Inflationary increase for S117 Mental Health service users care costs (re-profile)	0.01	0.01	(0.01)	(0.01)	0.00
No 84 Social care increase in demand pressures (inflow/attrition)	0.03	0.42	0.49	0.69	1.63
Total changes to investments	15.55	(1.46)	0.63	4.26	18.98
Changes to savings proposals					
NEW - One-off reduction in elections due to a fallow year in 25/26	(0.33)	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00
NEW - Airport dividend – one off income	0.00	(2.50)	2.50	0.00	0.00
NEW - Review of the family drugs and alcohol model and provision.	0.00	(0.09)	0.00	0.00	(0.09)
NEW - Increased traded income with schools	(0.01)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.01)
NEW - Review of statutory service provision	(0.04)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.04)
NEW - Deletion of quality assurance officer post	(0.05)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.05)
NEW - Integrate parenting offer within early help and children's social care as part of family help	(0.06)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.06)
NEW - Integrate customer facing activity within HAF to the customer experience centre	(0.02)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.02)
NEW - Removal of system support contract	(0.08)	(0.11)	0.00	0.00	(0.19)
NEW - Staffing efficiencies as part of One Source phase 2 implementation	(0.05)	(0.16)	0.00	0.00	(0.21)
P4 - Introduce more rewilding	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05
OP35 Additional income from an increase in outdoor advertising (reduced)	0.05	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.10
OP36 Remove external One Source system support by using in-house expertise (removed)	0.20	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.40

	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
OP56 £100k capital investment in CCTV to support revenue savings	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.05
OP61 ASC demand – decrease in existing service user placement costs (re-aligned)	0.10	(0.65)	(0.65)	(0.72)	(1.92)
OP62 ASC demand – additional service use contributions based (re-aligned)	(0.20)	0.14	0.18	0.19	0.31
OP63 Health contribution – Section 117/continuing health care (re-aligned)	0.26	0.06	0.05	(0.27)	0.10
Total changes to savings	(0.18)	(2.73)	2.13	(0.80)	(1.58)
Other service adjustments					
EEC - Extended producer responsibility	(5.88)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(5.88)
Children's - Extended rights to home to school transport (grant rolled into general funding)	0.08	0.00	.0.00	.0.00	0.08
Children's - Children's Social Care Prevention Grant (new funding)	(2.88)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(2.88)
Children's - Family Hubs Start for Life Programme Income (increase in funding)	(0.09)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.09)
EEC – Domestic Abuse grant (increase in funding)	(0.18)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.18)
R&T – Homelessness Prevention grant (increase in funding)	(0.32)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.32)
Total service adjustments	(9.27)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(9.27)
Central adjustments					
Increase in business rates income (funding)	(2.47)	2.42	0.15	1.66	1.76
Council tax surplus (funding)	(0.47)	0.47	0.00	0.00	0.00
Council taxbase changes (funding)	(0.85)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(1.17)
Reprofiling of central budget	3.53	0.43	(0.75)	(1.63)	1.58
New Homes Bonus increased income (funding)	(0.15)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.15)
Social Care grant increase income (funding)	(5.93)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(5.93)
Recovery Grant (funding)	(9.84)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(9.84)
National insurance contributions grant (funding)	(1.65)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(1.65)
Net use of reserves	0.68	(2.50)	2.50	0.00	0.68
Total central adjustments	(17.15)	0.72	1.79	(0.08)	(19.23)
Revised savings to be identified (Current budget shortfall)	0.00	4.00	4.55	3.38	11.93

Annex 5 – Capital Programme movements since reported to Cabinet 16 October 2025

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Council Funded Schemes - Cabinet 16 October 2024	48.95	32.38	10.40	8.79	100.52
Maintaining a safe and secure environment - reduced	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	0.00	(00.15)
Telephony - removed	(0.19)	(0.19)	0.00	0.00	(00.38)
Wi-Fi – reprofiled	(0.08)	0.00	0.08	0.00	00.00
Bloxwich Town Deal –reduced	(1.44)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(01.44)
Council roof repairs – reduced	(0.08)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(00.08)
Wheeled bin stock - reduced	(0.07)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(00.07)
Aids and adaptations - increased	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.83	03.32
New children’s home 2025- new	0.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	00.85
Refurbishments to foster carer’s homes - increased	0.10	0.15	0.15	0.15	00.55
Libraries – Community association style Hub – new	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	00.10
Assistive technologies - new	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	00.25
Promotion of community health and safety - reduced	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.06)	0.00	(00.14)
ICT Safe & Secure bring forward 2025/26 budget into 2024/25	(0.05)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(00.05)
Maintaining a Safe & Secure Environment - bring forward budget for upfront CISCO license	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.06)	0.00	(00.24)
Allotment Boundary Improvement Works	(0.02)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(00.02)
Hatherton Road car park	(0.21)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(00.21)
Play areas & outdoor gym	(0.13)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(00.13)
Revised Council Funded Schemes	48.63	32.99	11.29	9.77	102.68
External Funded Schemes - Cabinet 16 October 2024	31.19	22.27	23.08	30.10	106.64
Family Hubs 25/26 allocation	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	00.09
Disable Facilities Grant additional budget	0.63	0.63	0.63	0.63	02.52
High Needs budget reprofile	1.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	01.72
Basic Needs budget re-profile	10.00	6.00	(4.35)	(11.65)	00.00
LA Housing fund 3	0.32	0.00	0.00	0.00	00.32
Revised External Funded Schemes	43.95	28.90	19.36	19.08	111.29
Revised Programme	92.58	61.89	30.65	28.85	213.97

Annex 6 – Summary of Revenue Grants 2025/26

Revenue Grant	£m
Magistrates & Probation Service Grant	(22,064)
Bikeability Grant	(88,508)
Housing Benefit Subsidy - Rent Allowances	(57,269,985)
Housing Benefit Subsidy Administration	(790,574)
Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund	(29,464)
Local Reform Community Voices Grant	(235,436)
16 to 19 Education Funding	(3,026,619)
West Midlands Police Crime Commissioner Community Safety Grant	(125,426)
Housing Benefit Subsidy	(839,739)
AYSE Grant	(74,316)
Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)	(224,028,889)
Pupil Premium Grant	(12,247,845)
Primary PE & Sport Premium	(1,223,118)
Universal Infant Free School Meals Grant	(2,387,771)
Arts Council National Portfolio Grant	(1,218,152)
Heritage Lottery Fund	(73,028)
Holiday Activity and Food Programme Grant	(1,912,527)
DEFRA Countryside Stewardship Grant Income	(11,587)
St Thomas More Public Finance Initiative Grant (PFI)	(772,600)
Verified Earnings & Pension Grant	(10,967)
Discretionary Housing Payments	(540,168)
DWP Housing Benefit Award Accuracy Grant	(50,000)
Public Health Grant	(19,968,817)
Teachers Pay Additional Grant	(2,600,194)
Social Care Support Grant	(38,054,524)
Teachers' Pension Employer Contribution Grant	(95,493)
Youth Justice Board Grant	(488,691)
COVID-19 Recovery Premium	(423,336)
Afghan Relocation Grant	(802,740)
Market Sustainability & Fair Cost of Care	(6,264,233)
Restart Grant	(42,499)
Homes for Ukraine Scheme	(139,419)
Homelessness Prevention Grant	(1,430,821)
The Remand Framework for Children	(318,375)
Key Stage 2 Moderation and Key Stage 1 Phonics Grant	(11,917)
Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant	(896,337)
Arts Council Music Education Hub Grant	(484,072)
Household Support Fund Cost of Living	(5,639,418)
Violence Reduction Partnership Grant	(82,981)
Family Hub Grant	(1,359,537)
Supported Housing Improvement Programme	(107,609)
Staff Related Inherited Liabilities Grant	(400,000)
Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)	(1,842,601)
Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund	(75,443)

Revenue Grant	£m
Local Stop Smoking Services Grant	(367,927)
Walsall Energy Action Project	(513,966)
Darlaston Towns Fund	(200,000)
Social Worker Apprenticeship Grant	(88,868)
Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery grant	(734,900)
Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme	(48,552)
Local Authority Better Care Grant	(17,494,592)
Children's Social Care Prevention Grant	(2,884,555)
Children's and Families Grant	(2,766,839)
Street Lighting Public Finance Initiative Grant (PFI)	(1,595,348)
Business Rates Retention Section 31 Grant	(29,056,547)
Biodiversity Net Gain Grant	(26,807)
Recovery Grant	(9,836,997)
National Insurance Contribution Grant	(1,650,000)
New Homes Bonus Scheme	(152,716)
Top Up Grant	(22,772,985)
Total Revenue Grants 2025/26	(478,699,439)

Annex 7 – Capital & Investment Strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Prudential Code (2021) requires local authorities to produce a Capital Strategy (the “Strategy”) to demonstrate how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of desired outcomes and take account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability.

The Strategy forms part of the framework for financial planning and is integral to both the Medium Term Financial Framework (MTFF) and the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy (shown at section B, part 2 of the Corporate Budget Plan) and considers the funding implications of the capital programme and where borrowing is required. It sets out how capital investment will play its part in delivering the ambitious long term strategic objectives of the council, how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. The Strategy is also in line with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) Investment Guidance.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

- a. The Capital Strategy forms a key part of the council’s overall corporate planning framework within which capital and investment decisions will be made with a focus on protecting the council’s assets and delivering the council’s corporate objectives. The overarching aim of the 2025/26 to 2028/29 Capital Strategy is to provide a framework within which the council’s capital investment and financing decisions can be aligned with the council’s corporate priorities and objectives over the medium term. The Strategy recognises uncertainties, especially in relation to funding in later years.

In order to reflect the council’s corporate priorities the Strategy is driven by the ‘Pursuing Excellence’: Our Council Plan 2025-2029. The current Council Plan (Our Council Plan 2022-25) is due to be replaced next year, but there are additional drivers that make this a timely opportunity to completely review our corporate ambitions and priorities.

The main sections of the Capital Strategy link to the Council Plan in the following key areas:

- **Asset Management Planning** – is aligned to the Council Plan by reviewing service needs to ensure that quality services are delivered, and to further protect the Council’s assets.
- **School Estate Planning** – is aligned to the Council Plan by investing in Schools to providing the best start in life for the boroughs children.

- **Investment in Regeneration** – is aligned to the Council Plan by a focus on economic growth by supporting key strategic projects that will deliver business and inclusive growth and jobs across the borough.
- **Investment in ICT and Digital Services** - is aligned to the Council Plan by Striving for excellence by providing efficient and effective value for money services, supported by a skilled and engaged workforce to provide a high-quality experience for all those engaging with the council.
- **Capital Investment for Revenue Benefits** – is aligned to the Council Plan by investing in relevant services to reduce expenditure or create or increase revenue, impacting better value for money.

3. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

3.1 Setting the Capital Programme

- a. The council's Capital Programme covering the period 2025/26 to 2028/29 is set out within **Annex 8 - 10** of this Corporate Budget Plan.
- b. The basis of the Capital Programme is driven by the budget and service planning process. This process begins during the summer. The size of the Capital Programme is determined by:
 - The need to incur capital expenditure
 - Capital resources available
 - The revenue implications flowing from the expenditure.
- c. As part of the budget and service planning process, services are required to review capital needs locally, and to align with service priorities. Where directorate capital and asset groups agree these requirements, then these capital investments are named as projects and included in the Council's investment pipeline schedule ("Pipeline"). The Pipeline includes the following information:
 - Project background, including context, key dates and requirements
 - Project objectives and outputs
 - Scope and justification of the project
 - Draft profile of spend by financial year, source of funding, and revenue implications
 - References to background papers and key documentation
 - Anticipated project sponsor and project manager
- d. The Pipeline is scored, initially by project leads and managers, using the scoring matrix in Table 1 below. The scored Pipeline is then tested and challenged by the Council's Transformation Board and its Transformation and Finance Group, with scores adjusted where necessary. This ensures that scoring is robust and consistent across directorates, and projects can be categorised between "highly recommended", "recommended" and "not recommended" based on their score and funding available. Once Transformation Board are content with the prioritised Pipeline, this is reviewed

by Members for review and challenge. This process ensures that investment is directed to projects that align with the Council's strategies and meets our aims, objectives and outcomes. It also ensures that budgets are ring-fenced for critical and deliverable schemes, rather than silting up funds that are at risk carry forward.

Table 1: Pipeline investment scoring matrix

Ranking Criteria	Weighting	Notes	SCORING		
		Rag rating	GREEN	AMBER	RED
		Points	3	2	1
Aligned to local plans and strategies	40%	We should only be developing schemes in our wider plans. WM and BC Strategic Economic Plans, Walsall Council Plan, MTFs, Local planning policy, Site Allocation Document, Town Centre Area Action Plan, Walsall 2040.	Aligns to National AND local strategies	Aligns only to to National OR local strategies	No alignment to a specific strategy
Essential service	20%	Supports Council infrastructure to enable service delivery	Non-investment is not an option	Investment would be preferable and enhance service	Non-essential
Short term deliverability	20%	Likelihood of end scheme being delivered in short term	Delivery could commence in 12 months	Delivery 1-3 years	Delivery 4-5 years
Finance potential	20%	Potential for the wider scheme to secure external funding / match funding / recycling of funds i.e. commercialisation, overage, land sale etc so that more of the pipeline can be funded in the longer term	match funding (>50%) and revenue savings meaning payback within x5	funding or revenue savings generate, or significant cost avoidance	funding OR will result in no revenue change or a net revenue cost

- e. Pipeline projects are categorised between existing need (i.e. business as usual or project overspends) and new investments:
- Existing projects are named and valued in the Capital Programme.
 - Statutory or legally required capital expenditure may be added directly to the capital programme depending upon its nature.
 - A Pipeline Investment marker will be included in the Capital Programme for new investments, where indicative schemes are named but are subject to a Green Book compliant business case, future endorsement by Transformation Board and approval by Cabinet.
- f. Business cases, where requested to be completed, will be subject to formal review and assessment. A business case will include more detailed information on the proposed scheme, along with options where applicable, in line with the Government's 5 case model for developing business cases and would expect to include the following:
- Strategic Case - Provides strategic fit and is supported by a compelling case for change, and why the project is proposed.
 - Economic Case - Focuses on options appraisal and the identification of the preferred option by comparing value for money and non-quantified benefits of each delivery option
 - Financial Case – Assesses if the preferred option is fundable and affordable over the project lifetime (capital and revenue)
 - Commercial Case - Is commercially viable and attractive to suppliers. This section focuses on the development and procurement of the potential Deal

- Management Case: Can the project be delivered successfully by the organisation and its partners, does it need extra support and resource? This section focuses on the implementation arrangements for the proposal and milestones.
- g. Prior to cabinet approving the capital programme, the final version of the development pipeline is reviewed by members at CMT with any adjustments requested being made in the light of the relative priorities and the overall impact on the revenue budget.
- Existing capital schemes and expenditure that is unavoidable to meet statutory and legislative requirements (i.e. health & safety, expenditure to meet new legislation etc) will be presented separately in the capital programme. By their nature, these schemes are a first call on available resources. It also includes supported borrowing allocations which are ring fenced to a specific programme of activity.
- h. The council's policy is to agree the Capital Programme on an annual basis at the Council meeting in February, in line with statute. Once approved, the budget report is made available on the council's website and published on the finance pages of the council's intranet.

3.2 Managing the Capital Programme

- a. The council's contract/financial procedure rules and Constitution provide a clear framework on how all capital projects are to be managed.
- b. Regular monthly monitoring reports are submitted to directorate management teams and then to CMT, ASG, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees, showing actual expenditure compared with budget. This enables high-level scrutiny of the delivery of capital objectives against the plan and for action to be taken to ensure the longer term programme reflects emerging priorities.
- c. The majority of items for the capital programme will be identified as part of the council's budget setting process and will require business cases and a prioritisation review as part of this as outlined in 3.1 (aligning to the same approach taken for revenue budget setting). There is however recognition that in rare circumstances some capital funding requirements may need to be outside of this process because of timings, in which case the council will consider its central reserve position, external funding and other options for funding.

3.3 Restriction on Borrowing and Use of Capital Receipts

- a. The council funded element of the Capital Programme is normally financed from borrowing, capital receipts and the carry forward of unspent allocations from previous years.
- b. There is no restriction on the level of borrowing that the council can undertake, subject to compliance with the Treasury Management Code of Practice and affordability of the revenue costs. However subject to this compliance, borrowing is required to be funded from the council's own resources - generated through savings, and/or paid for via council tax (this is also commonly known as unsupported or Prudential borrowing). This links to the council's Operational Boundary and Authorised Limit set within the

Treasury Management & Investment Strategy based on forecast capital programme and pipeline requirements with affordable headroom built in. Any excess borrowing required over the Authorised Limit would require further Council approval and a full assessment of affordability.

- c. Capital receipt projections for 2025/26 are in the region of £6.7m and are based on professional estimates of property colleagues and subject to change dependent on the implementation of the Strategic Asset Plan moving forward. There are risks associated with the capital receipt estimate, as the timing of receipts can be delayed for reasons outside of the council's control. Any additional receipts received in year (excluding those earmarked for specific schemes) will be used to fund any shortfalls in previous year's receipts projections or transformation projects in line with the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy (Annex 11, part 1 of the Corporate Budget Plan).

3.4 Asset Management Planning

- a. The council has a typical local authority property portfolio consisting of operational property, investment property and property held for specific community or regeneration purposes. The council manages its portfolio under the guidance of its approved Strategic Asset Plan (SAP) 2022-27. In recent years, the council has adopted the current MTFO and embarked on a transformation agenda (Walsall Proud) to support the delivery of the Council Plan. The property portfolio has been extensively reviewed in order to identify opportunities to realise savings.
- b. The adoption of the Strategic Asset Plan was a major part of the transformation of the council's property teams – originally the Transformation Programme theme of “Our Assets”. Another significant part of the transformation was the adoption of a Corporate Landlord model for the management of the council's land and property assets which centralised the responsibilities and management of all property assets within the Corporate Landlord team which enables more effective and efficient strategic management of the portfolio and has now been embedded within the council and its core principles.
- c. A significant aim of the Strategic Asset Plan is to undertake an ongoing review of the buildings within the portfolio in order to maximise utilisation of the council's properties. This process is particularly pertinent as the council modifies its ways of working following the Covid-19 to fully consider future customer, employee and member requirements and expectations, alongside an internal review of the condition of our corporate estate. This will then inform our options and asset investment, acquisitions and disposals to meet these in the most effective way. In addition to this, an asset challenge process which seeks to identify the worst performing assets and assesses the options for those buildings being investment to improve, alterations to improve performance and suitability or disposal.
- d. The existing governance process enables joined-up decision making regarding the use of the council's land and property and is enabling strategic decisions such as the adoption of a planned preventative maintenance programmes and land assembly to support regeneration activity, to be made in consideration of wider corporate objectives and bearing in mind cross council service needs.
- e. The Disposals Strategy provides a framework for the decision-making process for the

retention or disposal of surplus assets and the prioritisation of the disposal programme. The adoption of the Disposals Strategy has enabled better planning for and forecasting of capital receipts generated through the disposal of surplus assets which contribute towards funding the capital programme.

- f. Outcomes of the above will be brought through the relevant internal governance process to Cabinet and once agreed will be updated within the Capital Programme accordingly.
- g. Additionally, the Highway Asset Management Plan sets out how the Council Plan links to the way the council develops and maintains the highways which are the single most valuable asset the council is responsible for. The way the highways are maintained and managed has a direct impact on the borough's residents, businesses and visitors and further investment will sustain and encourage economic growth.

3.5 School Estate Planning

- a. The Council has a duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for resident children who require a school place. Basic Need and High Needs capital funding are therefore allocated by the Department for Education to local authorities, based on pupil place number forecasts, to deliver the additional places in schools to meet expected demand.

The authority has identified a significant increase in demand for both mainstream and SEN pupil places in recent years. As at the end of 2024/25, the remaining balance of Basic Needs and High Needs Capital funding to be carried forward into 2025/26 is expected to be £32.5m of which £20.5m is already committed to capital projects across the borough to deliver additional pupil places. The allocation for Basic Needs in 2025/26 has been confirmed as £6.8m. This will be added to the carried forward balances to continue to deliver additional pupil places where required. Future years allocations are confirmed on an annual basis by the DfE based on the level of demand for pupil places in the borough each year. The DfE are yet to confirm what the High Needs Capital allocation will be for 2025/26.

- b. The pupil place requirement for SEND/mainstream places is increasing for many local authorities including Walsall. The impact of this is that local authority areas may not have sufficient or appropriate provision and capacity to deliver specialist support and therefore accurate management of limited resources like finance becomes pivotal to ensure not just the delivery of places but also value for money.
- c. With the view to support the challenges highlighted above the authority has identified the need to appoint a strategic partner who will work with the authority to develop and deliver proposals relating to any new and emerging need for pupil places responding to the changing trends in demand for pupil places as well as support the development of a longer-term plan for delivery of places and our wider Education Capital Programme. The appointment of a strategic partner will also help the Authority deliver school places more efficiently and effectively and improve value for money.
- d. To deal with the shortfall of places as mentioned above for SEND/Secondary places, a plan of short, medium and long term works has been identified and approved at cabinet to ensure that there are enough places available.

- e. The anticipated expansion programme is likely to have a significant impact on the Council's educational estate, providing enhancements to the operational benefit of schools. The programme will entail extensive works to extend, alter and remodel the portfolio, and could in some instances see the construction of new buildings. In accordance with any well-planned construction programme, it will be important to undertake pre-construction feasibility activity and site surveys to inform all necessary consents, as well as construction costs, and future maintenance responsibilities. Such consents will need to include planning and building regulations in addition to any specific requirements of other statutory bodies/ undertakers.

3.6 Investment in Regeneration

- a. In support of the objectives set out within the 'Pursuing Excellence': Our Council Plan 2025-2029, to achieve 'Economic Growth for all people, communities and businesses', the council continues to plan for and deliver its regeneration plans and proposals in line with local, sub regional and regional strategies. Boroughwide regeneration continues to be an important part of the council's 'Ways of Working' agenda following Covid-19 and underpin the overall borough's economic recovery approach.
- b. Additionally, the authority like many other councils, continues to explore alternative models for intervening in the market to aid our regeneration opportunities, and in ways that may also secure longer term revenue income as well as create additional business rate and council tax income. These opportunities will be modelled to provide assurance that sufficient investment returns over the life of the project are consistent with long term treasury investment returns adjusted for risk.
- c. Building upon the economic growth aspirations of key documents including the West Midlands and Black Country Strategic Economic Plan and Plan for Growth, current local planning policy including the Walsall Site Allocation Document and Town Centre Area Action Plan, and development frameworks including the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan and Willenhall Framework Plan, the council recognises its role in enabling public and private sector investment to be secured to continue and facilitate the delivery of key development opportunities. And The council has used capital resources to acquire land interests in key regeneration locations, including within Walsall Town Centre and the Black Country Enterprise Zone (BCEZ). Consideration is being given to future acquisitions to support the delivery of other projects.
- d. Walsall has an extensive prioritised development pipeline which comprises schemes that can support the delivery of:
 - 70 hectares of land remediated/ redeveloped
 - 2,900 new or sustained jobs within Walsall
 - 1,200 new homes
 - 150,000 square metres of employment / commercial floors space

The regeneration pipeline is included in the Councils Pipeline (para 3.1.3) and scored alongside wider Council projects, so investment decisions can be taken in the context of the Councils wider strategy and aims and objectives.

- e. Successful delivery of these projects will only be achieved through collaborative working between the council, public sector partners and private developers/ investors,

with the potential utilisation of public sources of finance.

- f. The council has a strong track record of working in partnership to secure investment and the borough is in the middle of a £1.5bn transformation through recent, current and planned investment.
- g. The council continues to work with the West Midlands Combined Authority to maximise the opportunities and benefits to the borough available through the devolved policy levers and powers and the integrated funding settlement. The Walsall Place Based Strategy, aligned to the Walsall 2040 Borough Plan, sets out the vision and priorities for how the functions of the integrated settlement will come together to bring about multi-year transformation across the borough and with focus on the Walsall Growth Corridor. The Place Based Strategy incorporates our regeneration pipeline activity and key linkages and interventions for housing, local growth & place, skills, local transport and retrofit.
- h. In 2025 the council will be preparing a refresh of the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan to reflect delivery of the catalytic interventions since approval in 2019, as well as recent changes in policy and new developments and additional sites. The Walsall Town Centre Masterplan will continue to be a key tool to 're-imagine' the town centre and unlock development opportunities; including opportunities that will require public funding through the integrated settlement investment propositions and co funding mechanisms.
- i. Building on the successful award of £11.4m of the Government's Future High Street Fund for a multi-million pound Connected Gateway project to transform the connectivity of the town centre's rail and bus stations, the council was also successful in being awarded £21.3m for each of the eligible Bloxwich and Walsall town areas from the Government's Towns Funds (£42.6m total). The Connected Gateway project and projects within the Towns Fund programme are at various stages of delivery, including the creative industries hub, active public spaces, and Bloxwich launchpad. The council's £20m bid to the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 to support delivery of new housing and highways improvements in Willenhall Phase 1 was also successful. To date the scheme has delivered cycling and walking improvements to the Greenway and a CPO has been secured for land at Moat Street/Villiers Street for housing development. Walsall has been selected as one of twenty places to form a Levelling Up Partnership with confirmed funding of £20m for a package of interventions. In October 2023 it was announced that the government had also been awarded £20m for a new Darlaston Long Term Town Plan that will deliver community-led interventions over a 10-year period although we are still awaiting further detail from MHCLG on this programme.
- j. Looking ahead and recognising the continued changing market conditions and development viability issues, the council has prioritised its regeneration activity to focus upon key strategic locations in the Walsall Growth Corridor. As reflected in the Place Based Strategy, the Corridor includes Walsall and Willenhall Town Centres, the BCEZ and Growth Zone employment sites, and significant brownfield housing development sites.
- k. The BCEZ and Growth Zone status mean that the council can has the option to utilise Public Works Loan Board funding for upfront enabling works where this will be repaid

through future business rate uplift. The delivery of new homes and wider interventions in the Walsall Growth Corridor can be assisted by the West Midlands integrated settlement, supported by other sources of financing to unlock the transformational change and grow the economy as set out in the Place Based Strategy. Growth aspirations will be further supported through the preparation of the Walsall Borough Local Plan, Business Growth Strategy and updated Housing Strategy.

- I. In this context it should be noted that Government has made announcements in relation to the Integrated Settlement being provided to WMCA through the Devolution Deal which may be able to support project delivery in the borough. In addition, Walsall is one of three Growth Zones agreed as part of the Devolution Deal which allows the council to retain business rates generated across six defined sites for a 25 year period to spend on growing the economy.

4. DEBT & BORROWING AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT

- a. A projection of external debt and use of internal borrowing to support capital expenditure, the council's authorised borrowing limit and operational boundary along with the Capital Financing Requirement are set out within the Treasury Management & Investment Strategy (section B, part 2 of the Corporate Budget Plan).
- b. The Treasury Management & Investment Strategy also sets out the council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) which identifies the financial provision that the authority is required to set aside each year for the provision of the repayment of borrowing over the life of the underlying debt.

4.1 Risk Appetite Statement

- a. The Prudential Code (2021) requires authorities to disclose their risk appetite with regard to its treasury management activity. This is set out within our Treasury Management Policy Statement and within TMP1.
- b. For the purpose of this statement, the authority has adopted the Orange Book (UK government publication on the strategic management of risk within government) definition of Risk Appetite, namely "the amount of risk that an organisation is prepared to accept, tolerate, or be exposed to at any point in time."
- c. It is important to note that risk will always exist in some measure and cannot be removed in its entirety. Additionally, in order to realise investment and commercial gains, an organisation has to take some measure of risk. Therefore, risks need to be considered both in terms of threats to the council as well as positive opportunities.
- d. It is worth noting that the Public Accounts Committee supports well-managed risk taking across government, recognising that innovation and opportunities to improve public services requires risk taking, providing that the ability, skills, knowledge and training to manage those risks well exist within the organisation or can be brought to bear.
- e. The authorities risk appetite statement sets out how it balances risk and return in pursuit of achieving its objectives. It is intended to aid careful decision-making, such that the council takes well thought through risks to aid successful delivery of its services

and obligations, while also understanding the adverse aspects of risk undertaken and taking appropriate measures to mitigate these in line with its stated goals. Thereby, the council's risk judgements are more explicit, transparent and consistent over time.

- f. The risk appetite statement forms a key element of the council's governance and reporting framework and is set by full Council as part of the Capital & Investment Strategy. In addition, the risk appetite will be considered annually and monitored on an ongoing basis by the Treasury Management Panel and external advisors.

4.2 Relationship to Other Aspects of Risk Management

- a. It is important to note that the risk appetite is a high level view on the key areas of risk and the qualitative quantum therein that the council is willing to accept in pursuit of its objectives. In this, it is different to other key aspects of risk management, primarily:
 - The Strategic Risk Register – a detailed list of the potential significant risks the council is exposed to;
 - The budget risk assessment – the assessed level of risk at which the council can operate, given its reserves, revenues, and access to funding, liquidity, regulatory and legal constraints, and any other restrictions.
- b. The risk appetite is also supported by the following:
 - The council's Risk Management Framework;
 - The governance structure and responsibilities;
 - Risk reporting;
 - Monitoring and escalation procedures.

4.3 Treasury Management Risk Appetite

- a. In general, the council's treasury management risk appetite is expressed through its tolerance to risk in respect of capital preservation, meaningful liquidity and income volatility. The council seeks to minimise its exposure to risks that are unwanted and unrewarded. Capital is managed centrally on an ongoing basis to ensure that there is sufficient liquidity in the short and medium term to meet costs and support front line services, as well as meeting long-term solvency and funding requirements.
- b. The council's treasury management operations are exposed to a broad range of risks. These, along with the council's approach to managing them, are set out in detail within the authorities Treasury Management Policies (TMP 1 – Treasury Risk management).
- c. Managing the council's treasury management risks is an area of significant focus for the Treasury Management Panel (TMP) and the council adopts an integrated view to the management and qualitative assessment of risk. The TMP is made up of senior council finance officers who meet to discuss treasury management performance, development of policy and identification of potential new investment products and the detail relating to them.
- d. The council aims to minimise its exposure to unwanted risks – those risks that are not actively sought and which carry no commensurate reward for the council.

5. INVESTMENT PROPERTY & COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

- a. If commercial opportunities do arise the council will review these to understand if there is a potential for a financial or community based (regeneration / creating or securing jobs etc) contribution from the scheme.
- b. In support of reviewing these options and informing decision making the council has a strong governance framework that goes beyond the regulatory codes. This includes the Audit Committee and reporting to Cabinet and Council.
- c. Due diligence is of paramount importance. All of the council's commercial investments will be supported by individual business cases that are subject to thorough risk assessment. Where appropriate to the size and scale of the project independent technical and legal reviews will also be considered.
- d. Ongoing performance monitoring for all commercial schemes that have been entered in to is also undertaken and reported to relevant members and senior officers on a regular basis through Asset Strategy Group.
- e. The council also seeks to ensure that all commercial schemes it considers and undertakes are fully aligned with priority outcomes set out within the Council Plan and are in line with the DLUHC guidance making it clear local authorities are no longer allowed to borrow to invest purely for commercial yield.
- f. Details of the councils existing non-financial investments, including their contribution, benchmarking indicators and proportionality of the income derived from them in comparison to net service expenditure is set out within the Treasury Management & Investment Strategy.
- g. Following consultation during 2020, HM Treasury have now revised access requirements for local authorities seeking to access borrowing from the Public Works and Loans Board (PWLB). These revisions mean that local authorities will not be able to access PWLB borrowing to buy investment property with the primary aim of generating yield, and specifically to access PWLB funding authorities will need to submit three year capital plans to PWLB, with the S151 officer confirming that there is no intention to buy investment properties primarily for yield at any point within those three years.
- h. If there are any intentions by the authority to buy investment properties primarily for yield within the three year capital programme then PWLB will not be able to lend to the authority for the period of that programme. HM Treasury have also confirmed that where local authorities do seek to pursue debt-for-yield projects which they finance in other ways, such as through the use of internal cash balances or borrowing from other financial institutions, they would then not be able to access PWLB borrowing to refinance this element of debt going forward.
- i. As interest rates on PWLB borrowing are normally more favourable than other forms of borrowing, being unable to access PWLB and having to seek borrowing from other financial institutions is therefore likely to increase the overall revenue costs required to fund the elements of the council's capital programme which are funded from borrowing – for example every 1% increase in interest costs on a three year capital programme

including circa £96.64m of capital spending funded from borrowing (similar to the level included within this report) would add £0.97m of additional ongoing revenue costs per year by the end of the three year period.

6. OTHER LONG TERM LIABILITIES

6.1 Pension Guarantees

- a. The council has entered into a number of long-term contracts for services that have been outsourced to service providers. These often involve the transfer of council employees to the new service provider. Employee's rights are protected under the provision in Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE). However, pension rights are not fully covered within TUPE regulations. The council have thus given pension guarantees to a number of organisations. This guarantee means that if an admitted body fails to pay its pension obligations then the council will be responsible for taking on those obligations.
- b. All guarantees entered into need the approval of Cabinet. The guarantees are reviewed annually as part of the closure of accounts process. The pension balance is assessed on an annual basis by the Pension Fund and is subject to change due to the underlying assets. This is rebalanced on a three year basis, known as a triennial review.

6.2 Public Finance Initiative (PFI) & Other Long Term Liabilities

- a. The council operates two PFI's and one Public Private Partnership (PPP) as follows:
 - St Thomas More School PFI - contract for the construction, maintenance and operation of a secondary school in Willenhall.
 - Public Street Lighting PFI - contract for the replacement and maintenance of the council's lighting stock across the borough. The objective of this contract is to ensure that the borough is lit in a uniform manner complying with British and European standards.
 - Housing & Care 21 PPP – contract to provide 285 extra care units (including 70 shared ownership and 5 respite care) across the borough, a 40 bed dementia care unit at Goscote and increased day care across the borough (including weekend access to services).
- b. The financial liabilities are disclosed annually in the council's Statement of Accounts and whilst PFI and PPP contracts are long term liabilities the agreements include financing and as such are netted off within the capital financing requirement.

7. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

- a. The Capital Programme and Treasury Management & Investment Strategy are managed by teams of professionally qualified accountants, who actively undertake Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on an ongoing basis to keep abreast of new developments and develop additional skills. They also have extensive local government finance experience between them.

- b. The council's Section 151 Officer is the officer with overall responsibility for capital and treasury activities. They too are a professionally qualified accountant undertaking an ongoing CPD programme.
- c. Any commercial projects that the council seek to enter into will also be supported by teams from all required professional disciplines from across the council, and external professional advice will also be sought if needed.
- d. Internal and external training is offered to members on an ongoing basis to ensure they have up to date skills to make capital and treasury decisions.
- e. The Council's Treasury Management Panel meet regularly to discuss treasury management performance, development of policy and identification of potential new investment products and the detail relating to them.
- f. The knowledge and skills of officers and members are commensurate with the council's risk appetite.

Annex 8 – Capital Programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29 aligned to the ambitions of the Council Plan – Council Funded Schemes

A1 - Rolling Programme Schemes

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	Draft carry forward from 2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Accessible services & connected places								
Economy, Environment & Communities	Traffic Signals Infrastructure	The council has a statutory duty to maintain all its traffic signal infrastructure. This programme of planned pedestrian crossing replacements will ensure the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians across the borough (Traffic Management Act 2004). Also supports delivery of the council's carbon reduction targets.	0	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	800,000
	Capitalisation of Reactive Highways maintenance- Pothole Funding	Capitalisation of Reactive Highways maintenance- Pothole Funding	0	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	800,000
	Highways Maintenance Programme	As Highway Authority the council has a legal responsibility to maintain the highway network. Failure to do so inevitably leads to a deterioration of our roads, increasing the likelihood of accidents and would ultimately expose the council to increased risk of third party claims.	0	1,300,000	1,300,000	2,800,000	2,800,000	8,200,000
	Promotion of Community Health and Safety	Ongoing funding of road safety schemes, to address local community concerns, which fail to achieve the strategic priorities associated with the Local Transport Plan funding in terms of casualty reduction. In supporting the delivery of these local schemes it is possible to improve local quality of life and safety creating safer communities.	0	120,000	120,000	120,000	120,000	480,000
Total Accessible services & connected places			0	1,820,000	1,820,000	3,320,000	3,320,000	10,280,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	Draft carry forward from 2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Celebrating our culture and heritage								
Economy, Environment & Communities	Capitalisation of Library Book Fund	Capitalisation of Library Book Fund	0	145,000	145,000	145,000	145,000	580,000
Total Celebrating our culture and heritage			0	145,000	145,000	145,000	145,000	580,000
Homes for all								
Resources & Transformation	Aids and Adaptations / Preventative Adaptations/ Supporting Independence	This project directly supports the council's: 1. Statutory requirement to provide Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs) this includes enabling the council to provide a continuous service rather than as some councils do in terms of stock-piling enquiries till new grant allocations are made to them. 2. Provision of maintenance of lifts and hoists. 3. Minor adaptation works. 4. Domestic electrical safety.	0	1,242,000	1,242,000	1,242,000	1,242,000	4,968,000
Economy, Environment & Communities	Health Through Warmth - Tackling Fuel Poverty	To help provide a safety net for those who cannot access other funding sources and is available as a loan charged on the individuals' property that is repaid upon sale or relevant transfer of their home. For this sum per year, it could offer 28 new boiler systems and 25 boiler repairs. Also helps secure continued investment from external agencies in tackling fuel poverty and excess winter deaths in the borough.	0	140,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	365,000
Total Homes for all			0	1,382,000	1,317,000	1,317,000	1,317,000	5,333,000
Safer streets, safer people								
Economy, Environment & Communities	Memorial Safety Management in Cemeteries	The continued inspection and making safe of memorials in Walsall cemeteries and to discharge the council's duty of care within the cemeteries. Increased safety of memorials benefits the residents of Walsall by delivering a safer environment within Walsall cemeteries.	0	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	80,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	Draft carry forward from 2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Council Wide	Funding to support essential works including health and safety, and other projects that cannot be programmed at start of year	1: Asbestos removal - the authority is required by legislation to manage asbestos within its properties and to remove to comply with health & safety legislation. 2: Statutory testing of gas and electrical systems in buildings. 3: Control of Legionella - statutory requirement to test all water systems and undertake upgrades and improvements as required. 4: Fire Risk Assessment - statutory requirement to ensure compliance with health & safety. 5: Demolition of redundant buildings to provide saleable assets and increase market value of sites. 6: General repair & maintenance of buildings, historic buildings, aiding relocations. 7: Self-insured property damage – insurance excess. 8: Risk Management - unforeseeable events.	0	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	4,000,000
Resources & Transformation	CFR 1391 Maintaining a Safe & Secure Environment (rolling programme)	Continuation of existing scheme CFR 1391 Maintaining a Safe & Secure Environment. Not all hardware has a warranty/support & maintenance agreement in place - it is more cost effective to replace the equipment should it fail - some equipment will run for 10+ years without incident, therefore having a support/warranty agreement in place is not cost effective. This scheme also funds critical work that needs to take place within the Council's data centre environments for example additional cooling units, additional door security, unforeseen problems ie suppliers unexpectedly declaring components end of life or unforeseen incompatibilities between components ie something new won't work with something old without additional intervention/replacement.	28,000	100,000	100,000	129,353	190,000	547,353
Total Safer streets, safer people			28,000	1,120,000	1,120,000	1,149,353	1,210,000	4,627,353
Total Rolling Programme Schemes			28,000	4,467,000	4,402,000	5,931,353	5,992,000	20,820,353

A2 – Prior Year Approval Schemes

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Vibrant towns								
Economy, Environment & Communities	Street Lighting Inspections	Capitalisation of electrical Inspections of Street Lighting- Health and Safety	0	62,469	35,793	63,091	0	161,353
	Future High Streets Fund	To invest in Walsall to deliver a much-needed boost to our high street at this challenging time (External funding announced by MHCLG. The works include the refurbishment of the Saddlers Centre including the transformation of the public realm area from the centre to the bus station with additional works to the train station concourse. This will be part of the transformative investment in Walsall Town Centre around the rail and bus stations. Originally £5,163,891 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	12,153,616	17,484,313	83,072	0	29,721,001
	Regenerating Walsall	Regenerating Walsall. Originally £223,206 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	223,206	0	0	0	223,206
	St Peter's Church Repairs	St Peter's Church Repairs - repairs to surrounding wall. Originally £29,569 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	29,569	0	0	0	29,569
	Development Team Structure	The Development Team structure is currently a Team Leader and 4 officers. Capitalising posts will enable further capacity to be introduced to the team to support delivery of the pipeline. Originally £77,649 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	500,000	405,298	327,649	327,649	327,649	1,888,245
	New Art Gallery	New Art Gallery	41,292	0	0	0	0	41,292
	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Rushall Olympic Stadium	5,833	0	0	0	0	5,833

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Economy, Environment & Communities	Town Deals	Walsall Towns Deal - In 2021/22, Walsall and Bloxwich were successful in being awarded £21.3m from DLUHC for each town. Working with the Town Deal Board and partners, a project confirmation table has been submitted for each project, with an underwriting requirement from the Council of £5.48m as the Council's share of the shortfall compared to the awarded allocation	0	1,779,600	0	0	0	1,779,600
		Bloxwich Towns Deal - In 2021/22, Walsall and Bloxwich were successful in being awarded £21.3m from DLUHC for each town. Working with the Town Deal Board and partners, a project confirmation table has been submitted for each project, with an underwriting requirement from the Council of £5.48m as the Council's share of the shortfall compared to the awarded allocation	1,015,844	2,265,000	0	0	0	3,280,844
	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Saddlers - Car Park Surfacing works, Electric Vehicle charging, Changing Places and toilets plus further capital works to units during/post connected gateway scheme. Originally £500,000 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	1,276	650,000	150,000	0	0	801,276
Total Vibrant towns			1,564,245	17,568,758	17,997,755	473,812	327,649	37,932,219
Celebrating our culture and heritage								
Economy, Environment & Communities	Single Library Management System	Single Library Management System	6,317	0	0	0	0	6,317
	Darlaston Library Integration	Darlaston Library Integration	60,586	0	0	0	0	60,586
	Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Self Issue	Radio Frequency Identification Self Issue - involves the tagging of library books with RFID tags and the use of self – services kiosks and other technologies to enable library customers to self-issue and self- return library books.	5,800	0	0	0	0	5,800

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Economy, Environment & Communities	Replacement PCs	Replacement PCs. Originally £34,000 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	34,000	0	0	0	34,000
Total Celebrating our culture and heritage			72,703	34,000	0	0	0	106,703
Accessible services & connected places								
Economy, Environment & Communities	Yorks Bridge (Top Up)	Yorks Bridge is currently the subject of a 7.5 tonne weight limit. Replacement scheme funded using council capital funding and the Department for Transport Maintenance Block. Originally £366,143 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	1,697,786	0	0	0	1,697,786
	Active Public Places	To deliver the full project scope of public realm works, canal bridge and basin works (approved by Cabinet). Originally £1,000,000 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	1,744,000	0	0	0	1,744,000
	Hatherton Road Car Park	Hatherton Road Car Park safety work	211,456	0	0	0	0	211,456
Total Accessible services & connected places			211,456	3,441,786	0	0	0	3,653,242
Supporting business and inclusive growth								

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Economy, Environment & Communities	Enterprise Zones	Required for the Council to cash-flow borrowing costs associated with capital investment into the Enterprise Zone. Financial modelling forecasts that these costs are expected to be recovered from future business rates generated from within the zone, although the Black Country LEP are the decision making body in relation to where business rates within the zone are invested. Therefore, on the basis that the BCLEP approve that costs on Walsall sites can be recovered through the business rates mechanism, then the Council will only be required to cash-flow these costs. Originally £2,178,246 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	353,941	2,178,246	0	0	0	2,532,187
Total Supporting business and inclusive growth			353,941	2,178,246	0	0	0	2,532,187
Homes for all								
Economy, Environment & Communities	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Social Housing Decarbonisation	59,870	0	0	0		59,870
	Willenhall Masterplan	Willenhall Garden City Phase 1 is part of a housing-led regeneration programme with public sector intervention in land assembly and gap funding required to support private sector delivery of new homes. Originally £2,543,194 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2026/27.	0	0	5,089,768	0	0	5,089,768
	New Homes Bonus	To support future regeneration projects. Originally £76,999 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	76,999	0	0	0	76,999

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Resources & Transformation	Temporary accommodation units	The Project is seeking to increase the Council's homelessness temporary accommodation (TA) portfolio with an additional supply of primarily self-contained dispersed homes, but also a block of emergency rooms for immediate placement. Originally £520,618 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	500,000	4,326,618	0	0	0	4,826,618
Total Homes for all			559,870	4,403,617	5,089,768	0	0	10,053,255
A quality experience for all								
Resources & Transformation	Replacement of 'tablet' technology	Devices will become out of date, this scheme is a tablet refresh programme	0	1,125,000	1,125,000	900,000	900,000	4,050,000
	Card payments, Digital Website	To ensure the council remains compliant and allows for citizens to pay for services online.	121,877	255,425	255,425	100,000	0	732,727
	Archiving of Systems moving to Customer Access Management being retired	Provision for archiving either systems or data within systems as and when they are retired where third party solutions are required.	40,000	0	0	0	0	40,000
	Standard Addressing	Standard Addressing. Originally £111,000 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	45,000	111,000	0	0	0	156,000
	Telephony	Transfer all of our incoming phone lines to new technology, potentially replace desk phones with headsets and implement Microsoft telephony.	90,000	0	0	0	0	90,000
	Capitalisation of Capital Finance Team	Capitalisation of the team to enhance capital planning, financing and strengthen programme delivery.	0	261,000	261,000	261,000	261,000	1,044,000
	Digital and Technology Service (DaTS) Staffing Capitalisation	DaTS will grow the internal team and knowledge to deliver capital projects which will reduce external consultants moving forward.	0	1,300,000	1,300,000	1,300,000	1,300,000	5,200,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Resources & Transformation	ICT safe and secure environment	ICT safe and secure environment	400,000	193,305	239,931	239,931	0	1,073,167
	Enabling technology	Further develop to include data changes, contract or agreements and assessment requirements. Originally £2,831,000 in 2024/25. £1,017,000 rephased into 2025/26, £957,000 rephased into 2026/27 and £857,000 rephased into 2027/28.	265,246	1,017,000	957,000	857,000	0	3,096,246
	IG Service Improvement	IG Service Improvement	16,145	0	0	0	0	16,145
	Android Replacement programme	These devices will need to be replaced every 2-3 years as the versions of android become unsupported (an android replacement carried out in 2022/23).	0	100,000	30,000	271,000	0	401,000
	Data Back-up/Security replacement & Cloud Data back up	The current on-premise tape back-up solution will be end of life in 2024/25 - a replacement solution will be required to ensure that data is secured in line with the council's retention policy and to also ensure that it can be recovered should there be a disaster.	0	0	450,000	0	0	450,000
	Wi-Fi Access Points and Licences	W-iFi access points and associated licences have a 4 year lifespan in which they are compliant with PSN standards. In order to retain the council's PSN certification the Access Points and Licences will need to be replaced on a 3-4 yearly basis.	0	0	0	80,000	80,000	160,000
	Enabling Support Services/ One Source system	Enabling Support Services/ One Source system	159,610	0	0	0	0	159,610
	MyCMIS - Council's Committee Management and Information System	MyCMIS - Council's Committee Management and Information System	12,000	0	0	0	0	12,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Resources & Transformation	Chip & Pin Devices	Chip & Pin Devices and associated licences have a 4-year life span in which they are compliant with PCI standards. To retain the council's PCI Compliance, the Chip & Pin Devices and Licences will need to be replaced on a 3-4 yearly basis.	0	0	0	0	30,000	30,000
Total A quality experience for all			1,149,878	4,362,730	4,618,356	4,008,931	2,571,000	16,710,895
A clean and green future								
Economy, Environment & Communities	Civic Centre Plumbing	Civic Centre Plumbing. Originally £66,600 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	66,600	0	0	0	66,600
	Council House Smoke & Heat Detection Fire Alarm	Council House Smoke & Heat Detection Fire Alarm. Originally £248,920 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	65,000	248,920	0	0	0	313,920
	Council House Internal Decoration	Council House Internal Decoration. Originally £30,218 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	30,218	0	0	0	30,218
	Civic Centre Heating	Civic Centre Heating. Originally £696,328 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	200,000	946,328	0	0	0	1,146,328
	Council House Windows	Council House Windows. Originally £945,570 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	315,189	945,570	0	0	0	1,260,759
	Council House General Heating	Council House General Heating. Originally £1,273,105 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	100,000	1,523,105	0	0	0	1,623,105
	Ways of Working	Ways of Working. Originally £188,665 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	188,665	0	0	0	188,665
	Public toilets	Public toilets. Originally £78,641 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	78,641	0	0	0	78,641
	HWRC station - Middlemore Lane	This is additional budget required to cover the uncontrollable increased inflationary / construction pressures on the existing project. To provide a new Waste Transfer Station (WTS) and large Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Middlemore Lane in Aldridge.	3,481,085	4,566,836	0	0	0	8,047,921

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Economy, Environment & Communities	Allotment Boundary Improvement Works	Allotment Boundary Improvement Works	21,473	0	0	0	0	21,473
	Capitalisation of wheeled bin stock	Linked to revenue savings option. Wheeled bin stock capitalisation	3,859	105,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	648,859
	Cremator Repairs/ Reline	Cremator Repairs/ Reline	3,779	0	0	0	0	3,779
	Council House Roof Repairs	Council House Roof Repairs. Originally £1,412,000 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	1,412,000	0	0	0	1,412,000
Central	Minor capital schemes <£100k	To fund minor capital schemes.	0	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
Total A clean and green future			4,190,385	10,611,883	680,000	680,000	680,000	16,842,268
Child-friendly borough								
Children's & Education	School Estate Condition Survey	Ongoing provision to cover school conditions.	0	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	200,000
	Children in care Foster Care refurbishment programme (business case required for additional £100k in 25/26 and £150k onward)	This funding is provided to enable foster carers and special guardians for children looked after by Walsall to enlarge their homes or in some circumstances, to obtain an alternative larger home. Originally £51,236 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	144,708	151,236	150,000	150,000	150,000	745,944

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Children's & Education	Residential Home New 2023	The project will provide a modern 4/5 bedroomed property that would be registered with Ofsted to provide accommodation for 3 children deemed to require complex care. The objectives of the project are to provide a safe and secure building that is fit for purpose, increasing sufficiency for children with more complex needs, to address current shortfalls in provision and to reduce dependence on high-cost provision. Since 2019/20 the total number of children in care has reduced from 671 to 650, however, due to the ongoing sufficiency pressures and the increasing number of complex cases, the number of children residing in an external residential home has risen from 37 to 73 in August 23. In addition, the average weekly cost of these placements has risen from £4.2k to £6.1k over the same period. By opening a new home, the service will have the ability to support the needs of our more complex children, who are currently residing in external residential or unregistered placements, at a lower cost than currently budgeted. Originally £153,600 in 2024/25. Rephased into 2025/26.	0	153,600	0	0	0	153,600
Total Child-friendly borough			144,708	354,836	200,000	200,000	200,000	1,099,544
Total Prior Year Approval Schemes			8,247,186	42,955,856	28,585,879	5,362,743	3,778,649	88,930,313

A3 - New Capital Schemes

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	Draft carry forward from 2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Child-friendly borough								
Children's & Education	Residential Home New 2024 (Business case required)	The project will provide a modern 4/5 bedroomed property that would be registered with Ofsted to provide accommodation for 3 children deemed to require complex care. The objectives of the project are to provide a safe and secure building that is fit for purpose, increasing sufficiency for children with more complex needs, to address current shortfalls in provision and to reduce dependence on high-cost provision. Since 2019/20 the total number of children in care has reduced from 671 to 650, however, due to the ongoing sufficiency pressures and the increasing number of complex cases, the number of children residing in an external residential home has risen from 37 to 73 in August 23. In addition, the average weekly cost of these placements has risen from £4.2k to £6.1k over the same period. By opening a new home, the service will have the ability to support the needs of our more complex children, who are currently residing in external residential or unregistered placements, at a lower cost than currently budgeted.	0	853,600	0	0	0	853,600
Total Child-friendly borough			0	853,600	0	0	0	853,600

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	Draft carry forward from 2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Homes for all								
Adult Social Care & Public Health	Assistive Technologies (Business case required)	Health and social care digitalisation strategy whereby an increased use of tech within ASC to support care and support (gov requirement). Aligns with Corporate plan keeping people at home and healthy.	0	250,000	0	0	0	250,000
Total Homes for all			0	250,000	0	0	0	250,000
Celebrating our Culture and Heritage								
Economy, Environment & Communities	Libraries – Community Association style HUB (business case required)	Libraries – Community Association style HUB	0	100,000	0	0	0	100,000
Total Celebrating our Culture and Heritage			0	100,000	0	0	0	100,000
Total New Capital Programme requests			0	1,203,600	0	0	0	1,203,600
Total Draft council Capital Programme			8,275,186	48,626,456	32,987,879	11,294,096	9,770,649	110,954,266

Annex 9 – Draft Capital Programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29 aligned to the ambitions of the Council Plan – External Funded Schemes

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Vibrant towns								
Economy, Environment & Communities	High Streets Fund	To invest in Walsall to deliver a much-needed boost to our high street at this challenging time, as announced by MHCLG (now Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities - DLUHC) on 26 December 2020.	1,087,327	0	0	0	0	1,087,327
	Levelling Up Fund	£20 million announced on 19 January 2022 by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to kickstart the delivery of over 500 new homes connecting local people in Willenhall to jobs, parks and new rail station.	13,626,319	0	0	0	0	13,626,319
	Levelling Up Fund	£20 million announced on 19 January 2022 by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to kickstart the delivery of over 500 new homes connecting local people in Willenhall to jobs, parks and new rail station.	2,331,525	0	0	0	0	2,331,525
	Willenhall masterplan - LPIF funding	£3.2m of LPIF Funding as part-funding for the Willenhall Masterplan project to kickstart the delivery of over 500 new homes connecting local people in Willenhall jobs, parks and new rail station.	0	0	3,200,000	0	0	3,200,000
Resources & Transformation	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Land & Property Investment Fund	4,522,594	60,682	0	0	0	4,583,276
		BCLEP reinvestment digital fund	173,150	0	0	0	0	173,150
		Growing Places Fund	586,344	0	0	0	0	586,344

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Resources & Transformation	Town Deal	Walsall Towns Deal - In 2021/22, Walsall and Bloxwich were successful in being awarded £21.3m from MHCLG for each town. Working with the Town Deal Board and partners, a project confirmation table has been submitted for each project, with an underwriting requirement from the Council of £5.48m as the Council's share of the shortfall compared to the awarded allocation	5,060,903	8,201,605	0	0	0	13,262,508
		Bloxwich Towns Deal - In 2021/22, Walsall and Bloxwich were successful in being awarded £21.3m from MHCLG for each town. Working with the Town Deal Board and partners, a project confirmation table has been submitted for each project, with an underwriting requirement from the Council of £5.48m as the Council's share of the shortfall compared to the awarded allocation	6,553,027	7,076,781	0	0	0	13,629,808
Total Vibrant towns			33,941,189	15,339,068	3,200,000	0	0	52,480,257
A clean and green future								
Economy, Environment & Communities	Food Waste Collection Capital Grant	DEFRA capital grant under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 for a capital grant to support the delivery of weekly food waste collections.	1,844,769	0	0	0	0	1,844,769
	One Palfrey Big Local Improvement Project	Landscape and Play Area Improvements at Palfrey Park, Arena Park, and Bescot Crescent Play Area	357,161	0	0	0	0	357,161
	Nature Recovery in partnership with Canal & River Trust	Nature Recovery in partnership with Canal & River Trust	44,493	0	0	0	0	44,493
Total A clean and green future			2,246,423	0	0	0	0	2,246,423

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Accessible services & connected places								
Economy, Environment & Communities	LTP Highway Maintenance Programme	This capital funding, known as the maintenance block, is distributed by the Integrated Transport Authority (ITA). As the Highway Authority we have an extremely high profile duty to maintain our highway network. This money is provided by the Department for Transport via the ITA with the condition that it should be spent on the classified road network. Includes allocation for potholes and bridge strengthening.	0	3,568,700	3,568,700	3,568,700	3,568,700	14,274,800
	Local Network Improvement Plan	The Government provides each locality with grant funding to help implement the Local Transport Plan in their area. The grant is used for the implementation of small scale capital schemes; development of major capital schemes and to part fund major schemes implementation costs. The programme is designed to address road safety issues, progress the Council's major scheme aspirations; and resource the required 'local contributions' to approved major schemes. (Department for Transport / West Midlands ITA).	761,725	1,563,100	1,563,100	1,563,100	1,563,100	7,014,125
	DFT Traffic signal Obsolescence	The council has a statutory duty to maintain all its traffic signal infrastructure. This programme of planned pedestrian crossing replacements will ensure the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians across the borough (Traffic Management Act 2004). Also supports delivery of the council's carbon reduction targets.	275,591	0	0	0	0	275,591
	Active Travel Tranche 4	Active Travel Tranche 4	2,303,357	0	0	0	0	2,303,357
	Wolverhampton Street S106	Wolverhampton Street S106	52,867	0	0	0	0	52,867

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Economy, Environment & Communities	Transforming Cities Fund	Transforming Cities Fund	109,952	0	0	0	0	109,952
	Highways CCTV Upgrade	Highways CCTV Upgrade	33,677	0	0	0	0	33,677
	Zebra Crossing	Zebra Crossing	4,774	0	0	0	0	4,774
Total Accessible services & connected places			3,541,943	5,131,800	5,131,800	5,131,800	5,131,800	24,069,143
Homes for all								
Resources & Transformation	Disabled Facilities Grant	This project directly supports the council's statutory requirement to provide disabled facility grants (DFGs). The project has a direct positive impact on the number and subsequent varied costs to the council from the increasing level of demand for home adaptations.	0	3,945,553	3,945,553	3,945,553	3,945,553	15,782,212
	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Purchase of Dispersed Temporary Accommodation	664,748	0	0	0	0	664,748
	Local Authority Housing Fund 3	Local Authority Housing Fund 3	0	323,000	0	0	0	323,000
Adult Social Care & Public Health	Integrated Community Equipment Store (ICES)	Supplies equipment to people with both a social care and a health need on an assessed needs basis. This is a pooled budget between the CCG and the council, this capital funding will be used to purchase this equipment which will enable people to return home or continue to remain at home. This now forms part of the Better Care Fund (BCF) for which the council is host. (Department of Health).	0	888,000	888,000	888,000	888,000	3,552,000

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Economy, Environment & Communities	Department for Business, Energy and industrial strategy (BEIS) - - Local authority delivery scheme (LADS) & Home Upgrade Grant scheme (HUGS)	Department for Business, Energy and industrial strategy (BEIS) - Local authority delivery scheme (LADS) & Home Upgrade Grant scheme (HUGS)	359,785	0	0	0	0	359,785
Total Homes for all			1,024,533	5,156,553	4,833,553	4,833,553	4,833,553	20,681,745
Celebrating our culture and heritage								
Economy, Environment & Communities	Walsall Archives for all	Walsall Archives for all	87,839	0	0	0	0	87,839
Total Celebrating our culture and heritage			87,839	0	0	0	0	87,839
Child-friendly borough								
Children's & Education	Basic Need	Paid to Local Authorities to support the capital requirement for providing new pupil places by expanding existing maintained schools, free schools or academies & establishing new schools (Department for Education-DfE).	5,899,617	10,000,000	8,000,000	5,000,000	4,714,497	33,614,114
	Devolved Formula Capital	Received by the Local authority then allocated out to individual schools as per allocations defined by the DfE. It is intended to provide schools with capital funding for improvement to buildings and other facilities, including ICT, or capital repairs / refurbishments and minor works. (Department for Education).	1,072,701	510,228	510,228	510,228	510,228	3,113,613

Directorate	Capital Scheme	Detail of Capital investment	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Children's & Education	Capital Maintenance	Allocated to the Local Authority on an annual basis to improve and maintain the condition of the school estate (buildings and grounds). Investment is prioritised on keeping school buildings safe and in good working order by tackling poor building condition, building compliance, energy efficiency, and health and safety issues. (Department for Education).	445,000	4,000,000	5,222,313	3,888,380	3,888,380	17,444,073
	High Needs Provisional Capital allocation	High Needs Provisional Capital Allocation funding is paid to Local authorities to support the capital requirement for providing new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities pupil places by expanding/improving existing maintained schools, free schools or academies.	0	3,731,136	2,000,000	0	0	5,731,136
	Other schemes carried forward from previous years requiring completion	Academies	215,807	0	0	0	0	215,807
	Family hubs and Start for Life programme,	To support the implementation of the Family Hub and Start For Life Programme which is aimed at providing families with the integrated support they need to care for their children from conception, throughout early years and into the start of adulthood. The capital element of the grant will be used to purchase / improve current data records management systems linked to documenting outcomes of the programme initially and then may be required to purchase equipment needed to support the programme ongoing. Funding from Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care	0	89,863	0	0	0	89,863
Total Child-friendly borough			7,633,125	18,331,227	15,732,541	9,398,608	9,113,105	60,208,606
Total Draft Externally Funded Capital Programme			48,475,052	43,958,647	28,897,894	19,363,961	19,078,458	159,774,012

Annex 10 - Summary Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29

Summary Capital Programme	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Council Funded Schemes	8,275,186	48,626,456	32,987,879	11,294,096	9,770,649	110,954,266
External Funded Schemes	48,475,052	43,958,647	28,897,894	19,363,961	19,078,458	159,774,012
Total Draft Capital Programme	56,750,238	92,585,103	61,885,773	30,658,057	28,849,107	270,728,278

Capital Investment Summary by Directorate

Directorate	2024/25 carry forward £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	2027/28 £	2028/29 £	Total £
Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub	0	1,138,000	888,000	888,000	888,000	3,802,000
Children's Services	7,777,833	19,539,663	15,932,541	9,598,608	9,313,105	62,161,750
Economy, Environment and Communities	28,717,917	36,723,872	33,659,323	9,345,612	9,199,449	117,646,173
Resources and Transformation	20,254,488	33,683,569	9,905,909	9,325,837	7,948,553	81,118,356
Central / Capital Financing	0	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	6,000,000
Total	56,750,238	92,585,103	61,885,773	30,658,057	28,849,107	270,728,278

Annex 11 – Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The proposals within this Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy have been prepared based on a capitalisation direction issued by the Secretary of State under Sections 16(2)(b) and 20 of the Local Government Act 2003: Treatment of Costs as Capital Expenditure.

2. The Direction

- 2.1 The Direction issued by the Secretary of State under Sections 16(2)(b) of the Local Government Act specifies that Local Authorities can treat as capital expenditure, expenditure which:
- “is incurred by the Authority that is designed to generate ongoing revenue savings in the delivery of public services and/or transform service delivery to reduce costs and/or transform service delivery in a way that reduces costs or demand for services in future years for any of the public sector delivery partners”.
 - The Government has extended the flexibility to use capital receipts, which has run since 2026/17, to fund the revenue costs of reducing costs and improving efficiency, to March 2030.
- 2.2 It is a condition of the Secretary of State’s direction that the flexible use of capital receipts in accordance with the direction only applies to capital receipts which have been received in the years to which the direction applies.
- 2.3 When applying the direction, Authorities are required to have regard to Guidance on Flexible Use of Capital Receipts issued by the Secretary of state under Section 15(1)(a) of the Act.
- 2.4 In using the flexibility, the Council will have due regard to the requirements of the Prudential Code and to the CIPFA Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice. The Council is also required to prepare a Flexible use of Capital Receipts Strategy before the start of the year to be approved by the Council – this is that Strategy.

3. Planned Expenditure 2025/26

- 3.1 To support the delivery of the Council Plan 2025-29 the delivery of the savings and efficiencies set out in the council’s budget for 2025/26 is imperative: delivery of the revenue savings will create the financially sustainable environment that is vital to enable the achievement the council’s objectives.
- 3.2 It is therefore proposed that any one-off cost associated with the delivery of approved saving plans (or suitable on-going mitigations identified during the year) are considered to be funded from capital receipts. More specifically, the council is proposing to use capital receipts in 2025/26 for the following purposes:
- Funding the cost of service reconfiguration, restructuring or rationalisation where this leads to ongoing efficiency savings or service transformation;

- Digital investment leading to increased efficiency;
 - Setting up alternative service delivery models to ensure value for money;
 - Investment in service reform to achieve on-going revenue savings.
- 3.3 The legitimacy of the use of capital receipts will be determined by the S151 Officer in order to ensure that it meets the requirements set out by the Secretary of State.
- 3.4 Approvals are subject to the availability of qualifying and uncommitted capital receipts. No approval to flexibly use capital receipts will be given that would result in the increase of borrowing cost for the capital programme.
- 3.5 The Council will implement this Strategy while maintaining its ability to use new capital receipts to support capital expenditure on short life assets and utilise capital receipts to reduce the borrowing cost associated with the financing of the capital programme.

4. The Prudential Code and impact on Prudential Indicators

- 4.1 The Council has due regard to the requirements of the Prudential Code and the impact on its prudential indicators from the application of this Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy.
- 4.2 The receipts in the scope of this Strategy have not been earmarked as funding for any other proposed capital expenditure and therefore there is no anticipated additional impact on the Council's prudential indicators as set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy except for Indicator Pr11 – Capital expenditure. This indicator will increase by the amount of capital receipts utilised to fund qualifying revenue expenditure.
- 4.3 This Strategy is affordable and will not impact on the council's operational and authorised borrowing limits based on maximum flexible use of capital receipts of £20m. Further details on the council's Prudential Indicators can be found within the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy.
- 4.4 The Council will also have due regard to the Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice when determining and including the entries required from undertaking and funding this scheme within the 2025/26 Statement of Accounts.

5. Monitoring the Strategy

- 5.1 The implementation of this Strategy will be monitored as part of regular financial monitoring arrangements and the progress will be reported to Cabinet quarterly.
- 5.2 The sections below provide a summary of the delivery against the planned projects for 2024/25.
- 5.3 In the February 2024 budget report Council approved to utilise £1.14m FUOCR. Following the 2023/24 outturn the available capital receipts have been reduced to £0.81m and forecast to be fully spent by the end of March 2025. A list of projects planned to make use of the capital receipts flexibility is set out in the table below as well as the forecast spend as at January 2025:

Proposed Area	Project Area / Work Stream	Forecast Qualifying Expenditure 2024/25 £m	Latest forecast (January 2025) £m
Walsall Proud Transformation and Change and Project Management Support	All Proud workstreams	0.04	0.48
One-Off Proud Workstream Investment to Deliver Proud Savings	Adult Social Care	0.29	0.29
Service restructuring and costs associated with organisation redesigns to deliver the changes in Proud ways of work	All Proud workstream projects	0.81	0.04
Total		1.14	0.81

5.4 Transformation and Change and Project Management Support: This resource provided support across multiple Proud work streams and as such support in the delivery of the overall 2024/25 saving of £20.10m. The latest forecast indicates that £12.82m of planned savings will be achieved by the end of 2024/25 financial year.

- 1 One-Off Proud Workstream Investment to Deliver Proud Savings included plans to deliver 2023/24 saving carried forward for delivery in 2024/25 related to adult social care. This is currently forecast at £0.29m. The latest forecast is £1.41m across these planned savings by the end of the 2024/25 financial year.
- 2 Service restructuring and rationalisation: of the £20.10m of savings proposed for 2024/25, approximately £1.44m align to staffing related work streams. The latest forecast is £0.04m by the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

Annex 12 – Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) Section 25 Report on the Adequacy of Proposed Reserves and Robustness of the Budget Estimates

Context

Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 (“the Act”) requires the Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) to formally report to members on the robustness of the estimates used for the purpose of calculating the budget and the adequacy of proposed reserves needed for meeting future expenditure requirements.

The Council is required to take this report into account when making its decision in relation to setting the annual budget and setting the council tax.

Since 2010-11, Walsall has received 19.5% real terms cut in funding, equivalent to £710 per household. Alongside this and following austerity, the Council has experienced the challenges faced by the pandemic closely followed by the cost of living crisis. The impact of these are still being felt, with significant cost pressures and increases in demand putting a strain on the council’s finances. As the Council continues to operate in a challenging financial environment, with uncertainty over funding beyond 2025/26, it is now more critical than ever to protect longer term financial sustainability by ensuring it has an appropriate level of earmarked reserves and general reserve balance to be able to mitigate any risks that appear in year which cannot be contained within Directorate budgets, avoiding the need for immediate reductions in services.

Reserves

Reserves are one-off money and can only be spent once. In setting an appropriate level of reserves, the Council has to balance the opportunity cost of holding reserves in terms of the impact upon council tax levels against the importance of maintaining adequate reserves and contingencies for planning for medium to longer-term financial resilience.

It is prudent for councils to maintain an adequate level of general reserves: they provide a buffer and mitigate against risks, such as unavoidable and unknown demand and other service cost pressures which may arise in the year; cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing; and support the management of the impact of any unexpected events or emergencies.

Earmarked reserves are also set to meet ‘known or predicted’ requirements, for example, self-insured liabilities, grant reserves, contingent and potential liabilities. Reserves allow the council to manage the impact of these and to manage change without the need for immediate reductions in services.

There is no overall formula for calculating what an appropriate level of reserves should be. Whilst the medium-term financial framework (MTFF) sets out the framework as to what should be a minimum level, the recommended level is based on best practice guidance, best professional judgement of the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and the strategic, operational, and financial risks facing the council, including an assessment of known and potential risks and an understanding of national and local factors.

A minimum level of reserves is specified in the Budget. The Council's MTFF sets a range of between 1% of gross revenue expenditure for the year in question (£8.51m) and 2.5% (£21.28m). However, Section 25 of the Act requires the CFO to report on the adequacy of proposed reserves and to determine the minimum level which the Council is required to have regard to in setting the overall budget envelope.

The MTFF also sets out the authority's financial framework including, as the first of ten themes of operational principles, calls on reserves and contingencies. A key principle is that reserves should not be considered to be or used as a budget and any in-year calls on the working balance should be replenished. Services cannot approve unbudgeted expenditure on the assumption that it will be met from the general reserve. This matter is reserved to the CFO, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

Adequacy of reserves

The CFO assesses and determines the appropriate level of reserves, provisions and contingencies using a variety of mechanisms, including;

- Being significantly involved in the budget setting process, the annual financial cycle, and engaged in the strategic leadership of the organisation (through regular meetings with the Chief Executive, other Statutory Officers, and the Corporate Management Team);
- The refresh of the medium-term financial framework (MTFF) and outlook (MTFO);
- Challenging the budget at various stages of construction, including the reasonableness of the key budget assumptions, such as estimates of financial pressures, the realism of income targets, the robustness of plans to deliver savings, and the extent to which known trends and liabilities are provided for;
- Review of Directorate financial risk assessments;
- Consideration of the Council's track record in relation to delivery of savings;
- Review of the movements, trends and availability of contingencies, provisions and earmarked reserves to meet unforeseen cost pressures in the context of future potential pressures and issues;
- The use of professional experience and best professional judgement;
- The use of appropriate professional, technical guidance and local frameworks (CIPFA guidance, LAAP99, Local Government Act 73, Localism Act 2011);
- Knowledge and involvement of colleagues involved in the process, including Directors and budget holders, along with finance business partners;
- Consultation with Members as appropriate, including the Portfolio Holder for Finance;
- Review of the strength of financial management and reporting arrangements, including internal control and governance arrangements and external assurance of these;
- Review of the current year's financial performance in services, actions to address areas of pressure, known future service delivery changes, the level of schools reserves and the financial performance of schools;
- Review of national and local economic, market, legislative and financial conditions.

Risks, including Strategic, Operational and Financial

In the budget, due regard is made to the strategic and operational risks facing the council. Some of these relate to the current economic conditions, others to potential regulatory or

national issues which may have a local impact. Estimates and forecasts include all known significant financial risks over the next year and medium term to inform spending decisions. The council continues to use an embedded good practice risk assessment approach both when setting the budget and in validating estimated outturns. This continues for the 2024/25 outturn and the 2025/26 budget.

A risk assessment approach is used to determine the required level of reserves and contingencies. This includes external risks; including the cost of living impact on services and residents, the legacy of the pandemic, national policy changes, legislation, national funding arrangements and levels of support available, changes in market, employment and economic conditions, service user behaviours (e.g. impact on income projections); and internal risks such as the ability to deliver planned savings. The MTFF is regularly updated and approved by Cabinet to reflect the changing environment in which we work. Reserves and contingencies are addressed within the Framework.

There continues to be significant uncertainties around funding, particularly in light of the impact of cost of living pressures, delayed changes to funding mechanisms, the continued use of one off grants and reliance on local council tax to fund service provision, and a one year settlement for 2025/26.

The recommended level of the general fund reserve balance takes account of the extent to which specific risks are supported through earmarked reserves. Three earmarked reserves were created in previous years to manage the assessed risk of:

- Cost of Living (COL) reserve to fund pressures deemed as short term (over a period of 18 to 24 months) such as significant fluctuations in energy and fuel costs and to smooth inflationary pressures;
- Risk reserve to manage the impact of in-year delays to delivery of approved savings arising from increased demand, cost of living or capacity and recruitment and retention issues impacting on services' ability to deliver to plan;
- Demand – to manage short term demand pressures (over a period of 18 to 24 months) for example in relation to children's social care (large sibling groups, remand, etc.) and to smooth fluctuations and uncertainty in demand levels in specific areas approved by Cabinet (children's movers).

All of the above have been utilised in year (2024/25) with some planned to be further used in the 2025/26 budget as set out in the Budget Plan.

As such is it considered prudent to ensure the general fund balance is sufficient to manage any further unknown or volatile in year pressures arising.

The level of opening general fund working balance for 2025/26 is partially dependent on the level of closing balances for 2024/25. The following table shows general reserves as at 1 April 2024, together with the proposed use of and transfer to reserves, and the resulting balance as at 1 April 2025, to secure the opening level of reserves recommended by the Chief Finance Officer.

Opening General Reserves	£m
Balance as at 1 April 2024	(19.56)
Transfers to / from earmarked reserves	(4.56)
Estimated closing balance as at 31 March 2025 and Opening Balance as at 1 April 2025	(24.12)

The financial risk assessment includes the risk of a number of different and varied events occurring within services, arising from economic, legislative, policy, funding, national government and other changes, which would impact services over and above current budgetary provision. These includes, but are not limited to:

- The cost of a major emergency occurring – in accordance with the governments Belwin scheme, the council would incur the first £1.70m of any costs. In light of the pandemic and cost of living impact, it is prudent to cover this within the general reserve balance;
- Managing the in year impact of new contract arrangements currently being retendered or negotiated, should these not be manageable within existing service budgets;
- The risk of bed and breakfast accommodation costs rising to national levels as opposed to locally projected levels;
- The risk of further losses of income over projected levels across all directorates;
- New Burdens / national policy implications on local budgets – the risk that Government changes in policy will lead to a transfer of responsibility / new burdens, without the transfer of funding to support those activities; or potential costs arising from inspections arising after the budget was set;
- Loss of grant funding where allocations are not yet final;
- Unknown liabilities that may arise after the budget is set, for example from changes in legislation or statutory guidance;
- The risk of additional children in care inflows and placement costs and increased costs of adults social care packages following reviews - consideration will be given to earmarking some of the general fund balance to the demand reserve to manage this;
- The increased risk of savings yet to be allocated to services, whilst revised transformation and delivery plans are developed;

These have been assessed, and a risk value assigned. Professional and best estimates have been made of the scope of the financial risk. Sensitivity analysis has been used where appropriate, to determine an appropriate risk value. The assessment confirms that a reserve value at a level higher than the MTFF guidelines is appropriate. This level of balance is considered prudent for a number of reasons:

- Uncertainty over the level of funding going forward, particularly in light of the continuing impact of cost of living pressures, the legacy of the pandemic on costs and income, supply chain issues and the fundamental changes in relation to central funding and business rate retention;
- The level of operational, strategic and financial risks facing the authority, as set out in this statement;
- The use of earmarked reserves above planned levels in 2024/25 to mitigate in year pressures and provide time to develop revised demand management and

transformation plans for adult social care and children's, resulting in reduced flexibility in the ability to further use earmarked reserves in this way:

- During 2024/25 a further £36.32m of earmarked reserves are forecast to be used;
- During 2025/26, £6.73m of reserves will be used;
- Whilst manageable, as the COL/Risk/Demand reserves were created for this specific purpose, those reserves have now reduced considerably and therefore this creates further risk which needs to be covered via the general working balance.
- The scale of the savings required in 2025/26 and over the MTFO period;
- Uncertainty around future demand led services, specifically within adult and children's social care.

The CFO has assessed the current year's financial performance and actions taken to address underlying pressures. In considering this, alongside the financial risk assessment, previous years' financial performance, and the potential risks and pressures facing the organisation, the CFO recommends that opening reserves are set at no less than £24.12m. This is based on the following assessed categorises of financial risk:

Financial Risk Assessment	£m
Funding risks – fall out of grant, council tax changes, etc	2.44
Cost Pressures including national, economic and legislative impact	19.22
Loss of Income / Investments	2.46
Assessed General Reserve Requirement	24.12

Earmarked Reserves

The council maintains a number of reserves, earmarked to provide for specific future expenditure plans. These cover:

- **Treasury reserves.** These reserves are to manage and smooth the impact of interest rate changes over the MFTO period and finance early redemption of loans to reduce the council's future interest exposure – it includes Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), Borrowing smoothing & repayments, preparing for the statutory override to cease, funding in year pipeline investments capital costs;
- **Grants / contributions received in advance.** This is where the council has received money in advance of the next accounting period or covers more than one accounting period. These amounts must be spent in line with the grant conditions. This category also includes ringfenced income such as building control fees, etc;
- **Improvement projects.** These reserves are to finance service modernisation and specific projects such as Cloud services, Oracle development, economic growth programme; and costs in relation to the council's transformation programme, Willenhall master plan;
- **Cost pressures.** Includes cost of living pressures above those budgeted which are short term or one-off and unmanageable post budget setting within existing budget and includes smoothing of costs over 12+ months whilst reviews are undertaken to reduce demand / pressures on an ongoing basis;
- **Council liabilities.** These reserves cover expenditure where the council has a legal obligation to pay costs, such as Insurance claims and self-financing costs, legal costs/claims, collection fund liabilities to smooth the impact of deficits on the general

fund, housing benefit subsidy claim, abortive costs, pension past service/contribution rate smoothing and redundancy costs;

- **Covid-19 grants.** The carry forward of specific government grants including expanded retail relief for businesses;
- **Public Finance Initiatives.** Liabilities for our PFI's with Street Lighting and St Thomas More;
- **Risk.** To cover unforeseen risks at the time the budget was set and manage any delays in delivery of savings due to unforeseen circumstances;
- **Other.** Other small reserves to cover one-off planned costs such as the fraud contract and investigations, CQC costs, buy versus lease cost in relation to vehicles and equipment.
- Additionally, the council holds Schools' reserves but these are restricted funds not controlled by the council.

A regular review of earmarked reserves is undertaken, with reviews taking place specifically during the annual budget setting and final accounts processes, and funds are adjusted as required or released where a liability is assessed as ceased. The expected level of earmarked reserves as at 1 April 2025 is as follows and is considered reasonable and prudent. All earmarked reserves are earmarked for a specific purpose as set out above and are released on the approval of the Chief Finance Officer.

Earmarked Reserves	£m
Balance as at 1 April 2024	(174.83)
Planned / Approved transfers from reserves in year*	45.43
Planned / Approved transfers to reserves in year*	(9.11)
Release of earmarked reserve following reserves review	4.30
Realignment from earmarked to general reserve to match risk profile of the 2025/26 budget	6.51
Forecast use of capital receipts in line with approved Strategy	(0.81)
Estimated Closing Balance as at 31 March 2025	(128.51)
Net use of earmarked reserves budgeted 2025/26	6.73
Further expected use of reserves (Risk/Demand)	8.95
Estimated Closing Balance as at 31 March 2026	(112.84)

Central Contingency

As well as general and earmarked reserves, the council holds a small revenue contingency to manage unforeseen but recurring expenditure. The contingency is held centrally and is calculated between 0.1% and 0.15% of the year's gross revenue budget. For 2025/26 this is to be set at £1.26m (the higher level).

A prudent central capital contingency is also held, not exceeding 10% of the annual council funded element of the capital programme requirement, to accommodate unforeseen / unbudgeted expenditure (i.e. where, due to the level of uncertainty, the financial impact is not certain at the time of setting the programme). The exact level is set by the CFO. The contingency will be funded either from drawing down the earmarked capital reserve or from an annual revenue contribution to capital outlay from the project reserve (subject to there being sufficient funds to replenish this at year end). For 2025/26 this is to be set at £500k, which is based on past requirements.

Schools Reserves

The CFO, as part of this statement, is required to confirm that school's balances are adequate.

In 2006/07, Department for Education introduced expectations on local authorities with regard to their schemes of financial management. Part of this legislation required schools to agree a balance control mechanism. This mandatory requirement was subsequently removed. The council and Walsall Schools Forum considered the options around balance control and given the authority powers to investigate and claw back balances in excess of a specified percentage of the school budget share. The council notes that the latest Academies handbook has removed the need for balance control for many academies.

Schools Forum is mindful of value for money in all that schools do, looks for medium term financial planning and encourages an adequate working balance as part of that process. This is supported by regular reports to the Schools Forum on medium term funding and more recently linking value for money and performance.

The adequacy of balances is reviewed annually by the CFO. There are currently 3 schools operating with a licenced deficit in 2024/25. Each of these schools are working closely with the council to implement an action plan to reduce the deficit and return to a surplus balance. One of these schools is planned to become an Academy in 2025/26. Due to this being an enforced academy order, the deficit balance will remain with the council. This has been accounted for within current budgets.

School balances and reserve levels are reviewed regularly throughout the year. Based on school monitoring submissions for 2024/25, the overall levels of schools reserves for 2024/25 are forecast to reduce from an opening balance of £14.53m to a closing balance of £10.93m, a planned reduction of £3.6m which is mainly linked to planned increased costs in pay and energy bills.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

Nationally, a significant number of authorities are experiencing difficulties managing the increasing demand for high needs support against the funding that is available within the High Needs block of DSG. Whilst Walsall has also seen an increase in demand for these services, it has, up until recently, been able to effectively manage those increases within the totality of High Needs funding that has been available. As at the end of 2022/23, Walsall's DSG reported deficit provision was £0.53m increasing to a deficit of £7.40m in 2023/24 (total cumulative deficit of £7.93m). Therefore, there is now a requirement for Walsall to identify and embed an effective DSG Management plan.

The DSG Management Plan covers a rolling 5 year period (current financial year plus the next 4 financial years) and sets out the estimated High Needs funding that the authority will receive over that period, the likely demand for high needs support and estimated cost of provision.

The unmitigated DSG Management Plan shows an expected DSG deficit of £33.5m in 2024/25 increasing to £61.70m by 2027/28. The mitigated management plan shows an expected DSG deficit of £24.58m in 2024/25 increasing to £29.56m by 2027/28. (To note, this is the expected annual deficit each financial year.)

There is currently a statutory override in place set by Government allowing local authorities to exclude DSG deficits from the council's wider financial position. This is due to end 31 March 2026 with the intention that local authorities should be in a position to manage high needs costs within budget by the end of this period.

There is yet to be any further updates provided by Government to advise if the override is to be extended or will remain in place to end on 31 March 2026. The Council is in regular contact with the Department for Education to understand the impact on the Local Authority's financial position in future years.

Local authorities are not permitted to fund any part of the DSG deficit without the authorisation of the Secretary of State, in the absence of any extra funding to resource the deficit. Our policy remains that we do not intend to subsidise the DSG from our own resources. We will continue to allocate resources to schools and other educational settings in accordance with the National Funding Formula for schools and early years. We will continue to work with schools and the Schools' Forum to identify and implement solutions to help bring the high needs budget back towards balance.

However, we recognise that a robust and sustainable solution does not lie wholly at a local level. The magnitude of the numbers means that managing the impact of the DSG forecast deficit on the overall financial sustainability of the Council's finances is unaffordable. Additional Government funding or fundamental system reform is required. We will continue to pursue opportunities to highlight the national systemic change needed before the statutory override ceases at the end of 2025/26, requiring a sustainable solution to be put in place.

The financial assumption in this budget is that the Authority will continue to take advantage of the statutory override and commit to implementing the options available to make good the accumulated deficit (such as taking out additional borrowing or raising the council tax) when the statutory override is lifted. Without the way forward to a financially sustainable solution being clear this represents a step change in the Authority's underlying financial risk and sustainability

Overall Assessment of Reserves

An opening level of general reserves of not less than £24.12m is considered to be sufficient for most possible events, over the short-term i.e., for 2025/26. The council will continue to face real and present financial challenges beyond this. In the context of this funding environment, wherever possible, reserves will be at least maintained during 2025/26 and beyond.

In recommending an adequate level of reserves, the CFO considers and monitors the opportunity costs of maintaining particular levels of reserves and balances and compares these to the benefits accrued from having such reserves. The opportunity cost of maintaining a specific level of reserves is the 'lost' opportunity for example, of using the funds to invest in service improvements or smooth council tax increases. In assessing this it is important to consider that reserves can only be used once. Therefore, any use of general or earmarked reserves is only ever used on one-off items of expenditure or short term pressures to smooth transitions between years whilst revised delivery or transformation plans are being developed and implemented. The level of reserves is also

determined by use of a comprehensive risk assessment to ensure they represent an appropriately robust "safety net" which adequately protects the council (a complex and multi-disciplinary metropolitan district local authority) against potential unforeseen and therefore unbudgeted costs.

In this context, it is considered that a level of reserves set at £24.12m presents an optimum balance between risk management and opportunity cost. The CFO is satisfied that the benefits accrued in maintaining these at the recommended level outweigh the potential lost opportunity from investing these reserves in other ways. This maintains a suitable and sustainable level of reserves, which include ensuring sound governance and financial stability in the short and longer term.

The above assessment concludes that general reserves, if set at £24.12m, will be at an appropriate level as determined in accordance with the MTFF and the CFO's professional advice.

Robustness of the Estimates included within the Budget

The CFO has been involved throughout the entire budget process, including significant input to the drafting of the budget, the ongoing financial monitoring and reporting process, evaluation of investments and savings, engagement with Members of the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny, advising colleagues, challenge and evaluation activities, and the scrutiny and approval of various reports.

As stated, the budget is risk assessed to ensure adequate funding for all known liabilities and to provide sufficient resources to enable service change and transformation. It covers an assessment of current year's performance, an assessment of income targets, estimates of future cost and potential unavoidable demand pressures.

Key assumptions

The economic outlook beyond 2025/26 remains uncertain in relation to interest rates, inflation and future Government funding. The environment in which the council operates continues to be one of unprecedented financial challenges arising from the increase in demand and the cost of more complex needs in relation to social care.

Appropriate inflationary growth has been included in the budget based on current and forecast inflationary and pay projections and review of contract conditions. The cost assumptions and prices used in the budget are derived from current intelligence and are considered appropriate.

Demand changes have been identified and are reflected in budget increases identified in the appendices where appropriate, on a risk assessed basis. Areas of identified pressure within 2024/25 are planned to be covered by a combination of base budget alignments to recognise the agreed ongoing management of corrective action undertaken during the year or base budget adjustments, where growth/investment is included within the 2025/26 budget to cover the cost pressure (or income/grant shortfall).

Fees and charges have been reviewed and changes are reflected in the overall budget.

Contingency has been built in for uncertainty concerning the impact on supply and prices

from cost of living. There is of course a level of uncertainty around forecasting, particularly given the disruption to services caused in recent years by the pandemic and cost of living in particular, and as such this is reflected in the risk assessment for 2025/26 and opening level of general reserves. Forecasts are therefore based on the best available data at the point the budget will be set, and best professional estimates.

Capital receipts and the borrowing requirement to be used for the capital programme are based on professional estimates both of timing and value.

Assumptions on funding, including government funding, business rate and council tax levels, inflation, income assumptions, increases in costs arising from demographics and demand, borrowing requirements, balances, and contingencies, are set out within the main budget report and are considered appropriate.

Significant investment has been included to cover those areas of most demand and volatility, particularly in Adult and Children's Social Care.

Summary

Best endeavours have been made to ensure that the budget and reserves are adequate using the information available at this date. The budget has been constructed within a professional policy-led medium term strategic framework, using appropriate assumptions, linking investment and spending to key priorities, and having undertaken a comprehensive assessment of risk.

In summary, I can confirm that, taking into account the information known at this time;

(a) the estimates made for the purposes of the calculation of the Council's budget requirement under Section 32 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, contained in the budget report, are robust;

(b) the financial reserves available to the Council as a result of agreeing the proposals contained within the Budget report are adequate to enable the setting of a lawful budget for 2025/26.

The Chief Finance Officer (Under S151 of the Local government Act 1972) is appropriately qualified under the terms of Section 113 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. In signing off this overall revenue budget report, the signature of the Director of Finance and Assurance who holds the position of Chief Finance Officer/S151 Officer, constitutes the formal declaration required under the Act that these conditions are met (based on the available information at the time of signing).

Date: xx February 2025

Shaun Darcy
Director of Finance and Assurance
Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer)

Part 2 – Treasury Management

A: Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2025/26 Onwards

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed, and that any surplus monies are invested in counterparties or instruments with an appropriate level of risk (as defined within the Councils Treasury Management Policies), providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.

The second main function of the treasury management service is to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to fund the Council's approved capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the council, essentially the longer term cash flow planning to ensure that the council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses. On occasion, when it is prudent and economic, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet council risk or cost objectives.

CIPFA defines treasury management as:

"The management of the local authority's borrowing, investments and cash flows, including its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

Reporting requirements

The Council is required to receive and approve, as a minimum, four main reports each year, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals.

Prudential and treasury indicators and treasury strategy - This covers:

- the capital plans (including prudential indicators);
- a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy (how residual capital expenditure i.e. that funded from borrowing, is charged to revenue over time);
- the Treasury Management Strategy (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised) including treasury indicators; and
- an Annual Investment Strategy (the parameters that set out how investments are to be made and managed).

A mid-year treasury management report – This is primarily a progress report and will update members on the progress of the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and identify whether any policies require revision. In addition, the Council will receive quarterly update reports on performance throughout the year.

An annual treasury report – This provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates included within the strategy.

A Capital Strategy report – The CIPFA 2021 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes require all local authorities to prepare a Capital Strategy report which will provide the following:

- a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services;
- an overview of how the associated risk is managed;
- the implications for future financial sustainability.

The aim of the strategy is to ensure that all the Authority's elected members fully understand the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting Capital Strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite. Further information can be found at Part 1 Annex 7 of the Budget Plan.

Scrutiny

The above reports are required to be adequately scrutinised before being recommended to the Council. For Walsall Council the Cabinet undertakes this role.

Quarterly reports – In addition to the four major reports detailed above, quarterly reporting (end of June/end of December) is also required. However, these additional reports do not have to be reported to Full Council/Board but do require to be adequately scrutinised. This role is undertaken by Cabinet. (The reports, specifically, should comprise updated Treasury/Prudential Indicators.)

1.2 Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26

The strategy for 2025/26 covers two main areas:

Capital issues

- capital plans and the associated prudential indicators;
- the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy.

Treasury management issues

- the current treasury position;
- treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council;
- prospects for interest rates;
- the borrowing strategy;
- policy on borrowing in advance of need;
- debt rescheduling;
- the investment strategy;
- creditworthiness policy;
- policy on use of external service providers.

These elements cover the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Investment Guidance, DLUHC MRP

Guidance, the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

1.3 Training

The CIPFA Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management. This especially applies to members responsible for scrutiny.

Furthermore, the code has been expanded and CIPFA expects all organisations to have a formal and comprehensive approach to ensuring the effective acquisition and retention of treasury management knowledge and skills for those responsible for management, delivery, governance and decision making, with developments to the existing knowledge and skills register for officers and members involved in the treasury management function.

As a minimum, authorities should carry out the following to monitor and review knowledge and skills:

- Record attendance at training and ensure action is taken where poor attendance is identified.
- Prepare tailored learning plans for treasury management officers and council members.
- Require treasury management officers and council members to undertake self-assessment against the required competencies (as set out in the schedule that may be adopted by the organisation).
- Have regular communication with officers and council members, encouraging them to highlight training needs on an ongoing basis.”

In further support of the revised training requirements, CIPFA's Better Governance Forum and Treasury Management Network have produced a 'self-assessment for members responsible for the scrutiny of treasury management', which is available from the CIPFA website to download and support members in identifying any further training needs that they may have.

All members were invited to a virtual training event hosted by the Council's Treasury Management Consultants Link Asset Services in January 2025 and further training will be arranged as required.

The training needs of treasury management officers are periodically reviewed.

A formal record of the training received by officers central to the Treasury function is maintained in line with the Council's Annual Performance Conversation (APC) process. Similarly, a formal record of the treasury management / capital finance training received by members is also be maintained.

1.4 Treasury Management Consultants

The council uses Link Group, Link Treasury Services Limited as its external treasury management advisors.

The council recognises that the responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the organisation at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers. All decisions will be undertaken with regards to all available information, including, but not solely, our treasury advisers.

It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Authority will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review.

1.5 Treasury Management Monitoring

Local and Prudential indicators are used to monitor treasury management activities which are produced monthly and reported at least quarterly to the treasury management panel. The indicators monitored during the year are detailed in **Annex 1**.

2. THE CAPITAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2025/26 – 2028/29

The council's capital expenditure plans are the key driver of treasury management activity. The output of these plans is reflected in the prudential indicators, designed to assist members' overview and confirm capital expenditure plans are prudent, affordable and sustainable.

2.1 Capital Expenditure - Prudential Indicator 1

This prudential indicator is a summary of the council's capital expenditure plans, both those agreed previously, and those forming part of this budget cycle. Members are recommended to approve the capital expenditure forecasts. The financing need below excludes other long term liabilities, such as Private Finance Initiative and leasing arrangements which already include borrowing instruments within them. The current capital plans which this strategy supports are detailed in Table 1 below.

A summary of the 2025/26 capital programme is outlined in section 4 of the budget plan at Section B Part 1 of this report. The summary of the draft capital programme over the plan period 2025/26 to 2028/29 is outlined within section 4, with full details by scheme in Annexes 8 and 9. Capital Strategy attached at Annex 7 of the budget plan at Section B Part 1 of this report.

Table 1: Current Capital Programme					
	2024/25 Forecast £m	2025/26 Estimated £m	2026/27 Estimated £m	2027/28 Estimated £m	2028/29 Estimated £m
Total Capital Expenditure	126.51	92.59	61.89	30.66	28.85
Resourced by:					
Capital receipts	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
Capital grants	72.41	43.96	28.90	19.36	19.08
Capital reserves	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Revenue	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
Borrowing	52.59	47.11	31.47	9.77	8.25
Total resources available	126.51	92.59	61.89	30.66	28.85

2.2 Affordability Indicators

Within this framework prudential indicators are required to assess the affordability of the capital investment plans. These provide an indication of the impact of the capital investment plans on the Authority's overall finances. Council is recommended to approve the following indicators:

Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream – Former Prudential Indicator 2

This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital financing (borrowing and other long-term obligation costs net of investment income) against the council's net revenue stream.

Table 2: Former Prudential Indicator 2					
	2024/25 Forecast	2025/26 Estimated	2026/27 Estimated	2027/28 Estimated	2028/29 Estimated
Ratio	6.31%	6.21%	5.33%	5.21%	4.79%

The estimates of financing costs include current commitments and the proposals in this budget report.

2.3 The council's borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement) – Prudential Indicator 4

Prudential indicator 4 is the council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is the total historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources. It is essentially a measure of the council's underlying borrowing need. Any capital expenditure not immediately paid will increase the CFR.

The CFR does not increase indefinitely, as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) is a statutory annual revenue charge, which broadly reduces the borrowing need in line with each assets estimated life and so charges the economic consumption of capital assets as they are used.

The CFR includes other long-term liabilities (e.g. PFI schemes, leases). Whilst these increase the CFR, and therefore the council's borrowing requirement, these types of schemes include a borrowing facility within them and so the council is not required to separately borrow for these schemes. The council currently has £13.51m of such schemes within the CFR. Council

is asked to approve the CFR projections in Table 3 which shows that the council's net borrowing need for the period from the start of 2024/25 to the end of 2028/29 is estimated to see an increase of £78.29m. The council's borrowing strategy is set out in section 4.

Table 3: Analysis of CFR					
	2024/25 Forecast £m	2025/26 Estimated £m	2026/27 Estimated £m	2027/28 Estimated £m	2028/29 Estimated £m
Opening Capital Financing Requirement	399.719	446.285	477.957	493.540	486.324
Adjustments for IFRS 16	7.461	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Revised opening CFR	407.180	446.285	477.957	493.540	486.324
<i>Net financing need for the year</i>					
Less MRP and other financing movements	(16.243)	(16.776)	(16.951)	(17.029)	(18.534)
Additional borrowing	52.568	47.106	31.468	9.774	8.251
New Right of Use leased assets	2.762	1.342	0.696	0.049	1.967
Movement in CFR	39.105	31.672	15.573	(7.206)	(8.316)
Closing Capital Financing Requirement	446.285	477.957	493.530	486.324	478.008

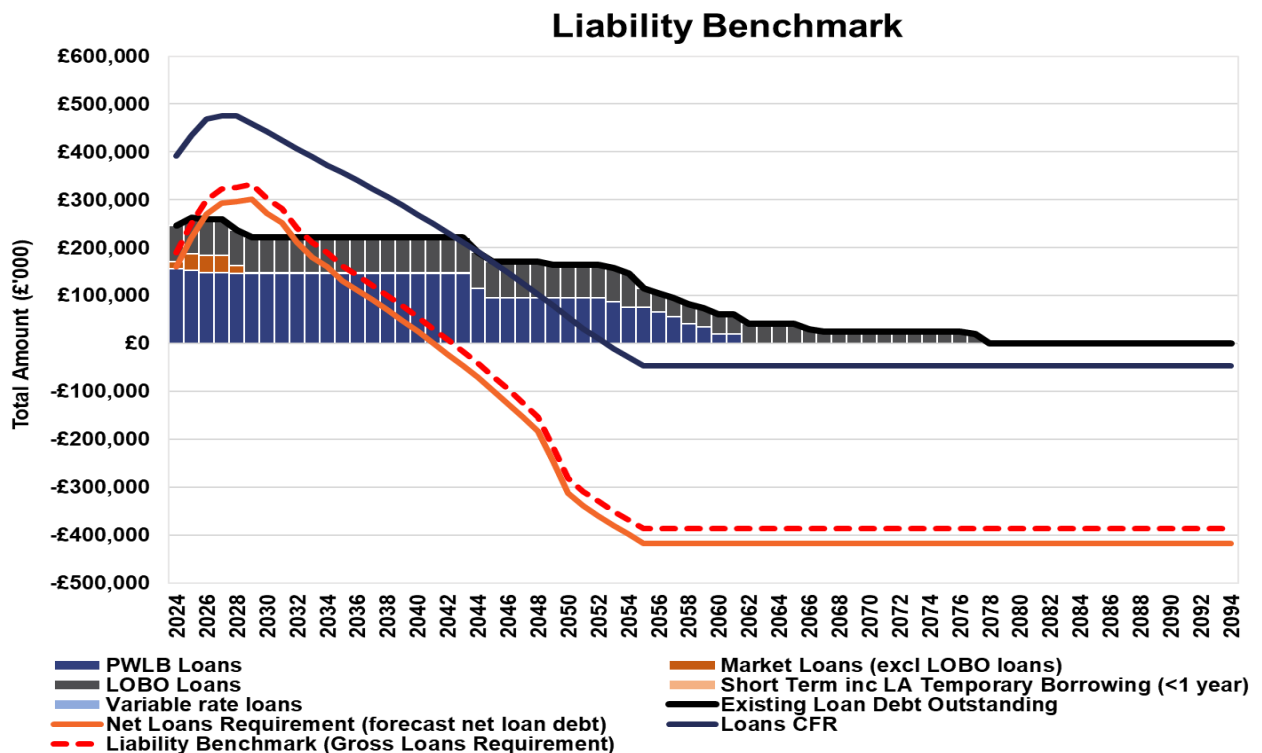
2.4 Liability Benchmark

The Authority is required to estimate and measure the Liability Benchmark (LB) for the forthcoming financial year and the following two financial years, as a minimum.

There are four components to the LB:

1. Existing loan debt outstanding: the Authority's existing loans that are still outstanding in future years.
2. Loans CFR: this is calculated in accordance with the loans CFR definition in the Prudential Code and projected into the future based on approved prudential borrowing and planned MRP.
3. Net loans requirement: this will show the Authority's gross loan debt less treasury management investments at the last financial year-end, projected into the future and based on its approved prudential borrowing, planned MRP and any other major cash flows forecast.
4. Liability benchmark: (or gross loans requirement) this equals net loans requirement plus short-term liquidity allowance.

Chart 1 – Liability benchmark for Walsall Council



The chart above shows Walsall Council's liability benchmark. The main point to note is that the benchmark indicates that the Council has a borrowing need from 2026 as the benchmark is above the existing loan portfolio. This is mainly due to the Council being in an under-borrowed position. Borrowing has been delayed as long as possible due to the high-interest rate environment.

The benchmark then assumes that over the medium / longer term authorities will run down investments instead of borrowing – however it should be noted that this would not always be the option that the authority chooses to take, as utilising cash balances potentially represents a re-financing risk (which the liability benchmark does not consider) where borrowing has to be taken once cash is run down at potentially unfavourable interest rates should markets decline in the intervening period.

Additionally, only approved planned borrowing can be included within the benchmark, as such the CFR and forecasts within the liability benchmark are underestimated after year 4 (as they are not allowed to include any potential capital plans the authority may choose / approve to enter in to following that period) and the longer term position shown in the benchmark is therefore not representative of the actual position that the council will realistically see. Additionally, as borrowing costs are not included for year 5 onwards, because they are not allowed within the calculations, it's too early at this point to identify if borrowing will be required. For prudence within future budget forecasts MRP calculations include estimated annual capital expenditure of £10m. This is why loans CFR shows as reducing and negative in later years.

The liability benchmark cannot therefore be considered in isolation and needs to be considered alongside the full range of borrowing plans, investment strategies and other

indicators set out within this strategy, with the liability benchmark itself being purely a guide to identify borrowing need and providing one of a number of tools that support the authorities ability to make judgements as required, and borrow up to the authorised limits, with any variance from the benchmark able to be explained.

3. MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP) POLICY STATEMENT

The MRP policy (see Annex 2) details the council's policies for calculating the annual amount charged to revenue for the repayment of debt.

3.1 Background to Annual MRP policy Review

A local authority shall determine each financial year an amount, it considers to be prudent, to be set aside for the repayment of accumulated borrowing relating to capital expenditure. This is known as the minimum revenue provision (MRP). There are four ready-made options available for calculating MRP, however authorities do also have discretion to determine their own MRP, other approaches are not ruled out, as long as the authority is properly reasoned and justified utilising them.

3.2 MRP Policy Objectives

- The council shall determine for each financial year an amount of revenue provision for the future repayment of debt that it considers prudent.
- To set aside funds at a rate such that future generations who benefit from the assets are contributing to the associated debt and avoiding the situation of future generations paying for the debt on assets that are no longer useable.

4 BORROWING

The resourcing of the capital expenditure plans set out in **Section 2** provides details of the proposed capital expenditure that will be incurred in support of the service activity of the council. The treasury management function ensures that the council's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes so that sufficient cash is available to meet this service activity and the Council's Capital Strategy. This will involve both the organisation of the cash flow and, where capital plans require, the organisation of appropriate borrowing facilities. The strategy covers the relevant treasury / prudential indicators, the current and projected debt positions and the annual investment strategy.

4.1 Current portfolio position

The council is expected to end 2024/25 with borrowing of over 1 year length of approximately £335m against an asset base of approximately £592m, and investments of approximately £75m, which will be proactively managed to minimise borrowing costs and maximise investment returns within a robust risk management environment. In 2025/26 estimated annual interest payments are £15.30m (£13.13m budget for 2024/25), with the increase due to planned borrowing included within the budget to take account of capital expenditure in line with capital plans set out in **Table 1**. Net investment interest income for 2025/26 is estimated to be £2.30m (£4.59m budget for 2024/25). The reduction in interest income budget is in relation to expected lower cash levels along with forecast interest rate reductions throughout 2025/26. The net budget for capital financing in 2025/26 is £25.52m (£27.91m in 2024/25).

The council's treasury portfolio position at 31st December 2024 is shown in **Table 4**; year end forward projections are summarised in **Table 5**. This shows that the actual external borrowing (the treasury management operations), against the capital borrowing need and operational debt, and highlights any over or under borrowing. It shows that the council's underborrowing position is expected to continue for the medium term.

Table 4: Borrowing and Investments			
	Borrowing £m	Investments £m	Net Borrowing £m
31 March 2024	248.80	(86.45)	162.35
31 December 2024	278.80	(95.18)	183.62
Change in year	30.00	(8.73)	21.27

Table 5: Borrowing Forward Projections				
Borrowing profile	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Under 12 Months	3.97	31.16	24.23	17.45
12 Months to within 24 Months	29.99	23.12	17.45	12.57
24 Months to within 5 Years	36.86	29.06	39.10	29.50
5 Years to within 10 Years	9.93	18.27	26.38	27.18
10 Years and Above	254.37	292.52	324.38	340.61
Total Borrowing	335.12	394.14	431.53	427.31
Operational Debt - Prudential Indicator 6	531.67	531.67	531.67	525.90
(Under) / Over Borrowed	(195.55)	(137.53)	(100.14)	(97.74)

The council has maintained an under-borrowed position, which means that the capital borrowing need (the CFR), has not been fully funded with loan debt. The council has been utilising its cash flow and reserves to minimise loan debt as a temporary measure. This strategy has been prudent whilst interest rates are elevated compared to the historical position.

Within the prudential indicators, there are a number of key indicators to ensure that the council operates its activities within defined limits. **Prudential Indicator 7** relates to the councils need to ensure that its gross debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2025/26 and the following two financial years. Previously, gross debt was compared to the CFR without adjustments for the following two financial years, this has been updated in line with Treasury Management and Prudential Code amendments. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years, but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue purposes.

The S151 Officer reports that the council complied with **Prudential Indicator 7** in the current year and does not envisage this indicator being breached in the future. This view takes into account current commitments, existing plans, and the proposals in this budget report. In accordance with **Prudential Indicator 8**, the council has adopted and complies with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management.

4.2 Treasury Indicators: Limits to Borrowing Activity

The Authorised Limit for External Debt - Prudential Indicator 5

This prudential indicator represents a control on the maximum level of borrowing. This represents a limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by Full Council. It reflects the level of external debt, which, whilst not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term.

This is based on the requirement to set a statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003. The Government retains an option to control either the total of all councils' plans, or those of a specific council, although this power has not yet been exercised.

The Authorised limit has been set at the Operational Boundary plus 10% and has been amended in line with Treasury Management and Prudential Code changes.

The Council is asked to approve the following authorised limit:

Table 6 : Authorised Limit £m - Prudential Indicator 5					
	2024/25 Forecast £m	2025/26 Estimated £m	2026/27 Estimated £m	2027/28 Estimated £m	2028/29 Estimated £m
Total	584.83	584.83	584.83	584.83	578.49

The Operational Boundary - Prudential Indicator 6

This is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to exceed. It has been calculated by taking the closing loans capital financing requirement (CFR) from the previous year and then adding any expected increases in borrowing requirements for the current year and following two years. The operational boundary has been set at the CFR level plus 10% to account for expected increases. The calculation has been amended in line with Treasury Management and Prudential Code changes.

Table 7 : Operational Boundary £m - Prudential Indicator 6					
	2024/25 Forecast £m	2025/26 Estimated £m	2026/27 Estimated £m	2027/28 Estimated £m	2028/29 Estimated £m
Total	531.67	531.67	531.67	531.67	525.90

4.3 Prospects for interest rates

The Authority has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Authority to formulate a view on interest rates. Link provided the following forecasts on 11 November 2024. These are forecasts for Bank Rate, average earnings and PWLB certainty rates, gilt yields plus 80 basis points.

Commentary from Link Group (the Council's Treasury Advisors) as at December 2024

The Authority has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Authority to formulate a view on interest rates. Link provided the following forecasts on 11 November 2024. These are forecasts for Bank Rate, average earnings and PWLB certainty rates, gilt yields plus 80 basis points.

Link Group Interest Rate View	11.11.24												
	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27
BANK RATE	4.75	4.50	4.25	4.00	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
3 month ave earnings	4.70	4.50	4.30	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
6 month ave earnings	4.70	4.40	4.20	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
12 month ave earnings	4.70	4.40	4.20	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
5 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.10	4.00	4.00	3.90
10 yr PWLB	5.30	5.10	5.00	4.80	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.10
25 yr PWLB	5.60	5.50	5.40	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.50
50 yr PWLB	5.40	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.30

Additional notes by Link on this forecast table: -

- Following the 30 October Budget, the outcome of the US Presidential election on 6 November, and the 25 basis points (bps) Bank Rate cut undertaken by the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on 7 November, we have significantly revised our central forecasts for the first time since May. In summary, our Bank Rate forecast is now 50bps – 75bps higher than was previously the case, whilst our Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) forecasts have been materially lifted to not only reflect our increased concerns around the future path of inflation, but also the increased level of Government borrowing over the term of the current Parliament.
- If we reflect on the 30 October Budget, our central case is that those policy announcements will be inflationary, at least in the near-term. The Office for Budgetary Responsibility and the Bank of England concur with that view. The latter have the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) measure of inflation hitting 2.5% year/year by the end of 2024 and staying sticky until at least 2026. The Bank forecasts CPI to be 2.7% year/year (Q4 2025) and 2.2% (Q4 2026) before dropping back in 2027 to 1.8% year/year.
- The anticipated major investment in the public sector, according to the Bank, is expected to lift UK real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to 1.7% in 2025 before growth moderates in 2026 and 2027. The debate around whether the Government's policies lead to a material uptick in growth primarily focus on the logistics of fast-tracking planning permissions, identifying sufficient skilled labour to undertake a resurgence in building, and an increase in the employee participation rate within the economy.
- There are inherent risks to all the above. The worst-case scenario would see systemic blockages of planning permissions and the inability to identify and resource the additional workforce required to deliver large-scale IT, housing and infrastructure projects. This would lead to upside risks to inflation, an increased prospect of further Government borrowing & tax rises, and a tepid GDP performance.
- Our central view is that monetary policy is sufficiently tight at present to cater for some further moderate loosening, the extent of which, however, will continue to be data dependent. We forecast the next reduction in Bank Rate to be made in February and for a pattern to evolve whereby rate cuts are made quarterly and in keeping with the release of the Bank's Quarterly Monetary Policy Reports (February, May, August and November).

- Any movement below a 4% Bank Rate will, nonetheless, be very much dependent on inflation data in the second half of 2025. The fact that the November MPC rate cut decision saw a split vote of 8-1 confirms that there are already some concerns around inflation's stickiness, and with recent public sector wage increases beginning to funnel their way into headline average earnings data, the market will be looking very closely at those releases.
- Regarding our PWLB forecast, the short to medium part of the curve is forecast to remain elevated over the course of the next year, and the degree to which rates moderate will be tied to the arguments for further Bank Rate loosening or otherwise. The longer part of the curve will also be impacted by inflation factors, but there is also the additional concern that with other major developed economies such as the US and France looking to run large budget deficits there could be a glut of government debt issuance that investors will only agree to digest if the interest rates paid provide sufficient reward for that scenario.
- So far, we have made little mention of the US President election. Nonetheless, Donald Trump's victory paves the way for the introduction/extension of tariffs that could prove inflationary whilst the same could be said of further tax cuts and an expansion of the current US budget deficit. Invariably the direction of US Treasury yields in reaction to his core policies will, in all probability, impact UK gilt yields. So, there are domestic and international factors that could impact PWLB rates whilst, as a general comment, geo-political risks abound in Europe, the Middle East and Asia.
- Our revised PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1 November 2012. Please note, the lower Housing Revenue Account (HRA) PWLB rate started on 15 June 2023 for those authorities with an HRA (standard rate minus 60 bps).

Gilt yields and PWLB rates

The overall longer-run trend is for gilt yields and PWLB rates to fall back over the timeline of our forecasts, but the risks to our forecasts are to the upsides. Our target borrowing rates are set **two years forward** (as we expect rates to fall back) and the current PWLB (certainty) borrowing rates are set out below: -

PWLB debt	Current borrowing rate as at 11.11.24 p.m.	Target borrowing rate now (end of Q3 2026)	Target borrowing rate previous (end of Q3 2026)
5 years	5.02%	4.30%	3.90%
10 years	5.23%	4.50%	4.10%
25 years	5.66%	4.90%	4.40%
50 years	5.42%	4.70%	4.20%

Borrowing advice: Our long-term (beyond 10 years) forecast for Bank Rate has been increased to 3.25% (from 3%). As all PWLB certainty rates are currently significantly above this level, borrowing strategies will need to be reviewed in that context. Overall, better value can be obtained at the shorter end of the curve and short-dated fixed LA to LA monies should also be considered. Temporary borrowing rates will, generally, fall in line with Bank Rate cuts.

Our suggested budgeted earnings rates for investments up to about three months' duration in each financial year are set out below.

Average earnings in each year	Now	Previously
2024/25 (residual)	4.60%	4.25%
2025/26	4.10%	3.35%
2026/27	3.70%	3.10%
2027/28	3.50%	3.25%
2028/29	3.50%	3.25%
Years 6 to 10	3.50%	3.25%
Years 10+	3.50%	3.50%

We will continue to monitor economic and market developments as they unfold. Typically, we formally review our forecasts following the quarterly release of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Report but will consider our position on an ad hoc basis as required.

Our interest rate forecast for Bank Rate is in steps of 25 bps, whereas PWLB forecasts have been rounded to the nearest 10 bps and are central forecasts within bands of + / - 25 bps. Naturally, we continue to monitor events and will update our forecasts as and when appropriate.

4.4 Borrowing Strategy

Our borrowing objectives are:

- To minimise the revenue costs of debt whilst maintaining an appropriate level of cash and a balanced loan portfolio;
- To manage the council's debt maturity profile, ensuring no single future year has a disproportionate level of repayments;
- To maintain a view on current and possible future interest rate movements and borrow accordingly;
- To monitor and review the balance between fixed and variable rate loans against the background of interest rate levels and prudential indicators.

Specific Borrowing Objectives

L1. Full compliance with the Prudential Code - **No Change.**

L2. Average maturity date between 15 and 25 years - **No Change.**

L3a. Financing costs as % of council tax requirement 20% – **No Change.**

L3b. Financing costs as % of tax revenues 12.5% - **No Change.**

- L4.** Actual debt as a proportion of operational debt is maintained below 85% - **A change from in the range of 65% - 85% by maintaining minimal debt levels given a high interest rate environment.**
- L5.** Average interest rate for internally managed debt will decrease to **4.41%** - **Changed from 5.46% in view of planned borrowing and forecast reducing interest rates.**
- L6.** Average interest rate for total debt (including other local authority debt) will be equal to or less than **4.46%** - **Changed from 5.51% in view of planned borrowing and forecast reducing interest rates.**
- L7.** The gearing effect on capital financing estimates of 1% increase in interest rates must not be greater than 5% - **No Change.**

The capital borrowing need (CFR) has not been fully funded with loan debt and instead the council's cash which would normally be utilised to support the council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used to fund the borrowing need as a temporary measure. This strategy is prudent as medium and longer dated borrowing rates are expected to fall from their current levels once prevailing inflation concerns are addressed by tighter near-term monetary policy. That is, Bank Rate remains elevated through to the second half of 2024.

The Council is currently working with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to identify and implement actions to reduce a deficit on High Needs expenditure within Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Whilst there is a ongoing pressure within DSG the Council will need to cashflow the shortfall in grant income compared to the expenditure. This is likely to have an impact on borrowing in the short term however this is forecast to be managed within current borrowing assumptions.

It is important to ensure that profiling for forecast expenditure within monitoring of capital projects is frequent and accurate to identify the optimal time and amount of any borrowing undertaken to avoid unnecessary interest costs and shortfalls in available cash.

Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution will be adopted with the 2025/26 treasury operations. The Head of Finance – Deputy S151 responsible for Treasury Management will monitor interest rates in financial markets and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances. For example:

- if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp FALL in borrowing rates, then borrowing will be postponed.
- if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper RISE in borrowing rates than that currently forecast, fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates are lower than they are projected to be in the next few years.

Any changes that are required will be reported to the treasury management panel at the next available opportunity.

4.5 Treasury Management Limits on Activity

There are three debt related treasury activity limits. The purpose of these is to restrain the activity of the treasury function within certain limits, thereby managing risk and reducing the impact of any adverse movement in interest rates. However, if these are set to be too

restrictive, they will impair the opportunities to reduce costs / improve performance. These limits have been reviewed. The indicators the Council is asked to approve are in **Table 8** below:

Table 8: Borrowing Limits	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Prudential Code Indicator 10			
Upper limits on fixed interest rate exposures.	95%	95%	95%
Lower limits on fixed interest rate exposures	40%	40%	40%
Prudential Code Indicator 11			
Upper limits on variable interest rate exposures	45%	45%	45%
Lower limits on variable interest rate exposures	0%	0%	0%
Prudential Code Indicator 12			
Lower limits for the maturity structure of borrowings:			
Under 12 Months	0%	0%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	0%	0%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	0%	0%	0%
5 years and within 10 years	0%	0%	0%
10 years and above	30%	30%	30%
Upper limits for the maturity structure of borrowings:			
Under 12 Months	25%	25%	25%
12 months and within 24 months	25%	25%	25%
24 months and within 5 years	40%	40%	40%
5 years and within 10 years	50%	50%	50%
10 years and above	85%	85%	85%

The council will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within forward approved CFR estimates and will be considered carefully to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated and that the council can ensure the security of such funds.

Risks associated with any borrowing in advance activity will be subject to prior appraisal and subsequent reporting through the mid-year or annual reporting mechanism.

4.6 Debt rescheduling

Rescheduling of current borrowing in the debt portfolio may be considered whilst premature redemption rates remain elevated but only if there is surplus cash available to facilitate any repayment. The reasons for any rescheduling include:

- the generation of cash savings and / or discounted cash flow savings
- helping to fulfil the treasury strategy
- enhancing the balance of the portfolio (amend the maturity profile and/or the balance of volatility)

Consideration will also be given to identify if there is any residual potential for making savings by running down investment balances to repay debt prematurely as short term rates on investments are likely to be lower than rates paid on current debt. All potential rescheduling would require the approval of the treasury management panel.

Rescheduling of debt would normally be undertaken where there is an opportunity to deliver ongoing interest rate savings to the council. However, rescheduling of debt does normally incur a premium cost (i.e. upfront break cost to end the borrowing agreement early). A reserve is therefore held by the authority to support any potential opportunities, and the current position of that reserve along with the forecast over the MTFO period is set out below.

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m
Opening Balance	21.914	31.977	28.472	24.129
Transfer to Reserves	0.533	(3.505)	(4.343)	(2.194)
Pooling of MRP reserve	9.530	0.00	0.00	0.00
Closing Balance	31.977	28.472	24.129	21.935

Analysis of previous rescheduling indicates that the cost of any premium may be up to £15m. Additionally, this reserve is also used to help mitigate the risk of interest rate rises on planned borrowing across the MTFO period and fluctuations in MRP charges across the period.

4.7 Financial Institution as a source of Borrowing

Currently the PWLB Certainty Rate is set at gilts = 80 basis points. However, consideration may still need to be given to sourcing funding from the following sources for the following reasons:

- Local authorities (primarily shorter dated maturities out to 3 years – generally cheaper than the certainty rate)
- Financial institutions (primarily insurance companies and pension funds but also some banks, out of forward dates where the objective is to avoid a “cost of carry” or to achieve refinancing certainty over the next few years).

Our advisors will keep us informed as to the relative merits of each of these alternative funding sources.

5 ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

5.1 Investment Policy

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)) and CIPFA have extended the meaning of ‘investments’ to include both financial and non-financial investments. This report deals solely with treasury (financial) investments, (as managed by the treasury management team). Non-financial investments, essentially the purchase of income yielding assets and service investments, are covered in the Capital Strategy (see Part 1 Annex 7 of the Budget Plan)

The Council’s investment policy has regard to the following: -

- MHCLG’s Guidance on Local Government Investments (“the Guidance”)
- CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes 2021 (“the Code”)
- CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2021

The Council's investment priorities will be security first, portfolio liquidity second and then yield, (return). The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity and with the Council's risk appetite.

In accordance with the above guidance from the MHCLG and CIPFA and in order to minimise the risk to investments, the council applies minimum acceptable credit criteria in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties which also enables diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk. The key ratings used to monitor counterparties are the short term and long term ratings.

Ratings will not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution; it is important to continually assess and monitor the financial sector on both a micro and macro basis and in relation to the economic and political environments in which institutions operate. The assessment will also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To this end the council will engage with its advisors to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as "credit default swaps" and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings.

Other information sources used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the banking sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties. Counterparty limits are set through the council's treasury management practices – schedules. This year the TM policies have been reviewed to ensure that any Banking Regulation changes are appropriately reflected to make certain that the security of the council's deposits remain the highest priority whilst the council seeks a fair return for its investment. See TMP 1 section on Credit and Counterparty Risk Management paragraph h. TMP 1 also allows the undertaking of non-specified investments on the approval of the S151 Officer e.g. loans to housing associations, property funds and bond issues by other public sector projects etc. The use of property funds can be deemed to be capital expenditure, and as such in some instances will be an application (spending) of capital resources. This Authority will undertake due diligence and appropriate checks, and if required seek guidance, on the status of any fund it may consider using.

5.2 Creditworthiness Policy

Approved Organisations for Investments

Only organisations that are eligible to receive investments from local authorities may be used. The council's credit worthiness policy forms part of this document for review and approval.

5.3 The Monitoring of Investment Counterparties

The credit rating and financial resilience of counter parties are monitored regularly. The council receives credit rating information from Link Asset Services as and when ratings change and counterparties are checked promptly. On occasion ratings may be downgraded when an investment has already been made. The criteria used are such that a minor downgrading should not affect the full receipt of the principal and interest. Any counterparty failing to meet the criteria will be removed from the list by the Head of Finance – Deputy S151 Officer and / or Strategic Technical Accounting and Transactional Finance Manager and if

required new counterparties which meet the criteria will be added to the list.

5.4 Investment strategy

The general policy objective for this council is for the prudent investment of its treasury balances. The council's investment priorities are:

- The security of capital
- Liquidity of its investments
- All investments will be in sterling
- The council will aim to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity

In-house funds

Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for interest rates.

Investment returns expectations

Investment returns are expected to decline during 2024/25. However, while markets are pricing in a series of Bank Rate cuts, actual economic circumstances may see the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) fall short of these expectations.

5.5 Specific Investment Objectives

Specific investment objectives are set out below

- L8.** Difference between average interest rate received on short-term interest (STI) versus at call interest rate on main bank account – comparing investment performance of proactively managing cash balances against doing nothing – 0% - **a change from 20%.**
When the indicator was originally set the interest rate environment was very different, at call rates were very low and there was scope to achieve a higher return by placing funds for longer. Currently there is an inverted yield curve as interest rate cuts are expected, this means that there is little difference in rates between placing funds overnight or short-term.
- L9.** Average interest rate received on:
- At call investments – 3.73% - **a change from 3.98%**
 - Short-term investments – 3.73% - **a change from 4.00%**
 - Long-term investments – 3.73% - **a change from 4.20%**
 - Property Funds – 4.50% - **a change from 4.10%**
- L10** Average rate on at call and short-term investments will be equal to or greater than 3.72% - **a change from 3.99%.**
- L11** Average interest rate received on all investments:
- Including Property Funds – 3.72% - **a change from 4.00%**
 - Excluding Property Funds – 4.04% - **a change from 4.03%**
- L12** % daily bank balances within a target range of 99% - **no change.**

Should the forecast for decreases in inflation increase, there could be a downside risk i.e. Bank Rate decreases occur earlier and / or at a quicker pace.

Investment treasury indicator and limit

Total principal funds invested for greater than 365 days. These limits are set with regard to the council's liquidity requirements and to reduce the need for early sale of an investment and are based on the availability of funds after each year end.

The Council is asked to approve Prudential Indicator 13. Treasury indicator and limit:

Prudential Indicator 13 Maximum principal sums invested > 365 days			
£m	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Principal sums invested > 365 days	£25m	£25m	£25m
Property Funds	£30m	£30m	£30m

5.6 Additional disclosures required within the statutory guidance on local government investments

The updated statutory guidance on local government investments, identifies specific disclosures that the authority should identify within its Investment Strategy for all investments that it holds. The required disclosures for investments held by the authority are set out at Annex 3.

5.7 End of year investment report

At the end of the financial year, the Council will report on its investment activity as part of its Annual Treasury Report.

Annex 1

IN YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT INDICATORS TO BE MONITORED

No.	Indicator	2024/25 Forecast	2025/26 Estimated	2026/27 Estimated	2027/28 Estimated
PRL 1	a. Capital expenditure - Council Resources - £m	54.10	48.63	32.99	11.29
	b. Capital expenditure - External Resources - £m	72.41	43.96	28.90	19.36
Former PRL 2	Estimates of the ratio of financing costs to the net revenue stream	6.31%	6.21%	5.33%	5.21%
L. 3	a. Financing costs as % of Council Tax Requirement	3.31%	20%	20%	20%
	b. Financing costs as % of Tax Revenues	2.33%	12.50%	12.50%	12.50%
L. 4	Actual debt v operational debt within the following range	63.56%	85.00%	85.00%	85.00%
L. 5	Average interest rate of debt excluding other local authority debt	4.21%	4.41%	4.27%	4.49%
L. 6	Average interest rate of debt including other local authority debt	4.24%	4.46%	4.27%	4.49%
L. 9	Average interest rate received on:				
	a. At Call Investments	5.00%	3.73%	3.48%	3.35%
	b. Short Term Investments	5.14%	3.73%	3.70%	3.50%
	c. Long Term Investments	5.02%	3.73%	3.70%	3.50%
	d. Property Fund	4.36%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%
L. 10	Average interest rate on all ST investments (ST and At Call)	5.03%	3.73%	3.55%	3.40%
L. 11	a. Average interest rate on all investments (excluding property fund)	5.03%	3.72%	3.57%	3.41%
	b. Average interest rate on all investments (including property fund)	4.86%	4.04%	3.96%	3.88%
L. 12	% daily bank balances within target range	99%	99%	99%	99%

MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP) POLICY

Under the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2018, local authorities have a duty to produce an annual statement on its policy for making a minimum revenue provision (MRP).

For the financial year **2025/26** (no change to the policy in 2024/25) the authority will be adopting the following policies in determining the MRP:

1. For all existing capital expenditure balances within the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) held as at 1 April 2023 MRP will be applied on an annuity basis with the write down period determined by asset lives up to the maximum allowable by the regulations set out above.
 2. For all capital expenditure incurred from 1 April 2023 MRP will be applied on an annuity basis with the write down period determined by asset lives up to the maximum allowable by the regulations set out above.
 3. The authority will treat the asset life as commencing in the year in which the asset first becomes operationally available. Noting that in accordance with the regulations the authority may postpone the beginning of the associated MRP until the financial year following the one in which the asset becomes operational, there will be an annual adjustment for Assets Under Construction.
 4. If determined by the S151 Officer the annual instalment may be calculated by the equal instalment method or other appropriate methods dependant up on the nature of the capital expenditure.
 5. In all years, the CFR for the purposes of the MRP calculation will be adjusted for other local authority transferred debt, finance lease and Private Finance Initiative (PFI).
 6. The Section 151 officer shall on an annual basis review the level of MRP to be charged, as calculated as per paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 above to determine if this is at a level, which is considered prudent. The amount of MRP charged shall not be less than zero in any financial year.
- 3.1 For all existing capital expenditure balances within the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) held as at 1 April 2023 MRP will be applied on an annuity basis with the write down period determined by asset lives up to the maximum allowable by the regulations set out above.

ADDITIONAL DISCLOSURES REQUIRED WITHIN STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

The MHCLG issued Investment Guidance in 2018, sets out specific disclosures that the authority should identify within its Investment Strategy for all investments that it holds.

The required disclosures for investments held by the authority are set out below.

1. Types of Investment

1.1 Investments made by local authorities can be classified into one of two main categories:

- Investments held for treasury management purposes
- Other investments

2. Contribution of investments toward the service delivery objectives and / or the place making role of the local authority

2.1 For each type of investment the disclosure guidelines require the authority to identify the contribution that the investments make. For Walsall's investments details of this contribution are set out below.

Investments held for treasury management purposes

The contribution that these investments make to the objectives of the local authority is to support effective treasury management activities, with the requirement to prioritise Security, Liquidity and Yield in that order of importance.

Other Investments

Details of all other Investments that the authority holds, and the contribution that each makes to the service delivery objectives and / or the place making role of the local authority is set out below:

I. Investment Properties

The council does not hold any material investment properties, however it is recognised the council does own the Saddlers Shopping Centre and the Old Square Shopping Centre both of which categorised as operational assets in line with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24.

3. Use of Indicators

The disclosure guidelines require the authority to produce relevant indicators for investments to support the ability of the public to assess the level of risk exposure. These are provided below for Walsall's investments.

Investments held for treasury management purposes

These investments are funded through the council's cash balances. The authorities published Treasury Management and Investment Strategy already includes a range of Prudential and

Local indicators that support the assessment of performance management and risk exposure in this area.

Additionally, the disclosure guidelines recommend that the authority to also publish the following two indicators.

Indicator	Description	Ratio (2024/25 Forecast)	Ratio (2025/26 Estimate)	Ratio (2026/27 Estimate)	Ratio (2027/28 Estimate)	Ratio (2028/29 Estimate)
Debt to Net Revenue Stream	Gross debt as a percentage of net service expenditure (where net service expenditure is a proxy for the size and financial strength of a local authority).	1.40:1	1.46:1	1.56:1	1.48:1	1.44:1
Commercial income to Net Revenue Stream	A measure of the authorities dependence on non-fees and charges income to deliver core services (where estimated fees and charges are netted off gross expenditure to calculate NSE).	0.44%	0.42%	0.30%	0.29%	0.28%

4. Security, Liquidity and Yield

4.1 Prudent investments will consider security, liquidity and yield in that order with the underlying objectives being:

- **Security** – protecting the capital sum invested from loss;
- **Liquidity** – ensuring the funds invested are available when needed;
- **Yield** – once security and liquidity are determined it is then reasonable to consider what yield can be obtained

4.2 When entering into '**Investments held for treasury management purposes**' local authorities always consider security, liquidity and yield (in that order) and the authorities Treasury Management Policies clearly set out and support this requirement.

4.3 When entering into '**Other Investments**' local authorities should consider the balance between security, liquidity and yield based on their risk appetite and the contribution that the investment will make toward service delivery objectives and / or the place making role of the local authority.

4.4 Security

Investments held for treasury management purposes

All investments that the authority currently holds for treasury management purposes are defined as financial investments, and the authorities Treasury Management policies clearly

define how credit worthiness and high credit quality will be determined. The policies also set out procedures for determining which categories of investment may be used, those which have already been defined as suitable for use, and the upper limits for investment with each counterparty / investment area.

Other Investments

All 'Other Investments' that the authority currently holds are defined as non-financial investments, which are non-financial assets that the authority holds primarily or partially to generate a profit.

Where a local authority holds a non-financial investment, it will normally have a physical asset that can be realised to recoup the capital invested. As such the disclosure guidelines require authorities to consider whether the asset retains sufficient value to provide security of investment. The authority does not hold any assets classified as 'Other Investments'.

Risk Assessment of Investments

Investments held for treasury management purposes

The authorities Treasury Management policies clearly define how risk for these types of investment will be assessed, including details of external advisors that may be used, the use of credit ratings and how often these are reviewed and additional sources of information that will support the underlying assessment of risk that may be attributable to the investment.

Other Investments

The way in which the Council manages other investments, including investment property and commercial activity is set out in detail within the Capital & Investment Strategy.

4.5 Liquidity

Investments held for treasury management purposes

For the Treasury Management investments held by the authority, the Treasury Management policies set out how the authority will determine the periods for which funds may be prudently committed and the maximum periods that will be utilised.

Other Investments

For the Other Investments held by the authority, these are all currently properties which are held for both regeneration and investment. The Council recognises that if it requires access to its investment these assets can take a considerable period to sell in certain market conditions. Therefore, these investments are all considered to be medium to long term, with a fair value assessment undertaken on an annual basis which is used to inform the point at which it may be prudent for the authority to consider selling assets and repaying any associated borrowing.

5. **Proportionality**

5.1 The scale of the 'Other Investments' currently, or planned to be, held by the authority, and any assumed associated profit to be generated by these investments does not place the authority in a position where it is dependent on this activity to achieve a balanced revenue budget.

6. Borrowing In Advance of Need

- 6.1 The councils Treasury management Strategy clearly sets out that it will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within forward approved CFR estimates and will be considered carefully to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated and that the council can ensure the security of such funds.

7. Capacity, Skills and Culture

Knowledge & Skills

- 7.1 The authorities Treasury Management activity is managed by a team of professionally qualified accountants, who actively undertake Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on an ongoing basis to keep abreast of new developments and develop additional skills. They also have extensive Local Government finance experience between them.
- 7.2 The Council's Section 151 Officer is the officer with overall responsibility for Treasury activities. They too are a professionally qualified accountant undertaking an ongoing CPD programme.
- 7.3 Any commercial projects that the council seek to enter into will also be supported by teams from all required professional disciplines from across the Council, and external professional advice will also be sought if needed.
- 7.4 Internal and external training is offered to members on an ongoing basis to ensure they have up to date skills to make commercial investment and treasury decisions.
- 7.5 The Council's Treasury Management Panel meet regularly to discuss treasury management performance, development of policy and identification of potential new investment products and the detail relating to them.
- 7.6 The knowledge and skills of officers and members are commensurate with the Council's risk appetite.

Commercial Activity and Governance

- 7.7 The Council has a strong governance framework that goes beyond the regulatory codes. This includes a Treasury Management Panel (TMP) in addition to reporting to Cabinet and Council. The TMP is made up of senior council finance officers who meet to discuss treasury management performance, development of policy and identification of potential new investment products and the detail relating to them.
- 7.8 Due diligence is of paramount importance. All of the Councils commercial investments have individual business cases that are subject to thorough risk assessment. Where appropriate to the size and scale of the project independent technical and legal reviews will also be considered.
- 7.9 Ongoing performance monitoring for all commercial schemes is also undertaken and reported to relevant members and senior officers on a regular basis.

7.10 The Council also seeks to ensure that all commercial schemes are fully aligned with priority outcomes set out within the Corporate Plan.

7.11 Any decisions taken on commercial investments are supported by the approach to non-financial investments and risk assessment process set out within this Treasury Management and Investment Strategy, with any individuals involved in negotiation of commercial deals being made aware of these principles and the prudential and regulatory regime within which local authorities operate.

8. Other Useful Information

Links to other documents that provide useful information in relation to the disclosures set out within this annex are set out below:

Walsall Council 2023/24 Statement of Accounts.

Walsall Council 2025/26 Budget Plan with a summary of the 2025/26 capital programme outlined in section 4 of the budget plan at Section B Part 1 of this report. The summary of the draft capital programme over the plan period 2025/26 to 2028/29 is outlined at section 4, with full details by scheme within Annexes 8 and 9.

Walsall Council 2025/26 Capital Strategy (see Part 1 Annex 7 of the Budget Plan).

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

This Economic Commentary is based upon information provided by the Councils Treasury Management Advisors – Link Group.

The third quarter of 2024 (July to September) saw:

- Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth stagnating in July following downwardly revised Q2 figures (0.5% quarter/quarter);
- A further easing in wage growth as the headline 3 month year on year rate (including bonuses) fell from 4.6% in June to 4.0% in July;
- Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation hitting its target in June before edging above it to 2.2% in July and August;
- Core CPI inflation increasing from 3.3% in July to 3.6% in August;
- The Bank of England initiating its easing cycle by lowering interest rates from 5.25% to 5.0% in August and holding them steady in its September meeting;
- 10-year gilt yields falling to 4.0% in September.

Over the aforementioned period, the economy's stagnation in June and July pointed more to a mild slowdown in UK GDP growth than a sudden drop back into a recession. However, in the interim period, to 12 December, arguably the biggest impact on the economy's performance has been the negative market sentiment in respect of the fallout from the Chancellor's Budget on 30 October.

If we reflect on the 30 October Budget, our central case is that those policy announcements will prove to be inflationary, at least in the near-term. The Office for Budgetary Responsibility and the Bank of England concur with that view. The latter have the CPI measure of inflation hitting 2.5% year/year by the end of 2024 and staying sticky until at least 2026. The Bank forecasts CPI to be elevated at 2.7% year/year (Q4 2025) before dropping back to sub-2% in 2027. Nonetheless, since the Budget, the October inflation print has shown the CPI measure of inflation bouncing up to 2.3% year/year with the prospect that it will be close to 3% by the end of the year before falling back slowly through 2025. The Retail Price Index (RPI) measure has also increased significantly to 3.4% year/year.

How high inflation goes will primarily be determined by several key factors. First amongst those is that the major investment in the public sector, according to the Bank of England, will lift UK real GDP to 1.7% in 2025 before growth moderates in 2026 and 2027. The debate around whether the Government's policies lead to a material uptick in growth primarily focus on the logistics of fast-tracking planning permissions, identifying sufficient skilled labour to undertake a resurgence in building, and an increase in the employee participation rate within the economy.

There are inherent risks to all the above. The worst-case scenario would see systemic blockages of planning permissions and the inability to identify and resource the additional workforce required to deliver large-scale IT, housing and infrastructure projects. This would lead to upside risks to inflation, an increased prospect of further Government borrowing & tax rises in the June 2025 Spending Review (pushed back from the end of March), and a tepid GDP performance.

Regarding having a sufficiently large pool of flexible and healthy workers, the initial outlook does not look bright. Research from Capital Economics has alluded to an increase of some 500,000 construction workers being needed to provide any chance of the Government hitting its target of 300,000 new homes being built in each of the next five years (234,000 net additional dwellings in England in 2022/23). But the last time such an increase was needed, and construction employment is currently at a nine-year low, it took 12 years to get there (1996 to 2008). Also note, as of October 2024, job vacancies in the construction sector were still higher than at any time in the 20 years preceding the pandemic.

Currently, it also seems likely that net inward migration is set to fall, so there is likely to be a smaller pool of migrant workers available who, in the past, have filled the requirement for construction worker demand. The Government plans to heavily promote training schemes, particularly to the one million 16- to 24-year-olds who are neither in education nor work. But it is arguable as to whether the employee shortfall can be made up from this source in the requisite time, even if more do enter the workforce.

Against, this backdrop, there may be a near-term boost to inflation caused by a wave of public sector cash chasing the same construction providers over the course of the next year or so, whilst wages remain higher than the Bank currently forecasts because of general labour shortages, including in social care where Government accepts there is a 150,000 shortfall at present.

Unemployment stands at a low 4.3% (September), whilst wages are rising at 4.3% year/year (including bonuses) and 4.8% (excluding bonuses). The Bank would ideally like to see further wage moderation to underpin any further gradual relaxing of monetary policy. Indeed, over the next six months, the market is currently only pricing in Bank Rate reductions in February and May – which would see Bank Rate fall to 4.25% - but further cuts, thereafter, are highly likely to be even more data-dependent.

If we focus on borrowing, a term we are likely to hear throughout 2025 is “bond vigilante”. Essentially, this represents a generic term for when the market is ill at ease with the level of government borrowing and demands a higher return for holding debt issuance. In the UK, we do not need to go back too far to recall the negative market reaction to the Truss/Kwarteng budget of 2022. But long-term borrowing rates have already gradually moved back to those levels since their recent low point in the middle of September 2024. Of course, the UK is not alone in this respect. Concerns prevail as to what the size of the budget deficit will be in the US, following the election of Donald Trump as President, and in France there are on-going struggles to form a government to address a large budget deficit problem too. Throw into the mix the uncertain outcome to German elections, and there is plenty of bond investor concern to be seen.

Staying with the US, Donald Trump’s victory paves the way for the introduction/extension of tariffs that could prove inflationary whilst the same could be said of further tax cuts. Invariably the direction of US Treasury yields in reaction to his core policies will, in all probability, impact UK gilt yields. So, there are domestic and international factors that could impact Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) rates whilst, as a general comment, geo-political risks continue to abound in Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

In the past month, the US Core CPI measure of inflation has indicated that inflation is still a concern (3.3% year/year, 0.3% month/month), as has the November Producer Prices Data (up 3.0 year/year vs a market estimate of 2.6% year/year, 0.4% month/month vs an estimate of 0.2% month/month) albeit probably insufficient to deter the Federal Open Market

Committee (FOMC) from cutting US rates a further 0.25% at its December meeting. However, with Trump's inauguration as President being held on 20 January, further rate reductions and their timing will very much be determined by his policy announcements and their implications for both inflation and Treasury issuance.

Looking at gilt movements in the first half of 2024/25, and you will note the 10-year gilt yield declined from 4.32% in May to 4.02% in August as the Bank's August rate cut signalled the start of its loosening cycle. More recently, however, 10 year gilt yields have spiked back up to 4.35%.

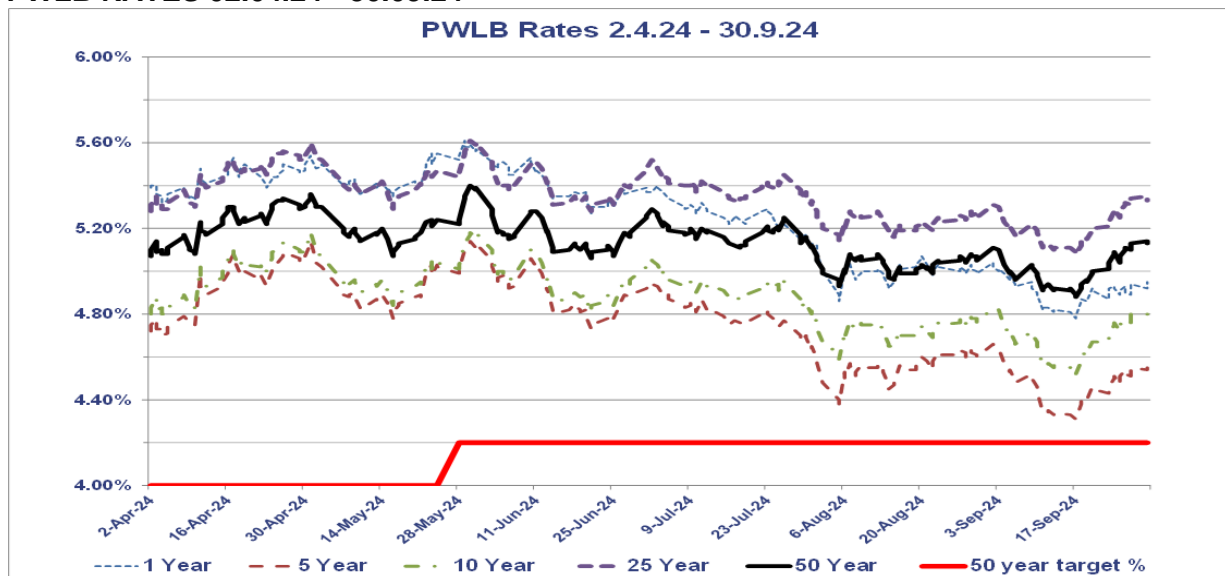
The FTSE 100 reached a peak of 8,380 in the third quarter of 2024 (currently 8.304), but its performance is firmly in the shade of the US S&P500, which has breached the 6,000 threshold on several occasions recently, delivering returns upwards of 25% year/year. The catalyst for any further rally (or not) is likely to be the breadth of AI's impact on business growth and performance.

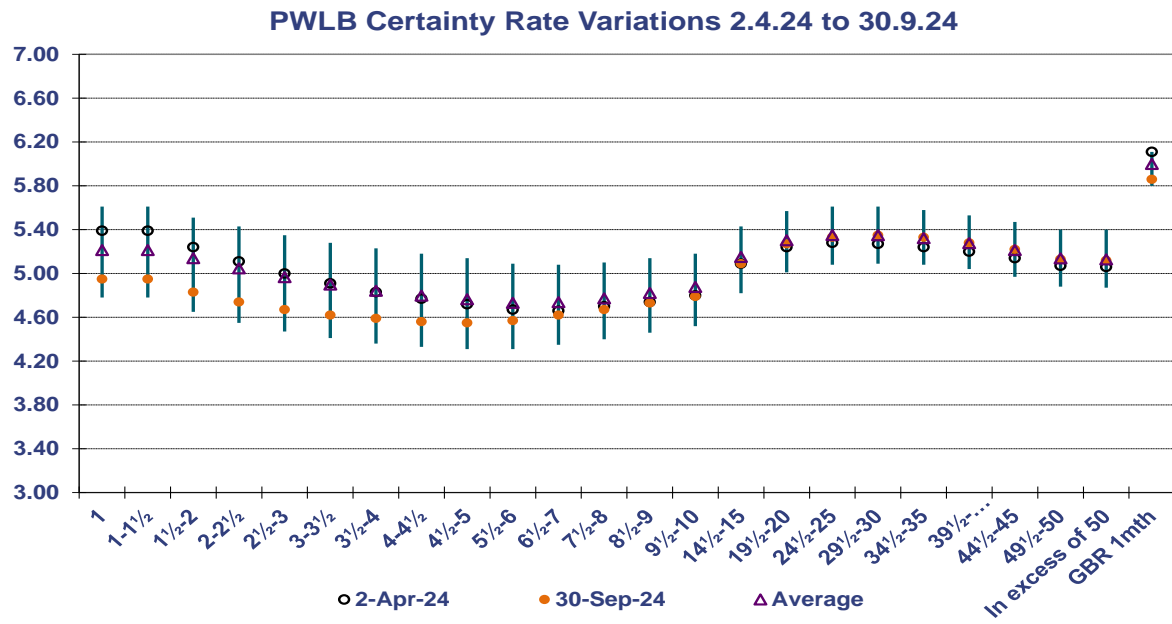
MPC meetings: 9 May, 20 June, 1 August, 19 September, 7 November 2024

- On 9 May, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted 7-2 to keep Bank Rate at 5.25%. This outcome was repeated on 20th June.
- However, by the time of the August meeting, there was a 5-4 vote in place for rates to be cut by 25 basis points to 5%. However, subsequent speeches from MPC members have supported Governor Bailey's tone with its emphasis on "gradual" reductions over time.
- Markets thought there may be an outside chance of a further Bank Rate reduction in September, following the 50 basis points cut by the FOMC, but this came to nothing.
- On 7 November, Bank Rate was cut by 0.25% to 4.75%. The vote was 8-1 in favour of the cut but the language used by the MPC emphasised "gradual" reductions would be the way ahead with an emphasis on the inflation and employment data releases, as well as geo-political events.

In the chart below, despite a considerable gilt market rally in mid-September, rates started and finished the six-month period under review in broadly the same position.

PWL B RATES 02.04.24 - 30.09.24





GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION
Authorised Limit	Level of debt set by the council that must not be exceeded.
Bond	A government or public company's document undertaking to repay borrowed money usually with a fixed rate of interest.
Borrowing	Obtaining money for temporary use that has to be repaid.
Capital expenditure	Expenditure on major items e.g. land and buildings, which adds to and not merely maintains the value of existing fixed assets.
Capital grants	Specific targeted grants to cover capital expenditure.
Capital receipts	The proceeds from the disposal of land or other assets. Capital receipts can be used to fund new capital expenditure but cannot be used to finance revenue expenditure
Cash flow Management	The management of the authority's receipts and payments to ensure the authority can meet its financial obligations.
CIPFA	The chartered institute of public finance and accountancy
Counter party limits	Maximum amount that the council may lend to other institutions will vary according to size and credit rating of other intuitions.
Dividends	Sum to be payable as interest on loan.
DLUHC	Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)
ECB	European Central Bank
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product – the total market value of all final goods and services produced in a country in a given year, equal to total consumer investment and government spending, plus the value of exports minus the value of imports.
Investments	The employment of money with the aim of receiving a return.
Liquidity	How easily an asset including investments may be converted to cash.
Long Term Borrowing	Borrowing of money for a term greater than one year.
Long Term Liabilities	Amounts owed by the council greater than 12 months old.
Market convention	The rules and regulations by which all brokers and dealers should abide by. It includes standards of practice and calculation conventions for interest. They are defined in the London Code of Conduct ("The London Code") published by the Bank of England.
MPC	Monetary Policy Committee – group that sets the bank base rate for the Bank of England

TERM	DEFINITION
OLA	Other Local Authorities
Temporary borrowing	Borrowing of money for a term of up to 365 days.
Treasury management	The management of the local authority's cash flows, its borrowings and its investments, the management of associated risks, and the pursuit of the optimum performance or return consistent with those risks.
Treasury Policy Statement	A statement of key policies that an organisation follows in pursuit of effective treasury management, including borrowing limits and strategy.
Variable debt	This is money that has been borrowed at a variable interest rate, and as such is subject to interest rate changes.
Unsupported borrowing	Borrowing taken through the remit of the Prudential Code for which the council will not receive any government funding and will fund from own resources.

Part 2 – Treasury Management

TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT

The CIPFA Code recommends that authorities should:

- i. Put in place formal and comprehensive objectives, policies and practices, strategies and reporting arrangements for the effective management and control of their treasury management activities.
- ii. Policies and practices should make clear that the effective management of risk, having regard to return, is a prime objective of the treasury management activities.
- iii. Acknowledge that the pursuit of best value in treasury management, and the use of suitable performance measures, are valid and important tools for responsible organisations to employ in support of their business and service objectives; and that within the context of effective risk management, the treasury management policies and practices should reflect this.

In order to do this, the Council should once again adopt a treasury management policy statement as shown below and create and adopt treasury management practices (TMPs):

- A treasury management policy statement, stating policies and objectives of its treasury management activities.
- Suitable TMPs, setting out the manner in which the council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives, prescribing how the council will manage and control those activities.
- The contents of the policy statement and TMPs will follow the recommendations contained in section 6 and 7 of the Code, subject only to amendment where necessary to reflect this council's particular circumstances.

There are amendments to the responsible posts under delegated powers which reflect changes to the staffing structure of the finance service.

THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES 2025/26 & 2026/27 ONWARDS

Walsall Council defines its treasury management activities as:

“The management of the local authority’s borrowing, investments and cash flows, including its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”

Walsall Council regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the organisation.

Walsall Council acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principle of achieving best value in treasury management, and to employing suitable performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT FUNCTION

The approved activities of the treasury management function are as follows:

Activities:

- Borrowing
- Investment of temporary surplus funds and other balances
- Setting and reviewing the treasury management strategy
- Cash flow management
- Management of debt and investments, including rescheduling, management of interest rate exposure and maturity profile management

High Level Policies for Borrowing and Investment

The Treasury Management Strategy sets out the detailed policies that the organisation will follow in operating its treasury management function. The high level policies set out within the strategy that relate to borrowing (section 4.4 of the strategy) and investments (section 5.5 of the strategy) are as follows:

Borrowing Strategy Objectives

Walsall Councils borrowing objectives are:

- To minimise the revenue costs of debt whilst maintaining a balanced loan portfolio
- To manage the council's debt maturity profile, ensuring no single future year has a disproportionate level of repayments
- To maintain a view on current and possible future interest rate movements and borrow accordingly
- To monitor and review the balance between fixed and variable rate loans against the background of interest rate levels and prudential indicators.

Investment Strategy Objectives

The underlying policy objective for Walsall Council is for the prudent investment of its treasury balances. The council's investment priorities are:

- The security of capital
- Liquidity of its investments
- All investments will be in sterling
- The council will aim to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

TMP 1 – TREASURY RISK MANAGEMENT

The S151 Officer shall:

- Ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the design; implementation and monitoring of all arrangements related to the identification, management and control of treasury management risk.
- Report at least annually on the adequacy/suitability thereof, and report as a matter of urgency, the circumstances of any actual or likely difficulty in achieving the council's objectives in this respect.
- In respect of each of the following risks, the arrangements which seek to ensure compliance with these objectives will be set out in schedules.

Liquidity

Objective: Adequate but not excessive cash resources, borrowing arrangements, overdraft or standby facilities to enable the council at all times to have the level of funds available which are necessary for the achievement of its service objectives.

Interest Rates

Objective: Management of the council's exposure to fluctuations in interest rates with a view to containment of its net interest costs.

Exchange Rates

Objective: Management of the council's exposure to fluctuations in exchange rates so as to minimise any detrimental impact on its budgeted income/expenditure levels.

Inflation

Objective: Control of exposure to the effects of inflation, in so far as they can be identified as impacting on treasury management activities.

Credit and Counterparties

Objective: To secure the principal sums invested over the period of the investment. A counterparty list will be maintained and the named organisations and limits will reflect a prudent attitude towards organisations with whom funds may be deposited.

Rescheduling and refinancing of Debt

Objective: All borrowing, private financing and partnership arrangements will be negotiated, structured and documented. The maturity profile of debt will be managed with a view to obtaining terms for renewal or refinancing, if required, which are competitive and as favourable to the organisation as can reasonably be achieved in the light of market conditions prevailing at the time.

Relationships with counterparties in these transactions will be managed in such a manner as to secure this objective, and will avoid over reliance on any one source of funding if this might jeopardise achievement of the above.

Legal and Regulatory

Objective: Compliance with statutory powers and regulatory requirements for all treasury management activities. The council will demonstrate such compliance, if required to do so, to all parties with whom it deals in such activities.

In framing its credit and counterparty policy under TMP1 - *Credit and Counterparty risk management*, the council will ensure that there is evidence of counterparties powers, authority and compliance in respect of the transactions they may affect with the organisation, particularly with regard to duty of care and fees charged.

The council will seek to minimise the impact of future legislative or regulatory changes on its treasury management activities so far as it is reasonably able to do so.

Fraud, Error and Corruption, and Contingency Management

Objective: Identification of circumstances which may expose the council to the risk of loss through fraud, corruption or other eventualities in its treasury management dealings. Employ suitable systems and procedures and maintain effective contingency management arrangements.

Market Risk

Objective: Protection from adverse market fluctuations in the value of the principal sums invested over the period of the investment.

Additional Level Risk / Reward

Objective: to ensure that the risk/ reward balance is appropriate and consistent with the risk appetite of the council the following aims are managed;

- to have a large proportion of debt on fixed rates to provide stability
- to have investments over a range of period lengths
- to use UK highly rated banks or strong building societies
- to obtain a fair return without any undue risk

Environmental, Social and Governance Risk Management (ESG)

The revised CIPFA Treasury Management Code and Prudential Code issued in December 2021 require that authority's credit and counterparty policies reflect any corporate ESG policies. The

authority has not yet set out a corporate ESG policy and Treasury Management Policies will be further reviewed and updated at the time that any corporate ESG policy is developed, to ensure that they are reflective of that.

Credit and Counterparty Risk Management

The Head of Finance – Deputy S151 will design, implement and monitor all arrangements for the identification, management and control of treasury management risk, will report at least annually on the adequacy/suitability thereof, and will report, as a matter of urgency, the circumstances of any actual or likely difficulty in achieving the organisation's objectives in this respect, all in accordance with the procedures set out in TMP6 - Reporting Requirements and Management Information Arrangements.

Credit and counter-party risk is the risk of failure by a counterparty to meet its contractual obligations to the organisation under an investment, borrowing, capital project or partnership financing, particularly as a result of the counterparty's diminished creditworthiness, and the resulting detrimental effect on the organisation's capital or current (revenue) resources.

This organisation regards a key objective of its treasury management activities to be the security of the principal sums it invests over the period of the investment. Accordingly, it will ensure that its counterparty lists and limits reflect a prudent attitude towards organisations with whom funds may be deposited, and will limit its investment activities to the instruments, methods and techniques referred to in TMP4 - Approved Instruments Methods and Techniques. It also recognises the need to have, and will therefore maintain, a formal counterparty policy in respect of those organisations from which it may borrow, or with whom it may enter into other financing arrangements.

Policy on the use of credit risk analysis techniques

- a. The council will use credit criteria in order to select creditworthy counterparties for placing investments with.
- b. Credit ratings will be used as supplied from rating agencies – Fitch, Moody's and S&P.
- c. Treasury management advisors will provide regular updates of changes to all ratings relevant to the council.
- d. The Head of Finance – Deputy S151 and Strategic Technical Accounting & Transactional Finance Manager, as responsible officers, will formulate suitable criteria for assessing and monitoring the credit risk of investment counterparties and shall construct a lending list comprising maturity periods, type, group, sector, country and counterparty limits.

The primary credit rating agencies Primary Credit Rating Scales, which are used, are shown below.

	Moody's				S&P				Fitch			
	Long Term	Short Term			Long Term	Short Term			Long Term	Short Term		
Investment Grade	Aaa				AAA				AAA			
	Aa1				AA+				AA+			
	Aa2				AA				AA			
	Aa3				AA-				AA-			
	A1	P1			A+	A-1+			A+	F1+		
	A2				A				A			
	A3				A-	A-1			A-	F1		
	Baa1	P2			BBB+				BBB+			
	Baa2				BBB	A-2			BBB			
	Baa3		P3		BBB-			A-3	BBB-		F2	F3
Non-Investment Grade	Ba1				BB+				BB+			
	Ba2				BB				BB			
	Ba3				BB-				BB-			
	B1				B+				B+			
	B2				B				B			
	B3				B-				B-			
	Caa				CCC				CCC			
	Ca				CC				CC			
	C				C				C			
		Not Prime				C				C		
					D	D			D	D		

The minimum credit ratings within these scales that the authority would expect for individual counterparties are set out below.

Minimum ratings	Moody's	S&P	Fitch
Short term	P3	A-3	F2
Long term	A3	A-	A-

Credit ratings for individual counterparties can change at any time. The Head of Finance – Deputy S151 and the Strategic Technical Accounting and Transactional Finance Manager are responsible for applying approved credit rating criteria for selecting approved counterparties. Treasury management staff will add or delete counterparties to/from the approved counterparty list in line with the policy on the criteria for selection of counterparties, and with the approval of either the S151 or Head of Finance – Deputy S151.

- e. This organisation will not rely solely on credit ratings in order to select and monitor the creditworthiness of counterparties. In addition to credit ratings it will therefore use other sources of information including;

- The quality financial press
- Market data
- Information on government support for banks and the credit ratings of that government support
- The maximum maturity periods and investment amounts relating to Approved Investment Counterparties are set out below:

Organisation	Criteria	Max Amount	Max Period
Banks and Nationwide Building Society	Minimum Ratings as defined above in paragraph d.	£25m in total with fixed term not exceeding £15m	3 years
Building Societies	Following an individual financial assessment must have a minimum Free Capital Ratio above that set out by Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1) and have at least one credit rating as defined above in paragraph d.	£10m	3 years
	Following an individual financial assessment must have a minimum Free Capital Ratio no lower than that set out by Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1)	£7m	3 years
Challenger Banks	Following an individual financial assessment must have a minimum Free Capital Ratio no lower than that set out by Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1), and must be a retail bank.	£15m	3 years
Money Market Funds	AAA long-term rating backed	£15m	3 years
Property Funds	Subject to individual financial assessment of each fund to identify the underlying financial strength	£30m	Review annually
Multi-Asset Investment Funds	Subject to individual financial assessment of each fund to identify the underlying financial strength	£20m	5 years
Non UK Banks	Minimum Ratings as defined above in paragraph d.	£10m	1 year

Organisation	Criteria	Max Amount	Max Period
Local Authorities	Subject to individual financial assessment of each fund to identify the underlying financial strength	£15m	3 years
Housing Associations	Subject to individual financial assessment of each fund to identify the underlying financial strength and credit ratings where available	£15m	3 years
Other	Subject to appropriate case by case review	£10m	N/A

- f. In defining the level and term of deposits significant regard is given to the proportion of the institution in government ownership.
- g. Following the changes to the Banking Regulation the council will consider when assessing the financial resilience of an institution key ratios e.g. common equity tier 1, leverage capital / exposure, liquidity coverage, net stable funding.

Notes:

- The definition of 'high credit quality' is also used to determine what are specified investments as opposed to non-specified investments. Specified investments are those that require minimum procedural formalities in terms of the placing of the investment by the treasury management team. Minimal procedural formalities means that the team is well experienced and knowledgeable in using these types of instruments and they pose minimal risk in their use.
- Other i.e. non-specified investments may be undertaken on the approval of the S151 Officer e.g. loans to other organisations and bond issues by other public sector projects and will be supported with appropriate rationale and due diligence to support investment security considerations. These may be for a duration longer than 3 years.
- For a credit rated bank to be on the council's counter party list the criteria must be passed for at least 2 of the credit ratings agencies.
- Full Individual Listings of Counterparties and Counterparty Limits are available on request and reported regularly to the Treasury Management Panel.

Authorisation of Payments

In order to support and maintain strong controls for the release of payments. A payment releasers register is maintained. It includes the names and post titles of officers authorised to sign financial documents releasing payments including cheques requiring manual signature and bank mandates. The payments releasers register is reviewed regularly and is approved by the Head of Finance – Deputy S151 Officer.

The Invoice / Payments Authorisation process is regulated by the financial and contract rules. Limits and authorised officers are maintained in the authorised signatory's data base.

TMP 2 – BEST VALUE AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

The council actively works to promote value for money and best value in its treasury management activities. The treasury management function will be the subject of regular reviews to identify scope for improvement. In addition annual benchmarking is undertaken to measure performance and to ensure that relative to other councils the council is achieving a fair investment return without any undue risk.

TMP 3 – DECISION MAKING AND ANALYSIS

Full records will be maintained of treasury management decisions, and of the processes and practices applied in reaching those decisions, to demonstrate that reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that all issues relevant to those decisions were taken into account.

TMP 4 – APPROVED INSTRUMENTS, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Only approved instruments, methods and techniques will be used, within the limits defined in TMP1 – Risk Management.

Sources of Borrowing

There shall be no restriction in principle on sources or methods of borrowing other than those imposed by law. The sources or methods of borrowing at any time will be determined by the current approved treasury management strategy.

Other Sources of Finance

The S151 Officer or Head of Finance - deputy S151 shall arrange leases and similar arrangements for items of equipment, vehicles, etc. where the acquisition or use of such items has been approved in line with the council's contract and rules.

Approved Organisations for Investments

The S151 Officer shall approve and revise from time to time, a list of organisations within the statutory definitions of approved investments, which would be eligible to receive investments from the council. Apart from the Government, and, in any emergency, the council's own bank, the maximum limit for investment with any single organisation shall be £25 million and the maximum period for investment shall be 3 years in accordance with each individual institution's credibility. The only exception to this are the approved investments in a Property Fund where the maximum limit shall be £30 million and will be reviewed on 5 year intervals. This should be reviewed at least monthly and incorporate any changes in ratings of counter parties.

Interest Rate Exposure

The limits on temporary borrowing and the proportion of interest at variable rates are set by Council, in accordance with Section 45 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989.

TMP 5 – ORGANISATION, CLARITY AND SEGREGATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES AND DEALING ARRANGEMENTS

Treasury management activities will be properly structured in a clear and open fashion and a rigorous discipline of segregation of duties will be enforced to ensure effective control and monitoring of its treasury management activities, for the reduction of the risk of fraud or error, and for the pursuit of optimum performance.

The principle on which this will be based is a clear distinction between those charged with setting treasury management policies and those charged with implementing and controlling these policies, particularly with regard to the execution and transmission of funds, the recording and administering of treasury management decisions and audit of the treasury management function.

If and when the council intends, due to a lack of resources or other circumstance, to depart from these principles, the S151 Officer will ensure that the reasons are properly reported in accordance with **TMP6** - Reporting Requirements and Management Information Arrangements and the implications properly considered and evaluated.

- The S151 Officer will ensure that there are clear written statements of the responsibilities for each post engaged in treasury management and the arrangements for absence cover.
- The S151 Officer will ensure that there is proper documentation for all deals and transactions, and that procedures exist for the effective transmission of funds.

The delegations to the S151 Officer in respect of treasury management are set out in the Constitution. The S151 Officer will fulfil all such responsibilities in accordance with the Policy Statement and TMP's and the Standard of Professional Practice on Treasury Management. This includes, but not exclusively, the following activity.

Activity	Prepared by	Delegation / Accountability
Approval of Treasury Management and Investment Strategy	Director of Finance and Assurance (S151 Officer)	Cabinet Council
Approval of Treasury Management Policies	Director of Finance and Assurance (S151 Officer)	Cabinet Council
Amendments to authorised officers and officer limits set out within the treasury management practices	Head of Finance – Deputy S151 / Strategic Technical Accounting and Transactional Finance Manager	S151 Officer
Review the debt portfolio and reschedule loans when considered appropriate	Strategic Technical Accounting and Transactional Finance Manager	S151 Officer
Updates to TM Practices	Head of Finance – Deputy S151 / Strategic Technical Accounting and Transactional Finance Manager	S151 Officer
Undertake budget monitoring and initiate actions when necessary	Strategic Technical Accounting and Transactional Finance Manager /Senior Treasury & Banking Manager	Head of Finance – Deputy S151
Authorisation of loan interest payments	Transactional Assistant – Treasury Management	Finance Business Partner – Treasury / Senior Treasury & Banking Manager
Approval of overnight investments	Transactional Assistant – Treasury Management / Finance Business Partner	Strategic Technical Accounting and Transactional Finance Manager

Activity	Prepared by	Delegation / Accountability
Preparation of borrowings documentation	Transactional Assistant – Treasury Management	Finance Business Partner – Treasury / Senior Treasury & Banking Manager
To arrange borrowing from time to time for the council's purposes. Sources of funds will comprise temporary loans, loans from PWLB, other mortgages and bonds, money bills, bank overdraft and internal funds of the council, subject to any restrictions which may be made by statute, Council or Cabinet	Strategic Technical Accounting and Transactional Finance Manager / Senior Treasury & Banking Manager	S151 Officer / Head of Finance – Deputy S151
Maintain Payment Releasers Register	Finance Business Partner - Treasury	S151 Officer / Head of Finance – Deputy S151
To arrange finance and operating leases as required in accordance with council's capital programme	Strategic Technical Accounting and Transactional Finance Manager	S151 Officer / Head of Finance – Deputy S151
To invest council funds temporarily not required in accordance with the statutory provisions regulating approved investments as defined in Section 66 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, subject to any restrictions which may be made by statute, by Council or by Cabinet	Transactional Assistant – Treasury Management	Finance Business Partner – Treasury / Senior Treasury & Banking Manager
<p>To maintain a counter party list of approved organisations eligible to receive council investments, this involves;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ongoing monitoring of ratings on investment products and institutions. - Investigation and appraisal of free capital ratio measures - signing off by the treasury manager as evidence of a monthly review and mid-month changes if necessary. <p>if ratings change for an investment product or institution currently held then actions for a possible exit of that strategy are undertaken as approved by the Treasury Management Panel</p>	<p>Finance Business Partner – Treasury</p> <p>Senior Treasury & Banking Manager</p>	<p>Head of Finance – Deputy S151 / Strategic Technical Accounting and Transactional Finance Manager</p> <p>or</p> <p>S151 Officer dependent on limits set by TMP on exit strategy</p>
Daily cash flow forecast	Transactional Assistant – Treasury Management	Finance Business Partner - Treasury

Activity	Prepared by	Delegation / Accountability
Update loan records	Transactional Assistant – Treasury Management	Finance Business Partner - Treasury
Operational Cash Flow	Finance Business Partner - Treasury	Head of Finance – Deputy S151 / Strategic Technical Accounting and Transactional Finance Manager / –Senior Treasury & Banking Manager
Audit and control review and improvements recommendations implementations	Internal Audit / All	Senior Treasury & Banking Manager
Annual MRP Policy review	Technical Accounting Manager	Head of Finance – Deputy S151 / Strategic Technical Accounting and Transactional Finance Manager / Senior Treasury & Banking Manager
Maintain accurate up to date information on Treasury Management	Transactional Assistant – Treasury Management	Senior Treasury & Banking Manager / Finance Business Partner - Treasury

TMP 6 – REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION ARRANGEMENTS

Regular reports will be prepared for consideration by Council on:

- Annual report on treasury management activities for the preceding year
- Treasury management strategy for the year, reviewed at least once during the year
- Regular monitoring reports on prudential and local indicators are prepared for the Treasury Management Panel.

Report	Frequency	When	Prepared by	To
Review of Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) and Treasury Management Policies	Annual	February/ March	Head of Finance – Deputy S151 Officer	Cabinet and Council
TMS – material changes	Immediately	As required	Head of Finance – Deputy S151 Officer/ Strategic Technical Accounting & Transactional Finance Manager	Cabinet and Council
Treasury Management Annual Report	Annual	September	Head of Finance – Deputy S151	Cabinet and Council

Report	Frequency	When	Prepared by	To
Mid-Year Report	Annual	December	Head of Finance – Deputy S151	Cabinet and Council
TM budget monitoring	Quarterly Monthly	Jul, Oct, Jan, Apr	Finance Business Partner – Treasury (reviewed by Strategic Technical Accounting & Transactional Finance Manager)	S151 Officer, Treasury Management Panel, Head of Finance – Deputy S151 for inclusion in overall corporate financial monitoring reports to CMT and Cabinet which are first reviewed by the S151 Officer
TM performance indicators	Quarterly Monthly	Jul, Oct, Jan, Apr	Finance Business Partner – Treasury (reviewed by Strategic Technical Accounting & Transactional Finance Manager)	S151 Officer, Treasury Management Panel, Head of Finance – deputy S151 for inclusion in overall corporate financial monitoring reports to CMT and Cabinet which are first reviewed by the S151 Officer
Cashflow summary	Monthly		Finance Business Partner – Treasury/Senior Treasury & Banking Manager	Strategic Technical Accounting & Transactional Finance Manager
Borrowing transactions	Monthly		Finance Business Partner – Treasury	Senior Treasury & Banking Manager
Payment Releasers Register	Quarterly		Finance Business Partner – Treasury	S151 Officer, Head of Finance (deputy S151)
Operational Investment Strategy	Quarterly		Finance Business Partner – Treasury / Senior Treasury & Banking Manager	Strategic Technical Accounting & Transactional Finance Manager

Report	Frequency	When	Prepared by	To
12 monthly cashflow	Quarterly		Finance Business Partner – Treasury / Senior Treasury & Banking Manager	Strategic Technical Accounting & Transactional Finance Manager
Government statistical returns	Monthly		Finance Business Partner – Treasury – Senior Treasury & Banking Manager	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
Daily cash balance forecast	Daily		Transactional Assistant	Finance Business Partner – Treasury

TMP 7 – BUDGETING, ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS

The S151 Officer will prepare an annual treasury management budget which will bring together all costs involved in running the treasury management function and associated income. This will be presented to Cabinet and Council and is approved as part of the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy.

The council will account for its treasury management activities in accordance with appropriate accounting practices, standards and statutory and regulatory requirements.

The council will ensure that its auditors, and those charged with regulatory review, have access to all information and papers supporting the activities of the treasury management function as are necessary for the proper fulfilment of their roles, and that such information and papers demonstrate compliance with external and internal policies and approved practices.

In line with market convention loans office staff, when dealing, are required to commit the council to terms of borrowing and investment transactions by telephone. Although these transactions are not legally binding until confirmed in writing, if subsequently dishonoured, this may damage the council's reputation. Electronic funds transfer requires the involvement of three officers, at least one of whom shall be on the payment releasers register.

TMP 8 – CASH AND CASH FLOW MANAGEMENT

All council monies will be under the control of the S151 Officer. Funds that are available within all council monies to support treasury management purposes are identified and Cash flow projections in relation to these funds are prepared on a regular and timely basis and the S151 Officer will ensure that these are adequate for the purposes of monitoring compliance with **TMP1** Liquidity risk management.

TMP 9 – MONEY LAUNDERING

Procedures will be enforced for verifying and recording the identity of counterparties and reporting suspicions and will ensure that staffs involved in this area are properly trained.

As a responsible public body, they should employ policies and procedures which reflect the

essence of the UK's anti-terrorist financing, and anti-money laundering, regimes. Accordingly the council undertakes a number of safeguards including the following:

- a. evaluates the prospect of laundered monies being handled by them
- b. determine the appropriate safeguards to be put in place
- c. require every person engaged in treasury management to make themselves aware of their personal and legal responsibilities for money laundering awareness
- d. make all its staff aware of their responsibilities under Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) 2002

In respect of treasury management transactions, there is a need for due diligence. The Council will only invest with those counterparties that are on its approved lending list. These will be local authorities, the PWLB, Bank of England and authorised deposit takers under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000. The register can be accessed through the Financial Conduct Authority website.

All transactions will be carried out by BACS or CHAPS for making deposits or repaying loans.

All loans are obtained from the PWLB, other local authorities or from authorised institutions under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000.

TMP 10 – MONEY LAUNDERING

The council recognises the importance of ensuring that all staff involved in the treasury management function are fully equipped to undertake the duties and responsibilities allocated to them. It will therefore seek to appoint individuals who are both capable and experienced and will provide training for staff to enable them to acquire and maintain an appropriate level of expertise, knowledge and skills. An annual review of treasury staff capacity, training needs and experience will be undertaken and reported to the Treasury Management Panel along with a register of all training completed by Council Officers involved in treasury management processes of the Council. Specific training for councillors will be provided and undertaken as required.

TMP 11 – USE OF EXTERNAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

When external service providers are employed, the S151 Officer will ensure it does so for reasons which have been subjected to a full evaluation of the costs and benefits. The terms of appointment and the methods by which service providers' value will be assessed will be properly agreed and documented.

The council does not currently require external investment managers, but recognises it may do so in the future for general or specific advice on a range of matters. These future services would be procured using the council's prevailing regulations relating to obtaining supplies and services. The council employs external treasury advisors to provide economic outlooks and information relevant to making robust investment and borrowing decisions.

TMP 12 – CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

This authority is committed to the pursuit and achievement of proper corporate governance throughout its business and services and to establish principles and practices by which this can be achieved. Accordingly the treasury management function and its activities will be undertaken with openness and transparency, honesty, integrity and accountability.

The council has adopted and has implemented the key recommendations of the CIPFA Code. The S151 Officer will monitor and when necessary, report upon the effectiveness of these arrangements to Cabinet.

A forum for the monitoring of Governance arrangements is the Treasury Management Panel. The Treasury Management Panel meets quarterly chaired by the S151 Officer or (in the absence of the S151 Officer) the Head of Finance (deputy S151 Officer). It will receive reports on the monitoring of Prudential and Local Indicators and approve drafts of strategy and policy cabinet/council reports. It will also initiate work and projects to further ensure strong compliance of internal controls and effective treasury performance.

Sherbourne Recycling Limited (SRL)

Sherbourne Recycling Ltd, which is providing a regional mixed recycling facility, was incorporated on 1 April 2021 as a company limited by shares. The shareholders of this company are eight local authorities including Walsall Council. The council has a shareholding of 19.66% of the company and is the second largest shareholder. The other shareholders are Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Stratford on Avon District Council, Warwick District Council, Rugby Borough Council, Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council and North Warwickshire Borough Council.

The regional materials recycling facility became operational during 2023 and the council began sending its recyclable waste to the new facility from 1st October 2023. To obtain governance during the build phase the Council held a director post within the company which sits on the Board. In addition to meetings of the board, there is a Finance Sub-Group which meets twice a year to feedback timescales, issues and updates on the projected timeframe for opening the facility.

There was an approved loan facility of £11.865m between Sherbourne Recycling Limited and the council and whenever SRL required funds they sent a loan drawdown notice requesting funds which gets approved and then paid. This loan facility has now been fully utilised. The total loan facility is £13.207m due the inclusion of capitalised interest.

Birmingham Airport Holdings Limited (BAH)

The seven West Midlands local authorities own 49% of BAH's 320 million ordinary shares of £0.01 each. The council owns 4.88% of these shares. The other shareholders are Airport Group Investments Limited (48.35%) and an employee share trust (2.75%). In addition the seven West Midlands authorities own all of BAH's 6.31% preference shares, of which Walsall Council owns 9.95%. These are cumulative and irredeemable.

The Council monitors its investment and governance processes through its membership on the West Midlands Airport Shareholder Committee, by its nominated Councillor. The Leader of the Council is also a Director of Birmingham Airport Holdings Ltd.

Cabinet - 12 February 2025

Supplementary Report - Corporate Budget Plan 2025/26 to 2028/29, incorporating the Capital Strategy; and the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2025/26

Revenue

Since the dispatch of the budget plan to Cabinet on 03 February 2025 the final Local Government Settlement was published on 05 February 2025.

The final settlement included the following amendments:

- Increase in National Insurance Contributions funding £785,445 taking the total funding to £2,435,445 (estimated direct cost to the council is £3.3m, government funding only covers c74% despite the increase);
- Increase in Children's Social Care Prevention Grant £203,519 taking the total funding to £3,088,074. The grant is ringfenced and investment has been increased to match the increased grant income;
- Reduction in Top Up Grant £211,022 taking total funding to £22,561,963;

There have also been other changes outside of the settlement as follows:

- Reduction in West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Levy investment of £231,038 taking the revised charge to £11,907,647;
- Increase in Environment Agency Levy of £2,087 taking the revised charge to £89,530;
- Increase in Public Health Grant £1,047,591 taking the total funding to £21,016,408. The grant is ringfenced and investment has been increased to match the increased grant income;
- Additional investment into corporate pay and pension allocation £618,156;
- Re-phasing of saving P5 - Relocation of the Leather Museum saving £190,000 from 2025/26 to 2026/27;
- Re-phasing of saving OP33 - Leisure review and health initiatives £165,000 from 2025/26 to 2026/27;

Annex 4 of this report has been updated to reflect the above changes and attached.

All of the above have an impact on the General Fund and have impacted on the statutory determinations (councils' gross income and expenditure). The Statutory determinations have been amended to reflect all of the above amendments since the despatch of the budget report to Cabinet on 12 February 2025. There are also still a number of final grant allocations to be received at this time, and officers will ensure that spend is adjusted to reflect final grant allocations, as appropriate.

The final levies and Police and Fire Precepts have not yet been received. Any changes to those following receipt of final figures will be reported to Council on 26 February 2025.

In respect of the Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) Section 25 Report, Annex 11 the impact of the final settlement does not change the Chief Finance Officer's recommendations in respect of the level or adequacy of reserves.

Capital

Since the dispatch of the budget plan to Cabinet on 12 February 2025 Walsall Council has been awarded a £20m capital grant from MHCLG for the Community Regeneration Programme. The Community Regeneration Programme for Walsall will bring together public and private sector partners along with the council to devise a programme of activity that will create opportunities for Walsall people and tackle health and inequality problems. The grant will be awarded in two payments with £10m received in 2024/25 and £10m in 2025/26.

The grant will increase the externally funded element of the capital programme for 2025/26 by £10m to £53.96m as detailed in **Annex 9**. This will have no impact on the revenue budget, or the council's borrowing already included in the report.

Annex 5 of this report has been updated to reflect the above changes and attached.

The attached is the revised recommendation that incorporates the above changes. Due to timing of the announcement the updated report and Section B 'Corporate Budget Plan' have not been reproduced for this meeting.

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Corporate Budget Plan 2025/26 to 2028/29, incorporating the Capital Strategy; and the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2025/26

Recommendation

3.3 That Cabinet approve and recommend to Council, the following:

3.3.1 Revenue

- a) The financial envelope of resources for 2025/26 as set out in **Section B - Part 1** "The Revenue Corporate Budget Plan and Capital Programme".
- b) A Walsall Council net council tax requirement for 2025/26 of £162.78m and a 2.99% increase in council tax, plus a further 2% increase for Adult Social Care precept (total council tax increase of 4.99%).
- c) That the recommendations of the S151 Officer in respect of the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the budget calculations and the adequacy of reserves **be approved**, including the levels of central contingency and reserves and an opening general reserve of not less than £24.12m, as set out in the S151 Officer Section 25 statement in **Annex 12** of the Budget Plan.
- d) The (estimated) levies below for outside bodies and Cabinet **approve** that the final figures **be substituted** for these provisional ones once they are available at the Council meeting on 26 February 2025. (An estimate has been used within this report based on informal notification from the authorities).

LEVY	AMOUNT (£)
West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Levy	11,907,647
Environment Agency	89,530

- e) The following statutory determinations (references are to the Local Government Finance Act, 1992 as amended), and subject to any final changes arising from receipt of final precepts and levies, receipt of final grant allocations, technical/legislative guidance and final specific grant allocations, **and Cabinet approve that these will be substituted** at the Council meeting on 26 February 2025 for the final figures once received:
 - I. **£849,006,475** being the aggregate gross expenditure, which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) (a) to (f) of the Act.
 - II. **£686,230,084** being the aggregate income which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) (a) to (d) of the Act.
 - III. **£162,776,391** being the amount, by which the aggregate at (e) (I) above exceeds the aggregate at (e) (II), calculated by the council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year.

- IV. **£2,188.58** being the amount at (e) (III) above, divided by the council tax base of 74,375.36, calculated by the council in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (average council tax at band D).

V. Valuation bands

Being amounts given by multiplying the amount at (e) (IV) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5 (1) of the Local Government Act 1992, is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the council in accordance with Section 30 and 36 of the Act as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwelling listed in different valuation bands.

A	B	C	D
1,459.05	1,702.23	1,945.40	2,188.58
E	F	G	H
2,674.93	3,161.28	3,647.63	4,377.16

- f) The draft precept from the Fire and Rescue Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner, issued to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992, for each of the categories of dwelling shown below and Cabinet **approve** that the final figures **be substituted** once they are available at the Council meeting on 26 February 2025.

PRECEPTING AUTHORITY	VALUATION BANDS			
Police And Crime Commissioner	A	B	C	D
	153.00	178.50	204.00	229.50
	E	F	G	H
	280.50	331.50	382.50	459.00
Fire & Rescue	A	B	C	D
	53.46	62.37	71.28	80.19
	E	F	G	H
	98.01	115.83	133.65	160.38

- g) That having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at (e) (v) and (f) above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts of council tax for 2024/25 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below and Cabinet **approve** that the final figures **be substituted** once the final precepts are available at the Council meeting on 26 February 2025.

A	B	C	D
1,665.51	1,943.10	2,220.68	2,498.27
E	F	G	H
3,053.44	3,608.61	4,163.78	4,996.54

- h) That notice **be given** of the council tax within twenty one days of it being set by publishing details of the same in the “Express and Star” newspaper circulating in the Authority’s area.
- i) That the S151 Officer **be instructed** to take all necessary action in relation to council tax, community charge and national non-domestic rates, including, where appropriate, the signing of all documents, billing, the giving of notices and the taking of necessary steps to ensure collection thereof.
- j) That the S151 Officer **be delegated authority** to make transfers to and from reserves in order to ensure that reserves are maintained as necessary and in particular, adjusted when reserves are no longer required, or need to be replenished.
- k) That, pursuant to Section 52ZB and 52ZC of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the relevant basic amount of council tax for the Council is not excessive in relation to determining whether a referendum is required.

3.3.2 Capital

- a) The allocation of capital expenditure plans as set out in **Part 1** “The Revenue Corporate Budget Plan and Capital Programme” and that the capital and leasing programme as set out in **Annex 10 be approved** bearing in mind the principle that unless affordable from within current resources, specific projects funded by borrowing will not be commenced until a payback agreement is in place. Schemes funded from grant will commence when final allocations are published.
- b) That the S151 Officer be **delegated authority** to determine how each source of finance is used to fund the overall capital programme and to alter the overall mix of financing as necessary, to maximise the flexibility of capital resources used and minimise the ongoing costs of borrowing to the council.
- c) That the S151 Officer, after consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council (Portfolio Holder for Finance), be **delegated authority** to release capital resources held back for any contingent items that may arise (earmarked capital receipts for essential or emergency spend), and also for any match funding requirements that may be required of the council in order to secure additional external capital funding (e.g. bids for government or other funding).
- d) That the S151 Officer be **delegated authority** to determine the use of capital receipts in relation to the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts to ensure that they meet the requirements set out by the Secretary of State.
- e) The Capital and Investment Strategy set out in **Annex 7** of the Budget Plan **be approved**.
- f) The Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy set out in **Annex 11** of the Budget Plan **be approved**.

3.3.3 Treasury Management

- a) **Part 2A** – The Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2025/26 onwards, including the council's borrowing requirement, borrowing limits, and the adoption of the prudential indicators, **be approved**.
- b) That decisions to effect movements between conventional borrowing and other long term liabilities, such as leases, **be delegated** to the S151 Officer.
- c) That decisions to use capital receipts or borrowing within the framework of approved prudential indicators **be delegated** to the S151 Officer.
- d) **Part 2B** – Treasury Management Policies, **be approved**.

Annex 4 - MTFO movements since reported to Cabinet 16 October 2025

	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
Gap as per report to Cabinet 16 October 2024	11.05	7.47	0.00	0.00	18.52
Changes to investments					
NEW – Energy cost	0.70	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.70
NEW - Remove third party spend saving	2.25	(0.75)	(0.75)	(0.75)	0.00
NEW - Remove TVI saving	2.70	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.70
NEW - Ongoing software costs following completion of Enabling technology capital project	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.08
NEW - Continuation of Walsall Connected initiative	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.06
NEW - Senior Partnership officer to support Walsall 2040	0.02	0.00	(0.02)	0.00	0.00
NEW – Additional HR advisory posts	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.09
NEW - Revenue implications of leasing	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.50
NEW - Waste short term contract	0.87	(0.43)	(0.44)	0.00	0.00
NEW - Middlemore Lane equipment lease	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25
NEW - Children's Social Care Prevention Grant	3.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.09
NEW - Family Hubs Start for Life Programme Income	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.09
NEW - Domestic Abuse grant	0.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.18
NEW - Homelessness Prevention grant	0.32	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.32
NEW - Increase in national insurance contributions	3.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.30
NEW - Pay Award	2.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.14
NEW – Remove Town hall and events saving	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04
NEW – Public Health Grant	1.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.05
No 2 Cloud/ Microsoft licences and infrastructure costs (reduce and re-profile)	(0.24)	0.20	0.00	0.00	(0.04)
No 8 Transport Levy	(0.23)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.23)
No 10 Carer allowances uplifts (removed)	(0.11)	(0.12)	0.00	0.00	(0.23)
No 11 & 25 External framework placement uplifts (merged and one-off increase)	0.18	(0.18)	0.00	0.00	0.00

	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
No 13 Children in care growth (re-profile and increase)	0.38	0.14	(0.34)	(0.11)	0.07
No 14 Children placement moves (re-profile and increase)	(0.26)	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.02
No 15 Home to school transport (increase)	0.07	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.09
No 32 Independent fostering agency framework retender outcome (increase)	0.10	0.06	0.07	0.05	0.28
No 53 One-off transformation programme investment to support savings within customer experience saving (re-profile)	(0.04)	0.00	0.05	(0.01)	0.00
No 71 Uplift in care provider fees (impact of new living wage and national insurance contributions)	2.45	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.45
No 71 Uplift in care provider fees (re-profile and reduction)	(2.14)	(4.22)	(2.10)	0.81	(7.65)
No 73 Social Care increase in existing service user placements costs following strength-based reviews (re-profile and increase)	(0.18)	3.16	3.08	3.41	9.47
No 75 Inflationary increase for S117 Mental Health service users care costs (re-profile)	0.01	0.01	(0.01)	(0.01)	0.00
No 84 Social care increase in demand pressures (inflow/attrition)	0.03	0.42	0.49	0.69	1.63
Total changes to investments	17.02	(1.46)	0.63	4.26	20.45
Changes to savings proposals					
NEW - One-off reduction in elections due to a fallow year in 25/26	(0.33)	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00
NEW - Airport dividend – one off income	0.00	(2.50)	2.50	0.00	0.00
NEW - Review of the family drugs and alcohol model and provision.	0.00	(0.09)	0.00	0.00	(0.09)
NEW - Increased traded income with schools	(0.01)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.01)
NEW - Review of statutory service provision	(0.04)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.04)
NEW - Deletion of quality assurance officer post	(0.05)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.05)
NEW - Integrate parenting offer within early help and children's social care as part of family help	(0.06)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.06)
NEW - Integrate customer facing activity within HAF to the customer experience centre	(0.02)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.02)

	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m
NEW - Removal of system support contract	(0.08)	(0.11)	0.00	0.00	(0.19)
NEW - Staffing efficiencies as part of One Source phase 2 implementation	(0.05)	(0.16)	0.00	0.00	(0.21)
P4 Introduce more rewilding	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05
P5 Relocation of the leather museum (re-phased)	0.19	(0.19)	0.00	0.00	0.00
OP33 Leisure review and health initiatives (reduced)	0.17	(0.17)	0.00	0.00	0.00
OP35 Additional income from an increase in outdoor advertising (reduced)	0.05	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.10
OP36 Remove external One Source system support by using in-house expertise (removed)	0.20	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.40
OP56 £100k capital investment in CCTV to support revenue savings	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.05
OP61 ASC demand – decrease in existing service user placement costs (re-aligned)	0.10	(0.65)	(0.65)	(0.72)	(1.92)
OP62 ASC demand – additional service use contributions based (re-aligned)	(0.20)	0.14	0.18	0.19	0.31
OP63 Health contribution – Section 117/continuing health care (re-aligned)	0.26	0.06	0.05	(0.27)	0.10
Total changes to savings	0.18	(3.09)	2.13	(0.80)	(1.58)
Other service adjustments					
EEC - Extended producer responsibility	(5.88)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(5.88)
Children's - Extended rights to home to school transport (grant rolled into general funding)	0.08	0.00	.0.00	.0.00	0.08
Children's - Children's Social Care Prevention Grant (new funding)	(3.09)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(3.09)
Children's - Family Hubs Start for Life Programme Income (increase in funding)	(0.09)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.09)
ASC – Public Health Grant	(1.05)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(1.05)
EEC – Domestic Abuse grant (increase in funding)	(0.18)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.18)
R&T – Homelessness Prevention grant (increase in funding)	(0.32)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.32)
Total service adjustments	(10.53)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(10.53)
	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	Total £m

Central adjustments					
Increase in business rates income (funding)	(2.47)	2.42	0.15	1.66	1.76
Council tax surplus (funding)	(0.47)	0.47	0.00	0.00	0.00
Council taxbase changes (funding)	(0.85)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(1.17)
Reprofiling of central budget	3.53	0.43	(0.75)	(1.63)	1.58
New Homes Bonus increased income (funding)	(0.15)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.15)
Social Care grant increase income (funding)	(5.93)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(5.93)
Recovery Grant (funding)	(9.84)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(9.84)
National insurance contributions grant (funding)	(2.43)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(2.43)
Reduction in Top Up Grant	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.21
Net use of reserves	0.68	(2.50)	2.50	0.00	0.68
Total central adjustments	(17.72)	0.72	1.79	(0.08)	(15.29)
Revised savings to be identified (Current budget shortfall)	0.00	3.64	4.55	3.38	11.57

Annex 5 – Capital Programme movements since reported to Cabinet 16 October 2025

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Council Funded Schemes - Cabinet 16 October 2024	48.95	32.38	10.40	8.79	100.52
Maintaining a safe and secure environment - reduced	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	0.00	(0.15)
Telephony - removed	(0.19)	(0.19)	0.00	0.00	(0.38)
Wi-fi – reprofiled	(0.08)	0.00	0.08	0.00	0.00
Bloxwich Town Deal –reduced	(1.44)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.44)
Council roof repairs – reduced	(0.08)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.08)
Wheeled bin stock - reduced	(0.07)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.07)
Aids and adaptations - increased	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.32
New children's home 2025- new	0.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.85
Refurbishments to foster carer's homes - increased	0.10	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.55
Libraries – Community association style Hub – new	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.10
Assistive technologies - new	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25
Promotion of community health and safety - reduced	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.06)	0.00	(0.14)
ICT Safe & Secure bring forward 2025/26 budget into 2024/25	(0.05)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.05)
Maintaining a Safe & Secure Environment - bring forward budget for upfront CISCO license	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.06)	0.00	(0.24)
Allotment Boundary Improvement Works	(0.02)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.02)
Hatherton Road car park	(0.21)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.21)
Play areas & outdoor gym	(0.13)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(0.13)
Revised Council Funded Schemes	48.63	32.99	11.29	9.77	102.68
External Funded Schemes - Cabinet 16 October 2024	31.19	22.27	23.08	30.10	106.64
Family Hubs 2025/26 allocation	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.09
Disable Facilities Grant additional budget	0.63	0.63	0.63	0.63	2.52
High Needs budget re-profile	1.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.72
Basic Needs budget re-profile	10.00	6.00	(4.35)	(11.65)	0.00
LA Housing fund 3	0.32	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.32
Community Regeneration Programme	10.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.00
Revised External Funded Schemes	53.95	28.90	19.36	19.08	121.29
Revised Programme	102.58	61.89	30.65	28.85	223.97

Cabinet – 12 February 2025

Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25

Portfolio:	Councillor M. Statham – Deputy Leader - Finance (Lead Portfolio)
Related Portfolios:	All
Service:	Finance – council wide
Wards:	All
Key decision:	No
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To report on the forecast corporate financial position for 2024/25, based on emerging pressures as at December 2024, and actions being taken to address this to ensure the council outturns on budget.

2. Summary

- 2.1 At the end of December 2024 the forecast revenue outturn for 2024/25 is an overspend of £17.80m. Taking into account mitigation actions identified to date of £11.05m, the forecast overspend reduces to £6.75m. This represents a favourable movement of £3.51m compared to the position reported to Cabinet at the end of the second quarter. The improvement is largely attributable to the implementation of stricter controls on discretionary spending across the organisation, the stabilisation of demand in both adult and children's social care and favourable performance of the council's treasury management activities.
- 2.2 In addition to the mitigating measures detailed above, a focused review of earmarked reserves held by services has also been carried out and identified £4.30m that is no longer required for the purpose they were originally set aside for. These reserves are proposed to be released with a view to fund the in-year overspend. The release of earmarked reserves is subject to approval within this report. If approved, the forecast overspend that requires funding from general reserve would reduce to £2.45m. The prudent level of general reserve will be reviewed as part of setting the 2025/26 budget. The lower the current year overspend the more flexibility it will allow for using reserves to smooth future year's budget profile and fund time limited allocations while maintaining a robust level of reserves based on the level of risks faced by the council. Work is in hand to identify further actions to bring the position in line with budget and ensure a balanced outturn is delivered by 31 March 2025.
- 2.3 In relation to the capital programme, the 2024/25 position presented to Cabinet in October was £181.55m. This report includes a number of proposed amendments to the capital programme for approval as set out in section 4.16 of the report. If approved, the

programme will reduce by £12.18m to £169.37m for 2024/25. Forecast capital expenditure for the year based on the latest forecast is £110.33m, this is a reduction by £920k compared to the previous quarter. The expected level of carry forwards reduced from £70.13m in the second quarter to £56.75m. These forecast carry forwards are reflected in the draft Capital Programme for 2025/26 – 2028/29. The capital forecast, after these amendments is an underspend of (£2.29m) for the year. If this underspend crystallised at yearend, it will be available in 2025/26 to fund unanticipated capital pressures.

2.4 This report also sets out:

- Performance against an agreed set of financial health indicators, which are forecast to be achieved;
- Performance against statutory and local prudential indicators, which are forecast to be achieved;

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 Note potential forecast revenue spend above budget of £6.75m, noting that further actions are being taken to address this position including the release of £4.30m of service earmarked reserves no longer required based on the focused review carried out.
- 3.2 Approve the release of service earmarked reserves totalling £4.30m as detailed in Appendix 4. These reserves are no longer required for the purposes for which they were originally created and therefore can be released to general reserves to support funding the current reported overspend position.
- 3.3 Note that there are additionally high risks of £3.80m to the revenue forecast identified within services as set out in Appendix 2. These risks are actively being monitored and action is being taken to reduce / eliminate them where possible.
- 3.4 Note the progress on savings approved for 2024/25 as detailed in section 4.14 and 4.15 within the report.
- 3.5 Note the ongoing mitigations identified to partially offset the savings deemed undeliverable as detailed in Appendix 5.
- 3.6 Note the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) financial position as detailed in sections 4.16 to 4.21
- 3.7 Approve amendments to the capital programme as set out in section 4.22, including the rephrasing of capital programme to 2025/26 at Appendix 8.
- 3.8 Note that the forecast for the capital programme is predicted to be an underspend of (£2.29m).
- 3.9 Note financial health indicator performance as set out in sections 4.26 to 4.31 and Appendix 9.
- 3.10 Note the prudential indicators as set out in section 4.32 to 4.34 and Appendix 10.
- 3.11 Approve the write off of debt as detailed in section 4.35.

4. Know – Context

- 4.1 The council is legally required to operate within a balanced budget, to operate within financial controls and to deliver approved budget savings. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis is causing in-year cost pressures, particularly in relation to energy and supplies and contract uplifts especially within adult social care and children's services.

Revenue Forecast 2024/25 - Service Pressures

- 4.2 Walsall Council has a track record of managing financial pressures and action has been taken to mitigate current and future cost pressures. The council is experiencing ongoing pressures in relation to the cost of living impact, on contracts/third party spend in particular, and where known and quantifiable, the financial impact of this is included within the forecast position. As a result of these pressures, mitigating actions has been instigated, including services taking focused action to reduce the overspend by implementing tighter controls on discretionary spend where possible.
- 4.3 The current council wide forecast shows a number of pressures which, if not managed, will lead to an overspend of £6.75m against budget, as summarised by directorate in Table 1. This includes mitigating actions identified to date of £11.05m. Further work is on-going to identify further actions to ensure a balanced position for 2024/25.

The forecast overspend has decreased by (£3.51m) compared to the September position of £10.26m reported to Cabinet on 16 October 2024.

Table 1: Forecast revenue analysis 2024/25 by Directorate – December 2024

Directorate	Net Budget	Year-end forecast prior to transfer to / (from) earmarked reserves	Year-end variance to budget prior to transfer / (From) earmarked reserves	Use of earmarked reserves	Transfer to earmarked reserves	Year-end forecast prior to mitigating actions	Mitigating Actions	Year-end forecast including all mitigating actions	Movement since reported to Cabinet 16.10.2024
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care and Public Health	91.85	101.36	9.51	(3.03)	1.68	8.16	(2.39)	5.77	(1.31)
Children's Services & Education	90.12	96.31	6.19	(1.80)	0.94	5.32	0.00	5.32	0.21
Economy, Environment & Communities	42.44	50.03	7.59	(5.80)	0.69	2.47	(0.33)	2.14	(0.55)
Resources & Transformation	46.46	57.87	11.40	(13.00)	0.29	(1.31)	0.00	(1.31)	(0.88)
Capital Financing	27.91	20.12	(7.79)	(0.21)	3.50	(4.50)	(3.94)	(8.44)	(5.80)
Services Position	298.79	325.69	26.90	(23.85)	7.09	10.14	(6.66)	3.48	(8.33)
Central budgets	(146.75)	(119.54)	27.22	(21.57)	2.02	7.66	(4.39)	3.27	4.82
Total Council tax requirement	152.03	206.15	54.12	(45.43)	9.11	17.80	(11.05)	6.75	(3.51)
Release of service earmarked reserves	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	(4.30)	(4.30)	(4.30)
Revised position	152.03	206.15	54.12	(45.43)	9.11	17.80	(15.35)	2.45	(7.81)

Table 2: Earmarked Reserves					
	Opening Balance 01/04/24	Transfers from Reserves	Transfers to Reserves	Transfer to General Reserves	Closing Balance 31/03/25
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Treasury Reserves	34.44	(1.97)	3.50	0.00	35.98
Grant / Contributions received in advance	17.33	(7.19)	2.33	(0.03)	12.45
Improvement projects	24.57	(10.70)	0.02	(1.56)	12.33
Cost Pressures	20.11	(9.82)	0.00	(0.22)	10.07
Council Liabilities	45.24	(9.49)	0.96	0.00	36.71
Covid-19 grants	0.68	(0.26)	0.00	0.00	0.42
Public Finance Initiatives	16.02	(2.56)	0.00	(2.48)	10.99
Risk	10.00	(2.25)	2.00	0.00	9.75
Other	6.43	(1.19)	0.30	(0.02)	5.52
Total	174.83	(45.43)	9.11	(4.30)	134.22

- 4.4 The year-end forecast includes the net use of earmarked reserves of £36.32m including transfers from earmarked reserves of £45.43m and transfers to earmarked reserves of £9.11m. As part of the recent reserves review £4.30m has been identified as no longer required for the original purpose they have been set aside for and can be released to General Reserve subject to Cabinet approval.
- 4.5 Based on the current revenue forecast, at the end of the financial year earmarked reserves are predicted to have a balance of £134.22m. Remaining earmarked reserves are planned to be used in future years, although the period over which they are to be used and the profiling of that use may vary.

Reserves are categorised for the purposes of reporting as follows:

- **Treasury reserves.** These reserves are to minimise the impact of interest rate changes and finance early redemption of loans to reduce the council's future interest exposure;
- **Grants / contributions received in advance.** This is where the council has received money in advance of the next accounting period or covers more than one accounting period. These amounts will be spent in line with the grant conditions;
- **Improvement projects.** These reserves are to finance service modernisation; specific projects such as pilot street cleansing initiatives, Cloud services, Oracle development, economic growth programme; and costs in relation to the council's transformation programme;
- **Cost pressures.** To include review of working practices including blended working, fluctuations in service demand such as in adult social care, crisis support and children in care;
- **Council liabilities.** These reserves cover expenditure where the council has a legal obligation to pay costs, such as equal pay claims and redundancies. In addition to these there are reserves for business rate appeals, pensions and insurance claims;
- **Covid-19 grants.** The carry forward of specific government grants to cover Covid pressures, including expanded retail relief for businesses;

- **Public Finance Initiatives.** Liabilities for our PFI's with Street Lighting and St Thomas More;
- **Risk.** To cover unforeseen risks in 2024/25 at the time the budget was set;
- **Other.** These reserves are to support a wide range of future costs such as partnership working with other external bodies.

The following sections detail movements since the position last reported to Cabinet in October 2024 (September - month 6 position) with the full detail on full year forecast variances and actions to address these shown in Appendix 1 and Appendix 3.

General Reserves

- 4.6 Opening unallocated general reserves for 2024/25 are £19.56m. The medium-term financial framework (MTFF) requires that a prudent level of reserves is maintained. This was set at no less than £18.39m for 2024/25. The MTFF also sets a minimum level of reserves beyond which any use must be reported to Council. This is currently set at £7.77m. The potential variance against budget of £6.75m within this report would reduce available reserves to £11.64m requiring replenishment in year. However, as a result of the release of the service earmarked reserves no longer required of £4.30m, this increases the available balance to £15.94m.

Directorate Financial Positions

- 4.7 Adults Social Care and Public Health - £1.31m decrease in overspend from £7.08m to £5.77m

The overspend for Adult Social as at December 2024 is £5.77m which is a decrease of (£1.31m) from the reported September position of £7.08m.

The main reasons for the **£5.77m** overspend are as follows:

- £3.52m of identified savings across the directorate that are deemed unachievable within this financial year (a detailed summary of these can be found in Appendix 5)
- £1.20m due to a combined impact of new service users above budgeted levels, being placed at a higher average cost than originally budgeted and the number of ended service users being significantly lower than the budgeted trends.
- £3.26m - Net increase due to the impact of changes to existing service user packages undertaken during from April to December 2024
- (£2.39m) – Identified mitigating actions as detailed in Appendix 2
- £180k – other minimal changes across the directorate

The decrease in the overspend position of **(£1.31m)** is as a result of the following:

- (£577k) - changes in existing placement costs – net decrease due to the impact of changes to existing service user packages undertaken during September to November 2024.
- (£520k) - additional mitigating actions identified through decrease in post Intermediate Care service discharges and other reviews.
- (£400k) - Agreed contribution from the Integrated Care Board to the 2023/24 Intermediate Care service overspend.
- (£407k) - decrease in staffing costs as a result of vacant posts and changes in planned recruitment dates and release of uncommitted reserves.
- £468k - increase due to net inflow of new, deceased and ended service users.

- £129k - additional contribution to the bad debt provision of £396k offset by additional service user contribution income and other changes of (£267k)

Further details of the reported overspend are outlined in Appendix 1 with supporting performance data relating to demand management costs in Appendix 7.

Risks

There are high risks of £720k which could impact the forecast position should they materialise, detailed in Appendix 2.

4.8 Public Health

The service is forecast to be on budget after the net use of transfer to reserves.

4.9 Children's and Education - £210k increase in overspend from £5.11m to £5.32m after use of and transfers to reserves and mitigating actions

The overspend for Children's service as at December 2024 is £5.32m which is an increase of £210k since the reported September position of £5.11m.

The main reasons for the **£5.32m** overspend are as follows:

- £1.87m - Children's Social Care Demand mainly due to the full year impact of 2023/24 pressures, cost increases linked to increased support within placements and increased demand on secure placements
- £760k – Children's Social Care Core mainly due to additional occupational therapy equipment and additional staffing costs across a number of services
- £2.36m – Access and Inclusion mainly due to the impact of increased demand and increased average costs associated with Home to school transport, partially offset by traded income and staff underspends within the service.
- £340k – Early help due to short breaks pressures relating to children in care cost avoidance and increased demand and complexity of children using placements

The increase in the overspend position of **£210k** is as a result of the following:

- £150k - Increases in support for two placements and the associated placement costs
- £250k - Early identification of increased inflow and the associated financial impact during December, over and above historic trends, primarily due to a large sibling group and a complex MH case entering care.
- (£160k) – Access and Inclusion due to early achievement of 2025/26 savings, underspends in staffing costs and additional traded income
- (£80k) - reduction in short breaks forecast following one child leaving care and costs reductions in other packages
- £50k – Other minor variances across the directorate

Further details of the reported overspend are outlined in Appendix 1 with supporting performance data relating to demand management costs in Appendix 6.

Risks

There are also high risks of £2.08m which could impact the forecast position should they materialise, detailed in Appendix 2.

4.10 Economy, Environment and Communities – (£550k) decrease in overspend from £2.69m to £2.14m after use of and transfers to reserves and mitigating actions

The overspend for Economy, Environment and Communities as at December 2024 is £2.14m which is a decrease of (£550k) from the reported position in September of £2.69m.

The main reasons for the **£2.14m** overspend are as follows:

- £1.57m – Overspend in operations mainly as a result of increased costs for the Sherbourne Recycling contract due to co-mingled waste costs, additional agency costs and overtime within Clean and Green partially offset by additional waste related income.
- £180k – Highways and Transportation – Due to a shortfall of income partially offset by an underspend on staffing.
- £990k – Place and environment mainly associated with reduced demand for bereavement services relating to a new competitor within the region, reduced demand for rental of market stalls and commercial pressures.
- (£180k) – Underspend in resilient communities due to vacancies across the service.
- (£330k) Identified mitigations to offset the above as detailed in Appendix 3.
- (£90k) – Other minor variances across the directorate.

The decrease in the overspend position of (**£550k**) is as a result of the following:

- (£770k) – Soft facilities management, decrease in forecast following a deep dive into the service.
- (£270k) – Regeneration and Development, decrease due to maximisation of external funding.
- £500k – Increase in operations to a reduction in waste related income and increased waste costs.

Further details of the reported overspend are outlined in Appendix 1

Risks

There are also high risks of £1.00m which could impact the forecast position should they materialise, detailed in Appendix 2.

4.11 Resources and Transformation - £878k decrease in underspend from (£432k) to (£1.31m) after use of and transfers to reserves and mitigating actions

The underspend for Resources and Transformation as at December 2024 is (£1.31m) which is a decrease of (£880k) from the reported position in September of (£430k).

The main reasons for the (**£1.31m**) underspend are as follows:

- (£110k) Finance, Procurement and Assurance - Mainly due to underspend on salaries and additional income within Finance, partially offset by agency staff costs and additional software costs within Procurement
- (£120k) Governance – Mainly due to underspends on salaries across Democratic Services, Legal Services and Electoral services
- (£490k) Transformation and Digital – Mainly due to underspends on salaries across the service partially offset by agency costs and supplies and services

- (£400k) Customer Engagement – Due to underspend on staffing costs and reallocation of Public Health reserve to existing staffing costs partially offset by increase costs associated with the Bed & Breakfast model.
- (£150k) Communications and Hub – Due to underspend on staffing costs across the services partially offset by agency staff and increased advertising costs.

The increase in the underspend position of **(£880k)** is as a result of the following:

- (£300k) – technical adjustment relating to the Public Health reserve to fund existing staffing costs relating to financial inclusion work as part of in-year mitigation work to reduce council position.
- (£110k) - additional income because of early payments on major contracts and traded services.
- (£470k) – reduction in staffing costs due to revised recruitment dates, consultancy costs, and revised supplies and services costs.

Further details of the reported overspend are outlined in Appendix 1

4.12 Capital financing (£5.80m) increase in underspend from (£2.64m) to (£8.44m)

The main reasons for the increase in underspend is due to a further reduction in borrowing costs of and higher investment returns than expected including a one-off forecast dividend of £4.50m.

4.13 Central £4.82m increase from an underspend of (£1.55m) to an overspend of £3.27m

The main reasons for the increase is due to the following

- £5.70m of savings held centrally relating to Third Party Spend (TPS) and Digital Opportunities are deemed to be undeliverable within this financial year.
- £740k increase in spend due to additional levy costs.
- £390k increase as a result of additional mediation costs.
- (£2.00m) use of reserves to offset fluctuation in demand across demand-led services this financial year.

Approved savings in 2024/25

- 4.14 The 2024/25 budget approved by Council on 22 February 2024 includes £20.1m of benefits realisation (savings) against transformation activity plus a further £5.17m of 2023/24 benefits approved to be carried forward for delivery in 2024/25, giving a total benefit figure of £25.27m to be achieved. Directors are required to ensure that service delivery plans are robustly implemented to fully deliver these in year.
- 4.15 There are currently £12.46m (49%) of benefits assessed as red for delivery (at high risk of non-delivery), as shown in Appendix 5 along with the reason and identified mitigating actions to date totalling £3.40m of which £1.68m is ongoing and £1.72m on a one-off basis. Savings assessed as red are currently included within the forecast overspend for 2024/25, therefore successful actions to deliver these red savings will reduce the pressure on this year's budget.

Dedication Schools Grant (DSG) Position

- 4.16 The forecast against the High Needs Block of DSG is currently an overspend of circa £24m. This is in line with the mitigated position of the latest DSG management plan.
- 4.17 Nationally high needs allocations have been distributed on a formula basis using a number of demographic factors since 2018/19 which includes a 50% funding factor based on historical spend.
- 4.18 Walsall's historical high needs spend prior to 2018/19 was low compared to other authorities which has caused a negative impact on subsequent annual allocations due to the 50% funding factor. Growth in EHCP requests and complexity of need have outweighed the annual increase in funding.
- 4.19 Since 2014, Walsall's High Needs Block allocation has increased by £30m however this is a real time cut of 45% due to the increase in EHCPs from 1,200 to over 4,700 in the same period. Of this funding, 94% is passported directly to schools and providers. The remaining 6% is retained within the LA to support the costs of providing support services to schools including children with visual and hearing impairments and school inclusion.
- 4.20 As a result of an increasing number of authorities with significant deficits on their DSG reserves the DfE introduced two support schemes, Delivering Better Value and The Safety Value as well as extending the statutory override which allows the exclusion of the deficit from the council's main revenue budget.
- 4.21 In December 2024 the government published the consultation on the provisional local government finance settlement for 2025-26 which included the following:
- “1.3.2 The government intends to set out plans for reforming the SEND system in further detail next year. This will include details of how the government will support local authorities to deal with their historic and accruing deficits and any transition period from the current SEND system to the reformed system. This will inform any decision to remove the statutory override.”*

Capital Programme 2024/25

- 4.22 The capital programme for 2024/25, as at Cabinet 16 October 2024 was £181.55m. Table 5 summarises amendments made to date, resulting in a revised programme of £169.37m.

Table 5: Amendments to Capital Programme 2024/25	
Project	£m
Capital programme 2024/25 per Cabinet 16 October 2024	181.55
Council Funded Resources	
Acquisition of Lex Site	3.34
Acquisition of Park Place Shopping Centre	3.14
Bloxwich Launchpad	1.44
Rushall Stadium	0.48
New Art Gallery	0.08
Brown Jug – Compulsory purchase order	(0.03)
Capitalisation Wheeled bin stock	0.07

Project	£m
Walsall New Art Gallery	0.47
Smartphones	(0.44)
Archiving	(0.12)
Konica	(0.05)
Telephony	(0.38)
Maintaining a safe and secure environment	(0.09)
Proud card payments	(0.61)
DaTS staffing	(0.82)
Tablet replacement	(0.23)
Cloud Navigator	(0.66)
Looked after children out of borough placements	(0.05)
Children's residential home	(0.15)
New Homes Bonus	(0.08)
Regenerating Walsall	(0.22)
Enterprise Zones	(2.18)
Future High Street Fund	(5.16)
Willenhall Masterplan	(2.54)
Development team capitalisation of posts	(0.08)
Active public spaces	(1.00)
Civic Centre heating	(0.70)
Council House smoke & heat detection fire alarm	(0.25)
Council House general heating	(1.27)
Council House internal decoration	(0.03)
Civic Centre plumbing	(0.07)
Council House windows	(0.95)
Council House roof repairs	(1.41)
Ways of working	(0.19)
Public toilets	(0.08)
Saddlers Centre Shopping Centre	(0.50)
St Peter Church repairs To surrounding wall	(0.03)
Yorks Bridge	(0.37)
Homelessness temporary accommodation expansion and redesign	(0.52)
Replacement PC's	(0.03)
Enabling technology	(2.83)
Standard addressing implementation	(0.11)
Externally Funded	
Walsall Town Centre Public Realm Improvements	(0.22)
Black country blue	(0.01)
Better streets	(0.01)
Wednesbury Road footbridge	(0.01)
NCN5 Canal and River Trust	(0.01)
Active Travel tranche 4	2.57
Walsall Archives for All project	0.09
Disabled Facilities Grant	0.63
Revised capital programme 2024/25	169.37

4.23 A full review of forecast capital carry forwards into 2025/26 has been undertaken resulting in rephasing of the capital programme provision of £56.75m being recommended. Rephasing occurs for a number of reasons such as late confirmation of grant approvals, timing of projects that may fall over more than one financial year, contract delays out of our control due to waiting for funding confirmation or Government approval

4.24 The key capital projects forecast to be rephased into next financial year are as follows:

- Willenhall Masterplan
- Bloxwich Towns Deal
- Walsall Towns Deal
- Basic Need
- Land and Property investment fund

Appendix 8 shows a detailed summary of the capital projects currently forecast to be rephased into 2025/26.

4.25 Table 6 summaries the 2024/25 capital programme which is forecast to be underspent by (£2.29m) after the re-phasing of £56.75m into 2025/26 (detailed at Appendix 8).

Table 6: Forecast capital analysis 2024/25					
Funding Source	Budget	Predicted year end forecast	Variance before Carry forward	Carry Forward	Variance Over / (Under)
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Council funded	68.86	58.29	(10.57)	8.28	(2.29)
Externally funded	100.51	52.04	(48.47)	48.47	0.00
Total	169.37	110.33	(59.04)	56.75	(2.29)

Table 7: Summary of Forecast Underspend 2024/25	
Project	£m
School temporary classrooms	(0.25)
School estate condition survey	(0.20)
Lighting - Invest to save	(0.40)
Capital contingency	(1.09)
Enabling technology	(1.03)
Health and Safety – IFM schemes	0.40
Town Deal – Community Capital	0.28
Total	(2.29)

Financial Health Indicators

4.26 Appendix 9 contains financial health indicator performance as at 31 December 2024 for revenue and capital forecast as referred to in this report. The primary purpose of these is to advise Cabinet of the current financial health of the authority in order to provide assurance to them in their role. The indicators cover a number of areas as follows:

Treasury Management

- 4.27 The indicators show the actual borrowing and investment rates for 2023/24 and the forecast for 2024/25 against set targets. Proactive and robust management of the council's debt and investment portfolios is forecast to result in positive variances against most of the financial health indicator targets for 2024/25.

Balance Sheet

- 4.28 These details ratios for the last 4 financial years 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and post-audit figures for 2023/24 which show the liquidity of the authority.

Revenue performance

- 4.29 This section shows collection rates for council tax and business rates, the average number of days to collect sundry debt and the number of days to process creditor payments for 2023/24 and the performance against profile for 2024/25. Sundry debt collection is on target with performance in relation to the processing of creditor payments better by 3 days. Council tax collection rates are currently slightly below target when compared to the profiled target, whereas NNDR collection rates are slightly above the profiled target.

Management of Resources

- 4.30 This section details the outturn position for 2023/24 and 2024/25 year-end forecast for revenue and capital, which is based on the financial position as at 31 December 2024.
- 4.31 The capital forecast as at the end of December is a forecast to be an underspend of (£2.29m) after the rephasing of £56.75m carry forward into 2025/26. Capital receipts are currently forecast to be on budget pending a review of available asset disposals which is fully dependent on timing and market conditions.

Prudential Indicators

Appendix 10 contains the prudential indicators as at 31 December 2024. The primary purpose of these is to provide assurance to Cabinet that the authority is borrowing and investing in a sound and prudent manner. Indicators are approved by Council on an annual basis.

National Indicators

- 4.32 These indicators are nationally set and provide an indication of the council's exposure to interest rate risks, the proportion of the council's budget used to finance capital expenditure and the borrowing limits for the current year.

All of these indicators were met in 2023/24 and are forecast to be met in 2024/25.

The targets that these prudential indicators are monitored against have been taken from the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2024/25 onwards.

Local Indicators

4.33 These indicators have been set in consultation with the Treasury Management Panel, which is chaired by the s151 Officer, to provide further assurances to the authority that borrowing and investment is being undertaken in a sound and prudent manner.

- L2 - Average length of debt – The target acceptable limit is within 15-25 years. The authority's current position is 15.58 years, which is within the target range.
- L3a - Net borrowing costs as % of net council tax requirement. The target figure of 20.00% represents an upper limit of affordable net borrowing costs as a percentage of the net council tax requirement for the authority. The actual level of net borrowing costs is currently less than the upper limit, showing as 3.31%, which in the main is linked to the work undertaken by the service to seek secure favourable rates on investments and reduced costs on borrowing, thus reducing the overall net borrowing costs.
- L3b - Net borrowing costs as % of Tax Revenue. The target figure of 12.50% represents an upper limit of affordable net borrowing costs as a percentage of tax revenues for the authority. The actual level of net borrowing costs is currently less than the upper limit, showing as 2.33%, which in the main is linked to the work undertaken by the service to seek to secure favourable rates on investments and reduced costs on borrowing, thus reducing the overall net borrowing costs.
- L9a –All investments are currently outperforming the 2024/25 target rates. The average rate of all investments is forecasted at 4.86%, which is 0.85% above the target of 4.03%. The investment rates will reduce in line with anticipated bank rate cuts in the final two quarters of this financial year, but the target is still expected to be met by March 2025.

4.34 All the above indicators were met in 2023/24 and are forecast to be met in 2024/25 except the following:

- L8. Average interest received on short term interest vs at call rate 2.80%. The short term interest rate of 5.14% is 0.14% basis points higher than the at-call rate which is 5%. This equates to a 2.80% increase, however, the target rate for STI vs call rate shows at 20.00%. It is unlikely that this target will be met as interest rates are now on a downward trend and the difference between at-call and short-term rates is minimal so market conditions dictate it is unlikely that the council will make 20% above.

Write off of debt

4.35 The following write off (as it is over £10,000) requires the approval of Cabinet;

- £18,965.25 relating to an Adult Social Care residential care charge for care in 2018. The debt is recommended for write off as the client has passed away and has no funds or assets to pay.
- £12,417.91 relating to Adult Social Care community-based charges for care during the period 2020 to 2023. The debt is recommended for write off as the client has passed away and has no funds or assets to pay.
- £10,916.34 relating to a Children's Services fostering care overpayment for the period 2014 to 2016. The debt is recommended for write off as following the end of a debt management plan the debtor could not be located.

Council Plan Priorities

- 4.36 The council's financial strategy and annual budget process is designed to ensure that resources follow council priorities and deliver outcomes as set out in the Council Plan 2022-25 and will align to future iterations of the Council Plan.

Risk Management

- 4.37 The 2024/25 budget and level of operating reserves were set following a robust financial risk assessment. The level of reserves can only be set based on a set of realistically foreseeable or predicted parameters. Due regard is made to the strategic and operational risks facing the council. Some of these relate to the current economic condition, others to potential regulatory or national issues, which may have a local impact. Best professional judgement and estimates were applied in terms of the ongoing impact of the global pandemic and rising cost of living pressures.
- 4.38 Managers are required to deliver service and improvement targets on time, to standard and within budget. The resource allocation process is governed by the overarching Medium Term Financial Framework (MTFF). Risk management is an integral part of this activity and is embedded in budget preparation, monitoring and forecasting to enable potential variances and risks to be identified early and addressed.
- 4.39 There are also a number of increased risks in 2024/25 as set out within this report. Financial forecasts have been included where known or are estimated. Actions have been taken to address these risks and reduce the forecasted overspend caused by these pressures. Mitigating actions are set out within this report.
- 4.40 As well as financial risk, the council maintains a register that highlights key themes of organisational risk which is reported to Audit Committee as part of their annual work programme. The Strategic Risk Register (SRR) is regularly reviewed and amended where appropriate. The SRR is reported to Corporate Management Team and oversight in relation to this rests with Audit Committee, which will receive a number of reports during 2024/25.

Financial Implications

- 4.41 The financial implications are as set out in the main body of this report. The council has a statutory responsibility to set a balanced budget and to ensure it has an adequate level of reserves. The council takes a medium-term policy led approach to all decisions on resource allocation. The potential forecast revenue variance, prior to mitigating actions being implemented, is significant and requires strong and robust management to ensure the council outturns within budget by year end. Actions are being taken to address this and progress will continue to be reported throughout 2024/25 to Cabinet.
- 4.42 Opening unallocated general reserves for 2024/25 were £19.56m. The medium-term financial framework (MTFF) requires that a prudent level of reserves is maintained. This was set at no less than £18.39m for 2024/25. The potential overspend of £6.75m within this report would reduce available reserves and action is being taken to address this to ensure we outturn with an appropriate level of reserves.

Legal implications

- 4.43 The council is required to set and operate within a balanced budget. Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the chief finance officer (CFO), in consultation with the council's monitoring officer, to make a report under this section if it appears to him or her that the expenditure of the authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources (including sums borrowed) available to it to meet that expenditure. In practice, this is most likely to be required in a situation in which reserves have become depleted and it is forecast that the council will not have the resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year. This mechanism, however, is impractical and should be avoided, as issuing a S114 notice requires all non-statutory spend to cease immediately, a situation which would just exacerbate the current situation.
- 4.44 The council will have due regard to its statutory responsibilities in proposing any changes to service provision and its statutory responsibilities in relation to setting a balanced budget.

Procurement Implications / Social Value

- 4.45 All procurement activity is being reviewed, with a focus on identifying opportunities that will enable us to financially support our current and future services. It will do this by reviewing and reducing third party spend and improving the 'Procure to Pay' process and systems. The Third Party Spend Board has been created to support and challenge services through the gateways of the commissioning and procurement process, with the aim of achieving best value for money.

Property Implications

- 4.46 The impact of Covid-19 has meant that many council premises were required to close or remain open with restricted access to essential workers during the early stages of 2021/22. Following the easing of restrictions, the council has reviewed its ways of working approach, emphasised on 'it's the work that we do, not where we do it'.

Cabinet on 20 April 2022 approved the council's Strategic Asset Plan 2022-27. The Strategic Asset Plan is the key document which sets out the council's vision and approach for the management of its property portfolio under the Corporate Landlord model.

The Corporate Landlord model approach takes a more strategic approach to property and asset management across the council, bringing together property, facilities management and commissioning responsibilities into a key enabling service under the council's new functional model. This will ultimately enable the development and implementation of an estate that supports our transformation programme and the wider corporate objectives of the council.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 4.47 This report is prepared with consideration of any impacts that any decisions would have on health and wellbeing. Any implications arising from the budget will be reported to members during budget setting along with any actions which are required to be addressed prior to implementation of budget proposals.

Staffing Implications

- 4.48 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.49 The 2010 Equality Act lays a requirement to have due regard to the equality impact when exercising its function. As a public body, the council is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as set out in the Equality Act, 2010. The PSED requires the council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Failure to meet these requirements may result in the council being exposed to costly, time-consuming, and reputation-damaging legal challenges. The budget is equality impact assessed and consulted on as appropriate, with feedback and actions arising from these reported to Members during budget setting.

Climate Change

- 4.50 This report is prepared with consideration of the council's Climate Change Action Plan, and the budget will need to consider the six key areas of the Plan: strategy, energy, waste, transport, nature, resilience and adaptation (as appropriate).

Consultation

- 4.51 The report is prepared in consultation with the s151 Officer, Corporate Management Team, relevant managers and directors.

5. Decide

- 5.1 Cabinet may wish to consider additional actions to address the matters set out in this report.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Following Cabinet's consideration and approval, the S151 Officer will ensure implementation of the recommendations.

7. Review

- 7.1 Regular monitoring reports will continue to be presented to Cabinet on the forecast for 2024/25, including an update on risks and impact on the budget for 2025/26 and beyond.
- 7.2 Budget proposals will be presented to Cabinet and implemented following approval of the budget by Full Council in February 2025.

Background papers: Various financial working papers.

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Judith Greenhalgh
Executive Director – Resources & Transformation

12 February 2025



Shaun Darcy
Director – Finance, Procurement and Assurance / S151 Officer

12 February 2025



Councillor M Statham
Deputy Leader – Finance

12 February 2025

Appendix 1 – Directorate Forecast Position 2024/25 prior to mitigating actions

The following sections provide more detail on directorate pressures and actions being taken to address these.

Adults Social Care and Public Health (£8.16m prior to mitigating actions, after use of and transfers to reserves)

The overspend prior to any mitigation is £8.16m, this pressure is offset by identified mitigating actions totalling (£2.39m).

The main reasons for the £8.16m overspend can be split into and 'Impact of Service Transformation Plan' of £3.52m, 'Business as usual' (BAU) of £3.67m and the transfer to reserves of £965k relating to joint funding income.

The reasons for the saving under-achievement of £3.52m are as follows:

- £1.40m - joint funding tool contributions and due diligence process is underway which will inform the 2024/25 position and the ongoing impact. This position reflects the latest position projection of sample assessed as part of the 'Devon' tool;
- £720k - Community Reablement;
- £651k - market management of Learning Disability and Mental health provider market, and Shared Lives review;
- £685k - effective processing of service user contributions and charges;
- £60k – Section 75 Income Generation.

The main reasons for the BAU position of £3.67m are as follows:

- £1.20m – inflow/ attrition/ backdating- Increase due to net inflow of new, deceased and ended service users. This increase is a combined impact of new service users above budgeted levels combined with being placed at a higher average cost than originally budgeted and the number of ended service users being significantly lower than the budgeted trends.
- £3.26m – changes in existing placement costs - Net increase due to the impact of changes to existing service user packages undertaken during from April to December 2024.
- (£857k) - other demand related changes including reduction in s117 expenditure forecast and increases in both health and client income.
- £62k – Integrated Community Equipment Service - This overspend is based upon the Councils net share of the reported position by Walsall Healthcare Trust at the end of August. The overspend is due to increasing demand for equipment.
- (£133k) - part year savings as a result of the cessation of both the CM2000 and Better Care Finance contracts.
- £140k - staffing and other miscellaneous variations

Public Health on budget (after planned use of and transfer to reserves)

The current forecast position before the net use/of transfer to reserves is an overspend of £1.24m. After the net transfer to reserves totalling £1.24m Public Health is on budget.

The **£1.24m** overspend prior to reserves is a result of the following:

- (£70k) transfer to reserves – This is due to a projected underspend on staffing as a result of part year vacancies across the service partially offset by agency staff costs.
- (£340k) transfer to reserves – This is due to a reduction in rehab placements (which is a demand-led service), a reduction in the forecast for family safeguarding workers due to vacancies in the team and underspends on supplies and services.
- £1.65m transfer from reserves – Planned projects funded from reserves for the financial year 2024/25. This includes investments into Mental Health, Sexual Health, and Young Adults Wellbeing services.

Mitigating actions of £2.39m have been identified across the directorate to reduce the overall forecast which are detailed at Appendix 3.

Children's - (£5.32m prior to mitigating actions, after use of and transfers to reserves)

The overspend prior to any mitigation is £5.32m. The main reasons for the overspend are as follows:

Children's Social Care Demand £1.87m, split as follows;

- £660k – full year impact of 2023/24 pressures, primarily linked to the increased net inflow/ outflow, offset by identified cost reductions and contributions totalling (£2.11m), of which £840k is yet to be realised.
- £280k – inflationary cost increases linked to the retender of the Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) framework.
- £430k – cost increases linked to increased support within placements.
- £430k – net pressure within the inflow / outflow and placement moves budget following an increased demand on secure placements. To note within this position £766k of savings have been identified as unachievable. These red savings have been offset by the recurrent overachievement of two savings within the service (£373k) and one-off underspends in short term placements, including Remand and Mother and Baby (£318k).
- £80k – pressures within the internal residential homes due to a reduction in respite income and increased overtime
- (£10k) – minimal variances linked to the FDAC contract.

Children's Social Care Core £760k, split as follows;

- £120k - Costs linked to occupational therapy equipment. Service continues to work with OTs to understand the reason for increases, manage future demand and reduce costs in future years.
- £20k - Increased staffing / agency costs linked to the impact of increased sibling groups and demand on the family time service. Proposals to invest in this area are included within the 2025/26 MTFO.
- £280k - Section 17 costs linked to increased use of agency support, childcare costs and accommodation to avoid children entering care, pending the full implementation

of the Families First for Children pathfinder. The pathfinder project should support with these costs going forward.

- £30k - Regional adoption agency contract increases in 2024/25.
- £350k - Staffing pressures from use of agency to backfill posts until permanent recruitment can be completed, temporary management arrangements and long-term sickness. To note, £257k of this pressure is within the social worker R&R focused areas and has been deemed unachievable as a saving during the financial year.
- £160k - Other non-staffing pressures relating to travel, premises and security costs
- (£190k) - Underspends within the complex needs project team due to delays in recruitment and £90k funding received from health partners.

Early Help - £340k, split as follows;

- £340k – short breaks pressure of which £230k relates to children in care demand cost avoidance and the remaining £110k is increased demand and complexity of children using the placements. The service continues to ensure the service provided is appropriate and health contributions are agreed and received where possible.
- (£0.00m) – pressures linked to Children Services contracts (£50k) which have been offset by staffing underspends across Early Help (£50k).

Access & Inclusion £2.36m, split as follows;

- £2.61m Home to school transport due to the impact of increased demand in 2023/24 over and above budget (28% increase vs 14% budgeted) and increase in average costs linked to market pressures.
- (£40k) use of attendance fine income to support staffing costs.
- (£50k) 2025/26 saving bought forward and achieved in 2024/25.
- (£140k) staffing and agency underspends due to delays in recruitment.
- (£20k) additional traded income.

Resources and Transformation (£1.31m underspend after use of and transfers to reserves, prior to mitigating actions)

The current net forecast position after the net use of reserves is an underspend of (£1.31m). The main reasons for the underspend are as follows:

- Finance (£333k) – underspend due to vacant posts partially offset by agency costs and recruitment costs
- Corporate assurance (£44k) – underspend due to vacancies across the service;
- Programme management (£37k) - underspend due to maximisation of external funding
- Corporate management team £99k – overspend on salary costs predominantly relating to additional responsibilities;
- Procurement £204k – overspend on agency staff costs partially offset by vacant posts across the service;
- Electoral Services (£30k) – underspend on staffing due to vacant posts;

- Democratic Services (£52k) – underspend on staffing due to vacant posts partially offset by under recovery of income from school admission appeals and an overspend on supplies and services;
- Legal services (£37k) – Underspend on staffing due to vacant posts partially offset by locum costs, external legal fees and under recovery of income
- Digital Transformation & Digital (£489k) – underspend on staffing costs across the service due to vacant posts partially offset by overspend on computer equipment and contracts;
- Human Resources, Organisational Development and Administration (£42k) – underspend in staffing costs across services partially offset by agency staff costs for specialist services and recruitment expenses;
- Customer Engagement (£398k) – Underspend on staffing costs and reallocation of Public reserve to fund existing staff costs partially offset by increased costs associated with the Bed & Breakfast model.
- Communications and Hub (£153k) – underspend on staffing costs due to vacant posts partially offset by agency staff costs and supplies and services.

Economy, Environment and Communities (£2.47m overspend prior to mitigating actions and after use of and transfers to reserves)

The overspend prior to any mitigation is £2.47m. The main reasons for the overspend are as follows:

- £280k - mainly due to agency staff costs for senior planning officers and software implementation within Planning Services and Building Control;
- (£160k) – additional income within Housing Standards and Improvements from fines and grants;
- £750k - pressure relating to cleaning and caretaking costs for buildings managed across the council;
- £260k – saving relating to staffing restructure not achieved covered by mitigating actions;
- £620k – staffing costs relating to overtime and agency costs within Clean and Green services;
- £180k – red savings relating to the closure of HWRC's 1 day a week and reduced demand for bulky waste collections following a price increase;
- £175k – pressure on water supplies to council buildings;
- £75k – red saving relating to premises rental income from partners of £225k, this is partially offset by additional income from commercial and shop premises income of (£150k);
- (£336k) –additional income from Lex Site and Park Place;
- £720k – pressure relating to a fall in demand on bereavement services relating to a new competitor within the borough;
- £135k – due to a decrease in demand for rental of stalls within Walsall Market;
- (£260k) – over recovery of income from W2R energy.

Capital Financing underspend of (£4.50m) after use of and transfer to reserves (prior to mitigating actions)

Prior to any transfer to reserves the position is an underspend of £7.79m. The underspend is due to a reduction in borrowing costs and higher investment returns than expected including a one-off dividend estimated to be £4.50m.

Of the total underspend £2.50m is to be transferred to the capital financing smoothing reserve to smooth known increases in borrowing costs from 2025/26 onwards. There will also be £1.00m transferred to the CCLA Valuation Reserve. There will be a planned (£0.21m) use of reserves from the lease vs buy reserve.

The remaining underspend of (£3.94m) is being used as mitigating action to support council wide pressures as set out in Appendix 3.

Central £7.66m overspend after use of and transfer to reserves (prior to mitigating actions).

The overspend relates to the following:

- £5.70m of savings held centrally relating to Third Party Spend (TPS) and Triple Value Impact (TVI) are deemed to be undeliverable within this financial year.
- £740k overspend due to additional levy costs.
- £390k overspend as a result of additional mediation costs.
- £840k forecast energy costs above budget which includes £200k saving which will not be achieved in year.

Appendix 2: Summary of potential risk

Details of Risk	Potential Cost of Risk £m
Adult Social Care & Public Health	
Increased demand for care services if client in/ outflow trends seen in 2024/25 are different to budgeted assumptions	0.12
Increased changes to existing service user costs if trends seen in 2024/2025 to date continue for the remainder of the year	0.44
Impact of backdating information within Mosaic. Risk of active/placements with financial commitments not yet recorded on the database and therefore omitted from the current forecast position	0.15
Total Adult Social Care & Public Health	0.72
Children's & Education	
Increased inflow/ outflow pressures – The financial impact of children entering and leaving care in 2023/24 was significantly higher than that of previous years, if these rates were to continue there could be an additional pressure in year.	0.46
Home to School transport increase in costs / demand – The current forecast is based on current demand and estimated future demand in the remaining months of the year. It also assumes changes to costs as seen in previous years	0.10
Placement moves – The financial impact of placement moves in 2023/24 was significantly higher than that of previous years.	0.21
Increase in placement costs / level of support – during 2023/24, there was a continuing number of cases whose level in support increased creating a pressure in year. If this were to materialise again in 2024/25, there could be a further pressure	0.09
Health partner contributions 23/24 – At the end of 23/24, 6 cases were identified with health requirements. Health partners have agreed that there are health needs but formal MDT's are yet to take place	0.41
Health partner contributions 24/25 – 10 cases were identified with health requirements. The position assumes funding will be received for these cases following formal MDT's, risk if funding received differs from what is assumed	0.35
Home to school transport impact of Belonging Regulations – DFE communications relating to this are resulting in several local authorities reviewing their stance on financial responsibility for transporting children, income may be reduced if local authority's change stance.	0.17
Increased demand in Section 17 – There has been a high level of expenditure to date linked to Section 17, if this expenditure does not reduce as forecast this could result in a further pressure.	0.29
Total Children's & Education	2.08
Economy, Environment and Communities	
Additional property maintenance costs	1.00

Total Economy, Environment and Communities	1.00
TOTAL HIGH RISKS	3.80

Appendix 3: Mitigation actions included within the report

Directorate	Detail of mitigating actions	£m
Adult Social Care & Public Health	Use of unallocated Better Care Fund inflation	0.21
	Decreases through post ICS discharges and other reviews reported up to end of August (mitigating action for market management of learning disability and mental health provider saving)	1.28
	Release of grant funding held in reserve to fund existing spend	0.47
	Agreed contribution from the ICB	0.40
	One-off staffing underspend to offset delay in achieving Section 75 Income	0.03
Total Mitigation included for Adult Social Care and Public Health		2.39
Economy, Environment & Communities	Economic Growth Programme funding held in reserves.	0.26
	Overachievement of fuel STP c/f from 2023/24	0.07
Total Mitigation included for Economy, Environment & Communities		0.33
Central	Reduction in borrowing costs and higher investment returns	3.94
	Use of cost of living reserve	1.09
	Social care demand reserve	1.30
	Use of risk reserve	2.00
Total Mitigation included for Central		8.33
Total Mitigation included in forecast outturn		11.05

Appendix 4: List of service Earmarked reserves to be released

Directorate	Earmarked reserve description	£
Economy, Environment & Communities	Economic growth programme reserve	999,158
	Transition funding reserve	14,500
	Feasibility appraisals and options reserve	238,579
	Street Lighting PFI	1,477,000
	Pro tech reserve	12,653
Total for Economy, Environment & Communities		2,741,890
Resources and Transformation	Audit and inspection reserve	20,000
	Improvement projects reserve	80,303
	Elections reserve	217,155
Total for Resources and Transformation		317,458
Children's and Education	Feasibility appraisals and options reserve	243,992
	St Thomas Moore PFI	1,000,000
Total for Children's and Education		1,243,992
Total Service Earmarked reserves to be released		4,303,340

Appendix 5: Benefits 2024/25 currently identified as 'Red' due to risk of delayed delivery.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be mitigated on a one-off basis in year £	Value to be mitigated ongoing (achieved alternatively) £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Children's Services	OP56 - Reduction in Home to School transport investment	145,000	145,000	0	0	Increased costs and demand over and above expected levels in 2023/24 have added pressure to 2024/25 budget, meaning savings are not achievable within current budget envelope.	No mitigation currently identified.
Children's Services	2023/24 - Home to School Transport review of contracts and route optimisation	300,000	300,000	0	0	Increased costs and demand over and above expected levels in 2023/24 have added pressure to 2024/25 budget, meaning prior year savings are not achievable within current budget envelope.	No mitigation currently identified.
Children's Services	OP6 - Review of current establishment and reduction in the use of agency staff, following recruitment of permanent staff	315,450	256,657	0	0	Unachievable based on current levels of agency staff/staff across the directorate	No mitigation currently identified.
Children's Services	OP57/60 – Further recruitment and retention of internal foster carers	810,648	183,311	107,463	0	Current year target achieved, however difficulty attracting additional carers over and above original target	One off under spends on short term placements
Children's Services	OP58 – Specialist Foster Placements	457,250	99,752	99,752	0	Delays in recruiting carer as per original timescales	One off under spends on short term placements

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be mitigated on a one-off basis in year £	Value to be mitigated ongoing (achieved alternatively) £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Children's Services	OP62 – Extend the Family safeguarding programme into Corporate parenting	859,866	482,874	106,205	372,543	Original assumptions now deemed unachievable due to the complexity of cases, this saving has been reduced from 2025/26 onwards in line with findings	£373k - Overachievement from savings relating to new internal residential homes and adolescent service and £106k - One off under spends on short term placements
Total Children's Services		2,888,214	1,467,594	313,420	372,543		
Adult Social Care	OP17 - Market management of Learning Disability/Mental Health provider	574,282	483,839	0	483,839	Business case still being developed. Workshops underway to determine identifying cost reductions	Reduction in post Intermediate Care Service discharges reviews.
Adult Social Care	OP16 - Community Reablement service	1,147,248	720,000	0	606,435	Delay in implementing the service – service implemented and live from November 2024	Reduction in post Intermediate Care Service discharges reviews.
Adult Social Care	OP15 - Shared Lives – Foster Care Provision	142,812	142,812	0	142,812	Expected increase in shared lives provision as encouraging more people to access this service to reduce more expensive service user placements	Reduction in post Intermediate Care Service discharges reviews.
Adult Social Care	2023/24 - Review for Learning Disabilities joint funding tool	2,212,270	1,407,147	0	0	Due diligence on tools in progress which will inform 2024/25 discussions with ICB.	No mitigation currently identified.
Adult Social Care	2023/24 - Shared Lives – Foster Care Provision	116,277	24,411	0	24,411	Expected increase in shared lives provision as encouraging more people to access this service to reduce more expensive service user placements	Reduction in post Intermediate Care Service discharges reviews.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be mitigated on a one-off basis in year £	Value to be mitigated ongoing (achieved alternatively) £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Adult Social Care	2023/24 – Section 75 Income Generation	59,780	59,780	30,124	0	Ongoing discussions with ICB.	One off underspend due to vacant posts within service.
Adult Social Care	2023/24 - Efficiencies attributed to the implementation of improved charging policies	794,720	684,549	0	0	Delayed delivery of the income generation project.	No mitigation currently identified.
Total Adult Social Care & Public Health		5,047,389	3,522,538	30,124	1,257,497		
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP49 - One public estate – income from partners	250,000	225,000	151,000	0	Rental of space in Civic Centre is dependent on HVAC works being completed before commencement of leases.	Rental of Commercial & Shop Premises
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP34 – Fees and Charges – Registrars, Crematorium	61,974	6,890	0	0	Charges increased but savings not achieved due to reduced demand due to competitor	No mitigation currently identified
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 – Outsource Outdoor Pursuits Service to a community group	12,878	12,878	0	0	Delays in legal processes – Expected to be delivered in April 2025	No mitigation currently identified
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP34 -Fees and charges - Cultural	39,601	14,847	0	14,847	Partial non delivery due to reduced room hire income at Forest Arts Centre and Environmental Health fees	Mitigated by achievement of other income and reduced expenditure
Economy, Environment & Communities	Active Living Centres income generation	180,000	74,363	74,363	0	Dependent on receiving additional HAF funding which is now widely available to the private sector and therefore reduced funding expected.	Mitigated by overachievement of income across other leisure services.

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be mitigated on a one-off basis in year £	Value to be mitigated ongoing (achieved alternatively) £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Economy, Environment & Communities	P4 – Street lighting dimming & trimming during the evening	160,000	120,000	120,000	0	Costs not reduced sufficiently enough to deliver saving. Awaiting outcome on ongoing negotiations	Funded from Street Lighting reserve
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP51 - Council House / Town Hall events	40,000	40,000	0	0	Unachievable based on current projection of future events.	No mitigation currently identified.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP53 - Energy reductions	200,000	200,000	200,000	0	Estimated energy forecast predict an overspend of at least £2m therefore this saving will not be delivered.	Mitigated one off through use of corporate reserve and reported centrally not within EE&C.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP28 - Bereavement services, new memorial garden at North Walsall Cemetery	55,000	55,000	0	0	Dependent on capital funding – delay in starting required work	No mitigation currently identified
Economy, Environment & Communities	P5 - Seek sponsorship for festive lights	40,000	40,000	40,000	0	Plan to seek sponsorship funding, but currently no agreement.	Funded from Street Lighting reserve
Economy, Environment & Communities	P6 - Closure of Fryers Road and Merchants Way Household Waste Recycling Centres for 1 day (7 to 6)	150,000	150,000	150,000	0	Plan for delivery currently being reviewed.	Mitigated by trade waste surplus income.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP4 - Increase on-street parking charges	20,000	10,000	10,000	0	Partial delay as not allowed to advertise changes after elections in May 2024	Funded from Parking reserve

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be mitigated on a one-off basis in year £	Value to be mitigated ongoing (achieved alternatively) £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP5 - Increase off-street parking charges	55,000	5,000	5,000	0	Partial delay as not allowed to advertise changes after elections in May 2024	Funded from Parking reserve
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Increase in bulky waste charges	136,000	15,000	15,000	0	Reduction in demand when introduced in February 2024.	Mitigated by trade waste surplus income.
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP72 – Full cost recovery of penalty notices for fly tipping	5,000	3,669	0	0	Plan for delivery currently being reviewed.	No mitigation currently identified
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Parking dispensation charging of £15 per vehicle per day	14,625	10,969	10,969	0	Delay in required system changes to implement change	Funded from Parking reserve
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Regeneration and Economy Team review	260,193	260,193	260,193	0	Delay in implementing new structure	Currently mitigated by one off external funding grants
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Improvement to DD collection processes	10,000	10,000	10,000	0	Delays in implementing required system changes due to compatibility.	Mitigated by additional income across the service
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Increase rental income from Park Lodges	4,034	4,034	0	4,034	Unachievable due to only partial increase in rates	Mitigated by rental of clock tower
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP54 – Charge developers for travel plans	30,000	30,000	0	30,000	Plan for delivery currently being reviewed.	Mitigated by under spend on expenditure budgets within the service
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Income generation review of fees and charges – increase bereavement charges by 5%, registrars and interment fees by 3%	93,646	93,646	0	0	Charges increased but savings not achieved due to reduced demand due to competitor from September	No mitigation currently identified

Directorate	Benefit	Original Full Benefit £	Value of benefit identified as at high risk of non-delivery £	Value to be mitigated on a one-off basis in year £	Value to be mitigated ongoing (achieved alternatively) £	Reason	Mitigating Actions
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP69 – Other waste disposal – (e.g. grey bin, plasterboard, textiles)	280,000	280,000	280,000	0	Unachievable based on current pressures within the service	Mitigated one off through use of corporate reserve and reported centrally not within EE&C.
Economy, Environment & Communities	2023/24 - Review of Libraries Management	60,679	40,392	0	0	Delay in implementation of change due to sickness absence.	No mitigation currently identified
Economy, Environment & Communities	P2 – Registrars change of name deeds	3,000	3,000	0	3,000	Change of name deed not yet implemented	Achieved through additional income streams within service
Economy, Environment & Communities	P6 - Rewilding of all urban grassed areas - to manage public grassed open spaces and verges for biodiversity rather than visual appearance	50,000	50,000	50,000	0	Plan for delivery currently being reviewed.	Achieved through one off staff and materials saving
Economy, Environment & Communities	OP34 – Fees and Charges (Planning)	12,000	12,000	0	0	Prices have increased but has resulted in lower demand for services	No mitigation currently identified
Total Economy, Environment & Communities		2,223,630	1,766,881	1,376,525	51,881		
Centrally Held	OP76 – Additional Third Party spend (TPS)	3,000,000	3,000,000	0	0	Plan for delivery currently being reviewed.	No mitigation currently identified
Centrally Held	OP77 – Triple Value Impact (TVI) workshop	2,700,000	2,700,000	0	0	Plan for delivery currently being reviewed.	No mitigation currently identified
Total Central		5,700,000	5,700,000	0	0		
Total		15,859,233	12,457,013	1,720,069	1,681,921		

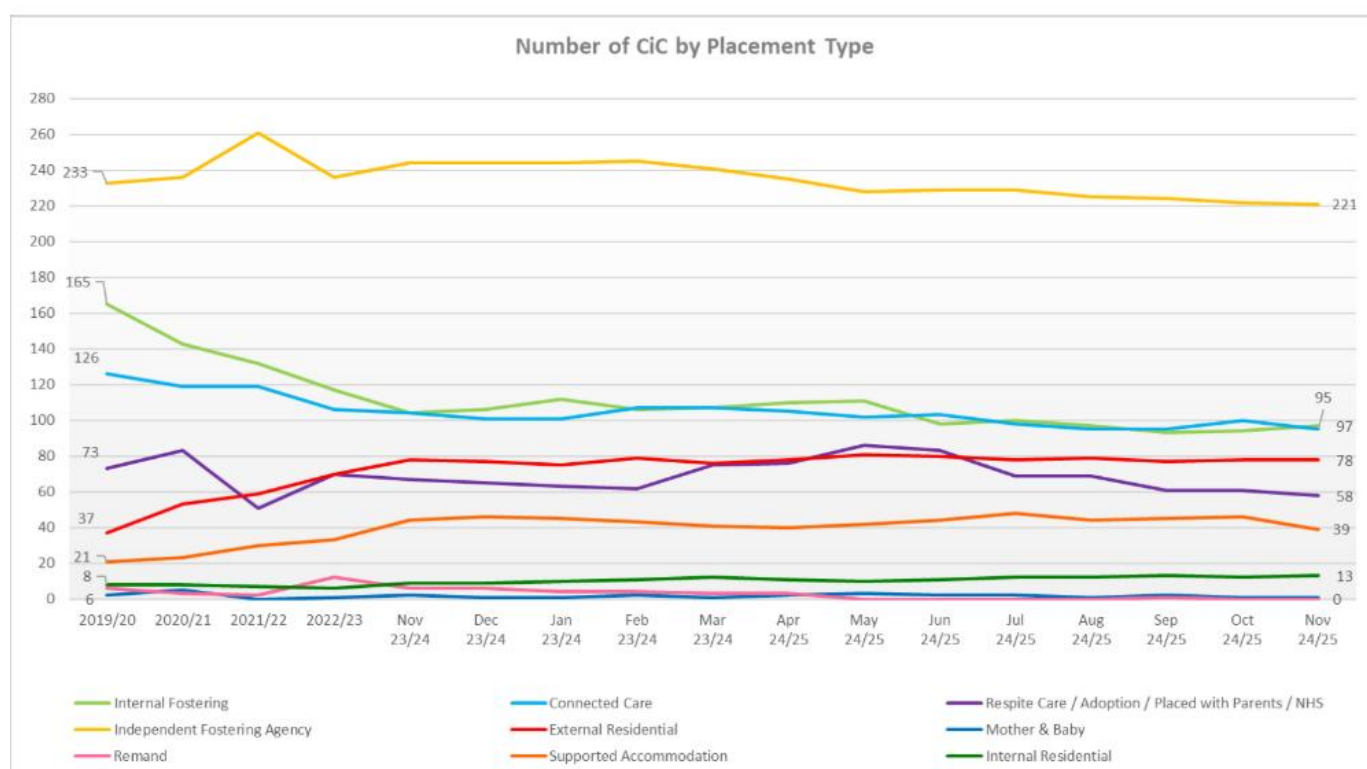
Appendix 6 – Performance data relating to demand within Children’s Services

Children’s Demand Services

Number of Children in Care by Placement Type

Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Nov 23/24	Dec 23/24	Jan 23/24	Feb 23/24	Mar 23/24	Apr 24/25	May 24/25	Jun 24/25	Jul 24/25	Aug 24/25	Sep 24/25	Oct 24/25	Nov 24/25
Total CiC	671	673	661	651	658	655	655	659	663	660	663	650	636	622	611	614	602

As of November 2024, there was 602 children in care in Walsall. The graph below shows these children and young people (C&YP) by placement type and demonstrates the continuing placement sufficiency pressures, which has resulted in a change in the mix of placement types.



The graph shows how the reliance on higher cost placements has increased over the 12 month and 5-year period, with the number of External Residential placements increasing from 37 in 2019/20 to 78 in November 2024. Although, the use of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) had previously continued to rise, there has been a reduction in recent months bringing the total number of IFA placements to 221. In comparison, the use of lower cost placements has decreased, with the number of Internal Fostering placements reducing from 165 in 2019/20 to 97 in November 2024, and Connected Care placements reducing from 126 in 2019/20 to 95 in November 2024.

Number of children entering and leaving care

The table below illustrates the number of children entering care to date for 2024/25 and the prior four-year inflow trends by placement type.

Placement Type	Apr - Nov 20/21	% of total	Apr - Nov 21/22	% of total	Apr - Nov 22/23	% of total	Apr - Nov 23/24	% of total	Apr - Nov 24/25	% of total
Internal Fostering	31	26%	21	19%	28	29%	17	13%	12	16%
Connected Care	19	16%	12	11%	9	9%	16	12%	10	13%
Respite Care / Adoption / Placed with Parents / NHS	17	14%	13	12%	13	13%	6	5%	13	17%
Independent Fostering Agency	34	28%	42	38%	29	30%	45	34%	23	30%
External Residential	8	7%	11	10%	7	7%	17	13%	4	5%
Mother & Baby	2	2%	2	2%	2	2%	5	4%	0	0%
Remand	3	2%	1	1%	5	5%	1	1%	1	1%
Supported Accommodation	7	6%	10	9%	5	5%	25	19%	12	16%
Internal Residential	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	2	3%
Total CiC	121		112		98		133		77	

The number of children entering care from April to November in 2024/25 is lower than that of the other prior years, with a total of 77 C&YP (as at 02/12/24). This reduced number has supported achieving cost avoidance savings in year and reduced the financial impact to the overall position. However, it should be noted that the reduced use of lower cost placements, such as internal fostering, described above, is also mirrored for those entering care, with internal fostering reducing to 16% of total placements used.

During 2023/24, 200 C&YP entered care, an increase of 20% on the prior year. In addition to the increased numbers, there was an additional reliance on IFA's and External Residential placements as seen above. This extraordinary growth and increased reliance on higher cost placements has created a pressure in 2024/25 over and above the budgeted investment of £660k.

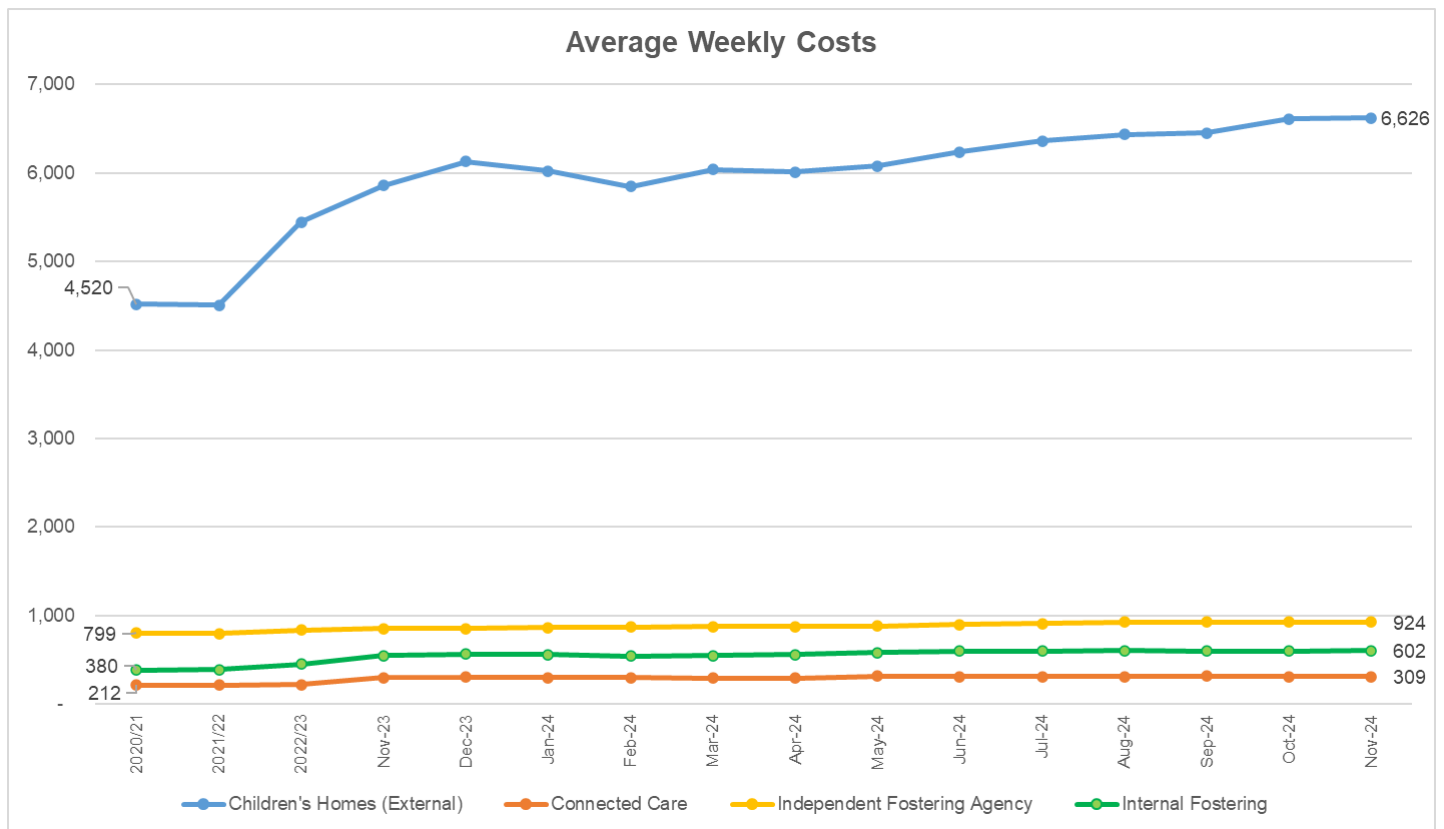
The table below shows the number of C&YP leaving care to date for 2024/25 and the prior four-year outflow trends. To note, this excludes those that have turned 18 as the financial impact of these have been considered within the forecast and budget.

	Apr - Nov 20/21	Apr - Nov 21/22	Apr - Nov 22/23	Apr - Nov 23/24	Apr - Nov 24/25
Number of C&YP leaving care	-71	-84	-81	-72	-92

From April to November 2024, there were 92 C&YP who left care. This is higher than that of the prior four financial years, however 29 of these were placed with parents so do not have an impact on the placements budget.

Average weekly costs of placements

The chart below shows the average weekly cost of the four most utilised placement types for Walsall's CiC. The average weekly cost for an external residential placement has significantly increased from £4.2k to £6.6k (56%) over the last 5 financial years, and from £5.9k 12 months ago (13%). There are currently seven placements over the cost of £10k per month which is influencing this average cost. When removed the average cost reduces to £6,114 per week. This is significantly higher than the average weekly cost of an Internal Fostering placement of £602 p/w and Connected Care placement of £309 p/w.

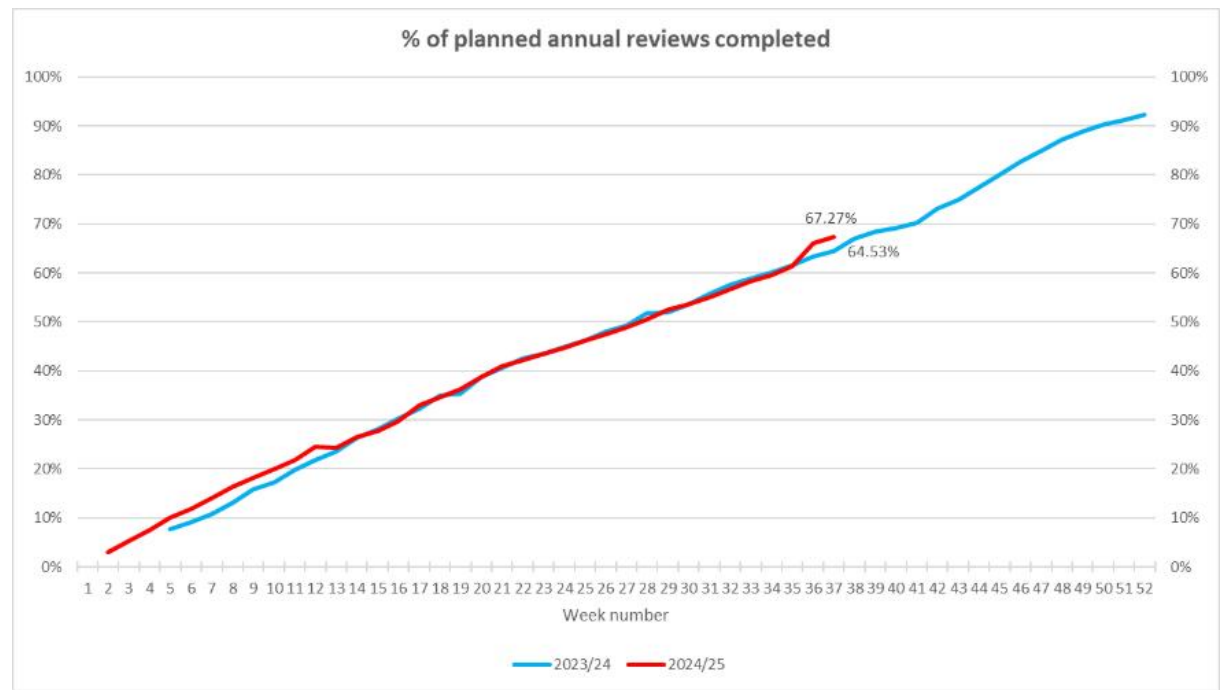


In recognition of the financial impacts above, the service will continue to focus on stepping C&YP down to lower cost placements where possible during 2024/25

Appendix 7 – Performance data relating to demand within Adult Social Care (P9 December 2024, utilising data to 30th November 2024)

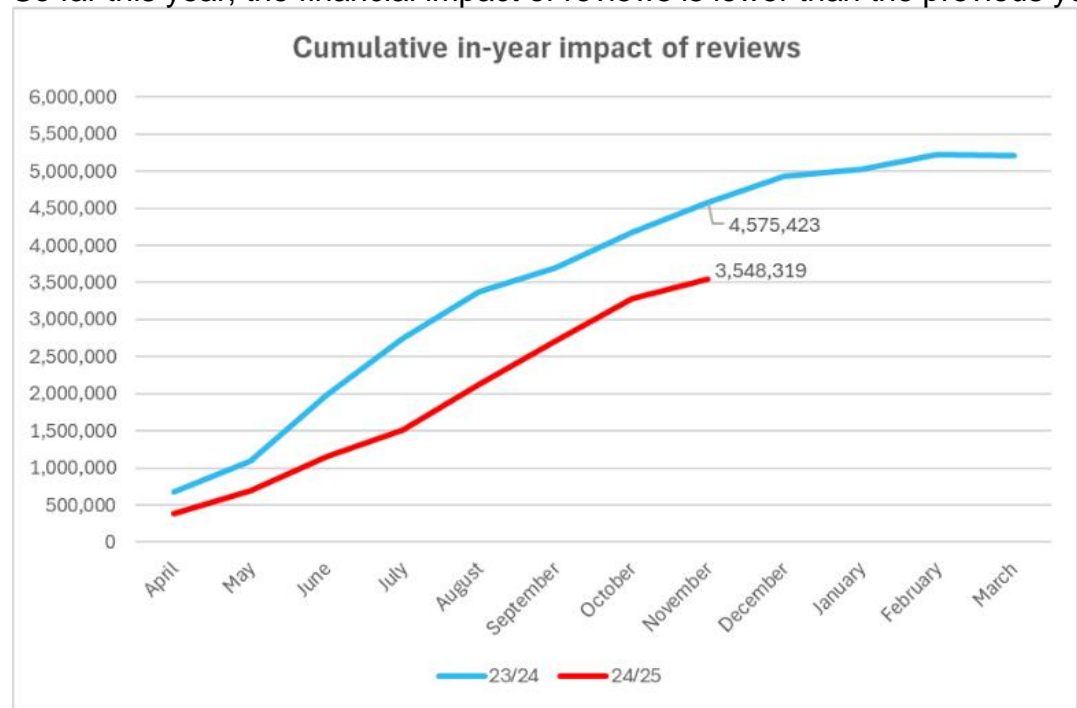
Reviews

Service users should receive a minimum of one planned review in a 12-month period, additionally unplanned reviews take place for several reasons.



The above graph, using Weekly Numbers data, indicates that the rate of completed reviews is currently in-line with the previous year. For 2024/25, 67.27% of planned reviews have been completed by the end of week 37 (15th December 2024) compared to 64.53% for 2023/24.

The graph below, using data from the Spend Overview Dashboard, shows that the net total in-year impact of reviews resulting in a new service plan for 2023/24 was £5.2m. So far this year, the financial impact of reviews is lower than the previous year.



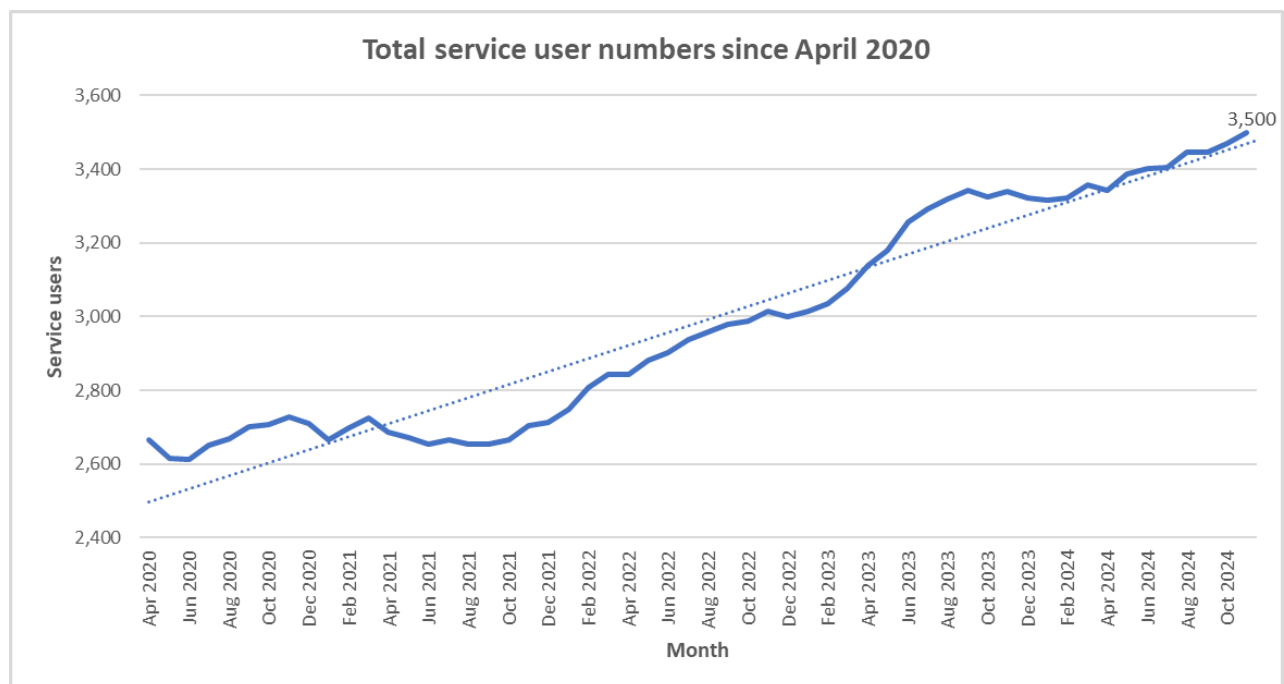
Service User Numbers

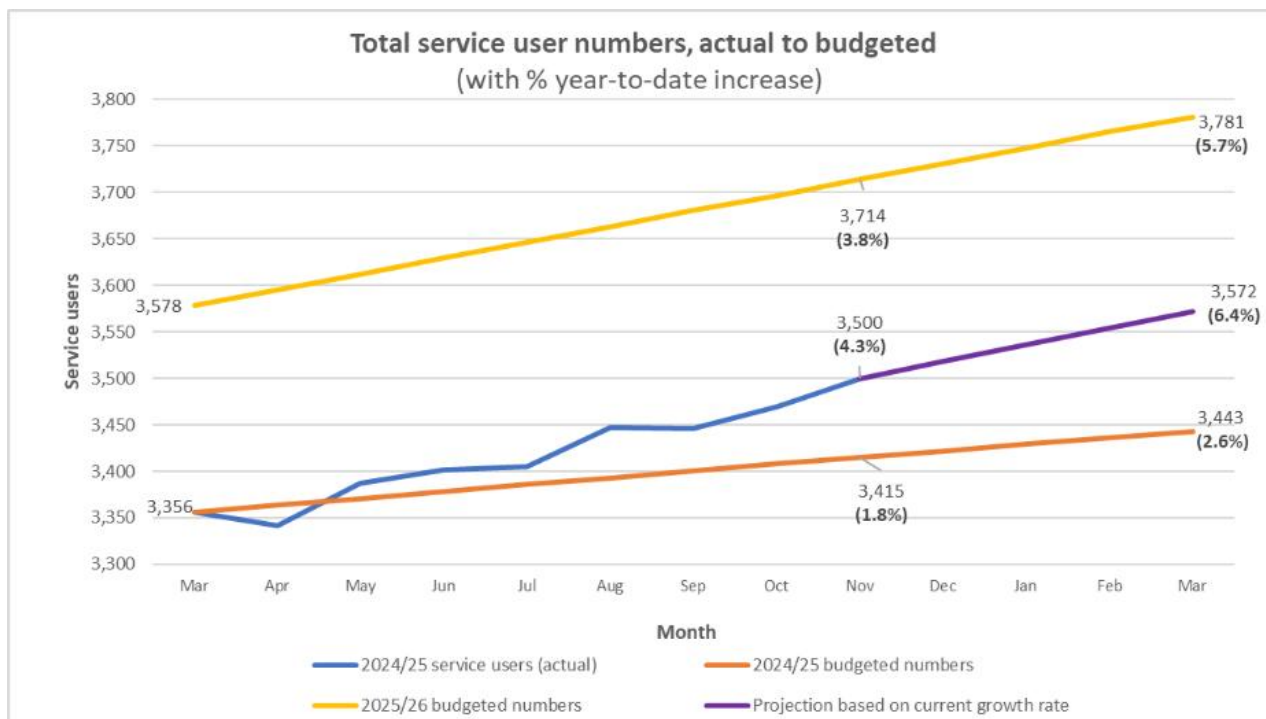
Attrition rate (current year effect)

	Budgeted (Apr to Nov)			Actual (Apr to Nov)			Variance (Apr to Nov)		
	Number	TOTAL	Average cost	Number	TOTAL	Average cost	Number	TOTAL	Average
New service users	1,139	18,088,057	15,881	1,221	22,460,480	18,395	82	4,372,423	
Deceased service users	(555)	(9,057,782)	16,320	(441)	(9,901,385)	22,452	114	(843,603)	
Ended service users	(525)	(9,014,632)	17,171	(636)	(11,492,499)	18,070	(111)	(2,477,867)	
TOTALS	59	15,643		144	1,066,597		85	1,050,953	

The table above shows that the number of new service users on 30th November 2024 was 82 more than budgeted. There were also 114 fewer client deaths than budgeted, and 111 more ended care packages than budgeted. Overall, there are 85 more service users in receipt of care than budgeted. Average new user costs have been markedly higher than budgeted, as have average deceased user costs, whilst average ended user costs have only been slightly higher than budgeted.

The graph below shows that user numbers have continued to increase since summer 2020, reaching 3,500 service users at the end of November 2024. As a reminder, these are not unique service users, services users with more than one care setting will be counted multiple times. However, a cross-check across care settings has shown 3,363 unique service users.

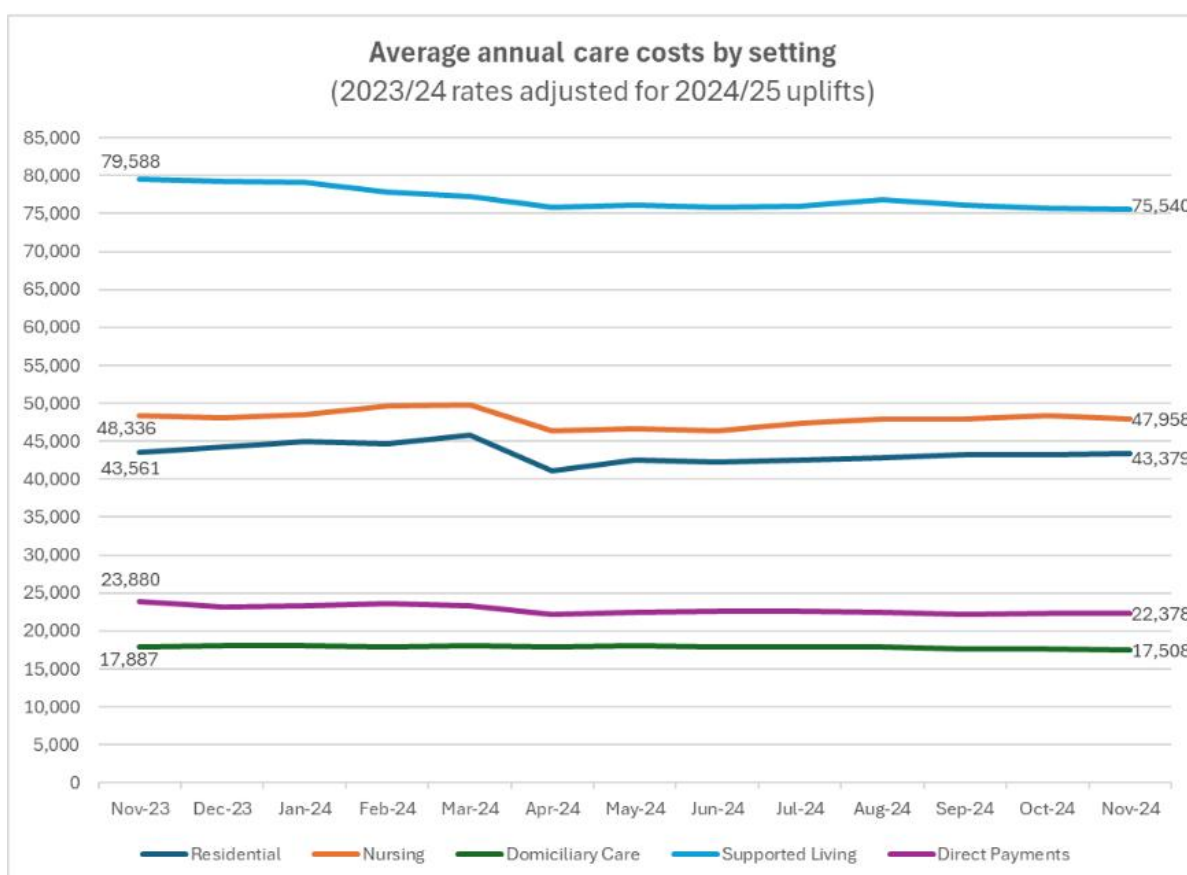




The above graph compares the actual number of service users for each month to the number budgeted for, along with a projection for the remaining months of 2024/25 (based on the growth rate since April 2024) and the 2025/26 budgeted numbers.

Average costs

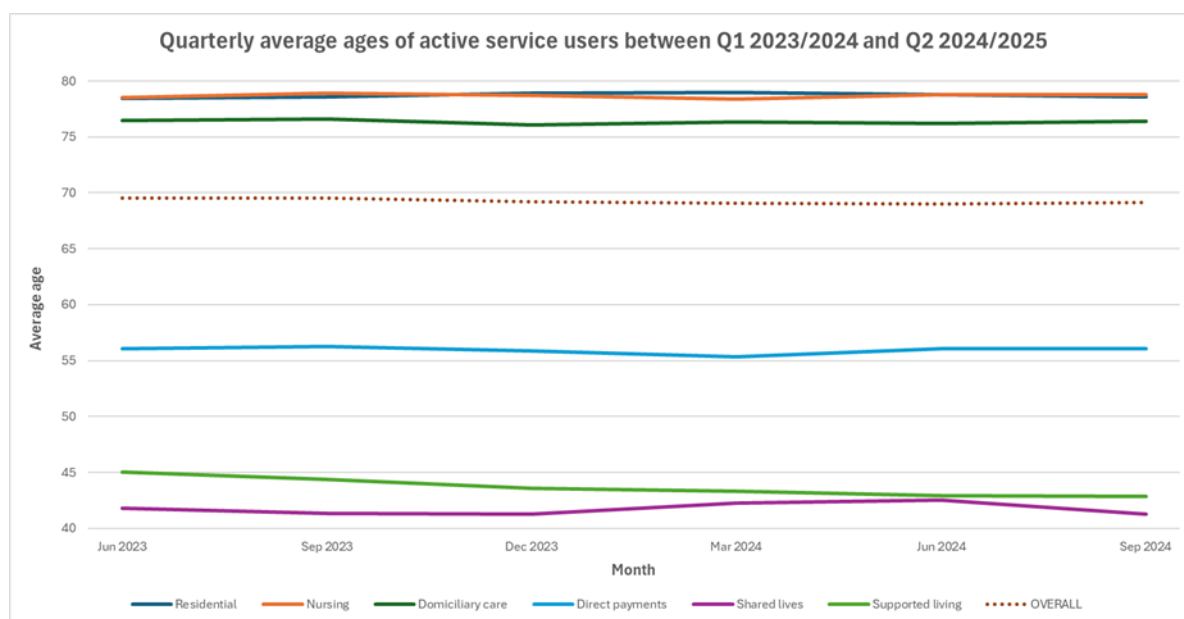
The following graph shows the average, full year costs for each care setting for the most recent 12-month period. The averages for 2023/24 have been increased by the 2024/25 uplift percentages to allow for a true comparison between the two years. Please note that while most 2024/25 uplifts been processed, some remain outstanding, so we are likely to see higher average rates in future months.



Care Setting	Nov-23	Nov-24	Change £	Change %
Residential	43,561	43,379	(182)	-0.42%
Nursing	48,336	47,958	(378)	-0.78%
Domiciliary Care	17,887	17,508	(379)	-2.12%
Supported Living	79,588	75,540	(4,048)	-5.09%
Direct Payments	23,880	22,378	(1,503)	-6.29%

Average ages

The final graph shows the average service user age for each care setting from Quarter 1 of 2023/24 to Quarter 2 of 2024/25. Overall, the average age of service users has decreased by 146 days, with the highest decrease in Supported Living.



Average ages			
Care setting	Jun 2023	Sep 2024	Change
Residential	78.46	78.57	0.11 41 days
Nursing	78.51	78.80	0.29 105 days
Domiciliary care	76.49	76.38	-0.11 -39 days
Direct payments	56.08	56.06	-0.03 -9 days
Shared lives	41.82	41.27	-0.56 -204 days
Supported living	45.03	42.84	-2.19 -800 days
Day care	65.48	57.22	-8.27 N/A
OVERALL	69.54	69.14	-0.40 -146 days

Average ages			
In	Out	Change	
81.03	83.10	-2.07	2 years 27 days
77.01	79.00	-1.98	1 year 358 days
61.57	66.00	-4.43	4 years 155 days
33.69	39.82	-6.13	6 years 12 days
32.89	49.61	-16.72	16 years 262 days
56.21	65.99	9.78	N/A
73.80	77.74	-3.93	3 years 93 days

Appendix 8 – Predicted re-phasing of capital funded schemes 2024/25 to 2025/26

Project	£m
Council Funded	
Children in care out of borough placements	0.15
Civic Centre Heating	0.20
Council House Smoke & Heat Detection Fire Alarm	0.06
Council House General Heating	0.10
Council House Windows	0.31
Middlemore Lane Hwrc	3.48
Hatherton Road Car Park	0.21
Safe And Secure Environment	0.40
Enabling Technology	0.27
Proud Card Payments Digital Website	0.12
New Art Gallery	0.04
Archiving Systems Moving To Customer Access	0.04
Development Team Capitalisation Of Posts	0.50
Homelessness Temp accommodation	0.50
Enabling Support Services/One Source System	0.16
Enterprise Zones	0.35
Allotment Boundary Improvement Works	0.02
Single library management system	0.01
Darlaston library integration	0.06
Radio frequency identification self-issue	0.01
Rushall Olympic Football Club	0.01
Maintaining A Safe And Secure Environment	0.03
Telephony Cloud Based System	0.09
Information Governance: Service Improvements	0.02
Programme Management Council Match	0.73
Social Housing Decarbonisation	0.06
My CMIS (Content management interoperability Services)	0.01
Town Deal Community Capital	0.28
Standard Addressing Implementation	0.05
External Funded	
Basic Need	5.90
Capital maintenance	0.45
Purchase Of Dispersed Temporary Accommodation	0.66
Devolved Formula Capital	1.07
Bloxwich Town Deal	6.55
Walsall Town Deal	5.06
Land And Property Investment Fund	4.53
Growing Places Fund	0.59
Willenhall Masterplan Transport Levelling Up Fund	2.33
Willenhall Masterplan	13.63
Future High Street Fund	1.09
Nature Recovery In Partnership With Canal & River Trust	0.03
Nature recovery in partnership with canal & river trust-s10	0.01
West midlands strategic transport plan (stp) 'movement for growth'	0.76

Project	£m
Wolverhampton street s106	0.05
Highways CCTV (upgrade)	0.03
Food Waste Collection Capital Grant	1.85
A41 Moxley Transforming Cities Fund	0.11
Academies	0.22
Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership Reinvestment Digital Fund	0.17
Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - local Authority Delivery Sch & Home Upgrade Grant	0.01
One Palfrey Big Local Park Improvement Project	0.36
Active Travel Fund (Tranche 4)	2.30
Home upgrade grant 2	0.27
Home Upgrade Grant 2 Midland Energy Hub	0.08
Walsall Archives For All	0.09
DFT (Department for transport) Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant	0.28
Total	56.75

Appendix 9: Financial Health Indicators – December 2024

Treasury Management	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Actual
Average Interest Rate (Borrowing)			
- Excluding other local authorities	4.13%	5.46%	4.21%
- Including other local authorities	4.16%	5.51%	4.24%
Gearing Effect on Capital Financing Estimates	4.20%	5.00%	4.28%
Net Borrowing Costs / Council Tax Requirement and NNDR contribution	1.55%	12.50%	2.33%
Capital Financing Requirement (£m)	433.11	446.29	446.29
Authorised limit for external Debt (£m)	465.41	483.80	483.80
Investment Rate Average (excl Property fund)	4.94%	4.00%	5.03%

Balance Sheet Ratios	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Current Assets: Current Liabilities	2.39	2.01	1.96	1.74	1.91
Useable Reserves: General Revenue Expenditure	0.73	1.02	1.07	0.77	0.85
Long Term Borrowing: Tax Revenue (Using both council tax and NNDR for tax revenue)	1.43	1.83	1.49	1.19	1.15
Long Term Assets: Long Term Borrowing	1.86	1.83	2.14	2.73	2.71
Total School Reserves: Dedicated School Grant	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.07

Revenues Performance % collected for financial year	2022/23 Actual Collected in total as at 31.12.24	2023/24 Actual Collected in total as at 31.12.24	2024/25	
			Profiled 2024/25	Actual 2024/25
Council tax %	95.9%	94.7%	74.6%	73.9%
Total Council Tax collected (£m)	£152,266,756	£156,921,152	£133,100,000	£131,824,869
National Non Domestic Rate %	98.4%	97.7%	78.0%	79.2%
Total NNDR collected (£m)	£69,700,709	£68,245,203	£61,450,000	£62,445,525

Debtors and Creditors Performance	2023/24 Actual	2024/25	
		Target	Actual
Sundry Debtors Collection – Average number of days to collect debt	25 days	24 days	24 days
Average number of days to process creditor payments*	5 days	8 days	5 days

Management of Resources	2024/25		
Service Analysis	Target	Actual	Variance
Adult Social Care and Public Health	91,848,404	97,616,485	5,768,081
Children's and Education Services	90,124,059	95,443,624	5,319,565
Economy, Environment and Communities	42,439,889	44,577,087	2,137,198
Resources and Transformation	46,464,979	45,153,298	(1,311,681)
Council Wide	7,141,486	1,984,798	(5,156,688)
NNDR/Top Up	(125,986,393)	(125,986,393)	0
Total Net Revenue Expenditure	152,032,424	158,788,900	6,756,476
General Reserves	Minimum £7.8m Maximum £19.4m	N/A	N/A
Council Funded Capital Expenditure	68,856,538	58,294,644	(10,561,894)
External Funded Capital Expenditure	100,514,867	52,041,247	(48,473,620)
Total Capital Expenditure	169,371,405	110,335,891	(59,035,514)
Capital Receipts	3,000,000	3,000,000	0

Management of Resources	2023/24		
Service Analysis	Target	Actual	Variance
Adult Social Care, Public Health and Hub	76,864,476	90,266,195	13,401,719
Children's Services			
- Children's and Education	81,704,822	87,462,134	5,757,312
- Customer Engagement	12,147,505	12,693,031	545,526
Economy, Environment and Communities	45,613,075	44,668,154	(944,921)
Resources and Transformation	50,925,395	50,489,250	(436,145)
Capital Financing	(5,546,678)	(9,777,391)	(19,179,688)
Central budgets	(117,545,553)	(117,545,553)	0
Total Net Revenue Expenditure	144,163,042	158,255,820	(856,198)
General Reserves	N/A	19,558,671	N/A
Council Funded Capital Expenditure	60,253,122	26,407,323	(33,845,799)
External Funded Capital Expenditure	84,040,016	64,349,023	(19,690,993)
Total Capital Expenditure	144,293,138	90,756,346	(53,536,792)
Capital Receipts	2,925,000	2,253,067	(671,933)

What this tells us

Treasury Management	
Average Interest Rate (Borrowing)	The average interest rate we are paying on the money we have borrowed compared to our target.
Gearing Effect on Capital Financing Estimates	Shows how a 1% increase in interest rates would affect the total interest cost to the council.
Net Borrowing Costs / Tax Requirement	Borrowing not financed by a grant from government, as a proportion of our Net Revenue Expenditure
Capital Financing Requirement (£m)	How much money we currently borrow to finance our capital programme.
Authorised limit for external Debt (£m)	The maximum amount of debt we should have at any one time
Investment Rate Average	The average interest rate we are receiving on the money we have invested.

Balance Sheet Ratios	
Current Assets: Current Liabilities	Our ability to meet our liabilities
Useable Reserves: General Revenue Expenditure	If our reserves are adequate to meet potential future variations.
Long Term Borrowing: Tax Revenue Using only council tax for tax revenue Using both council tax and NNDR for tax revenue	The effect of long-term borrowing on our budget.
Long Term Borrowing: Long Term Assets	This allows us to understand the relationship between the money we borrow and the assets we have as they both change over time.
Total School Reserves: Dedicated School Grant	If school's reserves are at an appropriate level.

Revenues Performance	
% Collected for Financial Year	As a percentage the amount of council tax we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that its related to, but this won't be included in this figure
Council Tax (%)	
National Non Domestic Rate (%)	As a percentage the amount of Business rates we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that it related to.
Total Council Tax Collected (£m)	This tells us the amount of council tax we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that it relates to, but this won't be included in this figure.
Total NNDR Collected (£m)	This tells us the amount of Business Rates we collected during the financial year that runs from 1 April – 31 March. We collect council tax after the year that it relates to, but this won't be included in this figure.
Sundry Debtors Collection Average number of days to collect debt	How long on average it takes us to collect money owed to us.
Average number of days to process creditors payments	How long on average it takes to pay our bills.

Management of Resources	
Service Analysis	
Children's Services Economy and Environment Adult Social Care Resources and Transformation Council Wide	Shows our forecast for how much we will spend on these services compared to what we planned and compared to how much we spent in the previous year.
General Reserves	Our forecast year end position on reserves against our opening balance.
Contingency	How much we have set aside and for unplanned expenditure, and how much we have left to spend.
Capital Expenditure	Forecast of our spend on capital programmes against our target
Capital Receipts	Forecast of how much money we expect to receive from selling some of our assets, against our target.

Appendix 10 - Prudential Indicators as at 31st December 2024

Prudential Indicator		Actual	Target	Actual Position at 31-March-25	Variance to target	
		2023/24	2024/25			
		£m	£m	£m	Numerical Variance	% Variance
Prl 1	Capital Expenditure	90.760	188.800	109.450	-73.350	-42%
This indicator is required to inform the council of capital spending plans, it is the duty of a local authority to determine and keep under review the amount that it can afford to allocate to capital expenditure. Capital expenditure may be funded by grant, capital receipts and borrowing.						
Prl 2	Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream	4.88%	6.66%	4.18%	-2.48	-37%
Financing costs - Divided by (Interest charged on loans Less Interest earned on investments)		Budget requirement (Revenue Support Grant + NNDR +Council Tax)			The ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream (General Fund) as a %	
Prl 3	Estimates of the incremental impact of new capital investment decisions on Council Tax	£89.66	£122.07	£122.07	0.00	0%
This is a notional amount indicating the amount of council tax band D that is affected by the capital programme in the budget report compared to existing approved commitments and current plans.						
Prl 4	Capital Financing Requirement	433.114	446.285	446.285	-28.769	-6%
This represents the underlying level of borrowing needed to finance historic and future capital expenditure. It is updated at end of the financial year.						
Prl 5	Authorised Limit for external debt	465.410	583.800	583.800	0.00	0%
The council may not breach the limit it sets, so it is important to allow prudent room for uncertain cash flow movements and borrowing in advance of future need.						
Prl 6	Operational Limit for external debt	423.100	530.730	530.730	0.00	0%
This has been set at the level of the capital financing requirement less the CFR items relating PFI and finance leases.						
Prl 7	Gross Borrowing exceeds capital financing requirement	No	No	No		
The CFR represents the underlying level of borrowing needed to finance historic capital expenditure. Actual net borrowing should be lower than this because of strong positive cash flow and balances. It would be a cause for concern if net borrowing exceeded CFR.						
Prl 8	Authority has adopted CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management	Yes	Yes	Yes		
To ensure that treasury management activity is carried out within best professional practice.						
Prl 9	Total principle sums invested for longer than 364 days must not exceed	0.0	25.0	0.0		

The council is at risk when lending temporarily surplus cash. The risk is limited by investing surplus cash in specified investments and by applying lending limits and high credit worthiness. These are kept under constant review.

Prudential Indicator continued		Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Actual 2023/24	Actual Position at 31-March-2025
Prl 10	Fixed Interest Rate Exposure	95.00%	40.00%	88.03%	100.00%
Prl 11	Variable Interest Rate Exposure	45.00%	0.00%	11.97%	0.00%
Prl 12	<i>Maturity Structure of Borrowing</i>				
	Under 12 months	25.00%	0.00%	12.85%	7.88%
	12 months and within 24 months	25.00%	0.00%	3.95%	16.03%
	24 months and within 5 years	40.00%	0.00%	24.69%	23.83%
	5 years and within 10 years	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	10 years and above	85.00%	30.00%	58.51%	52.25%

Local Indicators as at 31st December 2024

Local Indicators		Actual 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Actual Position as at 31-March- 2025	Variance to target		Met
					Numerical Variance	% Variance	
L1	Full compliance with prudential code	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	Y
L2	Average length of debt	17.74	Lower Limit 15 years, Upper limit 25 years	15.58	-	-	Y
This is a maturity measure and ideally should relate to the average lifespan of assets.							
L3a	Financing costs as a % of council tax requirement	2.31%	20.00%	3.31%	-16.69	-83.47%	Y
L3b	Financing costs as a % of tax revenues	1.55%	12.50%	2.33%	-10.17	-81.36%	Y
These are a variation to Prl 3 excluding investment income and including MRP (amount set aside to repay debt costs). The target figure of 12.5% represents an upper limit of affordable net borrowing costs as a percentage of tax revenues for the authority. The actual level of net borrowing costs is currently less than the upper limit, which in the main is linked to the work undertaken by the service to seek to secure favorable rates on investments and reduced costs on borrowing, thus reducing the overall net borrowing costs.							
L4	Net actual debt vs. operational debt	58.61%	85.00%	52.38%	-32.62	-38.38%	Y
This assists the monitoring of the authority's debt position.							
L5	Average interest rate of external debt outstanding excluding OLA	4.13%	5.46%	4.21%	-1.25	-22.96%	Y
L6	Average interest rate of external debt outstanding including OLA	4.16%	5.51%	4.24%	-1.27	-22.99%	Y
The measure should be as low as possible. Other Local Authority debt (OLA) is managed on our behalf by Dudley council.							

L7	Gearing effect of 1% increase in interest rate	4.20%	5.00%	4.28%	0.04%	This would increase the average interest rate payable from 4.24% shown in L6 to 4.28%	Y
This relates risk management principles to the monitoring of the TM strategy. It measures the effect of a change in interest rates and the effect it may have on the capital financing costs.							
L8	Average interest rate received on STI vs. At Call rate	1.02%	20.00%	2.80%	-17.20	-86.00%	N
L9a	AT call investments	4.92%	3.98%	5.00%	1.03	25.79%	Y
L9b	Short Term Investments	4.97%	4.00%	5.14%	1.14	28.50%	Y
L9c	Long Term Investments	5.00%	4.20%	5.02%	0.82	19.52%	Y
L9d	Property Fund Investments	4.47%	4.10%	4.36%	0.26	6.34%	Y
L10	Average interest rate on all ST investments (ST and AT call)	4.94%	3.99%	5.03%	1.04	26.00%	Y
L11a	Average rate on all investments (ex. Property fund)	4.94%	4.00%	5.03%	1.03	25.61%	Y
L11b	Average rate on all investments (inc. property fund)	4.83%	4.03%	4.86%	0.83	20.60%	Y
L12	% daily bank balances within target range	99%	99%	99%	0.00	0.00%	Y
This measures how good our daily cash flow prediction is. A figure of 98% and above indicates a high level of accuracy.							

Cabinet – 12 February 2025

Walsall Net Zero Climate Change Strategy

Portfolio: Councillor Flint – Health and Wellbeing

Related portfolios: All

Service: Climate Change

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 Climate change will threaten the wellbeing of our residents and disrupt our economy. By achieving Net Zero by 2041, the council will mitigate this risk.
- 1.2 In addition to achieving carbon neutrality, the borough will need to adapt to make communities and infrastructure resilient to a more hostile climate.
- 1.3 Seizing the opportunities of the transition to a net zero economy presents a significant economic opportunity for the borough. This transition to a green economy must be a 'just transition' to ensure no one is left behind.

2. Summary

- 2.1 A Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy has been prepared identifying key priorities and the actions necessary to eliminate the borough's carbon emissions and adapt to the consequences of climate change.
- 2.2 To deliver the borough-wide objectives of the Strategy, a 'Walsall Net Zero Partnership' will be established. This will comprise of key anchor organisations and agencies.
- 2.3 An accompanying three-year Walsall Council Action Plan has also been developed. This details the actions the council will take to eliminate its own carbon emissions, and how it can use its regulatory, spending and convening powers to deliver the priorities detailed in the Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That the Cabinet approves the content of the Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy.

- 3.2 That the Cabinet approves the Walsall Council Net Zero Action Plan.
- 3.3 That the Cabinet approves the establishment of a Walsall Net Zero Partnership.

4. Report detail – know

Context

- 4.1 The Council declared a climate emergency in September 2019 with a target to become a net zero authority by 2050 in line with the UK Governments Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment; Order 2019).
- 4.2 In October 2022 the Council updated the scope and target date to achieve carbon neutrality. The Council committed to work with all relevant partners and stakeholders to make the whole borough net zero by 2041 in line with the regional target agreed with the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- 4.3 The adoption of the 2041 target and the wider scope has necessitated a review of our current Climate Emergency Action Plan to reflect the new borough wide approach to tackling climate change.
- 4.4 The council Climate Change Task Force (which comprises of senior service managers) oversees the delivery of the council's Climate Change Action Plan has directed that a borough-wide climate change strategy be drafted to reflect the broader scope and ambition of the updated net zero target. A Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy has now been produced (**Appendix A**).
- 4.5 The Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy draws heavily on the vision of the We are Walsall 2040 Borough Plan and its accompanying evidence base. This indicated six in ten Walsall residents are concerned about climate change and nine in ten think it is important for organisations and people to work together to reduce our impact on the environment.
- 4.6 The Net Zero 2041 Strategy frames net zero as an economic opportunity with the aspiration to make Walsall a leading player in the green industrial revolution. The aspirations of Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy are summarised in a vision statement:

‘Our vision is to transform Walsall into a healthier, clean and green, carbon-neutral, climate-resilient borough by 2041. We aim to lead the green industrial revolution, ensuring a just transition to a net zero economy, where all residents enjoy clean air, green spaces, and a thriving natural environment.’
- 4.7 The Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy divides the interventions that need to be taken to achieve net zero into six themes. Each theme addresses the different aspects of our economy and lifestyles that contribute to climate change, represents a sector where significant greenhouse gas emissions

occur, or where there are opportunities for reducing emissions. The six themes are:

- Energy.
- Circular and Green Economy.
- Homes Workplaces and Public Buildings.
- Transport and Travel.
- Natural Capital and Land Use.
- Resilience and Adaptation.

- 4.8 The Strategy divides the measures needed to take to achieve net zero into those where the council can take a lead in implementation and those where partners across the borough will need to take a lead.
- 4.9 To deliver the measures where the council can take a lead an accompanying three-year Walsall Net Zero Action Plan (**Appendix B**) has been developed. The actions identified include enabling actions (e.g. embedding climate change considerations into all council decision making) and direct actions which will be implemented by the relevant council service (e.g. decarbonising the council fleet).
- 4.10 To deliver the borough wide elements of the Strategy a 'Walsall Net Zero Partnership' will be established. This partnership will aim to recruit key stakeholders and anchor organisations (e.g. Network Rail, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, Environment Agency, local business, utility companies, education providers, social housing providers). It will have a remit to:
- Promote collaborative working and engagement with government, utilities, businesses, community groups and other partners in Walsall.
 - Investigate steps that may be taken by the partnership to achieve net zero and the adaption measures required to provide climate change resilience.
 - Produce a Walsall Net Zero Partnership Plan that is realistic, measurable, and deliverable and progress with delivery of targets within this plan.
- 4.11 The target date for establishing the Walsall Net Zero Partnership is Q1 2025.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.12 The Strategy encourages economic growth, active and healthy living, up-skilling our people for green opportunities, and foster a clean and green future for Walsall. These ambitions align with the five principles in Walsall Council Plan 2025-2029. (i.e. Focusing on Prevention, Ensuring Equity, Working in Partnership, Being Insight-led and Acting Sustainably).
- 4.13 The Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy emphasises the green industrial revolution and the need for decarbonisation to be an economic opportunity if it is to happen at the pace and scale required to avoid the worst consequences of climate change. The Strategy aligns with the objectives of the council's Economic Strategy and Action Plan.

Risk management

- 4.14 Delivering the target of a net zero borough by 2041 will be a huge challenge. It will require supportive policies from national government (e.g. planning and resourcing).
- 4.15 The transition to low carbon technologies is already occurring. Failure to act will be a threat to businesses and jobs in high carbon industries (e.g. internal combustion engine supply chains).
- 4.16 Globally 2024 was the hottest year on record It was the tenth year in succession that has equalled or exceeded 1.0 °C above the pre-industrial period. Global temperatures exceeded the 1.5°C target set out in the Paris agreement for the first time. The consequences of a hotter climate for Walsall will be:
- More frequent extreme weather events causing economic damage.
 - Health impacts on the most vulnerable residents (e.g. from extreme temperature events).
 - Irreversible damage to ecosystems.
- 4.17 Implementing the Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy will help reduce carbon dioxide emissions and identify the resilience measures required for the borough to adapt to the consequences of climate change.

Financial implications

- 4.18 There are significant financial implications to pursuing a Net Zero 2041 target for the borough. The actions required will represent a mix of committed and desired interventions by multiple partners.
- 4.19 Significant additional investment will be needed for the Net Zero 2041 vision to be realised. There will be a need to explore potential sources of funding through existing avenues as well as develop innovative approaches to ensure projects can be delivered.
- 4.20 Some actions, such as retrofit programmes, already have funding committed while other programmes will require feasibility studies or business cases to be developed to determine their viability and funding will need to be secured to make them happen. This is particularly relevant for some of the larger projects.
- 4.21 Partners will need to develop financial business cases which consider the whole-life-cost of projects. Low carbon projects often pay for themselves because of reduced energy costs but require higher up-front investment than fossil fuelled alternatives.
- 4.22 The cost of delay in delivering the measures necessary to avoid the worst consequences of climate change are likely to be significant.

Legal implications

- 4.23 The legal framework for this work is set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 (CCA2008) and the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019. The Order sets the expectation that the UK will achieve net zero by 2050.
- 4.24 Currently there is no statutory obligation on local government to deliver net zero meaning there are no direct legal implications to adopting the Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.25 The greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the goods and services the council purchases are termed 'scope 3 emissions'. Council scope 3 emissions currently account for approximately 10 % of Walsall's geographic emissions. The scale of these emission means harnessing the purchasing power of the council via sustainable procurement practices offers a significant opportunity to reduce emissions, decarbonise supply chains, and kick start the green economy in Walsall.

Property implications

- 4.26 Council properties are responsible for a significant proportion of the council's direct greenhouse gas emissions. The Walsall Council Net Zero Action plan details the measures the council will take to eliminate emissions from its own estate.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.27 The Strategy supports active transport, healthy living style and increase of blue/green spaces which promotes health and wellbeing significantly. Reducing fossil fuel burning and electrification will improve air quality at local level. Support in retrofitting homes and enhancing carbon literacy of local communities help to improve climate resilience during extreme weather events.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.28 The Strategy helps to address inequalities within our communities. Climate impacts, like flooding, poor air quality, and energy insecurity, often affect low-income areas more severely, where residents may lack the resources to cope or recover. By investing, and encouraging our partners to invest, in green infrastructure, affordable public transport, and energy-efficient housing, we can create jobs, lower energy bills, and improve health outcomes, particularly for vulnerable groups.
- 4.29 Supporting sustainable local businesses and community-led projects also promotes economic resilience. Through fair climate policies, the council can

ensure that the benefits of a greener, healthier future are shared by all residents.

- 4.30 The potential of net zero policies to exacerbate inequalities has long been recognised. Achieving a fair and equitable transition to a net zero future is described as a 'just transition'. Achieving a just transition is a key element of the Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy vision.

Staffing implications

- 4.31 There will be staffing challenges delivering the priorities identified in the draft Net Zero 2041 Strategy.
- i. The council has a small climate change team comprising of a Climate Change Programme manager and two Net Zero Project officers. However, delivery of the Walsall Net Zero Action Plan will require resources from all council services which are often stretched performing their core functions.
 - ii. The structure of the proposed Walsall Net Zero Partnership is modelled in those established by other local authorities. The experience of other local authorities suggests a funded secretariat dramatically increases the effectiveness of such partnerships (e.g. Devon).

Climate Impact

- 4.32 Climate impact is the subject of this report.

Consultation

- 4.33 The Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy draws on the vision of the We are Walsall 2040 Borough Plan and its accompanying evidence base.
- 4.34 There has been extensive internal consultation on the Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy by the council's Climate Change Task Force and the wording in the Action Plan has been agreed with the relevant service leads.
- 4.35 The proposed Walsall Net Zero Partnership will be responsible for collating the views of key stakeholders when developing its Walsall Net Zero Partnership Plan.

5. Decide

- 5.1 Cabinet is asked to adopt the Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy.
- 5.2 Cabinet is asked to approve the creation of the Walsall Net Zero Partnership.
- 5.3 Cabinet is asked to adopt the council Net Zero Action Plan (2025 – 2028).

6. Respond

- 6.1 Delivery of the council Net Zero Action Plan will continue, with business cases brought forward on specific measures, as required.

7. Review

- 7.1 The council's Climate Change Task Force will meet quarterly to provide oversight of delivery of the Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy and Walsall Council Net Zero Action Plan. It will consider any additional interventions required to achieve our vision. A performance review will be submitted to Cabinet and full Council annually to report on progress.
- 7.2 The Walsall Net Zero Partnership steering group will meet quarterly to review the development and delivery of a borough wide Walsall Net Zero Partnership Plan.

Appendices

Appendix A: Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy

Appendix B: Walsall Council Net Zero Action Plan

Background papers

None.

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Dave Brown
Executive Director

31 January 2025



Councillor Flint
Portfolio Holder

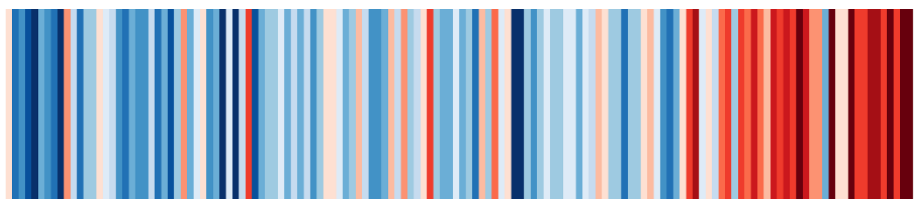
31 January 2025

Walsall

Net Zero 2041

Strategy

Our plan for the Green Industrial Revolution and a Just Transition to a Net Zero Borough



Foreword

In 2019 our council declared a climate emergency, recognising the serious and accelerating environmental, social, and economic challenges we face due to consequences of climate change. In 2022 we followed this by adopting a target date for reaching Net Zero carbon emissions across our borough no later than 2041. This ambitious target is underpinned by science and aligns with that set by the West Midlands Combined Authority. To succeed we need to work together with our partners in Walsall and the wider region to develop and implement policies that reduce carbon emissions and enable a just transition to a cleaner greener future.

This strategy builds on the climate change pledges in our recently approved We Are Walsall 2040 Borough Plan, which commits the council to work in partnership with businesses, communities, and public bodies to deliver our climate change ambitions and ensure Walsall will be a clean and green borough fit for future generations.

Much has already been achieved, with our partners capitalising on opportunities for energy efficiency and investment in low carbon technologies. Walsall Council has an ongoing programme to reduce energy usage in buildings and infrastructure. This has included the installation of renewable energy and heat pumps in public buildings, an extensive programme to upgrade our borough's housing stock, and the conversion to streetlights to utilise LED lamps. However, there is much work still to do if we are to make significant reductions in emissions as we face the challenges of climate change. This Net Zero 2041 strategy sets out our priorities in a long-term pathway to a transition to a Net Zero future in Walsall. It builds on the considerable work achieved by our public, private and community sector partners as we continue to shape our energy future by developing clean, low-cost solutions to reducing the borough's carbon footprint.

The transition to net zero economy will require unprecedented change in how we all do things. It is vital that we work hard to ensure this is a just transition, we must ensure greening the economy is undertaken in a way that is as fair and inclusive by creating decent opportunities for all our residents. This can only be achieved with everyone's input. We need government, businesses, public sector, community organisations, and residents to play their part. It is also essential that carbon management and energy efficiency become core values throughout the borough and that everyone takes responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

By working together to ensure that this strategy is supported and implemented, we can make Walsall a leader in low carbon skills, innovation, and investment to strengthen our businesses and communities.

Councillor Flint

Portfolio for Health and Wellbeing

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Executive Summary

Walsall Council has declared a climate emergency, recognising the urgent need to address climate change. We have set an ambitious target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2041. This target aligns with the target declared by the West Midlands Combined Authority. This Net Zero 2041 strategy outlines the pathway to a net zero future for Walsall, emphasising economic growth and collaboration with local partners and communities.

Our Vision

Our vision is to transform Walsall into a healthier, clean and green, carbon-neutral, climate-resilient borough by 2041. We aim to lead the green industrial revolution, ensuring a just transition to a net zero economy, where all residents enjoy clean air, green spaces, and a thriving natural environment.

Economic Opportunities and Green Jobs

The transition to a Net Zero economy presents significant economic opportunities for Walsall. By leading the green industrial revolution, Walsall can create new jobs, stimulate economic growth, and attract investment. Key sectors poised for growth include:

- **Construction and Retrofit:** Upgrading homes and buildings for energy efficiency will create demand for skilled workers in insulation, heat pump installation, and renewable energy systems.
- **Renewable Energy:** Expanding renewable energy projects will generate jobs in installation, maintenance, and innovation.
- **Green Manufacturing:** Developing low-carbon technologies and products will position Walsall as a hub for green manufacturing and innovation.

A Just Transition

Ensuring a just transition is central to Walsall's Net Zero 2041 strategy. This means making the shift to a net zero economy fair and inclusive, providing opportunities for all residents, and addressing inequalities. The key elements of a just transition are:

- **Job Creation:** Focusing on creating high-quality green jobs that are accessible to all, particularly those in disadvantaged communities.
- **Skills Development:** Partnering with educational institutions to provide training and reskilling programs, ensuring the workforce is equipped to take advantage of green job opportunities.
- **Economic Inclusion:** Targeting investments in low-carbon projects to reduce fuel poverty and improve living standards across the borough.

Our six strategic themes

Achieving our net zero vision will be a challenging and complex undertaking that will require the collective effort of everyone. We all contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly in our daily lives, work, or business activities.

To make our task more manageable, this strategy breaks down the actions we need to take into six strategic themes. Each theme addresses an aspect of our economy or lifestyles that contributes to climate change. We will need to address all six themes simultaneously if we are to make significant progress towards limiting greenhouse gas emissions and addressing the consequences of climate change.

Our six themes are:

- **Energy:** Focusing on reducing energy consumption, increasing efficiency, and transitioning to renewable energy sources.
- **Circular and Green Economy:** Promoting sustainable production and consumption, reducing waste, and supporting green skills and business opportunities.
- **Homes, Workplaces, and Public Buildings:** Improving energy efficiency in buildings, retrofitting existing buildings, and ensuring new buildings are net zero ready.
- **Transport and Travel:** Reducing emissions from transport by promoting active travel, enhancing public transport, and supporting the transition to electric vehicles.
- **Natural Capital and Land Use:** Protecting and enhancing green spaces, promoting biodiversity, and integrating natural capital into development and regeneration decision making.
- **Resilience and Adaptation:** Preparing for the impacts of climate change by building resilient communities and infrastructure.

Walsall Net Zero Partnership

Walsall Council is responsible for approximately ten percent of our borough's greenhouse gas emissions. However, implementing the actions necessary to achieve a net zero borough by 2041 will require the collective effort from all stakeholders, including government, public sector organisations, businesses, and residents.

This strategy divides the priorities and actions necessary to achieve net zero into two categories:

- **Our priorities:** Actions the council can directly influence via its purchasing, regulatory and convening powers. These priorities have been incorporated into our Walsall Council Net Zero Action Plan.
- **Borough wide priorities:** Those actions that will require the active engagement of stakeholders across the borough. These priorities will need to be delivered by partners across our borough.

To assist partners to deliver the borough wide priorities a Walsall Net Zero Partnership will be established. This partnership will comprise of anchor institutions, transport bodies, businesses, government and regional partners. It will have a remit to coordinate net zero activities, produce a borough wide Walsall Net Zero Partnership Plan and monitor progress towards net zero.

Funding and Resources

Significant investment is needed to realise our net zero vision. This strategy emphasises the importance of securing funding from government and private sources, developing business cases for projects, and leveraging existing resources efficiently.

Conclusion

The Net Zero 2041 Strategy is a comprehensive plan to transform Walsall into a sustainable, resilient, and prosperous borough. By working together, Walsall can lead the green industrial revolution, create economic opportunities, and ensure a just transition to a low-carbon future.

1 Introduction

Climate risk for Walsall

In the coming decade, Walsall will very likely encounter more extreme weather events as a result of climate change caused by the burning of fossil fuels. According to the UK Met Office, 2024 was the warmest year on record, with 2023 the second warmest year. Increased rainfall in winter, will make flooding more frequent, affecting homes, businesses and infrastructure. In summer, a higher chance of extreme heat events will pose health risks, particularly to vulnerable populations.

Our Net Zero target

To limit the consequences of climate change Walsall Council has declared a climate emergency and set a target to become a Net Zero Borough by 2041. Achieving this target will be a huge challenge due to the urgency of the situation and will require everyone to work together to bring about the changes required to achieve our goal. Our 2041 target is a science-based target derived from the UK carbon budget (a legally binding requirement of the Climate Change Act 2008), and the nationally determined contributions resulting from the Paris Agreement.

This Net Zero 2041 strategy establishes a framework for how Walsall Council will work alongside our partners, to eliminate the burning of fossil fuels and prepare our communities for the consequences of climate change.

Our vision

Our vision is to transform Walsall into a healthier, clean and green, carbon-neutral, climate-resilient borough by 2041. We aim to lead the green industrial revolution, ensuring a just transition to a net zero economy, where all residents enjoy clean air, green spaces, and a thriving natural environment.

Co - benefits

The actions we need to take to achieve net zero will not only enable us to meet national and global emission reduction targets, but they are also an opportunity to create a prosperous and healthy borough for all, with significant co-benefits such as:

- **Economic Growth:** Investments to insulate homes and swap gas boilers for low-carbon heating sources, such as heat pumps, will create economic growth and job opportunities through a green industrial revolution.
- **Health Benefits:** Transitioning to net zero and mitigating the impact of climate change will have significant health benefits. For example, eliminating the burning of fossil fuels will reduce air pollution. This will lead to fewer health issues such as asthma and other respiratory diseases. Increased active travel and access to green spaces will promote physical and mental health and reduce NHS costs.
- **A Just Transition:** Targeting low-carbon investments in ways to reduce fuel poverty and provide job opportunities to disadvantaged communities will reduce poverty and inequality.
- **Ecological Emergency:** The actions to reduce carbon emissions will contribute to the preservation of natural habitats, biodiversity and the ecosystems on which we all depend.

2 A local approach to a global issue

Global

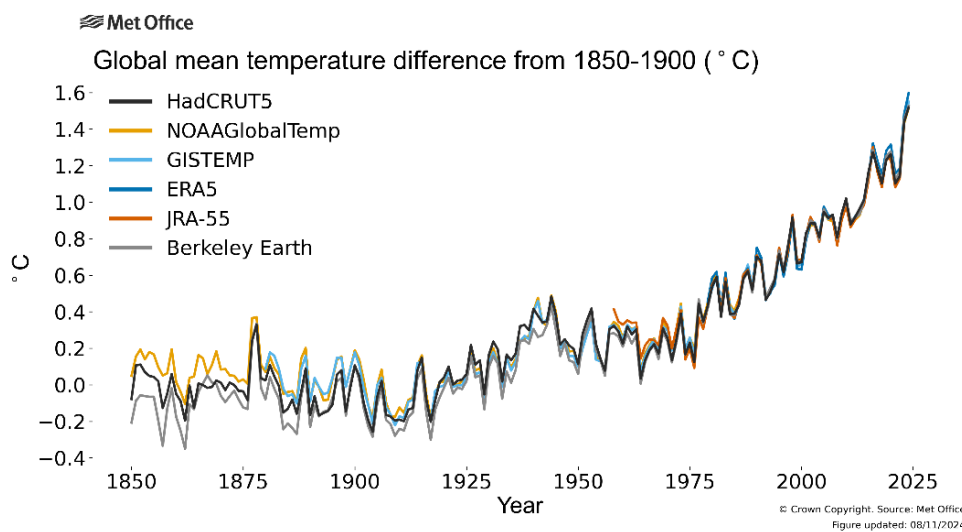
The Paris agreement

To tackle climate change and its negative impacts, world leaders at the 2015 UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris reached the historic Paris Agreement. The Agreement is a legally binding international treaty and came into force on 4 November 2016.

The UK is one of the 195 countries and states that have joined the Paris Agreement. Its overarching goal is to limit the increase in the global average temperature to 1.5°C and ideally to keep the increase below 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change.

Urgent action is needed, globally, at national level, and locally as temperatures are already approaching 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Global mean temperature difference from pre-industrial conditions.



The chart to the left shows the average global land and sea level temperature rise since the start of the industrial revolution.

The average global temperature for 2024 is forecast to be 1.46 °C above the average for the pre-industrial period. This will be the 11th year in succession that temperatures will have reached at least 1.0 °C above pre-industrial levels.

Source: UK Met Office

National

UK Climate Change Act

In 2008 the UK government became the first nation to set legally binding carbon reduction targets. In 2019 the Government amended the Climate Change Act to introduce a long-term, economy-wide target for the United Kingdom to achieve Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The [Climate Change Committee](#) monitors progress in the Climate Change Act on behalf of parliament. Its report in June 2023 identified a need for urgency in implementing net zero policies and emphasised the need to empower and inform households and communities to make low-carbon choices.

Local

Walsall Council's climate emergency declaration

In 2019 Walsall Council declared a climate emergency, recognising the serious and accelerating environmental, social, and economic challenges we face due to consequences of climate change.

In 2022 we updated the scope and target date to achieve carbon neutrality. Walsall Council committed to work with all relevant partners and stakeholders to make the whole borough Net Zero by 2041. Our 2041 target is aligned with the ambitions of our partners in the West Midlands Combined Authority.

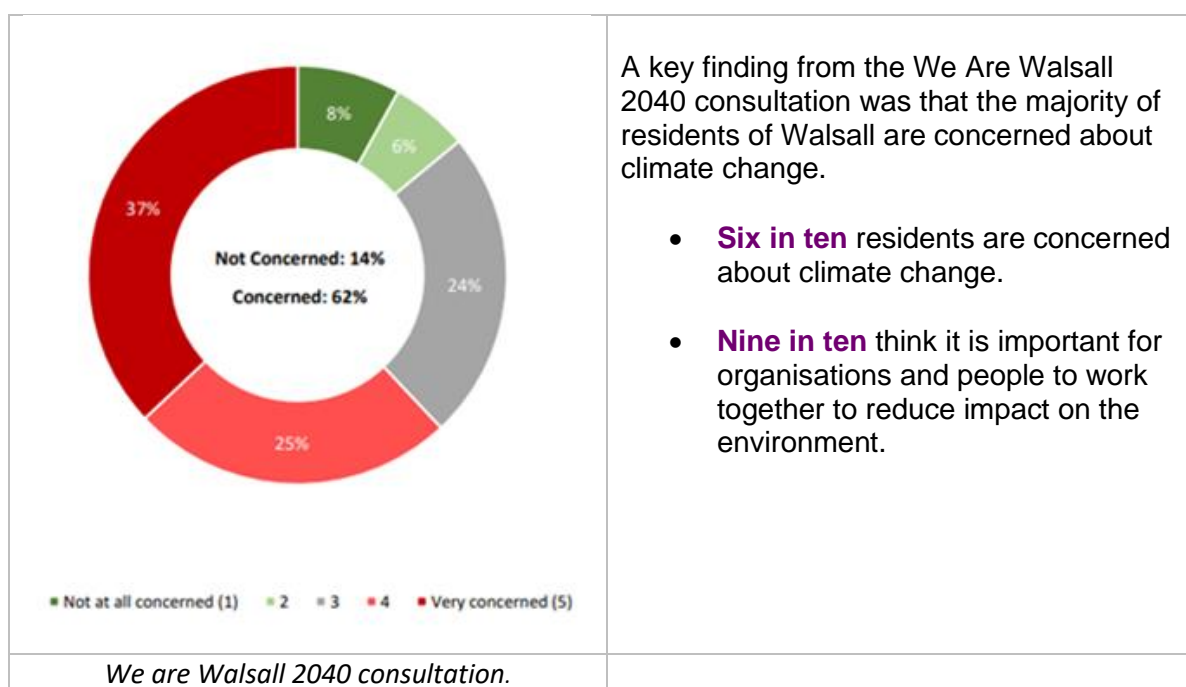
We Are Walsall 2040 Borough Vision

Climate change is a concern for the majority of residents in Walsall, particularly younger people.

The We are Walsall 2040 engagement programme was carried out from June 2022 – March 2023 and sought a wide range of views, opinions, and priorities on what matters now and for the future of Walsall.

We consulted extensively on the draft strategy framework to ensure all had an opportunity to shape the plan for the borough over the next 18 years. Over 8,300 views have been received and heard. Alongside this, we collated data and information from a variety of sources to understand what issues we have now and what challenges we may face in Walsall by 2040. The insight from the data and engaging with people have been used together to understand key priorities on our goal towards a thriving 2040 for Walsall. Following this consultation, the council and partners developed our We Are Walsall 2040 long-term vision.

Our 2041 target for reaching net zero aligns closely with the timelines and objectives of our We Are Walsall 2040 vision for a thriving, cleaner greener Walsall.



3 A Just Transition

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all UN members, including the UK. The SDGs aim to mobilise efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. They address a range of needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

What is a Just Transition?

The potential of Net Zero policies to exacerbate inequalities has long been recognised. Achieving a fair and equitable transition to a net zero future is described as a 'just transition'. This concept aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals particularly focusing on poverty eradication (goal 1), clean energy for all (goal 7), decent work for all (goal 8), and climate protection (goal 13).

To achieve a just transition the costs and benefits of the energy transition must be shared equitably. This means making sure that those who are most affected by the changes get the support they need so that no one is left behind. Climate change will affect all sections of society, however, both the consequences of climate change, and the measures required to achieve net zero will disproportionately affect those who are more socio-economically disadvantaged. For example:

Cost of Inaction: The potential economic, environmental, and health costs of not acting on climate change are substantial. Research by [The Grantham Institute on Climate Change and the Environment \(London School of Economics\)](#) estimates under current policies, the total cost of climate change damages to the UK could increase from 1.1% of GDP at present to 3.3% by 2050 and 7.4% by 2100.

Energy Costs: Net zero policies often involve a shift to renewable energy sources, which can initially be more expensive due to high upfront costs. This could lead to increased energy costs and increase rates of fuel poverty.

Health Benefits: Achieving Net Zero emissions can result in significant benefits to human health, addressing the range of health impacts caused by climate change. These benefits can be particularly significant for more disadvantaged communities as they will be disproportionately affected by climate change.

Job Opportunities: The greening of the economy can result in the loss of well-paid jobs in traditional high carbon industries. However, the transition to a net zero economy can create new job opportunities in green industries. This can only benefit our less affluent communities if they are able to access these opportunities. Developing 'green skills' and reskilling those workers leaving legacy high carbon industries is a key priority of our Net Zero 2041 strategy.

Whilst there are challenges associated with the transition to a net zero future, there are also significant opportunities. Our Net Zero 2041 strategy seeks to embrace to opportunities of a green economy to bring about a just transition for all.

4 A Green Industrial Revolution

Walsall is proud of its industrial heritage. Its buildings and other landmarks are testament to those who worked the leather and manufactured, chains, buckles and locks. Our canal network was built to transport the coal and limestone that powered the industrial revolution. It was the abundance of coal and other resources such as limestone and iron that enabled Walsall's growth.

The age of coal, oil and gas is now coming to an end and once again we find ourselves at an economic turning point. The transition to a net zero economy is a huge opportunity for Walsall to lead the green industrial revolution. It is a once in a generation opportunity to improve the lives of the people of Walsall. Our challenge is to decouple economic growth from carbon emissions and seize this opportunity to create a future that is healthier, more prosperous and sustainable.

The Walsall Council Economic Strategy and Action Plan identifies net zero as a priority action needed to create the jobs and prosperity that will provide growth opportunities in multiple sectors:

Housing

Housing stock will need to be designed or retrofitted to emit less carbon, providing opportunities in offsite construction and housing retrofit. With 80% of the buildings that will be occupied in 2050 already existing, there will be a significant long-term requirement for insulation installers, heat pump engineers and other retrofit professionals.

Transport

The future of both public and private transport in the borough will be increasingly electric. There will be new opportunities for companies providing vehicle charging infrastructure. The transition to electric vehicles will however mean significant changes for companies in the automotive supply chain and require retraining for those servicing vehicles.

It is also likely that private car ownership will decline, creating opportunities for those offering transport as a service (e.g. taxi and private hire operators).

Manufacturing

Walsall is a key manufacturing hub. The decarbonisation of the economy will present many new opportunities for our manufacturers. There will be long term requirements for low carbon heating solutions, renewable energy generation, insulation materials and the technologies needed for low carbon transportation. However, the transition also poses a threat to those companies manufacturing products for the carbon economy (e.g. internal combustion engines, mechanical drive trains and fossil fuelled boilers).

Circular Economy

The circular economy will encourage the development of new business models focused on reuse, repair, remanufacturing. Transitioning to a circular economy will create numerous opportunities in areas such as recycling and innovation-driven sectors.

Green Jobs and Skills

The Council Economic Strategy and Action Plan recognises that we face a massive shortfall in the skills required to deliver the transition to a net zero economy. Including shortages of housing insulation and retrofit specialists, ground and air source heat engineers, EV charging installers, commercial building energy efficiency specialists.

To unlock the opportunities provided by the green industrial revolution it will be necessary for the council and businesses to work closely with skills providers. It will be important to reskill those working in legacy, high carbon industries, to create high quality jobs and ensure a just transition.

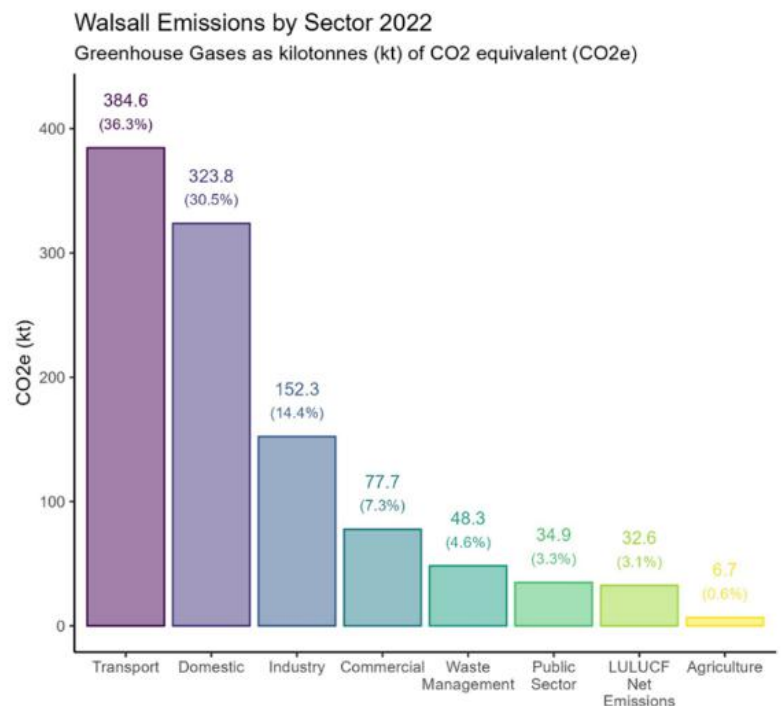
5 Current regional greenhouse gas emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions from Walsall

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) produces [annual estimates for greenhouse gas \(GHG\) emissions](#) by local authority and sector. Greenhouse gas emissions are measured in kilotonnes (1000 tonnes) of carbon dioxide (CO₂) equivalent.

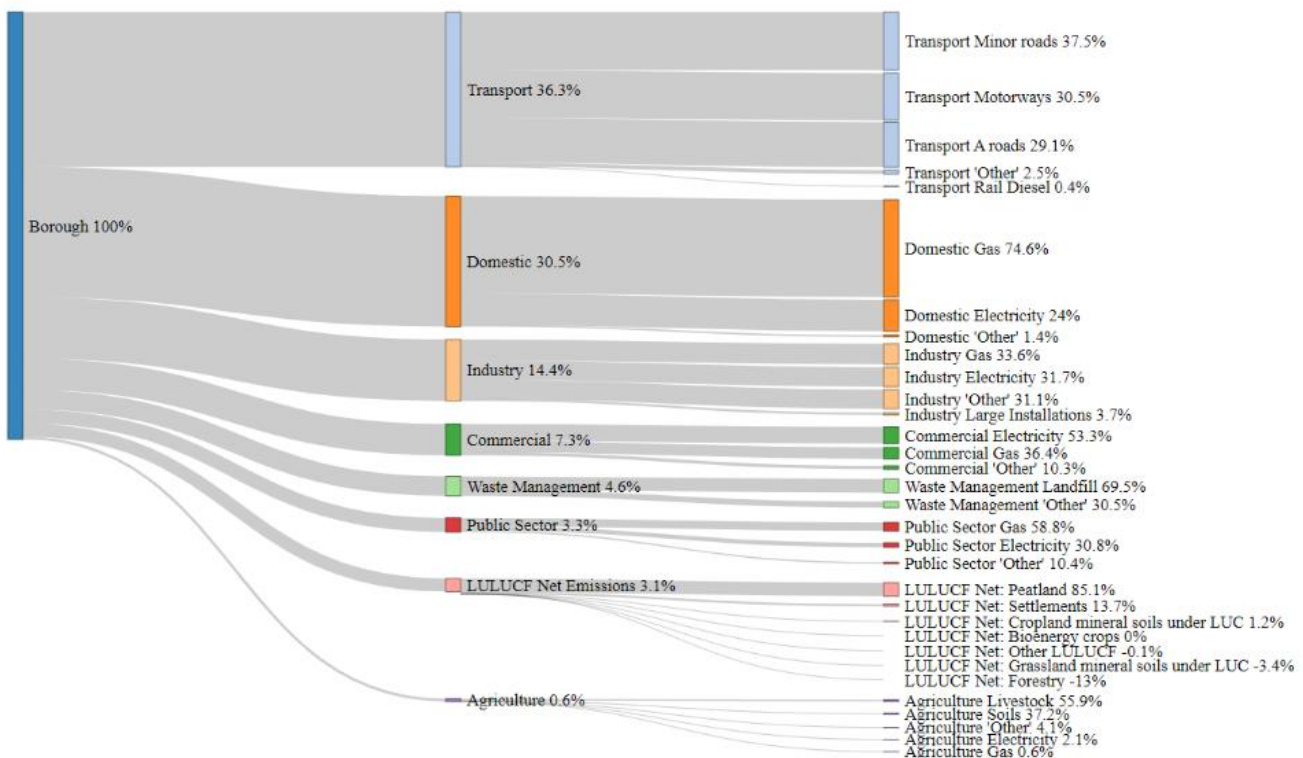
The latest data (2022) shows the sectors in Walsall with the highest emissions are Transport 36.3%, Domestic Sources 30.5% and with Industry contributing 14.4%. Waste Management 4.6%, Public Sector and Commercial operations contribute approximately 3% each. As Walsall is a predominantly urban borough, Agriculture and LULUCF (Land Use, Land Use Changes and Forestry) contribute the least, approximately 4% combined.

The chart below shows that three quarters of domestic emissions come from the burning of gas to provide heat and hot water for our homes. Industrial gas usage accounts for a third of the industry sector total and two thirds of the public sector emissions come from gas used to provide heat.



Analysis produced by Walsall Council's Business Insights www.walsallintelligence.org.uk
Data sourced from Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ)

Walsall Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sector 2022
Proportion of estimated emissions by Sector and Sub-Sector

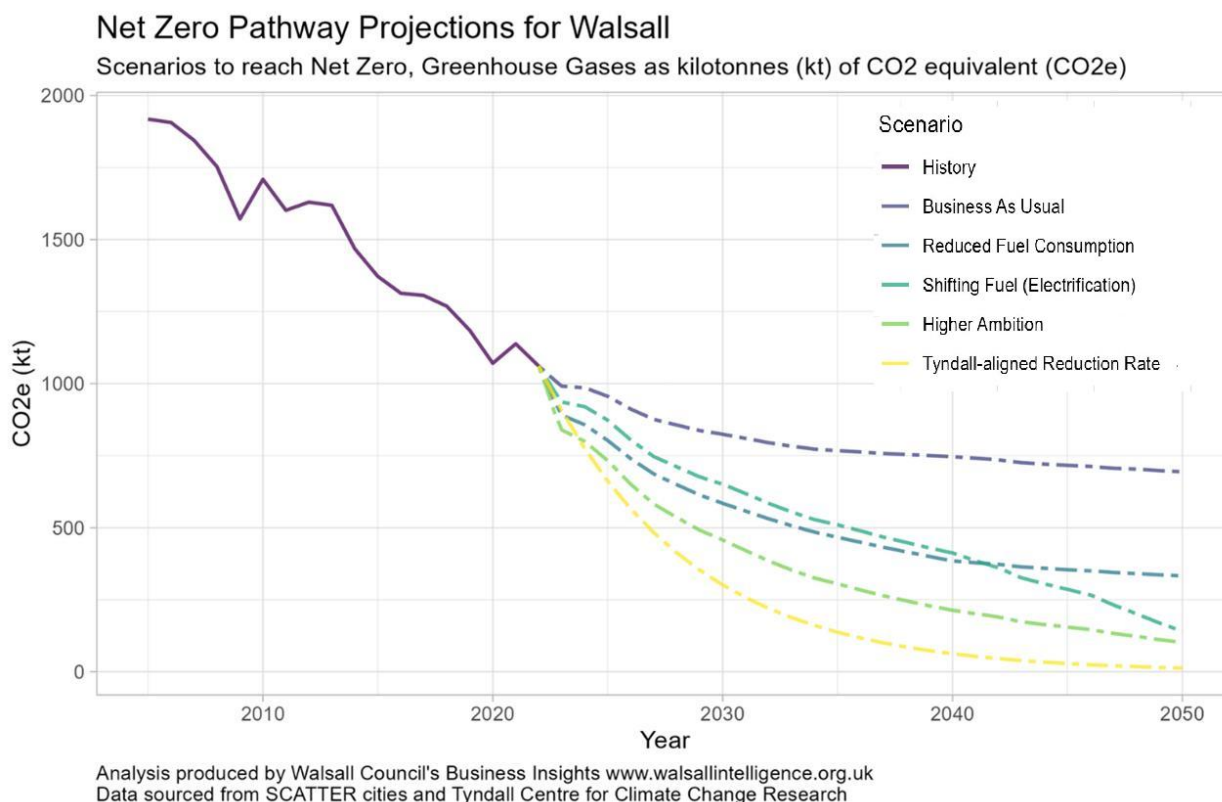


Analysis produced by Walsall Council's Business Insights www.walsallintelligence.org.uk
Data sourced from Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ)

Net Zero pathway projections for Walsall

The chart below illustrates potential future GHG emission projections, based upon a series of scenarios. The scenarios cover a range of measures: from Business as Usual (if there was no substantial change), through to a steady reduction in fuel consumption, or shifting fuel consumption (i.e. the electrification of heat and transport).

The [Tyndall Centre for Climate Change](#) assesses the maximum cumulative GHG emissions allowable in Walsall if we are to make a fair contribution to the global and national decarbonisation effort. This 'carbon budget (2020 to 2100) was deemed to be 6900kt(CO₂e) for Walsall and forms the basis of our Net Zero 2041 target. At current rates of emissions our carbon budget will be spent in less than seven years.



The historic data illustrates the link between GHG emissions and economic activity. The financial crash of 2008-2009 and the Covid-19 pandemic (2020 – 2022) both had significant impacts on carbon emissions due to the decline in economic activity. The hike in gas prices following the Russian invasion of Ukraine also depressed demand and carbon emissions. However, these effects were not lasting, and emissions rebounded quickly after the initial shocks.

Long-term emissions decreased by over 40.0% from 2005 to 2022. This was mainly due to the decarbonisation of the electricity grid, with improvement in household energy efficiency and improvement in vehicle fuel efficiency also contributing. Structural changes in the UK economy (e.g., the decline in heavy industry) have also reduced emissions.

Pathways to net zero 2041 will be extremely challenging. We will need to pursue all the interventions in the 'higher ambition' scenario whilst accepting that innovation will also be required to accelerate future emissions reductions if we are to realise our vision for a thriving, clean and green Walsall.

6 The partnership approach

Achieving our Net Zero 2041 vision is a challenging and complex undertaking that will require the collective effort of everyone. We all contribute to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, either directly or indirectly in our daily lives, work, or business activities. We therefore all have a role to play in reducing GHG emissions.

The role of Walsall Council

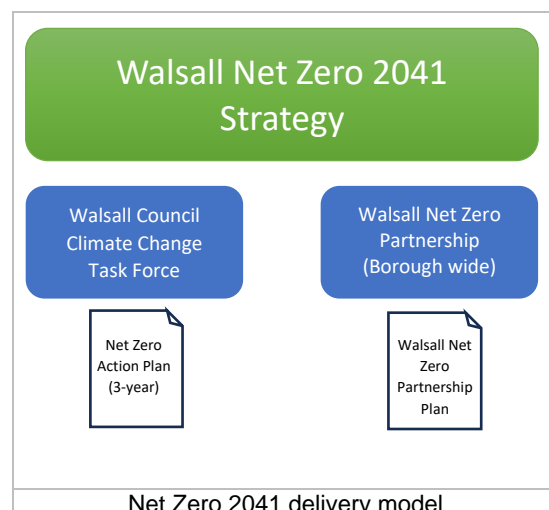
Whilst Walsall Council has a critical leadership role to play, achieving our borough's Net Zero 2041 ambitions will require all of us: the council, public agencies, private sector organisations, voluntary and community groups, as well as residents to do our part. Success depends on using our combined skills, assets, knowledge, powers, and effort to effect change. We must be honest about what is achievable, be inclusive in our plans and think sustainability and regeneratively in all that we do. We must be local, and resident focused, so the delivery is meaningful for people in Walsall and becomes an integral part of their everyday lives. It is for this reason that our Net Zero 2041 strategy focuses, not only on direct emissions of the council (e.g., heating our buildings and operating our fleet of vehicles), but emissions from the borough as a whole.

The council can use its policies to shape future development. We can make use of regulatory and enforcement powers to promote energy efficiency. It can incentivise and steer sustainable behaviour change amongst residents. As a service provider, it can use its purchasing power to decarbonise the supply chain and encourage green growth. As an enabler and an influencer, it can lobby for national change and by working in partnership with others, it can show the vital local leadership required to build a green economy in Walsall.

Our climate change action plan

This strategy divides the actions we need to take to achieve our net zero ambitions into those the council can take a lead in implementing 'our priorities' and those where our partners across the borough will need to take a lead 'borough wide priorities'.

The elements of this strategy where the council will lead delivery, have been incorporated into an accompanying three-year Net Zero Action Plan. These actions include enabling actions (e.g. embedding climate change considerations in all council decision-making) and direct actions which will be implemented by the relevant council service (e.g. decarbonising the council fleet).



The Walsall Net Zero Partnership

To deliver the elements of this strategy identified as 'borough wide priorities', a Walsall Net Zero Partnership will be established. The partnership will include key stakeholders ranging from the NHS, Natural England, UK Health Security Agency, local business, utility companies, education providers, social housing providers, and the voluntary and community sector, as well as our local communities. It will have a remit to:

- Enable collaborative working and engagement with government, utilities, businesses, community groups and other partners in Walsall.
- Investigate steps that may be taken by the partnership to achieve net zero and the adaptation measures required to provide climate change resilience.
- Produce a Walsall Net Zero Partnership Plan that is realistic, measurable, and deliverable and progress with delivery of targets within the plan.

Our Partners

The council will have a vital leadership role in achieving our vision of a clean and green Walsall. However, businesses, residents, voluntary and community organisations, health trusts, colleges, universities, social housing providers, each bring with them unique local knowledge, expertise, and resources. To deliver our Net Zero 2041 strategy we will work closely with all stakeholders to ensure policies are aligned and mobilise the resources required to transition to a green economy. Key partners include, but are not limited to:

- **National Government:** National government leadership is crucial to the delivery of our Net Zero 2041 strategy. It is responsible for making key regulatory decisions (e.g., the phasing out of gas boilers). Regulatory certainty, with clear long-term strategic priorities is required to attract private sector investment needed for the transition to a green economy. Government funding is also essential if we are to deliver decarbonisation projects at the scale required, to achieve not only our 2041 target, but also the legally binding target of a net zero UK by 2050 set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019.
- **West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA):** The regional WM2041 net zero target is aligned with the Walsall target. The WMCA will be an important partner in delivering our vision. The trailblazer devolution Integrated Settlement will have a significant impact on the delivery of net zero projects in the Walsall. For example, it aims to give more local control over funding and increased local control of housing and public building retrofit initiatives.
- **Transport for West Midlands (TfWM):** As the regional transport authority for the West Midlands TfWM is responsible for coordinating transport services. Working with train, bus, and metro operators, it can use its budget to deliver schemes that improve connectivity, drive economic growth, and help cut carbon emissions by making it easier and more attractive for people to switch to public transport, and encourage more cycling and walking.
- **Statutory bodies:** These are organisations and government departments which are set out in legislation as having responsibility for certain sites, features, activities or actions. E.g. Health and Safety Executive, Natural England, Historic England, Environment Agency, Coal Authority, Forestry Commission, National Highways and Network Rail. Many provide statutory documents or best practice guidance which set out the approaches required to achieve net zero whilst minimising the negative effects on the things they have responsibility for. Some also provide funding opportunities for projects.
- **Other Public Sector Organisations:** Public sector organisations need to provide leadership by developing their own robust decarbonisation plans and promoting behaviour change amongst their employees and service users.
- **Businesses:** The business community will be a key partner in the energy transition. They have a vital role to play both in reducing their own emissions and seizing the opportunities for green growth arising from our transition to a net zero economy.
- **Schools, colleges, and universities:** The opportunities arising from the transition to net zero economy are substantial. To unlock these however we will need to work closely with providers to develop green skills in key sectors such as construction, housing and transport.
- **Social housing providers:** With control of over 20,000 homes in Walsall, our social housing providers are key partners in decarbonisation. Their experience in energy efficiency, and access to funding for retrofitting homes, is an opportunity to develop local green skills and supply chains.
- **Voluntary and Community Organisations:** Resident-led organisations are uniquely placed to educate, inform, and promote the individual behaviour change in our communities required for green healthy lifestyles.

7 Net Zero strategic themes

Our Net Zero 2041 strategy focuses on six themes to address the different aspects of our economy and lifestyles that contribute to climate change. Each theme represents a sector where significant greenhouse gas emissions occur or where there are opportunities for reducing emissions (mitigating) or improving resilience (adapting) to climate change. We will need to address all six themes simultaneously if we are to make significant progress towards limiting carbon emissions and addressing the consequences of climate change.

Our six themes are:

- **Energy:** Energy production and use, particularly from fossil fuels, is our largest sources of carbon emissions. Improving energy efficiency and increasing the use of renewable energy sources are key achieving our Net Zero 2041 target.
- **Circular and Green Economy:** A circular economy aims to reduce waste and make the most efficient use of resources. This includes actions such as recycling, reusing materials, reducing food waste, and designing products to be more durable and recyclable. The green economy refers to a transformative shift that aims to reconcile economic growth with environmental sustainability.
- **Homes, workplaces, and public buildings:** Buildings are responsible for the majority of carbon emissions from Walsall. These emissions are primarily from the fossil fuels we use for heating but also come from the energy we use for cooling and operating appliances. Improving the energy efficiency of our buildings and using cleaner sources of energy will significantly reduce carbon emissions.
- **Transport and Travel:** Transport and travel is currently the largest single source carbon emissions in Walsall. Actions to reduce carbon emissions in this sector include improving fuel efficiency, promoting walking, cycling, the use of public transport, and transitioning to electric vehicles.
- **Natural Capital and Land Use:** How we manage our natural capital (e.g., forests, heathlands, and wetlands) and use our land, can have a significant impact on climate change. Walsall does not have enough available land to offset our emissions by carbon sequestration but how we use our land is important to maintain the carbon reserves we have in this natural capital, restore biodiversity, create healthy green spaces, and help to reduce the impacts of flooding.
- **Resilience and Adaptation:** Even with mitigation efforts, the consequences of climate change are unavoidable. This theme focuses on actions required to adapt to climate change and build resilient infrastructure and communities. These actions include considering climate change in the design of our buildings, flood protection measures, and encouraging behaviour change to help residents cope with extreme temperatures.

Energy

Background

The majority of greenhouse gas emissions come from energy use, specifically the release of carbon dioxide from burning of fossil fuels in boilers and internal combustion engines. The UK government has committed to decarbonising our electricity grid by 2030. The decarbonisation of heat and transport will be achieved primarily by replacing fossil fuels with electricity (e.g. by the adoption of heat pumps and electric vehicles). Heat networks that utilise waste heat will also have a role to play in decarbonising heat for our buildings

The energy used, and the resulting carbon emissions in our borough depend on factors such as economic activity, building quality, industrial practices, available transport options and residents' individual behaviour. In the short-term, behavioural change can decrease consumption by encouraging more energy efficient practices. Improving the energy performance of buildings, decarbonising industrial process, and decarbonising transport will take longer.

Power Down to Power Up - The Energy Hierarchy

The Energy Hierarchy are prioritised steps that can be taken to achieve a more sustainable energy system.

The first step is to minimise energy use. This not only reduces carbon emissions but also reduces energy bills.

The second step is to ensure energy is produced and consumed efficiently by using more efficient technologies (e.g. insulation, LEDs, low carbon heating systems, energy management systems).

The third step is to adopt renewable, low carbon energy sources.

Whole life costing

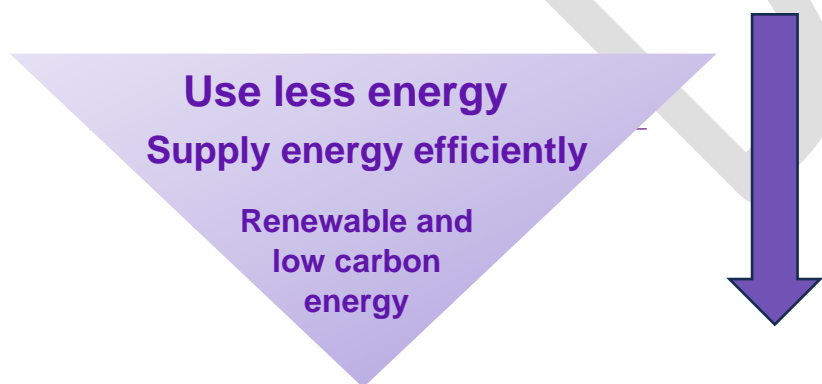
The shift towards low-carbon technologies sources comes with a risk of additional expenses due to the cost of deploying the infrastructure. It is important to consider whole-life costs when retrofitting or investing in new buildings and transport technologies.

Whole-life costing refers to the total costs and benefits of ownership of an asset building, or electric vehicle, and allows resource efficiency to be appropriately considered during the assessment of the actual cost of design, construction, and operation. This approach promotes the adoption of solutions such as low carbon design for new housing developments, the deployment of electric fleets.

Solar

Over the last decade, solar photovoltaics have improved in efficiency and due to economies of scale have made generating renewable electricity more affordable.

In recent years the council has installed solar photovoltaics on a number of its properties, such as the Civic Centre and Darlaston Leisure Centre. We will continue to invest and establish business cases for the installation of



more solar across our estate. We will encourage and support the adoption of solar energy in suitable locations across the borough.

Heat Pumps

The energy used to heat our homes, business and public buildings is responsible for around one third of UK of GHG emissions. Changing how we heat our buildings is essential to achieve net zero.

Heat pumps are a key technology for decarbonising heat. The Climate Change Committee projects that, to reach net zero, domestic heat pumps will be needed in at least half, and more likely up to 80%, of homes by 2050. Heat pumps are widely used in countries, such as Norway (60%) and Sweden (43%) but are in only installed 1% of UK homes. The UK Government has a target of 600,000 installations per year by 2028.

Heat Networks

Heat networks (also known as district heating schemes) supply heat from a central source to consumers, via a network of underground pipes carrying hot water. They can cover a large area or even an entire city or be local supplying a small cluster of buildings. This avoids the need for individual boilers or electric heaters in every building. Heat networks are sometimes described as “central heating for cities”.

The Energy Act 2023 provides the powers for government to implement Heat Network Zoning in England through regulations. These new regulations have the potential to transform the economic case for the development of heat networks in towns and cities in England.

Case Study: Walsall Energy Action Project

Funded by The National Lottery Community Fund's Climate Action Fund the Walsall Energy Action Partnership (WEAP) is a community partnership.

The aim of the WEAP project is to build a sustainable, climate-resilient and Net Zero Walsall together, in a fair and inclusive way. The project will drive community led action to reduce carbon emissions and climate inequalities among some of the most vulnerable in the community.



Behaviour Change

While national action is the most significant factor determining how fast we decarbonise our economy, individuals can also play a part in reducing carbon emissions.

This can be achieved by simple measures such as turning down thermostats, washing clothes at lower temperatures, insulating lofts, choosing energy efficient appliances, switching off appliances when not in use, changing to LED lighting. Despite their cost-saving benefits, these simple actions are often not carried out.

We will encourage and enable energy saving behaviour, deliver a borough-wide awareness campaign, and support community outreach projects.

Case Study: LED street light improvements

Walsall Council's plan to convert 23,000 streetlights to low energy LED lighting is completed in April 2024. The initiative began in April 2022 and is projected to deliver significant reductions in energy consumption and carbon emissions by around 70%.

Alongside the lantern conversion, the council have installed remote monitoring which can identify issues and control lighting levels.

With the ongoing upgrade scheduled, further savings are anticipated through dimming trials approved by the council in February 2024.



Energy – Our priorities:

Challenges and opportunities	Priorities	We will:
<p>Most greenhouse gas emissions are directly related to energy use, specifically the burning of fossil fuels in boilers and internal combustion engines (ICE).</p> <p>To achieve our Net Zero 2041 target, we need to reduce the CO₂ emissions that are released by the energy we use, for transport and powering our factories and buildings.</p>	<p>Priority 1: Decarbonising our power supply.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work with utility companies, regional and national government to ensure electricity grid reinforcement is undertaken to provide sufficient grid capacity to enable the electrification of heat and transport and deploy renewable electricity generation.
<p>The UK government has committed to decarbonising our electricity grid by 2030. The decarbonisation of heat and transport will be achieved primarily by replacing fossil fuels with electricity.</p> <p>To lessen the demand on the electricity grid it will be necessary for residents and businesses to install solar photovoltaic (PV) panels to generate power locally wherever practicable.</p> <p>Other low carbon energy sources of energy such as, biofuels, solar thermal and the use of waste heat via heat networks will also need to be considered.</p> <p>Hydrogen produced from low carbon sources may also be needed for industrial processes where high temperatures are required.</p> <p>The first step to reducing GHG emissions from energy is to reduce demand. This will be achieved by using more efficient vehicles, industrial processes, and buildings.</p>	<p>Priority 2: Promote adoption of clean energy alternatives to fossil fuels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will phase out gas boilers in all our buildings and replace these with heat pumps, connect to heat networks or use other low carbon sources of heat. • We will install solar arrays on our buildings wherever practicable (i.e., those buildings with suitable roofs). • We will encourage the deployment of solar PV on commercial buildings and homes.

Energy – Borough wide priorities

Businesses and other organisations:

- Undertake comprehensive energy audits to identify where energy is being consumed in the businesses and where efficiency measures can be applied.
- Optimise industrial process to reduce energy consumption and explore alternatives to fossil fuels.
- Install up to date building management systems (BMS) to actively manage heating and cooling in their buildings.
- Install renewable energy generation at their premises wherever possible.
- Large energy consumers should investigate technologies such as carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS) to capture carbon emissions from the energy they use.

Walsall Council:

- Show leadership by retrofitting and decarbonising our estate.
- Show leadership by converting our fleet to ultra-low emissions vehicles.
- Provide local energy advice to support residents.
- Rigorously enforce Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for domestic private rented properties.
- Implement a business support programme to support energy efficiency.

Residents:

- Install renewable energy such as solar panels or solar thermal in their homes.
- Switch to a renewable energy supplier.
- Plan to install a low carbon heating system for when they next need to replace their current heating system.

Government, regulators (Ofgem) and utilities:

- Ensure new renewable generation such as solar photovoltaic and new demand from electric vehicles and heat pumps receive timely and affordable connections to the network.
- Develop a resilient and smart electricity network to minimise the cost and delays caused by grid reinforcement.
- Use regulation to make sure networks are cost effective, competitive, and smart.
- Provide funding and regulatory certainty to encourage investment in alternative low carbon energy solutions (e.g., heat networks).

Regional Partners and Policy:

- WMCA: West Midlands Combined Authority Trailblazer deeper devolution deal.
- WMCA: WM 2041 Five Year Plan 2021 – 26.
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Energy Act 2023; Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy 2021.

Circular and Green Economy

Background

UK Government and private sector funding is increasingly focused on net zero and sustainability. Whilst Walsall has some key business and assets relevant to the transition to a low carbon economy, there is a pressing need for a step change in investment and support in the borough's business and skills base if Walsall is to be a leader in the green industrial revolution.

Walsall has the opportunity to capitalise on the growth of the low carbon construction, retrofit and transport sectors. There are national shortages of housing retrofit specialists, heat pump engineers, electric vehicle technicians, commercial building energy efficiency specialists and manufacturing capacity for low carbon technologies. Our industrial and engineering heritage make Walsall uniquely placed to become a leader regionally and nationally to deliver these services.

The Walsall Economic Strategy and Action Plan (2022) will support the growth of low carbon exemplar innovation and skills hubs. The council will provide these hubs with pilot test sites to enable practical demonstrators that can be used to attract new investment and to establish Walsall as an emerging low carbon exemplar that is serious about leading the green industrial revolution.

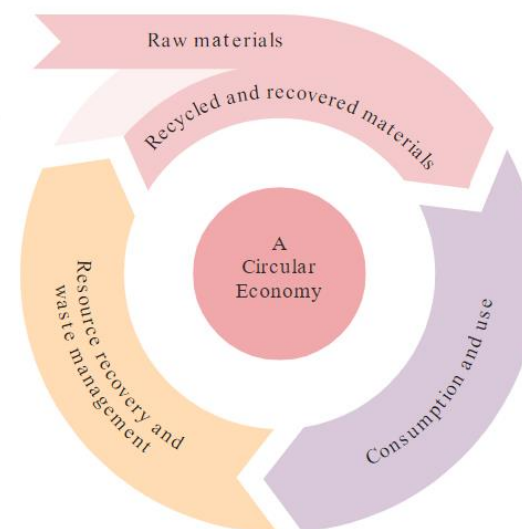
Circular Economy

The circular economy is a model of resource production and consumption that emphasises sustainability and waste reduction.

In this system, existing materials and products are shared, leased, reused, repaired, refurbished, and recycled for as long as possible.

It is about keeping materials in circulation through practices like maintenance, remanufacturing, and composting, rather than allowing these resources to become waste.

By adopting circular economy principles, Walsall can minimise resource use and create a more sustainable future. Developing recycling technologies is a green growth opportunity for the borough.



[Resources and waste strategy. Policy paper UK GOV. 2018](#)

Green Economy

We will continue to forge partnerships and collaborate with local educational providers to give the residents of Walsall the best available opportunities to gain experience, gain green skills and qualifications for the developing green economy.

We will continue to support local businesses to become more efficient and invest in low carbon and renewable technologies to enable Walsall to be leader in green technologies, innovation, and services.

Recycle and Reuse

In line with the wider circular economy approach, we will improve reuse and recycling rates.

Household recycling rates in Walsall are approximately 40%. The Government has set a target to recycle 65% of household waste by 2035, with no more than 10% going to landfill.

Environment Act 2021 stipulates that recyclable household waste, including food waste, must be collected separately from other household waste for recycling or composting (target date of March 2026).

The council will modernise, enhance and future-proof Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and waste disposal facilities across the borough to enable residents to effectively reuse and recycle.

Composting and anaerobic digestion.

Composting is a cost effective, natural process that transforms food and garden waste into a valuable and nutrient rich food for gardens and green spaces. We will investigate the potential for increase composting of suitable waste from council buildings and local schools. Anaerobic digestion is the preferred technology for processing food waste.

Behavioural Change

Residents will be equipped to make better decisions if they are provided with the relevant information. The council will support and promote community initiatives to reduce waste and fly-tipping across the borough.

Plastic Waste

Plastic pollution is a huge global environmental challenge. It is predicted that unless action is taken there will be a threefold increase in the amount of plastic flowing into our oceans by 2040.

The council will work to phase out the use of single use plastics within council offices and buildings.

Case Study: Middlemore Lane facility

The redevelopment of the Middlemore Lane HWRC will provide capacity to deal with our waste as our population grows. It will increase the range of items that can be recycled and reused. We will partner with charitable partners in re-use schemes with the addition of a reuse facility on site. The facility will have solar panels to generate renewable energy, and the proposed plan will include green landscaping and green roofs where practicable.



Circular and Green Economy – Our priorities:

Challenges and opportunities	Priorities	We will:
<p>As part of building a thriving, clean and green Walsall, we need to promote economic and resource productivity, eliminate waste, and increase business opportunities by leading the green industrial revolution. We need to ensure the transition to a green economy is a 'just transition' that will stimulate skills development and jobs for all.</p> <p>The damage done to our environment by waste products can be avoided if more sustainable decisions are made at the production stage. The UK Government's waste management hierarchy places emphasis on preventing waste and re-use wherever possible.</p> <p>To eliminate the environmental impact of the products we buy, we need to change the way that we behave as consumers. We also need to change the way we treat end-of-life products. We will achieve this by adopting the principles of the circular economy (i.e., maintain-reuse-recycle-refurbish-remanufacture-recycle-compost).</p> <p>We also need to work to identify green business opportunities to encourage more circular, sustainable and resource-efficient business models. This will be achieved by using more sustainable materials to ensure manufacturing processes maximise resource and energy efficiency.</p>	<p>Priority 1: Produce goods and services more sustainably and transition to a circular economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will embed net zero commitments across all our council strategies and policies, ensuring that we use our powers and influence to stimulate the demand for low carbon products and services.
	<p>Priority 2: Support local businesses to seize green growth opportunities and establish net zero supply chains to make Walsall an international centre of excellence for advanced manufacturing, modern construction methods, logistics and low carbon innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will align our economic development plan to recognising the potential of green growth to boost our local economy and competitiveness. • We will use our purchasing power to support localism, social value and the decarbonisation of the supply chain. • We will ensure that any national or regional funding initiatives that are managed by the council (e.g. Levelling Up funding) align with our Net Zero 2041 objectives.
	<p>Priority 3: Support green skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work with local colleges and schools to provide good quality training and make Walsall a leading centre for green and sustainable technologies, products, and services.
	<p>Priority 4: To make Walsall a leader in waste technology, close the gap in our recycling rate, and be known as a high performer regionally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will develop a circular waste management system, where we reduce the amount of waste generated, increase the separation and collection of recyclable materials, and promote the recovery of energy and nutrients from organic waste.

Circular and green economy - Borough wide priorities.

Businesses and other organisations:

- Explore green business opportunities in the retrofit, automotive and sustainable transport sectors.
- Review processes to look where efficiencies in design and production can be achieved.
- Conduct carbon audits to monitor the carbon content on the goods and services they deliver.
- Decarbonise their supply chains by making sustainability part of their procurement policy.
- Support the development of green skills and the reskilling of the region's workforce.
- Work with the Walsall Economic Forum, Walsall Net Zero Partnership, Midlands Engine, WMCA and other bodies to make the region a leader in the green industrial revolution.

Walsall Council:

- Make sustainability central to procurement policy to ensure the goods and services we buy on behalf of our residents have the lowest possible carbon content and encourage the supply chain to decarbonise.
- Support low carbon supply chains to foster innovation and skills development in key sectors such as energy, transport, and waste.
- Support local business in assessing finance to transition to sustainable business practices and the production of sustainable goods and services.
- Ensure that Walsall has the right infrastructure and technology to process waste and recycling.
- Support residents to reduce waste, reuse and recycle.

Residents:

- Reduce the amount of waste by using reusable products.
- Repair rather than replace to extend the life of the things they own.
- Recycle as much as possible and segregate waste for collection.
- Minimise food waste and where not possible compost or segregate for collection.
- Buy products and services from local business whenever possible.
- Cut down the number of plastics they use and buy sustainable products.

Schools, Colleges, Universities, and training organisations:

- Embed carbon literacy in academic and vocational training courses.
- Provide courses and apprenticeships for young people to equip them to thrive in the green economy.
- Provide training to reskill those working in legacy high carbon industries.
- Work with Voluntarily, Community and Faith Organisations, and our communities, to reduce waste and increase reuse and recycling.

Regional Partners and Policy

- We Are Walsall 2040 vision: By 2040/41 Walsall will be a regional leader in sustainability with a leading Net Zero economy. All public sector partners will be carbon neutral in their operations with sustainable public buildings and new homes will be carbon neutral.
- Walsall Council Economic Strategy and Action Plan.
- Environment Act 2021.
- HM Government: Public Services (Social Value) Act (2013).
- HM Government: The Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.

Homes, Workplaces and Public Buildings

Background

Buildings are responsible for over 40% of GHG emissions in our borough. To achieve our Net Zero 2041 target, we need to reduce the use of energy in building, particularly the energy used to heat our homes, commercial and public buildings.

Making our buildings more energy efficient will not only reduce GHG emissions, but it will also reduce costs for building operators. For homes, it will reduce energy bills and contribute to efforts to reduce fuel poverty and improve the health of residents.

Making buildings net zero will require owners of existing homes and buildings to make improvements to current levels of insulation to reduce heat loss through the building fabric well beyond the basic measures they might already have in place. It will also require fossil fuelled heating systems to be replaced with low carbon alternatives such as heat pumps. On-site energy generation will need to be installed wherever practicable. All new buildings will need to be net zero ready.

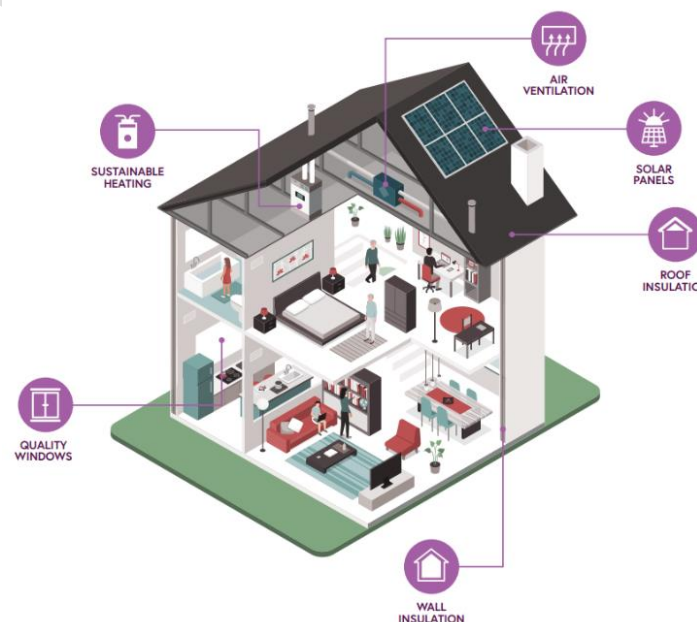
Decarbonisation of our buildings will be a colossal undertaking but also a huge opportunity for our region's construction, industrial and business sectors as we grow our green economy.

Domestic Energy Efficiency

80% of the homes we will be living in by 2050 have already been built. A nationwide programme of deep retrofits and refurbishment of existing housing is the only way to deliver the necessary carbon savings. Retrofitting homes will have significant co-benefits, making them cheaper to run and healthier to live in.

The [Institute of Engineering and Technology and Nottingham Trent University](#), have quantified the co-benefits improving the quality of homes. They estimate that a deep retrofit programme could reduce social care costs by between £1,700 and £4,500 per person per annum and cut GP visits by almost 50%.

Deep retrofit measures include external wall insulation, high quality glazing, mechanical heat recovery and the adoption of renewable energy technologies such as solar power and heat pumps.



IET – Nottingham Trent University

Public Sector Energy Efficiency

In order to accelerate the transition to low-carbon and renewable technologies in the public sector, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), introduced the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) with the aim to reduced emissions from public sector buildings by 75% by 2037.

The council will continue to evaluate the potential for the introduction of energy efficiency measures and technologies within its estate. We will conduct feasibility studies and develop business cases for their adoption wherever practicable.

Case Study: Darlaston Leisure Centre

In 2022, Walsall Council was awarded £2.6 million funding from the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

As a result of the funding, the council has been able to upgrade energy equipment within the facility and install a new, greener heating system with air source heat pumps, replacing fossil fuelled boilers. The work has involved the installation of 288 photo voltaic solar panels on the roof to generate electricity to power the heat pumps and help meet the leisure centre's electrical requirements. Internally, low energy LED lighting has been installed to improve efficiency.



Homes, workplaces, and public buildings - Our priorities:

Challenges and opportunities	Priorities	We will:
<p>Buildings are responsible for over 40% of CO₂ emissions in our borough. We need to reduce the excessive use of energy, particularly that used for heating homes, commercial and public buildings, to achieve our Net Zero objectives.</p> <p>Making our homes more energy efficient will not only reduce CO₂ emissions, but it will also help residents to live in warm homes which are cheaper to run and healthier to live in. It will contribute to efforts to reduce fuel poverty which at 19.7% in Walsall is the 9th highest for all English local authorities (<i>based on 2021 data released in April 2023</i>).</p> <p>Owners of existing homes and buildings will need to make improvements to current levels of insulation well beyond the basic measures they might already have in place (e.g., by retrofitting buildings with external wall insulation, and upgraded glazing).</p> <p>Making our homes net zero will also require fossil fuelled heating systems (e.g., gas boilers) to be replaced with low carbon alternatives such as heat pumps or by connection to a low carbon heat network.</p> <p>All new buildings will need to be net zero ready.</p> <p>Decarbonisation of our buildings will be a huge opportunity for our region's construction, industrial and business sectors as we grow our green economy.</p>	<p>Priority 1: Reduce carbon emissions and eliminate fuel poverty by reducing the heat demand of existing homes.</p> <p>Priority 2: Reduce the energy demand from existing commercial and public buildings.</p> <p>Priority 3: Reduce the energy demand of new buildings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to implement the Council's Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) to tackle fuel poverty. This will include advice to help households access retrofit funds (e.g., ECO 4, ECO Flex). • We will work to secure funding for the retrofitting of domestic properties across our borough to improve their Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating to at least a C. • We will ensure that landlords and agents, are aware of their legal obligation to provide and make available EPCs and take appropriate action against those who fail in this obligation. • We will retrofit the buildings we own to operate more efficiently and install low carbon heating systems as the existing systems become due for replacement. • As active members of the One Public Estate programme, we will work closely with other public sector organisations to explore opportunities to better utilise our buildings. • Where practicable we will use our planning powers and the Walsall Borough Local Plan to strengthen energy policy and to provide a clear framework for new builds to adopt significantly higher standards of energy efficiency than at present. • For regeneration projects overseen by the council we will ensure energy efficiency and sustainability are embedded into the design and delivery of projects.

Homes, workplaces, and public buildings - Borough wide priorities

Businesses:

- Be prepared to seize the opportunities available in the energy efficiency, retrofit and low carbon heating market.
- Conduct energy audits of their premises.
- Consider greener, more energy efficient premises when current or future contracts require renewal.
- Engage with landlords for cost sharing arrangements for the installation of energy efficiency measures and renewable energy systems.

Walsall Council:

- Show leadership by retrofitting and decarbonising our own estate and encourage partner organisations to follow.
- Provide energy advice to support residents.
- Access available funding to support retrofit programmes.
- Work with property owners to encourage high quality private rental properties across the borough and tackle rogue landlords.

Residents:

- Get the basics right – including LED lighting and draught-proofing.
- Upgrade home insulation – loft, cavity wall, double glazing.
- Think about whole house retrofit, particularly if conducting a home renovation.
- Install low carbon heating systems such as heat pumps.
- Adopt behaviour change measures that could improve household energy efficiency.

Other key partners:

- Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations will need to work with partners providing advice on energy efficiency to alleviate fuel poverty.
- Social housing providers will need to access available funding to retrofit their housing stock.
- Private landlords will need to comply with the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for the homes they let.
- Colleges and other training providers will need to offer courses to upskill installers to provide them with the skillsets required to work with low carbon technologies.

Regional Partners and Policy:

- We Are Walsall 2040 Vision - By 2040 homes in Walsall, whether new or existing dwellings, will be energy efficient and sustainable and Walsall will be on track towards all homes being carbon neutral by 2050.
- Walsall Council: Housing Strategy 2020 – 2025; Strategic Asset Plan 2022 – 2027.
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Heat and Buildings Strategy 2021.

Transport and Travel

Background

Transport and travel account for a third of GHG emissions in Walsall, primarily from the use of fossil fuelled vehicles. The emissions from vehicles are also the main contributor towards air pollution in Walsall. To reduce emissions and achieve our net zero ambitions, we need to significantly reduce the use of internal combustion engines, develop a mix of alternative transport solutions for people and freight to move around and through our borough.

Many journeys are short and very local, so we need to encourage a mode shift in how we move and promote active travel. We need to develop the convenient cycling, walking and wheeling infrastructure, where residents feel safe using these modes of transport.

We need to ensure we provide convenient, clean, efficient public transport services and continue to invest in electric vehicle charging infrastructure to decarbonise road transport.

Active Travel

Walking, wheeling, and cycling.

The shift towards more active travel is essential in meeting our net zero targets. We will adopt and implement the West Midlands Local Transport Plan and the Black Country Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Plan to improve public transport and active travel routes.

Safety

Providing safe, traffic-free cycling and walking infrastructure is key in encouraging its use. We will continue to invest in active travel routes, assessing suitable locations for pedestrianisation and active travel networks throughout the borough.

Case Study: Walsall Canal Network Improvements

It is quite well known regionally that Birmingham has more canals than Venice (35 miles to 26 miles). What is less well known is that so does Walsall. Our industrial legacy has left Walsall with approximately 26.4 miles of inland waterways.

This canal network provides a safe, traffic free route, not only connecting many areas across the borough, but also the surrounding West Midlands region.

Walsall Council is working in partnership with the charity, Canal & River Trust, to resurface the towpaths, improve access points and add solar lighting to around eight miles of towpath in the borough.

The first section of towpath, from Sneyd Wharf has now been reopened to the public with a tarmac surface.



Electric Vehicles

The UK Government has committed to phase out the sale of fossil fuelled cars and vans from 2035*. The leading vehicle manufacturers have committed to a future propelled by electricity meaning the majority of vehicles sold will be battery electric vehicles.

To ensure our borough is prepared for the transition from fossil fuel powered vehicles to electric vehicles, the council will implement its Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Strategy. This strategy provides a roadmap for delivering electric vehicle chargepoints across the borough.

Public Transport

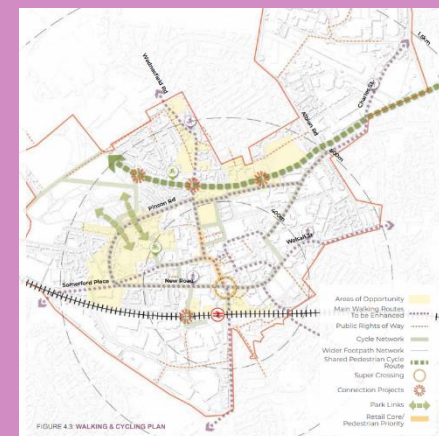
Walsall Council is working in partnership with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), the West Midlands Rail Executive, West Midlands Railways, Network Rail, and the Department for Transport to deliver new train stations at Willenhall and Darlaston.

When complete the new stations will give the communities direct access to the rail network for the first time since the 1960s, offering services to Walsall, Wolverhampton, and Birmingham.

Case Study: Willenhall Framework Plan

The Willenhall Framework Plan aims to have a firm focus on the future of Willenhall, to have the aspiration to become a more vibrant, healthy, and prosperous community.

Connectivity is a key pillar within the Framework Plan, maximising the benefits of the new train station and promoting active travel and healthy living through high quality public realm which links streets, public spaces and community facilities.



*The government is consulting on whether to reduce this target date to 2030

Transport and Travel - Our priorities:

Challenges and opportunities	Priorities	We will:
<p>Transport and travel account for 34.2% of CO₂ emissions in Walsall, primarily from the tailpipes of fossil fuelled vehicles.</p> <p>To eliminate these emissions, we need to develop a mix of alternative transport solutions for people and freight.</p> <p>Many journeys are short and very local, so we need to encourage active travel by developing the right cycling and walking infrastructure, to enable residents feel safe using these modes of transport.</p> <p>Where active transport is not an option, we need to ensure convenient clean efficient public transport services, such as buses, taxis, trams, and trains are available. Currently these modes of transport have lower CO₂ emissions per mile than private cars, but it is important that we encourage the operators of these public transport services to adopt ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs).</p> <p>For freight, and journeys where cars are necessary, we need to encourage the deployment of ULEVs by ensuring the appropriate electric vehicle charging infrastructure is in place.</p> <p>There are multiple co-benefits that will result from the adoption of sustainable transport. The adoption of ULEVs will not only reduce CO₂ emissions it will also eliminate other harmful pollutants (e.g., nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter) and will reduce traffic noise. Active travel is proven to result in better personal health and well-being.</p>	<p>Priority 1: Increase the use of public transport and active travel modes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will invest in cycling and walking routes to help people feel safe travelling by bicycle, on foot or by wheeling. • We will work with partners to improve public transport networks in our borough. • We will promote behaviour change to encourage cycling, walking and wheeling and the use of public transport.
	<p>Priority 2: Encourage the phasing out of fossil-fuelled private vehicles and their replacement with zero emission alternatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will promote behaviour change and establish a programme to inform and encourage businesses and residents to switch to ultra-low emission vehicles. • We will use planning policy to encourage the deployment of charge points in suitable locations. • Secure funding, or facilitate private investment, to install over 600 electric vehicle (EV) charging sockets across chargepoints in the borough by 2030.
	<p>Priority 3: Establish a zero-emissions council fleet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will transition the council's fleet to zero emissions by 2035.
	<p>Priority 4: Establish a zero-emission public transport fleet in Walsall.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work with regional bodies (e.g., TfWM, Black Country Transport, bus companies, taxi operators and owner drivers) to promote the deployment of ULEV buses and taxis.

Transport and Travel – Borough wide priorities:

Businesses and other organisations:

- Monitor the environmental impacts associated of suppliers' transport and logistics and work with them to find ways to minimise supply chain transport GHG emissions.
- Provide destination EV charging for customers (e.g., in supermarket car parks).
- Switch company fleets to electric vehicles and install charging infrastructure wherever possible. When replacing other vehicles, purchase the most efficient models.
- Support employees by encouraging flexible working, the use of public transport, cycling, walking, and car-sharing.
- Install EV charging at workplaces to enable employees to charge their vehicles whilst at work.

Walsall Council:

- Encourage public transport initiatives which enable a rapid shift towards active and sustainable travel modes.
- Ensure that adequate infrastructure is in place to facilitate the greening of the council and contractors' fleets by equipping all council offices, depots, car parks and sports facilities with charge points.
- Promote active travel modes, such as walking, cycling and wheeling.

Residents:

- Walk, cycle and wheel for short journeys.
- Use public transport for longer journeys.
- Use mobility services such as taxis rather than own their own vehicles.
- Cut costs, congestion, parking problems and pollution by car sharing wherever possible.
- When replacing a vehicle, consider using an ultra-low emission vehicle (ULEV) (e.g., electric car).

Freight companies, public transport operators, and taxi companies:

- All transport operators need to transition to electric vehicles (EVs) or other zero-emission vehicles. This includes buses for public transport, electric trucks for freight companies, and electric vehicles for taxi and private hire companies.
- Retrofit existing vehicles where this is more cost effective than replacing vehicles.
- Develop strategic plans to ensure the necessary charging infrastructure is in place for when EVs are procured.
- Collaborate closely with transport suppliers and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive regional mobility as a service (MaaS) offering.

Regional Partners and Policy:

- We Are Walsall 2040 vision: To make Walsall one of the most connected boroughs in England by rail and road with faster, quieter, and more reliable connections to new and existing destinations. To make Walsall a cycling borough with a network of cycling routes and facilities that are safe and secure.
- Walsall Council: Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Strategy.
- Transport for West Midlands (TfWM): Movement for Growth - Local Transport Plan (currently being updated – Reimagining Transport in the West Midlands)
- Department for Transport: Decarbonising Transport for a Better Greener Britain.

Natural Capital and Land Use

Background

Ecosystems cannot adapt as fast as the climate is changing so we must do all we can to protect these valuable assets. Natural capital and changes in land use also play a significant role in mitigating the consequences of climate change.

The UK government has pledged to protecting 30% of the UK's land and sea by 2030 (30by30) in England. Protecting existing natural areas from deforestation and degradation, and restoring degraded lands, prevents the release of stored carbon and helps to maintain biodiversity. This not only aids climate change mitigation but also enhances resilience to the consequences of climate change. Enhancing biodiversity and nature is key to providing a sustainable future for all.

Biodiversity and Green spaces

Walsall is perhaps best known for its industrial heritage; however, the borough is also home to some outstanding green spaces. A recent report for the Ancient Tree Inventory has revealed that Walsall Arboretum boasts the highest concentration of ancient and veteran trees in the region. Over 1/3 of the borough is green space.

We will protect and enhance the borough's parks and green spaces. We aim to promote biodiversity, preserve meadowland and wetland. We will work to increase the availability of green spaces for all or residents.

Planning

Strategic land use planning helps minimise the carbon footprint of urban development and maximise the benefits of green spaces for carbon sequestration and biodiversity net gain. The Walsall Borough Local Plan currently being developed provides the opportunity to ensure all new developments take into account the preservation and promotion of Natural Capital.

Case Study: Purple Horizons



Purple Horizons is a partnership project extending across up to 12,000 hectares on the fringes of the West Midlands conurbation and focusing on restoring and connecting fragmented heathlands to create a mosaic of heathlands, wetlands, woodlands and grasslands.

It will link up existing protected areas, work with local landowners to deliver habitat creation and carbon storage and is developing a plan for connecting with communities in Walsall to deliver green areas where they will have the greatest health benefits.

In 2024, 60 volunteers took part in the planting at Pelsall Common, Heath End and who helped to plant 400 plug plants of the Tormentil, Harebell and Cat's Ear species. These attract the Tormentil Mining Bee and provide a source of food for the bees and their young.

Natural Capital and Land Use - Our priorities:

Challenges and opportunities	Priorities	We will:
<p>Ecosystems cannot adapt as fast as the climate is changing so we must do all we can to protect these valuable assets. Natural capital and changes in land use also play a significant role in mitigating the consequences of climate change.</p> <p>Forests, grasslands, and wetlands can function as carbon sinks, absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere and storing it in plants and soil in a process known as carbon sequestration.</p> <p>Protecting existing natural areas from deforestation and degradation, and restoring degraded lands, prevents the release of stored carbon and helps to maintain biodiversity. This not only aids in climate change mitigation but also enhances resilience to the consequences of climate change.</p> <p>Strategic land use planning helps minimise the carbon footprint of urban development and maximise the benefits of green spaces for carbon sequestration and biodiversity net gain.</p> <p>Most land management related actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change have significant co-benefits, including improved air and water quality, enhanced biodiversity, improved recreational opportunities, and health benefits.</p> <p>We need to prioritise actions to protect, maintain and enhance our natural capital and the multiple benefits it provides.</p>	<p>Priority 1: Achieve a net gain in biodiversity for new developments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will use our planning powers to ensure the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 to achieve a biodiversity net gain of 10% for new developments is rigorously enforced. • We will make maintaining and enhancing Walsall's networks of habitats and green infrastructure an objective of the Walsall Borough Local Plan.
	<p>Priority 2: Create green and blue spaces that increase biodiversity, reduce air pollution, and mitigate the effects of climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will enhance the borough's parks, green and blue spaces to increase habitat diversity through appropriate management (e.g. via rewilding). • We will develop a Walsall Natural Health Strategy and identify land to offset carbon through increased tree planting and creating wildlife-friendly corridors.
	<p>Priority 3: Increase investment into our natural environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will integrate the management of green and blue infrastructure into town centre master planning and regeneration strategies to allow the mitigation and adaptation benefits to be realised. • We will plant one tree for every household in our in our borough by 2030, 11,000 trees per year for 10 years.
	<p>Priority 4: Increase engagement with our natural environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work with community and voluntary organisations, health partners, schools and other stakeholders to promote the public health benefits for all residents.

Natural Capital and Land Use - Borough wide priorities:

Businesses and landowners:

- Incorporate natural capital into decision making.
- Use their purchasing power to promote good practice in supporting sustainable supply chains (e.g. use certified sustainable timber, recycled materials).
- Where they own green or blue space, manage this to promote natural capital.
- Promote environmental volunteering amongst their employees.
- Farmers and landowners will need to adopt agriculture and land practices that enhances the natural capital of their assets (e.g., create or restore ponds and woodland).

Walsall Council:

- Work with other stakeholders to ensure effective measurement of natural capital.
- Ensure the Walsall Borough Local Plan embeds preserving and creating natural capital in new development and regeneration projects.
- Support and use its planning powers to ensure all development projects achieve Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Promote the health benefits of a clean and green Walsall and maximise the opportunities to enable all residents to benefit.

Residents:

- Manage green space they control (e.g. gardens and allotments) to encourage wildlife.
- Visit, spend time and be active in local green and blue spaces.
- Volunteer for projects that protect or improve the environment in your local area.

Schools, Colleges, Universities, NHS trusts and other public sector organisations:

- Universities and colleges will need to ensure all the graduates they train have an in-depth understanding of climate change, planetary boundaries, sustainability, and regeneration, so the next generation of professionals are equipped to tackle the climate emergency.
- Conduct meaningful research by engaging with stakeholders at the local, and regional level.
- Promote the importance of the natural environment to public health.
- Enhance the natural capital of their own estates.

Regional Partners and Policy:

- We Are Walsall 2040 vision: Walsall will be a clean and green borough with highly regarded parks and open spaces and be known as a place where nature is respected and protected. We will maintain our parks and green spaces for your enjoyment and safeguard our nature and biodiversity.
- WMCA: West Midlands Natural Environment Plan: 2021 – 2026.
- Environment Agency and Sustainability West Midlands: West Midlands Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan 2021 - 2026.
- DEFRA: Environment Act 2021 & 30by30 sustainability target.

Resilience and Adaptation

Background

Climate change will significantly impact the day to day lives and wellbeing of Walsall residents by 2041. We are already experiencing increase rainfall and more frequent extreme temperature events.

Climate resilience is about how our borough can meet its broader ambitions whilst ensuring it stays safe and secure. It means addressing key vulnerabilities and being prepared to meet expected or unexpected disruptive challenges (e.g., heatwaves, flooding, water stress). We must plan now for a more hostile climate.

Climate adaptation, like resilience, is about preparing for the negative consequences of climate change. According to the United Nations, climate adaptation means making adjustments in ecological, social or economic systems in response to the challenges and opportunities resulting from climate change. Appropriate climate adaptation actions will help to strengthen the resilience of Walsall's communities and infrastructure.

Partnerships

We will work with communities and businesses to increase resilience to future changes in climate including the development of an engagement programme to support Walsall businesses and community groups with continuity planning.

We will develop a Walsall Resilience Risk Register in partnership with the NHS to help identify members of the community vulnerable to interruptions in supply of power, heating, water and other essential services and regular testing and review of Local Resilience Partnership plans and NHS Winter/Heatwave Plans to prioritise services.

We will also consider how we need to adapt buildings and infrastructure to adapt to extremes of weather.

Plan and Prepare

It is our duty to make sure that residents, businesses and infrastructure are safe and protected. We will closely monitor the evolving risks posed by climate change and continuously review the Walsall Resilience Strategy.

We will ensure the Walsall Borough Local Plan addresses sustainable development, including the requirements arising from the Environment Act 2021.

Additionally, we will ensure emergency plans are in place- issuing alerts for severe weather events such as heatwaves, droughts, and flooding.

Resilience and Adaptation - Our Priorities:

Challenges and opportunities	Priorities	We will:
<p>Climate change will have a significant impact on the day to day lives of Walsall residents by 2041. The UK Met Office is projecting increased rainfall and more frequent extreme temperature events.</p> <p>Climate resilience is about how our borough can meet its broader ambitions whilst ensuring it is safe and secure. It means addressing key vulnerabilities and being prepared to meet expected or unexpected disruptive challenges (e.g., heatwaves, flooding, water stress).</p> <p>We need to build climate resilience to protect vulnerable communities. Our infrastructure needs to be able to withstand a more hostile climate.</p> <p>Climate adaptation, like resilience is about preparing for the negative consequences of climate change. We must plan now for a more hostile climate from 2041 and beyond.</p>	Priority 1: Build Climate Resilient Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will develop a Walsall Climate Change Adaptation Plan. • We will work with communities, businesses and education and health/social care providers to increase resilience to climate change. • We will embed climate change resilience and adaptation into all council strategies.
	Priority 2: Integrate climate change into council strategies to promote resilience and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will ensure the Walsall Borough Local Plan has regard to the National Planning Policy Framework goals for sustainable development and other national planning guidance and regulations. • We will promote sustainable design in buildings & review planning policies to reflect changes in national planning guidance including support for new homes to be built to Net Zero carbon standards. • We will promote Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs), (e.g. swales, rain gardens, permeable paving) in new developments and regeneration projects.
	Priority 3: Increase the resilience of our critical infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will plan for emergencies - issuing alerts in the event of severe weather (e.g., extreme temperatures and flooding). • We will review and update the Walsall Flood Management Plan 2020-23. • We will work with our partners to understand the current and future risks of flooding and review plans with the West Midlands Local Resilience Forum & Black Country Local Resilience Forum.

Resilience and Adaptation - Borough wide priorities:

Businesses:

- Use water, energy, and other resources efficiently.
- Check if they are at risk of flooding and sign up for flood warnings.
- If in a flood risk area, make their premises more resilient and link up with neighbouring properties.
- Check if they have the right level of insurance.
- Invest in natural capital.

Walsall Council:

- Develop the appropriate indicators to monitor and evaluate how prepared we are for the current and future impacts of climate change.
- Develop a Walsall Climate Change Adaptation Plan.
- Show leadership by retrofitting its own estate to encourage partner organisations to follow.
- Plant trees.
- Implement proposals to manage flood risk for existing developments.

Residents:

- Check if they are at risk of flooding and sign up for flood warnings.
- If in a flood risk area, make their homes more flood resistant.
- Check if they have the right level of insurance.
- In extremely hot and cold weather, look after themselves and their neighbours.
- Work with voluntary and community groups to protect the more vulnerable.
- Use water efficiently, install a water meter and consider rainwater harvesting.

Other Key Partners:

- Utility companies will need to invest in infrastructure to provide secure energy and water supplies.
- Environment Agency will need to provide funding for flood protection.
- All will need to consider how to adapt their buildings/infrastructure to cope with extremes of weather.

Regional Partners and Policy:

- WMCA: West Midlands Natural Environment Plan: 2021 – 2026.
- Environment Agency and Sustainability West Midlands: West Midlands Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan 2021 – 2026.
- Department for Levelling up Housing & Communities: National Planning Policy Framework.
- UK Government: Resilience Framework.

8 Delivering the Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy

Next Steps

To deliver the Net Zero 2041 vision set out in this strategy, we need to close the gap between what is needed and where we are now. We need to take different approaches to supporting innovation in technology, and new approaches to finance and funding. We must show leadership and strengthen existing partnerships between the public, private, community and voluntary sector organisations. We need to develop priorities for engaging and educating residents, communities and businesses and upskilling our workforce.

This strategy divides the actions we need to take into six strategic themes. Energy, Circular & Green Economy, Homes, Workplaces & Public Buildings, Transport & Travel, Natural Capital & Land Use and Resilience & Adaptation. The priorities identified in each of these strategic themes are in turn divided into:

Our priorities: Actions the council can directly influence via its purchasing, regulatory and convening powers.

Borough wide priorities: Those actions that will require the active engagement of stakeholders across the borough.

The actions identified as 'Our priorities' have been incorporated our Walsall Council Net Zero Action Plan and will be implemented by the relevant council service.

For the actions identified as 'Borough wide priorities' a Walsall Net Zero Partnership will be established with a remit to produce a Walsall Net Zero Partnership Plan to progress delivery of these ambitions.

Governance

The council Climate Change Task Force, comprising of senior service managers, will meet quarterly to provide oversight of delivery of the Walsall Net Zero 2041 strategy and Walsall Council Net Zero Action Plan and to consider any additional interventions required to achieve our vision. A performance review will be submitted to Cabinet and full Council annually to report on progress.

The Walsall Net Zero Partnership will develop its own governance mechanisms.

Funding and resourcing

The successful delivery of our Net Zero 2041 strategy will be dependent on appropriate levels of funding and resources being in place. The actions necessary represent a mix of committed and desired interventions by multiple partners. Some actions, such as retrofit programmes, already have funding committed. While other programmes will require feasibility studies or business cases to be developed to determine their viability and funding will need to be secured to make them happen. This is particularly relevant for some of the larger projects. Significant additional investment will be needed for our vision for a clean and green Walsall to be realised. We therefore need to explore potential sources of funding through existing avenues as well as develop innovative approaches to ensure projects can be delivered. Partners will need to develop financial business cases which consider the whole-life costs of interventions. They will also need to appreciate the consequences and costs of delay in delivering the necessary changes which are likely to be greater on the economy and society in the long-term.

UK Government and private sector funding is increasingly focused on net zero and sustainability. Our challenge is to present a compelling argument for Walsall receiving some of that investment in what is an increasingly noisy and competitive marketplace.

Measuring and evaluating our impact and effectiveness

The primary measure of the effectiveness of climate change interventions is the effect they have reducing regional greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) collates GHG emissions statistics for each local government area. However, there is typically a two-year lag from the time when the emissions occur and when the data is published. It is often difficult to establish which organisation or part of the supply chain is responsible for these emissions (e.g., who is responsible for the emissions of a beef burger consumed in Birmingham, by someone who lives in Bloxwich?). To resolve this issue carbon accounting methodologies, categorise GHG emissions as either Scope 1, 2, or 3.

For example, for Walsall Council:

- **Scope 1:** These are the GHG emissions released directly by the council from the fossil fuels we burn.
- **Scope 2:** These are the indirect GHGs emissions that are released from the electricity we buy.
- **Scope 3:** These are the GHG emissions embodied in the goods and services the council buy for its own use, and on behalf of our residents.

To monitor GHG emissions for which the council is responsible, we will use the well-established Local Government Partnerships - Greenhouse Gas reporting tool to estimate council Scope1 and Scope 2 emissions.

We will use the Oxygen Finance Insights Tool to estimate council Scope 3 emissions. This methodology uses industry benchmarks to estimate the carbon footprint of goods procured by the council based on their value.

We will use the data generated by these tools to report to the internationally recognised Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) to evaluate our progress and compare our performance with other localities.

In addition to assessing GHG direct emissions our Walsall Council Net Zero Action Plan will have performance indicators (e.g., number and capacity of fossil fuel boilers replaced, number of ULEVs in operation, recycling and landfill rates) to ensure they have such that they have measurable outcomes. We will also use the services of the council's Business Intelligence Unit and Black Country Economic Intelligence to collate relevant socio-economic data (e.g., green jobs, fuel poverty rates) and report progress on these indicators annually.

9 Communications Strategy

Background Approach

The Net Zero 2041 strategy is an important initiative of Walsall Council to tackle climate change and its consequences. Aligned with the We Are Walsall 2040 Borough Vision, this strategy aims to decarbonise, meet sustainability objectives, and adapt to climate change. Recognising the community's concern for climate change, especially among younger residents, Walsall Council acknowledges its responsibility in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and leading businesses, stakeholders, and residents towards a Net Zero future.

Communications Objectives

The communications objectives of the Net Zero 2041 strategy are:

- To lobby for national and regional ongoing policy change.
- To change behaviours, educate and create awareness among businesses.
- To engage with educational establishments in order to positively impact future generations.
- To raise the awareness of residents in regard to importance of reducing carbon emissions, developing climate change conscious habits, and working together for Walsall to have cleaner air.
- To encourage the public to advocate for sustainable and regenerative practices within businesses.

Focuses (Key Messages)

- The Council is committed to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2041.
- Transitioning to a green economy and creating green jobs provides economic benefits (e.g. green jobs and business opportunities).
- Addressing climate change will also tackle health inequalities (e.g. air quality and cold homes) and be a 'Just Transition' providing economic opportunities for all.
- We can all take simple, everyday actions to make a difference which will also save money and improve and maintain our health and wellbeing.
- The importance of addressing climate change and its consequences in Walsall.
- The Council's commitment to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions by 2041.
- The need for collective effort and collaboration from residents, businesses, and organisations to achieve the strategy's goals.
- The economic benefits of transitioning to a green economy and creating green jobs.
- The focus on a 'just transition' that tackles inequalities and provides economic opportunities for all.
- The aim to build climate resilience and adapt to the challenges of a changing climate.
- Making climate actions relatable to everyday people by linking actions to cost savings and health benefits.
- Introducing a clear vision to the public, outlining the project and encouraging public participation.

Walsall Council Net Zero Action Plan (2025 -2028)

Notes:

- a) This Walsall Council Net Zero Action Plan details the actions the council will take to deliver the priorities set out in the Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy.
- b) The actions have a timeline of three years (2025 to 2028).
- c) The actions detailed are limited to those the council can directly influence via its purchasing, regulatory and convening powers.
- d) The actions necessary to achieve our borough's geographic Net Zero 2041 target, but fall outside the council's direct influence, are not in the scope of this document. These borough-wide actions will be coordinated by a Walsall Net Zero Partnership comprising of regional partners.

The actions in this action plan are divided into the six strategic themes identified in the Walsall Net Zero 2041 Strategy. The actions for each of these themes is listed on a separate tab of this spreadsheet with an additional tab detailing the delivery approach:

1. Delivery Approach

This tab details the governance, funding, communications and monitoring approach the council will take to deliver the actions for the priorities for each of the six strategic themes of this action plan.

2. Energy

Energy use is responsible for approximately one third of gas emissions in our borough. This tab details actions the council will take reduce emissions by improving energy efficiency and switching to clean energy sources.

3. Circular and Green Economy

Achieving our Net Zero 2041 target will necessitate transforming the economy of our borough. This tab details the actions the council will take to promote the green economy by ensuring our residents have the right skills and businesses are positioned to seize the opportunities of the green industrial revolution.

4. Homes, Workplaces, and Public Buildings

Buildings are responsible for the majority of carbon emissions from Walsall. Improving energy efficiency and reducing energy use in buildings will eliminate fuel poverty as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This tab lists actions the council will take to reduce emissions from public buildings, workplaces, resident's homes, and new buildings.

5 Transport and Travel

Transport and travel is currently the largest single source greenhouse gas emissions in Walsall. This tab details the actions the council will take to encourage active travel, the use of public transport, replacing fossil fuelled vehicles with zero emission vehicles, and decarbonising our own fleet.

6. Natural Capital and Land Use

How we manage our natural capital (e.g., forests, heathlands, and wetlands) and use our land, can have a significant impact on climate change. This tab details the actions the council will take to achieve an increase in biodiversity, create green and blue spaces, and promote resident engagement with the natural environment.

7. Resilience and Adaptation

Even with mitigation efforts, the consequences of climate change are unavoidable. This tab details the actions the council will take to prepare our communities and infrastructure for a more hostile environment.

1. Delivery Approach

Ref	Objective	Proposed Action	Delivery Team / Partners	Performance Indicator	Timeline	Progress	Funding Source	Last Updated
D.1	Establish effective governance for the Walsall Net Zero 2041 Programme.	D.1.1 Climate Change Task Force to meet quarterly to oversee implementation of this Net Zero Action Plan.	Place and Environment / Task Force members	Delivery of Net Zero action Plan	Quarterly	Ongoing	Internal Resource	Nov-24
		D.1.2 Establish 'Walsall Net Zero Partnership' comprising anchor institutions and key stakeholders to deliver the Borough Wide priorities of the Net Zero 2041 Strategy.	Place and Environment	Recruit partners organisations Development of a borough-wide action plan.	Jan-25	First meeting planed January 2025	Internal Resource	Jan-25
		D.1.3 Climate Change considered as part of the Council Plan refresh & future updates of relevant service plans and policies.	Policy/Public Health	Adoption of new Council Plan	Nov-24	Ongoing	Internal Resource	Nov-24
D.2	Secure funding and resourcing.	D.2.1 Climate Change integrated into intermediate and longer-term external funding priorities.	External Funding	Total external funding secured	Apr-25	Ongoing	UK Gov. WMCA (integrated settlement etc), UKSPF, Lottery and Foundations	Dec-24
		D.2.2 We will ensure that any national or regional funding initiatives that are managed by the council align with our Net Zero 2041 objectives.	External Funding	Number of projects funded	Apr-25	Ongoing	Internal Resources	Dec-24
		D.2.3 Explore the potential of exploiting Green Finance initiatives to fund net zero priorities (E.g. Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) British Business Bank).	External Funding /WMCA	Total investment secured	Apr-26		External Funding	Dec-24
D.3	Promote Climate Literacy and	D.3.1 Develop a communications strategy to raise awareness, communicate and engage residents and partners in the Net Zero 2041 programme to promote sustainable behaviour change.	Communications/Public Health	Develop identifiable programme branding & communications programme, which promotes progress & celebrates success & positive changes in environmental practice	Apr-25		Internal Resource	Nov-24
		D.3.2 Climate Change risk assessment undertaken on key high-level decisions and public announcements.	Communications	Implementation of policy	Apr-25		Internal Resource	Nov-24
		D.3.3 Provide climate literacy training for elected members, officers and staff to council staff to inform policy.	Climate Change / Democratic services / HR	Number of staff completing climate literacy training	Jun-25		Internal Resource	Nov-24
		D.3.4 Provide induction Climate Literacy training as recommended training for all new starters.	Climate Change / HR	Training programme initiated	Dec-25		Internal Resource	Nov-24

	communications	D.3.5 Council to establish a team of Climate Champions service area to promote cross-departmental engagement climate literacy and behaviour change.	Climate Change	Recruit a minimum 30 Champions	Dec-25		Internal Resource	Nov-24
		D.3.6 Publish an internal newsletter detailing climate change progress and establish a dedicated intranet page.	Climate Change / Communications	Establish intranet site	Dec-25		Internal Resource	Nov-24
		D.3.7 Review the council's ethical advertising policy to encourage low carbon behaviours by residents and businesses.	Comms. / Public Health	Implementation of policy	2028		Internal Resource	Jan-25
		D.3.8 Engage young people via the proposed 'Youth Collaborative' to develop initiatives to explore with young people on how they can contribute to the development and delivery of the Walsall 2041 Net Zero Strategy.	Children's services / Climate Change	1) Clear evidence that young people are influencing policy. 2) Evidence young people are driving actions in their communities.	2025	(Commence April 2025)	Internal resource / Grant funding	Jan-25
D.4	Monitoring and reporting.	D.4.1 Annual performance review for Cabinet and full Council.	Climate Change	Produce annual report	Annually	(Feb 2025)	Internal Resource	Nov-24
		D.4.2 Use the LGA carbon reporting tool to report scope 1 & 2 emissions, use the Oxygen insight tool to report Scope 3 emissions, and report borough wide decarbonisation progress via the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)	Climate Change / BIU / Procurement	1. Tonnes of CO2e emitted 2. Progress in climate change according to CDP criteria	October 24 / Annually		Internal Resource	Nov-24
		D.4.3 Disseminate energy usage and spend to all services to enable active management of gas, electricity and water. (e.g. give access to energy portal)	Corporate Landlord / Procurement	1. Savings 2. Avoided CO2 emissions	2025		Savings	Nov-24

2. Energy

Ref	Net Zero Strategy Priorities	Proposed Action	Delivery Team / Partners	Performance Indicator	Timeline	Progress	Funding Source	Strategic Fit	Last Updated
E.1	Priority 1: Decarbonising our power	E.1.1 Work with utility companies and partners (e.g., National Grid, Energy Capital) on Local Area Energy Planning to promote the development of low carbon energy infrastructure ahead of need (e.g., electricity distribution grid reinforcement).	Climate Change / Utility Companies / WMCA	Number of sites analysed using LAEP+ tool and level of engagement with DNOs	Dec-25		N/A		Nov-24
		E.1.2 Review of the Council's energy purchasing strategy and explore potential for green supplies. Review Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) tariffs and Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) to make sure the optimal returns from renewable installations are being achieved.	Procurement / Corporate Landlord / Highways	1. Quantity of CO2e saved by switching to net zero tariffs. 2. Percentage of council electricity energy come from renewable source 3. Savings achieved by switching SEG / PPA tariffs.	Dec-25	New Energy contract commenced 1st October 2024.	Internal resource	(Sustainable Procurement Strategy (Highways))	Nov-24
E.2	Priority 2: Promote adoption of clean energy alternatives to fossil fuels.	E.2.1 Council estates plan to phase out gas boilers in all our buildings and replace these with heat pumps, connect to heat networks or use other low carbon sources of heat where practicable.	Corporate Landlord	Quantity of heat (kWh/a) provided by low carbon sources	2028	Ongoing	Integrated Settlement (PSDS). Capital programme.	UK Gov. Energy Act 2023 Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy 2021	Nov-24
		E.2.2 Develop a business model to deploy solar PV on all suitable roofs on council estate buildings.	Corporate Landlord / Facilities	Number of studies conducted and potential savings quantified			Integrated Settlement (PSDS)	(Place Based Strategy)	Nov-24
		E.2.3 Conduct feasibility study and develop a business model to deploy solar PV in council carparks.	Corporate Landlord / Transport	Solar Capacity installed	2027				Dec-24
		E.2.4 Investigate the feasibility of procuring a strategic Net Zero delivery partner.	Place and Environment	Procure partner	2028		Internal resource		Nov-24
		E.2.5 Work with partners to implement Heat Network Zoning as required by the Energy Act 2023 and support the development of commercial heat networks (District heating schemes).	Regeneration / Planning / WMCA	kWh of heat supplied to buildings via heat networks	2025/26		Internal resource, External Funding	UK Gov. Energy Act 2023	Nov-24
		E.2.6 Energy Awareness campaign within council to improve individual accountability. Energy savings achieved through awareness campaigns aimed at council staff will cut energy bills and reduce carbon emissions each year.	Climate Change / HR	1. Number of energy awareness workshops delivered to council staff 2. Number of council staff attended the workshops	2025		Internal Resource		Nov-24
		E.2.7 Continue the promotion of the council's home energy saving initiatives and collective energy switching schemes to residents (All fuel switches will require all bidding companies to use 100% renewable energy).	Customer Engagement	1. Number of households engaged 2. Number of measures implemented 3. Energy savings (kWh/a) attributed to improved energy efficient behaviour in households	2027		External funding tbc	Home Energy Conservation Act Action	Jan-25

		E.2.8 Investigating installation of solar PV on roof of market stalls (Walsall and Bloxwich).	Regeneration / Planning	Number of stalls with solar canopies	2027	Feasibility	Health Levelling up Funding	Town Centre Master Plan	Nov-24
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3. Green and Circular Economy

Ref	Net Zero Strategy Priorities	Proposed Action	Delivery Team / Partners	Performance Indicator	Timeline	Progress	Funding Source	Strategic Fit	Last Updated
C.1	Priority 1: Produce goods and services more sustainably and transition to a circular economy.	C.1.1 Review Procurement Strategy to maximise the extent we can use our purchasing power to support localism, social value and the decarbonisation of the supply chain where proportional and appropriate. Ensure that we use our spending power to stimulate demand, and procure low carbon products and services.	Resources and Transformation	Adopt sustainable procurement policy	May-25		Internal resources	(Sustainable Procurement Strategy)	Nov-24
		C.1.2 Ensuring carbon lifecycle is considered during the design and construction of infrastructure projects.	Resources and Transformation / Transport / Regeneration / Housing	Ensure designs are and bids include some level of carbon accounting which will be assessed in procurement scoring	May-25		Internal resources	Economic Strategy and Action Plan (ESAP)	Nov-24
		C.1.3 Adoption of low carbon materials in highway maintenance. A target for 70% of road resurfacing materials used low carbon products.	Highways	Milage of roads resurfaced using low carbon produces and reduction total in embodied carbon of all resurfacing materials used.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Internal Resources / External Funding	Highways Asset Management Plan Economic Strategy and Action Plan (ESAP)	Dec-24
C.2	Priority 2: Support local businesses to seize green growth opportunities and establish Net Zero supply chains to make Walsall an international centre of excellence for advanced manufacturing, modern construction methods, logistics and low carbon innovation.	C.2.1 Work with businesses to promote energy efficiency and decarbonise their activities (e.g. energy audits, installation of renewable energy systems etc.).	Employment and Growth	Number of business engaged on carbon reduction specific program	Dec-25	Decarbonisation Net Zero Program	Internal Resources / External Funding	Economic Strategy and Action Plan (ESAP)	Dec-24
		C.2.2 Encourage set up and support growth of green business (e.g. manufacture of sustainable building materials, modern methods of construction, green retrofit, etc.).	Employment and Growth	Number of start up business engaged and funded	Mar-26		External funding (SME Start up Grant)	Economic Strategy and Action Plan (ESAP)	Dec-24
		C.2.3 Deliver better financial, social, and environmental value for our residents by supporting and enabling net zero projects.	Place and Environment - Commercial Services	Value of Net Zero projects sponsored by the council	2028	Commercial strategy published 2024	Internal resource / revenue generating	Commercial Strategy	Jan-25
		C.3.1 Identify sectors and job roles where skills are being replaced with new green skills and where new jobs are being created	Employment and Skills Team, Employment and Skills Board	Sector Plans	Annual		Integrated Settlement		Nov-24
		C.3.2 Work with WMCA to ensure provision delivered by local colleges and training providers has clear alignment to emerging green skills required for new green jobs replacing those lost in traditional industries.	Employment and Skills Board / WMCA	Number of new learners	Annual		External funding (e.g. Adult Education Budget, Commercial Course Fees)		Nov-24
		C.3.3 Support employers to create new apprenticeships in retrofit construction, solar installation, heat pump installation, EV vehicle maintenance and other green heating or transport technologies.	Employment and Skills Board / WMCA	Number of apprentice places created	Annual		Apprenticeship Funding, Apprenticeship Levy Transfer		Nov-24

C.3	Priority 3: Support green skills	C.3.4 Identify and provide training places to prepare for the transition to electric vehicles (e.g. EV vehicle maintenance, servicing and development manufacture EV batteries).	Employment and Skills Board / WMCA	Number of new training places	Annual		Bootcamps, Adult Education Budget, Dept for Education	Economic Strategy and Action Plan (ESAP) (Skills Strategy)	Nov-24
		C.3.4 Identify and provide training places for the construction industry skills for low carbon new builds and retrofit (e.g. insulation installers, heat pump engineers and other retrofit professionals).	Employment and Skills Board / WMCA	Number of new training places	Annual		Bootcamps, Adult Education Budget, Dept for Education		Nov-24
		C.3.5 Inspire local people to become innovation professionals through self employment opportunities.	Employment and Skills Board / Business Growth / WMCA	Number of new business entrepreneurs	Annual		Integrated Settlement		Nov-24
		C.3.6 Lever in green employment and green skills outcomes through public sector procurement through social value commitments.	Employment and Skills Team	Number of new jobs created	Annual		Public Spend		Nov-24
		C.3.7 Inspiring every young person in the borough by embedding the green economy into curriculum and facilitating access to information on green skills and jobs opportunities.	Careers Enterprise Teams	Facilitating green projects within schools	Annual		Careers Enterprise Company Funding		Nov-24
		C.3.8 Provide local unemployed people with the right careers information and guidance to enter, upskill or retrain to access new roles in the green economy.	Employment and Skills Board	Reduce unemployment	Annual		Integrated Settlement		Nov-24
C.4	Priority 4: To make Walsall a leader in waste technology, close the gap in our recycling rate, and be known as a high performer regionally.	C.4.1 Enhance waste facilities, waste transfer station and improve reuse and recycling network.	Place and Environment	10% Reduction in household waste produced by 2035	Target 2035, 2026 milestone 3% reduction, 5% 2030	Middlemore waste facility Planned opening in 2025	Internal Resources	Environment Act 2021	Dec-24
		C.4.2 Develop a communication strategy which engages residents, schools, communities and businesses with measures to reduce the volume of waste they produce and increase participation / quality of reuse & recycling. Explore incentive schemes via external funding.	Place and Environment	1. Completion of the waste management system 2. Number of households engaged 3. % of household waste recycled	Target 2035, 2026 milestone 3% reduction, 5% 2030	Awaiting EPR funding (2025/26)	Internal resource, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)	Environment Act 2021	Dec-24
		C.4.3 Develop a circular waste management strategy to promote waste reduction and recycling. Ensure borough waste will be managed sustainably in-line with the council's We are Walsall 2040 vision.	Place and Environment	1. Recycling 65% municipal waste by 2035 2. Divert all non recyclable waste from landfill by 2035.	Milestones 1. Recycle 55% 2025 2. Recycle 65% 2030	Ongoing	Internal resources	Environment Act 2021	Dec-25
		C.4.4 Develop a food waste collection policy to enable weekly collections.	Place and Environment	Tonnage of waste composted from council and school premises by X% of total waste generation	(Target March 2026 for collection to commence)	Cabinet report being prepared	Internal resources / Gov. Capital Grant	Environment Act 2021	Dec-25
		C.4.5 Council business support team will promote recycling, remanufacturing investment (recovery, transfer and treatment).	Planning / Regeneration	1. Number of businesses signposted to recycling / remanufacturing support 2. Inward investment for the borough	2028		Internal resources	Economic Strategy and Action Plan (ESAP)	Dec-24
		C.4.6 Increase residents access to affordable good food from sustainable sources, and reduce food waste.	Public Health	Progress against Food Plan ambitions	2028		Internal resource, External funding	Council Plan We are Walsall 2040 Borough Plan	Nov-24

4. Homes, Workplaces and Public Buildings

Ref	Net Zero Strategy Priorities	Proposed Action	Delivery Team / Partners	Performance Indicator	Timeline	Progress	Funding Source	Strategic Fit	Last Updated
	Priority 1: Reduce CO2 emissions and eliminate fuel poverty by reducing the heat demand of existing homes.	H.1.1 Work with our partners (including energy companies, Registered Social Landlords, Owner Occupiers, Private Landlords, Home Care providers) to reduce fuel poverty by targeting any discretionary assistance (capital investment, advice and support) and seeking external funding /advice to help residents of these properties.	Customer Engagement / Housing Standards/Energy Efficiency	1. Number of residents in fuel poverty 2. Number of residents applying for energy savings home improvements measures (e.g. ECO Flex, Warm Homes, etc.)	Staggered over a 10 year period	Projects currently being developed	Integrated settlement External funding	Walsall Council: Housing Strategy 2020 - 2025	Nov-24
		H.1.2 Secure funding for the retrofitting of domestic properties across our borough to improve their energy performance ratings Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating to at least a C.	Customer Engagement / Housing Standards/Energy Efficiency	Number of properties achieving EPC rating of C or higher	Current government target is by 2030	Awaiting confirmation of funding specification.	Integrated settlement External funding	Walsall Council: Housing Strategy 2020 - 2025; Economic Strategy and Action Plan (ESAP)	Nov-24
		H.1.3 Ensure that landlords do not let out homes that do not have an Energy Performance Certificate of the requisite band and to educate and/or take appropriate action against those who fail in this obligation.	Customer Engagement / Housing Standards/Energy Efficiency	1. Number of properties let without the relevant EPC or exemption 2. Number of education / appropriate actions taken against landlords who default on this obligation	Ongoing	Ongoing	Internal resource	Walsall Council: Housing Strategy 2020 - 2025	Nov-24
		H.2.1 Review usage of council properties & consider removal (by disposal, sale or demolition) or upgrade of the least energy efficient buildings.	Corporate Landlord / Transformation and Digital	Appointment of strategic partner	2025	Ongoing	Internal resource	Walsall Council: Strategic Asset Plan 2022 - 2027	Nov-24
		H.2.2 (Dependent on H.2.1) - New heating and ventilation system for the Civic Centre & Council House designed with A rated boilers and more manageable heating controllers to improve efficiency (Estimate 2 year programme)	Corporate Landlord	Potential energy savings due to the install of low carbon solutions (kWh/a)	Mar-26	Contractor appointed	External funding (Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 3b)	Walsall Council: Strategic Asset Plan 2022 - 2027	Nov-24
		H.2.3 (Dependant on H.2.1) - Replacement of windows to energy efficient units (A+) in the Civic Centre as part of a 2 year programme.	Corporate Landlord		Mar-26	Contractor appointed		Walsall Council: Strategic Asset Plan 2022 - 2027	Nov-24
		H.2.4 Review energy usage of Active Living Centres, and implement any cost effective improvements as a matter of priority.	Corporate Landlord / Leisure	Potential energy savings due to the install of low carbon solutions (kWh/a)	2028	Oak Park solar array in progress	Integrated settlement / Sport England	Walsall Council: Strategic Asset Plan 2022 - 2027	Nov-24
		H.2.5 Implement Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates & Inspections). Use this data and install sensors to identify potential energy savings.	Corporate Landlord	1. Building management behaviour change 2. Energy savings	2026		Invest to save		Nov-24
		H.2.6 Support Walsall schools to implement a schools energy policy & investigate Invest-to-Save and PSDS schools funds to implement energy/carbon efficiency measures.	Corporate Landlord / Education.	Number of energy saving and low carbon measures installed	2027		Integrated settlement		Nov-24

H.2	Priority 2: Reduce the energy demand from existing commercial and public buildings.	H.2.7 Improve energy efficiency of crematoria by installation of monitoring equipment and streamline the work procedures.	Bereavement Service	1. Reduce NOx emissions by 70% 2. Reduce NOx emission to 200mg 3. Save 50K on gas bills	2027	Initiated conversations with supplier.	Internal resources	Walsall Council: Strategic Asset Plan 2022 - 2027	Nov-24
		H.2.8 Enhance heat recovery from crematorium and energy efficiency during the refurbishment of the chapel.	Bereavement Service	100% heat energy use by chapel come from recovered heat	2027	No started	Internal resources	Walsall Council: Strategic Asset Plan 2022 - 2027	Nov-24
		H.2.9 Conduct feasibility study on providing Natural Burial Ground service (Burying on woodland without a headstone but will plant a tree).	Bereavement Service	Complete feasibility study and provide forward recommendation on green bereavement	2028	Included in 5 year business plan.	Internal resources	Walsall Council: Strategic Asset Plan 2022 - 2027	Nov-24
		H.2.10 Monitor energy consumption and optimise use of LED streetlight by smart control / monitoring.	Place and Environment / Highways and Transport / Amy Lighting PFI	1. Measuring energy consumption in kwh 2. Calculating carbon (CO2e) savings from new lighting	Sep-23	Completed	Internal resources		Dec-24
		H.2.11 Application of multi-use sockets across the 22,856 street lamps, with 22,856 light sensors and traffic monitoring leading to more efficient public services. Sensors attached to street lamp columns allow for remote control of street lamps.	Place and Environment / Highways and Transport	1. Energy consumption in kwh 2. Calculating carbon (CO2e) savings	2025	All conventional lamps have been replaced, Heritage lamps and floodlights	Internal resources.		Dec-24
		H.2.12 As active members of the One Public Estate programme, we will work closely with other public sector organisations to explore opportunities to better utilise our buildings.	Corporate Landlord	1. Number of buildings with shared occupation / resources 2. Identify number of potential buildings for shared usage	2027	Ongoing	Internal resources	Walsall Council: Strategic Asset Plan 2022 - 2027	Nov-24
		H.2.13 Provide advice and support on resource efficiency and climate risk management for businesses in Walsall. E.g. Decarbonisation Net Zero Programme (with support from WMCA Business Energy Advise Service (BEAS)).	Regeneration / WMCA	1. Number of businesses engaged 2. Number of measures implemented 3. Energy savings (kWh) attributed to improved energy efficient behaviour in businesses 4. Tonnage of CO2e emissions eliminated	Mar-25	In progress (waiting for successor funding programme)	External funding WMCA	Economic Strategy and Action Plan (ESAP)	Dec-24
		H.2.14. Engage and support residential care providers to reduce energy costs and reduce carbon emissions.	Adult Social Care / Business Support / Climate Change	Number of residential care homes engaged	2026				Dec-24
H.3	Priority 3: Reduce the energy demand of new buildings	H.3.1 Promote sustainable design in buildings & review planning policies to reflect changes in national planning including support for new homes built to net zero carbon standards.	Planning / Regeneration	Include sustainability sections in the Walsall Local Plan	2026	In progress		Walsall Council: Housing Strategy 2020 - 2025 (Walsall Borough Local Plan)	Nov-24
		H.3.2 Encourage planning applications to include Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) systems.	Regeneration/ Planning	1. Number of planning applications with appropriate SuDS 2. Include SuDS policy in Walsall Borough Local Plan	2026		Internal resources	Walsall Flood Management Plan	Nov-24
		H.3.3 Review Design Guide on House Extensions, and other planning guidance notes publish by the council, to encourage low carbon solutions for new and retrofit building projects.	Regeneration / Building Control	Publication of revised design guide and revisions to existing planning guidance notes.	2026	In progress	Internal resources	Planning Policy	Jan-25

	new buildings.	H.3.4 For regeneration projects delivered by the council we will ensure energy efficiency and sustainability are embedded into the design and delivery where viable.	Regeneration / Planning	Number of projects delivered with enhanced low carbon measures	2027		Internal resources	(Walsall Borough Local Plan)	Nov-24
		H.3.5 Adopt a Whole Life Costing approach to ensure new developments and regeneration projects achieve greater operational sustainability. (This will include analysis of maintenance burdens, end of life use, outputs and performance to ensure resilient, efficient buildings are designed with minimal waste.)	Regeneration / Procurement	Number of new developments designed by whole life costing principles	Dec-27		Internal resources	Walsall Council: Strategic Asset Plan 2022 - 2027 DESNZ: Heat and Buildings Strategy 2021	Nov-24

5. Transport and Travel

Ref	Net Nero Strategy Priorities	Proposed Action	Delivery Team / Partners	Performance Indicator	Timeline	Progress	Funding Source	Strategic Fit	Last Updated
T.1	Priority 1: Increase the use of public transport and active travel modes.	T.1.1 Promote existing cycle salary sacrifice scheme, and investigate the viability of extending this to include electric vehicles.	Resources and Transformation / HR	1) Number of employees participating in salary sacrifice scheme. 2) Number of staff giving up fossil fuelled cars	2025	Cycle scheme ongoing. EV scheme not yet in place	Internal resources	Black Country Walking Cycling and Wheeling Plan WMCA Local Transport Plan (LTP)	Dec-24
		T.1.2 Investigate employee benefits to encourage active and low carbon travel of council staff (e.g. public transport discount scheme etc.)	Resources and Transformation Transport / HR / TfWM	Establish public transport, discount schemes	2025		Internal resources	Black Country Walking Cycling and Wheeling Plan WMCA Local Transport Plan (LTP)	Dec-24
		T.1.3 Encourage more / safer cycling and walking in the borough, by: - - securing the approval of the Black Country Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Plan to facilitate significant improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure. - commence the design, development and delivery of Black Country Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Plan routes/schemes (subject to funding).	BCT / Regeneration	1. Approval of BC Walking, Cycling and Wheeling 2. Number of cycle/walk schemes designed/developed 3. Length of segregated active travel routes provided (km)	Approval Mar-2025 Design/development Dec-2026 Multi-year programme. Delivery of individual projects subject to approval	Public consultation completed Sep-2024	External funding including Active Travel Fund (ATF)	Black Country Walking Cycling and Wheeling Plan WMCA Local Transport Plan (LTP)	Nov-24
		T.1.4 Promote behavioural change and establishing a programme to inform and encourage the public and business to switch to sustainable modes of transport. (E.g. Active travel, Public transport, ULEV etc.)	Transport / Healthy Spaces / Behaviour change.	1. Establish behaviour change programme to promote active travel. 2. Delivery Bloxwich Behaviour Change cycle training project	Dec-25		Internal resources, External funding	Black Country Walking Cycling and Wheeling Plan WMCA Local Transport Plan (LTP)	Nov-24
		T.1.5 Promote cycle and pedestrian training to children in the borough and encourage active transport	Transport / Road Safety / Education	1. To engage with 75% of schools within the borough to promote active travel. 2. To maintain a higher active travel figure for Walsall school children travelling to school by active modes than the national average, each year.	Rolling target		Bike-ability Grants DfT / CAF / TfWM	Regional Road Safety Strategy & Action Plan	Nov-24
		T.1.6 Make cycle maintenance sessions available to adults in the borough to help encourage active transport	Transport / TfWM	1. Number of Dr. Bike cycle maintenance sessions delivered	Rolling target		CAF / TfWM	Black Country Walking Cycling and Wheeling Plan WMCA Local Transport Plan (LTP)	Nov-24
		T.1.7 Work with TfWM to improve and deliver 'Transport as a Service' to Walsall residents	TfWM	TaaS available to Walsall residents	Dec-26	TfWM work in progress	DfT / TfWM	WMCA Local Transport Plan (LTP)	Nov-24
		T.1.8 Delivery of cycle scheme(s) in Willenhall from Somerford Place to Rose Hill/Bilston Lane Junction	TfWM / City of Wolverhampton Council	1. KM of cycle infrastructure delivered	Mar-26	In progress	Active Travel Funding / City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement	Willenhall Framework Plan	Nov-24
		T.1.9 Deliver project to improve the connections between Walsall Railway Station and the bus station, in line with the vision of the Town Centre Masterplan and Connected Gateway Scheme.	Regeneration	1. Improvements to the Saddlers Centre and entrance to rail station and surrounding public realm, leading to improved connectivity around town centre.	Late 2026/early 2027	Ongoing	Walsall council / MHCLG (Future High St Funding)	Connected Gateway Walsall Town Centre Masterplan	Jan-25
		T.1.10 Improve connectivity in the Borough with delivery of new stations at Willenhall and Darlaston.	Place and Environment / TfWM	Passenger numbers using new stations	Dec-26	In progress	DfT / TfWM	WMCA Local Transport Plan (LTP)	Nov-24

		T.1.11 Investigate viability of mobility hubs (Local Travel Point pilots) in partnership with BCT and TfWM.	Transport / BCT / TfWM	Number of mobility hub / local travel points developed as part of the TfWM pilot programme	2025 / 2026		TfWM	Black Country Walking Cycling and Wheeling Plan WMCA Local Transport Plan (LTP)	Nov-24
		T.1.12 Promote sustainable modes of travel for new developments by securing Travel Plans as part of planning decisions.	Regeneration / Planning	Number travel plans submitted with planning applications.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Internal resources	(Walsall Borough Local Plan)	Nov-24
		T.1.13 Use planning policy to enhance access to public transport and active travelling routes.	Planning	Amount of developments with sustainable travel implemented into design	Ongoing	Ongoing	Internal resources	(Walsall Borough Local Plan)	Nov-24
T.2	Priority 2: Encourage the phasing out of fossil fuelled private vehicles and their replacement with zero emission alternatives.	T.2.1 Collaborate with Black Country LAs to align taxi licencing policy targets to encourage the deployment of a ULEV taxi fleet.	Community Safety and Enforcement	Percentage of ULEV Taxis licenced by Walsall	2028	Ongoing	Internal Resources	Walsall Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy / Taxi Licencing Policy.	Jan-25
		T.2.2 Deliver the Walsall Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy and invest in electric Vehicle (EV) charging hubs and infrastructure across the borough	Place and Environment	Delivery of 300 EV chargepoints across the borough of Walsall by 2026 (Plus 300 more by 2030)	Phased delivery programme (2026 Initial phase)	Initiated	ORCs, LEVI...	Walsall Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy	Nov-24
		T.2.3 Support planning applications to deploy charge points at appropriate sites. (e.g. retail and business car parks).	Planning	Number of charge points installed	2028	In progress		Walsall Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy	Nov-24
T.3	Priority 3: Establish a zero-emissions council fleet.	T.3.1 Where the council outsources care in the community and mobility transportation services for residents, we will encourage the adoption and use of EVs and ULEV in the delivery of this service.	Adult social Care / Procurement / Inclusion	Carbon content per mile of contract	2026			(Sustainable Procurement Strategy)	Nov-24
		T.3.2 In line with the wider One Public Estate philosophy, investigate the potential for a shared service EV network with Police, Fire, NHS and other public service organisations.	Corporate Landlord / Transport /Climate Change	Number of shared projects initiated.	2026			One Public Estate	Nov-24
		T.3.3 Develop a 'Green Fleet Plan' to provide a roadmap to transition 90 % of the council's fleet to vehicles ultra low emission vehicles (ULEV) by 2035.	Street Scene /Climate Change	1. Fleet decarbonisation and electrification of the depot plan 2. Percentage of fleet vehicles that are ULEV	2025		Internal resource	(Waste Strategy)	Dec-24
		T.3.4 Replace Internal combustion engine powered plant and hand tools with electric alternatives where available.	Street Scene / Climate Change	Percentage of items replaced.	2027	Ongoing	Internal resource	(Waste Strategy)	Dec-24
		T.3.5 Reduce unnecessary miles/trips and fuel costs by investigating optimum routes and maximising performance of the vehicles making use of Web Aspx telematics system currently installed on all vehicles.	Street Scene / Fleet	Reduced milage and fuel usage.	2025	Collection route to be reviewed when HWRC opens	Fuel savings	(Waste Strategy)	Dec-24
		T.3.6 To review and ensure that adequate infrastructure is in place to facilitate the greening of the Council and contractors' fleet by equipping all council offices, depots, car parks and sports facilities with charge points.	Place and Environment / Highways and Transport	Electrification of depots feasibility study	Apr-25	Ongoing	Midlands Net Zero Hub	(Waste Strategy)	Nov-24
T.4	Priority 4: Establish a zero-emission public transport fleet in Walsall.	T.4.1 Participation in the West Midlands Enhanced Partnership Scheme to promote ULEV bus fleet options and feasibility in partnership with regional bodies (e.g. TfWM, bus operators, Black Country Transport).	TfWM / Highways & Transport	Attendance at Enhanced Partnership	As TWFM Enhanced Partnership programme	Operator commitment to Euro VI emission standard secured	Private sector / TfWM	WM Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme	Nov-24
		T.4.2 Continue to pursue opportunities to electrify the borough's railway network working with Network Rail, West Midlands Rail Executive and train operating companies	WMRE / Network Rail / TOCs	Low emission train trial project in WMRE area	Dec-27	Collaborative work with TOCs and Birmingham University	DfT / TfWM	WM Regional Rail Strategy	Nov-24

6. Natural Capital and Land Use

Net Nero Strategy Priorities		Proposed Action	Delivery Team / Partners	Performance Indicator	Timeline	Progress	Funding Source	Strategic Fit	Last Updated
N.1	Priority 1: Achieve a net gain in biodiversity for new developments	N.1.1 Ensure a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain is achieved for planning applications.	Planning	Number of developments completed that meet biodiversity net gain targets	-	National Requirement - Ongoing	Internal Resources	Environment Act 2021 (Walsall Borough Local Plan)	Dec-24
		N.1.2 Biodiversity Duty as per Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act.	Planning Policy	Meet to the enhance biodiversity duty outlined within the NERC Act	-	National Requirement - Ongoing	Internal Resources	Environment Act 2021 (Walsall Borough Local Plan)	Dec-24
		N.1.3 Provision of BNG offsite compensation areas to ensure offsite BNG remains in Walsall Borough.	Planning / Healthy Spaces	To be in a position to be able to offer council owned land to developers within the Borough. Have a number of privately owned sites available to offer as offsite compensation area.	2026	Feasibility study and legal investigation have commenced.	Internal Resources	Environment Act 2021 (Walsall Borough Local Plan)	Dec-24
N.2	Priority 2: reduce air pollution, and mitigate the effects of climate change.	N.2.1 We will develop a 'Walsall's Nature and Health Strategy' that will focus on improving mental and physical health, increasing biodiversity, connectivity and equitable access to green space.	Healthy Spaces	Adoption of the Walsall's Natural Health Strategy	2027	EOI to be submitted to funder Nov 2024	Heritage Lottery Fund (Nature Towns and Cities) & Internal Resources	(Walsall's Natural Health Strategy)	Nov-24
		N.2.2 Identify locations and projects that can increase the green and blue space (e.g. brownfields transition).	Public Health / Healthy Spaces/ Climate Change	Number of potential sites and projects identified	2027	EOI to be submitted Nov 2024	Internal resources, External funding (Heritage Lottery Fund - Nature Towns and Cities)	(Walsall's Natural Health Strategy)	Nov-24
		N.2.3 Review the potential to create of green and blue spaces with the refreshed town centre master plan.	Regeneration / Healthy Spaces / Planning	1. Review of town centre masterplan 2. Area defined as green infrastructure	2025		Internal resources	Economic Strategy and Action Plan (ESAP) Town Centre Master Plan 2019 (updating)	Nov-24
N.3	Priority 3: Increase investment into our natural environment.	N.3.1 Work with WMCA and other wider partners on the development and implementation of the Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme to enable the region to be in a state of readiness to attract private capital into Natural Capital Projects.	Healthy Spaces, WMCA	1. Establish a finance vehicle 2. Value of Walsall Borough project pipeline	2025	20%	Internal Resources	Urban Forestry Strategy for Walsall 2014-2024	Nov-24
		N.3.2 Planting of one tree for every household in our in our borough by 2030, 11,000 trees per year for 10 years.	Healthy Spaces	1. Number of trees planted per annum 2. Tonnage of CO2 reduced / mitigated	2030		Variety of external funding streams	Green Space Strategy 2022; Urban Forest Strategy for Walsall 2014 - 2024	Nov-24
		N.3.3 Restore and create area of wetland, heathland and peatland within the Borough.	Healthy Spaces	Hectares of habitat enhanced / created	2030			(Walsall Borough Local Plan) WMCA Local Nature Recovery Strategy	Nov-24
		N.4.1 Engage with residents, community groups and schools to promote environmental education and introduce longer term vision (e.g. health benefit) of a Net Zero borough.	Education / Public Health/ Health Spaces / Community Sector / Inclusion	1. Number of communities identified and being engaged to increase access to green space. 2. Number of schools participating in climate change schemes.	2027	To be developed	Heritage Lottery Fund (Nature Towns and Cities) & Internal Resources	(Walsall's Natural Health Strategy)	Nov-24

N.4	Priority 4: Increase engagement with our natural environment.	N.4.2 Build on the Black Country's UNESCO Geopark status to attract investment into the area's geological heritage. By developing a Geopark tourism strategy, Geo Product branding and climate change awareness.	Health Spaces, Geopark Board, Canal & River Trust, Natural England, BBCWT	Number of organisation participating in Geopark Branding	2026		Internal Resources	Black Country Local Nature Recovery Strategy (to be replaced by an updated strategy by WMCA) (Walsall's Natural Health Strategy)	Nov-24
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7. Resilience and Adaptation

Ref	Net Nero Strategy Priorities	Proposed Action	Delivery Team / Partners	Performance Indicator	Timeline	Progress	Funding Source	Strategic Fit	Last Updated
R.1	Priority 1: Build Climate Resilient Communities	R.1.1 Develop Climate Change Risk register and adaptation plan for Walsall.	Climate Change / WMCA / DEFRA	1. Publication of Climate Adaptation Plan	Jul-26		Internal Resources	DEFRA - Third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3)	Nov-24
		R.1.2 Work with Walsall Community Network to increase communities understanding of climate change and the need for prepare for extreme weather events (e.g. prolonged hot spells).	Resilient Communities / Climate Change	Number of community engagement events organised	Dec-26		Internal Resources	Building Community Resilience Plan	Jan-25
		R.1.3 Public Health to work with UKHSA to prepare for communicable disease control threats (including from vector-borne disease).	Public Health/Environmental Health		25-Dec		Internal Resources	Health Protection Strategy	Nov-24
		R.1.4 Work with schools and colleges to enhance the preparedness of Walsall's future generations for the challenges of climate change (e.g. curriculum planning).	Access & Inclusion	Share all funding opportunities with schools	ongoing		Internal resources	(Skills Strategy) (Place Based Strategy)	Nov-24
		R.1.5 Develop Walsall Emergency planning Risk Register. - to include review of climate risks (e.g. extreme weather events).	Emergency Planning / Local Resilience Forum/Public Health	Walsall Emergency Risk Register	Dec-27		Internal Resources / External Funding		Nov-24
		R.1.6 Walsall Energy Action Project (WEAP) actively engages and communicates with residents through partnered community hubs to raise awareness of climate change, wise energy use and encourage behavioural change.	Climate Change / VCOs	1. Number of residents engaged 2. Reported behavioural change before and after participating the project	Mar-27		Climate Action Fund (Lottery)		Nov-24
		R.1.7 Net Zero Neighbourhoods (NZN) project will work with partners and residents to enhance household energy efficiency and community engagement with Net Zero and sustainability.	Climate Change / Customer Engagement	1. Number of properties achieving higher EPC certification 2. Improvement in public health indicators	Mar-26		External funding (WMCA)		Nov-24
R.2	Priority 2: Integrate climate change into council strategies to promote resilience and sustainability.	R.2.1 Planning policy will take a proactive approach to adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating and drought from rising temperatures to ensure the future health and resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts.	Regeneration and Economy / Planning	Inclusion of climate change policies in Walsall Borough Local Plan	2027	In progress	Internal Resources	Walsall Borough Local Plan National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	Jan-25
		R.2.2 Review flood emergency response corporate plan, to include the hazards and risks of a hotter and wetter climate.	Emergency Planning / Highways / Environment Agency	1. Develop and publish plan	Dec-25	Draft plan for April 2025	Internal Resources	Local Resilience Forum	Nov-24
		R.2.3 Monitor and review air quality across the borough to determine whether national air quality objectives are being met	Public Health / Environmental Protection	Monitor air quality and emission of air pollutants (E.g. PM 2.5 concentration)	Ongoing		Internal Resources / External Funding	Annual Air Quality Status Report	Nov-24
		R.3.1 Ensure the highway infrastructure and associated drainage are able to adapt to severe weather e.g. flooding, extreme heat	Highways	1. Number of interventions 2. GIS mapping to enhance gully cleaning and flood management activities	Ongoing	Ongoing	Internal Resources	Highways Asset Management Plan	Nov-24

R.3	Priority 3: Increase the resilience of our critical infrastructure.	R.3.2 Implement the Flood Defence Grant in Aid programme to instal flood protection measures where needed.	Highways / Staffordshire CC / Lead Local Flood authority	Number and value of schemes delivered			Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGIA)	Nov-24
		R.3.3 Work with our partners to understand the current and future risks of flooding and review plans with West Midlands Local Resilience Forum.	Emergency Planning / Highways	Walsall Borough multi-agency flood plan	2026	Ongoing	Internal Resources	Nov-24
		R.3.4 Ensure that regeneration project consider the need to be resilient to more frequent extreme weather events (e.g. intense rainfall and prolonged hot spells) at the design stage.	Regeneration	Regeneration project designs	2028	Ongoing	Internal (Walsall Borough Local Plan)	Nov-24

Cabinet – 12 February 2025

Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy

Portfolio:	Councillor Flint – Health and Wellbeing
Related portfolios:	Councillor Andrew – Associate Leader, Economic Growth and Regeneration
Service:	Healthy Spaces and Environment
Wards:	All
Key decision:	Yes
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1. Well managed and located playing pitches, outdoor sports facilities and other open spaces make a vital contribution to the quality of life and health of individuals, families, and communities across Walsall.
- 1.2. The Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) will direct investment and planning decisions on playing pitches and outdoor sports across the borough in future years, help the council to secure external funding (including developer contributions), and release surplus assets to maximise local community and regeneration benefits.

2. Summary

- 2.1 An up-to-date PPOSS provides a robust needs assessment against which to evaluate development proposals, direct investment, manage outdoor sports facilities and seek funding. A refresh of Walsall's PPOSS and a further Section E update has been completed and is ready to be adopted by the council.
- 2.2 The PPOSS is the key strategic document and evidence base for any proposed development of playing pitches or any development on playing pitch sites (any land that has been part of a playing pitch in the past five years), and will form part of the evidence base for the Walsall Borough Local Plan (WBLP)
- 2.3 The PPOSS is for the borough rather than the council, and the delivery of the strategy is the responsibility of all stakeholders making up the steering group. However, the council, as both the planning authority and the principal provider of outdoor playing pitches, has a key role and interest in leading the development and implementation of the PPOSS.

- 2.4 This latest PPOSS and Section E update details the current base of evidence for playing pitch supply and demand in the borough. The number of sports the strategy covers has been broadened from 5 to 13, thus providing a much more robust evidence base. **Appendix A** provides details of the headline findings from the initial assessment report and action plan, with **Appendix E** providing the same for the Section E update. Additionally, the new PPOSS includes a separate Black Country Strategic Framework which ensures that supply and demand issues are considered across borough boundaries.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet adopt and publish:
- a. The updated Walsall PPOSS – strategy and assessment report.
 - b. The Black Country PPOSS Overarching Strategic Framework.
 - c. The Stage E assessment report, which provides a 2024 update on the assessment report detailed in 3.1.a.
- 3.2 That cabinet delegate authority to update the strategy to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing and the steering group, to ensure that the document is updated and kept current regarding the supply and demand of the various types of provision.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 The council manages numerous playing pitches, outdoor sports facilities, and open spaces in Walsall, which compliment pitches supplied by other providers across the borough. A good quality network of playing pitches, outdoor sports facilities and open space is vital to help deliver the boroughs Joint Local Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2025, the Our Council Plan 2022-25 and the We are Walsall 2040 Borough Plan.
- 4.2 In 2018, the previous playing pitch strategy (PPS) was approved and was required to be regularly reviewed to ensure it remained relevant. A joint review of the PPS for the four Black Country authorities was agreed in 2020, supported by Sport England, Active Black Country, and relevant national governing bodies of sports.
- 4.3 The review, conducted by Knight Kavanagh Page (KKP), undertook pitch assessments in 2022, and the report, completed in early 2023, includes an assessment report, strategy, and action plan for each authority, plus an overarching strategic framework for the Black Country to address Black Countrywide and cross-boundary issues.
- 4.4 The revised PPOSS will form part of its evidence base for the Walsall Borough Local Plan. The overarching strategic framework for the Black Country will still

identify cross-boundary issues and opportunities for joint working with other Black Country authorities, where appropriate.

4.5 The borough requires a PPOSS for the following reasons:

- a. It is the primary technical evidence base to assess any proposals to develop/change/dispose of any playing pitches or anything over 0.2Ha that is or has been used as a playing pitch in the last 5 years. Sport England is statutory planning consultees on any planning applications that affect playing pitches. Sport England relies on the PPOSS to determine its support or opposition each time. Without evidence to the contrary its default position is to oppose any loss of playing pitches.
- b. It will provide the technical evidence to inform planning decisions and will be published as evidence to support the emerging Walsall Borough Local Plan (WBLP).
- c. Paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, and sport and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space and sports and recreational provision is required.
- d. Paragraph 104 of the NPPF goes on to state that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings, or land to be surplus to requirements. The PPOSS will thus be required as evidence to establish whether such areas are truly surplus to local needs.
- e. While the WBLP is intended to replace our existing adopted development plans, Policy ENV6 of the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) states that developments that would reduce the overall value of the open space, sport and recreation network, will be resisted and that each local authority will develop its own standards, policies and proposals for such facilities. Adopting the revised PPOSS and Section E update now will ensure the council has a clear evidence base.
- f. Policy LC6 of the adopted Walsall Unitary Development Plan (UDP) states that proposals that would result in the loss or reduction of playing fields would only be permitted if it can be demonstrated with an up-to-date needs assessment that the pitches are no longer required to meet local demand.
- g. The Walsall SAD contains the policy, OS1: Open space, sport and recreation. This states that the loss of open space will be considered against the requirements of national and local policy, including the NPPF, BCCS and UDP. Again, the PPOSS provides relevant evidence

and background to this policy and will be used to help determine the appropriateness or otherwise of a proposed development.

- 4.6 The range of sports the study covers has been increased since the 2018 PPS, to be consistent with other Black Country authorities and ensure appropriate coverage of a range of wider sports to develop the evidence base. The assessment report, strategy, and action plan (the study) consider provision for the following sports:
- a. Athletics
 - b. Bowls
 - c. Cricket
 - d. Cycling
 - e. Football (including 3G pitches)
 - f. Golf
 - g. Hockey
 - h. Netball
 - i. Rugby union (including 3G pitches)
 - j. Rugby league (including 3G pitches)
 - k. Tennis
 - l. Water sports
 - m. Other grass pitch sports where they occur (e.g. Gaelic football)
- 4.7 The study identifies current levels of provision in the borough, split across the public, education, voluntary and commercial sectors, and compares them with likely future levels of demand.
- 4.8 As part of the study, consultation was carried out with Sport England, Active Black Country, local sports clubs, and national governing bodies of sport.
- 4.9 Pitch assessments were undertaken using a variety of methods including site visits, nontechnical assessments, and user feedback. Pitch quality influences the carrying capacity of a site; for example, poor drainage and poor maintenance may lead to a pitch being assessed as poor, thereby limiting the number of games that can be played.
- 4.10 The key objectives of the study for Walsall are to ensure the provision of a range of good quality and accessible outdoor sports facilities which:
- a. meet the needs of the borough,
 - b. improve the standards and provision of council managed facilities,
 - c. maximise the strengths of the voluntary sports sector,
 - d. support an increase in sport participation and physical activity, and
 - e. contribute to an overall increase in health and wellbeing across the borough.
- 4.10 A steering group has been established to keep the assessment of need and demand up to date through the cyclical production of a Stage E assessment. This is led by the council as the principal provider of pitches, with other members representing Sport England, and key pitch sport national governing bodies of sport. Officers from the healthy spaces and environment, clean and

green operations, property services and planning teams will be required to input into the group.

- 4.11 Sport England's guidance is, if no Stage E review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years, they would consider the PPOSS and the information on which it is based to be out of date. If it is used as a 'live' document and kept up to date, this timescale can be extended beyond this.
- 4.12 The first Stage E assessment has been undertaken and is to be adopted alongside the main strategy. **Appendix E** – provides details of the Stage E Summary Overview, which is backed up by the evidence in **Appendix F** – the Stage E Assessment and **Appendix G** – the Stage E Action Plan.

Findings

- 4.13 The Strategy identifies three strategic objectives:

<p>Objective 1: To protect the existing supply of outdoor sport facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs.</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure, through using the PPOSS, that outdoor sport facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy. b. Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements. c. Maximise community use of education facilities where needed.
<p>Objective 2: To enhance outdoor sport facilities and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. Maintain quality and seek improvements where necessary. e. Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites. f. Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding. g. Secure developer contributions.
<p>Objective 3: To provide new outdoor sport facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> h. Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock. i. Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

- 4.14 The headline findings from the assessment report, and from the action plan which shows how these recommendations can best be delivered, are detailed in **Appendix A** and **Appendix E**, the Stage E summary overview.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.15 The PPOSS will help deliver the objectives outlined in the council plan by providing a comprehensive framework for the maintenance and improvement of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities in Walsall. This PPOSS aligns with the council's ambitions to create a thriving and happy community, promote healthy and active lifestyles, and ensure resilient and empowered communities. By addressing the needs for high-quality sports facilities, the strategy supports the council's goals of fostering safer streets, enhancing community engagement, and improving overall well-being. Additionally, the action plan's focus on sustainable development and partnership working reflects the council's principles of acting sustainably and working in partnership, thereby contributing to the broader vision of making Walsall a vibrant and inclusive place to live.

Risk management

- 4.16 By not adopting the PPOSS, there is a risk that playing pitch related developments will be delayed or obstructed. This may include improvements to playing pitches or wider developments that impact on playing pitch provision.
- 4.17 There is a further risk that without an up-to-date PPOSS it will be increasingly difficult to secure external funding to improve playing pitch provision, or wider developments on sites that also contain playing pitches.

Financial implications

- 4.18 There are no immediate financial implications for the council arising from this report. The PPOSS steering group will be responsible for both agreeing and prioritising actions and identifying resources to support their implementation. The PPOSS may offer solutions to enhance, rationalise and outsource facilities to help manage the council's liabilities for ongoing maintenance.
- 4.19 Whilst there are a range of suggested costs outlined in the action plan; this would be the responsibility of external partners as well as the council. Any projects that fall under the council's responsibilities, will follow the appropriate governance procedures for approval.
- 4.20 The information outlined in the action plan will be used to inform future planning contributions and funding applications by the council and other partners.

Legal implications

- 4.21 Some council parks and playing fields are held by the council in trust for the benefit of the public generally. This means that a lease of the site or part of it cannot be entered as this could prevent access. Instead, the less formal arrangement known as a 'licence to use' may have to be issued. Where a lease or licence arrangement is proposed, Legal Services will assist with developing the terms of lease, licence, or other appropriate legal document that meets the council's needs.

Procurement implications / social value

- 4.22 The action plan contains recommended priorities for action. The PPOSS is, however, a strategic document intended to inform disposal, management, and investment decisions by the council and external partners. Any projects that fall under council responsibilities will follow the appropriate governance procedure for procurement.

Property implications

- 4.23 As the council is the borough's principal provider of playing pitches, the PPOSS has significant implications. The PPOSS will provide a framework to shape future investment in playing pitches. It will also test any proposals for the disposal of playing pitches to see whether these are strategically appropriate and deliver an overall "sporting gain".
- 4.24 The PPOSS also provides recommendations on how the council works with partner organisation in the maintenance and stewardship of the council's playing pitches. Examples include providing security of tenure and asset transfer to community groups. The adopted PPOSS will assist the council in addressing the rationalisation of occupational agreements with sports clubs and requests from additional clubs seeking pitches.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.25 The PPOSS will support improving health and wellbeing through the retention and development of sustainable playing pitches that will facilitate residents to be more physically and socially active and support positive mental wellbeing. As such it supports the following Marmot objectives:
- Give every child the best start in life.
 - Enable all children, young people, and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives.
 - Ensure a healthy standard of living for all.
 - Create and develop healthy and sustainable communities.
 - Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention.

Reducing inequalities

- 4.26 The PPOSS will highlight areas deficient in playing pitch provision in terms of demand, and to recommend ways of achieving equal access for all to a sufficient quantity and quality of sports pitches.
- 4.27 Whilst an EQIA has not been carried out as part of the PPOSS, where there is any significant change in pitch provision an EQIA will be undertaken.
- 4.28 The assessments for each sport do consider the needs of youth as well as adult teams, and both female and male teams. Outside of the steering group, there will be continued work between the Healthy Spaces team and the national governing bodies of sport to develop opportunities and increase participation by underrepresented groups.

Staffing implications

- 4.29 None.

Climate impact

- 4.30 The overall impact of the recommendations / actions within this report on the environment and climate is low. The PPOSS will not have any direct impact on climate change.
- 4.31 Whilst many of the action points in the Walsall climate action plan do not apply, the principle of the PPOSS does help to protect and improve community greenspaces and support action 5.3 - Enhancing the borough's parks and green spaces to increase meadow, wetland, and green areas in Walsall.

Consultation

- 4.32 The strategy development project group included Sport England, national governing bodies of sport representatives for each sport listed in the strategy, and council departments including planning, clean and green operations, and healthy spaces and environment.
- 4.33 A variety of consultation methods were used to collate demand information about leagues, clubs, county associations and schools. Face-to-face consultation was carried out with key clubs from each sport as well as an online survey sent to all clubs not covered by these meetings. Issues identified by clubs returning questionnaires were followed up by further telephone or face-to-face interviews.

5. Decide – options considered

- 5.1 The decision to adopt the strategy is to enable it and the action plan to be used as a basis for decision-making on investment in, management of, and potential disposal of outdoor sports facilities. If cabinet do not approve the adoption of the PPOSS, the council will not have an approved, accurate, and up to date evidence base and action plan to inform decisions. It will not be compliant with national planning guidance and local planning policy and will not have an evidence base for applications for external funding.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Subject to the recommendations being approved, officers from the healthy spaces team will continue to work with partners and coordinate the steering group to ensure that the PPOSS stays up to date and publicly available for use as an evidence base for planning guidance and local planning policy.

7. Review

- 7.1 The strategy is for the borough, not the council, and its delivery is the responsibility of all stakeholders making up the steering group. The steering group will be led by the council as the principal provider of pitches, with other

members representing Sport England, and key pitch sport national governing bodies of sport. Officers from clean and green operations, healthy spaces and environment, property services and planning will be required to input into the group and deliver actions as part of their work programme. It will be necessary to update the strategy to maintain it as a live document. Sport England guidance is that this review and subsequent update should occur at least every 3 years.

Appendices

Appendix A - Headline Findings from the Assessment Report, and Action Plan

Appendix B - Draft Walsall PPOSS - Strategy and Action Plan (KKP, October 2022)

Appendix C - Draft Walsall PPOSS - Assessment Report (KKP, October 2022)

Appendix D - Draft Black Country PPOSS - Overarching Strategic Framework (KKP, December 2022)

Appendix E – Stage E Summary Overview

Appendix F – Stage E Assessment

Appendix G - Stage E Action Plan

Background papers

None

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Signatures



Dave Brown
Executive Director

31 January 2025



Councillor Gary Flint
Portfolio holder

31 January 2025

Appendix A - Headline Findings from the Assessment Report, and Action Plan.

The headline findings from the assessment report, and from the action plan which shows how these recommendations can best be delivered, are outlined below for each sport studied.

Football (grass pitches)

There are 147 pitches available, at some level, for community use across 48 sites. Of those 68 are adult, 15 youth 11v11, 39 youth 9v9, 13 mini 7v7 and 14 mini 5v5 pitches that are available.

There are existing shortfalls for youth 11v11 provision in Walsall. When accommodating for future demand through team generation rates, mini 7v7 pitches also experience shortfalls.

Adult, youth 9v9, and mini 5v5 pitches contain both current and future spare capacity, although some localised shortfalls are evident.

31 pitches across 11 sites are overplayed by a combined 24 match equivalent sessions per week.

Of the community pitches that are available only 9 pitches are assessed as good quality, 89 standard and 48 assessed as poor quality.

Third Generation turf (3G) pitches

There are nine full size 3G pitches in Walsall, of which all are floodlit and available for community use. There are also 22 smaller sized 3G pitches across five sites, 20 of which are available for community use and 19 of which are floodlit; however, none are overly suitable for any purposeful match play demand due to certification and size issues.

All full-size pitches are good or standard quality, although pitches at Grace Academy Darlaston and Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy are at or close to the end of their life expectancy.

Priority should be placed on the creation of new 3G pitches to meet the identified shortfalls for football training demand. Meeting the 3G pitch shortfall for training will also help

alleviate grass pitch shortfalls and quality issues, providing that the transfer of play is pursued as and when more pitches are established.

It is also important to sustain the current pitch stock to ensure that the existing shortfalls are not exacerbated.

The creation of additional full size 3G pitches that are World Rugby compliant in strategically viable locations would also relieve pressure on rugby union grass pitches.

Cricket

There are 13 grass cricket squares in Walsall, all of which are available to the community. Five are assessed as good quality and eight are assessed as standard quality (none are assessed as poor quality).

There are 11 squares that show potential spare capacity on grass wickets although only two of these have actual spare capacity on Saturdays, and six have actual spare capacity on Sundays. Six squares have actual spare capacity during midweek for junior cricket.

Two squares are overplayed, with total overplay equating to 14 match equivalent sessions.

Demand for senior cricket is currently being met; however, a future shortfall is evident regarding Saturday cricket. It is expected that junior cricket will be able to be satisfied both now and in the future.

Rugby Union

There are 14 senior rugby pitches and 1 mini pitch available for community use across eight sites. All club-based pitches have secure tenure.

There is one rugby compliant 3G pitch within Walsall, located at the Walsall Rugby Club site. The pitch has significantly helped reduce the number of cancellations at the site whilst also supporting training demand for Handsworth, Aldridge and Bloxwich Rugby Clubs who all access the site for training purposes.

There is currently an insufficient supply of provision for rugby union to accommodate existing demand, with a shortfall of 4.25 match equivalent sessions identified. Future demand does not exacerbate shortfalls.

There are four sites and six pitches, which are overplayed by a total of 7 match equivalent sessions per week.

Despite nine sites showing theoretical levels of spare capacity, this is only considered to be actual spare capacity across two sites (Handsworth Rugby Club and Veseyans Sports & Social Club), totalling 1.25 match equivalent sessions.

Rugby league

There are no rugby league pitches in Walsall, and no demand has been identified for rugby league in Walsall. The nearest provision is provided in Bromsgrove. As no demand has been identified within Walsall, there is no need at this time for any provision to be established.

Hockey

There are four full size hockey suitable AGPs in Walsall, all of which are available to the community and floodlit.

All four of the community available full size AGPs require protection for continued hockey use.

Resolving pitch quality issues at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy should be seen as a priority.

Capacity issues at Sneyd Community Association and Aston University (Recreation Centre) require a resolution, with club users either requiring access to secondary pitches (at suitable times), or new provision. Alternatively, football demand at the two aforementioned sites could be alleviated by the development of a new 3G, which would in turn free up greater pitch access for hockey purposes.

Tennis

There are 63 tennis courts identified in Walsall across 20 sites, with 41 courts categorised as being available for community use at 13 sites. The majority of courts are operated by schools, although only 41% of these are available for community use.

In total, 24 of the 63 tennis courts are serviced by floodlights (38% of the provision). Of the courts, two are assessed as good quality, 48 as standard quality and 13 as poor quality.

For non-club courts, there are no identified capacity issues, although ancillary provision is generally considered an issue. Precedence should be placed on improving quality to an adequate standard for informal play, particularly at publicly available sites hosting multiple courts.

Walsall Tennis Club lost access to its home venue in 2017 and is now nomadic; it is working to find a suitable site to develop and re-establish as a home venue. Streetly Tennis Club states future demand can be accommodated on its existing supply of courts. Reedswood Tennis Club is likely to be satisfied at West Walsall E-Act Academy.

Netball courts

There is a total of 60 netball courts identified in Walsall across 17 sites. Of these, 13 courts at five sites are available for community use. Education providers operate all but two outdoor netball court in Walsall.

Of the courts, two are assessed as good quality, 52 are assessed as standard quality and four are assessed as poor quality; of the community available courts, there are none rated as good quality, 13 rated as standard and two as poor.

Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and no community use being allowed.

Given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a club/league facility to be provided in Walsall.

Bowling greens

There are 29 crown green bowls greens in Walsall provided across 28 sites. Overall, 26 greens are assessed as good quality and three as standard quality (none are assessed as poor quality).

Five greens are serviced by floodlighting. Ancillary provision accompanying the greens is generally adequate, although some improvements and particularly modernisation is required at certain sites.

There are 26 clubs using bowling greens in Walsall and they collectively cater for 901 members (at the 23 clubs where membership is known).

Five sites are currently operating above the recommended capacity threshold for a bowling green. One green is operating below the required membership threshold (Walsall Arboretum). Four greens are unused.

Cycling tracks

There is no purpose-built cycling facility identified in the Walsall area. Provision is available in the remaining three black country authorities.

There are two British Cycling affiliated clubs in Walsall: is Pelsall Social Cycling Club and Walsall Road Cycling Club. There is active demand for cycling in Walsall, predominately in the form of road cycling; meaning focus should be place on ensuring the infrastructure is appropriate.

With no dedicated cycling facilities in place, any demand for such provision should be directed towards venues and clubs in neighbouring authorities.

Various infrastructure developments for Walsall are outlined in the Black Country Walking and Cycling Strategy and Implementation Plan.

Athletics tracks

There is one purpose-built athletics track in Walsall provided at the University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus). The venue provides a 200-metre “J” track with six lanes; it has a synthetic surface, is serviced by floodlighting and is available to the community. The track is standard quality; however, it will soon require resurfacing.

Four clubs have been identified that have a current focus on athletics and/or running activity, with none of these having a requirement for a purpose-built facility.

The supply of dedicated athletics facilities is sufficient to meet demand, although quality improvements will soon be required. Priority should be placed on supporting activity being accommodated by the various running clubs in Walsall and the events that are being held.

Golf courses

There are seven golf sites in Walsall. Six sites provide standard hole golf courses, whilst two of the sites offer covered, floodlit bay sectioned driving ranges.

Five sites are members clubs. All clubs are operating above the national average for membership.

Walsall has a reasonable supply of golf provision, at a good quality with a variety of facilities available for players of differing abilities and with capacity for growth.

As no clubs have a significantly low membership and as levels have recently increased, it is apparent that each venue is required, meaning that each facility should be protected and supported to ensure long-term sustainability.

Water sports centres

Chasewater Water Sports Centre (Cannock Chase) provides facilities that are compatible with several water sports and other water-related activities. In addition, Sneyd Water Activity Centre is used for some water sport activities, whilst The Swag is a reservoir frequently used for sailing by Aldridge Sailing Club. Brownhills Canoe and Outdoor Centre caters for canoeing within Walsall and is utilised by Royal Sutton Coldfield Canoe Club.

Via Chasewater Water Sports Centre (Cannock Chase), Sneyd Water Activity Centre and The Swag, Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority.

Priority should be placed on protecting the provision and ensuring that quality remains sufficient, with support also required to maximise demand given the unique nature of the facilities.

WALSALL COUNCIL STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

OCTOBER 2022

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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ABBREVIATIONS

3G	Third Generation (artificial turf)
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
BAFA	British American Football Association
BC	Bowls Club
BCGBA	British Crown Green Bowling Association
BFA	Birmingham County FA
BSUK	Baseball Softball United Kingdom
CFA	County Football Association
CONGU	Council of National Golf Unions
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EH	England Hockey
EN	England Netball
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FF	Football Foundation
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FPM	Facilities Planning Model
GMA	Grounds Management Association
HC	Hockey Club
JFC	Junior Football Club
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page
LFFP	Local Football Facilities Plan
LTA	Lawn Tennis Association
NFFS	National Football Facilities Strategy
NGB	National Governing Body
NHS	National Health Service
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
PPOSS	Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy
PQS	Performance Quality Standard
RFL	Rugby Football League
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RLFC	Rugby League Football Club
RUFC	Rugby Union Football Club
TC	Tennis Club
U	Under
WCB	Worcestershire Cricket Board

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) has been commissioned the Black Country authorities of Walsall, Dudley, Sandwell and Wolverhampton, together with the Black Country Consortium, to assess playing pitch and outdoor sport facility needs across the individual local authority areas. The output is provision of four separate needs assessments and strategies across the aforementioned authorities as well as one additional overarching framework.

This report provides the Strategy for Walsall. Building upon the preceding Assessment Report, it provides a clear, strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing playing pitch and accompanying ancillary facilities up to 2039 (in line with the previously proposed Black Country Plan, although four separate local plans are now to be produced). It has been developed to provide:

- ✦ A vision for the future improvement and prioritisation of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities.
- ✦ A number of aims to help deliver the recommendations and actions.
- ✦ A series of strategic recommendations which provide a strategic framework for the improvement, maintenance, development and, as appropriate, rationalisation of the playing pitch and outdoor sport facility stock.
- ✦ A series of sport by sport recommendations which provide a strategic framework for sport led improvements to provision.
- ✦ A prioritised area-by-area Action Plan to address key issues on a site-by-site basis.

The Strategy is delivered in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) Guidance (for playing pitch sports) and Sport England's Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide (for "non-pitch" sports). Sport England's PPS Guidance details a stepped approach, separated into five distinct sections:

- ✦ Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach
- ✦ Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision
- ✦ Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views
- ✦ Stage D: Develop the Strategy
- ✦ Stage E: Deliver the Strategy and keep it robust and up to date

This report represents Stage D of the process, with stages A-C covered in the preceding Assessment Report and Stage E ongoing once the study is complete. The lifespan of a PPOSS is considered to be three years, although this can be increased if it is regularly kept up to date.

A PPOSS delivers the evidence required to ensure that sufficient land is available to meet existing and projected future outdoor sport requirements. Its robust evidence base should inform and be implemented into planning policy and other relevant corporate strategies to enable local policies, planning and sport development criteria to work efficiently and effectively. It is capable of:

- ✦ Providing a clear framework for all playing pitch and outdoor sport providers, including the public, private and third sectors.
- ✦ Clearly addressing the needs of all identified sports within the area, picking up on particular local demand issues.
- ✦ Addressing issues of population growth and major growth/regeneration areas.
- ✦ Addressing issues of cross boundary facility provision.
- ✦ Addressing issues of accessibility, quality and management with regard to facility provision.
- ✦ Standing up to scrutiny at a public inquiry as a robust study.

- ◀ Supporting funding applications.
- ◀ Providing realistic aspirations which are implementable within the local authority's budgetary position and procurement regime.

The Strategy and Action Plan recommends several priority projects for Walsall which should be realised over the Local Plan period. It provides a framework for improvement and, although resources may not currently be in place to implement it, potential partners, and possible sources of external funding are outlined throughout.

Partner organisations have a vested interest in ensuring that existing playing pitches, outdoor sports facilities and ancillary provision are protected and enhanced. As such, many of the objectives and actions within this document need to be delivered and implemented by a wide range of bodies such as National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), sports organisations, education establishments and parish/town councils. In many instances, the Council will not be the agency which delivers these actions or recommendations as the PPOSS is not just for the Council to act upon. It applies to/for all the stakeholders and partners involved.

Scope

A wide range of playing pitch and outdoor sports and associated facilities have been agreed for inclusion in the PPOSS in Walsall and across all four Black Country authorities. In full, the study covers:

- ◀ Athletics
- ◀ Cricket
- ◀ Football (including 3G pitches)
- ◀ Hockey (sand/water based AGPs)
- ◀ Rugby union (including 3G pitches)
- ◀ Tennis
- ◀ Bowls
- ◀ Cycling
- ◀ Golf
- ◀ Netball
- ◀ Rugby league (including 3G pitches)
- ◀ Water sports (e.g. sailing and water skiing)

In addition, other grass pitch sports are included where identified as having a presence.

Study area

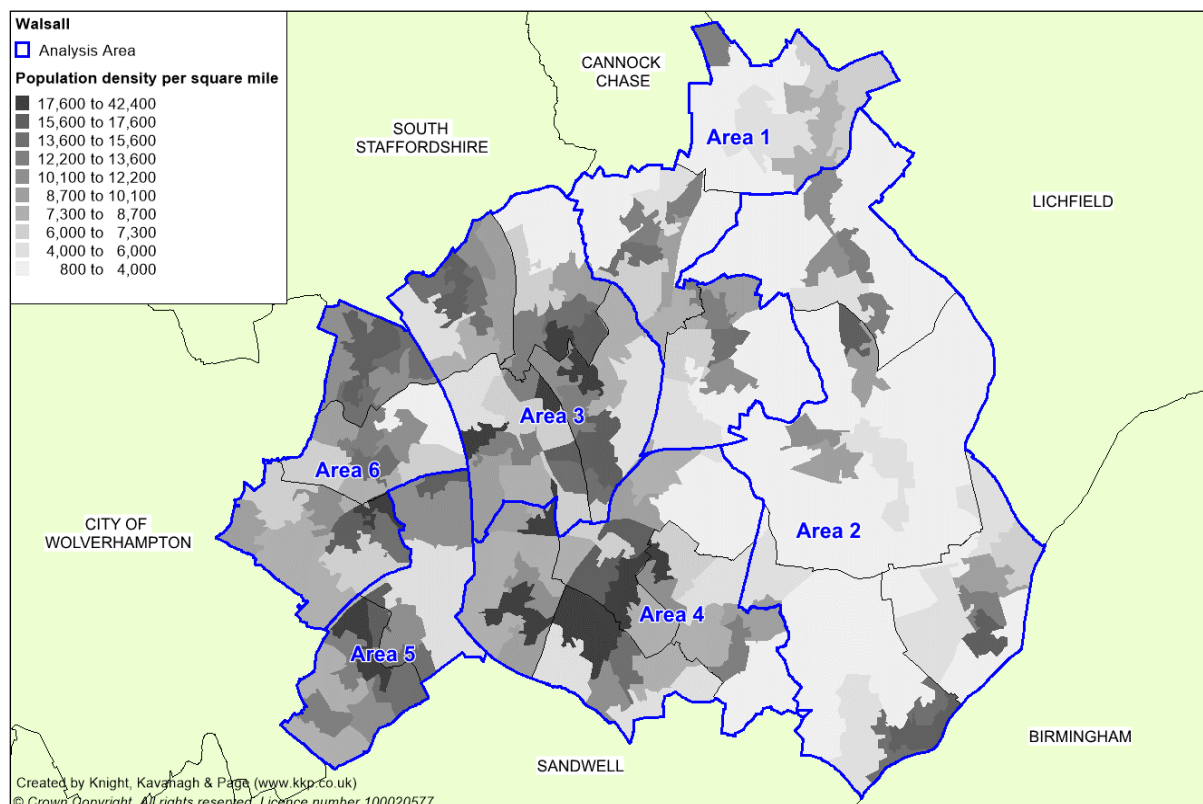
The study area for the Walsall PPOSS is the Walsall Council boundary area. Further to this, sub areas or analysis areas have been used to allow for a more localised assessment of provision and examination of supply and demand at a local level. For this purpose, Walsall is split into the following six areas:

- ◀ Area 1: Brownhills / Pelsall / Rushall / Shelfield
- ◀ Area 2: Aldridge / Streetly / Pheasey / Walsall Wood
- ◀ Area 3: Bloxwich / Blakenall / Birchills / Leamore
- ◀ Area 4: St. Matthew's / Paddock / Palfrey / Pleck
- ◀ Area 5: Darlaston / Bentley
- ◀ Area 6: Willenhall / Short Heath

These are shown in the figure overleaf.

Cross-boundary migration is also explored, not only to and from the other three Black County authorities but also from the likes of Birmingham, Cannock Chase, Lichfield and South Staffordshire. This applies to demand from neighbouring authorities that imports into Walsall and demand from Walsall which exports out.

Figure 1.1: Analysis areas



1.1: Headline findings

The table below highlights the quantitative headline findings identified for the pitch sports included in the preceding Assessment Report. For qualitative and site-specific findings, please see Part 4: Sport Specific Recommendations and Scenarios, and Part 6: Action Plan.

Table 1.1: Quantitative headline findings

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area One	Adult	Spare capacity of 1.5	Spare capacity of 1
Football	Area One	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 2.5
Football	Area One	Youth 9v9	Spare capacity of 4.5	Spare capacity of 4.5
Football	Area One	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area One	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 0.5	Spare capacity of 0.5
Football	Area Two	Adult	Spare capacity of 5	Spare capacity of 4
Football	Area Two	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 5.5
Football	Area Two	Youth 9v9	Spare capacity of 3	Spare capacity of 3
Football	Area Two	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Football	Area Two	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Football	Area Three	Adult	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 1.5

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Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area Three	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area Three	Youth 9v9	At capacity	At capacity
Football	Area Three	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area Three	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity
Football	Area Four	Adult	Spare capacity of 1	Shortfall of 2
Football	Area Four	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area Four	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 4.5
Football	Area Four	Mini 7v7	At capacity	Shortfall of 0.5
Football	Area Four	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Football	Area Five	Adult	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2
Football	Area Five	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 1.5
Football	Area Five	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 3	Shortfall of 3
Football	Area Five	Mini 7v7	At capacity	At capacity
Football	Area Five	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity
Football	Area Six	Adult	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 0.5
Football	Area Six	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area Six	Youth 9v9	At capacity	At capacity
Football	Area Six	Mini 7v7	At capacity	At capacity
Football	Area Six	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity
Football (3G pitches) ^[2]	Area One	Full size	Shortfall of 0.75	Shortfall of 1
Football (3G)	Area Two	Full size	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1.25
Football (3G)	Area Three	Full size	Shortfall of 0.75	Shortfall of 0.75
Football (3G)	Area Four	Full size	At capacity	At capacity
Football (3G)	Area Five	Full size	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1.25
Football (3G)	Area Six	Full size	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area One	Saturday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area One	Sunday	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 12
Cricket	Area One	Midweek	Spare capacity of 18	Spare capacity of 18
Cricket	Area Two	Saturday	Shortfall of 14	Shortfall of 14
Cricket	Area Two	Sunday	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2
Cricket	Area Two	Midweek	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2
Cricket	Area Three	Saturday	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 12
Cricket	Area Three	Sunday	Spare capacity of 24	Spare capacity of 24
Cricket	Area Three	Midweek	Spare capacity of 38	Spare capacity of 38
Cricket	Area Four	Saturday	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 12
Cricket	Area Four	Sunday	Spare capacity of 36	Spare capacity of 36
Cricket	Area Four	Midweek	Spare capacity of 36	Spare capacity of 36
Cricket	Area Five	Saturday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Five	Sunday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Five	Midweek	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Six	Saturday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Six	Sunday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Six	Midweek	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby union	Area One	Senior	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby union	Area Two	Senior	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Rugby union	Area Three	Senior	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall of 1.5
Rugby union	Area Four	Senior	Shortfall of 3.75	Shortfall of 3.75
Rugby union	Area Five	Senior	At capacity	At capacity

^[2] Based on accommodating 38 teams on one full size pitch

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Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Rugby union	Area Six	Senior	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

For non-pitch sports, quantitative shortfalls can be more difficult to determine, with capacity guidance differing and with focus often away from formal club activity. The current and future picture for each sport is therefore instead summarised in the table below.

Table 1.2: Quantitative headline findings (non-pitch sports)

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	There is a theoretical shortfall of capacity at Streetly TC. Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites)	There is a theoretical shortfall of capacity at Streetly TC. Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites)
Netball	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.
Bowls	Five sites are operating above the recommended capacity threshold. Walsall Arboretum BC is operating below the required membership to be sustainable, whilst Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability.	Five sites are operating above the recommended capacity threshold. Walsall Arboretum BC is operating below the required membership to be sustainable, whilst Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability.
Athletics	There is only one dedicated athletics facility in Walsall; however, with this being unused by clubs, no perceived demand has been identified. As such, supply is sufficient, although quality improvements may be required in the near future.	There is only one dedicated athletics facility in Walsall; however, with this being unused by clubs, no perceived demand has been identified. As such, supply is sufficient, although quality improvements will be required in the near future.

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Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Cycling	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.
Golf	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.
Water sports	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the Borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the Borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.
Other sports	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.

Conclusions

From a quantitative perspective, the existing position for each sport is either that demand is being met or that there is a shortfall, whereas the future position shows the creation of shortfalls for some pitch types and in some areas where demand is currently being met, as well as the exacerbation of existing shortfalls. Some level of shortfall is identified for all football pitch types, 3G pitches, cricket squares, hockey suitable AGPs and tennis courts.

Where demand is being met, this does not necessarily equate to a surplus of provision, with any spare capacity instead considered to be a solution to overcoming current or future shortfalls. There is a resultant need to protect all existing outdoor sport provision until all demand is met, or there is a requirement to replace provision in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy.

For the most part, the shortfalls identified can be met by better utilising current provision, such as through improving quality, re-configuration, installing additional floodlighting, improving ancillary facilities and enabling access to existing unused provision, such as at unavailable school sites. However, there is a shortfall of 3G pitch that can likely only be met through increased provision. With resources to improve the quality of grass pitches being limited, particularly at sites managed by the Council, an increase in such provision could also help reduce grass pitch shortfalls through the transfer of play, which in turn can reduce overplay and aid pitch quality improvements.

PART 2: VISION

Vision

This study has been developed on the basis of the above strategic drivers in order to ensure that it reflects the Council's wider ambitions. A vision has been set out to provide a clear focus with desired outcomes for the Walsall Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy:

“Provide a network of high quality sports pitches conducive to sustaining and increasing participation in the pursuit of a physically active and sporty Walsall, at the same time bringing together partners to ensure a coordinated approach to supply and demand.”

PART 3: AIMS

The following overarching aims are based on the three Sport England themes. It is recommended that they are adopted by the Council and partners to enable delivery of the overall PPS vision and Sport England planning objectives.

AIM 1

To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sport facilities where it is needed to meet current and future needs.

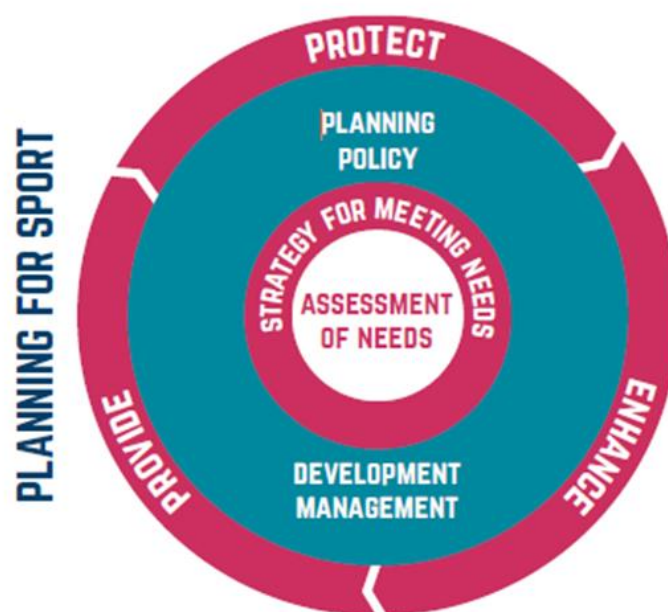
AIM 2

To **enhance** outdoor sport facilities and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

AIM 3

To **provide** new outdoor sport facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.

Figure 3.1: Sport England themes



Source: Sport England, Planning for Sport Guidance (June 2019)

PART 4: SPORT SPECIFIC ISSUES SCENARIOS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to help develop the recommendations/actions and to understand their potential impact, a number of relevant scenario questions are tested against the key issues in this section for each playing pitch sport, resulting in sport specific recommendations.

4.1: Football – grass pitches

Assessment Report summary

- ✦ **There are existing shortfalls for youth 11v11 provision in Walsall.**
- ✦ **When accommodating for future demand through team generation rates, mini 7v7 pitches also experience shortfalls.**
- ✦ **Adult, youth 9v9, and mini 5v5 pitches contain both current and future spare capacity, although some localise shortfalls are evident.**
- ✦ **31 pitches across 11 sites are overplayed by a combined total of 24 match equivalent sessions per week.**
- ✦ **Actual spare capacity equates to 28.5 match equivalent sessions per week and is identified across 33 pitches at 17 sites.**
- ✦ The audit identifies a total of 179 grass football pitches across 60 sites, with 147 pitches available, at some level, for community use across 48 sites.
- ✦ As a breakdown, there are 68 adult, 15 youth 11v11, 39 youth 9v9, 13 mini 7v7 and 14 mini 5v5 pitches that are available for community use.
- ✦ Lapsed/disused pitches are identified at Abbey Park Stadium, Bush Ground (Pelsall Villa FC), Darlaston Town Football Club and Glastonbury Crescent.
- ✦ The Council and schools are the predominant supplier of football pitches.
- ✦ Sheffield United FC and Silverdale FC expresses concerns around unsecure tenure, whilst Pelsall Villa FC aspires to gain lease on its site (Fordbrook). Lane Head also have ambitions to gain access to the disused pitch at Glastonbury Crescent.
- ✦ The majority of community available pitches are considered to be standard quality, with 89 assessed as this, although there is also a large quantity assessed as poor (48).
- ✦ Only nine pitches are assessed as good quality.
- ✦ Quality of ancillary provision is an issue at sites such as ten community sites, whereas an additional five sites community sites have no supporting ancillary provision for users.
- ✦ Through the audit and assessment, 446 teams currently play within Walsall, consisting of 105 adult men's, 16 adult women's, 191 youth boys', 22 youth girls' and 112 mini soccer teams.
- ✦ There has been a general trend of growth in demand in recent years, particularly at adult and youth level.
- ✦ Exported demand is expressed; however, this is predominately from teams accessing venues outside of Walsall due to the central venue nature of their leagues.
- ✦ 10 clubs express latent demand linked to a combination of pitch availability, training capacity and inadequate ancillary facilities.
- ✦ Dudley Town FC (Step 6) imports demand into Walsall as its facility requirements cannot be met in Dudley; it aspires to relocate back to Dudley in the future.
- ✦ Based on population growth (2039) an increase of 28 teams is forecast, whereas seven clubs express future demand aspirations equating to a potential increase in demand of nine teams.

Scenarios

Improving pitch quality

In total there are 31 pitches overplayed in Walsall across 11 sites, with overplay equating to 24 match equivalent sessions per week. Improving quality of such provision (i.e., through increased maintenance or improved drainage) will increase capacity at the sites and as a consequence reduce both current and future shortfalls.

To illustrate the above, Table 4.1 highlights the current levels of overplay that would be alleviated if quality improved to good at each site. As a reminder, the capacity rating for each type and quality rating is identified below.

Table 4.1: Capacity ratings

Adult pitch quality	Adult matches per week	Youth pitch quality	Youth matches per week	Mini pitch quality	Mini matches per week
Good	3	Good	4	Good	6
Standard	2	Standard	2	Standard	4
Poor	1	Poor	1	Poor	2

Table 4.2: Overplay if all pitches were good quality (match equivalent sessions)

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Current quality	Current capacity rating ¹	Good quality capacity rating ²
4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	4	2
11	Bentley Road North Playing Field	Adult	4	Standard	2.5	1.5
12	Bentley West Playing Field	Youth (9v9)	5	Poor	6	9
13	Bentley Youth Sports Ground	Adult	1	Standard	0.5	1.5
17	Lane Head Football Club	Adult	1	Standard	1	-
24	Clayhanger Park	Adult	2	Poor	1.5	2.5
29	Fordbrook	Adult	5	Poor	1	9
29	Fordbrook	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	0.5	3.5
29	Fordbrook	Youth 9v9	2	Poor	0.5	5.5
44	Leamore Park	Youth 11v11	2	Standard	0.5	3.5
44	Leamore Park	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	1	3
69	Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)	Youth 11v11	1	Standard	0.5	1.5
89	Walstead Road Playing Fields	Youth 9v9	2	Standard	4	-
93	Willenhall Memorial Park	Adult	3	Poor	0.5	5.5

¹ Match equivalent sessions

² Match equivalent sessions

As seen, most overplayed pitches could accommodate current demand if quality improved to good. The only sites that would continue to accommodate some level of overplay are Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club and Bentley Road North Playing Field, whilst the adult pitch at Lane Head Football Club and the two youth 9v9 pitches at Walstead Road Playing Fields would be played to capacity (all other pitches would have some form of spare capacity).

Given the above, some play at Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club and Bentley Road North Playing Field should be transferred to sites with actual spare capacity or to an existing or additional 3G pitches. Alternatively, if space and other usage allows, pitch re-configuration at the site could also be considered.

Overall, only 3.5 match equivalent sessions of overplay would remain across Walsall, compared to 24 match equivalent sessions currently, and this would also only exist on one adult and two youth 9v9 pitches. The impact this would have on the supply and demand balance across the Borough is shown in the table below, with all shortfalls being alleviated apart from on youth 9v9 pitches.

Table 4.3: Impact of improving pitch quality on overall supply and demand (match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch type	Current actual spare capacity	Current overplay	Current total	Potential overplay	Potential total
Adult	15	7	8	1.5	13.5
Youth 11v11	-	5	5	2	2
Youth 9v9	14	10.5	3.5	-	14
Mini 7v7	4	1.5	2.5	-	4
Mini 5v5	4.5	-	4.5	-	4.5

Given the costs of improving pitch quality, alternatives also need to be considered that can offer a more sustainable model for the future of football. The alternative to grass pitches is the use of 3G for competitive matches, which can not only alleviate overplay of grass pitches but can also aid quality improvements through the transfer of play and therefore reduced use. However, for sustainability, there also needs to be a sufficient level of midweek training demand taking place on the pitches.

Loss of sites without secure tenure

The table below identifies the total amount of demand that would need to be replaced if access was to be lost at all existing sites with unsecure tenure. This amounts to 60.5 match equivalent sessions of demand.

Table 4.4: Summary of demand at unsecure sites (match equivalent sessions per week)

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5
3	Aldridge School	Area 2	2	-	1	-	3
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	Area 4	5	-	1	-	1
10	Beacon Primary School	Area 6	-	-	-	1	1
14	Blackwood School	Area 2	-	-	-	1	-
15	Bloxwich Academy	Area 3	2	-	-	-	-
17	Lane Head Football Club	Area 3	3	-	-	-	-
18	Blue Coat Church of England Academy Playing Fields	Area 4	1	-	-	1	-
20	Brownhills Ormiston Academy	Area 1	-	-	-	-	-

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5
23	Christ Church CE Primary School (Bloxwich)	Area 3	-	-	-	-	-
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	Area 5	1	-	-	-	-
40	Joseph Leckie Academy Playing Fields	Area 4	-	-	-	-	-
45	Leighswood School	Area 2	-	-	-	-	-
49	Mayfield Preparatory School	Area 4	-	-	-	-	1
52	Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy	Area 1	2	-	-	-	-
55	Pelsall Village School	Area 1	-	-	-	-	1
57	Pool Hayes Academy	Area 6	-	-	-	-	-
59	Reedswood E-Act Primary Academy	Area 4	-	-	-	-	-
61	Elmwood School	Area 1	-	-	-	1	0.5
66	Ryders Hayes School	Area 1	-	-	-	-	-
67	Salisbury Primary School	Area 5	-	-	-	-	-
69	Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)	Area 1	0.5	2.5	1.5	-	2.5
70	Shire Oak Academy	Area 2	-	-	-	-	-
72	St Francis Of Assisi Catholic Technology College	Area 2	2	2	1	-	-
73	St James Primary School	Area 1	-	-	-	-	-
75	St Thomas More Catholic School	Area 6	-	-	2	1	1
78	The Streetly Academy	Area 2	2	-	2	-	-
82	Walsall Academy	Area 3	1	-	-	-	-
91	West Walsall E-Act Academy	Area 4	2.5	-	-	-	-
92	Willenhall E-Act Academy	Area 6	2	-	5	-	-
127	St Peters Catholic Primary	Area 2	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	Total	32	4.5	16	7.5	11.5

If access to these sites was lost, it would have a significant impact on the overall supply and demand analysis of football pitches across Walsall, as indicated in the table below. Shortfalls would be evident on each pitch type and considerably increased where they are already present.

Table 4.5: Summary of current supply and demand comparison (match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch type	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	14	7	7	5	3
Youth 11v11	-	5	5	7.5	12.5
Youth 9v9	11	10.5	0.5	0.5	-
Mini 7v7	1	1.5	0.5	1	0.5
Mini 5v5	2.5	-	2.5	-	2.5

Table 4.6: Summary of supply and demand comparison without unsecure sites (match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch type	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	14	33	19	5	24
Youth 11v11	-	9.5	9.5	7.5	17
Youth 9v9	11	24	13	0.5	13.5
Mini 7v7	1	6.5	5.5	1	6.5
Mini 5v5	2.5	11.5	9.5	-	21

Based on this information it is clearly important to secure tenure at as many of these sites as possible (when opportunities so present) in order ensure current and future pitch shortfalls are minimised. However, it is noted that this may not be possible at all venues.

Whilst not always possible, creating community use agreements between providers and users would ensure that such demand continues to be provided for in the longer-term. Where there is external investment on sites e.g., by an NGB or Sport England, there are opportunities to secure community use as part of the funding or approval agreement. Furthermore, external investment would likely be dependent on security of tenure being provided, with a lack of security of tenure a barrier to securing such funding.

Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP)

As improving the quality of all overplayed sites may not be feasible from an investment point of view, an alternative approach is to focus on improving strategic sites. To that end, the Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) identifies ten sites for grass pitch improvements that are considered to be in need of investment and that are key for football across Walsall.

The table below identifies what the impact would be on the supply and demand balance of pitches at these sites if quality was improved to good.

Table 4.7: Impact of LFFP quality improvements

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Quality	Current capacity rating	Good capacity rating
5	Anchor Meadow	Youth 9v9	2	Poor	-	4
12	Broadway West Playing Field	No marked provision 21/22	-	-	-	-
24	Clayhanger Park	Adult	2	Poor	1.5	2.5
28	Doebank Park	Adult	2	Standard	1	4
28	Doebank Park	Mini 7v7	1	Standard	3	8
28	Doebank Park	Youth 9v9	1	Standard	2	3
29	Fordbrook	Adult	5	Poor	1	9
29	Fordbrook	Mini 7v7	1	Poor	0.5	3.5
29	Fordbrook	Youth 9v9	2	Poor	0.5	5.5
35	Great Bridge Road	Adult	1	Poor	-	2
42	King George V (Bloxwich)	Adult	4	Standard	4.5	8.5
76	The Aldridge Airport	Youth 9v9	5	Standard	9.5	19.5
93	Willenhall Memorial Park	Adult	3	Poor	0.5	5.5

Improving quality as set out in the table above would create 76 match equivalent sessions of additional capacity. In addition, each site identified as being overplayed (from the LFFP project list) would see overplay alleviated.

The impact the improvements would have on the overall supply and demand balance is shown in the following table. Note the table below is presented on a peak time model, and therefore, improving sites in the table above, may not generate capacity within the peak periods, albeit it will create an improved match day experience for users.

Based on improvements, capacity for adult pitches would be increased, likewise for youth 9v9 pitches. A small shortfall for mini 7v7 pitches would be alleviated and youth 11v11 and mini 5v5 would remain unchanged.

Table 4.8: Impact on current supply and demand if quality improved at LFFP sites (match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch type	Current total	Potential total
Adult	7	11.5
Youth 11v11	5	5
Youth 9v9	0.5	3
Mini 7v7	0.5	-
Mini 5v5	2.5	2.5

The impact is similar when factoring in future demand as can be seen in the table below. The only difference is that future demand

Table 4.9: Impact on future supply and demand if quality improved at LFFP sites (match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch type	Future total	Potential total
Adult	2	6.5
Youth 11v11	12.5	12.5
Youth 9v9	-	2.5
Mini 7v7	1.5	1
Mini 5v5	2.5	2.5

As the LFFP is a live document to be informed by an up-to-date PPOSS, it is recommended that the priority list is updated on the back of this study to account for changes in demand since the project was completed. To help guide this process, the table below comments on whether the PPOSS provides evidence to support the inclusion of the sites currently featured.

As seen, it is recommended that each site is retained within the LFFP due to the impact the projects could achieve.

Table 4.10: Assessing LFFP priority list (grass pitch improvements)

Site ID	Site name	Comments	LFFP update recommendation
5	Anchor Meadow	No known use for 21/22 season. Not a priority site for improvement but retain as a project for future demand.	Retain for improvement
12	Broadway West Playing Field	Key site that is poor quality and overplayed	Retain for improvement

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Site ID	Site name	Comments	LFFP update recommendation
24	Clayhanger Park	Key site that is poor quality and overplayed.	Retain for improvement
28	Doebank Park	Key site, not overplayed but scope to improve quality.	Retain for improvement
29	Fordbrook	Key site that is poor quality and overplayed.	Retain for improvement
35	Great Bridge Road	Key site that is poor quality and overplayed	Retain for improvement
42	King George V (Bloxwich)	Key site, not overplayed but scope to improve quality.	Retain for improvement
76	The Aldridge Airport	Key site, not overplayed but scope to improve quality.	Retain for improvement
93	Willenhall Memorial Park	Key site that is poor quality and overplayed.	Retain for improvement

In addition to the above, additions should also be sought given the quality issues and shortfalls evidenced across Walsall. In that regard, the following sites should be considered given the number of pitches supplied and the quality/overplay issues identified:

- ♦ Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club
- ♦ Bentley Road North Playing Fields
- ♦ Bentley Road West Playing Fields
- ♦ King George Crescent (Shelfield United)
- ♦ Walstead Road Playing Fields

Table 4.11: Impact on current supply and demand if quality also improved at five additional outlined sites (match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch type	Current total	Potential total
Adult	7	9.5
Youth 11v11	5	1.5
Youth 9v9	0.5	10.5
Mini 7v7	0.5	0.5
Mini 5v5	2.5	2.5

Table 4.12: Impact on future supply and demand if quality also improved at four additional outlined sites (match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch type	Future total	Potential total
Adult	2	4.5
Youth 11v11	12.5	6
Youth 9v9	-	10
Mini 7v7	1.5	1.5
Mini 5v5	2.5	2.5

As can be seen, if work were to be undertaken to improve the five additional sites alongside those on the priority list in the LFFP there would be positive capacity benefits for adult, youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches. In particular, overplay for youth 9v9 pitches would be alleviated, this is due large a reduction of overplay at Bentley West Playing Field and Walstead Playing Field.

Reintroducing lapsed/disused sites

A total of four lapsed football pitch sites are identified in Walsall. These sites previously accommodated a total of four pitches, one adult pitch per site. The scenario below examines the impact reintroducing all pitches at these sites would have on current and future supply.

Table 4.13: Lapsed/disused provision

Site name	Lapsed/disused	Pitch type	Number of pitches
Abbey Park Stadium	Lapsed	Adult	1
Bush Ground (Pelsall Villa FC)	Lapsed	Adult	1
Darlaston Town Football Club	Lapsed	Adult	1
Glastonbury Crescent	Lapsed	Adult	1

As seen in the table above, bring back all sites for the sole benefit of adult football would add an additional four match sessions of peak time capacity to the overall supply vs demand balance. However, there is already sufficient capacity for adult football within peak time periods and therefore this is not recommended, as there is no clear need for it. When considering their role in accommodating for youth 11v11 format (size age format below adult) then the sites would reduce shortfalls, however, given the limited impact, it is unlikely to be viable to re-instate these sites for the benefit of community football.

Table 4.14: Impact on current supply and demand through reinstating lapsed/disused pitches (match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch type	Current total	Potential total
Adult	7	11
Youth 11v11	5	1

Future demand

In the proceeding Assessment Report, future demand derived from population growth has been considered to determine the future supply and demand of pitches, with club aspirations not included as these are thought to be lesser in number of teams. However, this scenario considers the impact such aspirations would have if the growth predicted by clubs was to be realised (and instead replaces forecasts from population growth).

Table 4.15: Incorporating future demand expressed by clubs into supply and demand analysis (match equivalent sessions per week)

Pitch type	Current future supply/demand balance	Additional future demand	Potential future supply/demand balance
Adult	7	-	7
Youth 11v11	5	0.5	5.5
Youth 9v9	0.5	0.5	-
Mini 7v7	0.5	1	1.5
Mini 5v5	2.5	3.5	1

In total, the impact of club aspirations is lesser than population growth. There is no change to the position for adult pitches, shortfalls are minimally exacerbated on youth 11v11 and mini 7v7 pitches with the small amount of spare capacity utilised on youth 9v9 pitches. The biggest impact is on mini 5v5 pitches where shortfalls emerge.

Recommendations

- ✦ Protect existing quantity of pitches, including lapsed and disused provision, until all demand is being met (unless replacement provision meets Sport England requirements and is agreed upon and provided).
- ✦ Where pitches are overplayed and assessed as poor or standard quality, prioritise investment and review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to sustain use and improve quality.
- ✦ Use the LFFP as a guide to determine suitable sites for grass pitch investment and update the priority projects within it following this study.
- ✦ Utilise the Football Foundation's PitchPower to provide the evidence report to be produced to identify pitch conditions and recommendations to maintain or enhance pitch quality.
- ✦ Consider opportunities for increasing the Councils grass pitch maintenance budget and general resources when a pitch/pitches have been improved to maintain the quality. If drainage is required, this will increase the annual maintenance cost.
- ✦ Consider bringing lapsed/disused sites back into use as a means to reduce shortfalls.
- ✦ Consider pitch re-configuration where capacity of one pitch type can be used to reduce shortfalls of another, and where it can better accommodate what demand is received.
- ✦ Transfer play from sites which remain overplayed to alternative sites with spare capacity such as King George V Playing Fields (or 3G provision).
- ✦ Work to accommodate latent and future demand at sites which are not operating at capacity, such as the Streetly Association, or at sites which are not currently available for community use.
- ✦ Secure tenure for those clubs accessing unsecure sites.
- ✦ Seek to gain access to sites not currently available for community use, particularly where a large quantities of pitches are provided, such as Shire Oak Academy.
- ✦ Improve ancillary facilities where there is a demand to do so and where it can benefit the wider footballing offer.
- ✦ Where appropriate, develop partnerships and/or lease arrangements with large, sustainable, development-minded clubs to manage their own sites.
- ✦ Ensure that any large housing developments assess the need for new pitch provision through master planning on an individual basis and utilise the findings of the PPS to determine needs.
- ✦ Where a housing development is not of a size to justify on-site football provision, consider using contributions to improve existing sites within the locality.
- ✦ Protect existing lapsed and disused sites.
- ✦ Where a development is of a size to justify on-site football provision, focus on the creation of multi-pitch sites with community use that reduce existing shortfalls, with accompanying clubhouse provision included given that single pitch sites without appropriate ancillary facilities can be unsustainable.³.

³ See Part 7 of this report for further information

4.2: Third Generation turf (3G) pitches

Assessment Report summary

- ✦ **Priority should be placed on the creation of new 3G pitches to meet the identified shortfalls for football training demand.**
- ✦ **Meeting the 3G pitch shortfall for training will also help alleviate grass pitch shortfalls and quality issues, providing that the transfer of play is pursued as and when more pitches are established.**
- ✦ **In addition, it is important to sustain the current pitch stock to ensure that the existing shortfalls are not exacerbated.**
- ✦ **The creation of additional full size 3G pitches that are World Rugby compliant in strategically viable locations would also relieve pressure on rugby union grass pitches.**
- ✦ There are nine full size 3G pitches in Walsall, of which all are floodlit and available for community use.
- ✦ There are also 22 smaller sized 3G pitches across five sites, 20 of which are available for community use and 19 of which are floodlit; however, none are overly suitable for any purposeful match play demand due to certification and size issues.
- ✦ The Bloxwich area catchment in Area 3 is a priority catchment for 3G development by football partners and Walsall Council.
- ✦ Six of the nine full size pitches are on the FA Pitch register for match play; provision at Grace Academy Darlaston, Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy and West Walsall E-Act Academy are not certified.
- ✦ There is one World Rugby Compliant pitch provided in Walsall; this is located at Walsall Rugby Club and was provided as part of the RFU Rugby 365 Programme.
- ✦ All full-size pitches are good or standard quality, although pitches at Grace Academy Darlaston and Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy are at or close to the end of their life expectancy
- ✦ The existing 3G provision is reported to be operating at or close to capacity at peak times, with all current community activity being football-based.
- ✦ With 446 football teams currently playing in Walsall, there is a broad calculated shortfall of 2.75 full size 3G pitches to meet training needs (increasing to 3.5 when analysis is undertaken by analysis area).
- ✦ When accounting for future demand for an additional 28 teams (team generation rates through population increases), the shortfall increases to 3.5 pitches.
- ✦ When assessing 3G pitch need by analysis area there is a current and future shortfall in areas 1, 2, 3 and 5.
- ✦ There are currently 112 football teams using the 3G pitch stock for matches; whilst the number needed for matches will never outweigh the number of 3G pitches needed for training, maximising the pitches that are in place and that are proposed should be fully supported.
- ✦ The pitch at Walsall Rugby Club is well used for rugby union, in addition to receiving football demand.
- ✦ No demand has been identified from other sports for access to 3G provision.

Scenarios

Accommodating football training demand

As evidenced in the preceding Assessment Report, in order to satisfy current football training demand (based on the FA's model of one full size 3G pitch being able to cater for 38 teams) there is a need for 3.5 3G pitches to accommodate training demand. How this is split on an analysis area basis can be seen in the table below.

Table 4.16: Current demand for 3G pitches by analysis area

Analysis area	Current number of teams	3G requirement ⁴	Current number of 3G pitches	Current shortfall
Area 1	100	2.75	2	0.75
Area 2	77	2	1	1
Area 3	28	0.75	-	0.75
Area 4	132	3.5	4	-
Area 5	76	2	1	1
Area 6	33	1	1	-
Walsall	446	12	9	3.5

After factoring in future demand, the overall shortfall increases to 4.25, as seen in the table below.

Table 4.17: Future demand for 3G pitches in Walsall for affiliated football team training

Analysis area	Future number of teams	3G requirement ⁵	Current number of 3G pitches	Future shortfall
Area 1	106	3	2	1
Area 2	82	2.25	1	1.25
Area 3	30	0.75	-	0.75
Area 4	142	3.75	4	-
Area 5	79	2.25	1	1.25
Area 6	35	1	1	-
Walsall	482	13	9	4.25

The table below identifies sites which could, in theory, be suitable for future development to meet known shortfalls for 3G pitches. Each of these sites will require a full feasibility to be undertaken to determine if they are suitable in meeting known need. Note this list is a starting point for discussion and should be updated as part of the Stage – E process.

For the development of any 3G pitch at the sites below (and any other suggested sites in the future) there is a need to ensure that Sport England's Playing Field Policy is adhered to.

Table 4.18: Site options for new 3G pitch developments to alleviate training shortfalls

Analysis area	Future shortfall	Site ID	Site name
Area 1	1	48	Manor Farm School
Area 1	1	52	Ormiston Shelfield Academy
Area 1	1	61	Elmwood School
Area 1	1	3	Aldridge School
Area 1	1	4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club
Area 1	1	8	Barr Beacon Leisure Centre
Area 1	1	9	BBG Stadium Oak Park (small sided)
Area 1	1	70	Shire Oak Academy
Area 1	1	76	Aldridge Airport
Area 3	0.75	15	Bloxwich Academy
Area 3	0.75	17	Lane Head
Area 3	0.75	44	Leamore Park

⁴ Rounded to the nearest 0.25

⁵ Rounded to the nearest 0.25

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Analysis area	Future shortfall	Site ID	Site name
Area 5	1.25	12	Bentley West Sports Ground
Area 5	1.25	26	Darlaston Community Sports Association
Area 5	1.25	33	Grace Academy

As seen, four analysis areas (1, 2, 3 and 5) have a current and future shortfall. These should therefore be the focus for providing new provision.

Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP)

The LFFP for Walsall identifies the following 3G projects:

- ♦ Oak Park Living Centre (Area 2) – One full size 3G pitch
- ♦ Aldridge Airport (Area 2) – Two full size 3G pitches
- ♦ Leamore Park (Area 3) – One full size 3G pitch
- ♦ Walsall College (Area 4) – One full size 3G pitch
- ♦ Darlaston Recreation Centre (Area 5) – One full size 3G pitch

In addition, a further project for a 3G stadia pitch at Rushall Olympic FC (Area 1) was delivered in 2019.

Since the LFFP was produced, investigatory work was undertaken by football partners at Oak Park Living Centre to determine the realism of delivery. Subsequently, it was determined that the site was unsuitable, and the plan will need updating to account for this.

It is further noted that no progress has been made with developing a project at Walsall College. As there is no shortfall within this catchment area, this project can be considered for removal in upcoming updates to the LFFP.

Lastly, a two pitch full size pitch project was identified for Aldridge Airport. There is an identified shortfall of one full size pitch within this catchment area and therefore this project requires downscaling to a development target of one full size pitch. It is noted that any development on this site could also theoretically draw in demand from outside of the Analysis Area and this requires consideration when any future updates to the LFFP are undertaken.

The table below shows LFFP projects against the identified shortfalls from the PPOSS. This table accounts for the original 3G project list in the LFFP. It highlights that a shortfall would remain in Area 1 Analysis Area. Based on the original project list, a theoretical oversupply would emerge in the Area 2 and Area 4 analysis areas of two and one full size pitches respectively. A short oversupply of 0.25 full size pitch equivalents would also emerge in Area 2 (albeit this is considered negligible).

Table 4.19: Impact of delivering current LFFP 3G projects (based on original LFFP projects)

Analysis area	Potential 3G requirement	Current number of 3G pitches	Potential shortfall	No. of proposed pitches	Shortfall if delivered
Area 1	2.75	2	0.75	-	0.75
Area 2	2	1	1	3	-
Area 3	0.75	-	0.75	1	-
Area 4	3.5	4	-	1	-
Area 5	2	1	1	1	-
Area 6	1	1	-	-	-
Walsall	12	9	3.5	6	0.75

Based on the above, it is recommended that a project within the Area 1 Analysis Area is sought, that the project for Aldridge Airport is downsized (unless a case for meeting demand for other analysis areas can be made) and that the project for Walsall College is removed.

Moving council match play demand to 3G pitches

To further the use of 3G pitches for matches, the FA is particularly keen to work with local authorities to understand the potential demand for full size floodlit 3G pitches should all competitive matches that are currently played on council pitches be transferred. The following table therefore calculates the number of teams currently using council facilities in Walsall for each pitch type.

Table 4.20: Number of teams currently using council pitches

Pitch type	Pitch size	Peak period	No. of teams
Adult	11v11	Saturday PM	18
Youth	11v11	Sunday AM	20
Youth	9v9	Sunday AM	19
Mini	7v7	Sunday AM	-
Mini	5v5	Sunday AM	4
-	-	Total	61

The FA suggests an approach for estimating the number of full size 3G pitches required to accommodate the above demand for competitive matches, as seen in the table overleaf.

Table 4.21: 3G pitches required for the transfer of council pitch demand

Format	No. of teams at peak time	No. of matches at peak time	3G units required per match	Total 3G units required	3G pitches required
Adult	18	9	32	288	4.50
11v11	20	10	32	320	5.00
9v9	19	9.5	10	95	1.48
7v7	0	0	8	0	0.00
5v5	4	1	4	4	1.00

A total of 12 (rounded up from 11.98) 3G pitches would be required to accommodate all matches currently played on council pitches. In Walsall, there are currently nine full-size 3G pitches provided and a shortfall of 3.75 pitches identified to meet training requirements. As such, the required increase of provision in the future could, in theory, support most, if not all, Council demand if adequate programming was established.

Moving mini demand to 3G pitches

The FA is particularly keen on enabling 3G match usage for mini teams given the high volume of matches that can be played at one time. The table below therefore tests a scenario to permit all 5v5 and 7v7 football to transfer to 3G pitches within Walsall based on a programme of play at current peak time (Sunday AM).

Table 4.22: Moving all mini matches to 3G pitches

Time	AGP	Total games/teams ⁶
9.30am – 10.30am	4 x 5v5	4/8
10.30am – 11.30am	2 x 7v7	2/4
11.30am – 12.30pm	2 x 7v7	2/4
12.30pm – 1.30pm	2 x 7v7	2/4

Based on the above programming and separate start times for mini 5v5 and mini 7v7 matches, the overall need is for five full size 3G pitches to accommodate all current mini match play demand. This is calculated based on 38 teams playing 5v5 football requiring five pitches (rounded up from 4.75) and 72 teams playing 7v7 football requiring six pitches. It is therefore considered feasible that all mini football could be accommodated on the existing stock of 3G pitches.

The table below tests a similar scenario for youth 9v9 football.

Table 4.23: Moving all 9v9 matches to 3G pitches

Time	AGP	Total games/teams
10am – Noon	2 x 9v9	2/4
Noon – 2pm	2 x 9v9	2/4
2pm – 4pm	2 x 9v9	2/4

This demand could also be accommodated on seven full size pitches based on 83 teams currently playing this format within Walsall.

World Rugby compliant 3G pitches

World Rugby produced the 'performance specification for artificial grass pitches for rugby', more commonly known as 'Regulation 22' that provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for rugby union. The RFU investment strategy for AGPs considers sites where grass rugby pitches are over capacity and where an AGP would support the growth of the game at the host site and for the local rugby partnership, including local clubs and education establishments.

There is one full size World Rugby compliant 3G pitch within Walsall, located at Walsall Rugby Club. This is currently used by the host club as well as Aldridge, Handsworth and Bloxwich rugby clubs, meaning that the 3G pitch is helping alleviate overplay at several sites. Given the historical draining issues at the Walsall RUFC site, the 3G pitch has significantly aided existing provision at the site.

Based on existing shortfalls elsewhere, there is no clear requirement for further World Rugby compliant 3G pitches to be developed.

Recommendations

- ✦ Protect current stock of 3G pitches.
- ✦ To alleviate identified competitive and training demand shortfalls, look to create additional 3G pitches.

⁶ Number of teams is double the number of games based on teams playing home and away

- ✦ Carry out further work to identify the best possible locations for 3G provision and ensure this is done in consultation with the relevant County FA's and the Football Foundation as well as Sport England and other relevant NGBs.
- ✦ Ensure England Hockey is consulted with regarding any proposals for development of new 3G artificial grass pitches or proposed conversion to 3G of existing hockey AGPs, to ensure the sustainability and sufficient supply of existing AGPs for hockey.
- ✦ Ensure that any new 3G pitches have community use agreements in place.
- ✦ Encourage more match play demand to transfer to 3G pitches.
- ✦ Ensure that all other full size and larger smaller sized pitches remain on the FA/RFU register are re-tested when required to sustain certification.
- ✦ Ensure all current and future providers have in place a sinking fund to ensure long-term sustainability.
- ✦ Ensure that all new 3G pitches are constructed to meet FA recommended dimensions and quality performance standards.
- ✦ Ensure that any new 3G pitches are priced competitively against the cost of hiring a grass pitches and are aimed at local grassroots clubs.

4.3: Cricket pitches

Assessment report summary

- ✦ **There are 11 squares that show potential spare capacity on grass wickets although only two of these have actual spare capacity for senior demand on Saturday's, whilst six have actual spare capacity on Sunday's.**
- ✦ **A total of six squares has actual spare capacity during midweek for junior cricket.**
- ✦ **Two squares are overplayed, with total overplay equating to 14 match equivalent sessions.**
- ✦ **Demand for senior cricket is currently being met; however, a future shortfall is evident in regards to Saturday cricket.**
- ✦ **It is expected that junior cricket will be able to be satisfied both now and in the future.**
- ✦ In total, there are 13 grass cricket squares in Walsall, all of which are available to the community.
- ✦ Five are assessed as good quality and eight are assessed as standard quality (none are assessed as poor quality).
- ✦ A disused square is located at Broadway West Playing Fields; It has now been unmaintained for cricket for the past five years.
- ✦ There are NTPs accompanying grass wicket squares at five sites and there are 10 standalone NTPs at nine sites (two are provided at Pleck Park).
- ✦ The NTPs at Bronze CC and Rushall CC are poor quality and needs replacement, which is also the case for the standalone NTPs at Broadway West Playing Field and Reedswood Park.
- ✦ No club is identified as having issues relating to the lease or management of their sites.
- ✦ Walsall CC has aspirations to improve the quality of its ancillary provision to provide an improved social offer and better quality changing facilities.
- ✦ There are eight affiliated clubs in Walsall which collectively provide 54 teams.
- ✦ Streetly CC exports demand outside of Walsall in that it accesses a second venue at Mill Green, in Lichfield, for its 3rd Saturday team.
- ✦ Aldridge CC, Bronze CC, Bloxwich CC, Streetly CC and Walsall CC are engaged in ECB national participation programmes e.g. All Stars Cricket and Dynamo's Cricket.
- ✦ Streetly CC field women's softball teams.
- ✦ Last Man Stands is providing a popular midweek offer in Walsall at Pleck Park; the League generally consists of over ten teams.

- ◆ Future demand from clubs equates to a potential growth of eight teams (four senior mens and four junior boys), whereas team generation rates do not indicate a growth in participation (when applied by individual analysis areas).

Scenarios

Addressing overplay

Although a regular, sufficient maintenance regime can sustain sites with minimal levels of overplay a reduction in play is recommended to ensure there is no detrimental effect on quality over time.

In Walsall, overplay is identified at Aldridge Stick and Wicket Club (Aldridge CC) and Streetly Sports Club (Streetly CC), with both squares are assessed as standard quality. As such, improving these to good quality would reduce overplay at Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club from 10 match equivalent sessions to two and create spare capacity at Streetly Sports Club.

In addition, Streetly Sports Club (Streetly CC) is currently without an NTP. Installing one on site to enable the transfer of demand from the grass wickets could therefore further relive any capacity issues. At Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club, greater use of its existing NTP should be encourage to fully eradicate overplay.

Accommodating future demand

Junior demand

Of the three clubs that express aspirations to increase their number of junior teams, both Bloxwich CC and Walsall YPF CC have capacity to do so on its current facility stock. However, in contrast, Streetly CC is unable to accommodate an increase in demand at its home venue, although it could if an NTP was installed, as referenced above.

Senior demand

Four clubs indicate a desire to field additional senior teams (playing either Saturday or Sunday) and of these, only Walsall YPF CC has theoretical capacity to do so on its current facility stock. Aldridge CC could accommodate a growth in demand on Saturdays or Sundays from a programming perspective but it would heighten existing overplay at the site and also potential displace Pelsall CC, which utilises the site for its 3rd team.

Both Bronze CC and Rushall CC can accommodate an increase of senior demand outside of peak time, on Sundays, but not on Saturdays without accessing an alternative site. Quality improvements would not provide a capacity benefit for accommodating the demand, with an increase in Saturday cricket being a programming issue, rather than a capacity issue.

Given this information, it is the case that there is a shortfall of provision for these collective clubs in that they cannot achieve future demand targets. If opportunities present themselves for new cricket provision to be established in the future (through development) then cricket should be considered as part of any new provision, on the basis a suitable usage programme can be established from clubs referenced above.

Recommendations

- ✦ Protect existing quantity of cricket squares.
- ✦ Improve quality at sites assessed as standard and ensure quality is sustained at sites assessed as good.
- ✦ Address overplay via quality improvements, an increase in NTPs accompanying grass wickets and increased utilisation of existing NTPs.
- ✦ If overplay cannot be alleviated through the abovementioned methods, explore the feasibility of utilising planned housing growth to create new cricket squares, particularly if future growth aspirations are realised.
- ✦ Pursue improved security of tenure for clubs without ownership or a long-term lease arrangement in place.
- ✦ Improve the changing facilities where there is a need to do so.
- ✦ Consider options to increase and improve stock of suitable practice facilities.
- ✦ Continue to support ECB initiatives such as All Stars and Dynamos and ensure unaffiliated demand and recreational cricket is provided for.
- ✦ Where a development is not of a size to justify on-site cricket provision, or if sufficient demand cannot be attracted, consider using contributions to improve existing sites within the locality.
- ✦ Ensure that any developments nearby to existing cricket sites do not prejudice the use of the provision (e.g. through ball-strike issues).
- ✦ Ensure that any large housing developments are provided for and assess the need for new pitch provision through master planning (i.e. via a sports needs assessment/feasibility study/assessment of need) on an individual basis.
- ✦ Where a development is of a size to justify on-site cricket provision, ensure that any proposals for new squares will attract adequate demand.

4.4: Rugby union - grass pitches

Assessment Report summary

- ✦ **There is currently an insufficient supply of provision for rugby union to accommodate existing demand, with a shortfall of 4.25 match equivalent sessions identified.**
- ✦ **Future demand (through TGRs) does not exacerbate shortfalls.**
- ✦ **There are four sites and six pitches which are overplayed by a total of 7 match equivalent sessions per week.**
- ✦ **Despite nine sites showing theoretical levels of spare capacity, this is only considered to be actual spare capacity across two sites (Handsworth Rugby Club and Veseyans Sports & Social Club), totalling 1.25 match equivalent sessions.**
- ✦ Within Walsall there are 16 sites containing a total of 25 senior and one mini rugby union pitches, of which 14 senior and the mini pitch is available for community use across eight sites.
- ✦ All club-based pitches have secure tenure.
- ✦ There are 12 senior pitches assessed as standard quality and 14 as poor quality (none are assessed as good quality).
- ✦ There is one rugby compliant 3G pitch within Walsall, located at the Walsall RUFC site. The pitch has significantly helped reduce the number of cancellations at the site whilst also supporting training demand for Handsworth, Aldridge and Bloxwich RUFC who all access the site for training purposes.
- ✦ Walsall RUFC has renovated half of its clubhouse, it now aspires to move onto phase two and then onto phase three of its project to improve adding storage, club shop, disabled toilets, and referee's changing space.

- There are five rugby clubs in Walsall: Aldridge RUFC, Bloxwich RUFC, Handsworth RUFC, Veseyans RUFC and Walsall RUFC.
- In total, the clubs field 13 senior men's, one senior women's, 14 junior boys', three junior girls' and 12 mini teams.
- Walsall RUFC trains on the 3G pitch at Walsall Rugby Club, whilst Aldridge, Handsworth and Veseyans rugby clubs train on floodlit training pitches.
- Aldridge RUFC aspires to add floodlights to a second grass pitch.
- Future demand for senior rugby is expressed by Aldridge and Handsworth rugby clubs and amounts to two senior women's teams (one team each), whilst junior girls demand is forecasted to increase by two teams from Veseyans RUFC and one from Walsall RUFC.
- Based on future projections, when calculated at a Borough-wide level, there is potential growth for two additional senior men's, two junior boy's and one junior girls' team. This is then discounted due to no teams are created when broken down by analysis areas.

Scenarios

Improving pitch maintenance and drainage

Maintenance and drainage solutions are an integral method in improving pitch quality at rugby union sites, ensuring that pitches can accommodate demand through the season. Currently, there are six rugby union pitches across four sites in Walsall which are overplayed by a total of seven match equivalent sessions per week. These pitches are located at Handsworth Rugby Club (Charles Lewis Memorial Ground), King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich), The Veseyans Sports & Social Club and Walsall Rugby Club.

Table 4.24: Pitch capacity (matches per week) based on quality assessments

Drainage and maintenance type	Poor Maintenance (M0)	Adequate Maintenance (M1)	Good Maintenance (M2)
Natural Inadequate drainage (D0)	0.5	1.5	2
Natural Adequate or Pipe Drained (D1)	1.5	2	3
Pipe Drained (D2)	1.75	2.5	3.25
Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	2	3	3.5

The table below looks at what capacity benefits would be seen if maintenance was undertaken at each site to an M2 specification and pipe drainage (D2) was installed on each overplayed pitch.

Table 4.25: Improving maintenance and drainage on overplayed rugby union pitches

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of pitches	Pitch type	Flood-lighting?	Current quality	Current capacity rating	Improved quality	New capacity rating
36	Handsworth Rugby Club (Charles Lewis Memorial Ground)	Area 4	1	Senior	Yes	M1 / D1	2	M2 / D2	0.5
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	Area 3	2	Senior	No	M0 / D0	1.5	M2 / D2	4

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of pitches	Pitch type	Flood-lighting?	Current quality	Current capacity rating	Improved quality	New capacity rating
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	Area 2	1	Mini	No	M1 / D0	1.5	M2 / D2	0.25
86	Walsall Rugby Club	Area 4	1	Senior	Yes	M1 / D1	2	M2 / D2	0.5
86	Walsall Rugby Club	Area 4	1	Senior	No	As above	As above	As above	As above

As seen in the table above, overplay would be alleviated at all sites, aside from Handsworth Rugby Club (Lewis Memorial Ground) where 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week. In theory, this could be alleviated via floodlighting installation at its secondary site (Walstead Road).

The table below illustrates how such improvements would impact the current and future supply analysis. Most overplay would be alleviated at most sites, notwithstanding the minimal amount at Handsworth Rugby Club. A limited amount of peak time capacity would also be generated at King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich). In total, an overall spare capacity would be available across Walsall.

Table 4.26: Impact of rugby union pitch improvements on overall supply vs demand balance (senior pitches) in match equivalent sessions per week

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current capacity balance	Future demand	Capacity balance after pitch improvements
Area 1	-	-	-	-	-
Area 2	1	-	1	-	1
Area 3	-	1.5	1.5	-	1
Area 4	0.25	4	3.75	-	0.5
Area 5	-	-	-	-	-
Area 6	-	-	-	-	-
Walsall	1.25	5.5	4.25	-	1.5

Recommendations

- Continue to develop strong relationships between rugby clubs and schools through curricular and extracurricular programmes in order to increase levels of mini and junior participation.
- Protect all rugby union pitches currently in use and pitches that are inaccessible or no longer in use due to the potential that they may offer for meeting current and future needs (unless replacement provision is agreed upon and provided).
- Maximise usage of the World Rugby Compliant 3G pitch at Walsall Rugby Club for the benefit of the regional rugby offer.
- Improve pitch quality to reduce overplay, foremostly through improved and more regular maintenance at sites used by community clubs. Engage and utilise the GMA Pitch Advisory Service to establish recommended programme of works at key sites.
- Work to increase the overall supply of floodlighting to reduce concentrated midweek training demand pressures at key club sites, such as Aldridge Rugby Club.
- Support Walsall RUFC in its plans to renovate its current clubhouse which shall include developing additional storage, disabled toilets a referee's changing space and a club shop.

4.5: Rugby league – grass pitches

Assessment Report summary

- ✦ **As no demand has been identified within Walsall, there is no need at this time for any provision to be established.**
- ✦ **Focus should be placed on ensuring that any demand that does exist can be accommodated within clubs outside of the Borough.**
- ✦ There are no rugby league pitches in Walsall.
- ✦ The nearest provision is provided in Bromsgrove.
- ✦ No demand has been identified for rugby league in Walsall.
- ✦ Any residual need is unlikely to be sufficient enough for a club to be created, with individuals instead likely to travel to form part of the clubs based in other, nearby authorities.

No provision or demand within the Borough means no scenarios are needed.

Recommendations

- ✦ Ensure any current and future demand within Walsall can be sufficiently accommodated at rugby league clubs in neighbouring authorities.

4.6: Hockey pitches (sand/water based AGPs)

Assessment Report summary

- ✦ **All four of the community available full size AGPs require protection for continued hockey use.**
- ✦ **Resolving pitch quality issues at Sneyd Community Association (Sports) and Willenhall E-Act Academy should be seen as a priority.**
- ✦ **Capacity issues at Sneyd Community Association and Aston University (Recreation Centre) require a resolution, with club users either requiring access to secondary pitches (at suitable times), or new provision. Alternatively, football demand at the two aforementioned sites could be alleviated by the development of a new 3G which would in turn free up greater pitch access for hockey purposes.**
- ✦ There are four full size hockey suitable AGPs in Walsall, all of which are available to the community and floodlit.
- ✦ There is one smaller size pitch at Darlaston Community Association; however, this is unavailable to the community and is not of a sufficient size to accommodate purposeful demand.
- ✦ The full-size pitches at Willenhall E-Act Academy and Streetly Academy are operated by the respective schools, whereas provision at Aston University (Recreation Centre) is managed in house by the University.
- ✦ The remaining pitch at Sneyd Community Association is managed by the Community Association on behalf of the Council.
- ✦ Streetly HC is without security of tenure at The Streetly Academy, as are West Bromwich HC at Aston University (Recreation Centre) and Wednesbury HC at Willenhall E-Act Academy.
- ✦ The pitch at Sneyd Community Association is assessed as poor quality and is considerably exceeded its expected lifespans.
- ✦ The pitches at Aston University (Recreation Centre) and The Streetly Academy are assessed as standard quality.
- ✦ The majority of pitches are only accompanied by changing facilities rather than social space, leading many of the clubs to access off-site venues for clubhouse provision.

- ◀ The five hockey clubs in Walsall consist of 34 teams, which as a breakdown consists of 16 senior men's, six senior women's and nine junior teams as well as three other team varieties.
- ◀ Membership of the clubs has increased over the previous three years.
- ◀ Each club has plans to increase their membership, whilst Bloxwich HC expresses latent demand.
- ◀ Aldridge & Walsall HC holds Hockey Heroes sessions.
- ◀ Aldridge & Walsall and Streetly hockey clubs both hosts Back to Hockey sessions in the Borough.
- ◀ Wednesbury and Bloxwich HCs have received funding from the Commonwealth Game Legacy Fund to promote hockey in several schools in Walsall. It is expected this will lead to an increase in junior participation within these clubs.
- ◀ There is significant use of the AGPs for other activities, most notably in terms of football whether that be through formal training or via informal social use.
- ◀ Aston University (Recreation Centre) and Sneyd Community Association are currently operating at capacity for matches and training, whilst some capacity exists at Streetly Academy and Willenhall E-Act Academy.

Scenarios

Requirement for hockey suitable AGPs

Due to the level of demand within Walsall for hockey, there is a need to retain all existing full size sand-based AGPs for hockey. Additionally, as a priority the full-size sand-based provision located at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy (both in poor quality) need to be resurfaced to ensure hockey demand is not displaced or lost in the future due to a lack of provision in the Borough.

If a pitch was to be lost, or become unusable, a replacement facility would be required.

Sneyd Community Association - King George V Playing Field

The AGP provided at Sneyd Community Association needs replacement. The surface is very slippery and hazardous and match reports from opposition teams support this notion. In addition, weeds are visible, and one side of the pitch does not have functioning floodlights. The pitch is managed by the Community Association on behalf of the Council.

If the pitch comes out of use, Bloxwich HC will be without a home venue. It currently operates seven senior and eight junior teams, in addition to a mixed gender team with a total of c.180 members.

Ultimately, a decision needs to be made about the future of this facility. The Council has identified a King George V Playing Field (Bloxwich) as a site for potential development of a AGP which would replace existing provision at Sneyd Community Association.

A steering group with relevant partners should be set up to progress with this issue.

Recommendations

- ◀ Protect and improve quality of the AGP at Sneyd Community Association. If not possible, ensure replacement provision of equal or better quality is provided to ensure the future of hockey in Walsall. This will require an appropriate management structure to be created for the pitch. Appropriate ancillary facilities will also have to support usage of the pitch.
- ◀ Protect remaining stock of full size pitches to support community hockey.

- ◀ Ensure England Hockey is consulted with regarding any proposals for development of new 3G artificial grass pitches or proposed conversion to 3G of existing hockey AGPs, to ensure the sustainability and sufficient supply of existing AGPs for hockey.
- ◀ Ensure all hockey suitable AGPs have a sinking fund in place for their eventual refurbishment.
- ◀ Look to move football demand to other 3G facilities within the area to ensure there is enough capacity at the four-sand based AGP's for hockey usage, although ensure the pitches remain sustainable without football usage.
- ◀ Ensure that any large housing developments are provided for and assess the need for new pitch provision through master planning on an individual basis.
- ◀ Where a development is of a size to justify on-site hockey provision, ensure that any proposals for new pitches will attract adequate demand.
- ◀ Where a development is not of a size to justify on-site hockey provision, or if sufficient demand cannot be attracted, consider using contributions to improve existing sites within the locality.

4.7: Tennis courts

Assessment Report summary

- ◀ **Streetly TC has potential capacity issues; however, the Club has not reported this as being a concern, stating that demand can be accommodated on its existing supply of courts.**
- ◀ **Walsall TC requires, as a minimum, either three floodlit courts or five non-floodlit courts as part of any development of a new home venue following the loss of its previous site.**
- ◀ **Reedswood TC is likely to be satisfied at West Walsall E-Act Academy unless its membership is larger than 480 members.**
- ◀ **As no non-club courts are identified as have any capacity issues, precedence should be placed on improving quality to an adequate standard for informal play, particularly at publicly available sites hosting multiple courts.**
- ◀ There are a total of 63 tennis courts identified in Walsall across 20 sites, with 41 courts categorised as being available for community use at 13 sites.
- ◀ Walsall TC lost access to its home venue in 2017 and is now nomadic; it is working to find a suitable site to develop to re-establish as a home venue.
- ◀ The majority of courts are operated by schools, although only 41% of these are available for community use.
- ◀ The large majority of courts have a macadam surface, with 45 being of this type compared to 18 having an artificial surface.
- ◀ In total, 24 of the 63 tennis courts are serviced by floodlights, representing 38% of the provision.
- ◀ Of the courts, two are assessed as good quality, 48 as standard quality and 13 as poor quality.
- ◀ For non-club courts, ancillary provision is generally considered to be problematic
- ◀ There are three tennis clubs in Walsall; Streetly TC, Walsall TC and Reedswood TC.
- ◀ Streetly TC is the largest club, catering for 600 members, whereas Walsall TC has 57 members (details regarding Reedswood TC are unknown).
- ◀ Streetly TC states that its senior membership has increased over recent years, whilst Walsall TC has experienced a significant decrease following the loss of its home venue.
- ◀ Walsall TC reports future growth aspirations, with total future demand amounting to 105 potential additional members (70 senior and 35 junior), whereas Streetly TC does not have any ambitions to grow its membership.
- ◀ Clubspark and associated LTA initiatives are utilised in Walsall across 10 venues.

- ♦ A Local Tennis League is in operation, with primary venues considered to be Blackwood Park, Holland Park, Leamore Park, Pelsall Village Common, Pleck Park, Walsall Arboretum and Willenhall Memorial Park.

Scenarios

LTA Investment

The LTA has developed a package of support for LAs to grow the use of park tennis courts by removing key barriers to participation. The three products are ClubSpark, Rally and Gate Access and can be used individually or in combination. The products are used to provide a remote booking and access system.

Instead of providing free access, some local authorities are now securing their courts as per a membership scheme that allows members access through the use of a fob system following payment of a small yearly fee. Not only does this deter unofficial use of courts but it also allows official use to be tracked, thus providing data on how well and how often courts are being accessed. In addition, it provides income generation that can go towards ongoing maintenance of the courts.

The LTA has identified Blackwood Park, Holland Park, Leamore Park, Pelsall Village Common, Pleck Park, Walsall Arboretum and Willenhall Memorial Park as key sites across Walsall for the development of informal tennis. In order to facilitate this demand, it is likely that floodlights would have to be provided, where not already the case, in addition to quality improvements and the potential provision or improvement of supporting ancillary facilities.

In addition to this, Aldridge Airport and Oak Park have also been outlined as lapsed sites potentially being brought back into existence.

Walsall Tennis Club

In 2017, Walsall TC was forced from its home venue which it accessed on a lease arrangement from a private landowner. The site was subject to a planning application however it was not approved due to the need to mitigate the loss of the courts. The Club has since become nomadic and can only compete in competitions on an “away” basis, which means that its survival is ultimately underpinned by opponent clubs being accommodating of this.

Given the above, Walsall TC has now prepared a fully costed business plan for the development and ongoing maintenance of five tennis courts. It is searching for an appropriate location but has thus far been unable to find a suitable site.

Based on the Club’s current membership, it requires, as a minimum, either three floodlit courts or five non-floodlit courts as part of any development of a new home venue. Park sites which are currently being investigated for LTA investment, such as Oak Park and Aldridge Airport should be considered as potential options.

Recommendations

- ♦ Protect existing quantity of courts.
- ♦ Improve court quality at sites assessed as poor or standard quality and sustain quality at sites assessed as good, especially at sites in use by clubs or that are (or could be) well used for recreational demand.
- ♦ Linked to the above, improve park courts as a priority to create a year-round recreational tennis option to meet local demand.

- ◀ Explore options to further improve the recreational tennis offer via utilisation of technology provided by the LTA (e.g., Clubspark) to support the customer journey and through investment into facilities and accompanying ancillary provision.
- ◀ Work to secure a long term home for Walsall TC with a sufficient number of courts.
- ◀ Ensure Streetly TC and Reedswood TC can continue to be accommodated at their venues.
- ◀ Ensure sinking funds are put into place by providers for long-term sustainability.
- ◀ Explore installation of additional floodlighting at club-based venues, particularly at sites operating above the capacity guidance.
- ◀ Provide additional court space for clubs operating above the capacity guidance, where it is required, potentially via better utilisation of existing provision.
- ◀ Improve ancillary provision at club sites, where it is required.

4.8: Netball courts

Assessment Report summary

- ◀ **Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and no community use being allowed**
- ◀ **Given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a club/league facility to be provided in Walsall.**
- ◀ **Focus should instead be placed on supporting the various initiatives that are championed by England Netball and ensuring such programmes have suitable provision from which to be ran from.**
- ◀ There is a total of 60 netball courts identified in Walsall across 17 sites. Of these, 13 courts at five sites are available for community use.
- ◀ All but two outdoor netball court in Walsall are operated by education providers.
- ◀ The majority of outdoor netball courts have a macadam surface, with 57 being of this type; the remaining courts all have an artificial surface.
- ◀ All 60 of the courts are over marked by other sports provision.
- ◀ Only seven of the courts are serviced by floodlighting (at Grace Academy Darlaston and Willenhall E-Act Academy), which represents a significantly low percentage.
- ◀ Of the courts, two are assessed as good quality, 52 are assessed as standard quality and four are assessed as poor quality; of the community available courts, there are none rated as good quality, 13 rated as standard and two as poor.
- ◀ Three clubs are identified as being based in Walsall (Yendys Netball Club, Willenhall Wanderers Netball Club and Barr Beacon Netball Club); however, all this demand is accommodated via the use of indoor sports halls.
- ◀ Yendys Netball Club and Willenhall Wanderers Netball form part of the Walsall Netball League, with all matches played at Phoenix Collegiate, in Sandwell (exported demand).
- ◀ The League would like to use a venue in Walsall to better accommodate its demand but states that there is currently no suitable location to enable this.
- ◀ Back to Netball has been held at Bloxwich Active Living Centre, Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy (two sessions a week) and at the University of Wolverhampton.
- ◀ Walking Netball sessions are held at Manor Farm Community Centre and the University of Wolverhampton.
- ◀ Netball Now sessions are hosted at the University of Wolverhampton.

Scenarios

Accommodating netball demand

Given that the Walsall Netball League wants to remain in Sandwell, there is no identified requirement for a venue within Walsall. As such, any demand to be accommodate will relate to training requirements and recreational demand or will be linked to England Netball's initiatives. It is considered that this could be accommodate on the current level of provision, although increasing the number of community available courts and the number of courts with floodlighting may be needed.

Recommendations

- ◀ Protect quantity of courts.
- ◀ Seek to improve poor quality courts quality through resurfacing or improved maintenance.
- ◀ Explore options to increase floodlighting across Walsall.
- ◀ Open discussions with sites providing a large number of courts to determine whether provision could be opened for community use.
- ◀ Look to continue and expand the use of courts for England Netball initiatives such as Back to Netball and Walking Netball.
- ◀ Facilitate improved engagement between England Netball and schools.

4.9: Bowling greens

Assessment Report summary

- ◀ **Five sites are currently operating above the recommended capacity threshold for a bowling green.**
- ◀ **One green is operating below the required membership threshold (Walsall Arboretum).**
- ◀ **Four greens are unused.**
- ◀ There are 29 crown green bowls greens in Walsall provided across 28 sites.
- ◀ Overall, 26 greens are assessed as good quality and three as standard quality (none are assessed as poor quality).
- ◀ Five greens are serviced by floodlighting.
- ◀ Ancillary provision accompanying the greens is generally adequate, although some improvements and particularly modernisation is required at certain sites.
- ◀ There are 26 clubs using bowling greens in Walsall and they collectively cater for 901 members (at the 23 clubs where membership is known).
- ◀ The average membership across the clubs is 40.
- ◀ In correlation to a national trend of declining membership, four clubs report a reduction in participation over recent years, whereas Willenhall Trinity BC reports an increase.
- ◀ Due to a predicted increase in persons aged 65 and over (to 2039), demand is likely to increase for greens over the coming years.
- ◀ Pelsall BC expresses future demand, equating to potential growth of 10 senior members and 10 junior members, whilst all remaining responsive clubs are focusing on membership retention.
- ◀ Willenhall Nordley BC indicates that it requires an additional green to enable it to increase its demand.

Scenarios

Accommodating demand

As only Willenhall Nordley BC in Walsall indicates a requirement to access an additional green, potential options should be considered as part of a consultation with the Club. As a starting point, one of the four unused greens could be considered, providing that quality is sufficient.

Unused provision

With four unused greens and with no club other than Willenhall Nordley BC requiring additional access, consideration could be given to repurposing or developing those that are not needed. Alternatively, they could be held as strategic reserve should there be any growth in demand or the formation of new clubs.

Recommendations

- ◆ Retain existing quantity of in use greens and, as a minimum, sustain quality.
- ◆ Explore options to provide Willenhall Nordley BC with an additional green.
- ◆ Ensure that any potential development of remaining greens are mitigated in line with Sport England NPPF.
- ◆ Assist clubs, where possible, with any future ancillary provision improvements
- ◆ Support clubs with plans to increase membership so that growth can be maximised.
- ◆ Support Walsall Arboretum and Leckie Senior Citizens bowls clubs to increase membership levels to sustainable levels.

4.10: Cycling tracks

Assessment Report summary

- ◆ **There is active demand for cycling in Walsall, predominately in the form of road cycling, meaning focus should be place on ensuring the infrastructure is appropriate.**
- ◆ **With no dedicated cycling facilities in place, any demand for such provision should be directed towards venues and clubs in neighbouring authorities.**
- ◆ **There are no purpose built cycling facilities identified in the Walsall area.**
- ◆ **Provision is available in the remaining three Black Country authorities.**
- ◆ **Various infrastructure developments for Walsall are outlined in the Black Country Walking and Cycling Strategy and Implementation Plan’.**
- ◆ There are two British Cycling Affiliated Clubs in Walsall; Pelsall Social Cycling Club and Walsall RCC.
- ◆ The two clubs are both road cycling clubs and have a combined membership of 173 members.
- ◆ Across the Black Country region, there are a number of other cycling clubs, some of which specialise in other disciplines, such as Halesowen Cycling Club in Dudley and Wolverhampton Wheelers, in Wolverhampton.
- ◆ There is a small but active contingent involved in Breeze, with rides arranged from Walsall Arboretum.
- ◆ Sport England’s Segmentation Tool identifies latent demand of 9,876 people who would like to participate in cycling in Walsall.

Scenarios

N/A

Recommendations

- ◆ Look to continue and expand British Cycling programmes such as HSBC UK Go-Ride and HSBC UK Breeze.

- ◆ Ensure any current and future demand for dedicated facilities within Walsall can be sufficiently accommodated at Walsall Arboretum or similar sites or alternatively in neighbouring authorities.

4.11: Athletics tracks

Assessment Report summary

- ◆ **The supply of dedicated athletics facilities is sufficient to meet demand, although quality improvements may be required in the near future.**
- ◆ **Priority should be placed on supporting activity being accommodated by the various running clubs in Walsall and the events that are being held.**
- ◆ There is one purpose-built athletics track in Walsall, provided at the University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus).
- ◆ The venue provides a 200-metre “J” track with six lanes; it has a synthetic surface, is serviced by floodlighting and is available to the community.
- ◆ The track is standard quality with resurfacing required in the near future.
- ◆ It is serviced by good quality ancillary facilities.
- ◆ Four clubs have been identified that have a current focus on athletics and/or running activity, with none of these having a requirement for a purpose-built facility.
- ◆ None of the clubs consulted with have a waiting list in place and all clubs are open to gaining new members.
- ◆ Walsall Arboretum Running Club and Jog Walsall form part of the Run Together initiative.
- ◆ A Park Run event is held each week at Walsall Arboretum, whilst a junior Park Run event is held every Sunday at King George V Memorial Fields in Bloxwich.
- ◆ Annual events held in include the Walsall Run and the Race for Life.

Scenarios

N/A

Recommendations

- ◆ Ensure the track and supporting facilities at the University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus) is retained and remains in adequate condition.
- ◆ Support clubs, running groups, events and England Athletics initiatives such as Park Run and pursue increased participation, where possible.
- ◆ Continue to increase participation both within affiliated clubs and the wider running market, signposting potential club members from the likes of Parkrun events and other health initiatives.

4.12: Golf courses

Assessment Report summary

- ◆ **Walsall has a reasonable supply of golf provision, with a variety of facilities available and with capacity for growth.**
- ◆ **As no clubs have a significantly low membership and as levels have recently increased, it is apparent that each venue is required, meaning that each facility should be protect and supported to ensure long-term sustainability.**
- ◆ There are currently seven golf sites in Walsall.
- ◆ Six sites provide a standard hole course, all of which are 18-hole courses.
- ◆ A Par 3 course is provided at Fishley Park Leisure Centre.
- ◆ Aldridge Road Driving Range provides a 30-bay driving range, whilst Fishley Park Leisure Centre offers a 14-bay driving range; both are covered and floodlit.

- ◀ Five sites are members clubs, whilst Aldridge Road Driving Range and Fishley Park Leisure Centre are proprietary facilities.
- ◀ All clubs with a membership scheme in place (Fishley Park Leisure Centre does not operate membership) operate above the national average for membership costs.
- ◀ In terms of quality, it is relatively good across Walsall with a range of facilities available for players of differing abilities.
- ◀ Across the clubs with a membership scheme in place, there are 3,470 members.
- ◀ All clubs are operating above the national average for membership
- ◀ Furthermore, England Golf reports that membership has increased considerably over the last 12-18 months, with the average membership across the sites now 551 (compared to 444.8 when the data was collected).
- ◀ England Golf's mapping tool identifies a significant amount of potential demand, with Great Barr Golf Club shown to have a particularly high population base.
- ◀ Pay and play usage is unknown but is likely to be highest at sites such as Aldridge Road Driving Range (Calderfields Golf & Country Club) and Fishley Park Leisure Centre given the operational structures in place and the lower price points.

Scenarios

Calderfield Driving Range – development

If Calderfield Driving Range was to be lost through housing development, a suitable needs assessment would need to be independent undertaken inline with NPPF to determine any possible mitigation needs.

Recommendations

- ◀ Retain all existing golf provision unless separate needs assessments are completed that evidence that a facility can be lost or reduced without it impacting upon demand.
- ◀ Sustain course and ancillary facility quality and seek improvements where necessary.
- ◀ Support clubs in membership retention and potential growth and encourage clubs and providers to work more collaboratively in terms of creating pathways for players.

4.13: Water sports centres

Assessment Report summary

- ◀ **Via Chasewater Water Sports Centre (Cannock Chase), Sneyd Water Activity Centre and The Swag, Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority.**
- ◀ **Priority should be placed on protecting the provision and ensuring that quality remains sufficient, with support also required to maximise demand given the unique nature of the facilities.**
- ◀ Chasewater Water Sports Centre (Cannock Chase) provides facilities that are compatible with a number of water sports and other water-related activities.
- ◀ In addition, Sneyd Water Activity Centre is also used for some water sport activities such as canoeing and power boating, whilst The Swag is a reservoir frequently used for sailing by Aldridge Sailing Club.
- ◀ Brownhills Canoe and Outdoor Centre caters for canoeing within Walsall and is utilised by Royal Sutton Coldfield Canoe Club.
- ◀ Walsall is home to numerous clubs; Aldridge Sailing Club, Chase Sailing Club and Pier 52.
- ◀ Aldridge Sailing Club is based at The Swag reservoir which it utilises for all its activities.

- ◆ Chase Sailing Club and Chase Open Water Swimming Club both use Chasewater Water Sports Centre for its activities, as does Pier 52.
- ◆ Royal Sutton Coldfield Canoe Club operates with 100 members and uses Blackroot Pool, in Birmingham, and Brownhills Canoe and Outdoor Centre as its facility.

Scenarios

N/A

Recommendations

- ◆ Ensure existing provision is retained and supporting facilities remain of sufficient quality.
- ◆ Support clubs to maximise demand and fully utilise the unique facilities offered.

4.14: Other grass pitches

Assessment Report summary

- ◆ As no supply or demand has been identified for any of the sports in Walsall, no development actions are required.
- ◆ It is imperative that any isolated demand is directed towards clubs in neighbouring authorities to ensure that it is catered for without provision being required.
- ◆ There are no American football, baseball/softball, or Gaelic football pitches in Walsall.

Scenarios

N/A

Recommendations

- ◆ If demand is to arise for other sports which are not already established, ensure adequate provision is provided to allow participation to be sustained and encouraged to grow.

PART 5: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The strategic recommendations for the Strategy have been developed via the combination of information gathered during consultation, site visits and analysis which culminated in the production of an assessment report, as well as key drivers identified for the Strategy. They reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed, which apply across playing pitch facilities and may not be specific to just one sport.

AIM 1

To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sport facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs.

Recommendations:

- a. Ensure, through the use of the PPOSS, that outdoor sport facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.
- b. Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
- c. Maximise community use of education facilities where needed.

Recommendation (a) – Ensure, through the use of the PPOSS, that outdoor sport facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.

The PPOSS shows that all existing playing field and outdoor sport sites cannot be deemed surplus to requirements because of shortfalls now and in the future. As such, all provision requires protection or replacement until all identified shortfalls have been overcome. This includes lapsed, disused, underused and poor quality sites as there is a requirement for such provision to help meet and alleviate the identified shortfalls.

When shortfalls are evident, provision can only be permanently lost when the current picture changes to the extent that the site in question is no longer needed as a result of no shortfalls existing, or unless replacement provision is provided and agreed upon by all stakeholders. NPPF paragraph 99 states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- ✦ An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- ✦ The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- ✦ The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

The PPOSS should be used to help inform development management decisions that affect existing or new playing pitch provision and accompanying ancillary facilities. All applications are assessed by the Local Planning Authority on a case-by-case basis taking into account site specific factors. In addition, Sport England is a statutory consultee on planning applications that affect or prejudice the use of playing field used within the last five years and will use the PPS to help assess that planning application against its Playing Fields Policy.

Sport England Playing Field Policy Exceptions

Policy Exception E1:

‘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’.

Where the PPS cannot demonstrate that the site, or part of a site, is clearly surplus to requirements then replacement of the site, or part of a site, will be required to comply with the remaining Sport England policy exceptions.

Policy Exception E2

‘The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity and quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use’.

Policy Exception E3

‘The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

- ♦ Reduce the size of any playing pitch;
- ♦ Result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
- ♦ Reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain quality;
- ♦ Result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site;
- ♦ Prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site’.

Policy Exception E4:

‘The playing field or fields to be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new playing field site or sites:

- ♦ of equivalent or better quality and
- ♦ of equivalent or greater quantity;
- ♦ in a suitable location and;
- ♦ subject to equivalent or better management arrangements.

Policy Exception E5

‘The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice of use, of the area of playing field’.

Lapsed and disused sites should also be protected from development or replaced in accordance with Sport England’s policy exceptions as they currently provide a solution to reducing identified shortfalls. Any disused/lapsed playing fields are included within the Action Plan together with a recommendation in relation to bringing the site back into use or to mitigate the loss on a replacement site to address the shortfalls identified.

It may be appropriate to consider rationalisation of certain low value playing pitch sites (i.e. one/two pitch sites with no changing provision) to generate investment in creating bigger and

better venues (hub sites). It is vital, however, that there is no net loss of facilities and that replacement provision is in place and available for use prior to existing provision being lost.

Recommendation (b) – Secure tenure and access to sites through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.

A number of education sites are being used in the Borough for competitive play, predominately for football. The following schools are already used for community use at varying levels but have no secure community usage:

- ✦ Aldridge School
- ✦ Aston University (Recreation Centre)
- ✦ Beacon Primary School
- ✦ Blackwood School
- ✦ Bloxwich Academy
- ✦ Blue Coat Church of England Academy
- ✦ Elmwood School
- ✦ Grace Academy Darlaston
- ✦ Mayfield Preparatory School
- ✦ Ormiston Sheffield Community Academy
- ✦ Pelsall Village School
- ✦ St Francis Of Assisi Catholic College
- ✦ St Francis Of Assisi Catholic College
- ✦ St Thomas More Catholic School
- ✦ The Streetly Academy
- ✦ Walsall Academy
- ✦ West Walsall E-Act Academy
- ✦ Willenhall E-Act Academy

Not having fully formalised usage presents a risk for those clubs using these sites as community use could technically be terminated at any time. Securing community use at such as will help to create additional pitch capacity and could help to address deficiencies as demonstrated within the Football Scenarios.

Further partnership working with NGBs should be carried out to encourage schools to put in place CUA including access to changing provision where required.

Not having fully formalised usage presents a risk for those clubs using these sites as community use could technically be terminated at any time. Securing community use at such as will therefore help to create additional pitch capacity and could help to address deficiencies as demonstrated within the scenario section of this report.

For unsecure sites, NGBs, Sport England and other appropriate bodies such as the Black Country Consortium and the Football Foundation can often help to negotiate and engage with providers where the local authority may not have direct influence. This is particularly the case at sites that have received funding from these bodies or are going to receive funding in the future as community access can be a condition of any agreement.

In the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review, which announced significant public spending cuts, it is increasingly important for the Council to work with voluntary sector organisations to enable them to take greater levels of ownership and support the wider development and maintenance of facilities. To facilitate this, where practical, the Council should support and enable clubs to generate sufficient funds, providing this is to the benefit of sport.

The Council should further explore opportunities where security of tenure could be granted via lease agreements (minimum 25 years as recommended by Sport England and NGBs) so that clubs are in a position to apply for external funding. This is particularly the case at poor quality local authority sites, possibly with inadequate or no ancillary facilities, so that quality can be improved and sites developed.

Local sports clubs should be supported by partners including the Council or NGBs to achieve sustainability across a range of areas including management, membership, funding, facilities, volunteers and partnership work. For example, club development should be support and clubs should be encouraged to develop evidence of business and sports development plans to generate income via their facilities.

All clubs could be encouraged to look at different management models such as registering as Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC)⁷. They should also be encouraged to work with partners locally, such as volunteer support agencies or local businesses.

Each club interested in leasing a council site should be required to meet service and/or strategic recommendations. An additional set of criteria should also be considered, which takes into account club quality, aligned to its long-term development objectives and sustainability, as seen in the table below.

Table 5.1: Recommended criteria for lease of sport sites to clubs/organisations

Club	Site
<p>Clubs should have NGB accreditation award.</p> <p>Clubs commit to meeting demonstrable local demand and show pro-active commitment to developing school-club links.</p> <p>Clubs are sustainable, both in a financial sense and via their internal management structures in relation to recruitment and retention policy for both players and volunteers.</p> <p>Ideally, clubs should have already identified (and received an agreement in principle) any match funding required for initial capital investment identified.</p> <p>Clubs have processes in place to ensure capacity to maintain sites to the existing, or better, standards.</p>	<p>Sites should be those identified as 'Local Sites' (recommendation d) for new clubs (i.e. not those with a Borough-wide significance) but that offer development potential.</p> <p>For established clubs which have proven success in terms of self-management 'Key Centres' are also appropriate.</p> <p>Sites should acquire capital investment to improve or be leased with the intention that investment can be sourced to contribute towards improvement of the site.</p>

The Council could establish core outcomes to derive from clubs taking on a lease arrangement to ensure that the most appropriate are assigned sites. Outcomes may, for example, include:

- ◆ Increasing participation.
- ◆ Supporting the development of coaches and volunteers.
- ◆ Commitment to quality standards.
- ◆ Improvements (where required) to facilities, or at minimum retaining existing standards.

In addition, clubs should be made fully aware of the associated responsibilities/liabilities when considering leases of multi-use public playing fields. It is important in these instances that the site, to some degree, remains available for other purposes or for other users.

⁷ <http://www.cascinfo.co.uk/cascbenefits>

For clubs with lease arrangements already in place, these should be reviewed when fewer than 25 years remain to improve security of tenure and aid the attraction of funding; clubs with fewer than 25 years remaining on a lease agreement are unlikely to be eligible for external funding.

Recommendation (c) - Maximise community use of education facilities where needed

To maximise community use a more coherent, structured relationship with schools is recommended. The ability to access good facilities within the local community is vital to any sports organisation, yet many clubs struggle to find good quality places to play and train. In Walsall, pricing policies at facilities can be a barrier to access at some education sites but physical access, poor quality and resistance from schools to open up provision is also an issue, especially at some private schools and academies.

A large number of sporting facilities are located on education sites and making these available to sports clubs can offer significant benefits to both the schools and local clubs, as well helping to reduce identified shortfalls. It is, however, common for school provision not to be fully maximised for community use, even on established community use sites.

In some instances, facilities are unavailable for community use due to poor quality and therefore remedial works will be required before it can be established. The low carrying capacity of these facilities sometimes leads to them being played to capacity or overplayed simply due to curricular and extra-curricular use, meaning they cannot accommodate any additional use by the community.

Although there are a growing number of academies over which the Council has little or no control, it is still important to understand the significance of such sites and attempt to work with the schools where there are opportunities for community use. In addition, relevant NGBs have a role to play in supporting the Council to deliver upon this recommendation and communicating with schools where necessary to address shortfalls in provision.

Where new schools are provided in major new residential developments, they should be designed to facilitate community access, with opportunities for meeting the community's outdoor sports needs explored at the outset to maximise the potential for facility provision to be made within the developments, if appropriate. An example of this is ensuring the provision of youth 11v11 and/or youth 9v9 grass football pitches, given current shortfalls and their suitability for the playing format of students, or multi-use provision such as court that can accommodate both tennis and netball activity.

As detailed earlier, NGBs, the Active Partnership and Sport England can often help to negotiate and engage with schools where the local authority may have limited direct influence. This is particularly the case at sites that have received funding from the relevant bodies or are going to receive funding in the future as community access can be a condition of the funding agreement.

AIM 2

To **enhance** outdoor sport facilities and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

Recommendations:

- d. Maintain quality and seek improvements where necessary
- e. Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites.
- f. Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding
- g. Secure developer contributions

Recommendation (d) – Improve quality

There are a number of ways in which it is possible to improve quality, including, for example, addressing overplay and improving maintenance. Given that the majority of councils' face reducing budgets it is currently advisable to look at improving key sites as a priority (e.g. the largest sites that are the most overplayed or the poorest). The action plan within this document provides a starting point for this, identifying key sites, poor quality site and/or sites that are overplayed.

With such pressures on budgets, any wide-ranging direct investment into pitch quality is challenging and other options for improvements should be considered. This could be via asset transfer as highlighted in Objective 1, with clubs taking on maintenance, whilst other options may include equipment banks and the pooling of resources for maintenance.

Addressing quality issues

Quality across Walsall is variable but generally most pitches are assessed as poor or standard quality. Where facilities are assessed as standard or poor quality and/or overplayed, maintenance regimes should be reviewed and, where possible, improved to ensure that what is being done is of an appropriate standard to sustain/improve pitch quality. Ensuring continuance of existing maintenance of good quality sites is also essential.

Based upon an achievable target, using existing quality scoring to provide a baseline, a standard should be used to identify deficiencies and investment should be focused on those sites which fail to meet the proposed quality standard. For the purposes of quality assessments, the Strategy refers to pitches and ancillary facilities separately as being of 'good', 'standard' or 'poor' quality. However, some good quality sites have poor quality elements and vice versa (e.g., a good quality pitch may be serviced by poor quality changing facilities).

It is also important to note the impact the weather has on quality. The worse the weather, the poorer facilities tend to become, especially if no drainage systems are in place or if existing drainage systems are inadequate. This also means that quality can vary, year on year, dependent upon the weather and levels of rainfall.

If a poor quality site receives little or no usage that is not to say that no improvement is needed. It may instead be the case that it receives no demand because of its quality, thus an improvement in said quality will attract demand to the site, potentially from overplayed standard or good quality sites (thus reducing capacity issues).

In addition, without appropriate, fit for purpose ancillary facilities, good quality provision may be underutilised, especially by adults and female users who have more of a requirement. Changing facilities form the most essential part of this offer and therefore key sites should be given priority for improvement. For the majority of sports, no senior league matches can take place without appropriate changing facilities and the same also applies to women's and girls' demand.

For football, The FA has a Pitch Improvement Programme aimed at improving the standard of grass pitches across the Country. For provision included in the programme, clubs can utilise the services of the Football Foundation's PitchPower app to carry out a free on-site assessment of their pitches. This then provides the Grounds Management Association (GMA) with the detail needed to create a personalised, informative report to advise on how improvements can be made. Clubs then receive bespoke advice and support to help with any future actions, funding applications and equipment, with clubs getting access to discounted rates for machinery and consumables through local partnerships.

The tool is available across mobile apps and desktop and is open to access by all providers, including clubs, schools and local authorities. Following a PitchPower report, organisations can work towards the recommended dedicated maintenance regime identified to improve the quality of their pitches. Applicants are required to submit a PitchPower assessment for each of their pitches as a condition of a grant funding application for Football Foundation grass pitch investment, such as the Grass Pitch Maintenance fund.

For cricket and the ECB, the equivalent is the Grounds and Natural Turf Improvement Programme (GaNTIP), which is jointly funded by the ECB, FA, Football Foundation and the GMA. Its aim is to raise the standards of sports surfaces as well as the understanding of sports turf management practices among grassroots sports clubs across England Wales.

Specifically for tennis, the LTA has secured a £22 million investment fund to be put into public tennis courts across Britain, together with an £8.5 million investment from the LTA. This will see thousands of public park tennis courts that are in poor or unplayable condition improved for the benefit of the local communities. The LTA is working with the Council to access the funding for improvements in Walsall.

For the improvement/replacement of AGPs refer to Sport England and the NGBs 'Selecting the Right Artificial Surface for Hockey, Football, Rugby League and Rugby Union' document for a guide as to suitable AGP surfaces: [Link to Sport England artificial surfaces guidance](#)

Addressing overplay

In order to improve the overall quality of the outdoor facility stock; it is necessary to ensure that provision is not overplayed beyond recommended carrying capacity. This is determined by assessing quality (via a non-technical site assessment) and allocating a match limit to each (daily for hockey, weekly for football and rugby union and seasonal for cricket).

The FA, the RFU, the ECB and EH all recommend a number of matches that pitches should take based on quality, as seen in the table below. For other grass pitch sports, no guidelines are set by the NGBs although it can be assumed that a similar trend should be followed.

Table 5.2: Capacity of pitches (match equivalent sessions)

Sport	Pitch type	Good quality	Standard quality	Poor quality
Football	Adult pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Youth pitches	4 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Mini pitches	6 per week	4 per week	2 per week
Rugby union	Natural Inadequate (D0)	2 per week	1.5 per week	0.5 per week
Rugby union	Natural Adequate (D1)	3 per week	2 per week	1.5 per week
Rugby union	Pipe Drained (D2)	3.25 per week	2.5 per week	1.75 per week
Rugby union	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	3.5 per week	3 per week	2 per week
Cricket	One grass wicket One synthetic wicket	5 per season 60 per season	4 per season	0 per season
Hockey	Full size AGP	4 per day	4 per day	4 per day

For non-pitch sports, capacity is not linked to the number of matches taking place but rather the number of members (and other users) attracted to a site. For example, for tennis, a floodlit hard court is said to have capacity for 60 members, whereas a non-floodlit hard court has capacity for 40 members (this varies for grass courts). For bowls, a green is considered at capacity if it has over 80 members, whilst a membership of under 20 could be unsustainable.

It is imperative to engage with clubs to ensure that sites are not played beyond their capacity. Play should therefore be encouraged, where possible, to be transferred to alternative venues that are not operating at capacity. This may include transferring play to 3G pitches or to sites not currently available for community use but which may be in the future.

For cricket, an increase in the usage of NTPs is key to alleviating overplay as this allows for the transfer of junior demand from grass wickets. It also does not require any additional playing pitch space as NTPs can be installed in situ to existing squares.

For rugby union, additional floodlighting can mitigate some of the overplay as it allows training demand to be spread across a greater number of pitches or unmarked areas. If permanent floodlighting is not possible, portable floodlighting is an alternative, as is the installation of a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch.

Improving changing provision

There is a need to address changing provision at some sites in the Borough, these are generally centred at either club or council managed sites.

Sites which predominantly accommodate adult and/or older junior age group sports should be prioritised for improvements, whilst there is a trend for younger junior age groups (particularly for football) not to require use of changing provision, with suitable male and female toilet provision for players and spectators considered to be of greater importance. For example:

- ◆ Clayhanger Park
- ◆ Doebank Park
- ◆ Great Bridge Road
- ◆ Holland Park
- ◆ Lane Head FC
- ◆ Pleck Park

- ◀ Rushall Playing Field
- ◀ Shelfield Playing Field
- ◀ Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)
- ◀ The Aldridge Airport
- ◀ Walstead Road

Recommendation (e) – Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites

To allow for facility developments to be programmed on a phased basis the Council should adopt a tiered approach to the management and improvement of outdoor sport sites and associated facilities. Please refer to Part 6: Action Plan for the proposed hierarchy.

Recommendation (f) – Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding

Partners should ensure that appropriate funding secured for improved sports provision is directed to areas of need, underpinned by a robust strategy for improvement in outdoor sport provision and accompanying ancillary facilities.

To address community need, target priority areas and reduce provision duplication, a coordinated approach to strategic investment is required. In delivering this recommendation, the Council should maintain a regular dialogue with local partners through the PPS Steering Group.

Although some investment in new provision will not be made by the Council directly, it is important that the Steering Group directs and leads a co-ordinated approach to facility development whether made at/by education sites, NGBs, sports clubs and the commercial sector. This is to ensure that the extent to which it addresses community need is optimised and duplication is avoided.

One of sport's key contributions is its positive impact on public health. It is therefore important to lever in investment from other sectors such as, for example, health and wellbeing. Sport and physical activity can have a profound effect on peoples' lives, and plays a crucial role in improving community cohesion, educational attainment and self-confidence.

Recommendation (g) –Secure developer contributions

It is important that this strategy informs policies and supplementary planning documents by setting out the approach to securing sport and recreational facilities through new housing development.

For playing pitches, it is recommended the Council use Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator as a tool for helping to determine the additional demand for pitches and to estimate the likely developer contribution required linking to sites within the locality. This should form part of the Council working with Sport England to develop a process and guidance for obtaining developer contributions.

The calculator uses the current number of teams by sports pitch type contained within the Assessment Report and calculates the percentage within each age group that play that sport. That percentage is then applied to the population growth. The additional teams likely to be generated are then converted into match equivalent sessions and associated pitch requirements in the peak period, with the associated costs (both for providing the pitch/facility and for its life cycle) then given. The calculator splits the requirement into peak time demand for natural turf pitches, training demand for artificial grass pitches, and the number of new changing rooms required.

The PPOSS should be used to help determine the likely impact of a new development on demand and the capacity of existing sites in the area, and whether there is a need for improvements to increase capacity of existing provision or if new provision is required.

Where a development is located within access of existing high-quality provision, this does not necessarily mean that there is no need for further provision or improvement to existing provision, as additional demand arising from the development is likely to result in increased usage (which can result in overplay or quality deterioration).

Where it is determined that new provision is required to accompany a development, priority should be placed on providing facilities that contribute towards alleviating existing shortfalls within the locality. To determine what supply of provision is provided, it is imperative that the PPOSS findings are taken into consideration and that for particularly large developments consultation takes place with the relevant NGBs and Sport England. This is due to the importance of ensuring that the stock of facilities provided is correct to avoid provision becoming unsustainable and unused. The preference is for multi-pitch and potentially multi-sport sites to be developed, supported by a clubhouse and adequate parking facilities which consider the potential for future AGP development. This is because single-pitch facilities are more likely to become under-used (or unused), unviable and unsustainable.

It is recognised that consultation cannot take place with NGBs for every development due to resource restrictions. Instead, it is recommended that such discussions take place within PPOSS Steering Group meetings, which should take place regularly following adoption of the study as part of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation process. It is recommended that these take place every 6-12 months and inform the annual review/update (see Part 8 for further information).

The guidance should form the basis for negotiation with developers to secure contributions to include provision and/or enhancement of appropriate provision and subsequent maintenance. S106 contributions could also be used to improve the condition and of the pitches in order to increase pitch capacity to accommodate more matches.

As well as considering needs across the Black Country authorities, recognition should also be given to other neighbouring authorities, especially where there is already significant evidence of cross-border supply and demand activity. An example of this is the relationship between Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire.

To further assist with identifying investment opportunities, additional analysis should be undertaken in regards to major housing sites to show the spatial relationship between the proposed developments and major opportunities for new provision and facility improvements at existing sites for each relevant sport. This can be achieved via using the action plans within the individual PPOSS reports to identify sites in need of investment, mapping these against housing growth sites to help determine those most suitable to receive associated investment.

The above modelling will not only further help understand where investment should be directed, but it can in turn help secure contributions and provide evidence for securing funds for analysis areas that are different, but close by, to where the developments are located (including, where considered appropriate/necessary, cross-boundary areas). This is because some priority sites for investment may sit outside of an analysis area that is subject to the housing growth but that are still well placed to cater for the increased demand due to their location and importance.

Sport England often advises the use of a 20-minute drive time catchment area, recognising that sports teams and users do not necessarily acknowledge local authority boundary lines. Via Active Places, it also provides a Catchment Profile tool that can aid the mapping and site selection process.

Sport England recommends that a number of objectives should be implemented to enable the above to be delivered:

- ◀ Planning consent should include appropriate conditions and/or be subject to specific planning obligations. Where developer contributions are applicable, a S106 agreement or equivalent must be completed that should specify, when applied, the amount that will be linked to Sport England's Building Cost Information Service from the date of the permission and timing of the contribution/s to be made.
- ◀ Contributions should also be secured towards the first ten years of maintenance on new pitches (lifecycle costs), the cost of which is indicated by the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator. NGBs and Sport England can provide further and up to date information on the associated costs.
- ◀ External funding should be sought/secured to achieve maximum benefit from the investment into appropriate facility enhancement, alongside other open space provision, and its subsequent maintenance.
- ◀ Where new provision is provided, appropriate changing rooms and associated car parking should be located on site.
- ◀ All new or improved outdoor sports facilities on school sites should be subject to community use agreements.

For further information, please see Part 7 of this report.

AIM 3

To **provide** new outdoor sport facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.

Recommendations:

- h. Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock.
- i. Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

Recommendation (h) - Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock

The Council and its partners should work to rectify identified inadequacies and meet identified shortfalls as outlined in the preceding Assessment Report and the sport-by-sport specific recommendations (Part 4) as well as the following Action Plan (Part 6).

It is important that the current levels of provision are protected, maintained and enhanced to secure provision both for now and in the future. Maximising use of existing provision through a combination of the following will help to reduce shortfalls and accommodate future demand:

- ✦ Improving quality in order to improve the capacity to accommodate more demand.
- ✦ Transferring demand from overplayed sites to sites with spare capacity.
- ✦ The re-designation of facilities e.g. converting an unused pitch (or pitch type) for one sport to instead cater for another sport (or another pitch type).
- ✦ Securing community use at school sites including those currently unavailable.
- ✦ Working with commercial and private providers to increase usage.

The PPOSS identifies priority sites that should be focused upon, including those that are presently overplayed and/or poor quality, or unused sites that are particularly large. It also advises how issues can be overcome.

Recommendation (i) - Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand

The Steering Group should use and regularly update the Action Plan within this Strategy. The Action Plan lists recommendations for each site, focused upon both qualitative and quantitative improvements, which if delivered will lessen the need for new provision.

Linked to the above and as evidenced in Part 4, although there are identified shortfalls of match equivalent sessions, most current and future demand is currently being met and most shortfalls can be addressed via quality improvements and/or improved access to sites that presently used minimally or that are currently unavailable. Adding to the current stock, particularly in the short term, is only required in specific cases such as 3G pitches, potentially sand-based AGPs, the shortfall for which cannot be reduced without new stock. In the long term, there could theoretically be a need for new cricket provision to be provided to cater for affiliated cricket. This will need to be determined by the ECB and local county boards to understand the feasibility of accommodating demand from a mixture of clubs.

Large scale housing developments and the establishment of new schools may also necessitate the need for new provision. Where new schools are developed, there is an opportunity to combine the building of the School to the development of a new multi-sport site that will be of a benefit to the School as well as the wider community.

For housing developments, as outlined in Recommendation (g), Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator can be used as a guide to inform requirements. See Part 7 for further information.

PART 6: ACTION PLAN

The site-by-site action plan seeks to address key issues identified in the preceding Assessment Report. It provides recommendations based on current levels of usage, quality and future demand, as well as the potential of each site for enhancement. It is separated by analysis area and includes information pertaining to the sub sections below.

Site hierarchy

The Council should make it a high priority to work with NGBs and other partners to comprise a priority list of actions based on local priorities, NGB priorities and available funding. As stated in Recommendation (e), to allow for facility developments to be programmed within a phased approach, the Council should adopt a tiered approach to the management and improvement of playing pitch sites and associated facilities.

The identification of sites is based on their strategic importance in a Borough-wide context i.e., they accommodate the majority of demand, or the recommended action has the greatest impact on addressing shortfalls identified either on a sport-by-sport basis or across the Council area as a whole.

Table 6.1: Proposed tiered site criteria

Criteria	Hub sites	Key centres	Local sites
Site location	Strategically located in the Borough. Priority sites for NGBs.	Strategically located within the analysis area.	Serves the local community.
Site layout	Accommodates three or more grass pitches, generally including provision of an AGP (or with the potential).	Accommodates two or more grass pitches.	Accommodates one or two pitches.
Type of sport	Multi-sport provision. Could also operate as a central venue.	Single or multi-sport provision.	Generally single sport provision but may cater for two.
Management	Management control allows for wide community use, i.e., through the local authority, a leisure operator or a school with a community use agreement.	Management control generally allows for wide community use but may include sites that are owned or leased by clubs/other organisations.	Management control can be via the local authority, schools, clubs and other providers.
Maintenance regime	Maintenance regime aligns or could align with NGB guidelines.	Maintenance regime aligns or could align with NGB guidelines.	Standard maintenance regime or an in-house maintenance contract.
Ancillary facilities	Good quality ancillary facilities on site (or potential), with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches; may include wider social/function facilities.	Good quality ancillary facility on site (or potential), with sufficient changing rooms and car parking to serve the number of pitches.	Limited or no changing room access on site.

Hub sites are of Borough wide importance where users are willing to travel to access the range and high quality of facilities offered and are likely to be multi-sport. These have been identified on the basis of the impact that the site will have on addressing the issues identified in the assessment.

Key centres are more community focused, although some are still likely to service a wider analysis area (or slightly wider); however, there may be more of a focus on a specific sport i.e., a dedicated site.

It is considered that some financial investment may be necessary to improve the facilities at both hub sites and key sites. This could be to improve the provision, create additional provision (e.g., a 3G pitch) or to enhance the ancillary facilities in terms of access, flexibility (i.e., single-sex changing if necessary) and quality as well as ensuring that they meet the rules and regulations of local competitions.

Local sites refer to those sites offering minimal provision or that are of minimal value to the wider community. Primarily they are sites with one pitch/facility or a low number of pitches/facilities that service just one or two sports (e.g., bowling green sites).

For local authority sites local sites, consideration should be given, on a site-by-site basis, to the feasibility of a club taking on a long-term lease (if not already present), in order that external funding can be sought. Such sites will require some level of investment, either to the outdoor sport facilities or ancillary facilities and it is anticipated that one of the conditions of offering a hire/lease is that the Club would be in a position to source external funding to improve/extend the provision.

Other sites considered in this tier may be primary school sites or secondary school sites that are not widely used by the community or that do not offer community availability.

Partners

The column indicating partners refers to the main organisations that the Council would look to work with to support delivery of the actions.

Given the extent of potential actions, it is reasonable to assume that partners will not necessarily be able to support all the actions identified but where the action is a priority and resource is available the partner will endeavour to assist.

As all sites sit within the local authority area, the Council is considered to be a partner for each identified action (as the column indicates partners for the Council) and is therefore not included. However, it is acknowledged that it will take on more of a leading role for some specific sites and some specific actions (e.g., at council venues).

Priority

Although hub sites are mostly likely to have a **high** priority actions, as they have wide importance, these have been identified on the basis of the impact that the site will have on addressing the key issues identified in the assessment. Therefore, some key centres and local sites are also identified as having a high priority level. It is these projects/sites which should generally, if possible, be addressed within the short term (1-2 years).

The majority of key centres have **medium** priority actions. These have analysis area importance and are identified on the basis of the impact that they will have on addressing the issues identified in the assessment, although not to the same extent as high priority actions.

The **low** priority actions tend to be for single pitch or single sport sites and often club or education sites with local specific importance but that may also contribute to addressing the issues identified in the assessment for specific users. Whilst low priority, there may be opportunities to action some of the recommendations made against such sites relatively quickly e.g., through S106 funding.

Costs

The strategic actions have also been ranked as low, medium or high based on cost. The brackets are:

- ◀ (L) -Low - less than £50k
- ◀ (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k
- ◀ (H) -High £250k and above

These are based on Sport England's estimated facility costs which can be found at:
[Link to Sport England Cost Guidance](#)

Timescales

The Action Plan has been created to be delivered over a ten-year period and the information within the Assessment Report, Strategy and Action Plan will require updating as developments occur. The indicative timescales relate to delivery times and are not priority based:

- ◀ (S) -Short (1-2 years)
- ◀ (M) - Medium (3-5 years)
- ◀ (L) - Long (6+ years)

Aim

Each action seeks to meet at least one of the three Sport England aims of the Strategy; **Enhance, Provide, Protect.**

WALSALL COUNCIL STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

ANALYSIS AREA 1

Summary

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area One	Adult	Spare capacity of 1.5	Spare capacity of 1
Football	Area One	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 2.5
Football	Area One	Youth 9v9	Spare capacity of 4.5	Spare capacity of 4.5
Football	Area One	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area One	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 0.5	Spare capacity of 0.5
Football (3G pitches) ^[2]	Area One	Full size	Shortfall of 0.75	Shortfall of 1
Cricket	Area One	Saturday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area One	Sunday	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 12
Cricket	Area One	Midweek	Spare capacity of 18	Spare capacity of 18
Rugby union	Area One	Senior	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

Summary non-pitch sports

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites)	Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites)
Netball	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.
Bowls	Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to be sustainable. Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability.	Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. Shortfalls aren't expected to increase but could need monitoring relative to changes in demographics in the Borough.

^[2] Based on accommodating 38 teams on one full size pitch

WALSALL COUNCIL STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Athletics	No provision within catchment. All provision based in Area 4. This serves all demand across Walsall. Need to protect quality and improve when needed in the future.	No provision within catchment. All provision based in Area 4. This serves all demand across Walsall. Need to protect quality and improve when needed in the future.
Cycling	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.
Golf	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.
Water sports	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.
Other sports	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Protect provision. ◆ Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Clayhanger Park and Fordbrook. ◆ Formalise community use agreements for clubs utilising unsecure sites. ◆ Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs such as Fordbrook to Pelsall Villa Colts. ◆ Enable use of currently unavailable sites. ◆ Improve changing facilities where required.

WALSALL COUNCIL STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Sport	Priority recommendations
3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches. Identify a site suitable to provide an additional full-size pitch. Potential options (which require full feasibility work to determine their viability) include, Manor Farm School, Ormiston Shelfield Academy and Elmwood School.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve changing facilities where required. Replace outdated NTP at Rushall CC.
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision.
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Seek to improve park courts such as Holland Park that are utilised in a local league
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision.
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision.
Water sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Other sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ⁸	Cost ⁹	Aim
20	Brownhills Ormiston Academy	Football	School	Two adult, one youth 9v9 and two mini 7v7 pitches all of a standard quality and unavailable for community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime. Explore the possibility of opening pitches to community use.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
		Rugby Union		One non floodlit poor quality senior pitch with no community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular demand. Explore the possibility of opening pitches to community use.	School RFU		L	L	L	
		Netball		Four poor quality non floodlit macadam courts not available to the community.	Explore the possibility to resurface courts as to improve curricular offering. Explore the possibility of opening pitches to community use.	School EN		L	L	M	
24	Clayhanger Park	Football	Council	Two poor quality adult pitches with poor quality ancillary provision that are available for community use and overplayed. Site has been identified by the LFFP for pitch improvement projects.	Following the LFFP, explore possibilities to improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime and potential investment into drainage systems as to alleviate overplay. Also, if possible improve poor quality ancillary provision.	Council CFA FF	Local	M	M	M	Protect
29	Fordbrook	Football	Council	Five poor quality adult pitches with two youth 9v9 pitches and an overmarked mini 7v7 on one of the adult pitches. Pelsall Villa Colts FC aspire to gain a 25-year lease of the site but have been unable to do so as of present. Site has been targeted for pitch improvements in the LFFP. Site has no ancillary offering.	If possible, grant Pelsall Villa Colts a 25-year lease of the site. This can in turn provide the Club with much needed secure pitch access whilst also enabling investment into pitch improvements and long term the installation of ancillary provision on site.	Council CFA FF	Local	H	S	H	Protect Provide Enhance
38	Holland Park	Football	Council	One adult and one youth 9v9 pitch, both of which are of a standard quality with an additional poor quality mini 5v5 pitch. Site is open to community use and has actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session on the youth 9v9 pitch.	Utilise actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session on the youth 9v9 pitch. Improve quality of mini 5v5 pitch as to bring it up to the level of playing surface seen on the adult and youth 9v9 pitches.	Council CFA FF	Local	H	S	L	Enhance Protect
		Tennis		Two poor quality non floodlit macadam tennis courts open to community use. Site is used for a local tennis league.	Given the sites importance and high usage through in the local tennis league, the two courts should be prioritised for re-surfacing as to improve quality.	Council LTA SE		H	M	H	
48	Manor Farm School Community Association	3G	Community charity	One 60 x 35 metre 3G pitch open to community use with no accompanying floodlights.	Explore the possibility to install floodlights on site. Maximise utilisation and sustain levels of quality of provision. Ensure a sinking fund is in place for the site	Council CFA FF	Local	S	L	M	Provide Protect
52	Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy	Football	School	Two poor quality adult pitches open to community use that are played at capacity.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular and community demand.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	S	L	L	Enhance Protect
		3G		One standard quality 106 x 70 metre 3G pitch that was surfaced in 2011 and is not FA or FIFA approved	Given the age of the surface, if financially viable install a new surface as to renovate the quality of provision.	School CFA, FF SE		H / M	S	H	

⁸ (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-5 years); (L) - Long (6+ years)

⁹ (L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ⁸	Cost ⁹	Aim
		Rugby Union		One poor quality, non-floodlit senior rugby pitch that is open to community use but un-used.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular and community demand.	School RFU		S	L	L	
		Netball		Four standard quality, non-floodlit macadam courts that are open to community use. Site is used for back to netball sessions.	Ensure quality of courts sustain to a good level as to provide a good playing surface for back to netball sessions.	School EN		S	L	L	
54	Pelsall Cricket & Sports Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality Cricket square open to community use with actual spare capacity for midweek play.	Utilise actual midweek spare capacity. Continue current maintenance programs as to ensure good quality is sustained.	Sports Club ECB	Local	S	L	L	Protect
55	Pelsall Village School	Football	School	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch open to community use with actual spare capacity discounted due to pitch quality.	Improve pitch quality through a more rigorous maintenance program. This can then enable actual spare capacity to be utilised.	School CFA FF	Local	S	L	L	Enhance Protect
61	Elmwood School	Football	School	One mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch both of which are of a poor quality. 5v5 has actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular and community demand. Utilise actual spare capacity.	School CFA FF	Local	S	L	L	Enhance Protect
62	Rushall Cricket Club	Football	Sports Club	One poor quality adult pitch open to community use that has spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support community demand. Following this spare capacity can be utilised as pitch will have a larger carrying capacity.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	S	L	L	Protect Enhance Provide
		Cricket		One standard quality square used by Rushall CC that have a rental agreement with WMBC. Site has spare capacity for Sunday and midweek play and has an NTP that is in need of replacement.	Replace on site NTP. Improve maintenance program as to raise quality from standard to good. Utilise spare Sunday and midweek capacity.	Sports Club ECB SE Council		S	L	S	
63	Rushall Olympic Football Club (Dales Lane)	3G	Sports Club	One FIFA approved, 105 x 72 metre floodlit 3G that is open to community use.	Sustain current levels of maintenance as to continue quality of provision. Ensure all free capacity is utilised as to maximise usage and revenue. Ensure a sinking fund is set in place for the site.	Sports Club CFA FF	Key Centre	M	L	M	Protect
64	Rushall Playing Field	Football	Council	One standard qual adult pitch with actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session. Site is serviced by poor quality ancillary provision.	Improve poor quality on site ancillary provision. Utilise actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session.	Council CFA FF	Local	H	M	H	Enhance Protect
66	Ryders Hayes School	Football	School	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch that is unavailable for community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular demand. Following this explore opening to community use.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect
68	Shelfield Playing Field	Football	Council	Two standard quality adult pitches, serviced by poor quality ancillary provision with actual spare capacity of two match equivalent sessions.	Improve on site ancillary provision as to enhance the surrounding experience of using the site. Utilise actual spare capacity of two match equivalent sessions.	Council CFA FF	Local	M	M	H	Enhance Protect
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green with no known user.	Continue current maintenance regime as to sustain levels of quality.	BCGBA Council		L	L	L	

**WALSALL COUNCIL
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Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ⁸	Cost ⁹	Aim
69	Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)	Football	Sports Club	Two adult, one youth 11v11, three youth 9v9, three mini 7v7 and two mini 5v5 pitches all of which are of a standard quality and open to community use. Site has actual spare capacity of 10 match equivalent sessions across all pitches other than the youth 11v11 pitch which is overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions. Site has been identified for pitch improvements in the LFFP.	Utilise actual spare capacity. Follow up on work done through the LFFP to improve pitch quality.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	H	S	L	Enhance Protect
73	St James Primary School	Football	School	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch with no community use.	Retain for curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
108	Pellsall Community Centre	Tennis	Council	Two poor quality non-floodlit macadam courts open to community use.	If viable re-surface existing courts as to improve quality of offering at the site.	LTA Council	Local	M	M	M	Enhance Provide
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality green. The local club has aspirations to grow its membership by 20 members.	Ensure that maintenance regime is very comprehensive as to enable a very good quality surface to accommodate large quantity of demand.	BCGBA Council	Local	L	L	L	Protect
109	Rushall Labour Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green with a stable current and future membership balance.	Sustain green quality through current maintenance regime as to ensure quality does not decline.	Sports Club BCGBA Council	Local	L	L	L	Protect
128	Walsall Wood School	3G	School	One 28 x 18 metre 3G pitch with no floodlights or community use.	Sustain for curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Local	M	L	L	Protect Provide
	<i>Bush Ground (Pelsall Villa FC) disused site</i>	Football	Council	Former home ground of Pelsall Villa FC. The Club was expelled from the Midlands League after failing to fulfil fixtures. It has since disbanded, and the ground has become derelict. A supermarket is currently progressing plans to develop the site.	Ensure any loss of provision meet both NPPF and Sport England Playing Field Policy. If plans to develop a supermarket do not progress, consider opportunities to reinstate to reduce shortfall on grass pitch stock.	Council CFA FF SE	Local	M	M	M	Protect Enhance Provide

ANALYSIS AREA 2

Summary

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area Two	Adult	Spare capacity of 5	Spare capacity of 4
Football	Area Two	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 5.5
Football	Area Two	Youth 9v9	Spare capacity of 3	Spare capacity of 3
Football	Area Two	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Football	Area Two	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Football (3G)	Area Two	Full size	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1.25
Cricket	Area Two	Saturday	Shortfall of 14	Shortfall of 14
Cricket	Area Two	Sunday	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2
Cricket	Area Two	Midweek	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2
Rugby union	Area Two	Senior	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

Summary non-pitch sports

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	There is a theoretical shortfall of capacity at Streetly TC. Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites)	There is a theoretical shortfall of capacity at Streetly TC. Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites)
Netball	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.
Bowls	Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. These are: Bloxwich Bowls Club Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club Pelsall Community Centre	Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. These are: Bloxwich Bowls Club Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club Pelsall Community Centre

WALSALL COUNCIL STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
	<p>Short Heath Liberal Club</p> <p>Trinity Bowls Club</p> <p>This overuse is marginal and manageable on all sites. Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to be sustainable. Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability.</p>	<p>Short Heath Liberal Club</p> <p>Trinity Bowls Club</p> <p>This overuse is marginal and manageable on all sites. At the other end of the spectrum, Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to be sustainable. Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability</p>
Athletics	No provision within catchment. All provision based in Area 4. This serves all demand across Walsall. Need to protect quality and improve when needed in the future.	No provision within catchment. All provision based in Area 4. This serves all demand across Walsall. Need to protect quality and improve when needed in the future.
Cycling	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.
Golf	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.
Water sports	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.
Other sports	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Doebank Park, Aldridge Community Centre and St Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College. Formalise community use agreements for clubs utilising unsecure sites such as Aldridge School. Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs if appropriate. Enable use of currently unavailable sites. Improve changing and other facilities where required, such as the covered stand at BBG Stadium Oak Park.
3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches. Look to provide an additional full-size pitch within the Analysis Area to cater for future demand, with Aldridge Airport outlined as the priority site (consider need for two full size pitches if it can accommodate demand from further afield than just this analysis area). Other potential sites, if Aldridge Airport is not viable (all of which require a full feasibility to determine viability include Barr Beacon Leisure Centre and Shire Oak Academy).
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve existing provision at to enhance square quality and reduce overplay. Explore the means of installing additional provision as to support existing and future projected shortfalls for Saturday peak time cricket.
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve quality of existing provision. Seek aiding the installation of new floodlights at Aldridge Rugby Club
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade existing floodlights provided at The Streetly Academy to LED as to better service hockey demand. Ensure a sinking fund is provided as to financially prepare for pitch the replacement at The Streetly Academy.
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision.
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Seek to improve park courts such as Blackwood Park that are utilised in a local league
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision.
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision.
Water sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Other sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁰	Cost ¹¹	Aim
2	Aldridge Rugby Club	Rugby Union	Sports Club	Two poor quality senior pitches, one of which is floodlit. The Club report frequent drainage issues of the site. Ambitions of the Club are to install floodlights on the second pitch.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support club demand. Seek possible grants and invest retained profits towards the installation of new floodlights on the second pitch.	Sports Club RFU SE	Local	M	L	L	Enhance Protect
3	Aldridge School	Football	School	Two adult, one youth 9v9 and three mini 5v5 pitches all of which are of a standard quality that are open to community use. Spare capacity has been discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Look to formalise a community use agreement to provide users with security of tenure.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance Provide
		Cricket		One poor quality NTP with no community use.	Replace existing NTP as to improve quality.	School ECB		L	L	L	
		Rugby Union		One poor quality, non-floodlit senior pitch that is open to community use but is unused.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular demand. Following this explore establishing a link with a Club as to utilise the pitch.	School RFU		L	L	L	
		Netball		Four standard quality macadam courts and two good quality artificial courts all of which are non-floodlit and not open to the community.	Explore the possibility of opening provision to the community as to utilise the standard quality offering. If viable seek to install floodlights on site.	School EN		L	L	L	
4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	Football	Sports Club	Two adult and one youth 11v11 pitch all of which are of a standard quality and open to community use. Adult pitches have actual spare capacity of 1.5 match equivalent sessions, whilst the youth 11v11 is overplayed by four. The Club have previously expressed a formal interest in installing a 3G pitch however they have not progressed with ambitions.	Utilise actual spare capacity on adult pitches and if possible, re-distribute balance of supply usage as to reduce overplay on the youth 11v11 pitch.	Sports Club CFA FF SE	Local	M	M	H	Provide Protect Enhance
		Cricket		Two standard quality Cricket squares with one accompanying non turf wicket. Site has no spare capacity for additional Cricket.	Improve square quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support Club demand.	Sports Club ECB		L	L	L	
8	Barr Beacon Leisure Centre	Football	School	Two adult and four youth 11v11 pitches all of which are of a poor quality and available for community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular and external demand.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance Provide
		Cricket		One standalone NTP that is available for community use and un-used.	Seek means of utilise available existing provision.	School ECB		L	L	L	
		Rugby Union		One poor quality senior pitch that is open to community use but unused.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular demand. Following this seek methods to entice local clubs to access the site.	School RFU		L	L	L	
		Netball		Four standard quality, non-floodlit macadam courts that are open to community use.	Explore possibility of installing floodlights on site. Aim to maximise community use of courts.	School EN		L	L	L	

¹⁰ (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-5 years); (L) - Long (6+ years)

¹¹ (L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁰	Cost ¹¹	Aim
9	BBG Stadium Oak Park	Football	Sports Club	Two standard quality adult pitches, one of which has actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions. Site is used by Walsall Wood FC who expressed an interest to develop two 5v5 3G pitches on the council land behind the main stand. Existing drainage for the pitches are not connected to the sewers which limits its effectiveness. Covered stand is also in need of repair due to very old rusty framework holding the stand and rotten wooden benches for seating.	Support 3G development aspiration, considering potential programme of use for affiliated football and recreational football. There is a need to further determine what this development may have on any full size pitch development. If financially viable connect current drainage to nearby sewer system as to enhance drainage of the pitches. Renovate the existing covered stand by replacing metal framework support the cover as well as upgrading the rotten wooden benches used as seating.	Sports Club CFA FF SE	Local	M	M	H	Provide Enhance
14	Blackwood School	Football	School	One poor quality mini 7v7 pitch that is open to community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular demand.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect
28	Doebank Park	Football	Council	Two adult, one youth 9v9 and one mini 7v7 pitch all of which are of a standard quality. Site has actual spare capacity of three match equivalent sessions and has been identified for pitch improvements in the LFFP.	Seek possibility to improve pitch quality following site identification from the LFFP. Utilise actual spare capacity of three match equivalent sessions.	Council CFA FF	Local	L	M	L	Enhance Protect
45	Leighswood School	Football	School	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch that is unavailable for community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular demand.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect
50	Oak Park Active Living Centre	3G	Council	One 106 x 70 metre floodlit FA approved community use pitch that was laid in 2017. Site was targeted for a second 3G pitch, however a feasibility study deemed it not achievable	Given the feasibility study deemed the site not feasible for a second 3G, efforts should be focused on ensuring pitch quality is sustained and capacity is as utilised as possible. Ensure a sinking fund is in place for the site as to guarantee long term sustainability.	Council CFA FF	Local	M	L	M	Enhance Protect
51	Oak Park Leisure Centre	Lawn Bowls	Council	One good quality bowling green with stable current and future demand for quantity of users.	Maintain current levels of maintenance as to ensure quality of provision does not decline in quality.	BCGBA Council	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect Enhance
		Tennis		Three lapsed tennis courts that the LTA are looking to re-instate.	Look to support the LTA in bringing back the lapsed provision into existence.	Council LTA		M	M	M	
70	Shire Oak Academy	Football	School	Four adult and one mini 5v5 pitch all of which are to a standard quality and unavailable to community use. Site received a pitch improvement plan visit within the last six years.	Continue the delivery of pitch improvement plan as to further enhance quality. Explore possibilities to open the site up to the general public.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	M	S	L	Enhance Protect
		Cricket		One standalone NTP that is available from community use and un-used.	Explore means of utilising existing provision.	School ECB		L	L	L	
		Rugby Union		One poor quality senior pitch that is open to community use but un-used. Pitch has actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions discounted due to poor quality.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular demand. Following this actual spare capacity will no longer be discounted and the school should seek means of utilising.	School RFU		L	L	L	

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁰	Cost ¹¹	Aim
		Netball		Two standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights that are open to community use.	Seek possibility to install floodlights if feasible and open to community use as to support existing demand.	School EN		L	L	L	
72	St Francis Of Assisi Catholic Technology College	Football	School	Two adult, two youth 11v11 and one youth 9v9 pitch all of which is of a poor quality and open to community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular and community demand.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	M	M	L	Enhance Protect Provide
		Cricket		One standalone NTP that is open to community use and unused.	Seek to protect existing provision as to ensure it is not replaced.	School ECB		L	L	L	
		Tennis		Six standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights that are not open to community use. Courts are overmarked by netball.	Seek possibility to install floodlights on site. Following this explore opening to community use.	School LTA		L	L	L	
		Netball		Six standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights that are not open to community use. Courts are overmarked by tennis.	Seek possibility to install floodlights on site. Following this explore opening to community use.	School EN		L	L	L	
76	The Aldridge Airport	Football	Council	Five standard quality youth 9v9 pitches open to community, with actual spare capacity of four match equivalent sessions. Site is principle option for 3G installation as to address current shortfalls.	Utilise actual spare capacity of four match equivalent sessions. Explore possibility to further enhance quality of existing provision. Explore the possibility of installing a full size 3G pitch as to address current shortfalls.	Council CFA FF	Local	H	S	H	Enhance Protect Provide
		Tennis		Two lapsed tennis courts that the LTA have intentions to bring back into existence.	If feasible look to support the LTA in its ambitions to re-instate the lapsed provision.	Council LTA		M	M	M	
77	The Mckechnies Ground	Football	Sports Club	One youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch all of which is to a standard quality and open to the community. The mini 5v5 pitch has actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session.	Utilise existing spare capacity on 5v5 pitch.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	H	S	L	Enhance
78	The Streetly Academy	Football	School	One adult and one youth 9v9 pitch that are of a standard quality and open to community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular and community demand.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	M	S	L	Protect Provide
		Cricket		One standalone NTP open to community use and un-used.	Protect existing provision.	School ECB		L	L	L	
		AGP		One standard quality 100 x 60 metre sand dressed pitch that was installed in 2012. The school has plans to upgrade the accompanying floodlights that were first installed in 1999. Site has spare capacity for matches and training.	Upgrade existing floodlights to LED specification as to better service Streetly HC training sessions as well as football demand. Utilise spare capacity. Ensure a sinking fund is in place for the site.	School CFA FF		M	M	L	
		Tennis		Three standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights that are open to community use. Courts are overmarked by netball.	Seek possibility to install floodlights and increase community usage.	School LTA		L	L	L	
		Netball		Three standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights that are open to community use. Courts are overmarked by tennis.	Seek possibility to install floodlights and increase community usage.	School EN		L	L	L	

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁰	Cost ¹¹	Aim
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	Football	Sports Club	One mini 7v7 and one youth 9v9 pitch both of which are open to community use. Pitches are overmarked on the rugby pitch and are of a standard quality.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support demand. If pitch is predominantly used for football purposes, ensure grass is cut to appropriate length and football markings remain clear.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	L	M	L	Protect Enhance
		Rugby Union		Four senior and one mini pitch all of which are of a standard quality and two have accompanying floodlights. Site has actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session as well as having overplay of 1.5 match equivalent sessions.	Re-distribute current pitch allocation as to reduce overplay on site.	Sports Club RFU		M	M	L	
98	Druids Heath Golf Club Ltd	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole course club with the highest membership rates within Walsall of 550 people.	Sustain existing course maintenance to ensure quality does not decline.	Sports Club EG	Local	L	L	L	Protect
99	Fairlawns Club	Tennis	Commercial	Two good quality community use macadam courts with no floodlights.	Explore the possibility of installing floodlights on site and ensure court quality does not decline through effective maintenance.	Sports Club LTA	Local	L	L	L	Provide Protect
100	Great Barr Golf Club	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole course club with 423 members within the Club. Site has the largest potential demand of golf clubs within Walsall as identified by England Golf.	Sustain existing course maintenance to ensure quality does not decline.	Sports Club EG	Local	L	L	L	Protect
104	Bronze Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality square with an accompanying poor quality NTP that needs replacing. Site has actual spare capacity for additional Sunday and midweek cricket.	Replace poor quality NTP with a new surface as to improve provision. Utilise actual spare capacity available for Sunday and midweek play.	Sports Club ECB SE	Local	M	L	L	Provide Protect Enhance
105	Streetly Sports Club	Football	Sports Club	Two standard quality adult pitches that are open to community use and have no spare capacity during peak period.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support demand	Sports Club CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Enhance Protect
		Cricket		One standard quality square with no spare capacity for additional cricket. Site is overplayed by 4 sessions a season.	Seek possibility to install an NTP as to alleviate current overplay.	Sports Club ECB	Key Centre	L	L	L	Provide Protect
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green accessed by Streetly BC who have the maximum number of members per green following loosely defined guidelines by the BCGBA.	Ensure green maintenance maintains to a good standard as to support the high demand seen.	Sports Club BCGBA	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect
111	Aldridge Community Centre	Football	Community	Two poor quality adult pitches open to community use with actual spare capacity discounted due to quality.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support demand. Following this utilise spare capacity that will become available through the pitches having larger carrying capacities.	Community CFA FF	Local	M	M	L	Enhance Protect
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality green with sustainable current and future membership figures at its site.	Ensure green maintenance maintains to a good standard as to support current demand.	Community BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
112	Anchorage 55+ Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green accessed by Anchorage 55+ BC.	Ensure green maintenance maintains to a good standard as to support current demand.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect

**WALSALL COUNCIL
STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN**

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁰	Cost ¹¹	Aim
113	Aldridge Library	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality floodlit bowling green accessed by Aldridge Cons BC and Aldridge Cons B BC. Site has sustainable current future membership figures.	Ensure green maintenance maintains to a good standard as to support the high demand seen.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
114	Queslett BC	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green accessed by Queslett BC. Current membership figures of the Club are unknown.	If provision is being accessed by a club, ensure green maintenance maintains to a good standard. If no-one is accessing the site approach larger scales clubs in the area for a possible second green as to alleviate overplay.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	M	M	L	Protect Provide
116	Streetly Methodise Recreation Centre	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality green with sustainable current and future membership figures at its site.	Ensure green maintenance maintains to a good standard as to support the high demand seen.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
120	Blackwood Park	Tennis	Council	One poor quality non floodlit macadam court open to community use and is used in a local Walsall league.	Improve court quality through re-surfacing of existing provision as to support demand from the local league.	Council LTA SE	Local	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
124	Streetly Tennis Club	Tennis	Sports Club	Ten standard quality community use artificial tennis courts, nine of which are floodlit. Club have ambitions to re-surface two of its older courts in the near future.	Re-surface two of the older courts when required. Seek possibility to install floodlights on the remaining court.	Sports Club LTA	Local	M	M	M	Enhance Protect Provide
127	St Peters Catholic Primary	Football	School	One poor quality 5v5 pitch with no community use.	Retain for curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect

ANALYSIS AREA 3

Summary

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area Three	Adult	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 1.5
Football	Area Three	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area Three	Youth 9v9	At capacity	At capacity
Football	Area Three	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area Three	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity
Football (3G)	Area Three	Full size	Shortfall of 0.75	Shortfall of 0.75
Cricket	Area Three	Saturday	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 12
Cricket	Area Three	Sunday	Spare capacity of 24	Spare capacity of 24
Cricket	Area Three	Midweek	Spare capacity of 38	Spare capacity of 38
Rugby union	Area Three	Senior	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall of 1.5
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

Summary non-pitch sports

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites)	Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites)
Netball	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.
Bowls	Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. These are: Bloxwich Bowls Club Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club Pelsall Community Centre Short Heath Liberal Club Trinity Bowls Club	Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. These are: Bloxwich Bowls Club Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club Pelsall Community Centre Short Heath Liberal Club Trinity Bowls Club

WALSALL COUNCIL STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
	This overuse is marginal and manageable on all sites. Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to be sustainable. Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability.	This overuse is marginal and manageable on all sites. At the other end of the spectrum, Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to be sustainable. Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability
Athletics	No provision within catchment. All provision based in Area 4. This serves all demand across Walsall. Need to protect quality and improve when needed in the future.	No provision within catchment. All provision based in Area 4. This serves all demand across Walsall. Need to protect quality and improve when needed in the future.
Cycling	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.
Golf	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.
Water sports	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.
Other sports	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.

Overarching Recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Leamore Park. Where pitches remain overplayed, seek the transfer of demand. Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs where appropriate. Consider reconfiguration of pitch layouts at sites such as Leamore Park Enable use of currently unavailable sites. Improve changing facilities where required.
3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches. Consider installation of an additional pitch as to address the shortfall of 0.75 match equivalent sessions within the analysis area, with Leamore Park identified as a priority site.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Utilise spare capacity at sites such as Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club and Walsall YPF Cricket Club. Improve square quality at Walsall YPF Cricket Club and Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club.
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve quality at King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich) to reduce overplay. Explore the feasibility of increasing floodlighting at the sites.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resurfacing of pitches at Sneyd Community Association Centre and Willenhall E-Act Re-installation of new LED floodlights at Sneyd Community Association Centre. Explore the feasibility of installing an AGP at King George V playing fields (Bloxwich) to service Bloxwich HC and better supply the black country with greater hockey provision. If current hockey pitch is lost and a replacement is unable to be provided at the King George V Playing Fields site, a new pitch must be re-provided to accommodate the loss of current provision. Any loss of provision must be provided against SE and NPPF policy.
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision.
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Seek to improve park courts such as Leamore Park that are utilised in a local league.
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision.
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision.
Water sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Other sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹²	Cost ¹³	Aim
15	Bloxwich Academy	Football	School	Two poor quality adult pitches open to community use and are played at capacity with curricular demand.	Improve pitch quality through a more robust maintenance regime.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
		Rugby Union		One poor quality senior rugby pitch open to community that is unused.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support curricular and community demand.	School RFU		L	L	L	
		Netball		Two poor quality, non-floodlit macadam courts with no community use.	Improve court quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support curricular demand	School EN		L	L	L	
16	Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality community use square with an accompanying NTP. Site has spare capacity for Sunday and midweek play.	Utilise existing spare capacity for Sunday and midweek Cricket.	Sports Club ECB	Local	M	L	L	Protect
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality green and clubhouse with floodlights servicing the rinks. The site the most heavily used within Walsall with 94 current members, making it over capacity.	Ensure green maintenance is to a very good standard as to sustain current quality and accommodate for the large demand.	Sports Club BCGBA		M	L	L	
17	Lane Head Football Club	Football	Sports Club	One standard quality adult pitch open to community use that is overplayed by 1 match equivalent session.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to alleviate overplay.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	M	M	L	Protect Enhance
23	Christ Church CE Primary School (Bloxwich)	Football	School	One poor quality 5v5 pitch with no community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	Football	Council	Four standard quality adult pitches open to the community with actual spare capacity of three match equivalent sessions. Site has been targeted by Walsall Council for the development of a new hockey pitch at the loss of some of the existing provision. Consultation with the Club state the land has a clause deeming it fit for sport purposes only. Site is located minutes from Bloxwich HC's clubhouse.	If approved by all relevant governing bodies and Sport England, provide a replacement AGP at King George V Playing Fields as to provide Bloxwich HC with a replacement pitch. The loss of any grass pitches should be mitigated in accordance of NPPF and Sport England Playing Field Policy. Policy E4 is most applicable given known shortfalls for grass pitches.	Council CFA FF EH SE	Key Centre	H	S	H	Protect Enhance Provide
		Cricket		One standard quality square with spare capacity for Saturday, Sunday and midweek play.	Utilise spare capacity for Saturday, Sunday and midweek play.	Council ECB		M	M	L	
		Rugby Union		Two poor quality senior pitches open to community use that are overplayed by 1.5 match equivalent sessions	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to alleviate overplay.	Council RFU		L	L	L	
		Lawn Bowls		One standard quality green accessed by Benton Senior Citizens BC who have sustainable membership figures for both current and future demand.	Improve current maintenance of the green as to improve quality.	Council BCGBA		L	L	L	

¹² (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-5 years); (L) - Long (6+ years)

¹³ (L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹²	Cost ¹³	Aim
44	Leamore Park	Football	Council	Two standard quality youth 11v11 and one poor quality mini 7v7 pitch all of which are open to community use. Site is overplayed by 1.5 match equivalent sessions. Site is outlined as a priority for the installation of a full size 3G.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support community demand. Explore the possibility of re-configuring current layout as to alleviate overplay. Look to install a full size 3G as to better support current shortfalls of provision.	Council CFA FF	Key Centre	H	S	H	Protect Enhance Provide
		Tennis		Two poor quality non-floodlit macadam courts that are open to community use. Site is used for a Walsall tennis league. Courts are overmarked with netball.	Improve current court quality as to supply the Walsall tennis league with better quality provision. Explore feasibility of installing floodlights.	Council LTA SE		M	M	L	
		Netball		Two poor quality public use macadam courts with no floodlights. Courts are overmarked with tennis.	Improve current court quality and explore the feasibility of installing floodlights.	Council EN		M	M	L	
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green accessed by Leamore & Blakenall BC who have sustainable current and future demand numbers.	Ensure green maintenance is to a very good standard as to sustain current quality and accommodate for the large demand.	Council BCGBA		L	L	L	
71	Sneyd Community Association	AGP	Community Association	One poor quality 110m x 70m floodlit community use pitch utilised by Bloxwich HC. The surface was installed in 2005 and is yet to be replaced, leading to the club and league cancelling fixtures as the pitch is unsafe. Floodlights on site are also a major issue and Club only access on set of changing rooms on site which is handed to the opposition team.	Replace the existing surface that is passed its lifespan and has been deemed unsafe as to better provide Bloxwich HC with a new pitch. Replace current floodlights that service only half a pitch with up-to-date LED floodlights. If replacement provision can be provided to Bloxwich HC at King George V Playing Fields whilst meeting Sport England Exemption tests, then site should still be targeted for converting into a hockey purpose built facility as to improve the lack of supply for hockey provision across the Black Country. If current hockey pitch is lost and a replacement is unable to be provided at the King George V Playing Fields site, a new pitch must be re-provided to accommodate the loss of current provision. Any loss of provision must be provided against SE and NPPF policy.	Community Association Council EH SE CFA FF	Key Centre	H	S	H	Provide Enhance
82	Walsall Academy	Football	School	One poor quality adult pitch open to community use that is played to capacity.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support curricular and community demand.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect Provide
		Netball		Four standard quality, non-floodlit macadam courts with no community use.	Retain for curricular demand.	School EN		L	L	L	
		Rugby Union		One poor quality senior pitch with no community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support curricular demand.	School RFU		L	L	L	

WALSALL COUNCIL STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹²	Cost ¹³	Aim
84	Walsall Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality Cricket square with spare capacity for two additional Sunday teams.	Continue current maintenance program as to sustain quality. Utilise existing spare capacity for Sunday Cricket.	Sports Club ECB	Local	L	L	L	Protect
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green with ancillary provision provided alongside the onsite Cricket.	Ensure green maintenance is to a very good standard as to sustain current quality.	Sports Club BCGBA		L	L	L	
88	Walsall YPF Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard quality square with an accompanying NTP. Site has spare capacity for one Saturday team, two Sunday teams and six midweek fixtures Cricket.	Utilise spare capacity for an additional Saturday team, two Sunday teams and midweek demand.	Sports Club ECB	Local	M	S	L	Enhance Protect
96	Bloxwich Golf Club	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole golf course with a grade II listed building as its clubhouse.	Continue current maintenance as to ensure quality.	Sports Club EG	Local	L	L	L	Protect
107	Bloxwich Bowls Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green utilised by Bloxwich BC; Palfrey & Caldmore Senior Citizens BC and British Rail BC. The site is currently operating over the BCGBA capacity guidelines.	Ensure green maintenance is to a very good standard as to sustain current quality and accommodate for high demand.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
121	Stan Ball Centre	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green with no known user.	Continue current maintenance as to support the un-identified Club utilising the site.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Provide Protect
	<i>Glastonbury Crescent (lapsed site)</i>	Football	Council	Former stadium site owned by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council. Provision has been approached by Lane Head FC for the potential of taking on the site.	Ensure any loss of provision meet both NPPF and Sport England Playing Field Policy.	Council CFA, FF SE	Local	M	S	M	Protect Provide Enhance

ANALYSIS AREA 4

Summary

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area Four	Adult	Spare capacity of 1	Shortfall of 2
Football	Area Four	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area Four	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 4.5
Football	Area Four	Mini 7v7	At capacity	Shortfall of 0.5
Football	Area Four	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Football (3G)	Area Four	Full size	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Four	Saturday	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 12
Cricket	Area Four	Sunday	Spare capacity of 36	Spare capacity of 36
Cricket	Area Four	Midweek	Spare capacity of 36	Spare capacity of 36
Rugby union	Area Four	Senior	Shortfall of 3.75	Shortfall of 3.75
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

Summary non-pitch sports

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites).	Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites).
Netball	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.
Bowls	Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. These are: Bloxwich Bowls Club Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club Pelsall Community Centre Short Heath Liberal Club Trinity Bowls Club	Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. These are: Bloxwich Bowls Club Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club Pelsall Community Centre Short Heath Liberal Club Trinity Bowls Club

WALSALL COUNCIL STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
	This overuse is marginal and manageable on all sites. Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to be sustainable. Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability.	This overuse is marginal and manageable on all sites. At the other end of the spectrum, Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to be sustainable. Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability.
Athletics	There is only one dedicated athletics facility in Walsall; however, with this being unused by clubs, no perceived demand has been identified. As such, supply is sufficient, although quality improvements may be required in the near future.	There is only one dedicated athletics facility in Walsall; however, with this being unused by clubs, no perceived demand has been identified. As such, supply is sufficient, although quality improvements will be required in the near future.
Cycling	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.
Golf	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.
Water sports	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.
Other sports	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Walstead Road Playing Fields. Where pitches remain overplayed, seek the transfer of demand. Improve security of tenure at key sites such as Aston University Recreation Centre and Blue Coat Church of England Academy Playing Fields Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs. Enable use of currently unavailable sites. Improve changing facilities where required.
3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Protect NTP at Pleck Park utilised for Last Man Stands Cricket. Improve changing facilities where required, such as at Walsall CC in its ambitions to create ECB compliant changing facilities and provide an improved social offer.
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve quality at Handsworth and Walsall Rugby Club's to reduce overplay. Explore the feasibility of increasing floodlighting at the sites as and when needed. Provide support for Walsall Rugby Clubs three-tiered clubhouse re-development, of which it is currently working on stage two.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a sinking fund is in place at Aston University (Recreation Centre) as to financially prepare for the pitch replacement of existing provision.
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision.
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Seek to improve park courts such as Leamore Park that are utilised in a local league.
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision.
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision.
Water sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Other sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁴	Cost ¹⁵	Aim
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	Football	University	Five adult, three youth 9v9 and one mini 5v5 pitch all of which are of a good quality and open to community use. Site has spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure	Continue current maintenance regime as to sustain level of quality. Explore granting a club a tenure agreement for the site as to utilise spare capacity.	University CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
		Cricket		One good quality square with no spare capacity for additional play due to unsecure tenure.	Continue current maintenance regime as to sustain level of quality. Explore granting a club a tenure agreement for the site as to utilise spare capacity.	University ECB		L	L	L	
		Rugby Union		One standard quality senior pitch open to community use that is used at capacity during peak times.	Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program.	University RFU		L	L	L	
		AGP		One floodlit 100 x 70 metre pitch open to community use. The pitch was installed in 2015 and is used by West Bromwich HC as primary bookers with Aldridge and Walsall HC as the secondary bookers of the site. Aldridge and Walsall currently access the site every Saturday from 14:30-17:30 with senior training every Monday from 20:00-22:00. Site is currently at capacity and future demand results in overplay of one match equivalent session per week.	Continue current maintenance program as to sustain current levels of quality. If a new AGP pitch were to be installed within Walsall, Aldridge and Walsall HC could potentially relocate as to grant the Club a more preferable allocation. Ensure sinking fund is in place for refurbishment when necessary.	University CFA FF		L	L	M	
18	Blue Coat Church of England Academy Playing Fields	Football	School	Two adult and one mini 7v7 pitch all of which are to a standard quality and open to community use. Spare capacity is discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program as to support curricular and community demand.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect
36	Handsworth Rugby Club (Charles Lewis Memorial Ground)	Rugby Union	Sports Club	One standard quality senior pitch that is open to community use and overplayed by two match equivalent sessions.	Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program as to support community demand. This can in turn support reducing overplay.	Sports Club RFU	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect
37	Handsworth Rugby Club (Walstead Road)	Rugby Union	Sports Club	One poor quality senior pitch with spare capacity of 0.25 match equivalent sessions.	Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program as to support community demand.	Sports Club RFU	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect
40	Joseph Leckie Academy Playing Fields	Football	School	One poor quality youth 9v9 pitch with no community use.	Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program as to support curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
		Cricket		One standalone NTP that is open to community use but un-used.	Protect existing provision as to allow for Cricket play.	School ECB		L	L	L	
		Tennis		Three standard quality, non-floodlit macadam courts with no community use. Courts are overmarked by netball.	If possible open courts to community use. Following this, explore the possibility of installing floodlights as to enhance tennis and netball demand.	School LTA		L	L	L	
		Netball		Three standard quality, non-floodlit macadam courts with no community use. Courts are overmarked by tennis.	If possible open courts to community use. Following this, explore the possibility of installing floodlights as to enhance netball and tennis demand.	School EN		L	L	L	
47	LMRCA Sports Club	Football	Sports Club	One adult and one mini 5v5 pitch both of which are of a standard quality. 5v5 pitch has actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session.	Utilise actual spare capacity on the 5v5 pitch. Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program as to support community demand.	Sports Club CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect

¹⁴ (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-5 years); (L) - Long (6+ years)

¹⁵ (L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁴	Cost ¹⁵	Aim
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green formerly accessed by British Rail BC who have now moved to Bloxwich BC.	Look to provide a Club with the current green. Sustain current levels of green maintenance as to ensure green quality does not decline.	Sports Club BCGBA		M	M	L	
49	Mayfield Preparatory School	Football	School	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch with spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Retain for curricular use.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect
56	Pleck Park	Football	Council	One standard quality adult pitches open to community use with actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session.	Utilise actual spare capacity on adult pitch. Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program as to support community demand.	Council CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
		Cricket		Two standalone NTP's that are open and used by the community. Site is used for Last Man Stands Cricket.	Protect existing provision as to ensure site can continue to be used for Last Man Stands.	Council ECB		M	M	L	
		Tennis		Two poor quality community use macadam courts with no floodlights. Site is used in the local Walsall tennis league.	Enhance court quality as to improve court quality. Site should be prioritised given its current poor quality and increased demand from the local league.	Council LTA SE		M	M	L	
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green used by Pleck Sons & Daughters of Rest BC who have sustainable current and future membership rates.	Sustain current levels of green maintenance as to ensure green quality does not decline.	Council BCGBA		L	L	L	
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	Cricket	School	Two standard quality squares, one of which has an accompanying NTP. Site has no spare capacity for additional Cricket due to unsecure tenure.	Seek possibility to grant the third team of Walsall CC increased tenure as to utilise spare capacity on site.	School ECB	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
		Rugby Union		Four standard quality senior pitches with no community use. Site has actual spare capacity of 2 match equivalent sessions discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Four standard quality senior rugby pitches with no community use. Given the large number of pitches, explore the possibility of partnering with a Rugby Club as to utilise spare capacity.	School RFU		L	L	L	
		Tennis		Two standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights or community use. Courts are overmarked by netball	Explore possibility to install floodlights as to enhance tennis offering on site.	School LTA		L	L	L	
		Netball		Two standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights or community use. Courts are overmarked by tennis.	Explore possibility to install floodlights as to enhance netball offering on site.	School EN		L	L	L	
59	Reedwood E-Act Primary Academy	Football	School	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch that is unavailable for community use.	Retain for curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect
60	Reedwood Park	Cricket	Council	One poor quality standalone NTP that is open for community use.	Seek possibility of re-surfacing existing NTP as to enhance quality of offering to community use.	Council ECB	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect
81	University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Site)	3G	University	One FA approved, 98 x 63 metre floodlit community use 3G pitch. Pitch was installed in 2017 and is of a good quality.	Sustain current maintenance regime as to prolong good quality surface for as long as possible. Aim to maximise capacity utilisation as much as possible as to reduce cases of instant perishability. Ensure sinking fund is in place for refurbishment when necessary.	University CFA FF	Hub site	M	L	M	Protect Enhance

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁴	Cost ¹⁵	Aim
		Tennis		Four standard quality non floodlit macadam courts open to community use. Courts are overmarked by Netball	Explore the possibility to install floodlights on site as to improve tennis and netball offering.	University LTA		L	L	L	
		Netball		Four standard quality non floodlit macadam courts open to community use. Courts are overmarked by Tennis.	Explore the possibility to install floodlights on site as to improve netball and tennis offering.	University EN		L	L	L	
		Athletics		One standard quality 200m track that was installed in 2004. The site is not TrackMark accredited and is deemed of a standard quality with some wear and tear issues identified.	Seek possibility of addressing wear and tear issues present at the site as to enhance track quality. Address issues limiting the surface from being granted TrackMark accredited.	University EA SE		H	M	H	
83	Walsall Arboretum	Tennis	Council	Two poor quality non floodlit macadam courts open to community use. Site is used for a Walsall tennis league.	Enhance court surface as to improve court quality. Site should be prioritised given its current poor quality and increased demand from the local league.	Council LTA SE	Local	M	M	L	Enhance Protect
		Lawn Bowls		One standard quality bowling green utilised by Leckie Senior Citizens BC. The Club currently have 12 members, putting them at risk of long-term sustainability.	Seek means of attracting new members to the site as to increase the likelihood of long-term sustainability. Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance green quality.	Council BCGBA		L	L	L	
84	Walsall Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality square with spare capacity for additional two senior teams on Sundays.	Utilise spare capacity for Sunday Cricket.	Sports Club ECB	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green with no known user.	Identify who is currently using the site, following this sustain current maintenance of the green as to protect current quality.	Sports Club BCGBA		L	L	L	
85	Walsall FC (Bescot Stadium)	Football	Sports Club	One good quality stadium pitch unavailable for community use	Sustain current maintenance regime as to guarantee good quality.	Sports Club CFA, FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect
		3G		One good quality FA approved, 100m x 60m floodlit pitch. The pitch was installed in 2010 and has since been re-surfaced in 2017.	Sustain current maintenance regime as to prolong good quality. Ensure a sinking fund is in place to guarantee long term sustainability on site.	Sports Club CFA FF		M	L	H	
86	Walsall Rugby Club	Rugby Union	Sports Club	Two standard quality senior pitches that are overplayed by two match equivalent sessions. Site is re-developing its clubhouse and is in the process of stage two in its three-tiered re-development. Stage three shall involve converting the players and referees changing rooms.	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community offering. This shall in turn reduce current overplay. Continue the re-development of the clubhouse.	Sports Club RFU	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect
		3G		One 100 x 60 metre FA approved rugby compliant pitch that was installed in 2018 following investment from the RFU. Site holds a significant presence for Rugby within Walsall.	Sustain current levels of maintenance as to ensure supply remains of a good quality for as long as possible. Ensure capacity usage is as high as possible as to increase Club revenue. Put aside enough finances as to ensure a sinking fund is in place.	Sports Club CFA FF		M	L	H	
89	Walstead Road Playing Fields	Football	Sports Club	One adult, two youth 11v11 and two youth 9v9 pitches, all of which are of a standard quality and open to community use. Site is overplayed by 4 match equivalent sessions.	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community offering. This shall in turn reduce current overplay.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁴	Cost ¹⁵	Aim
90	West Bromwich Albion (Palm Training Ground)	Football	Sports Club	Nine good quality adult pitches used by Championship level West Bromwich Albion for training purposes. Site has no community use.	Sustain current levels of maintenance as to ensure quality does not decline.	Sports Club CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect
91	West Walsall E-Act Academy	Football	School	Two standard quality adult pitches with spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community and curricular offering.	School CFA, FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Enhance Protect
		3G		One 104m x 60m pitch which is no longer FA accredited. The pitch was installed in 2015 and is of a standard quality	Seek possibility to improve current maintenance regime as to prolong the lifespan of the surface for as long as possible. Maximise usage wherever possible as to increase revenue. Ensure a sinking fund is in place for the long-term sustainability of the site.	School CFA FF		M	L	H	
		Tennis		Eight floodlit standard quality artificial courts that are open to community use.	Seek methods of increasing court usage given the presence of floodlights and the site already being open to community use.	School LTA		L	L	L	
95	Aldridge Road Driving Range	Golf	Sports Club	A 30 bay driving range which is good quality. The site is allocated for development for residential property.	If the site is to be lost for development, an independent needs assessment should be undertaken to determine any need for mitigation aligning to NPPF.	Sports Club EG	Local	L	L	L	Protect
95A	Calderfields Country & Country Club	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole golf course. c330 members.	Maximise usage of driving range as to increase Club revenue. Sustain current maintenance as to ensure course quality is to standard.	Sports Club EG	Local	L	L	L	Protect
103	Walsall Golf Club	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole golf course with 415 members following England Golf affiliation data.	Sustain current maintenance as to ensure course quality is to standard.	Sports Club EG	Local	L	L	L	Protect
110	Lichfield Road Bowls Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green used by Lichfield Road BC who have 24 members putting them at risk of being too low for long term sustainability.	Continue current maintenance regime as to ensure quality remains. Seek means of attracting new members as to ensure the long-term sustainability of the site.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
123	Palfrey Park	Tennis	Council	One standard quality non-floodlit macadam court open to community use.	Seek means of installing floodlights on site.	Council LTA	Local	L	L	L	Protect

ANALYSIS AREA 5

Summary

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area Five	Adult	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2
Football	Area Five	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 1.5
Football	Area Five	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 3	Shortfall of 3
Football	Area Five	Mini 7v7	At capacity	At capacity
Football	Area Five	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity
Football (3G)	Area Five	Full size	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1.25
Cricket	Area Five	Saturday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Five	Sunday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Five	Midweek	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby union	Area Five	Senior	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

Summary non-pitch sports

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites).	Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites).
Netball	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.
Bowls	Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. These are: Bloxwich Bowls Club Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club Pelsall Community Centre Short Heath Liberal Club	Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. These are: Bloxwich Bowls Club Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club Pelsall Community Centre Short Heath Liberal Club

WALSALL COUNCIL STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
	<p>Trinity Bowls Club</p> <p>This overuse is marginal and manageable on all sites. Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to be sustainable. Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability.</p>	<p>Trinity Bowls Club</p> <p>This overuse is marginal and manageable on all sites. At the other end of the spectrum, Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to be sustainable. Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability</p>
Athletics	No provision within catchment. All provision based in Area 4. This serves all demand across Walsall. Need to protect quality and improve when needed in the future.	No provision within catchment. All provision based in Area 4. This serves all demand across Walsall. Need to protect quality and improve when needed in the future.
Cycling	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.
Golf	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.
Water sports	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.
Other sports	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Bentley West Playing Field and Great Bridge Road. Where pitches remain overplayed, seek the transfer of demand. Improve security of tenure at key sites such as Grace Academy Darlaston. Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs. Enable use of currently unavailable sites. Improve changing facilities where required.
3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches. Consider installation of an additional pitch as to address shortfalls, with Darlaston Recreation Ground outlined as the priority site. Assess the provision provided at Grace Academy Darlaston and plan in the short to medium term to replace current surface.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve quality at Grace Academy Darlaston to enable spare capacity to be utilised.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Ensure any development of lapsed/disused provision meets Sport England requirements. If possible support Breakaways BC in increasing membership figures as to ensure long term sustainability.
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Seek to open courts provided at Grace Academy Darlaston and Pool Hayes Academy to the community.

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁶	Cost ¹⁷	Aim
11	Bentley Road North Playing Field	Football	Council	Four standard quality adult pitches that are open to community use and overplayed by 2.5 match equivalent sessions.	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community offering. This can in turn help alleviate overplay of 2.5 match equivalent sessions.	Council CFA FF	Local	M	M	L	Protect
		Lawn Bowls		Two good quality bowling greens used by Breakaways BC who have 21 members putting them at risk of being too low for long term sustainability.	Continue current maintenance regime as to ensure quality remains. Seek means of attracting new members as to ensure the long-term sustainability of the site.	Council BCGBA		L	L	L	
12	Bentley West Playing Field	Football	Council	Five poor quality youth 9v9 pitches that are open to community use and overplayed by six match equivalent sessions.	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community offering. This can in turn help alleviate overplay of six match equivalent sessions.	Council CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
13	Bentley Youth Sports Ground	Football	Sports Club	One adult and one youth 9v9 pitch, both of a standard quality. Adult pitch is overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions whilst the 9v9 has actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session.	Utilise actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session. Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community offering and alleviate overplay. Explore the idea of re-configuring site as to better balance demand. If site is considered for re-configuration, ensure this takes place in conjunction with neighbouring pitches as to guarantee enough youth 9v9 pitches remain.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
26	Darlaston Community Association	Football	Community	One standard quality adult pitch with actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session.	Utilise actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session. Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community offering.	Community CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance Provide
		AGP		One smaller sized AGP that has no community use despite being serviced with floodlights. Provision was installed in 1998 and has not had a replacement surface installed. Site has been outlined for 3G replacement in the LFFP.	Given the age of provision, site should be prioritised for the installation of a 3G pitch as to address current shortfalls. Development shall involve both converting and enlarging existing provision as to provide a full sized 3G.	Community EH CFA FF SE		H	S	H	
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green with no known user of the site.	Identify who is accessing the site. Following this if the green is unused, site could possibly be used as overspill for larger clubs. Alternatively, green can be targeted for a Club in need of relocating.	Community BCGBA		L	L	L	
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	Football	School	One standard quality adult pitch open to community use, with spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Explore means of granting a Club a form of tenure at the site as to utilise spare capacity.	School CFA, FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Provide Enhance

¹⁶ (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-5 years); (L) - Long (6+ years)

¹⁷ (L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁶	Cost ¹⁷	Aim
		3G		One floodlit 100 x 60 metre pitch that is not FA or FIFA accredited. The pitch was installed in 2013 and is of a standard quality.	Ensure maintenance regime of the site is robust as to prolong the lifespan of the surface for as long as possible. Given the surfaces nine-year lifespan, consider the requirement of replacing the current surface. Maximise capacity usage as to increase revenue for the site.	School CFA FF SE	Key Centre	H	M	H	
		Rugby Union		One poor quality senior pitch with potential spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality.	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community offering. Following this utilise the actual spare capacity that will be generated.	School RFU		L	L	L	
		Tennis		Four standard quality floodlit macadam courts with no community use. Courts are overmarked by netball.	Explore the means of opening courts to community use.	School LTA		L	L	L	
		Netball		Four standard quality floodlit macadam courts with no community use. Courts are overmarked by tennis.	Explore the means of opening courts to community use.	School EN		L	L	L	
35	Great Bridge Road	Football	Council	One poor quality adult pitch that has been identified for pitch improvements by the LFFP. Site is also serviced by poor ancillary provision.	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community offering and follow through the work taken place in the LFFP. Enhance existing poor quality ancillary provision.	Council CFA FF	Local	M	M	H	Provide Enhance
43	Kings Hill Park	Football	Council	Two standard quality youth 9v9 pitches and one poor quality youth 11v11 pitch. Youth 9v9 pitches have actual spare capacity of two match equivalent sessions.	Utilise actual spare capacity present on the youth 9v9 pitches. Improve maintenance of the youth 11v11 pitch as to develop quality.	Council CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
57	Pool Hayes Academy	Football	School	Three standard quality adult pitches that are unavailable for community use.	Explore means of opening to community use. Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance curricular offering	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Provide Enhance
		Tennis		Three standard quality non floodlit macadam courts unavailable for community use.	Explore means of opening to community use and the installation of floodlights.	School LTA		L	L	L	
67	Salisbury Primary School	Football	School	One poor quality youth 11v11 pitch with no community use.	Retain for curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect
125	Friar Park	Netball	School	One standard quality macadam court with no floodlights that are open to community use.	Retain for curricular demand.	School EN	Local	L	L	L	Protect
	<i>Darlaston Town FC (lapsed site)</i>	Football	Council	Former stadia site of Darlaston Town FC, which folded in 2013 and has since re-formed as a phoenix club accessing a different site.	Protect existing provision. Explore the possibility of bringing lapsed provision back into life as to better support demand across the area.	Council CFA FF SE	Local	M	M	M	Protect Enhance Provide

ANALYSIS AREA 6

Summary

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area Six	Adult	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 0.5
Football	Area Six	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area Six	Youth 9v9	At capacity	At capacity
Football	Area Six	Mini 7v7	At capacity	At capacity
Football	Area Six	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity
Football (3G)	Area Six	Full size	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Six	Saturday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Six	Sunday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Six	Midweek	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby union	Area Six	Senior	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required	No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

Summary non-pitch sports

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
Tennis	Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites).	Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites).
Netball	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.
Bowls	Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. These are: Bloxwich Bowls Club Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club Pelsall Community Centre	Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. These are: Bloxwich Bowls Club Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club Pelsall Community Centre

WALSALL COUNCIL STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

Sport	Current picture	Future picture
	<p>Short Heath Liberal Club</p> <p>Trinity Bowls Club</p> <p>This overuse is marginal and manageable on all sites. Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to be sustainable. Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability.</p>	<p>Short Heath Liberal Club</p> <p>Trinity Bowls Club</p> <p>This overuse is marginal and manageable on all sites. At the other end of the spectrum, Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to be sustainable. Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability</p>
Athletics	No provision within catchment. All provision based in Area 4. This serves all demand across Walsall. Need to protect quality and improve when needed in the future.	No provision within catchment. All provision based in Area 4. This serves all demand across Walsall. Need to protect quality and improve when needed in the future.
Cycling	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.
Golf	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.
Water sports	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.
Other sports	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Willenhall Memorial Park. Where pitches remain overplayed, seek the transfer of demand. Improve security of tenure at key sites such as Beacon Primary School. Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs. Enable use of currently unavailable sites. Improve changing facilities where required, such as Willenhall Memorial Park which currently has no ancillary provision and has been targeted for the installation of some offering.
3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. AGP at Willenhall E-Act Academy should be prioritised for a new pitch installation given the surfaces 17 year lifespan.
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required.
Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Ensure any development of lapsed/disused provision meets Sport England requirements.
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Seek to improve park courts such as at Willenhall Memorial Park via implementation of LTA products and improvement to court surfaces.
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek possibility of opening courts at Willenhall E-Act Academy to community use.

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁸	Cost ¹⁹	Aim
6	Aspray Arena	3G	Sports Club	One good quality floodlit, FIFA approved 105 x 70 metre pitch that was installed in 2018. Site also has five 30 x 18 metre floodlit 3G pitches that were installed in 2015.	Continue current maintenance regimes as to prolong good quality of the site. Ensure a sinking fund is in place for all six surfaces as to ensure long term sustainability. Ensure capacity usage of site is as high as possible as to maximise revenue.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	M	M	H	Protect
10	Beacon Primary School	Football	School	One mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch both of which are of a poor quality. Spare capacity has been discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance curricular offering.	School CFA, FF	Local	M	L	L	Protect
31	Goals Soccer Centre (Black Country)	3G	Commercial	Ten 30 x 22 metre 3G pitches with four 50m x 30m pitches that were installed in 2017 and are of a good quality.	Ensure maintenance of the site is robust as to prolong the pitches lifetimes as long as possible.	Commercial CFA, FF	Local	M	M	H	Protect
39	Jane Lane School	3G	School	One 34 x 23 metre non floodlit 3G pitch with no community use. The pitch was installed in 2011 and is of a standard quality however it has received less demand than regular 3G surfaces due to the lack of community demand.	Retain for curricular demand.	School CFA FF	Local	M	M	H	Protect
57	Pool Hayes Academy	Netball	School	Three standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights or community use.	Explore the means of installing floodlights on site. Following this open courts to the community if viable.	School EN	Local	L	L	L	Protect
		Football		Three standard quality adult pitches with no community use.	Explore the means of opening pitches to the community.	School CFA, FF		L	L	L	
75	St Thomas More Catholic School	Football	School	Two youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch all of a standard quality and open to community use. Pitches have spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Explore the means of granting a tenure agreement to the Club as to utilise spare capacity. Improve pitch quality through a more robust maintenance regime.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect
92	Willenhall E-Act Academy	Football	School	One adult and four youth 9v9 pitches all of which are standard quality. The youth 9v9 pitches have spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Explore the means of granting a tenure agreement to the Club as to utilise spare capacity. Improve pitch quality through a more robust maintenance regime.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance
		AGP		One 98m x 61m floodlit AGP pitch that was installed in 2005 and has significantly passed its life expectancy. Pitch is used by Wednesbury HC who stress the need to replace the pitch, something the school is also aware of. The pitch currently has current spare capacity of 2.5 match equivalent sessions, however, it requires pitch quality to be to standard for this to be utilised.	Site should be prioritised for the re-installation of a new hockey purpose AGP. Given the 17-year lifespan of the pitch it has been scheduled for a surface replacement over the summer of 2022.	School EH SE		H	S	H	
		Tennis		Three standard quality floodlit macadam courts with no community use.	Seek the means of opening to community use as to utilise the standard quality floodlit provision.	School LTA	Key Centre	L	L	L	

¹⁸ (S) -Short (1-2 years); (M) - Medium (3-5 years); (L) - Long (6+ years)

¹⁹ (L) -Low - less than £50k; (M) -Medium - £50k-£250k; (H) -High £250k and above

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales ¹⁸	Cost ¹⁹	Aim
		Netball		Three standard quality floodlit macadam courts with no community use.	Seek the means of opening to community use as to utilise the standard quality floodlit provision.	School EN	Key Centre	L	L	L	
93	Willenhall Memorial Park	Football	Council	Three poor quality community use adult pitches that have been targeted in the LFFP for pitch improvements. Site is overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions. Pitches have no accompanying ancillary provision, resulting in it being targeted for the need of installing some offering.	Enhance pitch quality through a better maintenance regime following work identified in the LFFP. Site should also be targetter for the installation of some form of ancillary provision to accompany the pitches.	Council CFA FF	Local	H	M	H	Provide Provide Enhance
		Tennis		Two poor quality macadam courts with no floodlights that are open to community use. Courts are used for a local tennis league.	Courts should be prioritised for re-surfacing given its poor quality and high demand from the local tennis league. If feasible floodlights should also be installed.	Council LTA SE		M	M	L	
		Lawn Bowls		One standard quality green with no known user.	Following this if the green is unused, site could possibly be used as overspill for larger clubs. Alternatively, green can be targeted for a Club in need of relocating.	Council BCGBA		L	L	L	
106	Amery Bowls Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green with no known user.	Identify who is accessing the site. Following this if the green is unused, site could possibly be used as overspill for larger clubs. Alternatively, green can be targeted for a Club in need of relocating.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
115	Short Heath Liberal Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality green accessed by Short Heath Liberal BC and Chart BC who have combined membership figures of 111 people. This is the most heavily used green within Walsall and is currently operating over BCGBA capacity.	Continue current green maintenance as to ensure quality does not decline. Following this site should potentially explore utilising a second green given how membership levels are nearly double BCGBA guidelines.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
117	Trinity Bowls Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality green used by Willenhall Trinity BC. Site is currently marginally operating over BCGBA capacity.	Continue current green maintenance as to ensure quality does not decline.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
118	Yale Bowls Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green used by Elay BC who have sustainable current and future demand levels.	Continue current green maintenance as to ensure quality does not decline.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect
119	Willenhall Liberal Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality floodlit green used by Willenhall Nordley BC. The site is serviced by very dated changing rooms in poor condition. The Club states that improvements are needed to make the provision more accessible for all users and in particular for female members.	Continue current green maintenance as to ensure quality does not decline. Efforts should be made to improve ancillary provision.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance

PART 7: HOUSING GROWTH SCENARIOS

The PPOSS provides an estimate of demand for pitch sports based on population forecasts to 2039 (in line with the previously proposed Black Country Plan, although four separate local plans are now to be produced). This future demand is translated into teams likely to be generated, rather than actual pitch provision required. The Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator adds to this, updating the likely demand generated for pitch sports based on housing increases and converts the demand into match equivalent sessions and the number of pitches required. This is achieved via team generation rates in the Assessment Report to determine how many new teams would be generated from an increase in population derived from housing growth and gives the associated costs of supplying the increased pitch provision.

Experience shows that housing sites with 600 dwellings or more are likely to generate demand for new provision to be created. For such large scale developments, consideration should be given to providing multi-pitch sites with suitable ancillary provision, including appropriate clubhouse/changing facilities and car parking. Single pitch sites which have been provided traditionally by developers are not considered to provide long term sustainable provision for the relevant sports.

Where demand does not warrant new pitch provision, the Action Plan in this document should be consulted to determine whether the additional demand can be accommodated via existing provision (in which case no further action is required). If this is not the case, contributions should be sought to enhance existing provision in the locality to accommodate the increased demand. This can be through, for example, improving quality, or providing new or improved ancillary provision. Consultation with appropriate NGBs should also be used to assist in the selection of suitable sites and suitable enhancements.

The following test scenarios below are provided as a guide to show the potential additional demand for pitch sports that could be generated from housing growth in Walsall, thus showing how the calculator works and what it provides. The demand is shown in match equivalent sessions per week for most sports, except for cricket, where match equivalent sessions are by season. Training demand is expressed in either hours or match equivalent sessions. Where expressed in hours, it is expected that demand will be to either a 3G pitch (to accommodate football demand) or an AGP (to accommodate hockey demand). Where expressed in match equivalent sessions, it is expected training will take place on floodlit grass pitches (rugby).

The test scenarios are based on ten individual developments that are already planned in Walsall. These are as follows:

- ✦ **Scenario One** – Yieldsfield Farm, Bloxwich – 978 dwellings
- ✦ **Scenario Two** – Land between Queslett Road Doe Bank Lane and Aldridge Road – 1,426 dwellings
- ✦ **Scenario Three** – Calderfields West, Aldridge Road – 592 dwellings
- ✦ **Scenario Four** – Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall Wood – 1435 dwellings
- ✦ **Scenario Five** – Land at Yorks Bridge, Lichfield Road, Pelsall - 580 dwellings
- ✦ **Scenario Six** – Land North of Stonnall Road, Aldridge – 363 dwellings
- ✦ **Scenario Seven** – Land at Vicerage Road/ Coronation Road, High Heath – 713 dwellings
- ✦ **Scenario Eight** – Chester Road North, Streetly – 655 dwellings
- ✦ **Scenario Nine** – Land to the east of Chester Road, Pacific Nurseries – 496 dwellings
- ✦ **Scenario Ten** - Accumulative demand for pitch sports generated from housing growth from the total anticipated housing growth across the Black Country

For reference, the indicative figures assume that population growth will average 2.3²⁰ per dwelling.

²⁰ The occupancy rate of 2.3 is in line with figures used in the 2011 Census.

Scenario One – Yieldsfield Farm, Bloxwich – 978 dwellings

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 978 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.3 per household is 2249 people.

This population increase equates to 1.87 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports, 0.12 match equivalent sessions on a hockey suitable AGP and 3.76 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket. Training demand equates to 3.47 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches and 0.32 hours on a hockey suitable AGP.

Table 7.1: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 978 dwellings

Pitch sport	Match demand per week ²¹	Training demand ²²
Adult football	0.47	3.47 hours total
Youth football	0.83	As above
Mini soccer	0.44	As above
Rugby union	0.13	0.14 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.09	0.26 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.03	0.06 hours
Cricket	3.76	-

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifecycle costs.

Table 7.2: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost ²³	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ²⁴	No. of rooms	Capital cost
Adult football	0.47	£44,655	£9,422	0.94	£154,058
Youth football	0.83	£62,965	£13,223	1.01	£165,740
Mini soccer	0.44	£10,333	£2,170	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.13	£17,572	£3,760	0.26	£43,302
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	0.08	£22,869	£4,620	0.16	£26,745
Sand based AGPs	0.02	£17,157	£532	0.04	£7,131
3G	0.09	£86,246	£3,359	0.18	£29,905
Total	2.06	£217,142	£37,086	2.59	£426,881

Key recommendations – Yieldsfield Farm, Bloxwich

Population growth due to the housing development at Yieldsfield Farm indicates there is a need for 2.06 pitches. It should be noted that this is demand is accumulated across the various pitch sports with no sports requiring a full pitch.

Therefore, monies from the development should, primarily, be allocated to improving existing provision within the locality and the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to further help determine where capacity improvements can be made.

²¹ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

²² Hours equate to access to a full size floodlit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

²³ Sport England Facilities Costs [Link to Sport England Cost Guidance](#)

²⁴ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

With the above being said, there are current shortfalls on youth 11v11, mini 5v5 full size 3G pitches, cricket squares and rugby union provision. Existing hockey provision is also poor quality and requires improvement to sustain participation in the sport.

Scenario Two – Land between Queslett Road and Doe Bank Lane and Aldridge Road – 1,426 dwellings

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 1,426 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.3 per household is 3,279 people.

This population increase equates to 2.72 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports, 0.17 match equivalent sessions on a hockey suitable AGP and 5.48 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket. Training demand equates to 5.06 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches and 0.36 hours on a hockey suitable AGP.

Table 7.3: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 1,426 dwellings

Pitch sport	Match demand per week ²⁵	Training demand ²⁶
Adult football	0.69	5.06 hours total
Youth football	1.21	As above
Mini soccer	0.63	As above
Rugby union	0.19	0.21 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.12	0.37 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.05	0.09 hours
Cricket	5.48	-

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifecycle costs.

Table 7.4: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost ²⁷	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ²⁸	No. of rooms	Capital cost
Adult football	0.69	£65,106	£13,737	1.37	£224,615
Youth football	1.21	£91,805	£19,279	1.47	£241,635
Mini soccer	0.63	£15,065	£3,164	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.19	£25,620	£5,483	0.39	£63,134
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	0.12	£33,344	£6,735	0.24	£38,995
Sand based AGPs	0.03	£25,014	£775	0.06	£10,397
3G	0.13	£125,748	£4,898	0.27	£43,601
Total	3	£381,702	£54,071	3.8	£622,377

²⁵ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

²⁶ Hours equate to access to a full size floodlit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

²⁷ Sport England Facilities Costs [Link to Sport England Cost Guidance](#)

²⁸ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

Key recommendations – Queslett Road and Doe Bank Lane and Aldridge Road

Population growth due to the housing development at Queslett Road, Doe Bank Lane and Aldridge Road indicates there is a need for three pitches. It should be noted that this is demand is accumulated across the various pitch sports with just youth 11v11 pitches requiring one full pitch. Creating one pitch sites is considering by all sports partners as being an unsustainable and impractical offer for community users as therefore the contribution should be instead sought.

Therefore, monies from the development should, primarily, be allocated to improving existing provision within the locality and the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to further help determine where capacity improvements can be made.

With the above being said, there are current shortfalls on youth 11v11, mini 5v5 full size 3G pitches, cricket squares and rugby union provision. Existing hockey provision is also poor quality.

Scenario Three – Calderfields West, Aldridge Road – 592 dwellings

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 592 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.3 per household is 1,361 people.

This population increase equates to 0.91 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports and 2.95 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket. Training demand equates to 1.83 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches.

Table 7.5: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 592 dwellings

Pitch sport	Match demand per week ²⁹	Training demand ³⁰
Adult football	0.28	2.10 hours total
Youth football	0.50	As above
Mini soccer	0.26	As above
Rugby union	0.08	0.09 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.05	0.16 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.02	0.04 hours
Cricket	2.28	-

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs.

²⁹ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

³⁰ Hours equate to access to a full size floodlit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

Table 7.6: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost ³¹	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ³²	No. of rooms	Capital cost
Adult football	0.28	£27,024	£5,702	0.57	£93,233
Youth football	0.50	£38,102	£8,002	0.61	£100,279
Mini soccer	0.26	£6,252	£1,313	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.08	£10,634	£2,276	0.16	£26,206
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	0.05	£13,840	£2,796	0.10	£16,185
Sand based AGPs	0.01	£10,383	£322	0.03	£4,316
3G	0.06	£52,191	£2,033	0.11	£18,096
Total	1.24	£158,426	£22,444	1.58	£258,315

Key recommendations – Calderfields West, Aldridge Road

Population growth due to the housing development at Calderfields West indicates there is a need for 1.24 pitches. It should be noted that this demand is accumulated across the various pitch sports with no sports requiring a full pitch.

Therefore, monies from the development should, primarily, be allocated to improving existing provision within the locality and the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to further help determine where capacity improvements can be made.

With the above being said, there are current shortfalls on youth 11v11, mini 5v5 full size 3G pitches, cricket squares and rugby union provision. Existing hockey provision is also poor quality and requires improvement to sustain participation in the sport.

Scenario Four – Home Farm, Sandhills, Walsall Wood – 1435 dwellings

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 1435 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.3 per household is 3,330 people.

This population increase equates to 2.74 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports and 5.52 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket. Training demand equates to 5.09 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches.

Table 7.7: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 1,435 dwellings

Pitch sport	Match demand per week ³³	Training demand ³⁴
Adult football	0.69	5.09 hours total
Youth football	1.22	As above
Mini soccer	0.64	As above
Rugby union	0.19	0.21 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.13	0.38 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.05	0.09 hours
Cricket	5.52	-

³¹ Sport England Facilities Costs [Link to Sport England Cost Guidance](#)

³² Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

³³ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

³⁴ Hours equate to access to a full size floodlit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifecycle costs.

Table 7.8: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost ³⁵	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ³⁶	No. of rooms	Capital cost
Adult football	0.69	£65,524	£13,825	1.38	£226,056
Youth football	1.22	£92,392	£19,402	1.48	£243,194
Mini soccer	0.64	£15,159	£3,183	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.19	£25,784	£5,518	0.39	£63,538
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	0.12	£33,556	£6,778	0.24	£39,244
Sand based AGPs	0.03	£25,174	£780	0.06	£10,464
3G	0.13	£126,548	£4,929	0.27	£43,878
Total	3.02	£384,137	£54,415	3.82	£626,374

Key recommendations – Home Farm, Walsall Wood

Population growth due to the housing development at Home Farm indicates there is a need for 3.02 pitches. It should be noted that this demand is accumulated across the various pitch sports with just youth 11v11 pitches requiring one full pitch.

Creating one pitch sites is considering by all sports partners as being an unsustainable and impractical offer for community users as therefore the contribution should be instead sought.

Therefore, monies from the development should, primarily, be allocated to improving existing provision within the locality and the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to further help determine where capacity improvements can be made.

With the above being said, there are current shortfalls on youth 11v11, mini 5v5 full size 3G pitches, cricket squares and rugby union provision. Existing hockey provision is also poor quality.

Scenario Five – Land at Yorks Bridge, Lichfield Road, Pelsall, 580 dwellings

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 580 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.3 per household is 1,334 people.

This population increase equates to 1.10 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports and 2.23 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket. Training demand equates to 2.06 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches.

³⁵ Sport England Facilities Costs [Link to Sport England Cost Guidance](#)

³⁶ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

Table 7.9: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 580 dwellings

Pitch sport	Match demand per week ³⁷	Training demand ³⁸
Adult football	0.28	2.06 hours total
Youth football	0.49	As above
Mini soccer	0.26	As above
Rugby union	0.08	0.09 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.05	0.15 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.02	0.04 hours
Cricket	2.23	-

The table overleaf translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs.

Table 7.10: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost ³⁹	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ⁴⁰	No. of rooms	Capital cost
Adult football	0.28	£26,488	£5,589	0.56	£91,384
Youth football	0.49	£37,349	£7,843	0.60	£98,300
Mini soccer	0.26	£6,128	£1,287	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.08	£10,423	£2,231	0.16	£25,686
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	0.05	£13,565	£2,740	0.10	£15,864
Sand based AGPs	0.01	£10,177	£315	0.03	£4,230
3G	0.05	£51,157	£1,992	0.11	£17,738
Total	1.22	£155,287	£21,998	1.55	£253,202

Key recommendations – Land at Yorks Bridge

Population growth due to the housing development at Yorks Bridge indicates there is a need for 1.22 pitches. It should be noted that this is demand is accumulated across the various pitch sports with no sports requiring a full pitch.

Therefore, monies from the development should, primarily, be allocated to improving existing provision within the locality and the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to further help determine where capacity improvements can be made.

With the above being said, there are current shortfalls on youth 11v11, mini 5v5 full size 3G pitches, cricket squares and rugby union provision. Existing hockey provision is also poor quality and requires improvement to sustain participation in the sport.

³⁷ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

³⁸ Hours equate to access to a full size floodlit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

³⁹ Sport England Facilities Costs [Link to Sport England Cost Guidance](#)

⁴⁰ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

Scenario Six – Land North of Stonnall Road, Aldridge – 363 dwellings

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 363 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.3 per household is 834 people.

This population increase equates to 0.69 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports and 1.39 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket. Training demand equates to 1.29 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches.

Table 7.11: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 363 dwellings

Pitch sport	Match demand per week ⁴¹	Training demand ⁴²
Adult football	0.17	1.29 hours total
Youth football	0.31	As above
Mini soccer	0.16	As above
Rugby union	0.05	0.05 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.03	0.10 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.01	0.02 hours
Cricket	1.39	-

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs.

Table 7.12: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost ⁴³	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ⁴⁴	Number	Capital cost
Adult football	0.17	£16,562	£3,495	0.35	£57,138
Youth football	0.31	£23,349	£4,903	0.37	£61,446
Mini soccer	0.16	£3,831	£805	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.05	£6,517	£1,395	0.10	£16,059
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	0.03	£8,481	£1,713	0.06	£9,918
Sand based AGPs	0.01	£6,363	£197	0.02	£2,645
3G	0.03	£31,983	£1,246	0.07	£11,090
Total	0.76	£97,086	£13,753	0.97	£158,296

Key recommendations – Land north of Stonnall Road

Population growth due to the housing development at Stonnall Road indicates there is a need for 0.76 pitches. It should be noted that this is demand is accumulated across the various pitch sports with no sports requiring a full pitch.

Therefore, monies from the development should, primarily, be allocated to improving existing provision within the locality and the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to further help determine where capacity improvements can be made.

⁴¹ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

⁴² Hours equate to access to a full size floodlit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

⁴³ Sport England Facilities Costs [Link to Sport England Cost Guidance](#)

⁴⁴ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

With the above being said, there are current shortfalls on youth 11v11, mini 5v5 full size 3G pitches, cricket squares and rugby union provision. Existing hockey provision is also poor quality and requires improvement to sustain participation in the sport.

Scenario Seven – Land at Vicarage Road/Coronation Road, High Heath – 713 dwellings

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 713 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.3 per household is 1,639 people.

This population increase equates to 1.36 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports and 2.74 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket. Training demand equates to 2.53 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches.

Table 7.13: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 713 dwellings

Pitch sport	Match demand per week ⁴⁵	Training demand ⁴⁶
Adult football	0.34	2.53 hours total
Youth football	0.60	As above
Mini soccer	0.32	As above
Rugby union	0.10	0.10 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.06	0.19 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.03	0.05 hours
Cricket	2.74	-

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs.

Table 7.14: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost ⁴⁷	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ⁴⁸	No. of rooms	Capital cost
Adult football	0.34	£32,546	£6,867	0.69	£79,394
Youth football	0.60	£45,894	£9,638	0.74	£85,405
Mini soccer	0.32	£7,529	£1,581	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.10	£12,808	£2,741	0.19	£22,314
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	0.06	£16,668	£3,367	0.12	£13,783
Sand based AGPs	0.02	£12,504	£388	0.03	£3,675
3G	0.07	£62,858	£3,367	0.13	£15,411
Total	1.51	£190,807	£27,949	1.9	£219,982

Key recommendations – Land at Vicarage Road/Coronation Road

Population growth due to the housing development at Vicarage/Coronation Road indicates there is a need for 1.51 pitches. It should be noted that this demand is accumulated across the various pitch sports with no sports requiring a full pitch.

⁴⁵ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

⁴⁶ Hours equate to access to a full size floodlit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

⁴⁷ Sport England Facilities Costs [Link to Sport England Cost Guidance](#)

⁴⁸ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

Therefore, monies from the development should, primarily, be allocated to improving existing provision within the locality and the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to further help determine where capacity improvements can be made.

With the above being said, there are current shortfalls on youth 11v11, mini 5v5 full size 3G pitches, cricket squares and rugby union provision. Existing hockey provision is also poor quality and requires improvement to sustain participation in the sport.

Scenario Eight – West of Chester Road, Streetly – 655 dwellings

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 655 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.3 per household is 1,506 people.

This population increase equates to 1.33 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports and 2.52 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket. Training demand equates to 2.32 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches.

Table 7.15: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 655 dwellings

Pitch sport	Match demand per week ⁴⁹	Training demand ⁵⁰
Adult football	0.31	2.32 hours total
Youth football	0.55	As above
Mini soccer	0.29	As above
Rugby union	0.09	0.10 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.06	0.17 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.02	0.04 hours
Cricket	2.52	-

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs.

Table 7.16: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost ⁵¹	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ⁵²	No. of rooms	Capital cost
Adult football	0.31	£29,904	£6,310	0.63	£103,168
Youth football	0.55	£42,166	£8,855	0.68	£110,976
Mini soccer	0.29	£6,918	£1,453	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.09	£11,767	£2,518	0.18	£28,998
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	0.05	£15,314	£3,094	0.11	£17,910
Sand based AGPs	0.01	£11,489	£356	0.03	£4,776
3G	0.06	£57,753	£2,249	0.12	£20,025
Total	1.36	£175,311	£24,835	1.75	£285,853

⁴⁹ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

⁵⁰ Hours equate to access to a full size floodlit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

⁵¹ Sport England Facilities Costs [Link to Sport England Cost Guidance](#)

⁵² Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

Key recommendations – Land West of Chester Road

Population growth due to the housing development west of Chester Road indicates there is a need for 1.36 pitches. It should be noted that this demand is accumulated across the various pitch sports with no sports requiring a full pitch.

Therefore, monies from the development should, primarily, be allocated to improving existing provision within the locality and the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to further help determine where capacity improvements can be made.

With the above being said, there are current shortfalls on youth 11v11, mini 5v5 full size 3G pitches, cricket squares and rugby union provision. Existing hockey provision is also poor quality and requires improvement to sustain participation in the sport.

Scenario Nine – Land to the east of Chester Road, Pacific Nurseries – 496

The estimated additional population derived from housing growth from 496 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.3 per household is 1,140 people.

This population increase equates to 0.95 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports and 1.91 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket. Training demand equates to 1.76 hours of use per week for football on 3G pitches.

Table 7.17: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 496 dwellings

Pitch sport	Match demand per week ⁵³	Training demand ⁵⁴
Adult football	0.24	1.76 hours total
Youth football	0.42	As above
Mini soccer	0.22	As above
Rugby union	0.07	0.07 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.04	0.13 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.02	0.03 hours
Cricket	1.91	-

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs.

⁵³ As per the PPS Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

⁵⁴ Hours equate to access to a full size floodlit 3G pitch or hockey suitable AGP

Table 7.18: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost ⁵⁵	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ⁵⁶	No. of rooms	Capital cost
Adult football	0.24	£22,634	£4,776	0.48	£78,088
Youth football	0.42	£31,916	£6,702	0.51	£84,008
Mini soccer	0.22	£5,237	£1,100	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.07	£8,907	£1,906	0.13	£21,949
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	0.04	£11,592	£2,342	0.08	£13,557
Sand based AGPs	0.01	£8,696	£270	0.02	£3,615
3G	0.05	£43,716	£1,703	0.09	£15,158
Total	1.05	£132,698	£18,799	1.31	£216,375

Key recommendations – Land East of Chester Road

Population growth due to the housing development west of Chester Road (Pacific Nurseries) indicates there is a need for 1.05 pitches. It should be noted that this demand is accumulated across the various pitch sports with no sports requiring a full pitch.

Therefore, monies from the development should, primarily, be allocated to improving existing provision within the locality and the PPOSS Action Plan should be used to further help determine where capacity improvements can be made.

With the above being said, there are current shortfalls on youth 11v11, mini 5v5 full size 3G pitches, cricket squares and rugby union provision. Existing hockey provision is also poor quality and requires improvement to sustain participation in the sport.

⁵⁵ Sport England Facilities Costs [Link to Sport England Cost Guidance](#)

⁵⁶ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

Scenario Ten– Accumulative demand for pitch sports generated from housing growth from the total anticipated housing growth across the Black Country

The estimated additional population from housing growth from all the scenarios is 19,687 dwellings with an occupancy rate of 2.3 per household this equates to 45,280 people. This equates to 13,235 dwellings in Dudley (30,441 people), 9,158 dwellings in Sandwell (21,064 people), 14,760 dwellings in Walsall (33,948 people) and 12,100 dwellings in Wolverhampton (27,830 people).

This population increase equates to 72.43 (19.35 Dudley, 11.11 Sandwell, 28.17 Walsall and 13.80 Wolverhampton) match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports, 2.62 match equivalent sessions of demand per week on AGPs for hockey (0.28 Sandwell, 1.82 Walsall and 1.24 Wolverhampton) and 201.62 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket (64.60 Dudley, 22.85 Sandwell, 56.78 Walsall and 57.39 Wolverhampton).

Training demand equates to 139.31 hours (38.69 Dudley, 21.97 Sandwell, 52.34 Walsall and 26.31 Wolverhampton) of use per week for football on 3G pitches and hockey equates to 9.27 hours of use per week on AGPs (0.62 Sandwell, 4.83 Walsall and 3.82 Wolverhampton). There are also 3.03 match equivalent sessions per week of training for rugby on a floodlit grass pitch (0.13 Sandwell, 2.17 Walsall, 0.73 Wolverhampton).

Table 7.19: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from all housing demand across the Black Country

Pitch sport	Dudley Match demand (MES) per week	Dudley Training demand	Sandwell Match demand (MES) per week	Sandwell Training demand	Walsall Match demand (MES) per week	Walsall Training demand	Wolverhampton Match demand (MES) per week	Wolverhampton Training demand	Black Country Match demand (MES) per week	Black Country Training demand
Adult football	4.17	38.69 hours	3.44	21.97 hours	7.10	52.34 hours	4.47	26.31 hours	19.18	139.31 hours
Youth football	8.72	As above	5.27	As above	12.51	As above	5.82	As above	32.32	As above
Mini soccer	6.46	As above	2.27	As above	6.57	As above	2.86	As above	18.16	As above
Rugby union	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions	0.13	0.13 match equivalent sessions	1.99	2.17 match equivalent sessions	0.65	0.73 match equivalent sessions	2.77	3.03 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions	0.00	0.00 match equivalent sessions	0	0.00 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.00	0.00 hours	0.19	0.57 hours	1.29	3.87 hours	1.14	3.43 hours	2.62	7.87 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0.00	0.00 hours	0.09	0.05 hours	0.53	0.96 hours	0.10	0.39 hours	0.72	1.40 hours
Cricket	64.60	-	22.85	-	56.78	-	57.39	-	201.62	-

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifestyle costs.

Table 7.20: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision from all housing demand across the Black Country

Pitch type	Dudley Pitches required to meet demand	Dudley Capital cost ⁵⁷	Dudley Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ⁵⁸	Dudley No. rooms	Dudley Capital cost	Sandwell Pitches required to meet demand	Sandwell Capital cost	Sandwell Lifecycle Cost (per annum)	Sandwell No. rooms	Sandwell Capital cost	Walsall Pitches required to meet demand	Walsall Capital cost	Walsall Lifecycle Cost (per annum)	Walsall No. rooms	Walsall Capital cost
Adult football	4.17	£395,698	£83,492	8.33	£1,365,159	3.44	£326,765	£68,947	6.88	£1,127,339	7.10	£674,057	£142,226	14.19	£2,325,497
Youth football	8.72	£662,392	£139,102	10.87	£1,781,410	5.27	£400,549	£84,115	6.82	£1,117,072	12.51	£950,496	£199,604	15.27	£2,501,755
Mini soccer	6.46	£153,469	£32,228	0.00	£0	2.27	£53,996	£11,339	0.00	£0	6.57	£155,950	£32,749	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0	0.13	£16,786	£3,592	0.25	£41,366	1.99	£265,247	£56,763	3.99	£653,644
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	1.43	£400,130	£80,826	2.86	£467,949	0.50	£140,902	£28,462	1.01	£164,783	1.23	£345,213	£69,733	2.46	£403,723
Sand based AGPs	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0	0.05	£37,327	£1,157	0.09	£15,516	0.33	£258,978	£8,028	0.66	£107,647
3G	1.02	£962,303	£37,479	2.04	£333,663	0.58	£546,430	£21,282	1.16	£189,466	1.38	£1,301,867	£50,704	2.75	£451,401
Total	21.79	£2,573,992	£373,129	24.09	£3,948,180	12.24	£1,522,755	£218,895	16.20	£2,655,541	31.10	£3,951,807	£559,808	39.32	£6,443,667

⁵⁷ Sport England Facilities Costs [Link to Sport England Cost Guidance](#)

⁵⁸ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

Pitch type	Wolverhampton Pitches required to meet demand	Wolverhampton Capital cost ⁵⁹	Wolverhampton Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ⁶⁰	Wolverhampton No. rooms	Wolverhampton Capital cost	Black Country Pitches required to meet demand	Black Country Capital cost	Black Country Lifecycle Cost (per annum)	Black Country No. rooms	Black Country Capital cost
Adult football	4.47	£424,714	£89,615	8.94	£1,465,265	19.18	£1,821,234	£384,280	38.34	£6,283,260
Youth football	5.82	£442,590	£92,944	7.70	£1,261,152	32.32	£2,456,027	£515,765	40.66	£6,661,389
Mini soccer	2.86	£67,898	£14,259	0.00	£0	18.16	£431,313	£90,575	0.00	£0
Rugby union	0.65	£86,423	£18,494	1.30	£212,971	2.77	£368,456	£78,849	5.54	£907,981
Rugby league	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0	0.00	£0	£0	0.00	£0
Cricket	1.26	£353,841	£71,476	2.53	£413,814	4.42	£1,240,086	£250,497	8.86	£1,450,269
Sand based AGPs	0.29	£225,481	£6,990	0.57	£93,724	0.67	£521,786	£16,175	1.32	£216,887
3G	0.69	£654,367	£25,486	1.38	£226,891	3.67	£3,464,967	£134,951	7.33	£1,201,421
Total	16.04	£2,255,314	£319,263	22.42	£3,673,816	81.17	£10,303,868	£1,471,095	102.03	£16,721,204

Population growth due to the housing developments across all allocated sites in the Black County Plan indicates there will be a need for 81.17 pitches. This demand is aggregated across most pitch types with football identified as having the highest theoretical increases of pitch need (due to associated demand).

The PPOSS Assessment Reports for all four authorities broadly identifies there are capacity issues for grass football pitches, rugby union pitches and cricket squares, as well as a need for an increased supply of 3G and hockey suitable AGPs. As evidenced in Part 4 of this report, in most cases, for football and rugby union, the existing quantity of grass pitches can accommodate for all known future demand through improvement of quality (and therefore increases to capacity). For the remaining pitch sports or facility types i.e., cricket, 3G pitches and hockey suitable AGPs, this is not the case and as such an increase of provision is required.

The above individual scenarios (one to nine, and those tested in other authority strategies) highlight that there is not sufficient demand generated from any single allocation to provide new provision. On this basis, contributions should be sought and for football and rugby and used to improved sites (identified in the PPOSS Action Plan) in the locality of any allocation. For the remaining facility needs, there is a strong requirement to pool capital receipts from individual allocations to provide for new cricket, 3G and hockey suitable AGPs.

⁵⁹ Sport England Facilities Costs [Link to Sport England Cost Guidance](#)

⁶⁰ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

Conclusion

For the scenarios above, the tables show that, through housing growth relating to the aforementioned developments, demand will be generated for football, rugby union, hockey and cricket. The level of demand generated for football is such that new provision could be warranted although this would likely only be a single pitch development. Single pitch developments are generally considered to be of a low strategic value for football and therefore this is not a recommended option.

There is unlikely to be a requirement for new provision for rugby union, cricket, hockey and 3G pitches, over and above what is already required. Instead, as the demand generated from the housing growth does not equate to a whole pitch, contributions would be better focused on improving existing sites to increase capacity to an appropriate level. The PPOSS and in particular the Action Plan, as well as future consultation with NGBs, should be used to inform this (e.g. to select suitable sites).

This is particularly the case for football, and rugby union as there is a lack of supply to meet current and future demand. With housing growth in the area expected to exacerbate these shortfalls, off-site contributions should be sought to increase capacity for these sports, whether that be through pitch quality improvements or ancillary improvements to ensure underused sites can be fully utilised.

For cricket, the shortfalls for peak time Saturday activity are so that they cannot be met through pitch improvements. The only option is for new provision to be provided for. On this basis, contributions from development should be pooled to provide provision in a suitable location in the future. This should be done in correspondence with the ECB, SE and local cricket boards.

To provide the greatest impact, contributions from housing developments could be pooled together to improve key sites. The action plan identifies high priority sites which would likely provide the most benefit from investment. This includes (but is not limited to):

- ◀ Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club
- ◀ Aldridge Airport
- ◀ Bentley Road North Playing Field
- ◀ Streetly CC
- ◀ Bentley Road West Playing Field
- ◀ Handsworth Rugby Club
- ◀ Fordbrook
- ◀ Walsall Rugby Club
- ◀ Leamore Park
- ◀ Willenhall E-Act Academy
- ◀ Walstead Road Playing Field
- ◀ Oak Park
- ◀ King George V (Bloxwich)
- ◀ Wallsall CC

PART 8: DELIVER THE STRATEGY AND KEEP IT ROBUST AND UP TO DATE

The section below is a generalised approach on how to deliver a PPOSS whilst also keeping it robust and up to date. However, a more tailored approach should also be considered and designed for Walsall based on the requirements and priorities of the Steering Group.

Delivery

The PPOSS seeks to provide guidance for maintenance/management decisions and investment made across Walsall. By addressing the issues identified in the Assessment Report and using the strategic framework presented in this Strategy, the current and future sporting and recreational needs of the Borough can be satisfied. The Strategy identifies where there is a deficiency in provision and identifies how best to resolve this in the future.

It is important that this document is used in a practical manner, is engaged with partners and encourages partnerships to be developed, to ensure that outdoor sports facilities are regarded as a vital aspect of community life and which contribute to the achievement of Council priorities.

The creation of this document should be regarded as part of the planning process. The success of this Strategy and the benefits that are gained are dependent upon regular engagement between all partners involved and the adoption of a strategic approach. Each member of the steering group should take the lead to ensure the PPOSS is used and applied appropriately within their area of work and influence.

To help ensure the PPOSS is well used, it should be regarded as the key document within the study area guiding the improvement and protection of playing pitch and outdoor sport provision. It needs to be the document people regularly turn to for information on the how the current demand is met and what actions are required to improve the situation and meet future demand. In order for this to be achieved, the Steering Group needs to have a clear understanding of how the PPOSS can be applied and therefore delivered.

The process of completing the PPOSS will hopefully have already resulted in a number of benefits that will help with its application and delivery. These may include enhanced partnership working across different agendas and organisations, pooling of resources along with strengthening relationships and understanding between different stakeholders and between members of the steering group and the sporting community. The drivers behind the PPOSS and the work to develop the recommendations and action plan will have also highlighted, and helped the steering group to understand, the key areas to which it can be applied and how it can be delivered.

Monitoring and updating

It is important that there is regular monitoring and review against the actions identified in the Strategy. This monitoring should continue be led by the local authority and supported by all members of, and reported back to, the Steering Group. Understanding and learning lessons from how the PPOSS has been applied should also form a key component of monitoring its delivery. It is possible that in the interim between reviews the Steering Group could also operate as a 'virtual' group; prepared to comment on suggestions and updates electronically when relevant.

It is agreed that the Council (potentially via consultants e.g., KKP) is responsible for keeping the database and background supply and demand information up to date in order that area-by-area action plans can be updated. This should be carried out in consultation with the NGBs, particularly around affiliation time when information is updated.

As a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years of the PPOSS being signed off by the steering group, then Sport England and the NGBs would consider it and the information on which it is based to be out of date. The nature of the supply and in particular the demand for provision is likely to change year-on-year, meaning that without any form of review and update it would be difficult to make the case that the supply and demand information and assessment work is sufficiently robust.

An annual review should not be regarded as a particularly resource intensive task. However, it should highlight:

- ◀ How the delivery of the recommendations and action plan has progressed and any changes required to the priority afforded to each action (e.g., the priority of some may increase following the delivery of others).
- ◀ How the PPOSS has been applied and the lessons learnt.
- ◀ Any changes to particularly important sites and/or clubs in the area (e.g., the most used or high quality sites for a particular sport) and other supply and demand information, what this may mean for the overall assessment work and the key findings and issues.
- ◀ Any development of a specific sport or particular format of a sport.
- ◀ Any new or emerging issues and opportunities.

Alongside regular steering group meetings a good way to keep the strategy up to date and maintain relationships is to hold sport specific meetings with the NGBs and other relevant parties. These meetings look to update the key supply and demand information, if necessary amend the assessment work, track progress with implementing the recommendations and action plan and highlight any new issues and opportunities.


















These meetings could be timed to fit with the annual affiliation process undertaken by the NGBs which would help to capture any changes in the number and nature of sports clubs in the area. Other information that is already collected on a regular basis such as pitch booking records for local authority and other sites could be fed into these meetings.

The NGBs are also able to indicate any further performance quality assessments that have been undertaken within the study area.

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Checklists

In order for this Strategy to be signed off by the steering group, a Stage D Checklist: Develop the Strategy, is signed off.

Stage D Checklist: Develop the Strategy	Tick 	
	Yes	Requires Attention
Step 7: Develop the recommendations and action plan		
1. Have a number of study area specific scenarios been looked at to help explore key issues and findings along with possible recommendations and actions?		
2. Have any recommendations and actions regarding AGP provision taken into account the guidance in the 'Selecting the Right Artificial Surface' document and any NGB specific information?		
3. Do the recommendations reflect the drivers, vision and objectives of the work?		
4. Are the recommendations precise enough to enable the development of clear individual area, sport and site specific actions to help achieve them?		
5. Have all relevant parties been engaged with the development of, and are signed up to the delivery of, the recommendations and actions?		
6. Are the recommendations and actions clearly presented?		
7. Has particular attention been paid to the situation at priority sites and those which are being significantly overplayed?		
8. Have area, sport and site specific solutions been proposed to protect, enhance, and provide playing pitch provision to meet the current and future demand?		
9. Has guidance on the future of any sites highlighted as being at risk been provided?		
10. Do the recommendations and actions seek to make the best use of existing pitches?		
11. Has the detriment and benefit of proposals to relocate provision been presented?		
12. Has the level and type of any new playing pitch provision required been presented?		
13. Has the importance of providing appropriate and fit for purpose ancillary facilities been highlighted in order to maximise the potential benefit to sport of any pitches?		
14. Have the recommendations sought to ensure an adequate amount of spare capacity in the provision of accessible pitches with secured community use?		
15. Does the PPS provide a steer as to the future of any spare capacity and any provision that may be genuinely surplus to requirements (paragraphs D12 to D15)?		
16. Does the action plan cover the points listed in paragraph D17?		
17. Does the action plan provide the most appropriate actions to improve provision in the study area rather than just those which the local authority can deliver?		
18. Does the action plan represent an infrastructure plan for playing pitches with deliverable area, sport and site specific actions and projects?		
Step 8: Write and Adopt the Strategy		
1. Does the PPS document provide the reader with a clear understanding of the areas listed in paragraph D20?		

WALSALL COUNCIL STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

2.	Is it clear from the PPS document why the recommendations and actions have been included, how they are to be delivered and what they will achieve?	✓	
3.	Does the PPS document indicate how it should be used and applied in different areas and circumstances along with the benefits of doing so?	✓	
4.	Has the PPS document been subject to appropriate consultation?	✓	
5.	Do all members of the steering group and other relevant parties endorse the PPS and recognise its lead role in guiding the improvement of pitches in the study area?	✓	
6.	Has the PPS document been formally adopted by the local authority and is its status recognised across all relevant departments?	✓	

To help ensure the PPS is delivered and is kept robust and up to date, the steering group can refer to the new methodology Stage E Checklist: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date:

Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date	Tick ✓	
	Yes	Requires Attention
Step 9: Apply & deliver the strategy		
1. Are steering group members clear on how the PPS can be applied across a range of relevant areas?		
2. Is each member of the steering group committed to taking the lead to help ensure the PPS is used and applied appropriately within their area of work and influence?		
3. Has a process been put in place to ensure regular monitoring of how the recommendations and action plan are being delivered and the PPS is being applied?		
Step 10: Keep the strategy robust & up to date		
1. Has a process been put in place to ensure the PPS is kept robust and up to date?		
2. Does the process involve an annual update of the PPS?		
3. Is the steering group to be maintained and is it clear of its on-going role?		
4. Is regular liaison with the NGBs and other parties planned?		
5. Has all the supply and demand information been collated and presented in a format (i.e. single document that can be filtered accordingly) that will help people to review it and highlight any changes?		
6. Have any changes made to the Active Places Power data been fed back to Sport England?		

For more information, see: [Link to Sport England website](#)



WALSALL COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORTS STRATEGY

ASSESSMENT REPORT OCTOBER 2022

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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WALSALL COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

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ABBREVIATIONS

3G	Third Generation (artificial turf)
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
BC	Bowls Club
BCGBA	British Crown Green Bowling Association
BUCS	British Universities and Colleges
CFA	County Football Association
CONGU	Council of National Golf Unions
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EH	England Hockey
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FF	Football Foundation
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FPM	Facilities Planning Model
GMA	Grounds Management Association
HC	Hockey Club
JFC	Junior Football Club
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page
LFFP	Local Football Facilities Plan
NFFS	National Football Facilities Strategy
NGB	National Governing Body
NHS	National Health Service
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
PPOSS	Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy
PQS	Performance Quality Standard
RFL	Rugby Football League
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RLFC	Rugby League Football Club
RUFC	Rugby Union Football Club
SCB	Staffordshire Cricket Board
TC	Tennis Club
U	Under

PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Knight, Kavanagh & Page (KKP) has been commissioned by the Black Country authorities of Walsall, Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton, together with the Black Country Consortium, to assess playing pitch and outdoor sport facility needs across the individual local authority areas. The output is provision of four separate needs assessments and strategies across the aforementioned authorities as well as one additional overarching framework.

This is the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) Assessment Report for Walsall. It presents a supply and demand assessment of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) Guidance (for playing pitch sports) and Sport England's Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide (for "non-pitch" sports). The PPS Guidance details a 13-stepped approach, separated into five distinct sections:

- ◀ Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach (1, 2 & 3)
- ◀ Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision (4 & 5)
- ◀ Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views (6, 7 & 8)
- ◀ Stage D: Develop the strategy (9 & 10)
- ◀ Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date (11, 12 & 13)

Stages A to C are detailed in this report, with stage D covered in the proceeding strategy document and Stage E ongoing once the work has been adopted. The lifespan of a PPOSS is considered to be three years, although this can be increased if it is kept up to date. As part of the Stage E process, the PPOSS should be reviewed on an annual basis from the date it is formally signed off. Such a review will help to maintain the momentum and commitment built up during its development.

1.1: Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach

Why the strategy is being developed

The PPOSS for Walsall will replace the existing study, which is now considered to be out of date having been finalised in 2016 (updated in 2019).

A key driver for undertaking the Study across the four authorities was to support the preparation of a joint Black Country Plan and to provide an important evidence base for its development. The intention was for this to replace the Black Country Core Strategy, which was adopted in 2011; however, separate local plans are now to be produced by the four local authorities instead.

Notwithstanding the above, the joint framework will still enable the four authorities to ensure that each PPOSS is carried out to same degree of detail and quality and for the reports to identify compatible outcomes across the sub-region. It will also help the authorities identify areas of deficits and surpluses in provision as well as helping to identify and capitalise on cross-boundary opportunities.

The PPOSS will identify current levels of provision across the four authorities and will compare this with current and likely future levels of demand. The primary purpose is therefore to provide a strategic framework that can ensure that the provision of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities can meet local and community needs of existing and future residents. As such, it will provide the evidence required to help protect provision and will ensure sufficient land is available to meet existing and projected future requirements.

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The strategies will be produced in accordance with national planning guidance and provide robust and objective justification for future sporting provision throughout the Black Country. One of the core planning principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs. Paragraph 98 discusses the importance of access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation that can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

Paragraph 99 discuss assessments and the protection of “existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields”. Paragraphs 101 and 102 also promote the identification of important green spaces by local communities and the protection of these facilities. Such spaces may include playing fields and outdoor sports facilities.

Management arrangements

A project team from Walsall Council, as well as the other relevant councils, has worked with KKP to ensure that all relevant information is readily available so that project stages and milestones are delivered on time. In addition, a strong and effective steering group has and will continue to lead the PPOSS during its development and will be responsible for the delivery of its recommendations and actions. The membership of this group is balanced and representative of the different parties and key drivers behind the work; it is made up of representatives from the councils, Active Black Country, Sport England and the relevant National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs).

The steering group is and has been responsible for the direction of the PPOSS from a strategic perspective and for supporting and checking and challenging the work of the project team. It will be important for the steering group to continue once the PPOSS has been finalised for several reasons, including a continuing responsibility to:

- ✦ Be a champion for provision in the area and promote the importance of the PPOSS.
- ✦ Support implementation of the recommendations and action plan.
- ✦ Monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the study.
- ✦ Ensure that the work is kept up to date and refreshed when necessary.

Agreed scope

A wide range of playing pitch and outdoor sports and associated facilities have been agreed for inclusion in the PPOSS in Walsall and across all four Black Country authorities. In full, the study covers:

- ✦ Athletics
- ✦ Cricket
- ✦ Football (including 3G pitches)
- ✦ Hockey (sand/water based AGPs)
- ✦ Rugby union (including 3G pitches)
- ✦ Tennis
- ✦ Bowls
- ✦ Cycling
- ✦ Golf
- ✦ Netball
- ✦ Rugby league (including 3G pitches)
- ✦ Water sports (e.g. sailing and water skiing)

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In addition, other grass pitch sports are included where identified as having a presence. This can include, but is not limited to, sports such as American football, baseball/softball, Gaelic football and lacrosse.

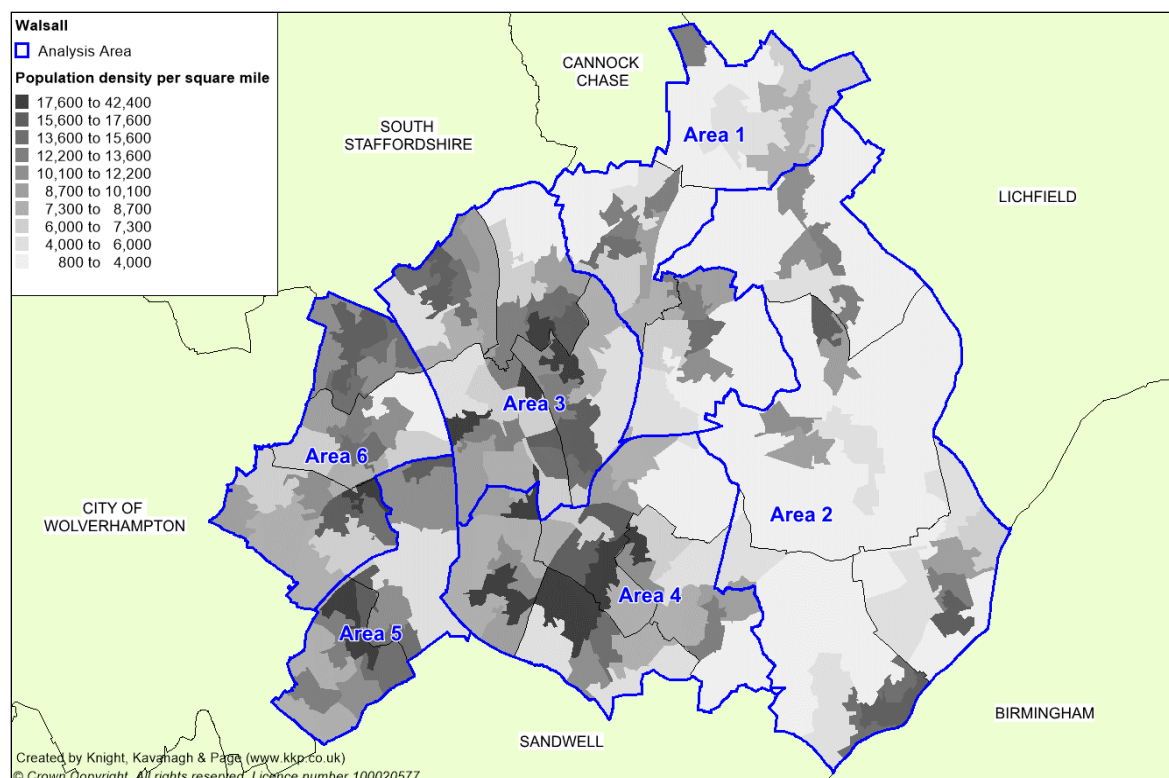
Sport England's PPS guidance applies to football, rugby union, rugby league, cricket and hockey, as well as any other grass pitch sports, whereas the ANOG guidance applies to the remaining sports (as these are "non-pitch").

Study area

The study area for the Walsall PPOSS is the Walsall Council boundary area. Further to this, sub areas or analysis areas have been used to allow for a more localised assessment of provision and examination of supply and demand at a local level. For this purpose, Walsall is split into the following six areas:

- ◆ Area 1: Brownhills / Pelsall / Rushall / Shelfield
- ◆ Area 2: Aldridge / Streetly / Pheasey / Walsall Wood
- ◆ Area 3: Bloxwich / Blakenall / Birchills / Leamore
- ◆ Area 4: St. Matthew's / Paddock / Palfrey / Pleck
- ◆ Area 5: Darlaston / Bentley
- ◆ Area 6: Willenhall / Short Heath

Figure 1.1: Analysis areas



Cross-boundary migration is also be explored, not only to and from the other three Black County authorities but also from the likes of Birmingham, Cannock Chase, Lichfield and South Staffordshire. This applies to demand from neighbouring authorities that imports into Walsall and demand from Walsall which exports out.

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1.2: Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision

A clear picture of the supply of and demand for playing pitches and outdoor sport facilities in Walsall needs to be provided to enable an accurate assessment of quantity, quality and usage. This is achieved through site assessments and consultation with key stakeholders.

Gather supply information and views – an audit of provision

Sport England's guidance uses the following definitions of a playing pitch and playing field; these are set out by the Government in the 2015 'Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order'¹:

- ▶ **Playing pitch** – a delineated area of 0.2ha or more which is used for football, rugby, cricket, hockey, lacrosse, rounders, baseball, softball, American football, Australian football, Gaelic football, shinty, hurling, polo or cycle polo.
- ▶ **Playing field** – the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch.

Although the statutory definition of a playing field sets out a minimum size, this PPOSS takes account of smaller sized pitches that contribute to the supply side. For example, a site containing a mini 5v5 football pitch is included despite it potentially being smaller than 0.2ha. The study counts individual grass pitches (as a delineated area) as the basic unit of supply, with the definition of a playing pitch also including artificial grass pitches (AGPs).

As far as possible, this report aims to capture all of the playing pitches and relevant outdoor sport facilities within Walsall; however, there may be instances that have led to omissions, such as unused school sites where access was not possible (although facilities at sites not accessed are still included within the study where provision is known to exist from other sources e.g. affiliation data or club/league consultation). Where provision has not been recorded within the report, it is still considered to exist for planning purposes and will continue to do so. Furthermore, any exclusion does not mean that the provision is not required from a supply and demand point of view.

Quantity

Where known, all playing pitch and outdoor sport facilities are included within the PPOSS, irrespective of ownership, management and use. Sites were initially identified using Sport England's Active Places web-based database, with the Council and NGBs supporting the process by checking and updating this initial data as well as supplying their own. This was also verified against club and league information supplied through consultation and any affiliation processes.

For each site, the following details are recorded in the project database:

- ▶ Site name, address (including postcode) and location
- ▶ Ownership and management type
- ▶ Security of tenure
- ▶ Community availability
- ▶ Total number, type and quality of provision
- ▶ Usage levels

¹. www.sportengland.org>Facilities and Planning> Planning Applications

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Accessibility

Not all facilities offer the same level of access to the community and the ownership and accessibility of provision also influences actual availability for demand. As such, each site is assigned a level of community use as follows:

- ✦ **Community use** – facilities in public, voluntary, private or commercial ownership or management (including education sites) recorded as being available for hire and currently in use by teams/members/individuals (depending on the sport).
- ✦ **Available but unused** - facilities that are available for hire but are not currently used externally; this most often applies to school sites but can also apply to sites which are expensive to hire or particularly poor quality.
- ✦ **No community use** - facilities which are, as a matter of policy or practice, unavailable for external hire. This includes professional club pitches along with some semi-professional club pitches where play is restricted to the first or second team of the host club.
- ✦ **Disused** – sites that are not being used at all by any users and are not available for community hire either (often being unmarked). Once these sites are disused for five or more years they will then be categorised as lapsed sites.
- ✦ **Lapsed** - last known use was as a playing field more than five years ago. These fall outside of Sport England's statutory remit but still have to be assessed using the criteria in paragraph 99 of the NPPF; Sport England would nonetheless challenge a proposed loss which fails to meet such criteria. It should be emphasised that the lawful planning use of a lapsed site is still that of a playing field.

In addition, there should be a good degree of certainty as to whether a facility will be available to the community for at least the following three years. A judgement is made based on the information gathered and any provision adjudged not to be available for this length of time is considered to be “unsecure” (as opposed to “secure”).

Quality

The capacity of provision to regularly provide for competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of provision affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of a sport. In extreme circumstances, it can result in a facility being unable to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times.

It is not just the quality of the pitches themselves which have an effect on capacity but also the quality, standard and range of ancillary facilities. The quality of both the playing provision and the ancillary facilities will determine whether sites are able to contribute to meeting demand from various groups and for different levels and types of play.

The quality of all provision identified in the audit and the ancillary facilities supporting them are assessed regardless of ownership, management or availability. Along with capturing any details specific to the individual facilities and sites, a quality rating is also recorded within the audit for each. These ratings are then used to help estimate the capacity (aligned to NGB guidance) to accommodate competitive and other play within the supply and demand assessment.

In addition to undertaking non-technical assessments (using the templates provided within the guidance and as determined by NGBs), users and providers have also been consulted on the quality. In some instances, the quality rating has been adjusted to reflect this i.e. an “agreed quality rating”.

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Gather demand information and views

Presenting an accurate picture of current demand for playing pitches and outdoor sport facilities (i.e. recording how and when provision is used) is important when undertaking a supply and demand assessment. Demand for provision in Walsall tends to fall within the following categories:

- ◀ Organised competitive play
- ◀ Organised training
- ◀ Informal play

Current and future demand for provision is presented on a sport-by-sport basis within the relevant sections of this report. In addition, unmet, latent, imported and exported demand for provision is also identified within each section.

Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to provision; it is usually expressed, for example, when a team is in training but is unable to access a match pitch, or when a league has a waiting list due to a lack of pitch provision, which in turn is hindering the growth of the league. In comparison, latent demand is defined as the number of additional teams that could be fielded if access to a sufficient number of outdoor sports facilities (and ancillary provision) was available. Exported and imported demand refers to those that are playing outside of their local authority area of choice.

A variety of consultation methods were used to collate demand information. Firstly, face-to-face consultation (normally via video call due to Covid-19 restrictions) has been carried out with key clubs and leagues (as identified by the Steering Group) from each sport, thus allowing for the collection of detailed demand information and an exploration of key issues to be interrogated and more accurately assessed. For all remaining clubs, telephone consultation or an online survey (converted to postal if required) has been utilised.

As key providers and users of the sports facilities, educational establishments have also been consulted with as to inform this report.

Future demand

Alongside current demand, it is important for a PPOSS to assess whether the future demand for provision can be met. Using Office of National Statistics (ONS) population projections and proposed housing growth, as well as likely participation growth informed through consultation, an estimate can be made of the likely future demand for the relevant facilities. Assumptions can then be made as to whether existing provision can cater for such growth.

Team generation rates are used to provide an indication as to how many people it may take to generate a team (by gender and age group). This ratio is then applied to predicted population growth to help estimate the change in demand for each sport that may arise in the future. Other information sources that were used to help identify future demand include:

- ◀ Recent trends in the participation.
- ◀ The nature of the current and likely future population and their propensity to participate.
- ◀ Feedback from clubs on plans to develop additional teams or attract additional members.
- ◀ Any local and NGB specific sports development targets.

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In line with the previously proposed Black Country Plan (now to be replaced by four separate local plans), future demand projections across the PPOSS cover the period up until 2039.

1.3: Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views

Supply and demand information gathered is used to assess the adequacy of playing pitch and outdoor sport provision in Walsall and to identify key issues, challenges and aspirations. This forms the basis of this report.

Understand the situation at individual sites

Qualitative ratings are linked to a capacity rating derived from NGB guidance and tailored to suit a local area. For playing pitch sports, the quality and use of each pitch is assessed against recommended capacity to indicate how many match equivalent sessions a pitch could accommodate. This is then compared to the number of matches actually taking place and categorised as follows, to identify:

- ✦ Potential spare capacity: Play is below the level the site could sustain
- ✦ At capacity: Play is at a level the site can sustain
- ✦ Overused: Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

As a guide, the NGBs for football, cricket, rugby union, rugby league and hockey have set a standard number of matches that each pitch type should be able to accommodate without adversely affecting its quality. Given how the sports operate, this is per week for football, rugby union and rugby league, per day for hockey and per season for cricket.

Table 1.2: Capacity of playing pitches in match equivalent sessions

Sport	Pitch type	Good	Standard	Poor
Football	Adult pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Youth pitches	4 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Football	Mini pitches	6 per week	4 per week	2 per week
Rugby union	Natural Inadequate (D0)	2 per week	1.5 per week	0.5 per week
Rugby union	Natural Adequate (D1)	3 per week	2 per week	1.5 per week
Rugby union	Pipe Drained (D2)	3.25 per week	2.5 per week	1.75 per week
Rugby union	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	3.5 per week	3 per week	2 per week
Rugby league	Senior pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Rugby league	Junior pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Rugby league	Mini pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
Cricket	One grass wicket	5 per season	4 per season	0 per season
Cricket	One synthetic wicket	60 per season	60 per season	0 per season
Hockey	One AGP	4 matches per day	4 matches per day	0 matches per day

For non-pitch sports, capacity is not linked to the number of matches taking place but rather the number of members (and other users) attracted to a site. For example, for tennis, a floodlit hard court is said to have capacity for 60 members, whereas a non-floodlit has court has capacity for 40 members (this varies for grass courts). Other sport specific capacity guidance is detailed within the relevant sections of this report.

Develop the current picture of provision

Once capacity is determined on a site-by-site basis, actual spare capacity is calculated on a local authority-wide and an area-by-area basis via further interrogation of peak time demand. This then identifies whether there is overall spare capacity on provision or whether there is a shortfall.

Although spare capacity may be identified at some sites and in some areas, it does not necessarily mean that there is surplus provision. For example, spare capacity may not be available when it is needed (actual spare capacity), or a site may be retained in a 'strategic reserve' to enable rotation and to reduce wear and tear. Often, spare capacity is discounted due to site specific issues such as those relating to quality, availability and security of tenure.

Identify the key findings and issues

By completing the aforementioned steps, it is possible to identify several findings and issues relating to the supply, demand and adequacy of playing pitch and outdoor sport provision. This report therefore seeks to identify and present such key information on a sport-by-sport basis prior to the development of the Strategy and Action Plan.

Each included sport has its own section within this Assessment Report, detailing key findings and featuring a supply and demand analysis. In addition, a separate 3G pitch section is also included to take into account the variety of sports that can utilise such provision (e.g. football, rugby union and rugby league).

Develop the future picture of provision (scenario testing)

Modelling scenarios to assess whether existing provision can cater for unmet, latent, exported and future demand is made after the capacity analysis. As such, most of the scenario testing generally occurs in the Strategy report that proceeds this document and therefore does not form part of the Assessment Report.

PART 2: FOOTBALL

2.1: Introduction

Both Birmingham and Staffordshire County FAs are the primary organisations responsible for the development of football in Walsall. They are also responsible for the administration, in terms of discipline, rules and regulations, cup competitions and representative matches, development of clubs and facilities, volunteers, referees, coaching courses and delivering national football schemes.

Facility development for football is largely the responsibility of the Football Foundation, which is a charity, linked to the Premier League, the FA and the Government, that helps communities improve their local football facilities through grant funding. It is committed to improving the experience of playing football for everyone involved in the game.

This section of the report focuses on the supply and demand for grass football pitches. Part 3 captures supply and demand for artificial grass pitches (AGPs). In the future it is anticipated that there will be a growing demand for the use of AGPs for competitive football fixtures, especially to accommodate mini and youth football.

For grass football pitches, formal demand is generally defined through five formats of play and five pitch types, linked to the age of teams and players. Please refer to the table below for more detail relating to this.

Table 2.1: Football grass pitch formats

Format/pitch type	Age range	Recommended pitch size (metres)
Adult	U17s+	100 x 64
Youth 11v11	U15s-U16s	91 x 55
Youth 11v11	U13s-U14s	82 x 50
Youth 9v9	U11s-U12s	73 x 46
Mini 7v7	U9s-U10s	55 x 37
Mini 5v5	U7s-U8s	37 x 27

Local Football Facility Plans (LFFPs)

To support in delivery of both the current and superseding FA National Games Strategy (NGS), the FA commissioned a nationwide consultancy project which has now been completed. As part of this, a Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) has been produced for every local authority across England, with each plan being unique to its area as well as being diverse in its representation.

The LFFP is strategically aligned to the National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS); a 10-year plan to change the landscape of football facilities in England. The NFFS represents a major funding commitment from the national funding partners (the FA, Premier League and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)) and is delivered through the Football Foundation to inform and direct an estimated one billion pounds of investment into football facilities over the next ten years.

Each LFFP builds upon PPS findings (where present and current) regarding the formal and affiliated game as well as including strategic priorities for investment across small-sided football (including recreational and indoor activity).

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The LFFP also incorporates consultation with groups outside of formal football, as well as under-represented communities. This includes those which may be key partners with regards to using football for behavioural change, plus groups which may be key drivers of FA priorities around participation in the likes of women and girls' football, disability football and futsal.

The LFFP is a 'live' document that can be updated following the completion of a PPS, if required, as an up-to-date supply and demand assessment may present findings and recommendations that need to be incorporated for investment purposes. LFFPs identify key projects to be delivered and act as an investment portfolio for projects that require funding. As such, around 90% of all national football investment through the funding partners will be identified via LFFPs.

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to recognise that the LFFP is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential investment; it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. Consequently, it cannot be used in place of a PPS and is not an accepted evidence base for site change of use or disposal. A LFFP does, however, build on available/existing local evidence and strategic plans and may adopt relevant actions from a PPS and/or complement these with additional investment priorities.

The LFFP for Walsall was produced in 2018 and identifies 21 priority projects for investment. These are discussed in greater detail in both this section and Part 3 of the report.

Consultation

Consultation requests were sent to all football clubs based in Walsall via Birmingham FA and Staffordshire FA, with 26% responding. Whilst this is a low figure, it represents 66% of teams as focus has been placed on large clubs identified as key. As such, most non-respondents are small clubs fielding just one or two teams, although some large clubs including Four Oaks FC and Walsall Phoenix FC also did not respond. The responsive clubs include the following clubs identified as key:

- ◆ Brewood Juniors FC
- ◆ Darlaston Town (1874) FC
- ◆ Pelsall Villa Colts FC
- ◆ Rushall Olympic FC
- ◆ Cresswell Wanderers FC
- ◆ Lane Head FC
- ◆ Premier FC
- ◆ Silverdale FC
- ◆ Sporting Khalsa FC
- ◆ Willenhall FC
- ◆ Sheffield United FC
- ◆ Walsall Wood FC

2.2: Supply

The audit identifies a current total of 179 grass football pitches within Walsall across 60 sites. Of these, 147 pitches are available, at some level, for community use across 48 sites. The remaining 32 pitches which are unavailable for community use, are located at professional football clubs (and are therefore not considered accessible) or at local schools.

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As can be seen in the table below, the Area 2 contains the largest number of pitches (48), whilst the Area 3 contains the least (11).

Table 2.2: Summary of grass football pitches available to the community

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Area 1	16	1	6	5	5	33
Area 2	20	8	13	4	4	49
Area 3	8	2	-	1	-	11
Area 4	12	2	4	1	3	22
Area 5	8	2	8	-	-	18
Area 6	4	-	6	2	2	14
Walsall	68	15	37	13	14	147

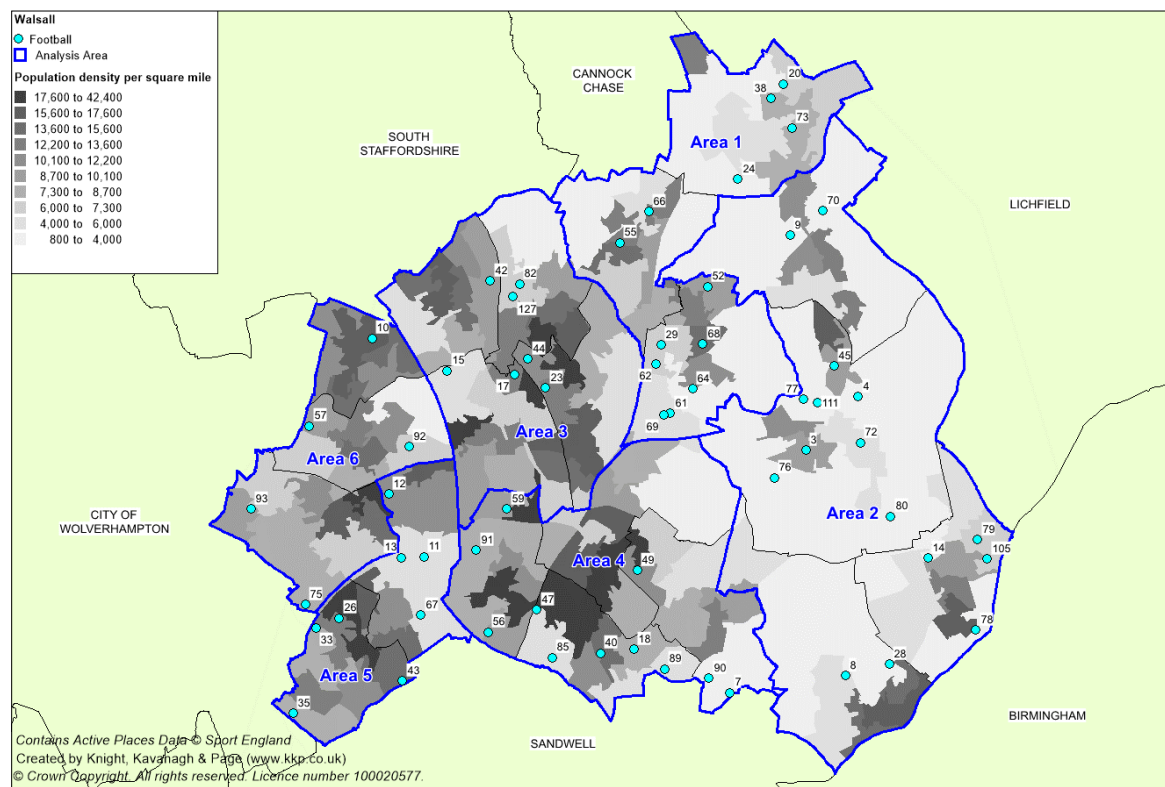
Adult pitches make up the majority of the available pitch supply (46% of all provision), which is reflective of high demand for adult football. However, youth 11v11 demand is actually higher, meaning that the low supply of youth 11v11 pitches does not correlate. This leads to many youth 11v11 teams playing on adult pitches, which, whilst sometimes preferable for clubs, is not ideal for players at U13-U16 level and is not in line with the FA Youth Review.

When compared to the 2016 PPS there has been a reduction of 11 community available pitches with the old total being at 155. This is due to sites such as Pelsall Cricket and Sports Club and Pelsall Villa FC no longer providing provision. In the case of the former the pitch is no longer prepared for play, whilst the latter was in talks of being converted into a supermarket, however, the application was refused in 2022.

Figure 2.1 identifies all grass football pitches currently within Walsall regardless of community use. For more detailed maps, please see Appendix 2. For a key to these maps, see Table 2.14.

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Figure 2.1: Location of all football pitches in Walsall



Lapsed/disused sites

The following table identifies sites in Walsall that previously provided football pitches which are no longer in use as playing field provision. As these have all not been used for over five years, they are all lapsed sites (rather than disused).

Table 2.3: Summary of disused/lapsed football provision

Site	Comments
Abbey Park Stadium	The former stadium of Sporting Khalsa FC. The Club left the site in 2010 to purchase a new stadium from existing tenants Willenhall Town FC. Following extensive refurbishment, the new site opened in time for the 2010-11 season. The Abbey Park Stadium site has been left defunct ever since.
Bush Ground (Pelsall Villa FC)	Former home ground of Pelsall Villa FC. The Club was expelled from the Midlands League after failing to fulfil fixtures. It has since disbanded, and the ground has become derelict. A supermarket was progressing plans to develop the site; however, an application was rejected in 2022.
Darlaston Town Football Club	Former stadium site of Darlaston Town FC, which folded in 2013. It has since re-emerged as a phoenix club which play at a new site.
Glastonbury Crescent	Former stadium site that is owned by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council. The site has been approached by Lane Head FC for the potential of taking on the site however there are potential complications with its location and current state.

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Future supply

Rushall Olympic FC has planning permission to create a new grass youth 9v9 pitch at its home venue. The land is owned by the Council.

Security of tenure

Of the 179 pitches in Walsall, 48 are managed by the Council, 77 by schools/universities, 46 by sports clubs and eight by community groups. Of the club pitches, 10 are unavailable to the community, as are 22 of the education pitches.

Table 2.3: Number of football pitches by management type

Community use	Club	Council	Education	Other
Available	36	48	55	8
Unavailable	10	-	22	-

With schools being the most common provider of pitches, it is worth noting that they are also the least likely to provide security of tenure. For example, teams within Rushall Olympic Youth Development accessing Elmwood School do so with an insecure tenure agreement with the school.

Tenure of sites in Walsall is generally secure i.e., through a long-term lease or a guarantee that the pitch will continue to be provided over the lifespan of the PPOSS, as is the case at most council sites. There are several sites owned or leased by clubs or wider multi-sport clubs, such as Rushall Olympic FC and Sporting Khalsa FC.

Notwithstanding the above, Sheffield United FC expresses concerns around insecure tenure at King George Crescent Playing Field. It can only agree a 12-month lease on the pitches from the landowner and likewise to Silverdale FC accessing Walstead Road and Pelsall Villa Colts at the Walsall Education Development Centre, who can all theoretically be asked to vacate the site in the future.

Pelsall Villa FC aspires to gain a 25 year lease (or longer) on its site, known as Fordbrook. It has previously held formal talks with the Council but has been unable to secure a formal agreement for use of the site.

Having security of tenure is crucial for clubs/organisations, especially those that will be seeking significant investment and external funding from partners such as the Football Foundation.

Pitch quality

The quality of football pitches in Walsall has been assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments as determined by the FA) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◆ Good
- ◆ Standard
- ◆ Poor

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The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments are as follows: Good (>80%), Standard (50-80%), Poor (<50%). However, it must be noted that the final quality ratings assigned to the sites also take into account the user quality ratings gathered from consultation.

For the full assessment criteria, please refer to Appendix 2.

Pitch quality primarily influences the carrying capacity of a site; often pitches lack the drainage and maintenance necessary to sustain levels of use. It is likely that pitches which receive little to no ongoing repair or post-season remedial work will be assessed as poor, therefore limiting the number of games able to take place each week without it having a detrimental effect on quality. Conversely, well maintained pitches which are tended to regularly are likely to be of a higher standard and capable of taking a greater number of matches without a significant reduction in surface quality.

Private sites (e.g. sports clubs) typically offer better quality facilities than council parks/playing fields and school pitches. In general, such sports clubs tend to have dedicated ground staff or volunteers working on pitches and the fact that they are often secured by fencing prevents unofficial use. The maintenance of council sites tends to be less frequent and unofficial use of these sites can further exacerbate quality issues.

The table below summarises the quality of pitches that are available for community use in Walsall. In total, nine pitches are assessed as good quality, 89 as standard quality and 48 as poor quality.

Table 2.4: Pitch quality assessments (community use pitches)

Analysis area	Adult Good	Adult Standard	Adult Poor	Youth Good	Youth Standard	Youth Poor	Mini Good	Mini Standard	Mini Poor
Area 1	-	7	10	-	5	2	-	5	5
Area 2	-	14	6	-	14	7	-	7	1
Area 3	-	5	3	-	2	-	-	-	1
Area 4	5	7	-	3	4	-	1	2	1
Area 5	-	6	1	-	3	6	-	-	-
Area 6	-	1	3	-	6	-	-	2	2
Walsall	5	40	23	3	34	15	1	16	10

For a full breakdown of the quality ratings at each site, see Table 2.15.

When comparing to the 2016 PPS, the number of poor-quality pitches within Walsall has decreased from 87 to 48, meaning the quality of pitches has on large improved within the last five years. That being said the total number of good quality pitches has remained the same at nine, meaning there are still areas for improvements in order to further enhance the quality of provision.

The non-technical pitch quality audit shows that most pitches are standard or poor quality, particularly at local authority sites. All sites managed by the Council receive a basic level of maintenance that is generally restricted to grass cutting and seeding with ad hoc improvements implemented when necessary.

The majority of pitches within schools also receive basic maintenance, which in most cases is contracted to an external maintenance companies. Maintenance of pitches at club sites varies; few clubs hire dedicated ground staff whilst others depend on remedial work by volunteers that is often limited by cost and a lack of specialised equipment.

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Sites containing community available poor quality pitches are as follows:

- ✦ Aldridge Community Centre
- ✦ Beacon Primary School
- ✦ Blackwood School
- ✦ Fordbrook
- ✦ Holland Park
- ✦ Leamore Park
- ✦ Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy
- ✦ Rushall Cricket Club
- ✦ Walsall Academy
- ✦ Willenhall Memorial Park
- ✦ Barr Beacon School
- ✦ Bentley West Playing Field
- ✦ Clayhanger Park
- ✦ Great Bridge Road
- ✦ Kings Hill Park
- ✦ Mayfield Preparatory School
- ✦ Pelsall Village School
- ✦ St Francis of Assisi Catholic College
- ✦ The Aldridge Airport

Where quality issues are prevalent, it is recommended that sites engage with the Football Foundation's PitchPower app (see below).

In contrast, the good quality community available pitches are all found at Aston University (Recreation Centre).

Overall, 7% of the adult pitches are good quality, 59% are standard quality and 34% are poor quality. Similarly, 29% of youth pitches are poor quality, whilst 65% are standard quality and 6% are good quality. For mini pitches, 4% are good quality, 59% are standard quality and 37% are poor quality.

Of clubs that responded to consultation, 45% report that quality has worsened over the last 12 months, whilst only 14% report that quality has improved (41% report no change). The most common factors attributed to pitch improvements are an investment in drainage work and more frequent maintenance, whilst the opposite is true for pitches that are worsening in quality.

Following information from survey responses, it seems that sites used for the Walsall Junior Youth League such as Willenhall E-Act and Willenhall Memorial Park are the pitches highlighted for poor quality. Therefore, this is likely caused by the high demand the pitches shall be under.

Local Football Facility Plan

The LFFP for Walsall identifies key sites considered a priority to improve, with these selected based on the rationale of identifying sites that are the poorest in quality and that are the best utilised, or that have the greatest potential for increased utilisation following quality enhancements. Emphasis is on sites with three or more pitches, although scope exists for the inclusion of smaller sites if they are deemed to be strategically important.

WALSALL COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

The following nine sites are identified for improvement projects:

- ◀ Aldridge Airport
- ◀ Broadway West
- ◀ Doebank Park
- ◀ King George Crescent
- ◀ Willenhall Memorial Park
- ◀ Anchor Meadow
- ◀ Clayhanger Park
- ◀ Fordbrook
- ◀ Great Bridge Road

In the PPOSS, most pitches at these sites have been assessed as poor or standard quality. Whilst most will therefore still require improvement, given that the LFFP is a live document, there may be a need to amend and/or add to this list based on the findings of this study. Recommendations on whether this current list of sites should be amended will be made in the accompanying Strategy document.

Pitch improvement

The FA has a Pitch Improvement Programme aimed at improving the standard of grass pitches across the Country. For provision included in the programme, clubs can utilise the services of the Football Foundation's PitchPower app to carry out a free on-site assessment of their pitches. This then provides the Grounds Management Association (GMA) with the detail needed to create a personalised, informative report to advise on how improvements can be made. Clubs then receive bespoke advice and support to help with any future actions, funding applications and equipment, with clubs getting access to discounted rates for machinery and consumables through local partnerships.

Linked to this, the FA has a general pitch improvement strategy, in partnership with the GMA. As part of this, it has a grass pitch maintenance service that can be utilised by clubs with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and therefore the quality of pitches. The key principles behind the service are to provide clubs with advice and practical solutions in a range of areas, with the simple aim of improving playing surfaces. This is designed to help clubs on sites that they themselves manage and maintain but can also be used to advise local authority-maintained sites.

The Football Foundation and the FA have also recently developed a new Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund that allows clubs and sports organisations to apply for funding for maintenance assistance, consumables and/or equipment. Whilst local authorities are currently ineligible applicants through this fund, clubs, leagues and/or charitable organisations using local authority sites can apply provided they have security of tenure.

Funding is awarded over a ten-year period for up to 66% of the total cost required to bring the pitches up to an appropriate standard, following a site assessment. The level of funding then decreases year on year, with the expectation that the Club is able to take on the works independently by the end of the term.

In the case of Walsall, Millfield Primary School, King George Crescent (Sheffield United), Four Oakes Boys, Delves Green Road (Rushall Olympic), Shire Oak Academy, Education Development Centre (Pelsall Villa Colts), Walstead Road (Silverdale FC), Red Star AFC and Walsall Wood FC all received pitch improvement plan visits within the last six years. Following these visits, pitch power assessments were completed at Four Oakes boys, Rushall Olympic Youth FC and West Walsall E-Act Academy.

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Over marked pitches

Over marking of pitches can cause notable damage to the surface quality and lead to overuse beyond recommended capacity. In some cases, mini pitches may be marked onto senior pitches or mini matches may be played widthways across adult or youth pitches. This can lead to targeted areas of surface damage due to a large amount of play focused on high traffic areas, particularly the middle third of the pitch.

Over marking of pitches not only influences available capacity, it may also cause logistical issues regarding kick off times; for example, when two teams of differing age formats are due to play at the same site at the same time.

There are also a number of football pitches in Walsall which are marked onto or overlapping cricket outfields, which can create availability issues at multi-sport sites as the cricket season begins in April when the football season is still ongoing and the football season begins in August as cricket fixtures are still being played.

The table below highlights all sites containing over marked pitches.

Table 2.5: Sites containing over marked pitches

Site	Comments
Aldridge Sticks and Wickets Club	Adult pitches overlap cricket outfield, and youth 11v11 has mini 7v7 pitch overmarked
Aston University Centre	Mini and youth pitches overmarked on adult pitches.
Fordbrook	Mini 7v7 pitch overmarked on adult pitch.
Streetly Sports Club	Adult pitches overlap cricket outfield.
The Veseyans Sport and Social Club	Mini and youth pitch both marked within a senior rugby union pitch.

Ancillary facilities

As with pitch quality, the quality of ancillary facilities servicing football sites across Walsall has been assessed on the basis of identifying good, standard and poor quality provision. To that end, the ratings are primarily influenced by the type and quality of amenities which are available on a site, such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, car parking and boundary fencing.

In the main, ancillary provision servicing sites in Walsall are a mixture of standard and poor quality although club sites are generally good quality (such as Sporting Khalsa FC). Based on the non-technical audit, poor quality provision is located at the following sites:

- ◆ Clayhanger Park
- ◆ Great Bridge Road
- ◆ Lane Head FC
- ◆ Rushall Playing Field
- ◆ Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)
- ◆ The Aldridge Airport
- ◆ Doebank Park
- ◆ Holland Park
- ◆ Pleck Park
- ◆ Shelfield Playing Field
- ◆ Walstead Road

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Further to this, the following sites are identified as having no known ancillary offer supporting play on site:

- ◀ Broadway West Playing Field
- ◀ Darlaston Community Association
- ◀ Fordbrook
- ◀ The Streetly Association
- ◀ Willenhall Memorial Park

Local Football Facility Plan

As with grass pitch improvements, the LFFP for Walsall identifies sites considered as priority sites for clubhouse and changing facility improvements or for new provision to be provided. In total, nine sites are identified for either improvement/replacement or for a new facility to be provided. The seven sites identified for improvement are:

- ◀ Aldridge Airport
- ◀ Clayhanger Park
- ◀ Fordbrook
- ◀ Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)
- ◀ Anchor Meadow
- ◀ Doebank Park
- ◀ Great Bridge Road

The two sites identified for having a need for new provision are Broadway West Playing Field and Willenhall Memorial Park.

Football pyramid demand

The football pyramid consists of a hierarchal format with the highest tier being the Premier League (Tier 1), the leagues below are professional reaching to League 2. These are governed by the Premier League or the English Football League (EFL). Below this, sits the National League (Tier 5/Step 1). This league in recent years (2020) has been recognised as professional alongside the tier below (Tier 5/Step 2). All leagues below this are recognised as semi-professional or amateur.

The National League comprises of seven steps, with various leagues at each level and more leagues lower down the pyramid than at the top. The system has a hierarchical format with promotion and relegation between the levels, allowing even the smallest club the theoretical possibility of rising to the top of the system.

Clubs within the step system (tier 5 and below) must adhere to ground requirements set out by the FA². The higher the level of football being played the higher the requirements. Clubs cannot progress into the league above if the ground requirements do not meet the correct specifications. Ground grading assesses grounds from A to H, with 'A' being the requirements for Step 1 clubs.

Walsall FCs men's first team is the highest performing team in Walsall, playing in the professional system (EFL League 2) and therefore above the non-league pyramid. Below this, there are then six clubs that play within the football pyramid, as shown in the table below.

² [Link to The FA ground grading](#)

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Table 2.6: Football pyramid clubs/teams in Walsall

Team	League	Level
Rushall Olympic FC	Southern League	Step 4
Sporting Khalsa FC	Northern Premier League	Step 4
Continental Star FC	Midlands Football League	Step 6
Darlaston Town (1874)	Midlands Football League	Step 6
Dudley Town FC	Midlands Football League	Step 6
Walsall Wood FC	Midlands Football League	Step 6

In addition to the clubs within the pyramid, there are four clubs that play in regional feeder leagues (Pelsall Villa, Lane Head FC, Walsall Phoenix and Walsall Town football club). These were formerly recognised as Step 7 within the structure but this has changed in recent years. Clubs competing in regional feeder leagues still have some ground grading requirements but generally require investment to bring grounds up to an adequate standard for Step 6 football in the event of a promotion.

Women's National League System

There is also a Women's National League System like the adult men's football pyramid, providing structure to the women's game. Although women's clubs are still required to meet ground requirements set out by the FA, these differ from the men's National League System. Ratings range from grade A to C, each with differing minimum requirements. Steps 1 and 2 in the Women's National League System is akin to steps 3 and 4 of the men's National League System, although not exactly the same.

Locally, there are three clubs in Walsall competing within the Women's system, including Aston Villa Women's FC, which plays at the Bescot Stadium (Walsall FC) and imports demand into Walsall from Birmingham as to meet the relevant ground grading requirements. There are also Walsall Ladies FC and Walsall Wood Ladies FC, which both compete in the West Midlands Regional League (Step 7). There are no specific ground grading requirements required for this level of play.

Table 2.7: Summary of ground grading for women's football

Level	League	Grading category
Step 3 and 4	Women's Super League 1	Grade A
Step 3 and 4	Women's Super League 2	Grade B
Step 5	Northern and Southern Women's Premier League	Grade A
Step 6	Women's Combination Leagues	Grade B
Step 7	Women's Regional Leagues – Premier Divisions	Grade C

2.3: Demand

A total of 446 teams are identified as playing within Walsall. This consists of 105 adult men's teams, 16 adult women's teams, 191 youth boys' teams, 22 youth girls' teams and 112 mini soccer teams.

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Table 2.8: Summary of competitive teams currently playing in Walsall

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Area 1	17	35	13	20	15	100
Area 2	23	25	14	15	-	77
Area 3	9	10	-	6	3	28
Area 4	57	18	29	13	15	132
Area 5	6	28	22	16	4	76
Area 6	9	14	5	4	1	33
Walsall	121	130	83	74	38	446

Most play is in Area 4, with 132 teams identified (equating to 30% of all demand). The least amount is in Area 6, with 33 teams playing football within this catchment (7% of all demand).

The most prevalent playing format is the youth 11v11 category (130 teams), with adult football the second most popular with 121 teams identified. The least popular format is mini 5v5 football, although this is impacted upon the central venue nature of localised leagues on 3G pitches in and outside of Walsall.

When compared to the 2016 PPS, the total number of teams competing within Walsall has risen from 376 teams to 446, a growth of 70 teams within five years. Notable growth has taken place since 2016 in Area 4 from 74 teams to the 132 seen as 2021, with adult teams alone within this Analysis area growing from 26 to 57 teams.

Participation trends

There has been a growth in football demand in recent years in Walsall, with more teams existing now when compared to previous seasons. This is predominately due to a growth in adult and youth football, with several larger clubs now fielding more teams within these formats, particularly in Analysis Area 4 which has seen notable growth.

Aligned to the above, 38% of consulted clubs report a growth in demand over the previous three years, whilst only one club reports a reduction. This is AFC Willenhall, which states that it has lost mini teams as the existing mini teams have progressed to youth football, without any backfilling taking place.

For the clubs that have experienced an increase, the reasons for the growth vary, but include increased advertising, the impact of initiatives and coaching sessions, increased access to secondary venues, and the acquisition of additional coaches. Some clubs also state that Covid-19 has resulted in an influx in new players following the lifting of restrictions.

Exported demand

There is no exported demand in Walsall, other than demand from clubs accessing pitches outside of the area as part of a central venue league system.

This is predominantly mini teams, with these playing at sites such as Bustleholme Playing Fields in Sandwell and Cheslyn Hay Academy in South Staffordshire.

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Imported demand

Dudley Town FC is currently ground sharing at Sporting Khalsa FC to meet ground grading requirements for Step 6 football. The Club previously played at The Dell Stadium within Dudley itself but has since moved into Walsall for an improved facility offer. However, it aspires to relocate back to Dudley and to progress up to Step 4, thus requiring a high standard stadia facility.

Unmet demand

There is no unmet demand identified in Walsall, although Saughall Colts Junior FC indicates that it often has to turn mini and youth players away as it does not have capacity for additional teams.

Latent demand

Several clubs in Walsall report latent demand, stating that they could field more teams if more pitches were available. This applies to the following:

- ✦ AFC Willenhall
- ✦ Black Country Hunters FC
- ✦ Lane Head FC
- ✦ Pelsall Villa FC
- ✦ Sporting Khalsa FC
- ✦ Shelfield United FC
- ✦ Brownhills Community Colts FC
- ✦ Darlaston Town FC
- ✦ Rushall Olympic FC
- ✦ Silverdale Junior FC
- ✦ Walsall Wood FC

Four of these suggest that their latent demand is due to a lack of match pitches, whilst seven identify a need for additional training facilities and six identify a need for improved ancillary provision. AFC Willenhall FC and Pelsall Villa FC report that all three aspects are an issue.

Future demand

Future demand can be defined in two ways, through participation increases and by using population forecasts. In addition, the Strategy & Action Plan that follows this report will contain housing growth scenarios that will estimate the additional demand for football arising from housing development plans within Walsall.

Population increases

Team generation rates are used to calculate the number of teams likely to be generated in the future (2039) based on population growth. Using this, it is predicted that there will be a possible increase of 39 teams, which is substantial. The highest growth areas are anticipated to be adult men's (13 teams) and youth 11v11 boys (16 teams).

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Table 2.9: Team generation rates (2039)

Age group	Current population within age group	Current no. of teams	Team Generation Rate	Future population within age group	Predicted future number of teams	Additional teams that may be generated from the increased population
Adult Mens (18-45)	49,565	105	1:472	56,106	118	13
Adult Womens (18-45)	50,265	16	1:3142	55,818	17	1
Youth Boys (12-17)	11,084	120	1:92	12,625	136	16
Youth Girls (12-17)	10,524	16	1:658	12,008	18	2
Youth Boys (10-11)	4,001	71	1:56	4,199	74	3
Youth Girls (10-11)	3,868	6	1:645	4,010	6	0
Mini Mixed (8-9)	7,818	74	1:110	8,300	75	3
Mini Mixed (6-7)	8,138	38	1:254	8,480	33	1

In total, population increases are likely to result 39 additional teams; however, this is when the team generation rates are applied local authority wide. When they are applied to individual analysis areas, a more detailed representation of where exactly the predicated growth will occur emerges.

Once applied by analysis area, it is forecast that 28 teams will be established across the six analysis areas. This is summarised below and translates the demand to match equivalent sessions (0.5 match equivalent sessions represents one team, based on teams playing on a home and away basis).

Table 2.10: Summary of future demand from team generation rates by analysis area in match equivalent sessions

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Area 1	0.5	2	-	0.5	-	3
Area 2	1	1.5	-	-	-	2.5
Area 3	0.5	0.5	-	-	-	1
Area 4	3	1	0.5	0.5	-	5
Area 5	-	1.5	-	-	-	1.5
Area 6	-	1	-	-	-	1
Walsall	5	7.5	0.5	1	-	14

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to note that team generation rates are based on population figures and do not account for targeted development work within certain areas or focused towards certain groups, such as through FA initiatives, coaching within schools and club-led programmes. For example, there is a current drive by the FA to increase female participation, which will not be reflected via team generation rates alone.

Participation increases

A total of six clubs report aspirations to increase the number of teams that they provide. This results in a predicted growth of nine teams.

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Table 2.11: Potential team increases identified by clubs

Club	Analysis area	Future demand (teams)	Pitch type	Match equivalents
AFC Willenhall	Area 6	2	Mini 5v5	1
Black Country Hunters FC	Area 5	2	Mini 5v5	1
Brownhill Community Colts FC	Area 1	1	Youth 11v11	0.5
Lane Head FC	Area 3	2	Mini 5v5	1
Rushall Olympic FC	Area 1	1	Mini 5v5	0.5
Rushall Olympic FC	Area 1	1	Mini 7v7	0.5
Pelsall Villa Colts FC	Area 1	1	Youth 9v9	0.5
Shelfield United FC	Area 1	1	Mini 7v7	0.5
-	-	Totals	Adult	-
-	-	-	Youth	1
-	-	-	Mini	4.5

The total future demand expressed by clubs amounts to 5.5 match equivalent sessions. It is expressed in areas 1, 5 and 6 and for youth 11v11, youth 9v9, mini 7v7 and mini 5v5 pitches.

Table 2.12: Summary of future demand expressed by clubs in match equivalent sessions

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Area 1	-	0.5	0.5	1	0.5	2
Area 2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Area 3	-	-	-	-	1	1
Area 4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Area 5	-	-	-	-	1	1
Area 6	-	-	-	-	1	1
Walsall	-	0.5	0.5	1	3.5	5

Future demand summary

In the supply and demand analysis at the end of this section of the report, only future demand identified through population increases are included due to the large increases expressed by clubs. This demand is considered more aspirational, and it is unlikely that it will all be achieved. However, the preceding Strategy document will include a scenario to identify the impact it would have if the growth was realised.

2.4: Capacity analysis

The capacity for pitches to regularly provide for competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of a pitch affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment. In extreme circumstances, it can result in the inability of a pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times.

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As a guide, the FA has set a standard number of matches that each grass pitch type should be able to accommodate without it adversely affecting its quality. Taking into consideration the guidelines on capacity, the following ratings are used in Walsall.

Adult pitch quality	Matches per week	Youth pitch quality	Matches per week	Mini pitch quality	Matches per week
Good	3	Good	4	Good	6
Standard	2	Standard	2	Standard	4
Poor	1	Poor	1	Poor	2

Table 2.14 applies the above pitch ratings against the actual level of weekly play recorded to determine a capacity rating as follows:

- ▶ Potential capacity: Play is below the level the site could sustain
- ▶ At capacity: Play matches the level the site can sustain
- ▶ Overused: Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

Match equivalent sessions

Pitches have a limit of how much play they can accommodate over a certain period of time before their quality, and in turn their use, is adversely affected. As the main usage of pitches is likely to be for matches, it is appropriate for the comparable unit to be match equivalent sessions but may for example include training sessions and informal use.

Education sites

To account for curricular/extra-curricular use of education pitches, the usage at such sites needs to be adjusted. The only time this would not happen is when a school does not use its pitches at all and the sole use is community use. The adjustment is typically dependent on the amount of play carried out, the number of pitches on site and whether there is access to an on-site AGP (as this can result in less grass pitch use).

In some cases, where there is no identified community use, there is little capacity to accommodate further play. Internal usage often exceeds recommended pitch capacity, which is further exacerbated by basic maintenance regimes that may not extend beyond grass cutting and line marking. As such, where not overplayed as a result of community use, many school sites are considered to have no spare capacity to accommodate further usage based on assumed curricular and extracurricular activity.

For school sites which are available for community use, current play has been enlarged on a site-by-site basis following consultation with the providers. Generally, usage is increased by one match equivalent session per pitch.

Informal use

A number of football pitches in the area are on open access sites. As such, these pitches are subject to informal use in the form of dog walkers, unorganised games of football and exercise groups. It must be noted, however, that informal use of these sites is not recorded and it is therefore difficult to quantify on a site-by-site basis. Instead, it is recommended that open access sites be protected through an improved maintenance regime.

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Peak time

Peak time for all pitch formats has been found to be Sunday AM, with more matches being scheduled at this time on each pitch type.

On occasion, spare capacity in the peak period is identified despite the pitch being played to capacity or overplayed, or more spare capacity is identified in the peak period than the overall spare capacity that exists. This is because most or all of the use on those particular pitches occurs outside of the peak period. Where this is the case, given that peak time usage should not be utilised over and above overall capacity, adjustments have been made.

A pitch is only said to have 'actual spare capacity' if it is available for community use and available at the peak time for that format of play. Any pitch not meeting this criterion is therefore not considered to have additional capacity, although it may have capacity outside of peak time.

There may also be situations where, although a site is highlighted as potentially able to accommodate some additional play, this should not be recorded as spare capacity against the site. For example, a site may be managed to operate slightly below full capacity to ensure that it can cater for a number of regular friendly matches and activities that take place but are difficult to quantify on a weekly basis.

Pitches that are of a poor quality are not deemed to have actual spare capacity due to the already low carrying capacity of the pitches. Any identified spare capacity should be retained in order to relieve the pitches of use, which in turn will aid the improvement of pitch quality. Furthermore, any pitches with unsecured tenure are not considered to have actual spare capacity as no further play should be encouraged on such sites given that future access cannot be guaranteed.

The table below identifies the way actual spare capacity is represented in Table 2.14.

Table 2.13: Spare capacity examples

Spare capacity in peak period (examples)	Explanation of spare capacity
1	If the cell is highlighted in green with a number, it means that the pitches have actual spare capacity at peak time.
-	If the cell has a dash in it, this means that the pitch is unavailable in the peak period. If it was to be made available, actual spare capacity could exist.
0	If the cell has a 0 in it, this means that the pitch is played to capacity, either overall or during the peak period.
1	If the cell has a number in it but is not highlighted, it means the pitch has spare capacity in the peak period; however, this is discounted. This is most commonly due to unsecure tenure and/or poor pitch quality.

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Table 2.14: Football pitch capacity analysis

Site ID	Site name	Postcode	Analysis area	Available for community use?	Type of tenure	Management	Pitch type	Pitch size	Agreed quality rating	No. of pitches	Site capacity (match sessions)	Current play (match sessions)	Capacity balance (match sessions)	Pitches available in peak period	Comments
3	Aldridge School	WS9 0BG	Area 2	Yes	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Standard	2	4	2	2	2	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
3	Aldridge School	WS9 0BG	Area 2	Yes	Unsecure	School	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	2	1	1	1	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
3	Aldridge School	WS9 0BG	Area 2	Yes	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Standard	3	12	3	9	3	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	WS9 8NH	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Sports club	Adult	-	Standard	2	4	2.5	1.5	1.5	Actual spare capacity
4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	WS9 8NH	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Sports club	Youth	(11v11)	Standard	1	2	6	4	-	Pitch overmarked by one mini 7v7. Pitch overplayed.
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	B43 7AJ	Area 4	Yes	Unsecure	University	Adult	-	Good	5	15	5	10	3	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	B43 7AJ	Area 4	Yes	Unsecure	University	Mini	(5v5)	Good	1	6	1	5	1	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	B43 7AJ	Area 4	Yes	Unsecure	University	Youth	(9v9)	Good	2	-	-	0	-	Both 9v9s are overmarked on adult pitches. Capacity discounted for this reason.
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	B43 7AJ	Area 4	Yes	Unsecure	University	Youth	(9v9)	Good	1	4	1	3	1	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
8	Barr Beacon School	WS9 0RF	Area 2	Yes	Secure	School	Adult	-	Poor	2	2	2	0	-	Pitches at capacity with curricular demand.
8	Barr Beacon School	WS9 0RF	Area 2	Yes	Secure	School	Youth	(11v11)	Poor	4	4	4	0	-	Pitches at capacity with curricular demand.
9	BBG Stadium Oak Park	WS9 9NP	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	1	1	-	No spare capacity during peak period
9	BBG Stadium Oak Park	WS9 9NP	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	1.5	0.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity
10	Beacon Primary School	WV12 5HA	Area 6	Yes	Unsecure	School	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	1	2	1	1	1	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
10	Beacon Primary School	WV12 5HA	Area 6	Yes	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	2	1	1	1	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
11	Bentley Road North Playing Field	WS2 0EA	Area 5	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult	-	Standard	4	8	10.5	2.5	-	Site overplayed.
12	Bentley West Playing Field	WS2 0ND	Area 5	Yes	Secure	Council	Youth	(9v9)	Poor	5	5	11	6	-	Site overplayed.
13	Bentley Youth Sports Ground	WS10 8LN	Area 5	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	2.5	0.5	-	Site overplayed.
13	Bentley Youth Sports Ground	WS10 8LN	Area 5	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	2	-	2	1	Actual spare capacity
14	Blackwood School	B74 3PH	Area 2	Yes	Unsecure	School	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	1	2	1	1	1	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
15	Bloxwich Academy	WS2 7NR	Area 3	Yes	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Poor	2	2	2	0	-	Pitches at capacity with curricular demand.
17	Lane Head Football Club	WS3 2BT	Area 3	Yes	Unsecure	Sports Club	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	3	1	-	Site overplayed.

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Site ID	Site name	Postcode	Analysis area	Available for community use?	Type of tenure	Management	Pitch type	Pitch size	Agreed quality rating	No. of pitches	Site capacity (match sessions)	Current play (match sessions)	Capacity balance (match sessions)	Pitches available in peak period	Comments
18	Blue Coat Church of England Academy Playing Fields	WS5 4LP	Area 4	Yes	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Standard	2	4	1	3	2	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
18	Blue Coat Church of England Academy Playing Fields	WS5 4LP	Area 4	Yes	Unsecure	School	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	1	4	1	3	1	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
20	Brownhills Ormiston Academy	WS8 7QG	Area 1	No	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Standard	2	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
20	Brownhills Ormiston Academy	WS8 7QG	Area 1	No	Unsecure	School	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
20	Brownhills Ormiston Academy	WS8 7QG	Area 1	No	Unsecure	School	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	2	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
23	Christ Church CE Primary School (Bloxwich)	WS1 3EN	Area 3	No	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
24	Clayhanger Park	WS8 7EG	Area 1	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult	-	Poor	2	2	3.5	1.5	-	Site overplayed.
26	Darlaston Community Association	WS10 8NW	Area 5	Yes	Secure	Community	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	1	1	1	Actual spare capacity
28	Doebank Park	B43 7LN	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult	-	Standard	2	4	1	3	1	Actual spare capacity
28	Doebank Park	B43 7LN	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Council	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	1	4	-	4	1	Actual spare capacity
28	Doebank Park	B43 7LN	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Council	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	2	-	2	1	Actual spare capacity
29	Fordbrook	WS4 1NG	Area 1	Yes	Unsecure	Council	Adult	-	Poor	5	5	6	1	-	Pitches overplayed. One adult is overmarked by a 7v7.
29	Fordbrook	WS4 1NG	Area 1	Yes	Unsecure	Council	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	1	2	2.5	0.5	-	Overmarked on adult pitch, capacity discounted.
29	Fordbrook	WS4 1NG	Area 1	Yes	Unsecure	Council	Youth	(9v9)	Poor	2	2	2.5	0.5	-	Pitch overplayed.
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	WS10 8QJ	Area 5	Yes	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	1	1	1	Spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
35	Great Bridge Road	WV14 8EP	Area 5	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult	-	Poor	1	1	1	0	-	Pitch at capacity
38	Holland Park	WS8 6HU	Area 1	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	1.5	0.5	-	No capacity in peak period.
38	Holland Park	WS8 6HU	Area 1	Yes	Secure	Council	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	2	1	1	1	Spare capacity.
38	Holland Park	WS8 6HU	Area 1	Yes	Secure	Council	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	2	1	1	1	Capacity discounted due to poor quality.
40	Joseph Leckie Academy Playing Fields	WS5 4NW	Area 4	No	Unsecure	School	Youth	(9v9)	Poor	1	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	WS3 3NT	Area 3	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult	-	Standard	4	8	3.5	4.5	3	Actual spare capacity
43	Kings Hill Park	WS10 7TP	Area 5	Yes	Secure	Council	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	2	4	-	4	2	Actual spare capacity
43	Kings Hill Park	WS10 7TP	Area 5	Yes	Secure	Council	Youth	(11v11)	Poor	1	1	1	0	-	Pitch at capacity
44	Leamore Park	WS3 1HF	Area 3	Yes	Secure	Council	Youth	(11v11)	Standard	2	4	4.5	0.5	-	Site overplayed.
44	Leamore Park	WS3 1HF	Area 3	Yes	Secure	Council	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	1	2	3	1	-	Site overplayed.
45	Leighswood School	WS9 8HZ	Area 2	No	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
47	LMRCA Sports Club	WS1 4JG	Area 4	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	2	0	-	Pitch at capacity
47	LMRCA Sports Club	WS1 4JG	Area 4	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Mini	(5v5)	Standard	1	4	-	4	1	Actual spare capacity
49	Mayfield Preparatory School	WS1 2PD	Area 4	Yes	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	2	1	1	-	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
52	Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy	WS4 1BW	Area 1	Yes	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Poor	2	2	2	0	-	Pitches at capacity.

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54	Pelsall Cricket and Sports Club	WS3 4BS	Area 1	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Adult	-	Standard	1	4	-	4	1	Actual spare capacity
55	Pelsall Village School	WS4 3NJ	Area 1	Yes	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	2	1	1	1	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure and poor quality.
56	Pleck Park	WS2 9AG	Area 4	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	0.5	1.5	1	Actual spare capacity
57	Pool Hayes Academy	WV12 4QZ	Area 6	No	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Standard	3	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
59	Reedswood E-Act Primary Academy	WS2 8RX	Area 4	No	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
61	Elmwood School	WS4 1NU	Area 1	Yes	Unsecure	School	Mini	(7v7)	Poor	1	1	1	0	-	Pitch at capacity
61	Elmwood School	WS4 1NU	Area 1	Yes	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	Actual spare capacity
62	Rushall Cricket Club	WS4 1NE	Area 1	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Adult	-	Poor	1	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	Spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.
64	Rushall Playing Field	WS4 1LW	Area 1	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	-	2	1	Actual spare capacity
66	Ryders Hayes School	WS3 4HX	Area 1	No	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
67	Salisbury Primary School	WS10 8BQ	Area 5	No	Unsecure	School	Youth	(11v11)	Poor	1	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
68	Shelfield Playing Field	WS4 1QX	Area 1	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult	-	Standard	2	4	1	3	2	Actual spare capacity
69	Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)	WS4 1EG	Area 1	Yes	Unsecure	Sports Club	Adult	-	Standard	2	4	0.5	3.5	-	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure
69	Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)	WS4 1EG	Area 1	Yes	Unsecure	Sports Club	Mini	(5v5)	Standard	2	8	2.5	5.5	-	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure
69	Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)	WS4 1EG	Area 1	Yes	Unsecure	Sports Club	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	3	12	0	12	-	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure
69	Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)	WS4 1EG	Area 1	Yes	Unsecure	Sports Club	Youth	(11v11)	Standard	1	2	2.5	0.5	-	Pitch overplayed.
69	Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)	WS4 1EG	Area 1	Yes	Unsecure	Sports Club	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	3	6	1.5	4.5	-	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure
70	Shire Oak Academy	WS9 9PA	Area 2	No	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Standard	4	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
70	Shire Oak Academy	WS9 9PA	Area 2	No	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Standard	1	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
72	St Francis Of Assisi Catholic Technology College	WS9 0RN	Area 2	Yes	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Poor	2	4	2	2	2	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
72	St Francis Of Assisi Catholic Technology College	WS9 0RN	Area 2	Yes	Unsecure	School	Youth	(11v11)	Poor	1	2	2	0	-	At capacity with curricular demand.
72	St Francis Of Assisi Catholic Technology College	WS9 0RN	Area 2	Yes	Unsecure	School	Youth	(9v9)	Poor	1	1	1	0	-	At capacity with curricular demand.
73	St James Primary School	WS8 6AE	Area 1	No	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
75	St Thomas More Catholic School	WV14 7BL	Area 6	Yes	Unsecure	School	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	2	4	2	2	2	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
75	St Thomas More Catholic School	WV14 7BL	Area 6	Yes	Unsecure	School	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	1	4	1	3	1	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.

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Site ID	Site name	Postcode	Analysis area	Available for community use?	Type of tenure	Management	Pitch type	Pitch size	Agreed quality rating	No. of pitches	Site capacity (match sessions)	Current play (match sessions)	Capacity balance (match sessions)	Pitches available in peak period	Comments
75	St Thomas More Catholic School	WV14 7BL	Area 6	Yes	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Standard	1	4	1	3	1	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
76	The Aldridge Airport	WS9 0QQ	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Council	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	5	10	0.5	9.5	4	Actual spare capacity. Only 4 pitches used as to seasonally rest one pitch.
77	The Mckechnies Ground	WS9 8DN	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Youth	(11v11)	Standard	1	2	2	0	-	Pitch at capacity
77	The Mckechnies Ground	WS9 8DN	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	2	1	1	-	No peak time availability.
77	The Mckechnies Ground	WS9 8DN	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	1	4	1.5	2.5	-	No peak time availability.
77	The Mckechnies Ground	WS9 8DN	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Mini	(5v5)	Standard	1	4	-	4	1	Actual spare capacity
78	The Streetly Academy	B74 2EX	Area 2	Yes	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	2	0	-	Pitches at capacity.
78	The Streetly Academy	B74 2EX	Area 2	Yes	Unsecure	School	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	2	2	0	-	Pitches at capacity.
79	The Streetly Association	B74 3HR	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Community	Adult	-	Standard	3	6	1.5	4.5	2	Actual spare capacity
79	The Streetly Association	B74 3HR	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Community	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	2	4	-	4	2	Actual spare capacity
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	WS9 0SQ	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Mini	(7v7)	Standard	1	4	1	0	-	Pitch overmarked on rugby union pitch. Capacity discounted.
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	WS9 0SQ	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	1	2	1	0	-	Pitch overmarked on rugby union pitch. Capacity discounted.
82	Walsall Academy	WS3 3LX	Area 3	Yes	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Poor	1	1	1	0	-	Pitch at capacity.
85	Walsall FC (Bescot Stadium)	WS1 4SA	Area 4	No	Secure	Sports Club	Adult	-	Good	1	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
89	Walstead Road Playing Fields	WS5 4DW	Area 4	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	2	0	-	Pitch at capacity.
89	Walstead Road Playing Fields	WS5 4DW	Area 4	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Youth	(11v11)	Standard	2	4	4	0	-	Pitches at capacity.
89	Walstead Road Playing Fields	WS5 4DW	Area 4	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	2	4	8	4	-	Pitches overplayed.
90	West Bromwich Albion (Palm Training Ground)	WS5 3LQ	Area 4	No	Secure	Sports Club	Adult	-	Good	9	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use
91	West Walsall E-Act Academy	WS2 9UA	Area 4	Yes	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Standard	2	4	2.5	1.5	-	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
92	Willenhall E-Act Academy	WV12 4BD	Area 6	Yes	Unsecure	School	Adult	-	Standard	1	2	2	0	-	Pitch at capacity
92	Willenhall E-Act Academy	WV12 4BD	Area 6	Yes	Unsecure	School	Youth	(9v9)	Standard	4	8	5	3	3	Capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.
93	Willenhall Memorial Park	WV13 3DD	Area 6	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult	-	Poor	3	3	3.5	0.5	-	Pitches overplayed.
105	Streetly Sports Club	B74 3HX	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Adult	-	Standard	2	4	2.5	1.5	-	No capacity in peak period.
111	Aldridge Community Centre	WS9 8AN	Area 2	Yes	Secure	Community	Adult	-	Poor	2	2	1	1	1	Capacity discounted due to poor quality.
127	St Peters Catholic Primary	WS3 3LY	Area 2	No	Unsecure	School	Mini	(5v5)	Poor	1	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use

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Actual spare capacity

The table below identifies actual spare capacity by site and pitch type across Walsall. It totals 28.5 match equivalent sessions and is identified across 33 pitches at 17 sites.

Table 2.15: Summary of actual spare capacity

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Capacity rating (sessions)
4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	Area 2	Adult	2	1.5
9	BBG Stadium Oak Park	Area 2	Adult	1	0.5
13	Bentley Youth Sports Ground	Area 5	Youth 9v9	1	1
26	Darlaston Community Association	Area 5	Adult	1	1
28	Doebank Park	Area 2	Adult	2	1
28	Doebank Park	Area 2	Mini 7v7	1	1
28	Doebank Park	Area 2	Youth 9v9	1	1
38	Holland Park	Area 1	Youth 9v9	1	1
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	Area 3	Adult	4	3
43	Kings Hill Park	Area 5	Youth 9v9	2	2
47	LMRCA Sports Club	Area 4	Mini 5v5	1	1
54	Pelsall Cricket And Sports Club	Area 1	Adult	1	1
56	Pleck Park	Area 4	Adult	1	1
61	Elmwood School	Area 1	Mini 5v5	1	0.5
64	Rushall Playing Field	Area 1	Adult	1	1
68	Shelfield Playing Field	Area 1	Adult	2	2
76	The Aldridge Airport	Area 1	Youth 9v9	4	4
77	The Mckechnies Ground	Area 2	Mini 5v5	1	1
79	The Streetly Association	Area 2	Adult	3	2
79	The Streetly Association	Area 2	Youth 9v9	2	2
-	-	-	Total	33	28.5

Analysis Area 2 provides the largest amount of actual spare capacity with 10 match equivalent sessions identified. There is no spare capacity identified in the Area 6 Analysis Area or on youth 11v11 pitches. Adult pitches have the highest level of spare capacity (14 match equivalent sessions).

Table 2.16: Summary of actual spare capacity by analysis area (match equivalent sessions per week)

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Area 1	4	-	5	-	0.5	9.5
Area 2	5	-	3	1	1	10
Area 3	3	-	-	-	-	3
Area 4	1	-	-	-	1	2
Area 5	1	-	3	-	-	4
Area 6	-	-	-	-	-	0
Walsall	14	-	11	1	2.5	28.5

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In addition, it must be noted that an additional 32 match equivalent sessions per week (from seven sites and 32 pitches) of potential spare capacity have been discounted due to unsecure tenure at sites which have standard or good quality pitches. A further 3.5 match equivalent sessions are then discounted due to poor quality.

Overplay

Overplay occurs when there is more play accommodated on a site than it can sustain, which can often be due to the low carrying capacity of pitches. In Walsall, 31 pitches across 11 sites are overplayed by a combined total of 24 match equivalent sessions per week.

Table 2.17: Summary of overplay

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Capacity rating (sessions)
4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	Area 2	Youth 11v11	1	4
11	Bentley Road North Playing Field	Area 5	Adult	4	2.5
12	Bentley West Playing Field	Area 5	Youth 9v9	5	6
13	Bentley Youth Sports Ground	Area 5	Adult	1	0.5
17	Lane Head Football Club	Area 3	Adult	1	1
24	Clayhanger Park	Area 1	Adult	2	1.5
29	Fordbrook	Area 1	Adult	5	1
29	Fordbrook	Area 1	Mini 7v7	1	0.5
29	Fordbrook	Area 1	Youth 9v9	2	0.5
44	Leamore Park	Area 3	Youth 11v11	2	0.5
44	Leamore Park	Area 3	Mini 7v7	1	1
69	Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)	Area 1	Youth 11v11	1	0.5
89	Walstead Road Playing Fields	Area 4	Youth 9v9	2	4
93	Willenhall Memorial Park	Area 6	Adult	3	0.5
-	-	-	Total	31	24

In total, there are 7 match equivalent sessions per week of overplay on adult pitches, five on youth 11v11 pitches, 10.5 on youth 9v9 pitches and 1.5 on mini 7v7. This is no overplay on mini 5v5 pitches.

Each analysis area is experiencing some level of overplay, most prominently in the Area 5 Analysis Area (nine match equivalent sessions).

Table 2.18: Summary of overplay by analysis area (match equivalent sessions per week)

Analysis area	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Area 1	2.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	-	4
Area 2	-	4	-	-	-	4
Area 3	1	0.5	-	1	-	2.5
Area 4	-	-	4	-	-	4
Area 5	3	-	6	-	-	9
Area 6	0.5	-	-	-	-	0.5
Walsall	7	5	10.5	1.5	-	24

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Of the overplayed pitches, 11 are assessed as poor quality, where improvements would relieve issues.

In addition to the overplayed pitches, it should be noted that 25 pitches across Walsall are currently played to capacity. Any further use of these, without quality improvements, would result in further overplay developing.

2.5: Supply and demand analysis

Having considered supply and demand, the tables below identify the current supply and demand balance (i.e. spare capacity taking away overplay) in each of the analysis areas for each pitch type. The future demand balance is then also calculated, based on what has been identified using team generation rates.

Adult pitch analysis

Overall, there is currently a sufficient supply of adult pitch provision in Walsall to accommodate current levels of demand, amounting to seven match equivalent sessions, although shortfalls are identified in areas 5 and 6.

Future demand forecasts reduces the overall spare capacity to 2 match equivalent sessions, meaning that a sufficient supply is likely to remain. The shortfalls in areas 5 and 6 are unchanged, whilst a shortfall of 2 MES appears in area 4.

When compared to the 2016 PPS, the capacity balance has improved despite current demand increasing. This is due to current demand increasing at sites that had spare capacity to accommodate.

Table 2.19: Supply and demand balance of adult pitches in Match equivalent sessions (per week)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Area 1	4	2.5	1.5	0.5	1
Area 2	5	-	5	1	4
Area 3	3	1	2	0.5	1.5
Area 4	1	-	1	3	2
Area 5	1	3	2	-	2
Area 6	-	0.5	0.5	-	0.5
Walsall	14	7	7	5	2

Youth 11v11 pitch analysis

There is currently a capacity shortfall across Walsall on youth 11v11 pitches totalling five match equivalent sessions per week, which can be attributed to areas 1, 2 and 3. The remaining areas are all at capacity.

When future demand is considered, the overall shortfall increases to 12.5 match equivalent sessions per week, with shortfalls evident in each analysis area.

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Table 2.20: Supply and demand balance of youth 11v11 pitches in Match equivalent sessions (per week)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Area 1	-	0.5	0.5	2	2.5
Area 2	-	4	4	1.5	5.5
Area 3	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	1
Area 4	-	-	-	1	1
Area 5	-	-	-	1.5	1.5
Area 6	-	-	-	1	1
Walsall	-	5	5	7.5	12.5

Youth 9v9 pitch analysis

The broad position for youth 9v9 pitches is that there is a sufficient supply of provision in Walsall to accommodate existing levels of demand. Although, shortfalls are identified in areas 4 and 5.

When accounting for future demand, current capacity is discounted and 9v9 pitches are played to capacity, due to future demand expressed in Area 4.

Table 2.21: Supply and demand balance of youth 9v9 pitches in Match equivalent sessions (per week)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Area 1	5	0.5	4.5	-	4.5
Area 2	3	-	3	-	3
Area 3	-	-	-	-	-
Area 4	-	4	4	0.5	4.5
Area 5	3	6	3	-	3
Area 6	-	-	-	-	-
Walsall	11	10.5	0.5	0.5	-

Mini 7v7 pitch analysis

Based on the table below, there is insufficient amount of provision for mini 7v7 pitches in Walsall for both current and future demand, contributed by shortfalls in areas 1, 3 and 4.

Table 2.22: Supply and demand balance of mini 7v7 pitches in Match equivalent sessions (per week)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Area 1	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	1
Area 2	1	-	1	-	1
Area 3	-	1	1	-	1
Area 4	-	-	-	0.5	0.5
Area 5	-	-	-	-	-
Area 6	-	-	-	-	-
Walsall	1	1.5	0.5	1	1.5

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Mini 5v5 pitch analysis

Currently, there is a sufficient supply of mini 5v5 pitches in Walsall to accommodate existing levels of demand. Furthermore, as future demand has been identified through team generation rates only, the future picture is exactly the same as the current total.

Table 2.23: Supply and demand balance of mini 5v5 pitches in Match equivalent sessions (per week)

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Area 1	0.5	-	0.5	-	0.5
Area 2	1	-	1	-	1
Area 3	-	-	-	-	-
Area 4	1	-	1	-	1
Area 5	-	-	-	-	-
Area 6	-	-	-	-	-
Walsall	2.5	-	2.5	-	2.5

Overall supply and demand analysis

Using the supply and demand analysis tables above, it is determined that there is currently a shortfall of youth 11v11 provision in Walsall and a sufficient supply and adult, youth 9v9, mini 7v7 and mini 5v5 pitches. After factoring in future demand, the existing youth 11v11 shortfalls are projected to worsen and shortfalls appear for mini 7v7 pitches. A strategy with scenario testing to address the shortfall of youth 11v11 pitches shall be explored within the action report.

Table 2.24: Summary of supply and demand in Match equivalent sessions per week

Pitch type	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	14	7	7	5	2
Youth 11v11	-	5	5	7.5	12.5
Youth 9v9	11	10.5	0.5	0.5	-
Mini 7v7	1	1.5	0.5	1	1.5
Mini 5v5	2.5	-	2.5	-	2.5

Football – grass pitch supply and demand summary

- There are existing shortfalls for youth 11v11 provision in Walsall.
- When accommodating for future demand through team generation rates, mini 7v7 pitches also experience shortfalls.
- Adult, youth 9v9, and mini 5v5 pitches contain both current and future spare capacity, although some localise shortfalls are evident.
- 31 pitches across 11 sites are overplayed by a combined total of 24 match equivalent sessions per week.
- Actual spare capacity equates to 28.5 match equivalent sessions per week and is identified across 33 pitches at 17 sites.

Football – supply summary

- The audit identifies a total of 179 grass football pitches across 60 sites, with 147 pitches available, at some level, for community use across 48 sites.
- As a breakdown, there are 68 adult, 15 youth 11v11, 39 youth 9v9, 13 mini 7v7 and 14 mini 5v5 pitches that are available for community use.

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- ◆ Lapsed/disused pitches are identified at Abbey Park Stadium, Bush Ground (Pelsall Villa FC), Darlaston Town Football Club and Glastonbury Crescent.
- ◆ The Council and schools are the predominant supplier of football pitches.
- ◆ Sheffield United FC and Silverdale FC expresses concerns around unsecure tenure, whilst Pelsall Villa FC aspires to gain lease on its site (Fordbrook). Lane Head also have ambitions to gain access to the disused pitch at Glastonbury Crescent.
- ◆ The majority of community available pitches are considered to be standard quality, with 89 assessed as this, although there is also a large quantity assessed as poor (48).
- ◆ Only nine pitches are assessed as good quality.
- ◆ Quality of ancillary provision is an issue at sites such as ten community sites, whereas an additional five sites community sites have no supporting ancillary provision for users.

Football – demand summary

- ◆ Through the audit and assessment, 446 teams currently play within Walsall, consisting of 105 adult men's, 16 adult women's, 191 youth boys', 22 youth girls' and 112 mini soccer teams.
- ◆ There has been a general trend of growth in demand in recent years, particularly at adult and youth level.
- ◆ Exported demand is expressed; however, this is predominately from teams accessing venues outside of Walsall due to the central venue nature of their leagues.
- ◆ 10 clubs express latent demand linked to a combination of pitch availability, training capacity and inadequate ancillary facilities.
- ◆ Dudley Town FC (Step 6) imports demand into Walsall as its facility requirements cannot be met in Dudley; it aspires to relocate back to Dudley in the future.
- ◆ Based on population growth (2039) an increase of 28 teams is forecast, whereas seven clubs express future demand aspirations equating to a potential increase in demand of nine teams.

PART 3: THIRD GENERATION TURF (3G) ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES (AGPS)

3.1 Introduction

Competitive football can take place on 3G surfaces that have been FIFA or International Matchball Standard tested and approved by the FA for inclusion on the FA pitch register. As such, in addition to training demand, a growing number of 3G pitches are now used for competitive match play, providing that the performance standard meets FIFA quality requirements.

World Rugby produced the 'Performance Specification for artificial grass pitches for rugby', more commonly known as 'Regulation 22', which provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for rugby union. The artificial surface standards identified in Regulation 22 allows matches to be played on surfaces that meet the required standard, meaning full contact activity can take place.

Competitive rugby league play and contact practice is permitted to take place on 3G pitches which are deemed by the Rugby Football League (RFL) to meet its Performance Standard. Pitches fall under two categories; community club pitches which require retesting every two years and elite stadia pitches which require an annual retest. Much of the criteria within the RFL performance standard test also forms part of the World Rugby test, meaning World Rugby certified 3G pitches are considered by the RFL to be able to meet rugby league requirements, subject to passing an additional RFL performance standard test.

Other sports that are known to use 3G pitches for training and match play include American football and lacrosse. Many test contractors are able to offer reduced rates through efficiency savings to carry out multiple performance tests in the same session, therefore providers seeking 3G pitch compliancy for a number of sports would be recommended to consider this opportunity.

England Hockey's Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy (June 2016) advises that 3G pitches should not be used for hockey matches or training and that they can only be used for lower level hockey (introductory level) as a last resort when no sand-based or water-based AGPs are available.

3.2 Current provision

A full size 3G pitch is considered by the FA to measure at least 100 x 64 metres (106 x 70 metres including run offs); however, for the purposes of this report, all pitches measuring over 91 x 55 metres (inclusive of run offs) are considered to be full size due to the amount of demand that they can accommodate. It is common for pitches to be slightly undersized, especially when sand-based pitches have been converted as the size requirement for hockey is generally smaller than for football.

As seen in the table below, there are currently nine full size 3G pitches within Walsall across the same number sites. All of the pitches are available to the community and floodlit. In terms of distribution, there are four full size pitches in Area 4, two in Area 1 s and one in each of areas 2, 5 and 6. There is no full size provision in Area 3.

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Table 3.1: Full size 3G pitches in Walsall

Site ID	Site name	Postcode	Analysis area	Community use?	Floodlit?	Size (metres)
6	Aspray Arena	WV13 2BB	Area 6	Yes	Yes	105x70
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	WS10 8QJ	Area 5	Yes	Yes	100 x 60
50	Oak Park Active Living Centre	WS9 9BH	Area 2	Yes	Yes	106 x 70
52	Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy	WS4 1BW	Area 1	Yes	Yes	106 x 70
63	Rushall Olympic Football Club (Dales Lane)	WS4 1LJ	Area 1	Yes	Yes	105 x 72
81	University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Site)	WS1 3BD	Area 4	Yes	Yes	98 x 63
85	Walsall FC (Bescot Stadium)	WS1 4SA	Area 4	Yes	Yes	100 x 60
86	Walsall Rugby Club	WS1 3JY	Area 4	Yes	Yes	100 x 60
91	West Walsall E-Act Academy	WS2 9UA	Area 4	Yes	Yes	104 x 60

In addition to the full size 3G pitches in Walsall, there are also four sites collectively containing 25 smaller sized pitches that could theoretically help to accommodate some demand. All but one of the pitch is available for community use, whilst all but two are floodlit (Manor Farm School Community Association has a pitch that is available to the community but without floodlighting).

Table 3.2: Additional supply of 3G pitches in Walsall

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Analysis area	Community use?	Floodlit?	No. of pitches	Size (metres)
6	Aspray Arena	WS9 8ZA	Area 6	Yes	Yes	5	30 x 18
31	Goals Soccer Centre (Black Country)	WV14 7BL	Area 6	Yes	Yes	10	30 x 22
31	Goals Soccer Centre (Black Country)	WV14 7BL	Area 6	Yes	Yes	4	50 x 30
39	Jane Lane School	WS2 0JH	Area 5	No	No	1	34 x 23
48	Manor Farm School Community Association	WS4 1EU	Area 1	Yes	No	1	60 x 35
128	Walsall Wood School	WS8 7PG	Area 1	No	No	1	28 x 18

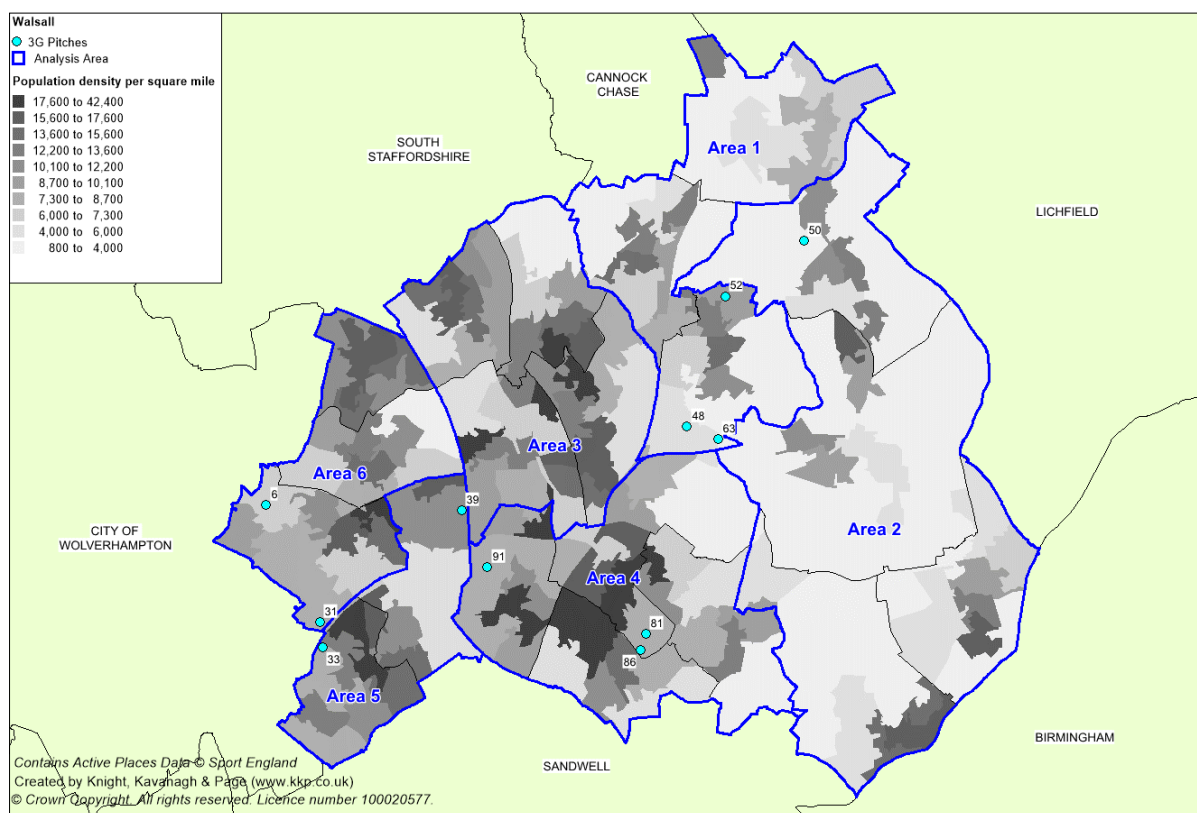
Nationally, whilst not large enough to accommodate adult match play, smaller sized provision can be used to host youth and mini matches, in addition to training demand, providing that they are FA approved. However, in Walsall, only four of the pitches at Goals Soccer Centre as well as the pitch at Manor Farm School Community Association meet the required dimensions for any format of play.

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Furthermore, these cannot be considered overly suitable as the pitches at Goals Soccer Centre are not appropriately marked for formal football, whilst Manor Farm School Community Association is without floodlighting.

Figure 3.1 identifies the location of all 3G pitches in Walsall, regardless of size.

Figure 3.1: Location of all 3G pitches in Walsall, regardless of size



Future provision

In the LFFP for Walsall, six priority projects are identified. This consists of:

- ◆ A secondary full size 3G pitch at Oak Park Active Living Centre
- ◆ A double pitch hub site at Aldridge Airport
- ◆ A full size pitch at Bloxwich Active Living Centre
- ◆ A full size pitch at Walsall College
- ◆ A full size pitch at Darlaston Recreation Ground
- ◆ A full size pitch at Rushall Olympic Football Club (Dales Lane)

In the case of the Oak Park Active Living Centre project a feasibility study was conducted, and the site was deemed not achievable for the installation of a new 3G pitch. Comparatively, the Bloxwich Active Living Centre project stagnated due to complications related to Covid-19, partnership funding and land ownership issues.

The latter of these projects was completed in 2019 and is now in use by the Club itself and other community teams. The remaining five remain outstanding, although the findings of this study should inform whether they should still be considered priorities, or whether replacements and/or additions are required.

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Away from the LFFP, the Bloxwich catchment, in Area 3, has been identified as an area for priority 3G investment by both County FAs and the Council to support affiliated and recreational football.

Linked to the above is the potential development of the lapsed Pelsall Villa FC football ground. An application by a supermarket would have presented a mitigation opportunity, but the application was rejected during 2022.

Elsewhere, Streetly Academy and Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club have both previously expressed a formal interest in 3G development, although neither have formally progressed with their aspirations.

FA/FIFA approved pitches

In order for competitive matches to be played on 3G pitches, the pitch should be FIFA or IMS tested and approved and added to the FA pitch register, which can be found at: [Link to Football Foundation 3G Pitch Register](#).

Pitches undergo testing to become a FIFA Quality pitch or a FIFA Quality Pro pitch, with provision commonly constructed, installed and tested in situ to achieve either accreditation. The differences between the accreditations are that FIFA quality pitches are designed to accommodate substantial levels of regular usage, whereas FIFA Quality Pro pitches are more for high level performance, with usage levels therefore more limited to protect the standard. Generally, FIFA Quality pitches can be typically used for 60-85 hours per week, whereas FIFA Quality Pro pitches are able to accommodate 20-30 hours.

To remain accredited, pitches must be re-assessed every three years to ensure that quality has not deteriorated beyond acceptable levels, although this is required annually for clubs using 3G pitches within the football pyramid (steps 1-6).

In Walsall, six of the nine full size pitches are currently FIFA/FA approved. The pitches at Grace Academy Darlaston and Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy are not, whilst the pitch at West Walsall E-Act Academy has had its certification recently expire.

Table 3.3: Summary of 3G pitch certification

Site ID	Site name	Certification type	Expiry
6	Aspray Arena	FIFA Approved	31/05/2022
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	-	-
50	Oak Park Active Living Centre	FA Approved	31/05/2024
52	Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy	-	-
63	Rushall Olympic Football Club (Dales Lane)	FIFA Approved	31/05/2022
81	University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Site)	FA Approved	31/05/2022
85	Walsall FC (Bescot Stadium)	FA Approved	31/05/2023
86	Walsall Rugby Club	FA Approved	31/05/2025
91	West Walsall E-Act Academy	FA Approved	<i>Expired</i>

No small sided pitches are identified as being certified for match play and therefore should not be in active use for competitive matches.

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World Rugby compliant pitches

To enable 3G pitches to accommodate competitive rugby union matches, World Rugby has developed the Rugby Turf Performance Specification. This is to ensure that the surfaces can replicate the playing qualities of good quality grass pitches, provide a playing environment that will not increase the risk of injury and are of an adequate durability.

The specification includes a rigorous test programme that assesses ball/surface interaction and player/surface interaction and has been modified to align the standard with that of FIFA. Any 3G pitch used for any form of competitive rugby must comply with this specification and must be tested every two years to retain compliance.

There is one full size World Rugby compliant 3G pitch within Walsall, located at Walsall Rugby Club. The pitch was provided as part of the RFU Rugby 365 Investment Programme.

Management

There is a mixed managing model of 3G facilities in Walsall. The full size pitches at Aspray Arena, Rushall Olympic Football Club, Walsall FC (Bescot Stadium) and Walsall Rugby Club are managed by sports clubs, whereas the pitch at Oak Park Active Living Centre is managed by the Council. The remaining pitches are managed by education providers.

In terms of smaller sized pitches, those at Aspray Arena are managed by the Club, the pitches at Goals Soccer Centre are managed commercially, and the pitch at Manor Bank School is managed inhouse by the association community organisation.

Availability

The table below summarises the availability for community use at sites in Walsall providing full size 3G pitches. As seen, each pitch is readily available for community access, although at club sites much of the capacity is reserved for use by the host clubs. At schools, pitches are generally reserved during school hours for curricular and extra-curricular activity.

The peak period is based on Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM), which applies an overall peak period for AGPs of 34 hours per week (Monday to Thursday 17:00-21:00; Friday 17:00-19:00; Saturday and Sunday 09:00-17:00).

Table 3.4: Summary of availability of full size 3G pitches

Site ID	Site name	Availability	Hours available in peak period and overall
6	Aspray Arena	Available for community hire between 17:00-21:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00 and 20:00 on weekends.	34 (42)
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	Available 18:00-21:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00-18:00 at weekends.	29 (33)
50	Oak Park Active Living Centre	Available 07:00-22:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00-18:00 at weekends.	32 (110)
52	Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy	Available 18:00-21:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00-18:00 at weekends.	29 (33)

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Site ID	Site name	Availability	Hours available in peak period and overall
63	Rushall Olympic Football Club (Dales Lane)	Available for community hire between 17:00-21:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00-20:00 on weekends. Weekend availability reduced for 1 st first team fixtures.	34 (42)
81	University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Site)	Available 08:00-22:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00-18:00 at weekends.	34 (90)
85	Walsall FC (Bescot Stadium)	Mixed availability dependent on programming by Walsall Community Trust.	-
86	Walsall Rugby Club	Available for use 09:00-21:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00-18:00 at weekends.	34 (82)
91	West Walsall E-Act Academy	Available 18:00-21:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00-18:00 at weekends.	29 (33)

The picture is similar for the smaller sized pitches, with non-school pitches available throughout each day and school-based pitches having good availability outside of curricular times (except for those unavailable for community use). The exception to this is at Jane Lane School, where no community use is offered.

Table 3.5: Summary of smaller sized 3G pitch availability

Site ID	Site	Availability	Hours available in peak period and overall
6	Aspray Arena	Available for community hire between 17:00-21:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00 and 20:00 on weekends.	34 (42)
31	Goals Soccer Centre (Black Country)	Available everyday midweek between 16:30 until 23:00. On Saturdays available 09:00 and 17:00 and 09:00 and 22:00 Sundays.	34 (53.5)
39	Jane Lane School	Unavailable for community use due to having no floodlighting or appropriate management for lettings.	-
48	Manor Farm School Community Association	Available 08:00-22:00 during the week (although no floodlighting is provided), 09:00-15:30 on Saturdays and 09:30-13:00 on Sundays.	28 (80)

Quality

Depending on use, it is considered that the carpet of an AGP usually lasts for approximately ten years and it is the age of the surface, combined with maintenance levels, which most commonly affects quality. It is therefore recommended that sinking funds be put into place by providers to enable long-term sustainability, ongoing repairs and future refurbishment beyond this period.

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For the PPOSS, each 3G pitch has been assigned a quality rating of good, standard or poor following site assessments. This rating is most commonly linked to the condition and age of the playing surface, as well as surrounding hard areas and maintenance that is undertaken. For the full assessment criteria, please refer to Appendix 2.

The following table indicates when each full size 3G pitch was installed or last resurfaced in Walsall together with an agreed quality rating following non-technical assessments and user and provider consultation.

Table 3.6: Summary of quality of full size 3G pitches

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Year installed/ resurfaced	Quality
6	Aspray Arena	Area 6	2018	Good
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	Area 5	2013	Standard
50	Oak Park Active Living Centre	Area 2	2017	Good
52	Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy	Area 1	2011	Standard
63	Rushall Olympic FC (Dales Lane)	Area 1	2019	Good
81	University Of Wolverhampton (Walsall Site)	Area 4	2017	Good
85	Walsall FC (Bescot Stadium)	Area 4	2010/ 2017	Good
86	Walsall Rugby Club	Area 4	2018	Good
91	West Walsall E-Act Academy	Area 4	2015	Standard

As seen, in the main, the quality of existing full size 3G pitches is either good or standard, with no poor-quality pitches identified. However, the pitches Grace Academy Darlaston and Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy are either over ten years old or nearing that and as such these are at or close to the end of their life expectancy. These will therefore likely need resurfacing in the coming years and over the lifespan of the PPOSS.

All smaller sized 3G pitches which are available for community use are also good or standard quality. The pitch at Jane Lane School is 10 years old but usage has been less given its lack of community availability and floodlighting.

Table 3.7: Summary of quality of small sided 3G pitches

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Years installed/ resurfaced	Quality
6	Aspray Arena	Area 6	2015	Good
31	Goals Soccer Centre (Black Country)	Area 6	2017	Good
39	Jane Lane School	Area 5	2011	Standard
48	Manor Farm School Community Association	Area 1	2019	Good

Ancillary facilities

All 3G provision is accompanied by ancillary facilities that are considered adequate and no major issues have been discovered via site assessments or through consultation.

3.3: Demand

The 3G pitches currently servicing Walsall are reported to be operating at or close to capacity at peak times, especially during winter months when grass pitches cannot be used for training or recreational demand (due to a lack of floodlighting). This applies not only to midweek capacity but also to weekend capacity on account of most of the community available full size pitches being FA approved to host competitive matches.

Currently, it is considered that the majority of community-based activity on 3G pitches is football related, with the exception of the pitch at Walsall Rugby Club, which is used extensively for rugby union given the wider nature of the site.

The large majority of capacity is being taken up by clubs for training and match play purposes, although there is also a strong presence of recreational football activity taking place (i.e., via unaffiliated groups).

Across the Country, there are often small-sided commercial leagues operating on 3G provision. In Walsall, this is the case at Rushall Olympic Football Club, where Soccer Sixes operates on Monday evenings.

Football

The FA considers high quality 3G pitches as an essential tool in promoting coach and player development, with the pitches considered to be great assets on account of being able to support intensive use and use during inclement weather. Primarily, such facilities have been installed for social use and training, however, they are increasingly being used for competition, which the FA wholly supports.

Training demand

Getting access to good quality, affordable training facilities is a problem for many clubs throughout the country. In the winter months, midweek training is only possible at floodlit facilities, with 3G provision preferred by the FA and most clubs.

The FA's long-term ambition is to provide every affiliated team in England the opportunity to train once per week on a floodlit 3G surface, together with priority access for every England Accredited Club through a partnership agreement. As such, it has established a model to calculate the required number of pitches to meet demand, with one full size pitch being required to service every 38 teams within a local authority.

This is based on peak time access being Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings (Mondays and Fridays are discounted as it is considered that teams do not want to train in such close proximity to a weekend match, and it also allows for other forms of access such as for commercial leagues and recreational play).

For the model, small sized pitches are considered if they can theoretically play a role in accommodating formal demand. However, they are not included in Walsall due to each pitch either being too small to accommodate purposeful play or being without floodlighting. None are therefore considered suitable for training demand, although it is accepted that some may be receive minimal bookings for this purpose.

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Using the above, with 446 teams currently playing in Walsall, there is a calculated need for 11.75 full size 3G pitches (rounded up from 11.73). With nine full size pitch equivalents currently provided, a shortfall of 2.75 is evident. This is markedly lower than the number of projects identified in the Walsall's LFFP.

Table 3.8: Current demand for 3G pitches in Walsall (based on 38 teams per pitch)

Current number of teams	3G requirement ³	Current number of 3G pitches	Current shortfall
446	11.75	9	2.75

When considering future demand for an additional 28 teams based on team generation rate population increases, there is demand for 12.5 full size pitches (rounded up from 12.47), which equates to a future shortfall of 3.5 pitches.

Table 3.9: Future demand for 3G pitches in Walsall (based on 38 teams per pitch)

Future number of teams	3G requirement ⁴	Current number of 3G pitches	Future shortfall
474	12.5	9	3.5

Alternatively, the table below considers the number of 3G pitches required if every team was to remain training within the respective analysis area that they play in. This not only identifies where the needs exist across Walsall, but it can also be used to guide which areas should be targeted for new provision.

Table 3.10: Current demand for 3G pitches in Walsall by analysis area

Analysis area	Current number of teams	3G requirement ⁵	Current number of 3G pitches	Current shortfall
Area 1	100	2.75	2	0.75
Area 2	77	2	1	1
Area 3	28	0.75	-	0.75
Area 4	132	3.5	4	-
Area 5	76	2	1	1
Area 6	33	1	1	-
Walsall	446	12	9	3.5

This identifies a slightly higher need than for Walsall as whole, which is due to rounding the numbers as well as an apparent oversupply in Area 4. Four analysis areas have a shortfall, with a shortfall of one pitch in both areas 2 and 5 and a shortfall of 0.75 pitches in areas 1 and 3.

When accounting for future demand, there is an overall shortfall of four full size 3G pitches.

³ Rounded to the nearest 0.25

⁴ Rounded to the nearest 0.25

⁵ Rounded to the nearest 0.25

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Table 3.11: Future demand for 3G pitches in Walsall by analysis area

Analysis area	Future number of teams	3G requirement ⁶	Current number of 3G pitches	Future shortfall
Area 1	106	3	2	1
Area 2	82	2.25	1	1.25
Area 3	30	0.75	-	0.75
Area 4	142	3.75	4	-
Area 5	79	2.25	1	1.25
Area 6	35	1	1	-
Walsall	474	13	9	4.25

Match play demand

Improving grass pitch quality is one way to increase the capacity at sites but given the cost of doing such work and the continued maintenance required, alternatives need to be considered that can offer a more sustainable model for the future of football. The substitute to grass pitches is the use of 3G pitches for competitive matches, providing that the pitch is appropriately accredited, floodlit and available for community use during the peak period.

Six existing pitches in Walsall are FA/FIFA approved to host competitive fixtures and there is relatively high demand for the provision, with 112 teams currently accessing a 3G facility as their home pitch and with each accredited pitch being in use for this purpose. Of this 112, 101 teams access a full-sized pitch with the remaining 11 utilising half a pitch. This is 112 teams that would otherwise be using grass pitches, adding to capacity and quality issues, or alternatively they would not exist at all due to having nowhere suitable to play.

As the number of 3G pitches increases in line with meeting training demand shortfalls, so should the number of teams utilising the provision for matches, which in turn should relieve grass pitches of use. As such, whilst the number of 3G pitches needed for matches will never outweigh the number of 3G pitches needed for training (as they would not be sustainable without midweek usage), maximising the pitches that are in place and that are proposed should be fully supported. This will be further explored in the proceeding strategy document via a range of scenarios for transferring play.

The use of 3G provision for matches also emphasises the importance of maintaining good quality pitches. Should pitches become poor quality, they will likely lose accreditation to accommodate fixtures. This will then result in all teams using the provision needing to transfer to grass pitches, adding to their usage, reducing their capacity and further diminishing their quality.

Rugby union

There is a World Rugby compliant full size 3G pitch at Walsall Rugby Club, which is used extensively by the host club for training and match play purposes, in addition to receiving additional demand for football related activity.

Given the identified shortfalls of grass rugby pitches (highlighted in Part 5 of this report), scope exists for further provision to be developed in the future. This is especially the case if additional pitches could be located in areas that can accommodate numerous clubs (rather than just a host club).

⁶ Rounded to the nearest 0.25

Other sports

No other sports clubs/users are presently identified as accessing the existing stock of 3G pitches in Walsall, outside of football and rugby union use, and no demand for access has been identified.

3.4: Supply and demand analysis

For football, there is limited spare capacity on the present supply of 3G pitches when teams require access for training purposes, leading to clubs reporting a need for increased provision. With the FA model suggesting that there is a current shortfall of at least 2.75 full size 3G pitches and a future shortfall of at least 3.5 full size pitches, priority should therefore be placed on the creation of new provision.

To that end, precedence should be given to areas with identified shortfalls and potential options will therefore be explored in the proceeding strategy document.

In addition, priority should not only be placed on the creation of new full size 3G pitches but also on sustaining the current pitch stock. To that end, providers are encouraged to put sinking funds in place and it is also recommended that all new and existing pitches undergo FA testing every three years to remain or become FA approved.

Meeting the 3G pitch shortfall for training will also help alleviate grass pitch shortfalls and quality issues identified in Part 2 of this report, providing that the transfer of play is pursued as and when more pitches are established.

For rugby union, the creation of additional full size World Rugby compliant 3G pitches in strategically viable locations would further relieve pressure on grass pitches and also help to accommodate any future demand. As such, if the opportunity presents itself, enabling the development of such provision in correlation to reducing shortfalls for football should be encouraged.

3G pitch – supply and demand summary

- ◀ Priority should be placed on the creation of new 3G pitches to meet the identified shortfalls for football training demand.
- ◀ Meeting the 3G pitch shortfall for training will also help alleviate grass pitch shortfalls and quality issues, providing that the transfer of play is pursued as and when more pitches are established.
- ◀ In addition, it is important to sustain the current pitch stock to ensure that the existing shortfalls are not exacerbated.
- ◀ The creation of additional full size 3G pitches that are World Rugby compliant in strategically viable locations would also relieve pressure on rugby union grass pitches.

3G pitch – supply summary

- ◀ There are nine full size 3G pitches in Walsall, of which all are floodlit and available for community use.
- ◀ There are also 22 smaller sized 3G pitches across five sites, 20 of which are available for community use. and 19 of which are floodlit; however, none are overly suitable for any purposeful, formal demand.
- ◀ The Bloxwich area catchment in Area 3 is a priority catchment for 3G development by football partners and Walsall Council.
- ◀ Six of the nine full size pitches are on the FA register for match play; provision at Grace Academy Darlaston, Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy and West Walsall E-Act Academy are not certified.

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- There is one World Rugby Compliant pitch provided in Walsall; this is located at Walsall Rugby Club and was provided as part of the RFU Rugby 365 Programme.
- All full size pitches are good or standard quality, although pitches at Grace Academy Darlaston and Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy are at or close to the end of their life expectancy.

3G pitch – demand summary

- The existing 3G provision is reported to be operating at or close to capacity at peak times, with all current community activity being football-based.
- With 446 football teams currently playing in Walsall, there is a broad calculated shortfall of 2.75 full size 3G pitches to meet training needs.
- When accounting for future demand for an additional 28 teams (team generation rates through population increases), the shortfall increases 3.5 full size pitch equivalents.
- When assessing 3G pitch need by analysis area there is a current and future shortfall in areas 1, 2, 3 and 5.
- There are currently 112 football teams using the 3G pitch stock for matches; whilst the number needed for matches will never outweigh the number of 3G pitches needed for training, maximising the pitches that are in place and that are proposed should be fully supported.
- The pitch at Walsall Rugby Club is well used for rugby union, in addition to receiving football demand.
- No demand has been identified from other sports for access to 3G provision.

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PART 4: CRICKET

4.1: Introduction

The Staffordshire Cricket Board (SCB) is the main governing and representative body for Cricket within Walsall. Working closely with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), it is responsible for the management and development of every form of recreational cricket for men, women, and children within Walsall. It is currently working with the ECB on delivering its Strategy, "Inspiring Generations", which has been live since 2020.

For adult cricket in Walsall there are three main offerings; Saturday, Sunday and midweek cricket. The youth league structure tends to be club-based matches which are played mid-week, although some matches are also played on Sundays.

Consultation

In total, eight cricket clubs are identified as playing within Walsall. All eight clubs responded to consultation requests resulting in a response rate of 100%.

Table 4.1: Cricket club response rate

Club name	Club response?
Aldridge CC	Yes
Bloxwich CC	Yes
Bronze CC	Yes
Pelsall CC	Yes
Rushall CC	Yes
Walsall CC	Yes
Walsall YPF CC	Yes
Streetly CC	Yes

4.2: Supply

There are a total of 13 natural turf grass cricket squares identified across 11 sites in Walsall, all of which, are available, at some level, for community use.

Table 4.2: Summary of pitches available for community use

Analysis area	Number of grass pitches available for community use
Area 1: Brownhills / Pelsall / Rushall / Shelfield	2
Area 2: Aldridge / Streetly / Pheasey / Walsall Wood	6
Area 3: Bloxwich / Blakenall / Birchills / Leamore	2
Area 4: St. Matthew's / Paddock / Palfrey / Pleck	3
Area 5: Darlaston / Bentley	-
Area 6: Willenhall / Short Heath	-
Walsall	13

Area 2 contains most of the squares, whilst none are identified in Area 5 or Area 6.

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Non-turf pitches

There are non-turf pitches (NTPs) accompanying five grass wickets squares. This applies to these sites:

- ◀ Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club
- ◀ Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club
- ◀ Bronze Cricket Club
- ◀ Walsall YPF Cricket Club
- ◀ Queen Marys Grammar School

These wickets, particularly those at club sites, can aid with training and practice and can help reduce overplay on grass wickets when used for matches. The ECB highlights that NTPs which follow its TS6 guidance on performance standards are suitable for high level, senior play. Additionally, NTPs are frequently used for junior matches.

In addition, there are 10 standalone NTPs currently provided across nine sites (two are provided at Pleck Park). All of these are available for community use albeit the large majority are unused. They are located at the following sites:

- ◀ Aldridge School
- ◀ Ormiston Sheffield Community Academy
- ◀ Reedswood Park
- ◀ St Francis of Assisi Catholic College
- ◀ Barr Beacon School
- ◀ Joseph Leckie Academy
- ◀ Pleck Park
- ◀ Shire Oak Academy
- ◀ The Streetly Academy

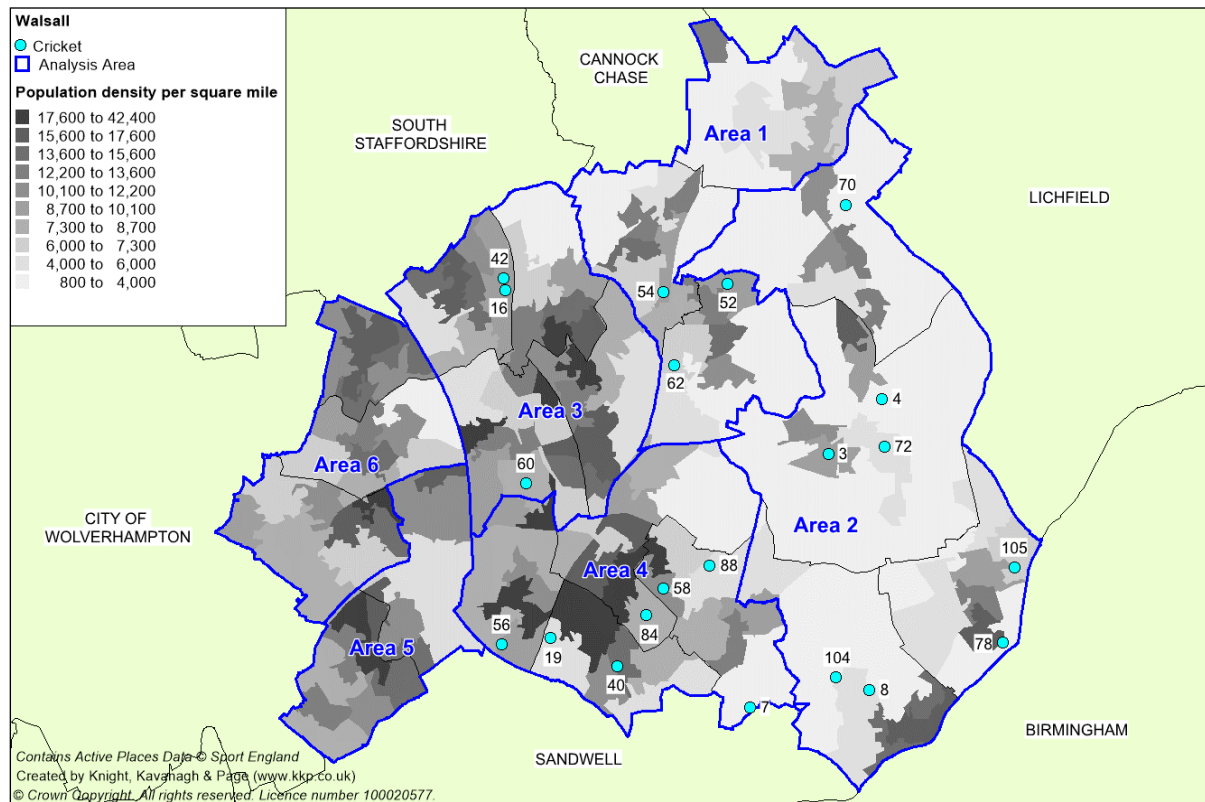
Lapsed provision

A lapsed square is located at Broadway West Playing Fields, in the Area 4 Analysis Area. It has now been unmaintained for cricket for the past five years.

The map below shows the location of all cricket squares currently servicing Walsall. For a key to the map, see Table 4.3.

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Figure 4.1: Location of cricket pitches within Walsall



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Table 4.3: Key to map of cricket provision (natural turf and non turf)

Site ID	Site name	Postcode	Analysis area	Community use?	No. of squares	No. of grass wickets	No. of non-turf wickets
3	Aldridge School	WS9 0BG	Area 2	No	1	0	1
4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	WS9 8NH	Area 2	Yes	2	15	1
4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	WS9 8NH	Area 2	Yes	2	8	0
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	B43 7AJ	Area 4	Yes	1	10	0
8	Barr Beacon School	WS9 0RF	Area 2	Yes-unused	1	0	1
16	Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club	WS3 3NJ	Area 3	Yes	1	12	1
40	Joseph Leckie Academy Playing Fields	WS5 4PG	Area 4	Yes - unused	1	0	1
42	King George V Playing Fields	WS3 3NJ	Area 3	Yes	1	6	1
52	Ormiston Sheffield Community Academy	WS4 1BW	Area 1	Yes - unused	1	0	1
54	Pelsall Cricket & Sports Club	WS3 4BS	Area 1	Yes	1	13	0
56	Pleck Park	WS2 9AF	Area 4	Yes	2	0	2
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	WS1 2PG	Area 4	Yes	2	8	0
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	WS1 2PG	Area 4	Yes	2	6	1
60	Reedwood Park	WS2 8SP	Area 4	Yes	1	0	1
62	Rushall Cricket Club	WS4 1NE	Area 1	Yes	1	8	0
70	Shire Oak Academy	WS9 9PA	Area 2	Yes-unused	1	0	1
72	St Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College	WS9 0RN	Area 2	Yes-unused	1	0	1
78	The Streetly Academy	B74 2EX	Area 2	Yes - unused	1	0	1
84	Walsall Cricket Club	WS1 3BE	Area 4	Yes	1	15	0
88	Walsall YPF Cricket Club	WS5 3AW	Area 4	Yes	1	13	1
104	Bronze Cricket Club	B43 7BA	Area 2	Yes	1	15	1
105	Streetly Sports Club	B74 3HX	Area 2	Yes	1	12	0

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Management and security of tenure

Based on consultation feedback, it is established that five out of the eight clubs own their home ground, whilst Bloxwich CC and Walsall Young People Federation CC lease their facilities from the Council via long-term arrangements. The remaining club, Rushall CC, has an annual rental agreement in place, also through the Council.

Table 4.4: Summary of security of tenure for clubs

Club	Primary site	Agreement
Aldridge CC	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	Freehold
Bloxwich CC	Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club	Lease arrangement with WMBC
Bronze CC	Bronze Cricket Club	Freehold
Pelsall CC	Pelsall Cricket & Sports Club	Freehold
Rushall CC	Rushall Cricket Club	Rental agreement with WMBC
Streetly CC	Streetly Sports Club	Freehold
Walsall CC	Walsall Cricket Club	Freehold
Walsall YPF CC	Walsall YPF Cricket Club	Lease arrangement with WMBC

Based on the table above, all clubs have secure tenure in Walsall. Furthermore, none express any concerns or issues relating to management and security of their respective sites.

In addition to the above, some clubs also rent/own secondary venues due to a lack of capacity on their main square. This relates to both Streetly CC and Pelsall CC, with the former currently exporting demand outside of Walsall to Mill Green, in Lichfield. The latter remains in Walsall and uses Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club.

Walsall CC accesses Queen Marys Grammar School, which is considered unsecure as no long-term agreement is in place for community use of the provision.

Pitch quality

The quality of cricket pitches has been assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments as determined by the ECB) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good
- ◀ Standard
- ◀ Poor

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows; Good (>80%), Standard (50-79%), Poor (<49%). For the full assessment criteria, please see Appendix 2.

Maintaining high pitch quality is the most important aspect of cricket; if the wicket is poor, it can affect the quality of the game and can, in some instances, become dangerous. As an example, if a square is poor quality, a ball can bounce erratically on a wicket and become a danger to players.

The audit of community available grass wicket cricket squares in Walsall found five to be good quality and the remaining eight to be standard quality. None are assessed as poor quality. The site-by-site breakdown of this is shown in the following table.

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Table 4.5: Quality ratings for community available grass wicket squares (site-by-site)

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	Square quality
4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	Area 2	Standard
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	Area 4	Good
16	Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club	Area 3	Good
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	Area 3	Standard
54	Pelsall Cricket & Sports Club	Area 1	Good
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	Area 4	Standard
62	Rushall Cricket Club	Area 1	Standard
84	Walsall Cricket Club	Area 4	Good
88	Walsall YPF Cricket Club	Area 4	Standard
104	Bronze Cricket Club	Area 2	Good
105	Streetly Sports Club	Area 2	Standard

Despite adequate quality, some of the squares suffer from issues relating to their outfields being used for football, with both Rushall CC and Pelsall CC reporting this as problematic at their sites.

Walsall YPF CC reports a specific need for improved machinery to aid its maintenance regime, in addition to appropriate storage containers to house the equipment. It states that improving quality to good is not possible with the current equipment that it has access to.

No other clubs report any significant issues with their squares, with clubs generally reporting that quality has improved over the last 12 months. Likewise, no clubs have reported any significant worsening of quality even with the impact of Covid-19.

To obtain a full technical assessment of wicket and pitches, the ECB recommends a Performance Quality Standard (PQS) assessment. The PQS looks at a cricket square to ascertain whether the pitch meets the required standards, which are benchmarked by the GMA. Clubs can contact the SCB to arrange for a pitch advisor to complete three different reports (comprehensive, mini, or verbal) that vary in cost.

A fully comprehensive report includes soil testing and guidance on machinery and corrective procedures, a mini report includes guidance on machinery and corrective procedures and a verbal report is a spoken version of a mini report.

Table 4.6: Performance Quality Standard ratings

Quality rating	Details
Premier (High)	Where the surface is intended for Premier League play, with those within the top quartile capable of holding minor county and 1st class one day matches. May include some of the better schools and university pitches
Club (Standard)	A Club pitch suitable for league, school, and junior cricket
Basic	An acceptable level suitable for recreational cricket and where the surface is designed and maintained within tight financial limitations such as local authorities
Unsuitable	This is where the surface is deemed unfit or unsafe for play

In relation to the NTPs provided in Walsall, quality is poor at both Bronze Cricket Club and Rushall Cricket Club, with replacement required. In addition, poor quality NTPs are also identified at Broadway West Playing Field and Reedswood Park.

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Ancillary facilities

All clubs in Walsall have access to changing room facilities at their home ground, although quality varies site-by-site. Most of the clubs' state that the quality of their ancillary provision is either good or standard quality with no specific issues raised other than areas being slightly dated.

Walsall CC identifies plans to refurbish its clubhouse to provide an improved social offer as well as new ECB compliant changing facilities. The current provision is not large enough and requires modernisation.

Training facilities

Suitable training facilities are an essential requirement for community cricket clubs during the summer, and in winter, when access to indoor facilities is crucial to continue cricket development. In Walsall, four clubs report a need for new and/or improved facilities:

- ◀ Bronze CC
- ◀ Rushall CC
- ◀ Walsall CC
- ◀ Walsall YPF CC

Bronze CC hosts autumn training for its junior members but reports that it has to use adult nets to accommodate this activity. It therefore notes an aspiration for specific junior nets to be provided to better accommodate this demand.

Rushall CC states that it requires a replacement NTP to allow for the continuation of training via the use of a mobile net. As mentioned earlier, its current wicket is poor quality.

Walsall YPF CC states that it requires training nets on site to accommodate its existing senior demand, with no current provision in place, whilst Walsall CC reports that its nets are of a poor quality and in need of replacement.

4.3: Demand

There are eight clubs in Walsall which collectively provide 54 teams. As a breakdown, this consists of 25 senior men's, one senior woman's and 28 junior teams.

The largest club (in terms of participation) is Aldridge CC, whilst the smallest is Walsall YPF CC, which operates with a solitary adult men's team.

A full breakdown of team demand can be found in the table below.

Table 4.7: Summary of teams by club

Club	Analysis area	Senior male teams	Senior female teams	Junior teams
Aldridge CC	Area 2	4	-	7
Bloxwich CC	Area 3	4	-	-
Bronze CC	Area 2	3	-	4
Pelsall CC	Area 1	4	-	5
Rushall CC	Area 1	2	-	-
Streetly CC	Area 2	4	1	5

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Club	Analysis area	Senior male teams	Senior female teams	Junior teams
Walsall CC	Area 4	3	-	7
Walsall YPF CC	Area 4	1	-	-
-	Total	25	1	28

As seen in the table below, most teams are based in Area 2 (28 teams).

Table 4.8: Summary of teams by analysis area

Analysis area	Senior mens teams	Senior women's team	Junior teams
Area 1	6	-	5
Area 2	11	1	16
Area 3	4	-	-
Area 4	4	-	7
Area 5	-	-	-
Area 6	-	-	-
Walsall	25	1	28

Participation trends

Most clubs report that participation has been largely static over the last three years, although it is reported that the Covid-19 pandemic in some instances has aided an increase in the number of participants available to clubs throughout the season (i.e. larger squads).

Just one club, Bronze CC, highlights a loss in the number of teams it traditionally operates. The Club has stopped operating a Sunday team due to reduced demand for cricket at off-peak times.

Latent demand

No latent demand has been expressed during consultation. That is, no clubs report that teams are unable to play due to a lack of facilities.

Imported/exported demand

Streetly CC exports demand outside of Walsall in that it accesses a second venue at Mill Green, in Lichfield, for its 3rd Saturday team. This site is a circa seven-minute drive from its primary site and, as such, is not seen as a key issue by the Club.

There are no identified cases of imported demand.

Additional activity

The ECB is currently running a number of initiatives across the Country which results in additional cricket demand and use of cricket facilities. Whilst these do not generally utilise grass wickets, they can impact upon availability when sessions are being held due to use of cricket outfield, making squares unusable for matches during these periods. This can mean no availability on one or two nights a week.

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All Stars cricket

In partnership with the ECB and Chance to Shine, cricket clubs can register to become an ECB All Stars Cricket Centre. Once registered, a club can deliver the programme which aims to introduce cricket to children aged from five to eight. Subsequently, this may lead to increased interest and demand for junior cricket at clubs.

The programme seeks to achieve the following aims:

- ✦ Increase cricket activity for 5–8-year-olds in the school and club environment.
- ✦ Develop consistency of message in both settings to aid transition.
- ✦ Improve generic movement skills for children, using cricket as the vehicle.
- ✦ Make it easier for new volunteers to support and deliver in the club environment.
- ✦ Use fun small-sided games to enthuse new children and volunteers to follow and play the game.

For the 2021 season, Aldridge CC, Bronze CC, Bloxwich CC, Streetly CC and Walsall CC are identified as being registered All Star cricket centres.

Dynamo's cricket

A key development area for the ECB in delivering on the outcomes of 'Inspiring Generations' will be the Dynamos Cricket programme for 8–11-year-olds, which originally aimed to launch in 2020. It plans on building on the significant growth of the All Stars and will develop the pathway to retain juniors who progress.

Where All Stars seeks to engage children in cricket activity and learning the skills, Dynamo's seeks to engage children in learning how to play, introducing a modified softball format as competitive progression with a view to eventual transition through to hardball cricket. The programme will be strongly linked to The Hundred, a new short format competition which also aimed to be launched in 2021.

In Walsall, Bloxwich, Bronze, Streetly and Walsall cricket clubs are signed up to the initiative.

Softball cricket

Softball cricket is an ECB initiative aimed at women and girls to increase female participation in cricket as a sport. The aim of softball cricket sections is enjoyment and participation, without pads, a hardball, a heavy bat, and limited rules. Sessions are generally played on the outfield of a square and follow a festival format with each session running for a maximum of two and half hours, shorter than traditional formats.

In Walsall, only Streetly CC currently field a women's softball team.

Chance to Shine

Chance to Shine is a national charity that aims to give all children the opportunity to play, learn and develop through cricket. It believes that cricket can help to develop the personal, social and physical skills of the 500,000 children that are worked with every year. It works in schools to provide children with their first experience of cricket, whilst it has also developed Chance to Shine Street. This is a format of the sport played with a tapeball, targeting children and young adults in inner-city areas and with matches lasting just 20-minutes.

SCB operates one Chance to Shine session per week in Walsall.

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Last Man Stands

Last Man Stands (LMS) was founded in 2005, in London. The social outdoor eight-a-side T20 cricket game is played midweek, lasts approximately two hours and is generally played on NTPs. All eight wickets are required to bowl a team out so when the seventh wicket falls, the 'Last Man Stands' on his own. This shorter format of the game has encouraged more people to participate in the sport and is increasing in popularity.

LMS in Walsall is a popular midweek offer and is the primary home of the Walsall & Sandwell Midweek League, with fixtures played at Pleck Park on both non-turf wickets throughout the traditional cricket season. The League generally consists of over ten teams, making it clear that the recreational offer for cricket in Walsall is strong.

Future demand

Future demand can be defined in two ways, through participation increases and using population forecasts. In addition, the Strategy & Action Plan that follows this report will contain housing growth scenarios that will estimate the additional demand for cricket arising from housing development plans within Walsall.

Population forecasts

Team generation rates are used below as the basis for calculating the number of teams likely to be generated in the future (2039) based on population growth. Using this, it is predicted that there will be a growth of two senior men's and two junior teams.

Table 4.9: Team generation rates based on population growth (2039)

Age group	Current population within age group	Current no. of teams	Team Generation Rate	Future population within age group	Predicted future number of teams	Additional teams that may be generated from the increased population ⁷
Senior Mens (18-55)	68,428	25	1:2737	76,423	27	2
Senior Womens (18-55)	69,299	1	1:69299	76,927	1	0
Junior (7-18)	22,967	28	1:820	25,321	30	2

When applied on an analysis area basis, the growth does not equate to a whole team in any of the analysis areas. As such, the overall predicted growth estimated across Walsall may not be realised.

Although no women and girls' teams are predicted to be created via population growth alone, consultation with the ECB suggests that further development of female cricket in Walsall is likely as it is currently a national priority to increase women and girl's participation. It is therefore important to acknowledge that there are plans and strategies in place to increase the number of teams at some formats beyond what current trends and population changes would ordinarily suggest. This also applies to a likely growth in junior cricket, linked to the abovementioned All Stars and Dynamo's initiatives.

⁷ Rounded to the nearest whole number

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In addition, the ECB's five-year media rights deal, from 2020-2024, includes a continuation of its relationship with Sky Sports. This now extends beyond broadcasting and acts as a genuine partnership to secure significant investment and a commitment to increase participation and drive engagement. This could therefore see future demand increase to levels in excess of those anticipated through the PPS, meaning the impact should be reviewed over coming years.

Participation increases

Of the clubs in Walsall, six indicate aspirations to increase levels of participation, with only Pelsall CC and Walsall CC reporting no growth aspirations. Total future demand expressed by the clubs amounts to a predicted growth of eight teams, equating to four senior men's and four junior teams.

Table 4.10: Future demand expressed by clubs

Club	Analysis area	Senior men's	Senior women's	Junior
Aldridge CC	Area 2	1	-	-
Bloxwich CC	Area 3	-	-	2
Bronze CC	Area 2	1	-	-
Rushall CC	Area 1	1	-	-
Streetly CC	Area 2	-	-	1
Walsall YPF CC	Area 4	1	-	1
-	Total	4	-	4

Future demand summary

In the supply and demand analysis at the end of this section of the report, future demand from only population increases is included to calculate the potential future supply and demand of/for cricket squares by that seen in the team generation rates. A scenario will be run in the forthcoming Strategy & Action Plan to look at the theoretical impact of club demand aspirations (if achieved).

Peak time demand

An analysis of match play identifies that peak time demand for senior cricket in Walsall is Saturday, although several clubs also field men's Sunday teams. Sunday cricket is also likely to be a time slot for any women's match play and therefore both days require consideration.

For junior cricket, peak time is midweek albeit some Sunday cricket is also recorded.

4.4: Capacity analysis

Capacity analysis for cricket is measured on a seasonal rather than a weekly basis. This is due to playability (as only one match is generally played per square per day at weekends or weekday evening) and because wickets are rotated throughout the season to reduce wear and tear and to allow for repair.

The capacity of a square to accommodate matches is driven by the number and quality of wickets. This section of the report therefore presents the current pitch stock available for cricket and illustrates the number of competitive match equivalent sessions per season per square that is available and that currently takes place.

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For good quality squares, capacity is considered to be five matches per grass wicket per season, whilst for a standard quality square, capacity is four matches per wicket per season. For poor quality squares, no capacity is considered to exist as such provision is not deemed safe for play.

The number of matches played by each team has been derived from consultation with the clubs. The average number for Saturday senior teams is between ten and 12 home matches per year and all junior teams play between four and eight matches per year depending on their age and level of competition.

The above is used to allocate capacity ratings as follows:

Potential capacity	Play is below the level the site could sustain
At capacity	Play matches the level the site can sustain
Overused	Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

The capacity analysis assumes that all clubs rotate their wickets evenly. However, this may not be the case at all sites, with central wickets potentially used more commonly than outer wickets that are closer to a boundary, especially for senior matches. The idea of this is to showcase what the capacity is or could be if best practice is followed for the whole square, rather than doing it on a wicket-by-wicket basis.

Please note that NTPs have been discounted from the analysis by means of not distorting the findings. This is because no NTPs are recorded as accommodating more than their recommended capacity, which is 60 match equivalent sessions per season (0 match equivalent sessions when poor quality). Therefore, no NTPs are considered to be overused, which translates to overall actual spare capacity for junior play, where the provision is more commonly used and where matches can be played on a variety of days. However, this is not considered to be actual spare capacity for senior cricket due to league requirements generally not allowing usage.

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Table 4.11: Capacity analysis of community available grass cricket squares

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Club users	No. of squares	Square quality	No. of grass wickets	Capacity (sessions per season)	Actual play (sessions per season)	Capacity rating (sessions per season)	Potential spare capacity for senior cricket? (Saturday)	Potential spare capacity for senior cricket? (Sunday)	Potential spare capacity for junior cricket? (Midweek)
4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	Area 2	Aldridge CC Pelsall CC (3 rd team)	1	Standard	15	60	56	4	No	No	No
4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	Area 2	Aldridge CC Pelsall CC (3 rd team)	1	Standard	8	32	42	10	No	No	No
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	Area 4	Aston University	1	Good	10	50	20	30	No	No	No
16	Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club	Area 3	Bloxwich CC	1	Good	12	60	35	25	No	Yes	Yes
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	Area 3	Bloxwich CC	1	Standard	6	24	11	13	Yes	Yes	Yes
54	Pelsall Cricket & Sports Club	Area 1	Pelsall CC	1	Good	13	65	59	6	No	No	Yes
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	Area 4	Walsall CC (3 rd team)	1	Standard	8	32	18	24	No	No	No
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	Area 4	Walsall CC (3 rd team)	1		6	24	6	18	No	No	No
62	Rushall Cricket Club	Area 1	Rushall CC	1	Standard	8	32	20	12	No	Yes	Yes
84	Walsall Cricket Club	Area 4	Walsall CC	1	Good	15	90	60	30	No	Yes	No
88	Walsall YPF Cricket Club	Area 4	Walsall YPF CC	1	Standard	13	52	11	41	Yes	Yes	Yes
104	Bronze Cricket Club	Area 2	Bronze CC	1	Good	15	90	54	36	No	Yes	Yes
105	Streetly Sports Club	Area 2	Streetly CC	1	Standard	12	48	52	4	No	No	No

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Actual spare capacity

Although a large amount of spare capacity is identified, it is not as simple as to aggregate this into a general oversupply of cricket squares. Despite 11 squares displaying some form of spare capacity, only two are available for further senior cricket activity on a Saturday. All remaining squares are used to capacity at this time, either because two teams are already assigned to them as a home venue or because the level of spare capacity is insufficient to accommodate an additional team without overplay being created.

In total, actual spare capacity on a Saturday equates to 54 match equivalent sessions provided across two sites; King George V Playing Fields and Walsall YPF CC. Potential spare capacity at Aston University (Recreation Centre) and Queen Marys Grammar School has been discounted due to neither site offering secure tenure arrangements for potential users.

Table 4.12: Summary of actual spare capacity for senior cricket (Saturday) by site

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of squares	Actual spare capacity (sessions per season)	Number of additional teams that could be accommodated
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	Area 3	1	13	1
88	Walsall YPF Cricket Club	Area 4	1	41	1

As seen, the actual spare capacity is identifiable in Area 3 (13 match equivalent sessions) and Area 4 (41 match equivalent sessions).

Table 4.13: Actual spare capacity for senior cricket (Saturday) by analysis area

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (sessions per season)
Area 1	-
Area 2	-
Area 3	13
Area 4	41
Area 5	-
Area 6	-
Walsall	54

All squares with actual spare capacity on a Saturday also have actual spare capacity for an increase in demand on Sundays.

As well as this, four additional sites can also accommodate demand for further use on Sundays, with these being Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club, Rushall Cricket Club, Walsall Cricket Club and Bronze Cricket Club.

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Table 4.14: Summary of actual spare capacity for senior cricket (Sunday) by site

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of squares	Actual spare capacity (sessions per season)	Number of additional teams that could be accommodated
16	Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club	Area 3	1	25	2
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	Area 3	1	13	1
62	Rushall Cricket Club	Area 1	1	12	1
84	Walsall Cricket Club	Area 4	1	30	2
88	Walsall YPF Cricket Club	Area 4	1	41	2
104	Bronze Cricket Club	Area 2	1	36	2

The total actual spare capacity equates to 157 match equivalent sessions and is found across areas 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Table 4.15: Actual spare capacity for senior cricket (Sunday) by analysis area

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (sessions per season)
Area 1	12
Area 2	36
Area 3	38
Area 4	71
Area 5	0
Area 6	0
Walsall	157

Sunday capacity provides capacity for additional senior men's demand outside of the peak period, with teams still being able to play within a competitive format. Moreover, it provides peak time availability for senior women's cricket (both hardball and softball) and for some junior demand.

For junior midweek cricket, six squares have actual spare capacity and the total amount of actual spare capacity equates to 132 match equivalent sessions.

Table 4.16: Summary of actual spare capacity for junior cricket by site

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of squares	Actual spare capacity (sessions per season)	Number of additional teams that could be accommodated
16	Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club	Area 3	1	25	4
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	Area 3	1	13	2
54	Pelsall Cricket & Sports Club	Area 1	1	6	1
62	Rushall Cricket Club	Area 1	1	12	2

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of squares	Actual spare capacity (sessions per season)	Number of additional teams that could be accommodated
88	Walsall YPF Cricket Club	Area 4	1	41	6
104	Bronze Cricket Club	Area 2	1	36	2

As with Sunday cricket, the spare capacity is found in areas 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Table 4.17: Actual spare capacity for junior cricket (midweek) by analysis area

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (sessions per season)
Area 1	18
Area 2	36
Area 3	38
Area 4	41
Area 5	-
Area 6	-
Walsall	133

The reason for midweek capacity being higher than the capacity for senior cricket on a Saturday is because fixtures can be split across numerous days, meaning more than two home teams can be assigned to a square.

Actual spare capacity analysis

Notwithstanding the above, it should be noted that spare capacity across Saturday, Sunday and midweek should not be viewed collectively as utilising the spare capacity across different days may result in overplay. For example, a site with 12 match equivalent sessions of spare capacity theoretically has capacity for one additional senior team and two additional junior teams; however, it does not have capacity for both. As such, this needs to be taken into consideration on a site-by-site basis as and when demand grows.

Overplay

Overplay translates to a site accommodating more demand than it can sustain based on the number of wickets provided and the quality of the square. On this basis, overplay is relatively modest, with only two sites being overplayed. This amounts to 14 match equivalent sessions per season, all of which is identified in Area 2.

Table 4.17: Summary of overplay

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Overplay (matches per season)
4	Aldridge Stick and Wicket Club (Aldridge CC)	Area 2	10
105	Streetly Sports Club (Streetly CC)	Area 2	4
-	-	Total	14

Although it is possible to sustain certain, minimal levels of overplay providing that a regular, sufficient maintenance regime is in place, a reduction in play is recommended on overplayed squares to ensure there is no detrimental effect on quality over time.

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4.5: Supply and demand analysis

Consideration must be given to the extent to which current provision can accommodate current and future demand for both senior and junior cricket. This section therefore looks at actual spare capacity on grass wicket squares considered against overplay and identified future demand.

Match equivalent sessions for future demand are calculated using the average number of matches played per season (12 matches for senior teams and between four and eight matches for junior teams, depending on age). Future demand is based on club aspirations gathered through consultation.

Senior cricket supply and demand analysis (Saturday)

The table below looks at the supply and demand balance during the peak period for senior men's cricket (Saturday). For actual spare capacity, please note that this is converted from the number of match equivalent sessions identified above to the number of match equivalent sessions that could feasibly be utilised by a growth in demand. This is calculated by using the average number of matches played per season by senior teams (12) multiplied by the number of additional teams that can be fielded at peak time (two teams per square that is available). The entirety of the spare capacity at each site is not used as this number of matches may not be able to be accommodated at peak time.

Based on Team Generation Rates, no future demand is identified for senior cricket. Had club ambitions been taken into account it would have created overall shortfalls of 38 match equivalent sessions per season (this will be explored in the Strategy & Action Plan).

Table 4.18: Supply and demand analysis of cricket squares for senior cricket (Saturday) in match equivalent sessions

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Area 1	-	-	-	-	-
Area 2	-	14	14	-	14
Area 3	12	-	12	-	12
Area 4	12	-	12	-	12
Area 5	-	-	-	-	-
Area 6	-	-	-	-	-
Walsall	24	14	10	-	10

As seen in the table above, the overall position is that there is current spare capacity available for cricket on Saturdays amounting to 10 match equivalent sessions, although a shortfall is evident in Area 2.

Senior cricket supply and demand analysis (Sunday)

The table below looks at the supply and demand balance for Sunday cricket, which is peak time for senior women's demand but also relevant to some senior men's and junior teams.

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Table 4.19: Supply and demand analysis of cricket squares for senior cricket (Sunday) in match equivalent sessions

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Area 1	12	-	12	-	12
Area 2	12	14	2	-	2
Area 3	24	-	24	-	24
Area 4	36	-	36	-	36
Area 5	-	-	-	-	-
Area 6	-	-	-	-	-
Walsall	84	14	70	-	70

The table above shows that there is current spare capacity for Sunday cricket equating to 70 match equivalent sessions per season, although a small shortfall is identified in Area 2. Future demand through Team Generation Rates causes no change to the future supply, meaning the existing capacity is still present. Had club ambitions been taken into account it would have reduced spare capacity to 22 match equivalent sessions per season.

Junior cricket supply and demand analysis (midweek)

For the junior supply and demand analysis, actual spare capacity equates to the total spare capacity at each available site or, if it is lower, the total number of additional junior teams that could be fielded on each available square (on the assumption that one square can accommodate six midweek teams), multiplied by six (the average number of matches a junior team plays). This is because junior demand at peak time is not limited to one day, although some capacity should be reserved for activity such as All Stars and Dynamo's Cricket.

Table 4.20: Supply and demand analysis of cricket squares for junior cricket in match equivalent sessions

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Area 1	18	-	18	-	18
Area 2	12	14	2	-	2
Area 3	38	-	38	-	38
Area 4	36	-	36	-	36
Area 5	-	-	-	-	-
Area 6	-	-	-	-	-
Walsall	104	14	90	-	90

There is currently overall spare capacity for midweek cricket amounting to 90 match equivalent sessions per season, despite a small shortfall in Area 2. When accounting for future demand through Team Generation Rates there is no change to supply. Had club ambitions been taken into account it would have reduced spare capacity to 66 match equivalent sessions per season.

Cricket – supply and demand summary

- There are 11 squares that show potential spare capacity on grass wickets although only two of these have actual spare capacity for senior demand on Saturday's, whilst six have actual spare capacity on Sunday's.
- A total of six squares has actual spare capacity during midweek for junior cricket.
- Two squares are overplayed, with total overplay equating to 14 match equivalent sessions.
- Demand for senior cricket is currently being met; and when factoring in future demand through team generation rates this remains the case.

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- It is expected that both senior and junior cricket will be able to be satisfied both now and in the future.

Cricket – supply summary

- In total, there are 13 grass cricket squares in Walsall, all of which are available to the community.
- Five are assessed as good quality and eight are assessed as standard quality (none are assessed as poor quality).
- A disused square is located at Broadway West Playing Fields; It has now been unmaintained for cricket for the past five years.
- There are NTPs accompanying grass wicket squares at five sites and there are 10 standalone NTPs at nine sites (two are provided at Pleck Park).
- The NTPs at Bronze CC and Rushall CC are poor quality and needs replacement, which is also the case for the standalone NTPs at Broadway West Playing Field and Reedswood Park.
- No club is identified as having issues relating to the lease or management of their sites.
- Walsall CC has aspirations to improve the quality of its ancillary provision to provide an improved social offer and better quality changing facilities.

Cricket – demand summary

- There are eight affiliated clubs in Walsall which collectively provide 54 teams.
- Streetly CC exports demand outside of Walsall in that it accesses a second venue at Mill Green, in Lichfield, for its 3rd Saturday team.
- Aldridge CC, Bronze CC, Bloxwich CC, Streetly CC and Walsall CC are engaged in ECB national participation programmes e.g. All Stars Cricket and Dynamo's Cricket.
- Streetly CC field women's softball teams.
- Last Man Stands is providing a popular midweek offer in Walsall at Pleck Park; the League generally consists of over ten teams.
- Future demand from clubs equates to a potential growth of eight teams (four senior mens and four junior boys), whereas team generation rates do not indicate a growth in participation (when applied by individual analysis areas). In the case of the PPS future demand has been calculated through team generation rates only.

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PART 5: RUGBY UNION

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) is split into four areas across the country with a workforce team that covers development, coaching, governance and competitions. As part of this, Club Developers and a team of community rugby coaches deliver core programmes in schools and clubs across Walsall.

The RFU governs a variety of formats and programmes, including 15-a-side, 10-a-side, 7-a-side and Tag rugby as well as The Touch Union programme. Its aim is to increase and retain participation within the game, with facilities needing to be appropriate, affordable, and accessible in order to enable this.

Consultation

There are five affiliated rugby union clubs identified as playing within Walsall. Four of these clubs have responded to consultation requests, resulting in a response rate of 80%. A full breakdown is provided in the table below; Bloxwich RUFC is the unresponsive club.

Table 5.1: rugby union club response rate

Club name	Club response?
Aldridge RUFC	Yes
Bloxwich RUFC	No
Handsworth RUFC	Yes
Veseyans RUFC	Yes
Walsall RUFC	Yes

Following consultation with the RFU there are also two additional clubs that have been included in the assessment that lie within South Staffordshire on the border with Walsall, both of which completed a telephone consultation.

- ◆ Essington RUFC
- ◆ Willenhall RUFC

These clubs are located in Essington, South Staffordshire. For the purposes of the report a telephone consultation took place with both clubs detailing matters such as number of teams, aspirations to increase, training and ancillary facilities. As both clubs are located on the border of Walsall, they attract players from the Local Authority. Information with regards to the clubs is detailed within the report however non-technical site assessments were not completed as they fall outside the study area.

5.2: Supply

Within Walsall there are 16 sites containing a total of 25 senior and one mini rugby union pitches; no junior pitches have been identified.

Of the pitches, 19 senior and one mini pitch is available for community use across 13 sites, albeit six senior pitches at six school sites are unused for community use. Moreover, there are six senior pitches at three sites which are classified as being unavailable for community use.

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Table 5.2: Summary of grass rugby union pitches available for community use

Analysis area	No. of senior pitches	No. of junior pitches	No. of mini pitches
Area 1	1	-	-
Area 2	9	-	1
Area 3	3	-	-
Area 4	5	-	-
Area 5	1	-	-
Area 6	-	-	-
Walsall	19	-	1

Area 2 has the most available pitches to the community, with 10, whilst Area 6 has the least amount of provision and contains no community available provision.

The audit only identifies dedicated, line marked pitches, with recommended dimensions shown in the table overleaf. However, it is common for junior and mini matches to be played on senior pitches via the use of cones, particularly at sites used by clubs.

Table 5.3: Pitch dimensions

Age	Pitch type	Maximum pitch dimensions (metres) ⁸
U7	Mini	20 x 12
U8	Mini	45 x 22
U9	Mini	60 x 30
U10	Mini	60 x 35
U11	Mini	60 x 43
U12	Mini	60 x 43
U13	Junior	90 x 60 (60 x 43 for girls)
U14 +	Senior	100 x 70 ⁹

Figure 5.1 highlights all rugby union pitches currently within Walsall, regardless of community use. For a key to the map, see Table 5.7.

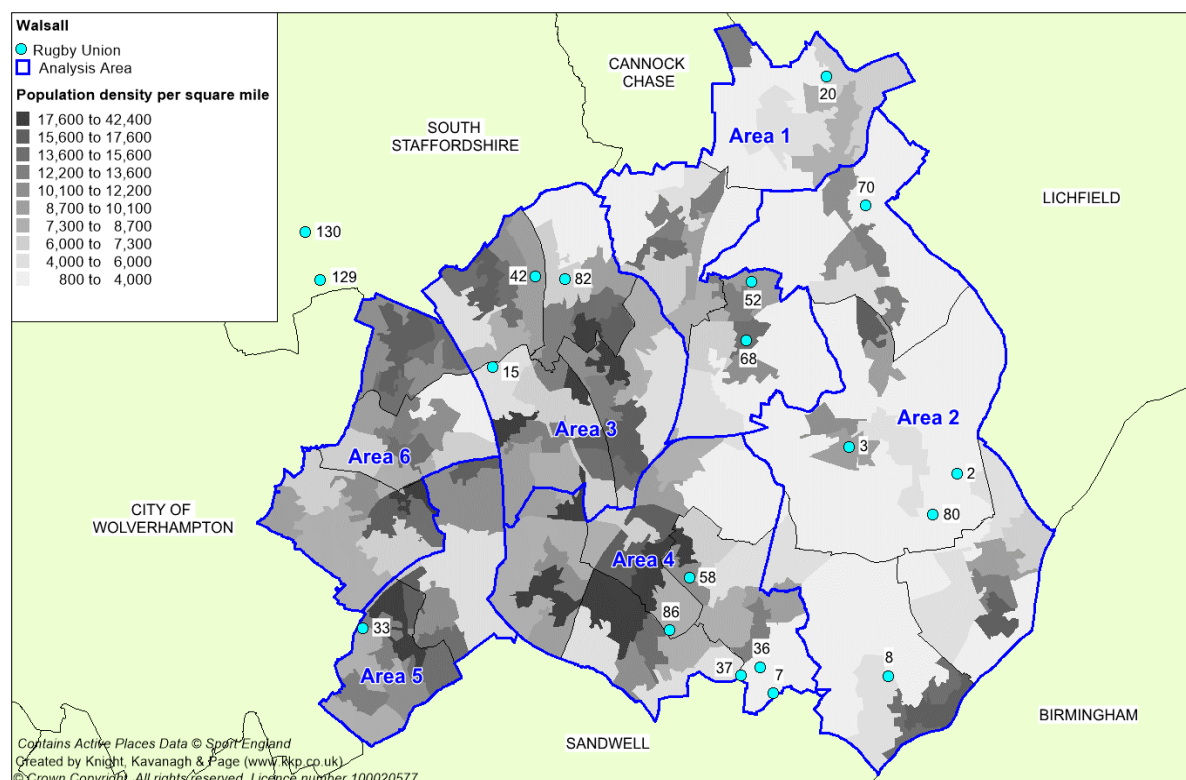
⁸ Recommended run off area for all pitch types requires five-metres each way and a minimum in-goal length of six metres.

⁹ Minimum dimensions of 94 x 68 metres are accepted.

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Figure 5.1: Location of rugby union pitches within Walsall



Security of tenure

Tenure at all in-use rugby union sites is deemed to be secure in Walsall. Aldridge, Handsworth and Walsall rugby clubs own their sites, whilst Veseyans RUFC has a long-term lease agreement in place. Bloxwich RUFC rents its site, with this considered secure given that the Council is the landowner.

Essington RUFC has a 50-year lease agreement signed six years ago with Essington Parish Council to cover the pitches and clubhouse on site. Comparatively, Willenhall RUFC has freehold ownership of the clubhouse and two of its four pitches on site. The remaining two pitches are under ownership of the farmer whose land the pitches lie upon, of which the Club has a long-term lease agreement.

Table 5.9: Details of club security of tenure

Club	Site name	Ownership
Aldridge RUFC	Aldridge Rugby Club	Owned
Bloxwich RUFC	King George V Playing Fields	Rented
Handsworth RUFC	Handsworth Rugby Club	Owned
Veseyans RUFC	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	Leased
Walsall RUFC	Walsall Rugby Club	Owned
Essington RUFC	Essington Rugby Club	Leased
Willenhall RUFC	Willenhall Rugby Club	Part owned part leased

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Pitch quality

The quality of rugby pitches across Walsall has been assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments as determined by RFU) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good
- ◀ Standard
- ◀ Poor

The methodology for assessing rugby pitch quality looks at two key elements: the maintenance programme and the level of drainage on each pitch. An overall quality based on both drainage and maintenance can then be generated. The agreed rating for each pitch type also represents actions required to improve pitch quality. A breakdown of actions required based on the ratings can be seen below:

For the full assessment criteria, please see Appendix 2.

Table 5.4: Definition of maintenance categories

Category	Definition
M0	Action is significant improvements to maintenance programme
M1	Action is minor improvements to maintenance programme
M2	Action is no improvements to maintenance programme

Table 5.5: Definition of drainage categories

Category	Definition
D0	Action is pipe drainage system is needed on pitch
D1	Action is pipe drainage is needed on pitch
D2	Action is slit drainage is needed on pitch
D3	No action is needed on pitch drainage

Table 5.6: Quality ratings based on maintenance and drainage scores

Maintenance and drainage type	Maintenance Poor (M0)	Maintenance Adequate (M1)	Maintenance Good (M2)
Natural Inadequate Drainage (D0)	Poor	Poor	Standard
Natural Adequate Drainage (D1)	Poor	Standard	Good
Pipe Drained (D2)	Standard	Standard	Good
Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	Standard	Good	Good

The figures are based upon a pipe drained system at 5m centres that has been installed in the last eight years and a slit drained system at 1m centres completed in the last five years.

For the full site assessment criteria, please refer to Appendix 2.

Overall, in Walsall, there are 13 pitches assessed as standard quality and 13 as poor quality; no pitches are rated as good.

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Table 5.7: Quality of pitches available for community use

Good senior pitches	Standard senior pitches	Poor senior pitches	Good mini pitches	Standard mini pitches	Poor mini pitches
-	12	13	-	1	-

The lack of good quality pitches is reflective of a generally club-based volunteer network maintaining grass pitches, with limited time and financial resource to make necessary improvements to good. It is worth noting that to attain a good quality rating (based on the PPOSS methodology) that the on-going maintenance of pitches has to be excellent and/or a drainage system has to be in place.

Most of the poor quality pitches are located at school sites, which is not uncommon. This is largely due to basic maintenance regimes aligning to an M0 maintenance score. However, some club pitches are also assessed as poor quality, such as the pitches at Aldridge Rugby Club where the poor rating is supported by the Club which states that the top pitch in particular suffers from severe drainage issues.

The table overleaf shows the agreed quality ratings for each of the pitches on a site-by-site basis.

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Table 5.8: Site quality ratings

Site ID	Site name	Postcode	Analysis area	Community use?	Tenure	No. of pitches	Pitch type	Floodlit?	Non tech score	Quality rating
2	Aldridge Rugby Club	WS9 0SH	Area 2	Yes	Secure	1	Senior	Yes	M0 / D1	Poor
2	Aldridge Rugby Club	WS9 0SH	Area 2	Yes	Secure	1	Senior	No	M0 / D1	Poor
3	Aldridge School	WS9 0BG	Area 2	Yes-unused	Secure	1	Senior	No	M0 / D0	Poor
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	B43 7AJ	Area 4	Yes	Secure	1	Senior	No	M1 / D1	Standard
8	Barr Beacon School	WS9 0RF	Area 2	Yes-unused	Secure	1	Senior	No	M0 / D1	Poor
15	Bloxwich Academy	WS2 7NR	Area 3	Yes-unused	Secure	1	Senior	No	M0 / D0	Poor
20	Brownhills Ormiston Academy	WS8 7QG	Area 1	No	Unsecure	1	Senior	No	M0 / D0	Poor
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	WS10 8QJ	Area 5	Yes	Secure	1	Senior	No	M0 / D1	Poor
36	Handsworth Rugby Club (Charles Lewis Memorial Ground)	WS5 3PJ	Area 4	Yes	Secure	1	Senior	Yes	M1 / D1	Standard
37	Handsworth Rugby Club (Walstead Road)	WS5 4DT	Area 4	Yes-unused	Secure	1	Senior	No	M0 / D1	Poor
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	WS3 3NT	Area 3	Yes	Secure	2	Senior	No	M0 / D0	Poor
52	Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy	WS4 1BW	Area 1	Yes	Secured	1	Senior	No	M0 / D0	Poor
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	WS1 2PG	Area 4	No	Unsecure	4	Senior	No	M1 / D0	Standard
70	Shire Oak Academy	WS9 9PA	Area 2	Yes-unused	Secure	1	Senior	No	M0 / D1	Poor
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	WS9 0SQ	Area 2	Yes	Secure	1	Mini	No	M1 / D0	Standard
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	WS9 0SQ	Area 2	Yes	Secure	2	Senior	No	M1 / D0	Standard
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	WS9 0SQ	Area 2	Yes	Secure	2	Senior	Yes	M1 / D1	Standard
82	Walsall Academy	WS3 3LX	Area 3	No	Unsecure	1	Senior	No	M0 / D1	Poor
86	Walsall Rugby Club	WS1 3JY	Area 4	Yes	Secured	1	Senior	Yes	M1 / D1	Standard
86	Walsall Rugby Club	WS1 3JY	Area 4	Yes	Secured	1	Senior	No	M1 / D1	Standard
129	Essington RUFC	WV11 2DW	Outside	Yes	Secured	3	Senior	No	M1 / D1	Standard
129	Essington RUFC	WV11 2DW	Outside	Yes	Secured	1	Senior	Yes	M0 / D1	Poor
130	Willenhall RUFC	WV11 2BA	Outside	Yes	Secured	2	Senior	1 Yes	M1 / D1	Standard

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Ancillary facilities

Walsall RUFC renovated half of its clubhouse following the 2016 Rugby World Cup, which was funded through various income streams (including the Club's own funds, RFU and Sport England grants and through Enovert trust funds). There are three phases to the whole project with only the first phase so far complete.

Phase two will incorporate extending the clubhouse further to implement more storage, adding a club shop and disabled toilets to the site, whilst phase three will involve updating the existing changing rooms and converting a space into referees changing. The whole project is estimated to cost £750,000 and the Club appreciates that it will need to find further funding to complete everything.

Elsewhere, Handsworth RUFC reports that it has four changing rooms with showers and a referee's room which are in poor quality. The Club has an active bid with Sport England to improve this space and it has plans to improve the provision particularly for its women's side. Currently, there is no dedicated women's changing space and as a result home and away players have change together in the same room on match days. The Club installed a new bar in 2020 but it is not able to open this space up to the public or for functions due to licensing issues.

Aldridge RUFC states that it refurbished its clubhouse in 2012 as the old one burnt down. It provides four RFU specification changing rooms with showers in each as well as a dedicated referee's changing space. The social room is open to functions, but there is little demand due to its location.

Veseyans RUFC states that it has six good quality changing rooms, of which four were added six years ago. It now also has a physio and a referee's room. Moreover, the four new rooms also have integrated toilets and showers.

Essington RUFC has two non RFU-spec changing rooms in its clubhouse, both with internal showers and non-self-contained toilets. The building also features a large function room and players lounge for members and the general public to use. The Club state ambitions to develop a referee changing room as currently referee's utilise the players lounge before and after matches.

Willenhall RUFC has a large clubhouse with six changing rooms and accompanying social space. The Club state that two of the changing rooms are RFU spec and of a good quality whilst the remaining changing rooms are of a lesser quality and design specification. The social offer is of a standard to good quality and meets the need of the Club.

5.3: Demand

Demand for rugby union within Walsall tends to fall within the categories of organised competitive play and organised training.

Competitive play

Five community rugby union clubs play within Walsall producing a total of 43 teams, which is broken down as 13 senior men's, one senior women's, 14 junior boys', three junior girls' and 12 mini teams. The clubs vary in size, with large clubs such as Walsall and Veseyans rugby clubs catering for numerous teams within each format, compared to Aldridge and Bloxwich rugby clubs which provide just two men's teams each.

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Table 5:10 Summary of demand (in teams)

Club	Area	Senior male	Senior female	Junior boys	Junior girls	Mini mixed
Aldridge RUFC	Walsall	2	-	-	-	-
Bloxwich RUFC	Walsall	2	-	-	-	-
Handsworth RUFC	Walsall	3	1	2	-	-
Veseyans RUFC	Walsall	3	-	6	-	6
Walsall RUFC	Walsall	3	-	6	3	6
Essington RUFC	Outside	3	-	5	-	6
Willenhall RUFC	Outside	2	-		-	-
-	Outside Total	5	-	5	-	6
-	Walsall Total	13	1	14	3	12

In addition to the five clubs outlined as playing within Walsall above, Essington RUFC and Willenhall RUFC both play within South Staffordshire near the border with Walsall. As can be seen, Essington feature three senior men's teams and 11 junior and mini mixed teams, whereas Willenhall are more of a social club and feature only 2 teams.

In comparison to the 2016 PPS, demand has decreased from 60 teams to 43, which is largely caused by the exclusion of Essington RUFC and Willenhall RUFC. If accounting for demand from the two South Staffordshire based clubs, overall demand increases to 59, resulting in an overall decrease of one team since the previous PPS. Whilst the total number of teams has remained largely the same, the distribution of this total has notably changed with a reduction in five senior men's teams, whereas junior demand has grown from 37 to 40. There is also the addition of a senior female team provided by Handsworth RUFC.

Training

Throughout the Country, many rugby teams train at its home ground on match pitches. As a result, usage is concentrated which reduces the capacity for match play on these pitches and means they are more likely to be overplayed. A key factor in determining the extent of training on match pitches is the presence of floodlighting.

Walsall RUFC utilises the World Rugby compliant 3G pitch at Walsall Rugby Club for most of its training demand. It trains for one-hour sessions on both Tuesday and Thursday for its senior sides, whilst the girls and colts' rugby training takes place on Wednesdays. This relieves its grass pitches of additional, non-match play usage. The pitch is also accessed by Handsworth, Aldridge and Bloxwich RUFC for training purposes.

Bloxwich RUFC trains using its grass pitches at King George V Playing Fields for one hour and a half on Thursday evenings. Similarly, Veseyans RUFC utilises the two floodlit grass pitches at its home site. The seniors train Tuesdays and Thursdays and the colts train on Wednesdays for one hour.

Aldridge RUFC uses its one strip of floodlights on the Southernmost grass pitch for training on Tuesday and Thursday evenings for its senior sides. The Club has ambitions to install floodlights to fully service the pitch, however greater membership numbers will be needed to justify this want.

Handsworth RUFC uses the grass floodlit pitch at Charles Lewis Memorial Ground for training during the week whereas its minis team uses the Walstead Road site for Sunday morning Academy sessions.

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Aldridge RUFC has aspirations to install floodlights on a second pitch at Aldridge Rugby Club to further accommodate the Club's training demand during the week.

Willenhall RUFC hold senior training sessions every Tuesday and Thursday from 18:30-20:00, utilising the entirety of the floodlit training pitch, whilst junior sessions run 18:00-20:00 Wednesdays and 10:00-12:00 every Sunday.

Finally Essington RUFC hold training every Wednesday evening on a separate grass floodlit training space. The Club also run touch rugby training sessions on Thursday evenings.

Use of artificial pitches

The alternative to training on grass pitches is the use of 3G pitches. World Rugby produced the 'Performance Specification for artificial grass pitches for rugby', more commonly known as 'Regulation 22' that provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for rugby union. A World Rugby compliant pitch also enables the transfer of match demand from grass pitches onto 3G pitches, which alleviates overplay of grass pitches and as a result protects quality.

Nationally, clubs with access to 3G pitches for training utilise them as a method of protecting grass pitches for matches and providing a high-quality surface for full contact practice. Competitive play generally continues to take place on grass pitches, although there is occasional use of 3G pitches for fixtures in the case of grass pitch quality or capacity issues (especially during bad weather spells).

As evidenced in Part 3 of this report and as referenced above, there is currently one World Rugby compliant 3G pitches in Walsall, located at Walsall Rugby Club. This is currently used by the host Club, as well as Handsworth Aldridge and Bloxwich RUFC, therefore the 3G pitch is helping alleviate overplay at several sites.

Given the notorious draining issues at the Walsall RUFC site, the 3G pitch has significantly aided existing provision at the site. Furthermore, the increased revenue stream for the Club is enabling the three stage enhancements to the on-site clubhouse as already covered earlier in the report.

Exported/imported demand

Given the location of Wednesbury RUFC, a Club with two senior men's teams, which lies within Sandwell very near the border with Walsall, the Club will export a lot of senior men's demand from Walsall into Sandwell.

Simultaneously, Essington RUFC and Willenhall RUFC import some of their player bases from Walsall into South Staffordshire. This occurs more frequently for the latter given the larger scale of the Club.

Unmet/latent demand

No unmet or latent demand is reported by any of the rugby clubs in Walsall.

Future demand

Future demand can be defined in two ways, through participation increases and using population forecasts. In addition, the proceeding Strategy & Action Plan document will contain housing growth scenarios that will estimate the additional demand for rugby union arising from housing developments within Walsall.

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Population forecasts

Team generation rates are used below as the basis for calculating the number of teams likely to be generated in the future based on population growth (to 2039). Based on future projections, when calculated at a Borough-wide level, there is potential growth for two additional senior men's, two junior boy's and one junior girls' team.

Table 5.11: Team generation rates (2039)

Age group	Current population within age group	Current no. of teams	Team Generation Rate	Future population within age group	Predicted future number of teams	Additional teams that may be generated from the increased population
Senior Mens (19-45)	47,827	13	3679	54,058	14	1
Senior Womens (19-45)	48,638	1	48638	53,889	1	0
Junior Boys (13-18)	10,882	12	907	12,574	13	1
Junior Girls (13-18)	10,319	3	3440	11,922	3.5	1
Mini Mixed (7-12)	23,614	13	1816	5,995	13	0

However, when these are applied across the six analysis area catchments, it is anticipated that growth is more likely to join pre-existing teams as opposed to new teams being formed.

Participation increases

Future demand is expressed by two clubs (Aldridge RUFC and Handsworth RUFC), as seen in the table below. The total growth equates to an increase of two senior women's teams. Moreover, Veseyans RUFC has plans to add new members with the RFU highlighting the significant growth the Club is expected to see over the upcoming 18 months. RFU consultation also covered Walsall RUFC's expected growth of another junior girls' team.

Future demand aspirations for Bloxwich RUFC are to gain an additional senior mens team. This information has been collated through consultation with the RFU rather than a Club response. In the case of the two South Staffordshire based clubs, neither expressed any intentions to further develop in number of teams, with Willenhall RUFC stating a lack of space to accommodate and Essington RUFC currently being in a state of consolidation and are not in a position to further increase in number of teams.

Future demand expressed by clubs can be seen in the table below.

Table 5.12: Future demand expressed by clubs (in teams)

Club	Senior male	Senior female	Junior boys	Junior girls	Mini mixed
Aldridge RUFC	-	1	-	-	-
Bloxwich RUFC	1	-	-	-	-
Handsworth RUFC	-	1	-	-	-
Veseyans RUFC	-	-	-	2	-
Walsall RUFC	-	-	-	1	-
Total	1	2	0	3	0

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The peak period

In order to fully establish actual spare capacity, the peak period needs to be established. The peak time for demand of senior rugby pitches is Saturday PM. The peak time for junior and mini teams is Sunday AM, although junior teams also play on senior pitches. Women's and girls' rugby is played on Sunday afternoons.

5.4: Capacity analysis

The capacity for pitches to regularly accommodate competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of a pitch affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of playing rugby. In extreme circumstances, it can result in the inability of a pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times.

To enable an accurate supply and demand assessment of rugby pitches, the following assumptions are applied to the site-by-site and pitch-by-pitch analysis:

- ✦ All sites that are or could be used for competitive rugby matches (regardless of whether this is secured community use) are included on the supply side.
- ✦ All competitive play is on senior sized pitches (except for where mini pitches are provided and known to be used as standard practice).
- ✦ From U13 upwards, teams play 15 v 15 and use a full pitch.
- ✦ Mini teams (U6-U12) play on half of a senior pitch, meaning two matches and four teams can be accommodated at any one time; this means that play per week is set at 0.25 for each match played based on all teams operating on a traditional home and away basis.
- ✦ For senior and youth teams, the current level of play per week is set at 0.5 for each match played based on all teams operating on a traditional home and away basis (assumes half of matches will be played away).
- ✦ Senior men's rugby generally takes place on Saturday afternoons.
- ✦ Senior women's rugby generally takes place on Sunday afternoons.
- ✦ Junior rugby generally takes place on Sunday mornings.
- ✦ Mini rugby generally takes place on Sunday mornings.
- ✦ Unless known otherwise, capacity on school pitches is limited due to internal usage.
- ✦ Training that takes place on marked pitches is reflected by the addition of match equivalent sessions to current usage levels.

As a guide, the RFU has set a standard number of matches that each pitch should be able to accommodate. Capacity is based upon a basic assessment of the drainage system and maintenance programme ascertained through a combination of the quality assessment and the club survey.

This guide should only be used as a very general measure of potential pitch capacity and does not account for specific circumstances at time of use and assumes average rainfall and an appropriate end of season rest and renovation programme.

Table 5.13: Pitch capacity (matches per week) based on quality assessments

Maintenance and drainage type	Maintenance Poor (M0)	Maintenance Adequate (M1)	Maintenance Good (M2)
Natural Inadequate Drainage (D0)	0.5	1.5	2
Natural Adequate Drainage (D1)	1.5	2	3
Pipe Drained (D2)	1.75	2.5	3.25
Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	2	3	3.5

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Capacity is based upon a basic assessment of the drainage system and maintenance programme ascertained through a combination of the quality assessments and consultation. This guide, however, is only a very general measure of potential pitch capacity. It does not account for specific circumstances at time of use and it assumes average rainfall and an appropriate end of season rest and renovation programme.

Please see the table overleaf for the full capacity analysis. Note that pitches that are unavailable for community use have been discounted by means of not distorting the community picture.

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Table 5.14: Rugby union pitches and level of community use

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of pitches	Pitch type	Quality rating	Floodlit?	Match equivalent sessions (per week)	Pitch capacity (Sessions per week)	Capacity rating	Comments
2	Aldridge Rugby Club	Area 2	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D1	Yes	1.5	1.5	0	Two senior pitches that are used by the 1st and 2nd teams for matches and training.
2	Aldridge Rugby Club	Area 2	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D1	No	1.5	1.5	0	As above
3	Aldridge School	Area 2	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D0	No	0.5	0.5	0	The School has one senior pitch that is available for community use but unused. Likely to be used, at least, to capacity via internal use.
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	Area 4	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D1	No	1	2	1	The University has one senior pitch that is available for community use but unused. Match equivalent sessions therefore account for university use only.
8	Barr Beacon School	Area 2	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D1	No	1	1.5	0.5	The School has one senior pitch that is available for community use but unused. Match equivalent sessions therefore account for school use only.
15	Bloxwich Academy	Area 3	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D0	No	0.5	0.5	0	The School has one senior pitch that is available for community use but unused. Likely to be used, at least, to capacity via internal use.
20	Brownhills Ormiston Academy	Area 1	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D0	No	0.5	0.5	0	The School has one senior pitch that is available for community use but unused. Likely to be used, at least, to capacity via internal use.
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	Area 5	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D1	No	1	1.5	0.5	The School has one senior pitch that is available for community use but unused. Match equivalent sessions therefore account for school use only.
36	Handsworth Rugby Club (Charles Lewis Memorial Ground)	Area 4	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D1	Yes	4	2	2	One pitch used for matches and training; 1st, 2nd, and 3 rd men's teams and one female team. Pitch is also used for training by senior teams.
37	Handsworth Rugby Club (Walstead Road)	Area 4	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D1	No	1.25	1.5	0.25	One additional pitch that is primarily used for Sunday morning Academy training sessions as well as the occasional match.
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	Area 3	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D0	No	1.5	0.5	1	Pitches are used by the Club's 1st & 2nd teams for matches and training.
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	Area 3	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D0	No	1	0.5	0.5	The second pitch is used for training only.
52	Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy	Area 1	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D0	No	0.5	0.5	0	The School has one senior pitch that is available for community use but unused. Likely to be used, at least, to capacity via internal use.
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	Area 4	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D0	No	1	1.5	0.5	The School has four senior pitches that are not available for community use. Match equivalent sessions has been accounted for as school use only.
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	Area 4	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D0	No	1	1.5	0.5	As above
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	Area 4	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D0	No	1	1.5	0.5	As above
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	Area 4	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D0	No	1	1.5	0.5	As above
70	Shire Oak Academy	Area 2	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D1	No	1	1.5	0.5	The School has one senior pitch that is available for community use but unused. Match equivalent sessions therefore account for school use only.

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	No. of pitches	Pitch type	Quality rating	Floodlit?	Match equivalent sessions (per week)	Pitch capacity (Sessions per week)	Capacity rating	Comments
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	Area 2	1	Mini	Standard M1 / D0	No	3	1.5	1.5	Pitch is used by minis for training and matches.
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	Area 2	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D0	No	1	1.5	0.5	Pitch is used by club's 1st and 2nd teams for matches.
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	Area 2	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D0	No	1	1.5	0.5	Pitch is used by club's 3 rd and colt's teams for matches
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	Area 2	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D1	Yes	2	2	0	Pitch used for the majority of training activity and some junior matches.
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	Area 2	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D1	Yes	2	2	0	Pitch is used for some training and some junior matches
82	Walsall Academy	Area 3	1	Senior	Poor M0 / D1	No	1	1.5	0.5	The School has one senior pitch that is available for community use but unused. Match equivalent sessions therefore account for school use only.
86	Walsall Rugby Club	Area 4	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D1	Yes	3.5	2	1.5	Pitch is used by the Club's Colts team and five junior teams (u13s-u17s) for matches. Also used by all teams for training including the minis.
86	Walsall Rugby Club	Area 4	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D1	No	2.5	2	0.5	Pitch is used by the Club's 1st, 2nd, and 3rd teams for matches.
129	Essington RUFC	Outside	1	Senior	Standard M1/ D1	No	1.25	2	0.75	Pitch is used for first team and U6, U7 and U8 fixtures
129	Essington RUFC	Outside	1	Senior	Standard M1/ D1	No	1.5	2	0.5	Pitch is used for second team and U9, U10, U11 and U12 fixtures
129	Essington RUFC	Outside	1	Senior	Standard M1/ D1	No	2	2	0	Pitch is used for third team and U13, U15 and colts fixtures.
129	Essington RUFC	Outside	1	Senior	Poor M0 /D1	Yes	4.5	1.5	3	Pitch is used for U14 fixtures and training. Training demand equates to 2 MES for senior rugby and 2 MES for junior training.
130	Willenhall RUFC	Outside	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D1	Yes	0.5	2	1.5	Pitch is used for first team fixtures only.
130	Willenhall RUFC	Outside	1	Senior	Standard M1 / D1	No	1	2	1	Pitch is used for second team and touch rugby fixtures.

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Actual spare capacity

There may be situations where, although a site is highlighted as potentially able to accommodate some additional play, this should not be recorded as actual spare capacity against the site. For example, a site may be managed to regularly operate slightly below full capacity to ensure that it can cater for regular friendly matches and activities that take place but are difficult to quantify on a weekly basis.

Furthermore, there are numerous rugby union pitches in Walsall at education sites that are unused by clubs despite being reported as available. Whilst these may theoretically provide some spare capacity, it would not be reasonable to equate this as actual spare capacity as school usage itself is likely to limit what additional activity should take place on the provision. Moreover, the nature of club rugby generally means that clubs are generally unwilling to utilise secondary venues, making community use unlikely.

In addition, any pitches that are used by clubs to capacity at peak time, that are poor quality or that provide unsecure tenure are not considered to have actual spare capacity. As such, the table below ascertains whether or not any identified 'potential capacity' can be used to accommodate an increase in play, firstly for senior play, on a site-by-site and pitch-by-pitch basis.

Table 5.15: Spare capacity summary

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Potential capacity	Actual spare capacity	Comments
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	Area 4	1	0	Used to capacity at peak time
8	Barr Beacon School	Area 2	0.5	0	Poor quality
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	Area 5	0.5	0	Poor quality
37	Handsworth Rugby Club (Walstead Road)	Area 4	0.25	0.25	Actual spare capacity
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	Area 4	2	2	Unsecure tenure
70	Shire Oak Academy	Area 2	0.5	0.5	Poor quality
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	Area 2	1	1	Actual spare capacity
82	Walsall Academy	Area 3	0.5	0.5	Poor quality

Despite eight sites showing theoretical levels of spare capacity, this is only considered to be actual spare capacity across two sites (Handsworth Rugby Club and Veseyans Sports & Social Club). The stock of provision at the remaining sites is either poor quality or have unsecure tenure.

The actual spare capacity totals 1.25 match equivalent sessions and is split across Area 2 and Area 4.

Table 5.16: Summary of actual spare capacity for senior rugby

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Analysis area	Actual spare capacity (match equivalent sessions)
Area 1	-
Area 2	1
Area 3	-
Area 4	0.25
Area 5	-
Area 6	-
Walsall	1.25

For mini and junior rugby, ascertaining actual spare capacity can be unclear with regards to the programming of matches as it can vary from week to week. This is because junior and mini sections tend to enter cup competitions or play organised friendly fixtures, with clubs arranging for several of their age groups to play those from another club all at once, either at home or away. Then when fixtures are not scheduled, clubs will generally hold training sessions, which means that clubs may require use of home pitches for consecutive weeks, or not at all for the same time period.

Given the above, it is generally assumed that no pitches used by mini or junior teams have significant actual spare capacity for an increase in demand (over and above what actual spare capacity has been identified for senior play). However, it is acknowledged that some capacity does exist during weekend when the pitches are not in use.

In regards to the South Staffordshire based clubs both Essington and Willenhall RUFC have actual spare capacity of 0.5 MES each.

Overplay

There are four sites and six pitches which are overplayed by a total of 7 match equivalent sessions per week, which includes the two senior pitches at Walsall Rugby Club despite the on-site rugby compliant 3G pitch.

It is worth highlighting that when compared to the 2016 PPS, overplay has reduced from 18.5 to 7 MES in the space of six years. Previously Walsall RUFC singlehandedly contributed towards 7.5 MES of overplay at its home site which is now showing 2 MES of overplay. This is caused by the installation of the rugby compliant 3G pitch which also accommodates demand from other clubs within the area. Therefore, the 3G pitch installation has successfully contributed towards reducing overplay within the Borough.

The remaining overplay is on club pitches which have poor quality provision (and therefore a low carrying capacity). In these instances, overplay is due to club training and fixture demand.

Table 5.17: Overplay summary

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Pitch type	No. of pitches	Match sessions
36	Handsworth Rugby Club (Charles Lewis Memorial Ground)	Area 4	Senior	1	2
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	Area 3	Senior	2	1.5
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	Area 2	Mini	1	1.5
86	Walsall Rugby Club	Area 4	Senior	2	2

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The majority of overplay is evident in Area 4, although some is also identified in areas 2 and 3. It totals 7 match equivalent sessions.

For the South Staffordshire clubs, overplay of 3 match equivalent sessions are present Essington RUFC which is largely caused by the concentrated demand on the floodlit training pitch.

Table 5.18: Summary of overplay

Analysis area	Overplay (match equivalent sessions)
Area 1	-
Area 2	1.5
Area 3	1.5
Area 4	4
Area 5	-
Area 6	-
Walsall	7

5.5: Supply and demand analysis

Having considered supply and demand, the table below identifies the overall spare capacity and overplay in each of the analysis areas for rugby union pitches based on match equivalent sessions per week.

Future demand is based on TGRs (population changes) this in turn, does not equate to any formal increases in demand. Note this is the position for senior pitches and does not include identified overplay on mini pitch types/

Table 5.19: Supply and demand analysis of senior grass rugby union pitches in Match equivalent sessions per week

Analysis area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current demand	Future demand	Future total
Area 1	-	-	-	-	-
Area 2	1	-	1	-	1
Area 3	-	1.5	1.5	-	1.5
Area 4	0.25	4	3.75	-	3.75
Area 5	-	-	-	-	-
Area 6	-	-	-	-	-
Walsall	1.25	5.5	4.25	-	4.25

The broad position is that there is an insufficient supply of provision for rugby union to accommodate existing demand, with a current shortfall of 4.25 match equivalent sessions identified. This can be attributed to areas, 3 and 4.

It is worth noting that whilst a shortfall still exists, the current picture is significantly improved from that identified in the 2016 PPS which saw Walsall have a shortfall of 18.5 MES. Therefore, the installation of Walsall RUFC's 3G pitch and various pitch improvements across the Borough have significantly contributed towards a far more improved picture.

Future shortfalls are not expected to be exacerbated through population changes (TGRs).

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Rugby union supply and demand summary

- There is currently an insufficient supply of provision for rugby union to accommodate existing demand, with a shortfall of 4.25 match equivalent sessions identified.
- Future demand (through TGRs) does not exacerbate shortfalls.
- There are four sites and six pitches which are overplayed by a total of 7 match equivalent sessions per week.
- Despite nine sites showing theoretical levels of spare capacity, this is only considered to be actual spare capacity across two sites (Handsworth Rugby Club and Veseyans Sports & Social Club), totalling 1.25 match equivalent sessions.

Rugby union supply summary

- Within Walsall there are 16 sites containing a total of 25 senior and one mini rugby union pitches, of which 14 senior and the mini pitch is available for community use across eight sites.
- All club-based pitches have secure tenure.
- There are 12 senior pitches assessed as standard quality and 14 as poor quality (none are assessed as good quality).
- There is one rugby compliant 3G pitch within Walsall, located at the Walsall RUFC site. The pitch has significantly helped reduce the number of cancellations at the site whilst also supporting training demand for Handsworth, Aldridge and Bloxwich RUFC who all access the site for training purposes.
- Walsall RUFC has renovated half of its clubhouse, it now aspires to move onto phase two and then onto phase three of its project to improve adding storage, club shop, disabled toilets, and referee's changing space.

Rugby union demand summary

- There are five rugby clubs in Walsall: Aldridge RUFC, Bloxwich RUFC, Handsworth RUFC, Veseyans RUFC and Walsall RUFC.
- In total, clubs' field 13 senior men's, one senior women's, 14 junior boys', three junior girls' and 12 mini teams.
- Walsall RUFC trains on the 3G pitch at Walsall Rugby Club, whilst Aldridge, Handsworth and Veseyans rugby clubs train on floodlit training pitches.
- Aldridge RUFC aspires to add floodlights to a second grass pitch.
- Future demand for senior rugby is expressed by Aldridge and Handsworth rugby clubs and amounts to two senior women's teams (one team each), whilst junior girls demand is forecasted to increase by two teams from Veseyans RUFC and one from Walsall RUFC.
- Based on future projections, when calculated at a Borough-wide level, there is potential growth for two additional senior men's, two junior boy's and one junior girls' team. This is then discounted due to no teams are created when broken down by analysis areas.

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PART 6: RUGBY LEAGUE

6.1: Introduction

The Rugby Football League (RFL) is the governing body for rugby league in England. It administers the England national rugby league team, the Challenge Cup, Super League and the championships which form the professional and semi-professional structure of the game in the UK.

Most community club rugby league is played throughout the summer season (from February to October). However, rugby league is also considered as a winter season sport within schools, colleges and universities and therefore pitch provision for matches and training is also required throughout the winter months.

Senior rugby league is played on a field measuring 100 x 68 metres. The preferred pitch size for u7s, u8s and u9s is 60 x 40 metres, whereas for u10s and u11s it is 80 x 30 metres, with U12s and above generally playing on senior pitches. Teams from u7s to u11s are known as primary teams, with teams from u12s to u18s known as junior teams.

6.2: Supply

There are no identified rugby league pitches in Walsall.

There are also no rugby league pitches provided across the four Black Country authorities. The nearest provision is at Kings Norton Rugby Club, in Bromsgrove, where a rugby union pitch doubles up to accommodate Birmingham Bulldogs RLFC.

6.3: Demand

There is insufficient demand identified for rugby league in Walsall to create a specific club/team. In effect, any residual demand from Walsall residents instead will likely travel to form part of the clubs based in other, nearby authorities.

6.4: Supply and demand analysis

As no demand has been identified within Walsall, there is little case for provision to be established. Instead, focus should be placed on ensuring that any demand that does exist can be accommodated within clubs outside of the local authority.

Rugby league – supply and demand summary

- ◆ As no demand has been identified within Walsall, there is no need at this time for any provision to be established.
- ◆ Focus should be placed on ensuring that any demand that does exist can be accommodated within clubs outside of Walsall.

Rugby league – supply summary

- ◆ There are no rugby league pitches in Walsall.
- ◆ The nearest provision is provided in Bromsgrove.

Rugby league – demand summary

- ◆ No demand has been identified for rugby league in Walsall.
- ◆ Any residual need is unlikely to be sufficient enough for a club to be created, with individuals instead likely to travel to form part of the clubs based in Wolverhampton and Bromsgrove.

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PART 7: HOCKEY

7.1: Introduction

Competitive league hockey matches, and training can only be played on sand filled, sand dressed, or water based artificial grass pitches (AGPs). Although competitive, adult, and junior club training cannot take place on 3G pitches, 40mm pitches may be suitable at introductory level, such as school curriculum low level hockey. England Hockey's (EH) Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy details suitability of surface type for varying levels of hockey, as seen below.

Table 7.1: England Hockey guidelines on artificial surface types suitable for hockey

Category	Surface	Playing Level	Playing Level
England Hockey Category 1	Water surface approved within the FIH Global/National Parameters	Essential International Hockey - Training and matches	Desirable Domestic National Premier competition Higher levels of EH Player Pathway Performance Centres and upwards England
England Hockey Category 2	Sand dressed surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	Essential Domestic National Premier competition Higher levels of player pathway: Academy Centres and Upwards	Desirable All adult and junior League Hockey Intermediate or advanced School Hockey EH competitions for clubs and schools (excluding domestic national league)
England Hockey Category 3	Sand based surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	Essential All adult and junior club training and league Hockey EH competitions for clubs and schools Intermediate or advanced schools' hockey	As above
England Hockey Category 4	All 3G surfaces	Essential None	Desirable Lower-level hockey (Introductory level) when no category 1-3 surface is available.

In addition to the above pitch types, EH reports that it is currently trialling a different multi-sport surface in order to better accommodate lower levels of hockey demand on a pitch that is also suitable for other sports such as netball and tennis. The surface type, known as Gen 2¹⁰, is a versatile surface that will ensure that the sports do not need to compromise on the playing experience; it will be a sand dressed synthetic turf with a compatible shock pad.

¹⁰[Link to England Hockey Gen2 surfaces guide](#)

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The concept is designed to provide facilities, including schools, with a dynamic surface which reduces the amount of space required and enables the provision to be utilised to its full potential.

For senior teams, a full-size pitch for competitive matches must measure at least 91.4 x 55 metres excluding surrounding run-off areas, which must be a minimum of two metres at the sides and three metres at the ends. EH's preference is for four-metre side and five-metre end run offs, with a preferred overall area of 101.4 x 63 metres, though a minimum overall area of 97.4 x 59 metres is accepted.

It is considered that a hockey pitch can accommodate a maximum of four matches on one day (peak time) provided the pitch has floodlighting. Training is generally midweek and also requires access to a pitch with floodlights.

Consultation

There are five affiliated hockey clubs identified as playing within Walsall. All five responded to consultation requests, resulting in a response rate of 100%, as shown below.

Table 7.2: hockey club response rate

Club name	Club response?
Aldridge & Walsall HC	Yes
Bloxwich HC	Yes
Streetly HC	Yes
Wednesbury HC	Yes
West Bromwich HC	Yes

Further to this, Aston University provides three teams playing within British University and Colleges leagues (BUCS) on Wednesday afternoons.

7.2: Supply

The audit identifies four hockey suitable AGPs in Walsall, all of which are available for community use and floodlit. Areas 2, 3, 4 and 6 all contain one AGP each; no pitches are located in either Area 1 or Area 5.

Table 7.3: Summary of full-size hockey suitable AGPs

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Analysis area	Floodlit?	Community use?	Size (metres)
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	B43 7AJ	Area 4	Yes	Yes	100 x 70
71	Sneyd Community Association	WS3 2PA	Area 3	Yes	Yes	110 x 70
78	The Streetly Academy	B74 2EX	Area 2	Yes	Yes	100 x 60
92	Willenhall E-Act Academy	WV12 4BD	Area 6	Yes	Yes	98 x 61

Smaller size provision

In addition to the full size AGPs, there are also two smaller sized pitch provided in Walsall, the first of which is at Darlaston Community Association. This is located in Area 5 and measures 68 x 44 metres, although it is not available to the community despite being serviced by floodlights.

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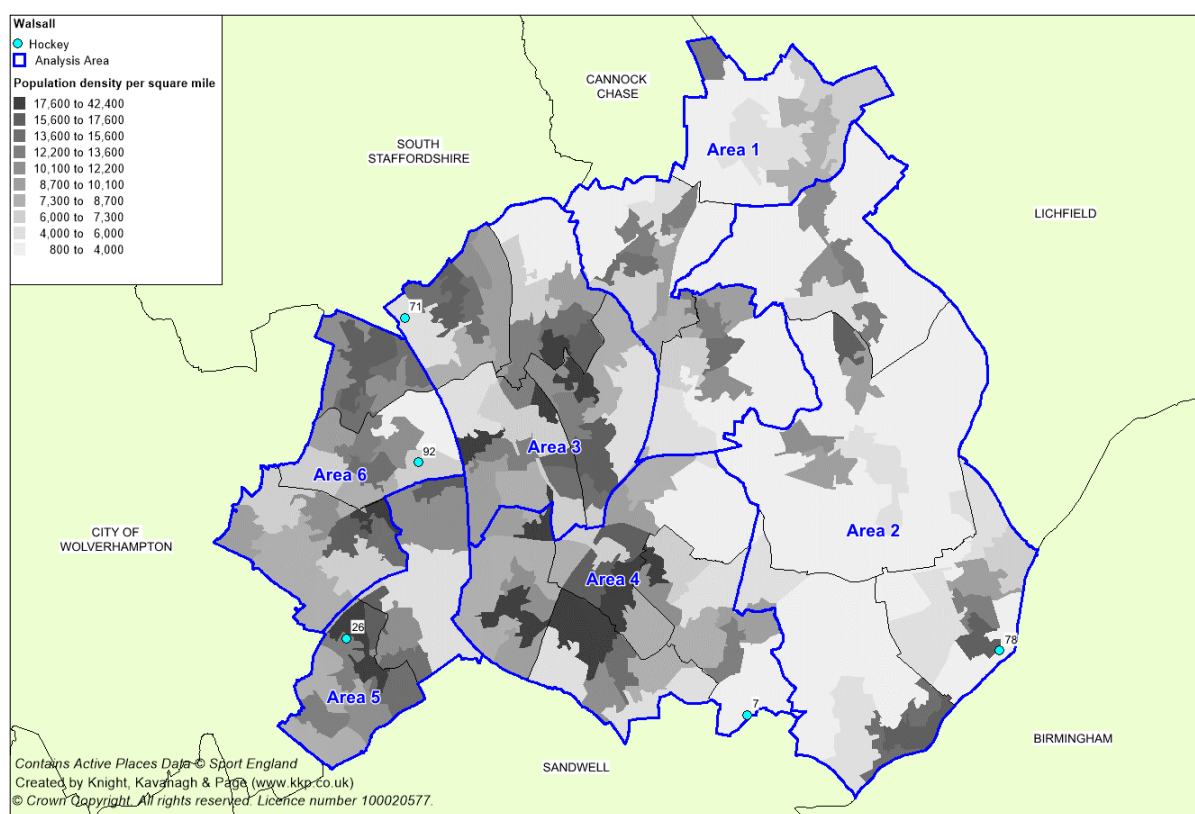
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The latter smaller sized hockey provision is found at Queen Mary's Grammar School which saw the re-surfacing of two netball courts into a sand dressed astro turf the equivalent scale of two tennis courts. The site features no floodlights and is predominantly used for tennis purposes, with Walsall tennis club having ambitions to use this as its new home site.

The smaller sized pitch is considered too small to accommodate any purposeful hockey demand. As such, it has been discounted from this point on.

For the location of the AGPs, regardless of size, please see Figure 7.1 overleaf.

7.1: Location of full-size hockey suitable AGPs in Walsall



Management and ownership

The full-size pitches at Willenhall E-Act Academy and Streetly Academy are operated by the respective schools, whereas provision at Aston University (Recreation Centre) is managed in house by the University. The remaining pitch at Sneyd Community Association is managed by the Community Association on behalf of the Council.

Security of tenure

Streetly HC rents the AGP at The Streetly Academy on an annual basis agreement. As this provider could cease allowing usage at any point beyond a playing season, the Club's usage of the site is deemed to be insecure.

Sneyd Community Association is owned by the Council and run by an overarching community association, of which Bloxwich HC is a long term user of the site. Therefore, it is considered to have secure tenure of this facility even though it only rents the pitch on a yearly basis. The Club has used the site as its home venue for over ten years.

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Bloxwich HC has aspirations to develop an additional hockey pitch at King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich), which it also has secure tenure of through the wider association. The site is currently only used for other sports such as football and rugby union.

The pitch at Aston University (Recreation Centre) is used by Aldridge & Walsall HC and West Bromwich HC. Aldridge & Walsall HC's usage is deemed to be secure due to having a three-year agreement in place; however, West Bromwich HC only has an annual agreement in place, meaning its use is unsecure.

Wednesbury HC utilises the provision at Willenhall E-Act Academy, although this is considered to be unsecure as no long-term agreement is in place. Consultation with England Hockey has highlighted the governing body is working towards making the link between the Club and site more secure.

Availability

Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) applies an overall peak period for AGPs of 34 hours per week (Monday to Thursday 17:00-21:00; Friday 17:00-19:00; Saturday and Sunday 09:00-17:00).

Of the AGPs available for community use in Walsall, the pitch at Sneyd Community Association (Sports) is fully available during the peak period, although most of the availability is taken up internally via other sports, predominately football.

The pitch at Willenhall E-Act Academy is available for the least amount of time within the peak period (27 hours). This is mainly down to the School closing early on Sundays where it is unavailable from 15:00.

The AGPs at Aston University (Recreation Centre) and The Streetly Academy are both available for 29 hours per week within the peak period. This is reduced from full availability as the pitch is reserved for internal usage until 18:00 on weekdays.

Table 7.5: Availability of full-size hockey suitable AGPs

Site ID	Site	Availability in the peak period (hours)	Comments
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	29	Available to the community from 18:00 until 22:00 Mondays to Fridays and from 09:00 until 17:30 Saturdays and Sundays.
71	Sneyd Community Association	34	Available for use until 22:00 on all weekdays and from 09:00 until 18:00 Saturdays and Sundays
78	The Streetly Academy	29	Reserved for school use during the week until 17:00, then available to the community from 18:00 until 22:00 on Mondays to Fridays and from 09:00 until 17:00 on Saturdays and Sundays.
92	Willenhall E-Act Academy	27	Reserved for school use during the week until 17:30, then available to the community from 18:00 until 22:00 on Mondays to Fridays and from 09:00 until 17:00 on Saturdays and from 09:00 until 15:00 Sundays.

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Quality

Depending on use, it is considered that the carpet of an AGP usually lasts for approximately ten years, and it is the age of the surface, together with maintenance levels, that most commonly affects quality. An issue for hockey nationally is that many providers did not financially plan to replace the carpet when first installed.

The following table indicates when each of the full size AGPs within Walsall were installed or last resurfaced, together with an agreed quality rating. As seen, the pitch at Sneyd Community Association has significantly exceeded its estimated lifespan and is assessed as poor quality. The pitches at Aston University (Recreation Centre) and The Streetly Academy are six and nine years old, respectively, and are assessed as standard. The pitch at Willenhall-E-Act Academy has been resurfaced this year (2022).

Table 7.6: Summary of full-size AGP quality

Site ID	Site	Year installed/ resurfaced	Quality
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	2015	Standard
71	Sneyd Community Association	2005	Poor
78	The Streetly Academy	2012	Standard
92	Willenhall E-Act Academy	2005/2022	Good

The pitch at Sneyd Community Association was re-dressed in 2021 but not resurfaced and the owners of the site was told that it had 12 months of play left on it. The surface is reported to be slippery and hazardous and match reports from opposition captains support this notion.

The Streetly Academy reports that its focus is on regular maintenance to prolong its surface and to minimise damage. In addition, the School has plans to upgrade the floodlighting as this has not been done since the pitch was first installed in 1999.

Whilst the pitch at Aston University is assessed as adequate quality, it must be noted that the AGP is used heavily for university, club and social play. As such, the pitch needs to be maintained regularly to minimise any damage and to sustain quality.

Ancillary provision

Changing facilities at Willenhall E-Act Academy, which is used by Wednesbury HC, is reported to be of standard quality, although no social space is offered. The Club was based at Wednesbury Old Union until this closed down three years ago, with it now using Homestead Pub instead.

Similarly, Streetly HC accesses Streetly Sports Club as its clubhouse, with The Streetly Academy only providing changing facilities.

Aldridge & Walsall and West Bromwich hockey clubs both use Aston University for changing facilities and both are satisfied with the quality. In terms of a clubhouse, West Bromwich HC uses space available at the University, whereas Aldridge & Walsall HC is based at Aldridge Stick & Wicket and is happy with this arrangement.

Bloxwich HC accesses changing facilities at Sneyd Leisure Centre. However, it can only access the changing rooms that service the onsite swimming pool, which is less than ideal due to size.

7.3: Demand

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The five hockey clubs playing in Walsall consist of 34 teams, with as a breakdown equates to 16 senior men's, six senior women's and nine junior teams as well as three other teams. These consist of masters (veterans), badgers (mixture of juniors and adults) and mixed gender teams.

All five clubs' field multiple teams, with Bloxwich HC being a particular large club. However, Aldridge & Walsall, Wednesbury and West Bromwich hockey clubs currently only provide senior teams.

A summary of demand, by club, is shown in the table below.

Table 7.7: Summary of demand in teams

Name of club	Senior men	Senior women	Junior	Other	Total no. of members
Aldridge & Walsall HC	4	1	-	-	105
Bloxwich HC	3	4	8	1	172
Streetly HC	3	1	1	-	122
Wednesbury HC	3	-	-	1	76
West Bromwich HC	3	-	-	1	75
Walsall	16	6	9	3	550

As seen, across the clubs there are 550 playing members, which is an increase of 140 members when compared to demand three years ago. However, this has not necessarily manifested itself via an increase in teams, with the exception of Bloxwich HC.

When compared to the 2016 PPS, the overall number of teams has decreased by one from 35 to 34 meaning demand has largely stayed the same. However, the distribution of the number of teams has altered somewhat with the number of senior teams decreasing, whereas junior demand has grown by four teams.

Aldridge & Walsall Hockey Club

Aldridge & Walsall HC currently fields a total of five teams, consisting of four men's and one women's team. There are no junior sides currently, though some junior members play in the open aged men's sides. The Club reports that the number of teams has decreased recently due to losing some junior members and therefore its goal is to sustain team levels and grow, if possible.

University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Site) was previously used as the Club's home venue; however, it has since relocated to Aston University (Recreation Centre) due to the conversion of the full-size pitch to 3G. The Club states that this was detrimental to its youth section, with social aspects also being impacted upon.

The Club relocated all its demand to Aston University (Recreation Centre), with its teams having priority for two Saturday slots. This does not always provide sufficient capacity, depending on how the fixtures are set out, at which point it requires access to a slot otherwise reserved for West Bromwich HC.

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As for training demand, this also takes place at Aston University (Recreation Centre), with the men's and women's squads training on site on a Monday from 20:00 until 22:00. This taking place on a Monday is not seen as preferable due to it not allowing for sufficient rest after a match weekend and due to it being a considerable time away from the next match. The Club would therefore like more reasonable time slots, but states that this is not currently possible due to the presence of West Bromwich HC as well as football users.

Junior hockey takes place on Sunday morning for an hour each week.

Bloxwich Hockey Club

Bloxwich HC currently has three senior men's, four senior women's, eight junior and one badgers' team. Matches are played at Sneyd Community Association on both Saturdays and Sundays, with all capacity on both days taken up by the Club. Training takes place every Tuesday evening.

The pitch at Sneyd Community Association reportedly has no additional capacity and this is slightly hindering the Club as it also aspires to host regular walking hockey sessions, albeit a recent trial was unsuccessful. This links to the Club's aspiration of developing an additional pitch at King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich).

The Club are in discussions with Willenhall E-Act Academy as a potential replacement site given the nearby location of the clubhouse. This therefore further emphasises the need to re-surface the current pitch at Willenhall E-Act.

The Club has seen considerable growth in recent years.

Streetly Hockey Club

Streetly HC currently fields three senior men's, three senior women's and one junior team. All its match play and training demand is accommodated on the pitch at The Streetly Academy, with training takes place across Tuesdays and Wednesdays and matches taking place on Saturdays. The Club states that it is happy with its current arrangements.

The Club has tried to increase team numbers through hosting Back to Hockey sessions and is open to additional growth. Its junior membership has risen significantly in recent years.

Wednesbury Hockey Club

Wednesbury HC has three senior men's and one badgers' team. It previously also had a fourth senior men's team, though this has now been disbanded due to the loss of members and the Covid-19 pandemic having an impact.

In addition to its formal demand, the Club also hosts an informal girls training session. However, there are currently an insufficient number of members to formalise it and create a team from it. The Club's focus is very much on juniors where it is aiming to grow this side of the organisation.

All demand takes place on the pitch supplied at Willenhall E-Act Academy, with all four teams playing home fixtures here in addition to training demand. Training takes place on Wednesday evenings where the juniors and adults all train together, although there are also junior training sessions held on Saturday mornings when no fixtures are arranged.

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The Club states that it is happy with its current setup, despite previously accessing RSA Academy in Sandwell before it was resurfaced to 3G in 2013. It considers itself to be a Sandwell-based club but would now prefer to remain in Walsall.

West Bromwich Hockey Club

West Bromwich HC has three men's and one badger's team, though previously it had a fourth men's and a women's team. The Club uses Aston University (Recreation Centre) for matches and training but previously it played all its competitive matches at George Salter Academy in Sandwell. It was forced to relocate out of the area when this pitch was converted to a 3G surface.

Matches for the Club's teams take place on Saturday where they have a time slot from 10:00 until 14:30. As for training demand, its senior teams train for two hours a week on Tuesday evenings, whereas the juniors train for one hour on Saturday mornings.

The hockey club states that it is happy in relation to its training and match slots. However, there could be some capacity issues in the future as it has plans to expand team numbers. It also states that if there are any pitches of a similar or better quality which become available in Sandwell then it would relocate back out of Walsall.

England Hockey state desires to relocate West Bromwich HC back into Sandwell, given the clubs name, historical location and present issues with pitch allocation. This would in turn enable greater room for growth for both the Club and Aldridge and Walsall HC who currently share the provision available at Aston University (Recreation Centre).

Imported/exported demand

As alluded to above, both Wednesbury HC and West Bromwich HC import their demand into Walsall from Sandwell.

West Bromwich HC previously played all its competitive matches at George Salter Academy in Sandwell, before being forced to relocate when it was converted to a 3G surface. This resulted in it moving to Walsall due to a lack of capacity on remaining Sandwell pitches and due to Aston University (Recreation Centre) providing a better-quality pitch than any alternative. However, it would prefer to play within Sandwell if a comparable offer was provided.

Wednesbury HC is also imported into Walsall from Sandwell following the resurfacing of its previous home pitch at RSA Academy to a 3G surface. However, unlike West Bromwich HC, it has no desire to move back and is reportedly happy and well provided for at Willenhall E-Act Academy.

Latent demand

Bloxwich HC is said to be at capacity and limited by existing facilities. The Club believes that it could cater for additional senior and junior teams if a second full-size AGP was available to it.

Future demand

All hockey clubs in Walsall have plans to increase their membership, with West Bromwich HC reporting that it is in a position to add one senior men's team, one senior women's team and one junior team to its club.

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Bloxwich HC has aspirations to increase its demand in line with the latent demand expressed above. However, it is in a predicament with there being no more capacity at its current venue to be able to accommodate additional teams.

Aldridge & Walsall, Wednesbury, and Streetly Hockey clubs report aspirations to grow their junior sections, although neither quantify potential increases in terms of team numbers.

In addition to the above, growing participation is a key aim within EH's Strategic Plan and key drivers include working with clubs, universities, and schools, working with regional and local leagues, developing opportunities for over 40s and delivering a quality programme of competition. Overall, it has an aim to double participation over the next ten years.

Hockey Heroes

Hockey Heroes is a six-week hockey programme aimed at beginners (children aged five to eight) that not only focuses on helping children develop some physical hockey skills such as dribbling, passing and goal scoring, but also places as much emphasis on character development including teamwork, communication, perseverance, and respect.

There is one Hockey Heroes sessions which operate in Walsall, ran by Aldridge & Walsall HC. Apart from this the next nearest course is nine miles away in Birmingham where Barford Tigers HC conduct sessions at Craythorne Avenue.

Back to Hockey

Back to Hockey sessions are fun, social, and informal and are aimed at people who either have not played for a number of years or that are looking to play for the first time. They are generally hosted by clubs, with EH providing guidance on how to deliver the programme.

Benefits of clubs being involved include:

- ◀ More members
- ◀ More casual players
- ◀ Additional income
- ◀ Extra publicity
- ◀ New volunteers

There are two clubs which host Back to Hockey sessions that operate in Walsall. The two clubs which host these sessions are Aldridge & Walsall and Streetly hockey clubs.

Peak time demand

For matches, senior hockey activity in Walsall typically takes place on a Saturday, whereas junior activity occurs on a Sunday. For training, peak time is midweek evenings, although preference is generally given for Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Usage

There is significant use of hockey suitable AGPs in Walsall, not only for hockey but also for other activities, most notably football. whether that be through formal training or via informal social use. In particular, this is a key issue at Aston University (Recreation Centre) and Senyd Community Association.

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All of the available pitches are in current use for hockey purposes, although the level varies from site to site. Aston University (Recreation Centre) and Sneyd Community Association are both heavily used, whereas The Streetly Academy and Willenhall E-Act Academy receive less demand from the clubs. As such, some spare capacity exists at these sites for an increase in demand.

The table overleaf summarises the usage of full-size hockey suitable pitches within Walsall, comparing availability against hockey use and other activity as well as taking into consideration any remaining spare capacity.

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Table 7.8: Usage of full-size hockey suitable AGPs

Site ID	Site name	Availability in the peak period (hours) ¹¹	% of hockey usage	% of other usage (e.g. football)	Comments	Capacity for hockey
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	29	45%	55%	Used by West Bromwich and Aldridge & Walsall hockey clubs. The demand from the former is due to the full size AGP at George Salter Academy in Sandwell being converted to 3G. The pitch does also get usage from football clubs for training midweek.	At capacity for matches and training.
71	Sneyd Community Association	34	60%	40%	The pitch is used by Bloxwich HC. All capacity at peak time for the weekend is taken up by the Club as well as two hours on Tuesdays. The Club want more hours for training but is unable to do so due to football users.	At capacity for matches and training.
78	The Streetly Academy	29	35%	45%	Used by Streetly HC for matches and for two weekly training sessions on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Remaining capacity taken up by football, although some availability remains, especially at weekends. Possibility for one slot available on Saturday.	Spare capacity for matches and training
92	Willenhall E-Act Academy	27	30%	40%	Used by Wednesbury HC where it has access all day on Saturday for training and matches. It also accesses this pitch midweek on Wednesday from 6.30-8pm. The provision is also accessed by football users, but capacity remains for increases.	Spare capacity for matches and training

¹¹ Based on data from Sport England's Active Places

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7.4: Supply and demand analysis

It is suggested that a floodlit pitch is able to accommodate four match equivalent sessions on a Saturday. With teams playing on a home and away format, this equates to one AGP being able to cater for eight 'home' teams (one team requires 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week on its 'home' AGP).

Based on the above, with 22 senior teams currently playing in Walsall, there is a need for three full size pitches (rounded up from 2.75), with four community available pitches currently being provided. When accounting for future demand, the requirement for provision increases to 3.25 pitches.

Table 7.9: Capacity analysis of AGPs for hockey at senior peak time (Saturdays) in Match equivalent sessions (per week)

Current demand	Current carrying capacity	Current position	Future demand	Future carrying capacity
11	16	5	2	3

For junior hockey matches, the need for pitches is generally less than it is for senior hockey. This is because younger age groups can play on half a pitch (meaning two fixtures can take place at one time) and because there are also significantly fewer junior teams in Walsall than there are senior teams. As such, a stock of pitches sufficient for senior demand is also likely to be sufficient for junior demand.

With four full size pitches currently provided, it is suggested in the table above that there is currently sufficient provision to cater for match play demand. However, when analysing capacity on a club-by-club and site-by-site basis, it is clear that this is not actually the case, particularly for Bloxwich HC at Sneyd Community Association and Aldridge & Walsall HC and West Bromwich HC at Aston University (Recreation Centre).

Table 7.10: Current capacity analysis site by site in Match equivalent sessions (per week)

Site	Current demand	Current carrying capacity	Current position	Future demand	Future carrying capacity
Aston University (Recreation Centre)	4	4	0	1	1
Sneyd Community Association	3.5	4	0.5	1	0.5
The Streetly Academy	2	4	2	-	2
Willenhall E-Act Academy	1.5	4	2.5	-	2.5

In addition, some of the pitches with potential spare capacity are not actually fully available for further use due to quality issues and/or because of football demand. This also means that training demand may not be able to be adequately catered for, even if match play demand can be.

Conclusion

Based on existing demand, it is clear that all four of the community available full size AGPs require protection for continued hockey use as it is not considered feasible for the clubs that use such provision to amalgamate onto a lesser number of pitches. To that end, quality should be sustained or improved across the sites to ensure they remain useable for the long-term future and security of tenure issues require addressing.

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All clubs playing within Walsall have unsecure tenure due to accessing education or council sites on short term leases. This is an issue for the area as it results in clubs being unable to access necessary funding for aspects such as improving pitch quality which has already been identified as an issue for the area.

Hockey supply and demand summary

- ◀ All four of the community available full size AGPs require protection for continued hockey use.
- ◀ Resolving pitch quality issues at Sneyd Community Association (Sports) and Willenhall E-Act Academy should be seen as a priority.
- ◀ Capacity issues at Sneyd Community Association and Aston University (Recreation Centre) require a resolution, with club users either requiring access to secondary pitches (at suitable times), or new provision. Alternatively, football demand at the two aforementioned sites could be alleviated by the development of a new 3G which would in turn free up greater pitch access for hockey purposes.

Hockey supply summary

- ◀ There are four full size hockey suitable AGPs in Walsall, all of which are available to the community and floodlit.
- ◀ There is one smaller size pitch at Darlaston Community Association; however, this is unavailable to the community and is not of a sufficient size to accommodate purposeful demand.
- ◀ The full-size pitches at Willenhall E-Act Academy and Streetly Academy are operated by the respective schools, whereas provision at Aston University (Recreation Centre) is managed in house by the University.
- ◀ The remaining pitch at Sneyd Community Association is managed by the Community Association on behalf of the Council.
- ◀ Streetly HC is without security of tenure at The Streetly Academy, as are West Bromwich HC at Aston University (Recreation Centre) and Wednesbury HC at Willenhall E-Act Academy.
- ◀ The pitches at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy are assessed as poor quality and have considerably exceeded their expected lifespans.
- ◀ The pitches at Aston University (Recreation Centre) and The Streetly Academy are assessed as standard quality.
- ◀ The majority of pitches are only accompanied by changing facilities rather than social space, leading many of the clubs to access off-site venues for clubhouse provision.

Hockey demand summary

- ◀ The five hockey clubs in Walsall consist of 34 teams, which as a breakdown consists of 16 senior men's, six senior women's and nine junior teams as well as three other team varieties.
- ◀ Membership of the clubs has increased over the previous three years.
- ◀ Each club has plans to increase their membership, whilst Bloxwich HC expresses latent demand.
- ◀ Aldridge & Walsall HC holds Hockey Heroes sessions.
- ◀ Aldridge & Walsall and Streetly hockey clubs both hosts Back to Hockey sessions in the Borough.
- ◀ There is significant use of the AGPs for other activities, most notably in terms of football whether that be through formal training or via informal social use.
- ◀ Aston University (Recreation Centre) and Sneyd Community Association are currently operating at capacity for matches and training, whilst some capacity exists at Streetly Academy and Willenhall E-Act Academy.

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PART 8: TENNIS

8.1: Introduction

The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is the organisation responsible for the governance of tennis and administers the sport locally across Walsall. It has recently restructured its strategic approach to target several national focus areas, with a priority on developing the sport at park sites.

Consultation

There are three tennis clubs in Walsall. Walsall TC and Streetly TC responded to consultation requests, whereas Reedswood TC has been unresponsive. This equates to a response rate of 67%. Despite Streetly TC being located slightly outside of the borough, the Club have been consulted with and included throughout this report given their historic affiliation to the area.

8.2: Supply

There are 63 tennis courts identified in Walsall across 20 sites, with 41 of the courts categorised as being available for community use at 14 sites. The remaining 22 courts are based at education sites.

Most courts available for community use are located in Area 4 (17), whilst no community available courts are present in Area 5.

Table 8.1: Summary of the number of courts by analysis area

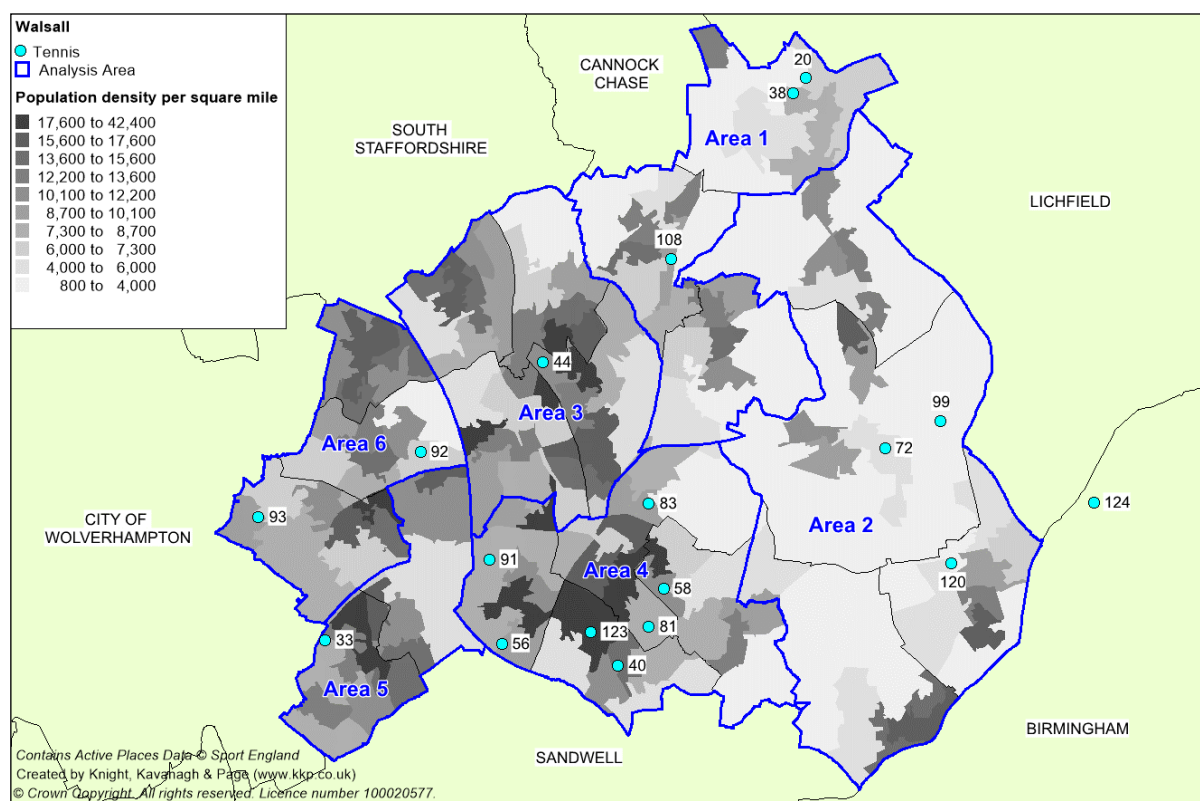
Analysis area	No. of courts available for community use	No. of courts unavailable for community use
Area 1: Brownhills / Pelsall / Rushall / Shelfield	4	4
Area 2: Aldridge / Streetly / Pheasey / Walsall Wood	16	6
Area 3: Bloxwich / Blakenall / Birchills / Leamore	2	-
Area 4: St. Matthew's / Paddock / Palfrey / Pleck	17	13
Area 5: Darlaston / Bentley	-	4
Area 6: Willenhall / Short Heath	2	3
Walsall	41	22

Please note that courts are classified as being available for community use provided that they are deemed to be easily accessible to the general population, either via pay and play or through a membership at a club (or a mixture of both).

Figure 8.1 shows the location of the courts servicing Walsall, regardless of community use. For a key to the map, see Table 8.2.

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Figure 8.1: Location of tennis courts in Walsall



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Table 8.2: Tennis courts in Walsall

ID	Site name	Postcode	Analysis area	Ownership	Community use?	No. of courts	Floodlit?	Court type	Court quality
20	Brownhills Ormiston Academy	WS8 7QG	Area 1	School	No	4	No	Macadam	Standard
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	WS10 8QJ	Area 5	School	No	4	Yes	Macadam	Standard
38	Holland Park	WS8 6HU	Area 1	Council	Yes	2	No	Macadam	Poor
40	Joseph Leckie Academy Playing Fields	WS5 4NW	Area 4	School	No	3	No	Macadam	Standard
44	Leamore Park	WS3 1HF	Area 3	Council	Yes	2	No	Macadam	Poor
56	Pleck Park	WS2 9AG	Area 4	Council	Yes	2	No	Macadam	Poor
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	WS1 2PG	Area 4	School	No	2	No	Macadam	Standard
72	St Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College	WS9 0RN	Area 2	School	No	6	No	Macadam	Standard
78	The Streetly Academy	B74 2EX	Area 2	School	Yes	3	No	Macadam	Standard
81	University Of Wolverhampton (Walsall Site)	WS1 3BD	Area 4	School	Yes	4	No	Macadam	Standard
83	Walsall Arboretum	WS1 2QB	Area 4	Council	Yes	2	No	Macadam	Poor
91	West Walsall E-Act Academy	WS2 9UA	Area 4	School	Yes	8	Yes	Artificial	Standard
92	Willenhall E-Act Academy	WV12 4BD	Area 6	School	No	3	Yes	Macadam	Standard
93	Willenhall Memorial Park	WV13 3DD	Area 6	Council	Yes	2	No	Macadam	Poor
99	Fairlawns Club	WS9 0NU	Area 2	Commercial	Yes	2	No	Macadam	Good
108	Pelsall Community Centre	WS3 4BQ	Area 1	Council	Yes	2	No	Macadam	Poor
120	Blackwood Park	B74 3PH	Area 2	Council	Yes	1	No	Macadam	Poor
123	Palfrey Park	WS1 4AH	Area 4	Council	Yes	1	No	Macadam	Standard
124	Streetly Tennis Club	B74 4PT	Area 2	Club	Yes	9	Yes	Artificial	Standard
124	Streetly Tennis Club	B74 4PT	Area 2	Club	Yes	1	No	Artificial	Standard

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Future supply

In 2018, Walsall TC was forced from its home venue which it accessed on a lease arrangement from a private landowner. The site was subject to a planning application however it was not approved, due to the need to mitigate the loss of the courts. The Club has become nomadic and can only compete in competitions on an “away” basis. This means that its survival is ultimately underpinned by opponent clubs being accommodating of this.

Given the above, Walsall TC has now prepared a fully costed business plan for the development and ongoing maintenance of five tennis courts. It is searching for an appropriate location but has thus far been unable to find a suitable site.

Management and security of tenure.

The table below highlights the management of tennis courts within Walsall. The majority are operated by schools, although only 41% of these are available for community use.

Table 8.3: Number of tennis courts by management type

Community use	Club	Council ¹²	Education	Other
Available	10	14	15	2
Unavailable	-	-	22	-
Total	10	14	37	2

A total of ten courts are managed by clubs, with all ten of these provided at Streetly Tennis Club. The Club has freehold of these courts.

Reedswood TC is known to access the courts at West Walsall E-Act Academy; however, under what agreement is unclear as the Club has not been responsive to consultation requests. Further exploration is therefore required.

Court type

Most outdoor tennis courts in Walsall have a macadam surface, with 45 being of this type and 23 of these being available for community use. The estimated lifespan of a macadam court is 10 years, depending on levels of use and maintenance levels. To ensure courts can continued to be used beyond this time frame, it is recommended that a sinking fund is put into place for eventual refurbishment.

A total of 18 of the remaining courts have an artificial surface, with 10 of these provided at Streetly Tennis Club and eight at West Walsall E-Act Academy.

Floodlighting

Floodlit courts enable use throughout the year and are identified by the LTA as being a key priority for growing participation nationally. The LTA reports that floodlights allow for a 35% increase in available court time on an annual basis.

¹² Includes parish/town council courts.

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In Walsall, 24 of the 63 tennis courts are serviced by floodlights, representing 38% of the provision. The floodlit courts are located at:

- ◀ Grace Academy Darlaston
- ◀ West Walsall E-Act Academy
- ◀ Willenhall E-Act Academy
- ◀ Streetly Tennis Club

A lack of floodlighting at many of the school sites presents a key reason as to why many of the courts are unavailable for community use. Many providers traditionally state that making them available for lettings would not be financially viable as usage would be limited, although the LTA does offer solutions to help overcome this i.e. Clubspark and Gate Access (detailed further on).

Access to floodlit courts is considered particularly key for clubs as it allows for more usage of provision, which in turns can help accommodate more members. To that end, it must be noted both Reedswood TC and Streetly TC have access to floodlit provision (Walsall TC of course does not). However, Streetly TC identifies an aspiration need to replace its floodlights with an LED offering to reduce its carbon footprint and to reduce light pollution in its locality.

It is worth noting that University of Wolverhampton has been subject to a planning application for refurbishment for erection of floodlights, fencing and seating for the courts provided at the Walsall site. This has been done with a focus on serving netball demand, however will also apply to the tennis courts.

Over markings

Tennis courts, particularly within schools, are often over marked by netball, basketball and/or football courts. Courts which are over marked tend to receive higher levels of use which can be detrimental to quality over time, as well as creating capacity issues if there is community demand from more than one sport.

In Walsall, 31 courts are over marked by netball provision, with the majority of these located at school sites where curriculum activity makes this necessary. For more information, see Part 8 of this report.

Quality

The quality of tennis courts has been informed through non-technical site assessments and consultation with providers to assign each court a rating of good, standard or poor. Key aspects informing the findings include surface quality, grip underfoot, line marking quality, evenness and evidence of inappropriate use (e.g. vandalism and/or littering).

- ◀ Good
- ◀ Standard
- ◀ Poor

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows: Good (>80%), Standard (70-80%), Poor (<70%).

For the full assessment criteria, please refer to Appendix 2.

Of the courts in Walsall, a large proportion (21%) are assessed as poor quality, whilst very few (3%) are assessed as good quality.

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That being said, all of the good quality courts are available for community use, whereas less than half of the standard and poor-quality courts are.

Table 8.4: Quality of community available tennis courts

Community use?	Good	Standard	Poor
Available	2	25	13
Unavailable	-	23	-
Total	2	48	13

The courts assessed as poor quality are located at the following sites:

- ◆ Blackwood Park
- ◆ Holland Park
- ◆ Leamore Park
- ◆ Pelsall Community Centre
- ◆ Pleck Park
- ◆ Walsall Arboretum
- ◆ Willenhall Memorial Park

Issues surrounding these courts include poor grip underfoot, worn line markings and loose gravel, with maintenance also considered to be basic and infrequent at most of the sites, leading to further deterioration in quality.

All of the sites containing poor quality courts are operated by the Council. Improving such courts is currently a national priority for the LTA, with a focus on suitable sites that cater for high levels of recreational demand or that have the potential to do so. This is especially the case if the provision is serviced (or could be serviced) by changing facilities and floodlighting, whereby a sustainable tennis programme could be supported.

In contrast to the poor-quality courts, the courts at Fairlawns Club are assessed as good quality. This is considered to be a direct result of the courts being maintained regularly.

All courts in use by clubs (at Streetly Tennis Club and West Walsall E-Act Academy) are assessed as standard quality, which is not ideal given the level and quantity of demand received. At Streetly Tennis Club, the Club plans to resurface two of its older courts in the near future.

Ancillary provision

The clubhouse servicing Streetly TC is considered to be good quality due to extensive refurbishment that the Club has recently undertaken. The Club does, however, cite an issue with car parking, noting that spaces are limited. This results in street parking, which can cause issues with neighbours at busy times.

For Reedswood TC, it is unclear whether it has access to ancillary provision at West Walsall E-Act Academy.

In relation to non-club courts, ancillary provision is generally considered to be problematic. Whilst most sites do provide changing facilities and/or toilets, they are not specific for tennis and are generally too far away from the courts to be realistically used. Often, the facilities predominately service football/cricket pitch users and therefore are not readily available or suited to tennis court users. In some instances, quality is also poor.

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Insight from the LTA indicates good quality ancillary facilities such as toilets, changing rooms and cafes encourage players to visit community available provision and stay for extended periods of time. Therefore, a potential way to increase usage of such provision would be to invest in suitable ancillary amenities, which can then also provide a source of income.

8.3: Demand

It is reported that demand for tennis provision during the Covid-19 pandemic has increased substantially compared to prior levels when court restrictions have not been in place (potentially linked to tennis being one of the first sports to be allowed to resume). This should therefore be monitored moving forward to ensure that any growth can be accommodated for if the increases are sustained.

Competitive tennis

There are three tennis clubs in Walsall, with known membership details displayed in the table below. Streetly TC is one of the larger clubs in the Black Country region with 600 members.

Table 8.5: Summary of tennis club demand

Club	No. of senior members	No. of junior members
Reedwood TC	Unknown	Unknown
Streetly TC	400	200
Walsall TC	51	7

Participation trends

Streetly TC states that its senior membership has increased over recent years, with its senior section increasing by 50 members and its junior section increasing by 30. It predominately attributes this to organic growth but notes a further uplift following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.

Conversely, Walsall TC reports that its number of senior and junior members has decreased substantially recently as it previously had up to 133 seniors and 65 juniors. The Club apportions this solely on members leaving following the loss of the Club's home venue.

Latent/unmet demand

Latent demand for tennis nationally is reported to be high by the LTA, which has an insight tool that suggests that 18% of the five million players that pick up a racket each year would play more often if key barriers such as poor promotion of opportunities to get on court, unclear booking journeys (especially those that are 'offline') and low-quality facilities were addressed. As such, there is a potential opportunity in Walsall for the Council and other providers to address such barriers, whilst also bettering understanding of court usage.

Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables analysis of 'the percentage of adults that would like to participate in tennis but 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies latent demand of 4,180 people within Walsall, which is below the figures for Dudley (5,375 people) and Sandwell (4,852 people), but above the figure for Wolverhampton (3,933 people).

In relation to clubs, neither Streetly TC nor Walsall TC report any latent demand, although the latter is obviously limited by not having a home venue.

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Future demand

Walsall TC reports future growth aspirations, with total future demand amounting to 105 potential additional members (70 senior and 35 junior). This is due to it expecting to grow to previous levels once a home venue is secured.

In contrast, currently, Streetly TC does not have any ambitions to grow its membership.

Table 8.7: Summary of future tennis club demand

Club	No. of senior members	No. of junior members
Reedwood TC	Unknown	Unknown
Streetly TC	-	-
Walsall TC	70	35
Total	70	35

Anecdotally, the LTA suggests that the above aspirations are modest in relation to its own expectations, which it primarily bases on its insight tools. The levels of latent and unmet demand it identifies is significantly higher, suggesting that future growth may exceed club ambitions. However, such demand is also likely to include demand outside of the club-environment.

Informal tennis

It is considered that all local authority courts available for community use in Walsall have spare capacity for a growth in demand, although this is difficult to quantify as use is not always recorded due to the open access nature of many sites. Most of the current use is assumed to take place throughout the summer months although it is also accepted that many courts are accessed unofficially for activities unrelated to tennis.

The LTA has developed a package of support for local authorities to grow the use of tennis courts by removing key barriers to participation. The three products are ClubSpark, Rally and Gate Access, which are further detailed below. In Walsall, these are utilised at the following venues:

- ◆ Blackwood Park
- ◆ Holland Park
- ◆ Palfrey Park
- ◆ Pelsall Village Common
- ◆ Walsall Arboretum
- ◆ Leamore Park
- ◆ Pleck Park
- ◆ Streetly Tennis Club
- ◆ West Walsall E-Act Academy
- ◆ Willenhall Memorial Park

In relation to education providers, only West Walsall E-Act Academy has any known regular demand from the community for tennis, linked to it hosting Reedwood TC. It is believed by the rest that a lack of demand is a direct result of quality issues and/or a lack of floodlighting, as well as other courts being available for free. This results in the community being less likely to pay a hire charge for their provision.

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ClubSpark – Improving the booking process

ClubSpark is a flexible and simple venue management platform with multiple products and applications to help venues, local authorities and coaches manage their sport. ClubSpark is a tool that is offered for free as part of LTA venue registration and allows administrators to manage all functions at their venue(s), including:

- ✦ Managed website - create and manage a mobile friendly website tailored to LA/club requirements to promote events and activities.
- ✦ Managed coaching – set up coaching lessons and courses online.
- ✦ Membership management - improve membership engagement by making it easier for the venue and for members to pay, renew and keep in touch (includes online payments, direct debits, and the monitoring of revenue streams; membership modules can also be used to take season ticket payments for venues operating a non-traditional annual facility fee).
- ✦ Organise payments - set the way payments are taken, whether it's immediate pay and play, or bookable as part of a membership package.
- ✦ Court bookings – reduced administration for managing bookings; give staff, coaches, members, and the general public access to book and pay for courts, classes, or other resources online.
- ✦ Scheduling - set unique booking and price rules to suit the venue and enable lights to switch on/off automatically when linked to the LTA Premium Gate Access system.
- ✦ Book and pay remotely - customers can make bookings and payments for a venue anytime, anywhere via the real-time booking app.
- ✦ Reporting - ClubSpark allows administrators to view reports highlighting income, court usage, revenue and number of members and season ticket holders; this allows for identification of trends and patterns and evidence to demonstrate participation levels and impact.

RALLY

Rally is an aggregator that collects all booking and coaching information via ClubSpark pages and displays it for participants in one easy to view page. It allows players to search for venues close to them and provides booking options, removing the barriers of not knowing where courts are or how to book.

Rally provides a helpful customer journey, with a personal profile to review and manage bookings, and helpful reminders. Courts can be set to book for free of charge or at a fee agreed by the provider.

Gate Access

The LTA has developed two gate access systems that work in association with ClubSpark to secure courts and to allow access to booked customers only. Members of the public can book a court online (making payment if required) and receive a four-digit access code via email to enter using a courtside keypad. The gate access system then allows entry for the time booked if a correct code is entered.

There are two gate options available; SmartAccess Premium and SmartAccess Lite. The demands and needs of users plus the setup of the venue determines the most appropriate system for each site.

Nationally, the LTA report that in the last three years, sites with a gate access system installed have attracted 64,841 unique players, leading to 609,671 courts being booked. This has generated income of over £1 million.

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Additional demand

The LTA operates various tennis initiatives across the Country which result in some courts receiving additional demand. Furthermore, there are other formats away from traditional tennis that can result in increased usage. These are all detailed below.

Local Tennis Leagues

Recreational Tennis leagues are less formal in comparison to established club play, offering greater flexibility and an opportunity for all abilities to engage in competition at local venues. The leagues are available to all aged 18 years and above and are run by an organisation called Local Tennis Leagues, which affiliates to the LTA. Players are organised into mixed sex leagues of eight based on similar ability levels, with matches arranged between the two players at whatever time and court is agreed. The flexibility of play is conducive to the use of park sites which are typically more easily accessible.

In Walsall, a league is in operation, with primary venues considered to be Blackwood Park, Holland Park, Leamore Park, Pelsall Village Common, Pleck Park, Walsall Arboretum and Willenhall Memorial Park.

LTA Youth Start

This is a six-week coaching offer for children that have never played tennis before and is identified as a priority by the LTA. For £25, kids get six weeks coaching by an LTA Accredited coach, along with a free racket, pack of balls and personalised t-shirt so that they can continue playing.

Tennis for Free

Tennis for Free is a community sports charity that works in partnership with the LTA. The charity delivers free, fully inclusive weekly coaching sessions for all ages and abilities in local communities across the UK, especially those in low-income areas.

Tennis for Free offers a package for local authorities and court operators that includes financial support for local LTA Accredited coaches to deliver the sessions, tennis equipment for attendees and coaches and promotional support. Sessions are typically delivered across three courts, although the charity have recently launched 'Tennis for Free Lite', available to clubs that wish to open their doors to non-members.

Through its offer, Tennis for Free aims to:

- ✦ Reinvigorate under-used public facilities
- ✦ Make tennis a sport for all
- ✦ Make tennis more financially accessible in the UK
- ✦ Improve the physical and mental wellbeing of local communities through tennis

LTA Big Tennis Weekend

The LTA Big Tennis Weekend is an LTA initiative which all registered venues can access. Clubs and venues have the ability to sign up to host open days, which are free of charge, and create a relaxed and welcoming environment for those new to tennis to participate. This in turn can potentially lead to the clubs attracting new members.

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The LTA hosts three dedicated weekends a year (in May, July, and September) that are the UK's biggest public tennis events. Furthermore, venues are able to run additional events outside these dates and will benefit from their events being promoted on the national LTA campaign website. All clubs running an open day are asked to promote a follow-on offer to all attendees, such as a reduced rate introductory membership or a number of free coaching sessions, to encourage people to continue playing after the event.

Mini tennis

Mini tennis provides children with the perfect opportunity to learn the fundamentals of tennis at an early age. Designed for children aged between 4-10, mini tennis utilises smaller courts, nets, and rackets as well as lower-bouncing tennis balls to develop vital tennis skills and techniques. The game is split out into three levels, with the LTA stating that each stage there are key aims and goals:

- ♦ Red (Stage 3): 4–8-year-olds – serve, rally and score
- ♦ Orange (Stage 2): 8–9-year-olds – develop a rounded game
- ♦ Green (Stage 1): 10-year-olds – put skills to the test

No dedicated mini tennis courts have been identified in Walsall.

Paddle tennis

Paddle tennis (also referred to as Padel) is a form of tennis that is easy to play, fun and sociable. It is played mainly in a doubles format on an enclosed court about a third of the size of a tennis court and can be played in groups of mixed ages and abilities as it is not power dominant. The rules are broadly the same as tennis, although you serve underhand and the walls are used as part of the game, with the ball allowed to bounce off them.

One of the fastest growing sports across continental Europe, it has gained increasing popularity over recent years, particularly in Spain with over six million people currently playing. As of 2021, there are around 6,000 active paddle tennis players across Great Britain, with 107 courts provided at 52 clubs. This is predicted to grow substantially in future years.

In Walsall, paddle courts are provided at Streetly Academy.

8.4: Supply and demand analysis

The LTA suggests that a non-floodlit court can accommodate a maximum of 40 members, whereas a floodlit court can accommodate 60 members. However, it must be noted that the capacity figures are just used as a guide. In reality, many clubs operating above recommended capacity limits will not see this as an issue and will be able to function without a problem.

Based on the above, Streetly TC is currently considered to be operating above its recommended capacity limit. This is on account of it having a membership of 600 and its site offering capacity for 580 members (eight floodlit courts and one non-floodlit court). The Club, however, does not report any capacity issues, suggesting that the situation is sustainable, especially with no future demand identified.

As membership details for Reedswood TC are unknown, its position cannot be assessed, with further exploration required. With access to eight floodlit courts, it has a theoretical capacity for 480 members.

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For Walsall TC, it is also not possible to run a calculation based on its current nomadic state. Based on a current membership of 58, it would require either one floodlit court or two non-floodlit court to be satisfied, although with future demand for 105 additional members the need increases to three floodlit courts or five non-floodlit courts.

As no non-club courts are identified as having any capacity issues, precedence should be placed on improving quality to an adequate standard for promoting and increasing informal play, particularly at publicly available sites accommodating multiple courts and adequate ancillary facilities. Linked to this, the continued utilisation and rollout of LTA schemes at suitable sites should be considered, as should the establishment of the other various initiatives supported by the NGB. A focus should also be placed on mitigating the loss of courts provided at Walsall TC.

Tennis – supply and demand summary

- ◀ Streetly TC has potential capacity issues; however, the Club has not reported this as being a concern, stating that demand can be accommodated on its existing supply of courts.
- ◀ Walsall TC requires, as a minimum, either three floodlit courts or five non-floodlit courts as part of any development of a new home venue following the loss of its previous site.
- ◀ Reedswood TC is likely to be satisfied at West Walsall E-Act Academy unless its membership is larger than 480 members.
- ◀ As no non-club courts are identified as have any capacity issues, precedence should be placed on improving quality to an adequate standard for informal play, particularly at publicly available sites hosting multiple courts.

Tennis – supply summary

- ◀ There are a total of 63 tennis courts identified in Walsall across 20 sites, with 41 courts categorised as being available for community use at 13 sites.
- ◀ Walsall TC lost access to its home venue in 2018 and is now nomadic; it is working to find a suitable site to develop to re-establish as a home venue.
- ◀ The majority of courts are operated by schools, although only 41% of these are available for community use.
- ◀ The large majority of courts have a macadam surface, with 45 being of this type compared to 18 having an artificial surface.
- ◀ In total, 24 of the 63 tennis courts are serviced by floodlights, representing 38% of the provision.
- ◀ Of the courts, two are assessed as good quality, 48 as standard quality and 13 as poor quality.
- ◀ For non-club courts, ancillary provision is generally considered to be problematic

Tennis – demand summary

- ◀ There are three tennis clubs in Walsall; Streetly TC, Walsall TC and Reedswood TC.
- ◀ Streetly TC is the largest club, catering for 600 members, whereas Walsall TC has 57 members (details regarding Reedswood TC are unknown).
- ◀ Streetly TC states that its senior membership has increased over recent years, whilst Walsall TC has experienced a significant decrease following the loss of its home venue.
- ◀ Walsall TC reports future growth aspirations, with total future demand amounting to 105 potential additional members (70 senior and 35 junior), whereas Streetly TC does not have any ambitions to grow its membership.
- ◀ Clubspark and associated LTA initiatives are utilised in Walsall across 10 venues.
- ◀ A Local Tennis League is in operation, with primary venues considered to be Blackwood Park, Holland Park, Leamore Park, Pelsall Village Common, Pleck Park, Walsall Arboretum and Willenhall Memorial Park.

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PART 9: NETBALL

9.1: Introduction

England Netball is the governing body with overall responsibility for ensuring the effective governance of the sport.

Whilst often played indoors, there are far more outdoor courts provided and in use by the netball community than there are indoor. Nationally, England Netball reports that the challenge is that the supply of outdoor netball courts is generally not of a good enough standard for use by the community, whilst accessibility and a lack of floodlighting can also be problematic.

Consultation

Information to inform this section of the report was primarily obtained through discussions with England Netball. In addition, consultation has taken place with the Walsall Netball League.

9.2: Supply

There is a total of 60 netball courts identified in Walsall across 17 sites. Of these, 13 courts at five sites are available for community use, whilst the remaining 47 courts are unavailable. All of these are based at education sites. In addition to these courts, there may be further courts located at primary schools which will be identified during consultation with the education section later in 2021.

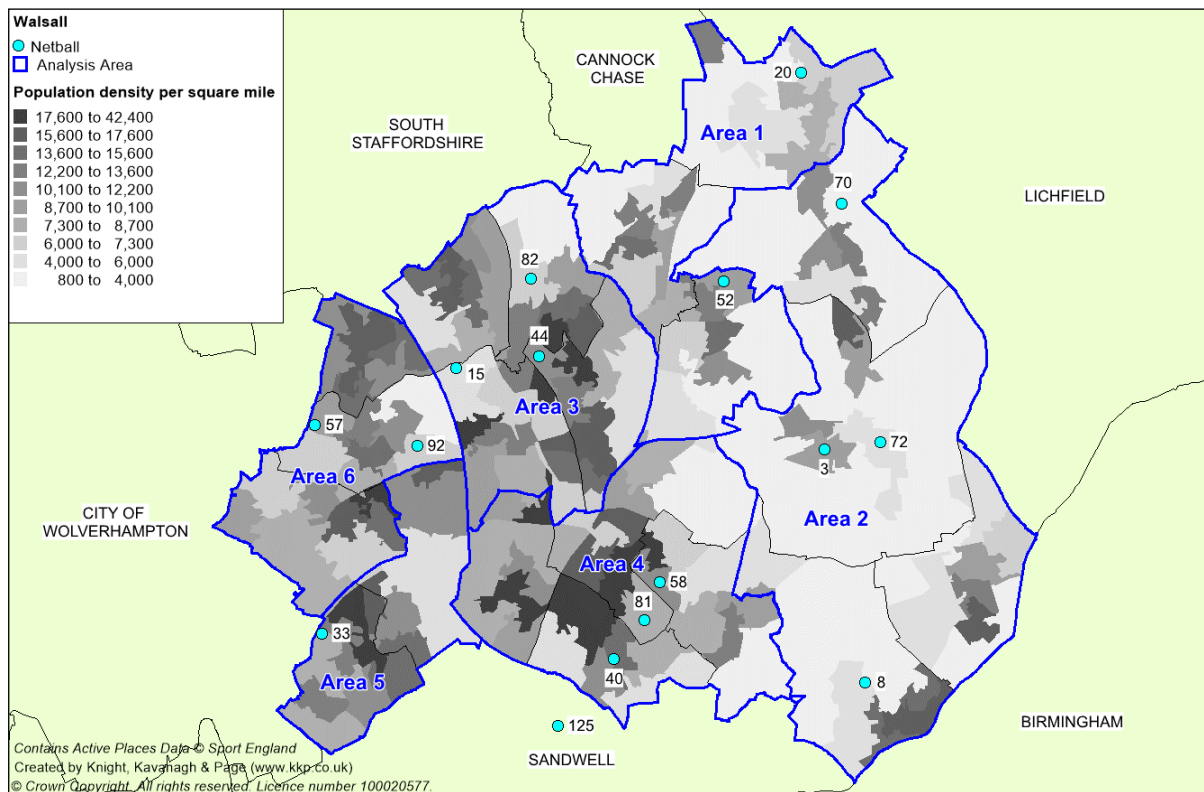
Table 9.1: Summary of the number of courts by analysis area

Analysis area	No. of courts available	No. of courts unavailable
Area 1: Brownhills / Pelsall / Rushall / Shelfield	-	8
Area 2: Aldridge / Streetly / Pheasey / Walsall Wood	6	14
Area 3: Bloxwich / Blakenall / Birchills / Leamore	2	6
Area 4: St. Matthew's / Paddock / Palfrey / Pleck	4	9
Area 5: Darlaston / Bentley	1	4
Area 6: Willenhall / Short Heath	-	6
Walsall	13	47

For a site-by-site breakdown of the courts supplied across Walsall, please refer to Table 9.2 and Figure 9.1 overleaf.

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Figure 9.1: Location of netball courts in Walsall



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Table 9.2: Netball courts in Walsall

Site ID	Site name	Postcode	Analysis area	Ownership	Community use?	No. of courts	Floodlit?	Court type	Overmarked?	Court quality
3	Aldridge School	WS9 0BG	Area 2	School	No	4	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard
3	Aldridge School	WS9 0BG	Area 2	School	No	2	No	Artificial	Yes	Good
8	Barr Beacon School	WS9 0RF	Area 2	School	Yes	4	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard
15	Bloxwich Academy	WS2 7NR	Area 3	School	No	2	No	Macadam	Yes	Poor
20	Brownhills Ormiston Academy	WS8 7QG	Area 1	School	No	4	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	WS10 8QJ	Area 5	School	No	4	Yes	Macadam	Yes	Standard
40	Joseph Leckie Academy Playing Fields	WS5 4NW	Area 4	School	No	3	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard
44	Leamore Park	WS3 1HF	Area 3	Council	Yes	2	No	Macadam	Yes	Poor
52	Ormiston Sheffield Community Academy	WS4 1BW	Area 1	School	No	4	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard
57	Pool Hayes Academy	WV12 4QZ	Area 6	School	No	3	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	WS1 2PG	Area 4	School	No	4	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	WS1 2PG	Area 4	School	No	2	No	Artificial	Yes	Good
70	Shire Oak Academy	WS9 9PA	Area 2	School	Yes	2	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard
72	St Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College	WS9 0RN	Area 2	School	No	5	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard
78	The Streetly Academy	B74 2EX	Area 2	School	No	3	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard
81	University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Site)	WS1 3BD	Area 4	University	Yes	4	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard
82	Walsall Academy	WS3 3LX	Area 3	School	No	4	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard
92	Willenhall E-Act Academy	WV12 4BD	Area 6	School	No	3	Yes	Macadam	Yes	Standard
125	Friar Park	WS10 0JS	Area 5	School	Yes	1	No	Macadam	Yes	Standard

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Management

All but two outdoor netball courts in Walsall are operated by education providers, with 51 provided at schools and four at the University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus). The remaining courts are operated by the Council at Leamore Park. This illustrates that there is a significant reliance on education providers, where security of tenure can often be problematic.

Court type

Most outdoor netball courts in Walsall have a macadam surface, with 57 being of this type in total including all 13 that are available for community use. The estimated lifespan of a macadam court is 10 years, depending on levels of use and maintenance levels.

The remaining four courts have an artificial surface, with a double artificial court being provided at Aldridge School albeit these courts are not available for community use. The remaining two courts are found at Queen Mary's Grammar School that were recently converted to an artificial surface for hockey purposes with netball overmarked. As with macadam courts, the estimated lifespan of an artificial court is 10 years.

Floodlighting

Of the 57 outdoor netball courts provided in Walsall, seven are serviced by floodlighting. These are provided at Grace Academy Darlaston and Willenhall E-Act Academy.

A lack of floodlighting on netball courts is an issue nationwide, with England Netball's national database (updated in April 2020) identifying that only 1,941 of 5,108 outdoor netball courts are floodlit throughout the Country (38%). Whilst this is a minority of courts, it still represents a significantly higher ratio than that found in Walsall, where less than 12% of courts are serviced.

A lack of floodlighting presents a key reason as to why many courts are unavailable for community use in Walsall. Many providers of non-floodlit courts state that making them available would not be financially viable as usage would be significantly limited. However, it is also stated by the majority that there is a lack of perceived demand.

With regards to floodlighting, Wolverhampton University has been subject to a planning application for refurbishment for erection of floodlights, fencing and seating for the courts provided at the Walsall site. This has been done with a focus on serving netball demand and if achieved may result in the accompanying courts being re-surfaced.

Over markings

Netball courts, particularly at school sites, are often over marked, predominately by tennis courts but also on occasion by basketball and/or football courts. Provision such as this tends to receive higher levels of use which can be detrimental to quality over time, as well as potentially causing capacity issues when there is external netball demand.

In Walsall, all 57 netball courts are over marked, with there being no standalone courts.

Quality

The quality of netball courts has been informed through non-technical site assessments and consultation with providers to assign each court a rating of good, standard, or poor. Key aspects informing the findings include surface quality, grip underfoot, line marking quality, evenness and evidence of inappropriate use (e.g. vandalism and/or littering).

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For the full assessment criteria, please refer to Appendix 2.

Of the courts in Walsall, four are assessed as good quality, 52 are standard quality and four are assessed as poor quality. Of the community available courts, there are none rated as good quality, with 11 rated as standard and two as poor.

Table 9.3: Quality of courts

Community use	Good	Standard	Poor
Available	-	13	2
Unavailable	4	39	2
Total	4	52	4

The poor-quality courts that are available for community use are located at Leamore Park, where improvements ought to be seen as a priority. The surface is worn, and the line markings have faded.

The good quality courts which are not available for community access are provided at Aldridge School.

Further to the above, the University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus) has gained planning permission to install new floodlights, fencing and seating to its existing courts at the Gorway Campus. This improved offer will enable it to cater for the West Midlands League as well as a grassroots recreational offer.

Ancillary provision

Ancillary provision is generally considered to be problematic. Whilst most sites provide changing facilities and/or toilets, they are not specific for netball and are generally located within main school buildings or are provided to predominately service sports halls and/or grass pitches. As such, access can be limited even at sites that allow for community use.

9.3: Demand

Demand for outdoor netball tends to come in two forms; league and club-based netball that consists of matches and training, and the various netball-based initiatives such as Back to Netball and Walking Netball.

League and club demand

Three clubs are identified as being based in Walsall, with Yendys Netball Club and Willenhall Wanderers Netball Club accessing the University of Wolverhampton, and Barr Beacon Netball Club accessing Streetly Academy. However, all this demand is accommodated via the use of indoor sports halls, meaning that none of the clubs utilise any outdoor courts within Walsall.

Yendys Netball Club and Willenhall Wanderers Netball Club form part of the Walsall Netball League, where all matches are played via a central venue at Phoenix Collegiate, which is located outside of Walsall, in Sandwell. The League operates both winter and summer leagues, also using the indoor provision at Phoenix Collegiate for the former. When the summer iteration was last held, there were five divisions and 37 teams accommodated (including teams from Grasshoppers Netball Club).

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As the Walsall League uses courts outside of Walsall to host its competition, this represents exported demand. However, there is no desire for it to relocate as significant investment has gone into the courts at Phoenix Collegiate and a secure community use agreement is in place.

Barr Beacon Netball Club fields senior and junior teams in the West Midlands Regional League whilst also competing in the South Staffordshire Junior League, the Dudley League, and the Birmingham League.

Back to Netball

Back to Netball is a scheme put into place by England Netball in 2010, with participation increasing since its inception. Sessions are running weekly by qualified coaches across England with the aim of re-introducing female players over the age of 16 to the sport.

In Walsall, numerous Back to Netball sessions have been run, held at Bloxwich Active Living Centre, Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy (two sessions a week) and at the University of Wolverhampton. Sessions at all sites, with the exception of Bloxwich Active Living Centre, are held on outdoor courts.

Walking Netball

Walking Netball is a slower version of the sport, designed so that anyone can play regardless of age or fitness level. It can give those who are isolated an outlet, provide an activity for those who do not deem themselves fit enough and offer a stepping-stone for those looking for a pathway back into traditional netball.

Walking Netball sessions are hosted across the Black Country and the wider West Midlands region by Netball West Midlands. In Walsall, the courts at Manor Farm Community Centre and the University of Wolverhampton are utilised. These sessions are held on outdoor courts at the latter site.

Netball Now

Netball Now is a simple, straight forward way to play netball. It is not a competition led by rules or scores but rather a simple session where players can play a variety of positions and even have a go at umpiring.

Netball Now sessions in Walsall are hosted at the University of Wolverhampton on its outdoor courts.

Bee Netball

A new initiative by England Netball, Bee Netball a programme for children all about friendship, inclusion, fair play, and teamwork. Each session is managed by an England Netball accredited coach. Although there are currently no sessions operating in Walsall, it is still in its infancy so one may be established in the near future.

Exported/imported demand

As indicated above, the majority of netball demand in Walsall will likely export demand to Sandwell to form part of the Walsall Netball League.

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Latent/unmet demand

Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables analysis of 'the percentage of adults that would like to participate in netball but 'are not currently doing so'.

The tool identifies latent demand of 704 people within Walsall, which is a relatively minimal amount, although it is the second highest in the Black Country region (behind Sandwell).

No latent or unmet demand is currently reported by England Netball or the Walsall Netball League. The League identifies that it grew substantially in the years leading up to Covid-19 and will always find ways to welcome new teams.

Future demand

The Walsall Netball League reports that it expects to lose several teams when the League resumes post Covid-19 due to many players being unable to play netball over the past couple of seasons. However, it is hoping that this will then be offset through more junior players joining following the 2022 Commonwealth Games (hosted in Birmingham), with interest in the sport likely to increase.

In addition to the above, it is hoped by England Netball that there will be an increase in the number of its initiatives held in Walsall which will increase the demand for them. However, this is reliant on volunteers hosting and organising the sessions.

9.4: Supply and demand analysis

Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.

To increase netball demand away from the club and league environment, focus should be placed on supporting the various initiatives that are championed by England Netball and ensuring such programmes have suitable provision from which to be ran from. As part of this, priority should be placed on improving the quality of the existing stock, particularly where quality is poor and where curricular and extra-curricular needs are high. Given that all courts are over marked, this could be carried out in conjunction with improving tennis court quality.

Netball – supply and demand summary

- ◀ Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and no community use being allowed
- ◀ Given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a club/league facility to be provided in Walsall.
- ◀ Focus should instead be placed on supporting the various initiatives that are championed by England Netball and ensuring such programmes have suitable provision from which to be ran from.

Netball – supply summary

- ◀ There is a total of 60 netball courts identified in Walsall across 17 sites. Of these, 13 courts at five sites are available for community use.
- ◀ All but two outdoor netball court in Walsall are operated by education providers.

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- ◀ The majority of outdoor netball courts have a macadam surface, with 56 being of this type; the remaining four courts all have an artificial surface.
- ◀ All 60 of the courts are over marked by other sports provision.
- ◀ Only seven of the courts are serviced by floodlighting (at Grace Academy Darlaston and Willenhall E-Act Academy), which represents a significantly low percentage.
- ◀ Of the courts, four are assessed as good quality, 52 are assessed as standard quality and four are assessed as poor quality; of the community available courts, there are none rated as good quality, 13 rated as standard and two as poor.

Netball – demand summary

- ◀ Three clubs are identified as being based in Walsall (Yendys Netball Club, Willenhall Wanderers Netball Club and Barr Beacon Netball Club); however, all this demand is accommodated via the use of indoor sports halls.
- ◀ Yendys Netball Club and Willenhall Wanderers Netball form part of the Walsall Netball League, with all matches played at Phoenix Collegiate, in Sandwell (exported demand).
- ◀ The League would like to use a venue in Walsall to better accommodate its demand but states that there is currently no suitable location to enable this.
- ◀ Back to Netball has been held at Bloxwich Active Living Centre, Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy (two sessions a week) and at the University of Wolverhampton.
- ◀ Walking Netball sessions are held at Manor Farm Community Centre and the University of Wolverhampton.
- ◀ Netball Now sessions are hosted at the University of Wolverhampton.

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PART 10: BOWLS

10.1: Introduction

Outdoor bowls in Walsall is played on crown greens, with a typical season running in the Summer from May until September. The British Crown Green Bowling Association (BCGBA) is the NGB with overall responsibility for ensuring effective governance of the sport.

Flat green bowls is another version of bowls played in England, governed separately by Bowls England. However, this is played predominately in the South and therefore currently has no presence in Walsall.

Consultation

There are 26 BCGBA affiliated bowls clubs identified as currently using outdoor bowling greens in Walsall. Of these, six responded to consultation requests, equating to a response rate of 23%.

Table 10.1: Summary of consultation

Name of club	Responded?
Aldridge Cons BC	No
Aldridge Cons B BC	No
Amery BC	No
Anchor Meadow BC	No
Anchorage 55 BC	No
Benton Senior Citizens BC	No
Bloxwich Stafford Road BC	Yes
Bloxwich BC	Yes
Breakaways BC	No
British Rail BC	No
Brownhills & Oak Park BC	No
Chart BC	No
Elay Sports BC	No
Lichfield Road BC	No
Leamore & Blakenall BC	No
Leckie Senior Citizens BC	No
Palfrey & Caldmere Senior Citizens BC	No
Pelsall BC	Yes
Pleck Sons & Daughters of Rest BC	No
Queslett BC	No
Rushall Labour BC	No
Short Heath RBL BC	No
Streetly BC	No
Streetly Methodist BC	No
Victoria Park (Tipton)	Yes
Willenhall Nordley BC	Yes
Willenhall Trinity BC	Yes

A low response rate can be common when it comes to bowls clubs. Therefore, further consultation has taken place with BCGBA to understand demand pressures for facilities and gap-fill information. Details of this are identified throughout this section of the report.

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10.2: Supply

There are 29 crown green bowling greens in Walsall provided across 87 sites (two are provided at Bentley Road North Playing Field). All the greens are available for community use, and they are relatively evenly split across Walsall.

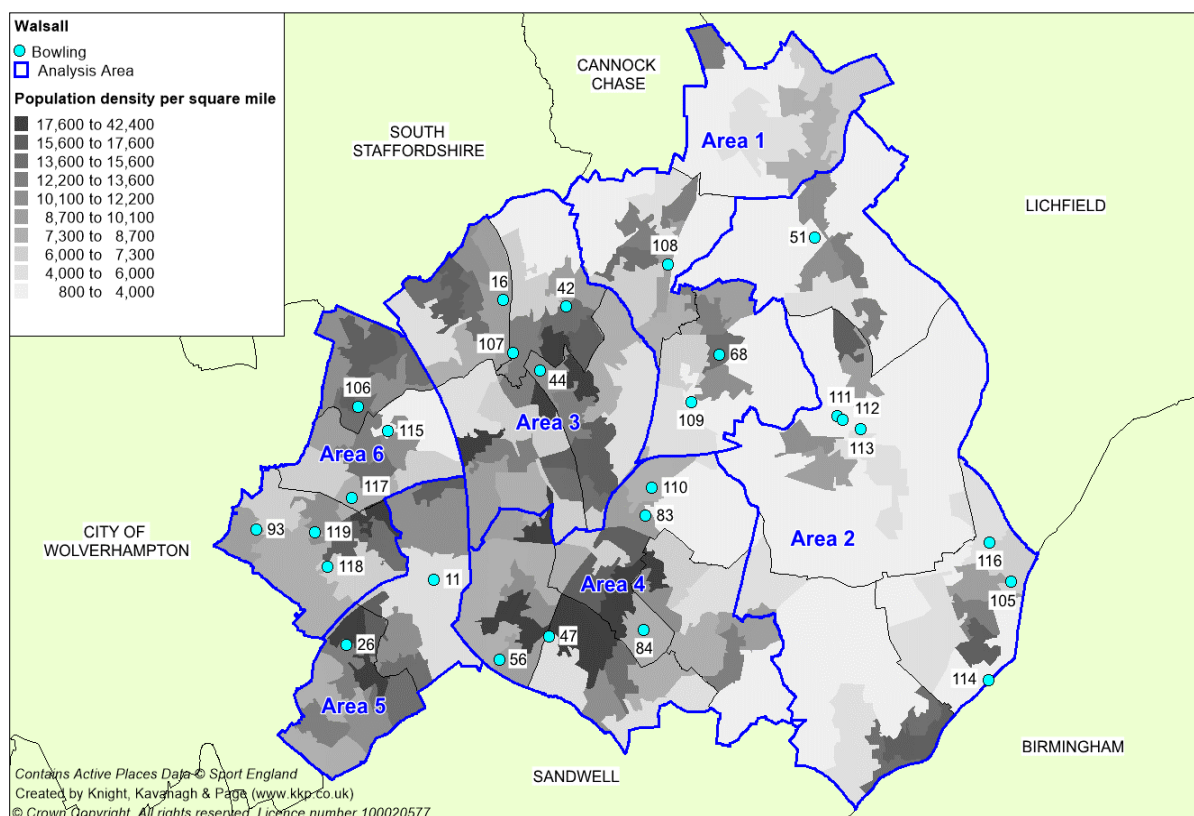
Area 2 contains the largest number of greens, with seven, whilst Area 5 provides the least, with three.

Table 10.2: Summary of the number of greens by analysis area

Analysis area	Number of greens
Area 1: Brownhills / Pelsall / Rushall / Shelfield	4
Area 2: Aldridge / Streetly / Pheasey / Walsall Wood	7
Area 3: Bloxwich / Blakenall / Birchills / Leamore	4
Area 4: St. Matthew's / Paddock / Palfrey / Pleck	5
Area 5: Darlaston / Bentley	3
Area 6: Willenhall / Short Heath	6
Walsall	29

Figure 10.1 below shows the location of all bowling greens currently servicing Walsall. For a key to the map, see Table 10.3.

Figure 10.1: Location of bowling greens in Walsall



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Table 10.3: Key to map

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Analysis area	Users	No. of greens
11	Bentley Road North Playing Field	WS2 0EA	Area 5	Breakaways BC	2
16	Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club	WS3 3NJ	Area 3	Bloxwich Stafford Road BC	1
26	Darlaston Community Association	WS10 8NW	Area 5	-	1
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	WS3 3NT	Area 3	Benton Senior Citizens BC	1
44	Leamore Park	WS3 1HF	Area 3	Leamore & Blakenall BC	1
47	LMRCA Sports Club	WS1 4JG	Area 4	British Rail BC	1
51	Oak Park Leisure Centre	WS9 9PQ	Area 2	Brownhills & Oak Park BC	1
56	Pleck Park	WS2 9AG	Area 4	Pleck Sons & Daughters of Rest BC	1
68	Shelfield Playing Field	WS4 1XQ	Area 1	-	1
83	Walsall Arboretum	WS1 2QB	Area 4	Leckie Senior Citizens BC	1
84	Walsall Cricket Club	WS1 3BE	Area 4	-	1
93	Willenhall Memorial Park	WV13 3DD	Area 6	-	1
105	Streetly Sports Club	B74 3HX	Area 2	Streetly BC	1
106	Amery Bowls Club	WV12 5RY	Area 6	Amery BC	1
107	Bloxwich Bowls Club	WS3 3JT	Area 3	Bloxwich BC; Palfrey & Caldmore Senior Citizens BC	1
108	Pelsall Community Centre	WS3 4BQ	Area 1	Pelsall BC	1
109	Rushall Labour Club	WS4 1JX	Area 1	Rushall Labour BC	1
110	Lichfield Road Bowls Club	WS4 2DW	Area 4	Lichfield Road BC	1
111	Aldridge Community Centre	WS9 8AN	Area 2	Anchor Meadow BC	1
112	Anchorage 55+ Club	WS9 8AN	Area 2	Anchorage 55 BC	1
113	Aldridge Library	WS9 8NN	Area 2	Aldridge Cons BC; Aldridge Cons B BC	1
114	Queslett BC	B72 2EY	Area 2	Queslett BC	1
115	Short Heath Liberal Club	WV12 5PG	Area 6	Short Heath Liberal BC; Chart BC	1
116	Streetly Methodise Recreation Centre	B74 3JJ	Area 2	Streetly Methodist BC	1
117	Trinity Bowls Club	WV13 1HG	Area 6	Willenhall Trinity BC	1
118	Yale Bowls Club	WV13 2HA	Area 6	Elay BC	1
119	Willenhall Liberal Club	WV13 1DF	Area 6	Willenhall Nordley BC	1
121	Stan Ball Centre	WS3 3AZ	Area 3	-	1

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Ownership/management

Details around the ownership and management arrangements for clubs which responded to consultation requests are provided in the table below. As seen, two clubs own their greens, one club has a lease arrangement and two access their greens via a rental agreement.

Table 10.4: Ownership/management arrangements for bowling clubs in Walsall

Name of club	Ownership/management details
Bloxwich Stafford Road BC	The Club leases the green at Bloxwich Stafford Road Bowls Club from the Council for approximately 70 years
Bloxwich BC	The Club rents the green annually from a Supermarket chain
Pelsall BC	The Club rents Pelsall Community Centre from the Council
Willenhall Nordley BC	The Club owns the green at Willenhall Nordley Bowls Club
Willenhall Trinity BC	The Club owns the green at Willenhall Trinity Bowls Club

All responding bowls clubs report satisfaction with the arrangements at their respective venues with no major reported issues.

Quality

The quality of bowling greens across Walsall have been assessed via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good
- ◀ Standard
- ◀ Poor

For bowling greens, the non-technical assessment considers several attributes of the site including the surrounding hard surfaces to the green, disability access, evenness, grass coverage and signs off unofficial use. For further detail regarding the site assessment criteria, see Appendix 2.

Overall, 26 greens are assessed as good quality, three are assessed as standard and none are assessed as poor. This is seen site-by-site in the table below.

Table 10.5: Summary of bowling green quality

Site ID	Site	Analysis area	No. of greens	Quality
11	Bentley Road North Playing Field	Area 5	2	Good
16	Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club	Area 3	1	Good
26	Darlaston Community Association	Area 5	1	Good
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	Area 3	1	Standard
44	Leamore Park	Area 3	1	Good
47	LMRCA Sports Club	Area 4	1	Good
51	Oak Park Leisure Centre	Area 2	1	Good
56	Pleck Park	Area 4	1	Good
68	Shelfield Playing Field	Area 1	1	Good
83	Walsall Arboretum	Area 4	1	Standard
84	Walsall Cricket Club	Area 4	1	Good
93	Willenhall Memorial Park	Area 6	1	Standard
105	Streetly Sports Club	Area 2	1	Good

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Site ID	Site	Analysis area	No. of greens	Quality
106	Amery Bowling club	Area 6	1	Good
107	Bloxwich Bowls Club	Area 3	1	Good
108	Pelsall Community Centre	Area 1	1	Good
109	Rushall Labour Club	Area 1	1	Good
110	Lichfield Road Bowls Club	Area 4	1	Good
111	Aldridge Community Centre	Area 2	1	Good
112	Anchorage 55+ Club	Area 2	1	Good
113	Aldridge Library	Area 2	1	Good
114	Queslett Bowls Club	Area 2	1	Good
115	Short Heath Liberal Club	Area 6	1	Good
116	Streetly Methodise Recreation Centre	Area 2	1	Good
117	Trinity Bowls Club	Area 6	1	Good
118	Yale Bowls Club	Area 6	1	Good
119	Willenhall Liberal Club	Area 6	1	Good
121	Stan Ball Centre	Area 3	1	Good

Three of the five responsive clubs report that quality has improved over the last year, whilst only one of the clubs (Willenhall Trinity BC) reports worsening quality. The remaining club (Willenhall Nordley) states that there is no difference. All five report that green quality is of an overall good quality.

Of the clubs reporting improvements, Bloxwich Stafford Road BC puts it down to increased maintenance and the acquisition of new maintenance equipment, whilst the remaining clubs (Bloxwich BC and Pelsall BC) attribute it to a lack of use during Covid-19 lockdown periods.

The one club that reports quality deterioration is Willenhall Trinity BC. The Club states that this is because foxes have started to dig large holes and as a result it has affected playing quality. These ditches need repairing urgently.

Ancillary provision

All clubs are able to access ancillary provision at their home green and the majority are serviced by adequate quality facilities, although the range of provision and the condition varies site-by-site. The more comprehensive facilities tend to be provided at sites that also service other sports and activities, such as at Walsall Cricket Club and LMRCA Sports Club.

Pelsall BC is based at Pelsall Community Centre which has a good quality clubhouse that includes a kitchen, toilets, and storage space. Pelsall BC reports that car parking is available, but it is not adequate for their needs as it fills relatively quickly, meaning users need to park on the residential street parking. This on occasion causes issues with nearby residents complaining about additional congestion which is caused.

Both Bloxwich Stafford Road BC and Willenhall Nordley BC are also serviced by good quality clubhouses, at Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club and Willenhall Liberal Club, respectively. However, the changing accommodation at the latter site is very dated and in poor condition. The Club states that improvements are needed to make the provision more accessible for all users and in particular for female members.

Both Willenhall Trinity BC, housed at Trinity Bowls Club, and Bloxwich BC, based at Bloxwich Bowls Club, rate their ancillary facilities as standard quality. Both clubs are well provided for in terms of facilities, but some modernisation is required.

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Floodlighting

In Walsall, five greens are serviced by floodlighting. These are at the following sites:

- ◀ Aldridge Library
- ◀ Bloxwich Bowls Club
- ◀ Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club
- ◀ Trinity Bowls Club
- ◀ Willenhall Liberal Club

Floodlit greens offer opportunities to access provision for training and matches during evenings outside of the summer months. However, they are relatively rare across the Country, with the level of floodlit supply in Walsall therefore considered to be comparatively reasonable.

10.3: Demand

There are 26 clubs using bowling greens in Walsall. Membership details of 23 of these are known, and they cumulatively accommodate 901 members. Details for the clubs that have been unresponsive to consultation requests has been provided by the BCGBA.

Table 10.6: Summary of club membership numbers

Club name	Men	Women	Juniors
Aldridge Cons BC	19	3	-
Aldridge Cons B BC	15	2	-
Amery BC	33	8	-
Anchor Meadow BC	26	8	-
Anchorage 55 BC	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Benton Senior Citizens BC	22	10	-
Bloxwich Stafford Road BC	61	30	3
Bloxwich BC	56	10	-
Breakaways BC	15	6	-
British Rail BC	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Brownhills & Oak Park BC	29	5	-
Chart BC	27	18	-
Elay Sports BC	35	-	-
Lichfield Road BC	22	2	-
Leamore & Blakenall BC	18	9	-
Leckie Senior Citizens BC	10	2	-
Palfrey & Caldmore Senior Citizens BC	8	-	-
Pelsall BC	48	19	1
Pleck Sons & Daughters of Rest BC	20	6	-
Queslett BC	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Rushall Labour BC	23	1	-
Short Heath Liberal BC	60	5	4
Streetly BC	55	5	-
Streetly Methodist BC	20	2	-
Willenhall Nordley BC	40	3	3
Willenhall Trinity BC	57	17	-
Total	719	171	11

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The largest club is Bloxwich Stafford Road BC (94 members). In contrast, the smallest club is Palfrey & Caldmore Senior Citizens BC (eight members), followed by Leckie Senior Citizens BC (12 members).

The average membership across the clubs is 39.

Participation trends

In correlation to a national trend of declining membership, four of the five responsive clubs report a reduction in participation over recent years. The largest is evidenced by Willenhall Nordley BC, which reports that it has had to pull a team out of three different leagues due to dwindling numbers. The main reason cited by the Club is a lack of younger members coming through to replace senior members that no longer play due to age and retirement. It is also worth noting that reported membership levels across each Club are more stable than those reported in the 2016 PPS.

The above also correlates with Bloxwich Stafford Road BC, which claims that there are less players in the League overall and that people are just not wanting to play bowls any longer. Further to this, the Club claims that its junior category has declined due to players moving on with their lives (e.g. going to University and getting into relationships). Likewise, Pelsall BC reports similar issues with its junior teams.

Of particular concern is a reduction in participation at Bloxwich BC, with the Club reporting that membership has decreased significantly over the last 12 months. The Club states that it is now under threat of folding due to the minimal membership base that remains and club income not being adequate enough to meet external costs. That being said the Club was in a worse position regarding membership in the 2016 PPS with the Club previously reporting figures of 45 members.

In contrast, Willenhall Trinity BC reports an increase in membership, which has led to the Club increasing team numbers by one additional team, with this team used for new members to gain experience playing competitive games.

Latent demand

Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables analysis of 'the percentage of adults that would like to participate in bowls but 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies latent demand of 488 people within Walsall, which is a relatively low number compared to Dudley (583 people) and Sandwell (495 people) but is above the levels of Wolverhampton (454 people).

All responsive clubs report that existing membership can be accommodated on the current level of provision available to them and that no potential members are being turned away due to capacity issues. Nevertheless, Willenhall Nordley BC indicates that an additional green is required in the future as this would enable it to increase its demand. The Club states that this would allow it to double its membership and increase its numbers to 80 in total, although it is questionable as to whether this is a realistic aspiration.

Future demand

Using ONS projections, the number of persons aged 65 and over is likely to significantly increase for the period up to 2039. Due to this age band being the most likely to play bowls, demand for greens could increase.

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From consultation, only Pelsall BC express some level of future demand, with the Club identifying growth targets of 10 senior and 10 junior members. It aims to achieve this by increasing its advertising, especially via social media, and through hosting open days.

All other clubs are focusing on sustaining current membership numbers, although they are also all open to new members if the demand exists.

10.4: Supply and demand analysis

The capacity of a bowling green is very much dependent on the leagues and the day that they operate. A green may have no spare capacity on an afternoon or evening when a popular league operates but may be unused for the rest of the week. However, in many cases, greens are used during the afternoons by club members who bowl socially, with access a potential issue during peak times if membership is particularly high.

The BCGBA does not have any specific guidance on bowling green capacity, stating that it can vary from site-to-site and from club-to-club. However, as a guide, it states that any green used by at least 20 members is generally considered to be sustainable, whilst any green operating with a membership of over 60 may need additional resource to ensure that it is meeting its required level of demand.

Based on the above, capacity ratings for bowling greens in Walsall are classified as follows:

- ✦ Within capacity range: Membership ensures green is sustainable without capacity issues
- ✦ Outside capacity range: Membership is below or above the recommended capacity range

Following this, the table below highlights the level of usage each green in Walsall receives, where the information is known. Where no membership information is known, further communication is required with clubs to fully understand their needs and any potential capacity or sustainability issues.

Table 10.7: Supply and demand balance of bowling greens in Walsall

Site ID	Site	No. of greens	Club user	Current members	Future demand
11	Bentley Road North Playing Field	2	Breakaways BC	21	21
16	Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club	1	Bloxwich Stafford Road BC	94	94
26	Darlaston Community Association	1	-	0	0
42	King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich)	1	Benton Senior Citizens BC	32	32
44	Leamore Park	1	Leamore & Blakenall BC	27	27
47	LMRCA Sports Club	1	British Rail BC	Unknown	Unknown
51	Oak Park Leisure Centre	1	Brownhills & Oak Park BC	34	34
56	Pleck Park	1	Pleck Sons & Daughters of Rest BC	26	26
68	Shelfield Playing Field	1	-	0	0
83	Walsall Arboretum	1	Leckie Senior Citizens BC	12	12

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Site ID	Site	No. of greens	Club user	Current members	Future demand
84	Walsall Cricket Club	1	-	0	0
93	Willenhall Memorial Park	1	-	0	0
105	Streetly Sports Club	1	Streetly BC	60	60
106	Amery Bowls Club	1	Amery BC	41	41
107	Bloxwich Bowls Club	1	Bloxwich BC; Palfrey & Caldmore Senior Citizens BC	74	74
108	Pelsall Community Centre	1	Pelsall BC	68	88
109	Rushall Labour Club	1	Rushall Labour BC	24	24
110	Lichfield Road Bowls Club	1	Lichfield Road BC	24	24
111	Aldridge Community Centre	1	Anchor Meadow BC	34	34
112	Anchorage 55+ Club	1	Anchorage 55 BC	Unknown	Unknown
113	Aldridge Library	1	Aldridge Cons BC; Aldridge Cons B BC	39	39
114	Queslett BC	1	Queslett BC	Unknown	Unknown
115	Short Heath Liberal Club	1	Short Heath RBL BC & Chart BC	111	111
116	Streetly Methodise Recreation Centre	1	Streetly Methodist BC	22	22
117	Trinity Bowls Club	1	Willenhall Trinity BC	74	74
118	Yale Bowls Club	1	Elay BC	35	35
119	Willenhall Liberal Club	1	Willenhall Nordley BC	46	46
121	Stan Ball Centre	1	-	0	0

Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold. These are:

- ✦ Bloxwich Bowls Club
- ✦ Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club
- ✦ Pelsall Community Centre
- ✦ Short Heath Liberal Club
- ✦ Trinity Bowls Club

Demand at these sites should continue to be monitored to ensure that the provision remains sufficient to meet demand, especially for Pelsall BC given its future demand aspirations.

In addition, consideration must be given to Willenhall Nordley BC given its ambition to acquire an additional green. Further exploration is required to explore why this is the case as purely from a membership perspective, the current provision should be able to comfortably accommodate demand.

At the other end of the spectrum, only Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to safeguard provision. Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability.

Four greens are unused. There may be opportunities to repurpose these for other sports and leisure opportunities, or to use them as strategic reserve for some of the larger clubs.

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Bowls – supply and demand summary

- ◀ Five sites are currently operating above the recommended capacity threshold for a bowling green.
- ◀ One green is operating below the required membership threshold (Walsall Arboretum).
- ◀ Four greens are unused.

Bowls – supply summary

- ◀ There are 29 crown green bowls greens in Walsall provided across 28 sites.
- ◀ Overall, 26 greens are assessed as good quality and three as standard quality (none are assessed as poor quality).
- ◀ Five greens are serviced by floodlighting.
- ◀ Ancillary provision accompanying the greens is generally adequate, although some improvements and particularly modernisation is required at certain sites.

Bowls – demand summary

- ◀ There are 26 clubs using bowling greens in Walsall and they collectively cater for 901 members (at the 23 clubs where membership is known).
- ◀ The average membership across the clubs is 40.
- ◀ In correlation to a national trend of declining membership, four clubs report a reduction in participation over recent years, whereas Willenhall Trinity BC reports an increase.
- ◀ Due to a predicted increase in persons aged 65 and over (to 2039), demand is likely to increase for greens over the coming years.
- ◀ Pelsall BC expresses future demand, equating to potential growth of 10 senior members and 10 junior members, whilst all remaining responsive clubs are focusing on membership retention.
- ◀ Willenhall Nordley BC indicates that it requires an additional green to enable it to increase its demand.

PART 11: CYCLING

11.1: Introduction

British Cycling is the governing body for all forms of cycling. It oversees six sporting disciplines, with each having a dedicated facility type:

- ◆ Track cycling – velodromes
- ◆ Road cycling – closed road circuits
- ◆ Mountain biking – trails
- ◆ BMX racing – race/pump tracks
- ◆ Cycle speedway – cycle speedway tracks
- ◆ Cyclocross – non-dedicated, non-permanent venues

British Cycling aids in the development of all six formats, helping to safeguard those that wish to participate in a competitive and compelling environment. The popularity of cycling has increased since recent, elite sporting success in the Olympics and Paralympics as well as in other major championships.

In 2016, the West Midlands Combined Authority proposed a 'Black Country Walking and Cycling Strategy and Implementation Plan' aiming to raise levels of cycling to 5% of all trips by 2023. The project was outlined to address the matter that historically the West Midlands region had fewer people choosing to cycle to work than other metropolitan regions.

Broad cycling specific aims of the project the project included:

- ◆ Making cycling inviting and attractive to everyone
- ◆ Making cycling safe and secure
- ◆ Making cycling easy and intuitive
- ◆ Normalising cycling to reduce inequalities

Key outlined developments for Walsall included:

- ◆ A Wolverhampton to Walsall route through high quality cycling segregation along the A454.
- ◆ A Wednesbury Darlaston and Walsall route of segregated cycle lanes from Wednesbury to Walsall via opened link south of the M6.
- ◆ Converting grass verges to cycle lanes along the A34 Green Lane from Walsall to Bloxwich and the B4151 on Sutton Road from Walsall to Streetly.

Consultation

Information for cycling was gathered through online research and via consultation with British Cycling.

11.2: Supply

There are no identified purpose-built cycling facilities within Walsall. However, across the Black Country region, Wolverhampton features six facilities, whilst Dudley and Sandwell have one facility each.

Whilst the Walsall area may not have any dedicated cycling facilities, it does have several comprehensive cycling routes for many users to utilise. The routes incorporate roads, nature trails and canal towpaths to allow cyclists to access local areas.

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11.3: Demand

The table below identifies British Cycling affiliated clubs operating within Walsall. There are two designated clubs, both of which focus on road cycling. Collectively, they currently cater for 173 declared members.

Table 11.1: Summary of cycling demand across Walsall (where known)

Club name	Total British Cycling members
Pelsall Social Cycling Club	115
Walsall Road Cycling Club	58

Across the Black Country region, there are a number of other cycling clubs, some of which specialise in other disciplines, such as Halesowen Cycling Club in Dudley and Wolverhampton Wheelers, in Wolverhampton. It is likely that these cater for some Walsall based demand.

Latent demand

Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables analysis of 'the percentage of adults that would like to participate in cycling but are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies latent demand of 9,876 people who would like to participate in the sport within Walsall.

In comparison to neighbouring authorities, Dudley has the highest amount of latent demand for cycling when compared to its neighbouring authorities, with Walsall having a slightly higher latent demand than Wolverhampton.

Table 11.2: Comparison of neighbouring Local Authorities latent demand

Neighboring local authorities	Latent demand of adults like to participate in cycling but are not currently doing so
Wolverhampton	9,210
Dudley	12,906
Sandwell	11,449
Walsall	9,876

Notwithstanding the above, it must be noted that latent demand does not account for societal factors or changes in the way people may wish to participate in sport and cannot account for specific targeted development work within certain areas or focused towards certain groups, such as NGB initiatives or coaching within schools. For example, there is a focus by British Cycling to develop youth participation through the HSBC UK Go-Ride or HSBC UK Breeze schemes. This may lead to further increases in demand.

HSBC UK Go-Ride

HSBC UK Go-Ride is a British Cycling's development programme for young people. It offers a fun and safe way to introduce young people to the sport and provides a platform to improve cycling skills.

People can get involved through holiday coaching programmes or through their local accredited club, which allows them to sample the various disciplines of the sport. Progression is obtainable with Go-Ride Racing, offering competition for riders to transition from school or club coaching to inter club and open regional competitions.

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A HSBC UK Go-Ride event took place in Walsall in August 2021 at Walsall Arboretum.
HSBC UK Breeze

HSBC UK Breeze is a British Cycling's development programme for women. It offers three categories easy going, steady and challenging to allow women of all abilities to get involved. The programme offers exercise whilst also creating a comfortable environment to meet new people.

There are currently no HSBC UK Breeze events taking place in Walsall.

11.4: Supply and demand analysis

High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.

With no dedicated cycling facilities in place, any demand for such provision should be directed towards venues and clubs in neighbouring authorities.

Cycling – supply and demand summary

- There is active demand for cycling in Walsall, predominately in the form of road cycling, meaning focus should be placed on ensuring the infrastructure is appropriate.
- With no dedicated cycling facilities in place, any demand for such provision should be directed towards venues and clubs in neighbouring authorities.
- Cycling – supply summary
- There are no purpose built cycling facilities identified in the Walsall area.
- Provision is available in the remaining three Black Country authorities.
- Various infrastructure developments for Walsall are outlined in the Black Country Walking and Cycling Strategy and Implementation Plan'.

Cycling – demand summary

- There are two British Cycling Affiliated Clubs in Walsall; Pelsall Social Cycling Club and Walsall RCC.
- The two clubs are both road cycling clubs and have a combined membership of 173 members.
- Across the Black Country region, there are a number of other cycling clubs, some of which specialise in other disciplines, such as Halesowen Cycling Club in Dudley and Wolverhampton Wheelers, in Wolverhampton.
- There is a small but active contingent involved in Breeze, with rides arranged from Walsall Arboretum.
- Sport England's Segmentation Tool identifies latent demand of 9,876 people who would like to participate in cycling in Walsall.

PART 12: ATHLETICS

12.1: Introduction

As a Governing Body, UK Athletics is responsible for developing and implementing the rules and regulations of athletics, including everything from anti-doping, health and safety, facilities and welfare, to training and education for coaches and officials as well as permitting and licensing.

Locally, the sport is governed through England Athletics, which is the development and membership body for athletics and running clubs in England. It has a National Head of Clubs and Participation as well as a team of five club support managers across the Country, with one of these covering activities in Walsall as part of the Midland region.

Consultation

Two running clubs have been consulted to inform this section of the report; Walsall Arboretum Running Club and Sneyd Striders. Additionally, wider consultation also took place with England Athletics.

12.2: Supply

Consultation with England Athletics reveals that, nationally, no new standard 400-metre athletics tracks are planned to be constructed. Focus is instead on the retention of the existing 200-metre facility. The nearest available 400m track is located at WV Aldersley, Wolverhampton.

In Walsall, there is one purpose-built athletics track at the University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus). It is a 200-metre “J” track with six lanes and a synthetic surface. It is serviced by floodlighting and available for community use.

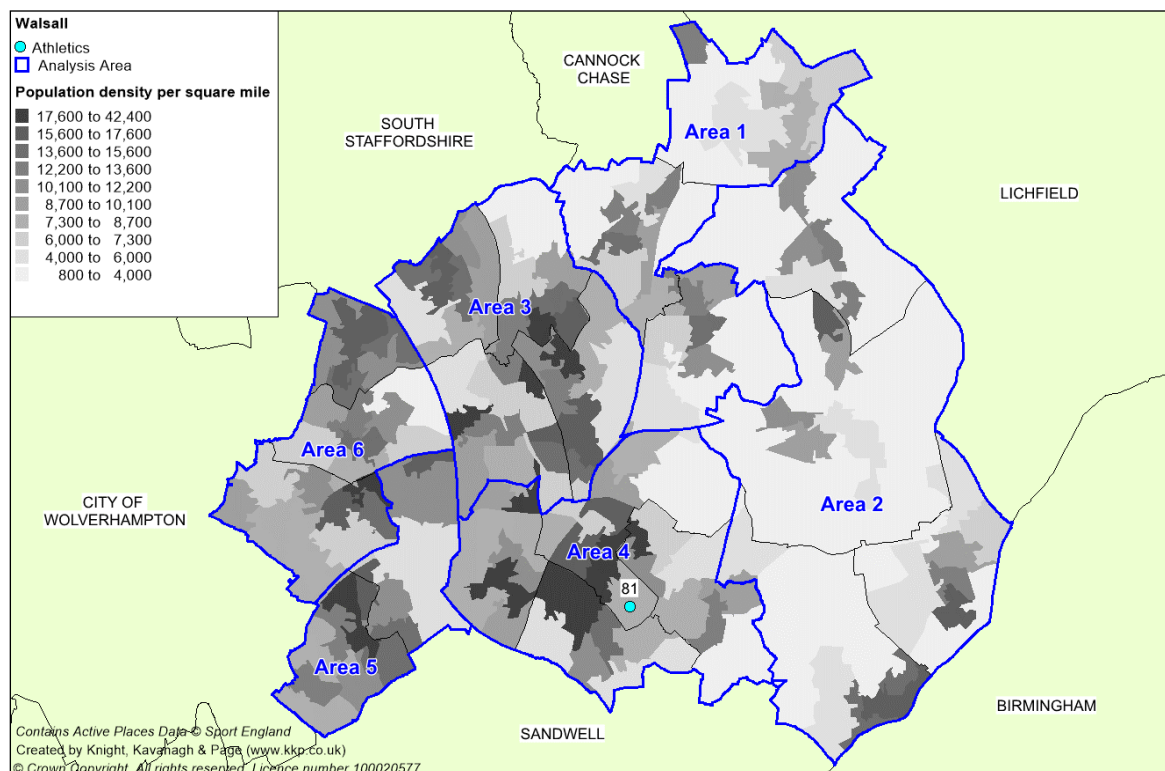
Table 12.1: Summary of athletics tracks in Walsall

Site ID	Site	Postcode	Analysis area	Length	Floodlit?	Community use?
81	The University of Wolverhampton (Walsall campus)	WS1 3BD	Area 4	200 metres	Yes	Yes

As seen, the University of Wolverhampton Walsall campus is in Area 4. For the specific location, please see Figure 12.1.

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Figure 12.1: Location of athletics tracks in Walsall



Management

The 200-metre track is managed in house by the University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus). It is available for community lettings, although no regular community group is identified as using the provision.

Quality

The track at the University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus) was built in 2004 and is yet to be refurbished. Based on the non-technical audit, the track is assessed as standard quality, with some wear and tear issues noted.

For the site assessment criteria, please see Appendix 2. Key factors impacting upon the quality ratings include the condition and age of the track surface, the prominence of the line markings and any signs of wear and tear or unofficial use.

TrackMark

TrackMark is UK Athletics' quality assurance scheme for outdoor track and field athletics facilities. A venue that achieves TrackMark is recognised by UK Athletics as having well managed, compliant facilities that are accessible to participants of all abilities. From 2021, venues that actively choose not to pursue accreditation are not eligible to apply for a competition licence at any level.

In Walsall, the track at the University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus) is not currently accredited and has not started working towards this compliance.

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Ancillary facilities

The University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus) is serviced by a multi-functional social space called the 'performance hub' and a gym, both of which are associated to the University. This provide changing rooms and social spaces and the overall ancillary facility offer is good.

12.3: Demand

For the purposes of this study, athletics demand is considered to come in various forms, rather than just traditional track and field activity. As such, running clubs are also considered, as are organised running events and various running initiatives, some of which are governed by England Athletics. It is also acknowledged that recreational running forms a large part of demand, although this is difficult to measure.

Walsall Arboretum Running Club

The Club caters for both senior and junior members, with current figures equating to 84 senior (21 male and 63 female) and four junior members. It notes that this has reduced over the previous two years, predominately due to the impact of Covid-19.

The Club partake in road running sessions, beginning at Walsall Arboretum and is also part of the England Athletics Run Together initiative (see below).

Aldridge Running Club

Aldridge running club was founded in 1988 and currently accommodates over 200 members, roughly 60 of which frequently attend sessions on Tuesday evenings. The Club meets at Aldridge Stick & Wicket Cricket Club, where it has access to the clubhouse.

The Club, in addition to its running sessions, also offers regular walking sessions, making it more accessible for people of various ages and abilities.

Sneyd Striders

Sneyd Striders is a running Club within Walsall that was founded in 1984. It is based out of Sneyd Community Association in Bloxwich and holds runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays for its members.

Jog Walsall

Jog Walsall offers free of charge running sessions in Walsall to members of the general public. It also forms part of the Run Together initiative and offers 12-week Couch to 5k courses.

Run Together

Run Together is an official England Athletics recreational running project which aims to get the whole nation running. Its aim is to provide fun, friendly, supportive and inclusive running opportunities for everyone, regardless of ability and availability. It believes that running is more fun and easier to become part of a lifestyle when shared with others.

In Walsall, as referenced above, both Walsall Arboretum Running Club and Jog Walsall form part of the programme. A key focus for England Athletics is increasing demand for participation in initiatives such as Run Together, meaning this could be further targeted moving forward, especially given the number of other clubs that could be involved.

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Park Run

Park Run is a series of 5k runs held on Saturday mornings in areas of open space around the UK, with 1,063 events now operating across the Country. They are open to all, free, and are safe and easy to take part in. Runners must first register online in order to access a printed barcode which gives them access to all Park Run events.

In Walsall, a Park Run event is held each week at Walsall Arboretum. It has been held 426 times, with an average attendance of 292 runners.

For those aged between 4 and 14, junior Park Run events are also available, with one held in Walsall every Sunday at King George V Memorial Playing Fields in Bloxwich. This has been held 151 times and averages 41 runners.

Other running events

Another annual running event that takes place in Walsall is the Race for Life 5k and 10k, which is an event organised by Cancer Research UK. This utilises the Walsall Arboretum and takes place in September each year. The Race for Life is a series of runs across the Country that gives people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities the chance to come together to help beat cancer. There are more than 150 held across the UK.

Couch to 5k

Couch to 5k is a national health initiative promoted by the National Health Service (NHS) to encourage absolute beginners get into running as part of establishing and maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle including regular exercise.

The plan consists of three runs per week and a day of rest in between, with a different schedule for each of the nine weeks to completion. It starts with a mix of running and walking, to gradually build up fitness and stamina, in order to create realistic expectations and a sense of achievability to encourage participants to stick with it. The end goal of the plan is for the participant to be able to run 5k.

Through the Couch to 5k plan the NHS particularly promotes the health benefits of running and regular exercise which underpin the initiative, such as improved heart and lung health, weight loss and possible increases in bone density which can help protect against bone diseases such as osteoporosis. This also includes mental benefits of running through goal setting and challenge setting, which can help boost confidence and self-belief. Furthermore, running regularly has been linked to combating depression.

It is believed that an increase in people running through the Couch to 5k plan may increase interest and possibly have a knock-on effect of leading to increased demand at running groups and clubs as people may wish to continue develop their running further.

In December 2020, Jog Walsall delivered a 12-week Couch to 5k programme that was then extended in order to enable accessibility for more participants. The Club regularly runs five couch to 5k sessions for each school term over a 12 week programme which receives over 100 sign ups.

Latent/unmet demand

Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables analysis of 'the percentage of adults that would like to participate in athletics but 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies significant latent demand amounting to 4,999 people within Walsall, which is above the level of Wolverhampton (4,731 people) but below the levels in Dudley (6,335 people) and Sandwell (5,955 people).

No clubs express any latent or unmet demand. Of those consulted, all are open to welcoming new members. With no dedicated facility accessed, there are no real capacity limits, with the number of coaches and volunteers the most preventative factor.

Future demand

All clubs consulted with express an aspiration to grow membership, although the majority state that this is difficult to quantify as they will do their utmost to not turn demand away. Walsall Arboretum Running Club in particular is keen to grow its demand.

In addition, England Athletics also believes that demand is likely to increase in the future, particularly for initiatives such as Park Run, although again to what extent is difficult to quantify.

12.4: Supply and demand analysis

There is only one dedicated athletics facility in Walsall; however, with this being unused by clubs, no perceived demand has been identified. As such, supply is sufficient, although quality improvements may be required in the near future to accommodate the University's own demand.

Away from the University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus), priority should be placed on supporting activity being accommodated by the various running clubs in Walsall and the events that are being held.

Athletics – supply and demand summary

- ◆ The supply of dedicated athletics facilities is sufficient to meet demand, although quality improvements may be required in the near future.
- ◆ Priority should be placed on supporting activity being accommodated by the various running clubs in Walsall and the events that are being held.

Athletics – supply summary

- ◆ There is one purpose-built athletics track in Walsall, provided at the University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus).
- ◆ The venue provides a 200-metre "J" track with six lanes; it has a synthetic surface, is serviced by floodlighting and is available to the community.
- ◆ The track is standard quality with resurfacing required in the near future.
- ◆ It is serviced by good quality ancillary facilities.

Athletics – demand summary

- ◆ Four clubs have been identified that have a current focus on athletics and/or running activity, with none of these having a requirement for a purpose-built facility.
- ◆ None of the clubs consulted with have a waiting list in place and all clubs are open to gaining new members.
- ◆ Walsall Arboretum Running Club and Jog Walsall form part of the Run Together initiative.
- ◆ A Park Run event is held each week at Walsall Arboretum, whilst a junior Park Run event is held every Sunday at King George V Memorial Fields in Bloxwich.
- ◆ Annual events held in include the Walsall Run and the Race for Life.

PART 13: GOLF

13.1: Introduction

Golf is the fifth largest participation sport in England, with around 730,000 members belonging to one of 1,800 affiliated clubs and a further two million people playing independently outside of club membership. There are an estimated 3,000 golf courses across the Country, with approximately 90 designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest because apart from the intensively managed trees and greens they have other habitats with high wildlife value. Many other courses also exist within designated Heritage Coast sites, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or listed Historic Parklands.

Nationally, the sport is governed by England Golf. Its role includes providing competitions for players of all ages and abilities, identifying and developing the most talented golfers, maintaining a uniform system of handicapping, administering and applying the rules, and introducing new golfers via its initiatives such as 'Get into Golf'.

Consultation

The section was informed via consultation with England Golf, which has provided information relating to all facilities and clubs within Walsall.

13.2: Supply

There are three different types of golf facilities recognised by Sport England and governed by England Golf, as defined in the table below. Facilities such as pitch and putt courses and miniature/crazy golf courses are not included as these are not considered to be traditional formats of the game and are not comparable offerings.

Table 13.1: Definitions of golf facilities

Facility type	Description
Standard	A standard par course, with a minimum of 9 holes but normally associated with 18-hole courses; many 9-hole courses have different tee boxes which allow the provision to be played as an 18-hole course. Some courses provide 27 holes, with any two loops of 9-holes played to make up an 18-hole round.
Par 3	Shorter length of holes than a standard course, with no hole longer than Par 3. Most likely to be a 9-hole course although 18-hole offerings do exist. Does not include pitch and putt courses, which are even shorter offerings and are not considered to be a traditional version of the sport.
Driving Range	Includes covered and uncovered driving range bays but not practice areas within golf courses; ranges are based on the hiring of balls, with users not required to retrieve, whereas practice areas are generally for members to use with their own balls (although a growing number have dispensers). Does not include 'entertainment' ranges or virtual offerings, although some driving ranges have expanded to also provide these features.

Within Walsall, there are eight golf venues that provide facilities conforming with the above definitions, as identified in Table 13.1 and Table 13.2 below.

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Figure 13.1: Location of golf courses in Walsall

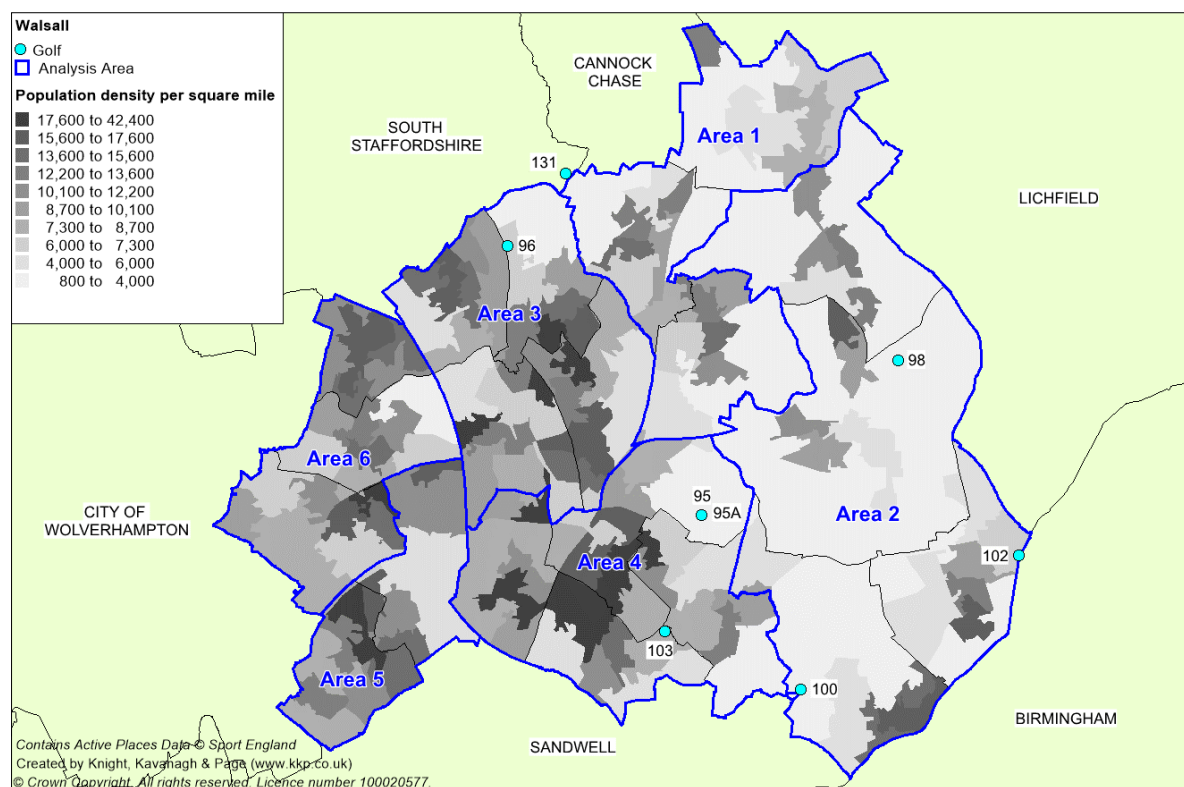


Table 13.2: Golf facilities within Walsall

Site ID	Site name	Postcode	Authority
95	Calderfields Driving Range, Aldridge Road	WS4 2JS	Area 4
95A	Calderfields Golf and Country Club, Aldridge Road	WS4 2JS	Area 4
96	Bloxwich Golf Club	WS3 3PQ	Area 3
98	Druids Heath Golf Club Ltd	WS9 8JZ	Area 2
100	Great Barr Golf Club	B43 7BA	Area 2
102	Sutton Coldfield Golf Club	B74 3ER	OUTSIDE
103	Walsall Golf Club	WS1 3EY	Area 4
131	Fishley Park Leisure Centre	WS3 5AE	OUTSIDE

Standard hole golf courses

Six of the eight of the golf sites within Walsall provide a standard hole course, all of which are 18-hole courses.

Druids Heath Golf Club provides the longest offering at 6,705 yards, whilst the shortest course is Bloxwich Golf Club. Shorter courses tend to offer some variety that may appeal more so to a defined market that would not feel comfortable playing lengthier provision e.g. beginner and/or casual golfers.

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Table 13.3: Summary of standard hole provision in Walsall

Site ID	Site name	Holes	Par	Championship tee yardage	Men's tee yardage	Women's tee yardage	Slope rating
95A	Calderfields Golf and Country Club, Aldridge Road	18	72	6,379	6,123	5,384	-
96	Bloxwich Golf Club	18	71	6,329	6,113	5,361	110-113
98	Druids Heath Golf Club Ltd	18	72	6,705	6,346	5,730	127-131
100	Great Barr Golf Club	18	72	6,519	6,311	5,701	113-115
102	Sutton Coldfield Golf Club	18	72	6,548	6,202	5,660	128-137
103	Walsall Golf Club	18	70	6,259	5,988	5,592	126-129

As evident, there are no standard hole 9-hole courses in Walsall. Nationally, many 9-hole courses are shorter than the front or back nine of an 18-hole course, primarily to attract and cater for a different userbase.

Slope ratings

Slope ratings are new to golf across the World. The intention is for them to allow the handicap system to reflect course difficulty and the difference in difficulty for all players compared to scratch golfers. In effect, this enables each player to have a handicap that will vary from course-to-course, depending on difficulty, as well as a general handicap.

The maximum slope rating is 155, whereas the minimum is 55. The standard difficulty is considered to be 113, which means that six of the identified golf courses within Walsall are considered to be more difficult than the mean. Only Bloxwich Golf Club is considered slightly easier with a slope rating of 110-113 (rating vary depending on which tee is being used).

Par 3 golf holes

Most commonly, Par 3 provision is used by beginner and casual players, although they are also frequented by more traditional golfers wanting to practice their short game. Fishley Park Leisure Centre provides the only Par 3 provision locally. This is located in South Staffordshire.

Driving range bays

Calderfields Driving Range, Aldridge Road provides a covered 30-bay driving range, in addition to its standard hole course, whilst Fishley Park Leisure Centre offers 14 covered bays.

Both ranges are available for anyone to use on a pay and play basis and provision is serviced by floodlighting to allow all-year round and late evening usage at both sites.

It has come to light that the Calderfields Driving Range, Aldridge Road, is under threat having been included as part of a wider housing allocation in the Black Country Plan Review. England Golf have reported that the loss of this facility would have a significant impact on this provision as it is at the start of the golf participation pathway, and the NGB states that it would resist its loss without equitable replacement.

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Table 13.3: Summary of driving range bays in Walsall

Site ID	Site name	No. of bays	Floodlit?	Pay and play?
95	Aldridge Road Driving Range, Aldridge Road	30	Yes	Yes
131	Fishley Park Leisure Centre	14	Yes	Yes

Aldridge Road Driving Range, Aldridge Road, also offers customers ball tracking technology. Nationally, many driving range providers are updating their facilities with such provision in a bid to increase demand. Others also seek the installation of automatic tees or entertainment systems such as TopTracer and FlightScope. These allows for users to simulate playing on courses across the world and provides ball tracking and statistical feedback.

Management and ownership

There are three main types of ownership and management models of golf facilities in England: members clubs, proprietary clubs, and municipal facilities. Each of these is summarised in the table below.

Table 13.4: Types of ownership and management of golf facilities

Management type	Description
Members	Traditionally owned by members and run by committees. They are likely to hire caterers and green staff. Most members' clubs offer some level of pay and play and encourage golf societies but are mostly focused on membership numbers.
Proprietary	Owned or managed by businesses or individuals, these can include country club type facilities at the high end of the golfing market alongside more localised facilities. Many have clubs operating within them but can also take a much more relaxed attitude to dress and traditions of golf. Pay and play opportunities tend to be a key feature of the business plan.
Municipal	These are generally owned by a local authority, although in a growing number of instances, management has been contracted and externalised to private companies. Due to a lack of financial viability, many have closed across the Country in recent years and many that remain are under threat.

It is recognised that members clubs and visitors to such clubs are normally expected to dress appropriately, have a registered handicap certificate (a certificate issued by the Council of National Golf Unions (CONGU)) and be familiar with the rules and etiquette of the game. This is not uncommon at some proprietary clubs, but municipal courses tend to be more relaxed with regard to dress codes and do not require people to have handicaps, making golf much more accessible.

Consequently, municipal courses are, in many instances, seen as entry level facilities, with players using them before having the confidence to move on to a members' or high-end proprietary club (although many people can and do stay attached to a particular course). They also tend to offer a more affordable golfing experience.

The business model for members clubs tends to rely heavily on income through membership subscriptions and use of ancillary facilities, rather than from pay and play usage, although attention has somewhat switched at many sites in recent years due to demand falling. The same can be said for some proprietary clubs, although, in general, more emphasis is placed on supplementing regular activity with green fee sales.

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Conversely, municipal sites have always been heavily reliant on visitors even though membership packages are normally available (often in the shape of season tickets). On occasion, these can be linked to access to other local authority operated sports facilities, such as leisure centres and swimming pools.

Despite the above generalisations, each golf facility, regardless of management type, will have its own processes in terms of how much focus is placed on membership and pay and play usage, or whether it equally encourages both. There is no correct way to run a site. A club that focuses on members has guaranteed income, but this can often deter more casual players or nomadic golfers through, for example, a lack of peak time availability.

In contrast, a site that depends on visitors can struggle to be viable if there are spells of inclement weather during summer months and can discourage people that want to be part of a club environment. On the other hand, more income can be brought in through regular users compared to what would be the case had they been part of a membership scheme.

In Walsall, there are five members clubs and two proprietary clubs; there are no municipal facilities.

Table 13.5: Summary of ownership/management in Walsall

Site ID	Site name	Management type
95	Aldridge Road Driving Range, Aldridge Road	Proprietary
95A	Calderfields Golf and Country Club, Aldridge Road	Proprietary
96	Bloxwich Golf Club	Members
98	Druids Heath Golf Club Ltd	Members
100	Great Barr Golf Club	Members
102	Sutton Coldfield Golf Club	Members
103	Walsall Golf Club	Members
131	Fishley Park Leisure Centre	Proprietary

Neither Aldridge Road Driving Range, Aldridge Road, nor Fishley Park Leisure Centre are affiliated to England Golf. This means that any competitions held at these sites are not governed by the NGB and do not qualify for handicap certifications or changes; however, it also means that any members of the associated club can save on yearly subscription fees (annual affiliation to England Golf is compulsory for members of affiliated clubs, costing £9.50 in 2021). Non-affiliation is most commonly the case at venues that have a focus on informal activity.

Sutton Coldfield Golf Club was previously home to two clubs; both Sutton Coldfield Golf Club and Sutton Coldfield Ladies Golf Club. However, these have recently merged to create a single entity. The clubhouse facility servicing the Club is based in Walsall, but the course itself, based across the road to the site in Sutton Park falls within Birmingham.

Pricing

A key issue for the wider golf population is whether golf courses are available to the general population at a price point which is accessible to the majority of residents. Better quality courses tend to cost more to use, whilst 18-hole provision is generally more expensive to access than 9-hole provision.

Nationally, over the past few years, many facilities have altered their pricing structures to allow for discounts following a previous decline in golf membership.

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England Golf has positively encouraged this as its view is that clubs are more likely to experience growth when flexible packages are available.

For instance, some now offer five and/or six-day memberships (whereby members can access the course on specific days but not on one or both weekend days), whilst others provide discounts that are no longer limited solely to junior players (e.g. discounts for those aged 18-21 and 21-30 or for those aged 65 and over). In the past, it was common for clubs to have membership waiting lists, although for a time, this did decline, it has now become more prominent.

England Golf reports that the average cost of a full adult membership across the Country is currently £901.00. In Walsall, Druids Heath Golf Club, Walsall Golf Club, Bloxwich Golf Club and Great Barr Golf Club all operate above this figure with costs at all sites exceeding £1,000 per year, suggesting that these facilities are relatively high-end. In the case of the more opulent Bloxwich Golf Club, members are also charged a £1,000 joining fee, emphasising the exclusivity of the site.

At the other end of the scale, there are no clubs within Walsall that offer membership rates below the national average. Whilst membership rates at Sutton Coldfield Golf Club are unknown, it is likely it sits above the national average judging it on its green fee rates. Neither Aldridge Driving Range, Aldridge Road, nor Fishley Park Leisure Centre offer a membership scheme.

Green fees are available at all sites. Pricing for weekday access at conventional clubs varies from £35.00 at Walsall Golf Club to £60.00 at Sutton Coldfield Golf Club, with this increasing from £45.00 at Great Barr Golf Club to £70.00 at Sutton Coldfield Golf Club during weekends. For the proprietary facilities, the costs reduces substantially, with Fishley Park Leisure Centre in particularly offering a significantly lower green fee rate of £4.00 on weekdays and £5.00 on weekends. This will partly be due to the site being a Par-3 course.

Table 13.6: Pricing structures at golf facilities within Walsall

Site ID	Site name	Joining fee	Full membership (per year)	Weekday Green fee (per round) ¹³	Weekend Green fee (per round) ¹⁴
95	Aldridge Driving Range, Aldridge Road	-	£950.00	£15.00	£20.00
96	Bloxwich Golf Club	£1000.00	£1172.25	£40.00	£50.00
98	Druids Heath Golf Club Ltd	£500.00	£1145.00	£50.00	£70.00
100	Great Barr Golf Club	-	£1180.00	£40.00	£45.00
102	Sutton Coldfield Golf Club	Unknown	Unknown	£60.00	£65.00
103	Walsall Golf Club	£500.00	£1178.00	£35.00	-
131	Fishley Park Leisure Centre	-	-	£4.00	£5.00

Quality

There are no official national or county golf facility rankings. Generally, the better course quality and supporting infrastructure is, the higher the joining/membership and green fees are likely to be. Some sites gain status through hosting county, national and international golf events and some tend to feature in ranking articles put together by golf magazines.

¹³ Where more than one course is provided, the price displayed is for the larger course.

¹⁴ Where more than one course is provided, the price displayed is for the larger course.

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In terms of golf course quality in Walsall, it is relatively good across the sites, with no significant issues identified. However, quality is, for obvious reasons, better at the likes of Sutton Coldfield Golf Club (Birmingham) when compared to Fishley Park Leisure Centre (South Staffordshire), with more sophisticated and regular maintenance regimes.

The ancillary facilities across Walsall are also generally good. The clubhouse at Bloxwich Golf Club is a grade II listed building that earned this status in 1986, whilst Sutton Coldfield Golf Club is also accompanied by a grade II listed building.

Golf clubs often need such revenue sources to operate effectively and the provision of a good quality, well equipped clubhouse is a key opportunity to provide a secondary income stream. This emanates from a variety of sources including bar and catering income from members and visitors as well as venue hire for special occasions including weddings, christenings and funerals.

From a golfing perspective, given the current emphasis on increasing levels of female and junior golf membership across the Country, it is also imperative that ancillary provision can adequately cater for all types of members e.g. by providing gender specific changing facilities.

13.3: Demand

Around 2004, participation in golf began declining; however, recent signs show that the reduction has not only levelled off, but that demand has started to increase, especially following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, both in 2020 and 2021. As one of the first sports to be allowed on both occasions, people have been able to play whilst maintaining social distancing and England Golf has provided very clear guidance as to how this should manifest itself (e.g. by not allowing the flag to be taken out or rakes to be used). Some courses have reported a near doubling of usual demand compared to pre-pandemic levels, highlighting that a significant opportunity now exists to retain increased participation in the long-term. An opportunity now exists for this to represent a long-term increase in demand, although to what level is unclear as retention may in some instances be challenging as more and more users return to normal working/living conditions.

Membership

England Golf suggests that the average membership of a golf club nationally is 386, which is based on a central national handicap platform. In Walsall, the table below provides the most recent membership numbers of the golf facilities within Walsall, based on latest England Golf affiliation data. Across the clubs, there are 3,470 members, representing an average of 578 per club.

Table 13.7: Summary of golf membership within Walsall

Site ID	Site name	No. of members
95	Aldridge Driving Range, Aldridge Road	N/A
95A	Calderfields Country & Country Club	532
96	Bloxwich Golf Club	665
98	Druids Heath Golf Club Ltd	614
100	Great Barr Golf Club	621
102	Sutton Coldfield Golf Club	582
103	Walsall Golf Club	456
131	Fishley Park Leisure Centre	N/A

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As seen, Calderfields Golf & Country Club is operating below the national average for membership, with 335 members. That being said, none of the sites have a particularly low membership, with levels below 200 common at other sites across the Black Country and nationally.

The remaining clubs with a membership scheme are operating above the national membership, most significantly at Druids Heath Golf Club, which has 550 members.

Membership trends

Information received from England Golf suggests that the average membership per club is now 551, although club-by-club figures are not available. This represents a significant increase in relation to the above data. This is likely to be due to growth following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.

Pay and play

Whilst pay and play usage has generally increased across England in recent years, usage figures at the sites within Walsall are not known as it is not something that is tracked by England Golf. However, it is likely to be highest at sites such as Calderfields Golf & Country Club and Fishley Park Leisure Centre given the operational structures in place and the lower price points.

Unmet demand

Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to golf facilities. This could be reflected via a waiting list at a club, although it is likely that people on a waiting list are still playing golf elsewhere, either via membership of another club or through pay and play access. As such, unmet demand in Walsall is considered to be minimal, with none of the sites having any known capacity concerns. No waiting lists are in place.

Latent demand

Latent demand is demand for golf that is not currently being realised. This could be for numerous reasons, such as time constraints, financial reasons and a lack of suitable, available provision. To that end, Sport England's Segmentation Tool enables analysis of 'the percentage of adults that would like to participate in golf but 'are not currently doing so'. The tool identifies latent demand of 2,214 people in Walsall.

Whilst the reasoning for the latent demand is unknown and is likely to be varied, the data does show relatively high demand which would significantly increase membership and/or pay and play usage across facilities if realised. England Golf is supportive of clubs that proactively target new audiences in an attempt to tap into such demand i.e. through developing a variety of golfing offers, coaching programmes and a range of membership options.

In addition, England Golf has a mapping tool that enables an assessment of potential demand within a 20-minute drive time of each golf facility, with the population broken down into nine golfing segments.

These segments are defined to help provide an indication as to what type of golfing offer each would be most likely to access. They are:

- ◀ Relaxed members
- ◀ Older traditionalists
- ◀ Younger traditionalists
- ◀ Younger fanatics

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- ◀ Younger actives
- ◀ Late enthusiasts
- ◀ Occasional time pressed
- ◀ Social couples
- ◀ Casual fun

The demand for each of the sites is relatively evenly split across the nine segments; the highest demand is from “younger traditionalists” (173,141 people), whilst the lowest is from “older traditionalists” (137,833 people).

Across Walsall, Great Barr Golf Club is identified as having the largest potential demand with 223,838 people falling within the segments within a 20-minute drive time, followed by Walsall Golf Club (189,563). Druids Heath has the smallest potential demand with 86,901 people.

Future demand

England Golf has an aim to increase membership of clubs nationally. It has no fixed targets and in reality, each facility will have different aspirations in terms of future growth. England Golf reports that many of the clubs are proactively targeting new audiences through coaching programmes and wider range of membership and playing options.

13.4: Supply and demand analysis

With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.

Notwithstanding the above, demand is also high, particularly given the recent membership increases reported by England Golf. As such, each venue should be protected and supported, including the driving range provision. The only site this may not apply to is Fishley Park Leisure Centre given that it has no membership scheme in place, with further interrogation required to fully determine its demand.

To protect and support the facilities, England Golf can offer assistance, primarily through a variety of tools that can be used to better understand the local market. There may also be opportunities for some clubs across the area to work more collaboratively in terms of creating pathways where appropriate to collectively cater for all types of players.

Golf – supply and demand summary

- ◀ Walsall has a reasonable supply of golf provision, with a variety of facilities available and with capacity for growth.
- ◀ As no clubs have a significantly low membership and as levels have recently increased, it is apparent that each venue is required, meaning that each facility should be protected and supported to ensure long-term sustainability.

Golf – supply summary

- ◀ There are currently eight golf sites in Walsall.
- ◀ Six sites provide a standard hole course, all of which are 18-hole courses.
- ◀ A Par 3 course is provided at Fishley Park Leisure Centre.
- ◀ Aldridge Driving Range, Aldridge Road, provides a 30-bay driving range, whilst Fishley Park Leisure Centre offers a 14-bay driving range; both are covered and floodlit.

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- ◆ Five sites are members clubs, whilst Aldridge Road Driving Range, Calderfields Golf & Country Club and Fishley Park Leisure Centre are proprietary facilities.
- ◆ All clubs with a membership scheme in place (Fishley Park Leisure Centre does not operate membership) operate above the national average for membership costs.
- ◆ In terms of quality, it is relatively good across Walsall with a range of facilities available for players of differing abilities.

Golf – demand summary

- ◆ Across the clubs with a membership scheme in place, there are 3,470 members.
- ◆ All clubs are operating above the national average for membership.
- ◆ Furthermore, England Golf reports that membership has increased considerably over the last 12-18 months, with the average membership across the sites now 551 (compared to 444.8 when the data was collected).
- ◆ England Golf's mapping tool identifies a significant amount of potential demand, with Great Barr Golf Club shown to have a particularly high population base.
- ◆ Pay and play usage is unknown but is likely to be highest at sites such as Aldridge Road Driving Range (Calderfields Golf & Country Club) and Fishley Park Leisure Centre given the operational structures in place and the lower price points.

PART 14: OUTDOOR WATER SPORTS

Water sports in England are governed by various bodies, including:

- ✦ British Canoe Union
- ✦ British Kite Surfing Association
- ✦ British Rowing
- ✦ British Sub-Aqua Club
- ✦ British Swimming
- ✦ British Water Ski
- ✦ Royal Yachting Association
- ✦ Surfing Great Britain

Chasewater Water Sports Centre (Cannock Chase), Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe and Outdoor Centre and The Swag offer various opportunities to participate in water sports within Walsall and represent key venues for water sports across the region.

14.1: Supply

Chasewater Water Sports Centre (Cannock Chase) provides facilities that are compatible with several water sports, including:

- ✦ Barefoot skiing
- ✦ Knee boarding
- ✦ Slalom skiing
- ✦ Trick skiing
- ✦ Wakeboarding
- ✦ Wake surfing

The site uses Chasewater Country Park (Cannock Chase) for all activities. In addition, the site is serviced by a lakeside bar and cafe which offers meals and functions, as well as a designated changing facility and car park.

Sneyd Water Activity Centre caters for the following water sports:

- ✦ Canoeing
- ✦ Kayaking
- ✦ Powerboating
- ✦ Sailing
- ✦ Windsurfing

The site uses Sneyd Community Association for all activities, which features DDA compliant changing rooms and a dining area.

Brownhills Canoe and Outdoor Centre a canal running through Walsall, used by Royal Sutton Coldfield Canoe Club, whereas The Swag is a reservoir within Walsall used by Aldridge Sailing Club. The former has private mooring rings/bollards, toilets and a gated car park, whereas the latter features a large dinghy park, car parking areas, two slipways with jetty's and one dedicated safety boat slipway. It also contains a building designated to Aldridge Sailing Club.

14.2: Demand

The identified water sports facilities are home to numerous clubs, as follows:

- ♦ Aldridge Sailing Club
- ♦ Chase Open Water Swimming Club
- ♦ Chase Sailing Club
- ♦ Pier 52
- ♦ Royal Sutton Coldfield Canoe Club

Aldridge Sailing Club

Aldridge Sailing Club use The Swag reservoir for all its sailing activity. The Club offers free taster sessions to new members and hold races on Friday's and Sundays throughout the year and on Wednesday evenings during summer.

Family membership rates are priced at £216 per year, whilst single membership rates are £192 (junior and student rates are charged at £60). Daily memberships can also be acquired for £15.

Chase Open Water Swimming Club

Chase Open Water Swimming Club utilises Chasewater Water Sports Centre to undertake beginner, intermediate and advanced sessions. Prices are £7 per swim and take place on Thursdays and Saturdays. All members must be registered with NOWCA¹⁵ to take part in sessions.

Chase Sailing Club

Chase Sailing Club utilise Chasewater Water Sports Centre as its home facility, with the Club offering sailing, windsurfing and paddleboarding to its members. The Club takes part in racing sessions on Wednesday's and Saturday's as well as social events throughout the year.

Membership costs £204 per year for seniors and £48 per year for juniors.

Pier 52

Pier 52 also utilises Chasewater Water Sports Centre to offer members kayaking, wakeboarding, paddleboarding and Ringo rides. Membership rates are significantly more expensive than at other clubs within Walsall, with a full membership equating to £769 for seniors and £500 for juniors.

Royal Sutton Coldfield Canoe Club

Royal Sutton Coldfield Canoe Club was founded in 1990 and has roughly 100 members. It uses Blackroot Pool in Sutton Park, in Birmingham, as its primary location, but also uses Brownhills Canoe and Outdoor Centre on Wednesdays. This Club is affiliated with the British Canoe Union and Canoe England.

¹⁵ <https://nowca.org/>

14.3: Supply and demand analysis

Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe and Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre (Cannock Chase) also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.

Based on the above, priority should be placed on protecting the provision and ensuring that quality remains sufficient. Given the unique nature of the facilities, support should also be offered to maximise demand, not only from Walsall but from the wider region.

Outdoor water sports – supply and demand summary

- ▶ Via Sneyd Water Activity Centre and The Swag, Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority.
- ▶ Priority should be placed on protecting the provision and ensuring that quality remains sufficient, with support also required to maximise demand given the unique nature of the facilities.
- ▶ Chasewater Water Sports Centre, located outside of Walsall export demand from the borough.

Outdoor water sports – supply summary

- ▶ In addition, Sneyd Water Activity Centre is also used for some water sport activities such as canoeing and power boating, whilst The Swag is a reservoir frequently used for sailing by Aldridge Sailing Club.
- ▶ Brownhills Canoe and Outdoor Centre caters for canoeing within Walsall and is utilised by Royal Sutton Coldfield Canoe Club.
- ▶ Chasewater Water Sports Centre exports demand by providing facilities that are compatible with a number of water sports and other water-related activities.

Outdoor water sports – demand summary

- ▶ Walsall is home to numerous clubs; Aldridge Sailing Club, Chase Sailing Club and Pier 52.
- ▶ Aldridge Sailing Club is based at The Swag reservoir which it utilises for all its activities.
- ▶ Chase Sailing Club and Chase Open Water Swimming Club both use Chasewater Water Sports Centre for its activities, as does Pier 52.
- ▶ Royal Sutton Coldfield Canoe Club operates with 100 members and uses Blackroot Pool, in Birmingham, and Brownhills Canoe and Outdoor Centre as its facility.

PART 15: OTHER GRASS PITCH SPORTS

15.1: American football

Introduction

The British American Football Association (BAFA) is responsible for the governance of the sport which is continuing to grow in popularity in the UK and there are now hundreds of clubs and thousands of players competing regularly across the country.

The American football season in England generally runs from May until August.

Consultation

N/A

Supply

There are no dedicated American football pitches within Walsall and no other sports pitches are used for the sport.

Demand

There has been no identified demand for American football within the Walsall area. In fact, Walsall represents the only authority across the Black Country that has not hosted a dedicated club, with Dudley accommodating the Black Country Vipers, Sandwell offering the Sandwell Steelers and Wolverhampton previously hosting the Wolverhampton Outlaws (now disbanded). This means that the region is well supported and it is likely that some isolated demand from Walsall is being catered for outside of the authority.

Supply and demand analysis

With no dedicated facilities or substantial demand for the sport identified, American football should not be identified as a sport for the Council to prioritise. It is, however, imperative that any demand that does exist is directed to clubs in neighbouring authorities to ensure that it is catered for.

15.2: Baseball/softball

Introduction

Baseball and softball are both governed by Baseball and Softball UK (BSUK), which is currently aiming to build the number of teams playing regularly throughout the country. Baseball is played between two teams of nine players, which take turns batting and fielding across nine innings, whilst softball has two varieties: slow-pitch softball and fast-pitch softball. Both sports in England operate from April until September.

Consultation

N/A

Supply

No baseball/softball pitches are evident in Walsall.

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Demand

No baseball/softball clubs are identified in Walsall.

Across the Black Country authorities, both Dudley and Wolverhampton have a baseball club. It is possible that some isolated demand from Walsall is being accommodated within these, although only senior teams are currently fielded.

Supply and demand analysis

It is likely that any demand for baseball or softball is being accommodated in neighbouring authorities. As such, the sports should not be considered a priority for development.

15.3: Gaelic football

Britain GAA is the Provincial Council of Gaelic football and hurling outside of Ireland. It is made up of seven counties, with Walsall and the other Black County authorities falling into the Warwickshire region. The playing season runs from May until August.

Consultation

N/A

Supply

There are no Gaelic football pitches provided in Walsall. Within the Black Country, there is provision in Wolverhampton through St Mary's Gaelic Football Club, whilst numerous pitches are also provided in Birmingham.

Demand

No demand for Gaelic football has been identified in Walsall, with no clubs in existence either currently or historically.

Supply and demand analysis

With no clubs or future demand identified within the area and with Wolverhampton being home to St Mary's Gaelic Football Club, there is no direct actions required relating to Gaelic football in Walsall.

Other grass pitch sports – supply and demand summary

- ◆ As no supply or demand has been identified for any of the sports in Walsall, no development actions are required.
- ◆ It is imperative that any isolated demand is directed towards clubs in neighbouring authorities to ensure that it is catered for without provision being required.

Other grass pitch sports – supply summary

- ◆ There are no American football, baseball/softball or Gaelic football pitches in Walsall.

Other grass pitch sports – demand summary

- ◆ No demand for the sports has been identified.

APPENDIX 1: SPORTING CONTEXT

The following section outlines a series of national, regional and local policies pertaining to the study and which will have an important influence on the Strategy.

National context

The provision of high quality and accessible community outdoor sports facilities at a local level is a key requirement for achieving the targets set out by the Government and Sport England. It is vital that this strategy is cognisant of and works towards these targets in addition to local priorities and plans.

Department of Media Culture and Sport Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation (2015)

The Government published its strategy for sport in December 2015. This strategy confirms the recognition and understanding that sport makes a positive difference through broader means and that it will help the sector to deliver five simple but fundamental outcomes: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development. In order to measure its success in producing outputs which accord with these aims it has also adopted a series of 23 performance indicators under nine key headings, as follows:

- ◀ More people taking part in sport and physical activity.
- ◀ More people volunteering in sport.
- ◀ More people experiencing live sport.
- ◀ Maximising international sporting success.
- ◀ Maximising domestic sporting success.
- ◀ Maximising domestic sporting success.
- ◀ A more productive sport sector.
- ◀ A more financially and organisationally sustainable sport sector.
- ◀ A more responsible sport sector.

Sport England: Uniting the Movement 2021

Sport and physical activity has a big role to play in improving the physical and mental health of the nation, supporting the economy, reconnecting communities and rebuilding a stronger society for all. From this notion, Sport England has recently released its new strategy, Uniting the Movement, its 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity.

It seeks to tackle the inequalities long seen in sport and physical activity. Providing opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind, and helping to remove the barriers to activity, has never been more important.

There are three key objectives to the Strategy:

- ◀ Advocating for movement, sport and physical activity.
- ◀ Joining forces on five big issues
- ◀ Creating the catalyst for change

In particular, the five big issues are identified where the greatest potential is seen for preventing and tackling inequalities in sport and physical activity. Each one is a building block that, on its own, would make a difference, but together, could change things profoundly:

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Recover and reinvent: Recovering from the biggest crisis in a generation and reinventing as a vibrant, relevant and sustainable network of organisations providing sport and physical activity opportunities that meet the needs of different people.

Connecting communities: Focusing on sport and physical activity's ability to make better places to live and bring people together.

Positive experiences for children and young people: Unrelenting focus on positive experiences for all children and young people as the foundations for a long and healthy life.

Connecting with health and wellbeing: Strengthening the connections between sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing, so more people can feel the benefits of, and advocate for, an active life.

Active environments: Creating and protecting the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active.

The specific impact of the Strategy will be captured through programmes funded, interventions made, and partnerships forged. For each specific area of action, a set of key performance indicators will be developed. This hybrid approach will help evidence the overall progress being made by all those involved in supporting sport and physical activity.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out planning policies for England. It details how these changes are expected to be applied to the planning system. It also provides a framework for local people and their councils to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities.

The NPPF states the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It identifies that the planning system needs to focus on three themes of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is a key aspect for any plan-making and decision-taking processes. In relation to plan-making the NPPF sets out that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs.

The 'promoting healthy communities' theme identifies that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficiencies or surpluses in local areas should also be identified. This information should be used to inform what provision is required in an area.

As a prerequisite the NPPF states existing open space, sports and recreation buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- ◀ An assessment has been undertaken, which has clearly shown that the open space, buildings or land is surplus to requirements.
- ◀ The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.
- ◀ The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

In order for planning policies to be 'sound' local authorities are required to carry out a robust assessment of need for open space, sport and recreation facilities.

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The FA National Football Facilities Strategy (2018-28)

The Football Association's (FA) National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS) provides a strategic framework that sets out key priorities and targets for the national game (i.e., football) over a ten-year period.

The Strategy sets out shared aims and objectives it aims to deliver on in conjunction with The Premier League, Sport England and the Government, to be delivered with support of the Football Foundation.

These stakeholders have clearly identified the aspirations for football to contribute directly to nationally important social and health priorities. Alongside this, the strategy is clear that traditional, affiliated football remains an important priority and a core component of the game, whilst recognising and supporting the more informal environments used for the community and recreational game.

Its vision is: *"Within 10 years we aim to deliver great football facilities, wherever they are needed"*

£1.3 billion has been spent by football and Government since 2000 to enhance existing football facilities and build new ones. However, more is needed if football and Government's shared objectives for participation, individual well-being and community cohesion are to be achieved. Nationally, direct investment will be increased – initially to £69 million per annum from football and Government (a 15% increase on recent years).

The NFFS investment priorities can be broadly grouped into six areas, recognising the need to grow the game, support existing players and better understand the different football environments:

- ◀ **Improve 20,000 Natural Turf pitches**, with a focus on addressing drop off due to a poor playing experience;
- ◀ **Deliver 1,000 3G AGP 'equivalents'** (mix of full size and small sided provision, including MUGAs - small sided facilities are likely to have a key role in smaller / rural communities and encouraging multi-sport offers), enhancing the quality of playing experience and supporting a sustainable approach to grass roots provision;
- ◀ **Deliver 1,000 changing pavilions/clubhouses**, linked to multi-pitch or hub sites, supporting growth (particularly in women and girls football), sustainability and providing a facility infrastructure to underpin investment in coaching, officials and football development;
- ◀ **Support access to flexible indoor spaces**, including equipment and court markings, to support growth in futsal, walking football and to support the education and skills outcomes, exploiting opportunities for football to positively impact on personal and social outcomes for young people in particular;
- ◀ **Refurbish existing stock to maintain current provision**, recognising the need to address historic under-investment and issues with refurbishment of existing facilities;
- ◀ **Support testing of technology and innovation**, building on customer insight to deliver hubs for innovation, testing and development of the game.

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The FA: National Game Strategy (2018-2021)

The FA launched its new National Game Strategy in July 2018 which aims to inspire a life-long journey in football for all. To achieve this, the strategy will focus on five key aspects of the game:

- ◀ A high quality introduction to football
- ◀ Developing clubs and leagues
- ◀ Embrace all formats of football and engage all participants
- ◀ Recruit, develop and support the workforce
- ◀ Develop sustainable facilities

Through these five pillars, The FA's objectives are to:

- ◀ Increase the number of male affiliated and recreational players by 10%.
- ◀ Double the number of female affiliated and recreational players via a growth of 75%.
- ◀ Increase the number of disability affiliated and recreational players by 30%.
- ◀ Ensure affiliated Futsal is available across the country in order to increase the number of Futsal affiliated and recreational players.

The sustainable football facilities should provide support to an agreed portfolio of priority projects that meet National Football Facility Strategy (NFFS) investment priorities.

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) Inspiring Generations (2020-2024)

The England and Wales Cricket Board unveiled a new strategic plan in 2019. The strategic plan aims to connect communities and improve lives by inspiring people to discover and share their passion for cricket

The plan sets out six important priorities and activities, these are:

- ◀ ***Grow and nurture the core***
 - ◀ Create an infrastructure investment fund for First Class County Clubs (FCCs)
 - ◀ Introduce a new Community Investment Funding for FCCs and County Cricket Boards (CCBs)
 - ◀ Invest in club facilities
 - ◀ Develop the role of National Counties Cricket
 - ◀ Further invest in County Competitions
- ◀ ***Inspire through elite teams***
 - ◀ Increase investment in the county talent pathway
 - ◀ Incentivise the counties to develop England Players
 - ◀ Drive the performance system through technology and innovation
 - ◀ Create heroes and connect them with a new generation of fans
- ◀ ***Make cricket accessible***
 - ◀ Broaden crickets appeal through the New Competition
 - ◀ Create a new digital community for cricket
 - ◀ Install non-traditional playing facilities in urban areas
 - ◀ Continue to deliver South Asian Action Plans
 - ◀ Launch a new participation product, linked to the New Competition
- ◀ ***Engage children and young people***
 - ◀ Double cricket participation in primary schools
 - ◀ Deliver a compelling and coordinated recreational playing offer from age five upwards
 - ◀ Develop our safeguarding to promote safe spaces for children and young people

- ◀ **Transform women's and girls' cricket**
 - ◀ Grow the base through participation and facilities investment
 - ◀ Launch centres of excellence and a new elite domestic structure
 - ◀ Invest in girls' county age group cricket
 - ◀ Deliver a girls' secondary school programme
- ◀ **Support our communities**
 - ◀ Double the number of volunteers in the game
 - ◀ Create a game-wide approach to Trust and Foundations through the cricket network
 - ◀ Develop a new wave of officials and community coaches
 - ◀ Increase participation in disability cricket

The Rugby Football Union Strategic Plan (2017-2021)

The RFU has released its new strategic vision for rugby in England. The strategy is based on four main elements which are; Protect, Engage, Grow and Win. It covers all elements of rugby union ranging from elite rugby to grassroots, although the general relevancy to the PPS is centred around growing the game.

The RFU exists to promote and develop rugby union in England and ensure the long-term sustainability of clubs by growing player numbers and retaining them across all age groups. Responding to wider market influences, work will continue on developing new ways to take part in all forms of the game, without comprising the sports traditions. This will ensure a lasting legacy from elite success by attracting new players and encouraging current male and female adult players to play.

The four key aims to ensure long term sustainability are to:

- ◀ Improve player transition from age grade to adult 15-a-side rugby
- ◀ Expand places to play through Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs)
- ◀ Engage new communities in rugby
- ◀ Create a community 7's offering

The Rugby Football League Facility Strategy

The RFL's Facilities Strategy was published in 2011. The following themes are prioritised:

- ◀ Clean, Dry, Safe & Playable
- ◀ Sustainable clubs
- ◀ Environmental Sustainability
- ◀ Geographical Spread
- ◀ Non-club Facilities

The RFL Facilities Trust website (www.rflfacilitiestrust.co.uk) provides further information on:

- ◀ The RFL Community Facility Strategy
- ◀ Clean, Dry, Safe and Playable Programme
- ◀ Pitch Size Guidance
- ◀ The RFL Performance Standard for Artificial Grass Pitches
- ◀ Club guidance on the Annual Preparation and Maintenance of the Rugby League Pitch

Further to the Strategy, detail on the following specific programmes of particular relevance to pitches and facility planning are listed below and can be found via the trust link:

- ◀ The RFL Pitch Improvement Programme 2013 – 2017
- ◀ Clean, Dry and Safe programmes 2013 - 2017

Rugby League World Cup 'Inspired by 2021' Legacy Programme

The Rugby League World Cup 2021 will develop a £10 million legacy programme with funds driven into local clubs and community projects. The government investment, delivered by Sport England, is part of an ambitious plan to grow the sport and make it more visible, engaging and welcoming to current and potential participants.

The funding will be split into large transformational community projects, such as changing room improvements and new artificial grass pitches with the remaining funding used for smaller scale initiatives such as supplying new kit and equipment to promote club and community development. The investment will focus on the following four key areas:

- ◀ Creating welcoming environments
- ◀ Encouraging participation growth
- ◀ Building community engagement
- ◀ Cultivating further investment

England Hockey (EH) - A Nation Where Hockey Matters 2013

The vision is for England to be a 'Nation Where Hockey Matters'.

We know that delivering success on the international stage stimulates the nation's pride in their hockey team and, with the right events in place, we will attract interest from spectators, sponsors and broadcasters alike. The visibility that comes from our success and our occasions will inspire young people and adults to follow in the footsteps of their heroes and, if the right opportunities are there to meet their needs, they will play hockey and enjoy wonderful experiences.

Underpinning all this is the infrastructure which makes our sport function. We know the importance of our volunteers, coaches, officials, clubs and facilities. The more inspirational our people can be, the more progressive we can be and the more befitting our facilities can be, the more we will achieve for our sport. England Hockey will enable this to happen and we are passionate about our role within the sport. We will lead, support, counsel, focus and motivate the Hockey Nation and work tirelessly towards our vision.

As a governing body, we want to have a recognisable presence to participants of the game, be that through club or association website or their communications, or through the work of the many outstanding coaches in our game, so that players understand that their club is part of a wider team working together to a common goal.

The core objectives are as follows:

- ◀ Grow our Participation
- ◀ Deliver International Success
- ◀ Increase our Visibility
- ◀ Enhance our Infrastructure
- ◀ For England Hockey to be proud and respected custodians of the sport

Club participation

Our club market is well structured and clubs are required to affiliate to England Hockey to play in community leagues. As a result only relatively few occasional teams lie outside our affiliation structure. Schools and Universities are the other two areas where significant hockey is played.

Hockey is clearly benefiting from a double Olympic legacy. After Great Britain's women won bronze in front of a home crowd in London in 2012 the numbers of young girls playing the sport doubled and a historic gold in Rio 2016 saw more than 10,000 players promptly joining clubs. These triumphs have inspired the nation to get active and play hockey. Thanks to the outstanding work of the network of clubs across the country, England Hockey has seen unprecedented growth at both ends of the age range. There has been an 80% increase in the number of boys and girls in clubs, as well as a 54% increase in players over the age of 46.

Hockey clubs have reaped the rewards of the improved profile of the sport, focussing on a link with schools to provide excellent opportunities for young players. Programmes such as Quick sticks – a small-sided version of hockey for 7-11 year olds – in Primary Schools have been hugely successful in allowing new players to take part in the sport from an early age. The growth in the sport since the eve of London 2012 has been seen across the country, examples being a 110% increase in under 16s club participation in London, and a 111% growth in the North West in the same age bracket.

England Hockey Strategy

England Hockey's Facilities Strategy can be found [here](#).

Vision: For every hockey club in England to have appropriate and sustainable facilities that provide excellent experiences for players.

Mission: More, Better, Happier Players with access to appropriate and sustainable facilities

The three main objectives of the facilities strategy are:

- ◀ **PROTECT:** To conserve the existing hockey provision
 - There are currently over 800 pitches that are used by hockey clubs (club, school, universities) across the country. It is important to retain the current provision where appropriate to ensure that hockey is maintained across the country.
- ◀ **IMPROVE:** To improve the existing facilities stock (physically and administratively)
 - The current facilities stock is ageing and there needs to be strategic investment into refurbishing the pitches and ancillary facilities. England Hockey works to provide more support for clubs to obtain better agreements with facilities providers & education around owning an asset.
- ◀ **DEVELOP:** To strategically build new hockey facilities where there is an identified need and ability to deliver and maintain. This might include consolidating hockey provision in a local area where appropriate.

England Hockey has identified key areas across the country where there is a lack of suitable hockey provision and there is a need for additional pitches, suitable for hockey. There is an identified demand for multi pitches in the right places to consolidate hockey and allow clubs to have all of their provision catered for at one site.

LTA Facilities Investment Strategy – Vision for the 2020 and beyond

The LTA has developed a programme of action based on seven core strategies. These are:

- ✦ Visibility – Broaden relevance and increase visibility of tennis all year round to build engagement and participation with fans and players.
- ✦ Innovation – Innovate in the delivery of tennis to widen its appeal.
- ✦ Investment – Support community facilities and schools to increase the opportunities to play.
- ✦ Accessibility – Make the customer journey to playing tennis easier and more accessible for anyone.
- ✦ Engagement – Engage and collaborate with everyone involved in delivering tennis in Britain, particularly coaches and volunteers, to attract and maintain more people in the game.
- ✦ Performance – Create a pathway for British champions that nurtures a diverse team of players, people and leaders.
- ✦ Leadership – Create a pathway for British champions that nurtures a diverse team of players, people and leaders.

The LTA Facilities Investment Framework sets out how it intends to deliver the investment to support community accessible tennis facilities. The focus will be on:

- ✦ New and existing indoor tennis centres
- ✦ Park tennis
- ✦ Tennis clubs
- ✦ Schools and other educational establishments

The key principles of the framework are to:

- ✦ Help fund projects through interest free loans.
- ✦ Invest in venues that have a proven record of increasing participation.
- ✦ Invest where there is thorough community engagement.
- ✦ Support venues that encourage participation growth.
- ✦ Targeted investment that is demand-led.
- ✦ Support venues that have successfully sourced partnership funding.

England Netball - Your Game, Your Way 2013-17

Even though this Plan is out of date, England Netball remains committed to its '10-1-1' mission, vision and values that form the fundamentals for its strategic planning for the future for the sport and business.

To facilitate the successful achievement of Netball 10:1:1 and Goal 4, England Netball will:

- ✦ Accelerate the participation growth by extending our market penetration and reach through the activation of a range of existing and new participant-focused products and programmes that access new and targeted markets.
- ✦ Increase the level of long-term participant retention through targeting programmes at known points of attrition and easy transition through the market segments, supported by an infrastructure that reflects the participant needs and improves their netball experience.
- ✦ Build a sustainable performance pathway and system built on the principles of purposeful practice and appropriate quality athlete coach contact time.

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- ◀ Develop sustainable revenue streams through the commercialisation of a portfolio of products and programmes and increasing membership sales. This will also include the creation of cost efficiencies and improved value for money through innovative partnerships and collaborations in all aspects of the business.
- ◀ Establish high standards of leadership and governance that protect the game and its people and facilitates the on-going growth and transformation of the NGB and sport.

England Athletics Strategic Plan – Athletics & Running: for everyone, forever – 2017 and beyond

This plan sets out England Athletics' mission, vision and strategic priorities that will direct how they work as an organisation during the coming years: what they do and how they will do it.

Vision: Make athletics and running the most inclusive and popular sport in England, led by a network of progressive clubs and organisations and supported by a sustainable, respected and trusted governing body.

For England Athletics to achieve this vision, they will focus on three values:

- ◀ Pride – taking pride in their work and demonstrating to athletes that they recognise the importance of their role in bettering athletics.
- ◀ Integrity – demonstrate integrity to earn respect and to build effective partnerships.
- ◀ Inclusivity – promote inclusivity in all their actions.

Mission: To grow opportunities for everyone to experience athletics and running, to enable them to reach their full potential.

In order to achieve their mission, England Athletics will have three strategic priorities.

- ◀ To expand the capacity of the sport by supporting and developing its volunteers and other workforce. The target is to achieve a 6% increase every year of licensed leaders, coaches and officials.
- ◀ To sustain and increase participation and performance levels in our sport. To achieve this, England Athletics' current targets are to increase the number of club registered athletes from (149,000 to 172,000), engage 135,000 people through the RunTogether programme and to increase athlete performance levels across all events and disciplines by 1% every year.
- ◀ To influence participation in the wider athletics market. Their target here is to increase the number of regular athletes or runners by at least one million.

England Athletics Facility Strategy (2018 – 2025)

The purpose of this document is to set out our long term vision for athletics facilities in England. Facilities form a vital component of the overall England Athletics strategy.

The development, protection and enhancement of facilities will support our strategic plan and help England Athletics contribute to the delivery of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Sporting Futures: A New Strategy for Sport and Sport England's strategy Towards an Active Nation. Appropriate facilities help to attract and inspire new participants and provide the foundation and focus for a significant proportion of the England Athletics family.

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The England Athletics Strategic Plan notes that the sport increasingly needs to become financially sustainable and that a business-like and innovative approach is a vital component of its future success. Facilities are fundamental, but they are also expensive to create and to maintain. The sport therefore faces a significant challenge to develop, improve and maintain facilities, most of which are currently operated and funded by third parties.

This strategy sets out a challenge to all those involved with the delivery of the sport to be innovative and business like in the operation and development of facilities at a time of financial challenge, as it aims “To create an innovative and inspiring network of sustainable athletic facilities, with the capacity to meet both current and future demand across England”.

England Golf Course Planner – Strategic Direction (2021-2025)

England Golf has always had a mission to lead, support, inspire and deliver for its community of golfers, golf clubs and counties. To help enable this, its Course Planner forms the core of its strategy, with 18 guiding principles established that are designed to best position growth in the game:

- ◀ Strengthen governance in all aspects of the sport
- ◀ Deliver safeguarding throughout the golfing community
- ◀ Utilise data and technology to enhance decision making
- ◀ Drive equality and equity in everything it does
- ◀ Support golf clubs with member recruitment and retention
- ◀ Connect and engage with all golfers
- ◀ Inspire and educate golf's network of volunteers
- ◀ Increase golf's influence
- ◀ Advocate and inform on all elements of sustainability
- ◀ Drive diversity at all levels of golf
- ◀ Create more opportunities for junior and young adults
- ◀ Promote the health and wellbeing of golf
- ◀ Inspire more women and girls to play golf
- ◀ Develop greater access for disabled people
- ◀ Enthuse all golfers through relatable role models
- ◀ Communicate a positive perception change for golf
- ◀ Deliver an excellent talent development pathway
- ◀ Host best-in-class competitions for all golfers

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APPENDIX 2: NON TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT SHEETS

Figure 2.1.1: Grass football pitch non-technical assessment sheet

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Football									
Please complete one form per pitch									
Site reference:				Site Name:					
6 figure grid reference				Pitch ID(s):					
Number of football pitches on site:				Pitch size:	(Adult 11v11, Youth 11v11, 9v9, 7v7 Mini, 5v5, 7v7)				
Availability				Are any other pitches marked out over this pitch?					
				If yes, please indicate what pitches are overmarked? (i.e. one youth pitch is overmarked on a adult pitch) in Pitch Issues					
Weather at time of visit & date of visit									
Pitch Issues:									
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each pitch with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer)									
Element (Gathered via a non technical site assessment)	Rating						Guidance notes	Comments	
Playing surface									
Grass Cover	Good >80%		Adequate 60-80%		Poor <60%		Advice is to walk through the middle of the pitch		
Does the pitch meet The FA minimum size?	Yes - as per the FA recommended size		Within FA recommended guidelines		No		See size chart below for recommended dimensions		
Slope of pitch (gradient and cross fall)	Flat		Moderate		Severe				
Length of grass	Good		Too long		Too short		Good 30mm-50mm, Too long 51mm plus, Too short 29mm less		
Evenness of pitch	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Problem Areas: Evidence of dog fouling/glass/litter/vehicle tracks	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Problem Areas: Evidence of unofficial use/damage to the surface	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Problem Areas: Evidence of poor drainage	No evidence of standing water or poor drainage		Some evidence of poor drainage		Yes, poor drainage				
Maintenance programme (information from maintenance schedule/grounds team/club survey)								Section total	
Grass cutting	Yes, as required		Yes, but not frequent enough		No				
Seeded	Yes, as required		Not known		No				
Aerated (per year)	Three or more times		Once/ twice		No				
Sand dressed	Within the last 12 months		Within the last 2 years		No				
Fertilised	Within the last 12 months		Within the last 2 years		No				
Weed killed	Within the last 12 months		Within the last 2 years		No				
								Section total	
NB If none of this information is provided you should assume that only the grass is being cut and the rest of the maintenance items should be marked with the lowest score option.									
PITCH SCORE				0.0%	RATING		Poor		

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Figure 2.1.2: Cricket non-technical assessment

Element	Rating				Guidance notes	Comments (use the guidance notes to help complete)
About the cricket outfield						
Grass coverage	Good		Acceptable		Poor	<80% falls below the ECB basic standard
Length of grass	Good		Acceptable		Poor	Ideally 12mm - 25mm
Evenness	Even				Uneven	Ball should run without deviation or ramp
Evidence of Dog fouling/glass/stones/litter?	None		Yes		Immediate action required	May also wish to refer to water marking. If yes, refer to water marking message
Evidence of Unofficial use?	None		Yes		Immediate action required	eg informal, casual use, unbooked use, kids kickabout etc. May also wish to refer to water marking. If yes, refer to water marking message
Evidence of Damage to surface?	None		Yes		Immediate action required	eg from normal activities - rubbish, balls and footwear may also wish to refer to water marking
Artificial wickets						
Is the wicket and surrounds married in	Yes				No	There should be no trip points
Evenness of wicket	Even				Uneven	There should be no unevenness in surface levels
Stump holes	Yes				No	Should be no wider than a standard cricket ball
Moss or materials in the surface	Yes				No	There should be none
Rips or surface lifting	Yes				No	If "yes" send site message
Surface worn in high traffic areas - creases	Yes				No	If "yes" send site message
Hardness - does the ball rebound when thrown straight down?	Yes				No	
Grass wickets						
Presence of line markings	Yes				No	
Evidence of rolling - is wicket smooth and uniform	Yes				No	
Evidence of straight cut and height	Yes				No	3mm to 10mm wicket/12mm roll of square
Evidence of repair work on old wickets	Yes				No	
Grass coverage (square and wickets)	Yes				No	<80% falls below the ECB basic standard
Hardness - does a cricket ball thrown straight down into the surface rebound?	Yes				No	
Changing/ Pavilion						
Umpires provision	Yes				No	
Toilets	Yes				No	
Hot/cold water	Yes				No	
Heating	Yes				No	
Condition of building	Good		Acceptable		Requires attention	
NTP						
Is the wicket and surrounds married in (no trip points)	Yes				No	
Evenness of wicket (no contours in surface levels)	Even				Uneven	
Stump holes (no wider than a standard cricket ball)	Yes				No	
Moss or materials in the surface (should be none)	Yes				No	
No rips or surface lifting	Yes				No	
Surface worn in high traffic areas - crease	Yes				No	
Hardness - does the ball rebound when thrown straight down	Yes				No	
Is the steel frame/posts upright?	Yes				No	
Are steel cross members detached?	Yes				No	
Are all posts and net fixings in place?	Yes				No	
Can a ball pass through any part of the netting?	Yes				No	
Is appropriate safety/supervisory signage present?	Yes				No	

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Figure 2.1.3: Rugby pitch non-technical assessment sheet

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Rugby Union									
Please complete one form per pitch									
Site reference				Site Name					
6 figure grid reference				Pitch ID(s)					
Date of assessment				Pitch size	(Senior, Mini/Midi)				
Number of pitches on site				Are any other pitches marked out over this pitch?					
Availability				If yes, please indicate what pitches are overmarked? (i.e. one mini/ midi pitch is overmarked on a senior pitch) in Pitch Issues					
Community Use - used, Community Use - unused, No Community Use, Available but Unused									
Weather at time of visit									
General comments/observations									
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each pitch with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer)									
Qualitative information (gathered on site)	Rating						Guidance notes	Comments	
Grass Coverage	Good		Adequate		Poor		>90% = good. <80% = poor		
Size of pitch	Acceptable (between recommended minimum and maximum sizes)		Flag for further investigation (below recommended minimum size)		Unacceptable (above maximum size)		Maximum size = width 70m, goal line to goal line 100m, in goal area 22m, run offs 5m where practical. Recommended minimum size = width 68m, goal line to goal line 94m, in goal area 6m, run offs 5m where practical.		
Length of grass	Too Long		Good		Too short		Too long = >75mm. Too short = <50mm		
Problem Areas: Evidence of glass/litter/vehicle tracks/dog fouling	None		Yes - some		Yes lots				
GOALPOSTS									
Are goalposts installed?	Yes		No						
Is there any obvious danger on posts?	Yes		No						
Are the posts stable in the ground?	Yes		No						
Is the crossbar fixed securely?	Yes		No						
Is there evidence of rust on the posts?	Yes		No						
ANCILLARY									
Is the pitch floodlit?	Yes		No						
Is there changing accommodation for the pitch?	Yes		No						
Is an appropriate level of car parking available?	Yes		No						
Pitch maintenance (information gathered via club survey/ pitch provider consultation) - refer to the guidance notes below									
Aerated (per year)	three or more times		twice		once		never		
Sand dressed (per year)	three or more times		twice		once		never		
Fertilised (per year)	three or more times		twice		once		never		
Weed killed (per year)	three or more times		twice		once		never		
Chain harrowed	every week		fortnightly		monthly		never		
Pitch Maintenance Score									
Drainage	Natural (inadequate) SCORE D0		Natural (adequate) SCORE D1		Pipe drained SCORE D2		Pipe and slit drained SCORE D3		Unknown SCORE D0
Natural (adequate) = 3 or less training/match cancellations per season Natural (inadequate) = 4 or more training match cancellations per season *Based on a pipe drained system at 5m centres that has been installed in the previous eight years **Based on a slit drained system at 1m centres completed in the previous five years.									

WALSALL COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

Figure 2.1.4: Artificial grass pitches non-technical assessment (including third generation turf pitches)

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Artificial grass pitches									
Site reference			Site Name						
6 figure grid reference			Pitch ID						
Number of AGPs on site			Pitch size	Full (i.e., 100m x 60m)		Half (i.e., 60m x 40m)			
Availability									
Community Use - used, Community Use - unused, No Community Use, Available but Unused									
Type of pitch	Long Pile 3G (65mm with shock pad)		Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)		Short Pile 3G (40mm)				
	Sand Dressed		Sand Filled		Water based				
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each pitch with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer)									
Element	Rating						Guidance notes	Site comments	
Age of Surface	less than 2 years		2-5 years		5-10 years		over 10 years		
Evidence of moss/lichen (all surfaces)	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Loose gravel (macadam surface)	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Holes or rips in surface (macadam, art. grass or polymeric surfaces)	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Grip underfoot	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Line markings - quality	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Problem Areas: Evidence of Glass/ stones/ litter	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Problem Areas: Evidence of inappropriate use	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Problem Areas: Evidence of damage to surface	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots		If no evidence, assume none.		
Access for disabled players. i.e.: ramps onto courts, width of gates	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Condition of posts/ nets/ goals	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Surrounding fencing	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Adequate safety margins (w here appropriate)	Yes - fully		No- but adequate		No - not adequate				
Is the AGP floodlit?	Yes		No						
Is the AGP left open at all times?	Yes		No						
Are there dug outs?	Yes		No						
Are there youth shelters/spectator seating around AGP?	Yes		No						
Is there changing accommodation for the AGP?	Yes		No						
Maximum score	93	Scoring:	Poor	<=50	Total Score	0			
			Standard	51-79	Potential Rating	Poor			
			Good	80+					

Figure 2.1.5: Court non-technical assessment (netball and tennis)

[illegible]

Element	Rating						Comments
About the courts							
Evidence of moss/lichen (all surfaces)	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots		
Loose gravel (macadam surface)	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots		
Holes or rips in surface (macadam, art. grass or polymeric surface)	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots		
Grip underfoot	Good		Adequate		Poor		
Line markings - quality	Good		Adequate		Poor		
Surrounding fencing	Good		Adequate		Poor		
Size of courts	Yes - fully		No - but adequate		No - not adequate		
Adequate safety margins	Yes - fully		No - but adequate		No - not adequate		
Slope of courts	Flat		Slight		Gentle		Moderate
Problem Areas: Evidence of Glass/ stones/ litter	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots		
Problem Areas: Evidence of inappropriate use	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots		
Access for disabled players - ie: ramps onto courts, width of gates	Good		Adequate		Poor		
Changing Accomodation							
Changing Accomodation	Yes		No				
About the equipment							
Posts and net	Good		Adequate		Poor		
Are the courts locked when not in use?	Yes		No				
Practice wall	Yes		No				

WALSALL COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

Figure 2.1.6: Bowling green non-technical assessment

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Bowling green									
KKPref									
Site name:									
Number of greens									
Flat/crown		Community Use?							
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each pitch with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer)									
Element	Rating					Comments			
About the greens									
Grass cover	Over 70%		40-69%		less than 40%				
Evenness of surface	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Signs of wear and tear	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Condition of ditches/boardings	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Surface of surrounding hard areas	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Is the green and surrounding area fenced?	Yes			No					
Fencing around the green and ancillaries	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Problem areas: litter, glass, fouling, leaf fall on the green	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Problem Areas: Evidence of inappropriate use on the green	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Access for disabled players/spectators - ie: ramps onto greens, width of gates	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Ancillary facilities									
Changing Accommodation	Yes		No						
Toilets	Yes		No						
Car parking	Yes		No						
General comments about the site:									

WALSALL COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT ASSESSMENT

Figure 2.1.7: Athletics tracks non-technical assessment

Non Technical Visual Quality Assessment - Athletics Tracks									
KKPref									
Site name:									
Track surface		Grass, polymeric, cinder, other specify		Specify If 'Other'					
No. of Lanes		Length of track:		Community Use:					
Assessment Criteria (please rank each of the following aspects for each track with an 'X' in the coloured box to the right of the chosen answer)									
Element	Rating						Comments		
About the track facilities									
Damage to the track surface	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Grip underfoot	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Line markings - quality	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Track edging	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Disabled access	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Problem Areas: Evidence of Glass/ stones/ litter	None		Yes - some		Yes - lots				
Floodlighting	Yes		No						
Is the track fenced?	Yes		No						
Surface of run ups - long/triple jump, high jump									
	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Adequate landing areas - jumps	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Adequate safety margins	Yes - fully		No-but adequate		No-not adequate				
Take off boards	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Landing mats	Yes		No						
Surface of throw ing areas - shot, discuss, hammer	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Adequate safety margins - throw s	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Throw ing cages	Yes		No						
Access to toilets									
	Yes		No						
Changing accommodation	Yes		No						
Changing accommodation - quality	Good		Adequate		Poor				
Club room	Yes		No						
Car parking	Good		Adequate		Poor				
General Comments									
						ENTER Athletics	Please make sure there is no filter on in sheet At_db !		

BLACK COUNTRY

PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

DECEMBER 2022

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd
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**BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY
OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK**

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BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

ABBREVIATIONS

3G	Third Generation (artificial turf)
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
BC	Bowls Club
BFA	Birmingham County FA
BCGBA	British Crown Green Bowling Association
BSUK	Baseball Softball UK
CC	Cricket Club
CFA	County Football Association
EA	England Athletics
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EH	England Hockey
EN	England Netball
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FF	Football Foundation
HC	Hockey Club
GMA	Grounds Maintenance Association
IoG	Institute of Groundsmanship
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page
LFFP	Local Football Facility Plan
LTA	Lawn Tennis Association
NGB	National Governing Body
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NTP	Non-turf pitch
PPOSS	Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy
PQS	Performance Quality Standard
RFU	Rugby Football Union
SCB	Staffordshire Cricket Board
RUFC	Rugby Union Football Club
TC	Tennis Club

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Following completion of a Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) for each of the four Black Country authorities of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton, this document brings the findings of the studies together to provide an Overarching Strategic Framework. This should be used to address sub-regional issues, guide relevant planning policy and to ensure cross-boundary and collaborative working.

Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) has been commissioned by the local authorities, together with the Black Country Consortium, to assess playing pitch and outdoor sport facility requirements across the individual areas, as well as considering these needs in the wider context of the area. The output has been separate needs assessments and strategies for each authority, with the findings fed into this document.

The Overarching Strategic Framework and the recommendations within it have been put forward based on the evidence that has been gathered as part of the delivery of each individual PPOSS. However, it is recognised that not everything will be actionable by all of the authorities, at least in the short-term. It should instead be used as a long-term document that can assist, where possible, with guiding future actions when it comes to playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities.

The main objectives of the study have been to:

- ✦ Identify current supply and demand issues for sport and recreation facilities in the Black Country, based on quality, quantity and accessibility.
- ✦ Enable the Councils to plan appropriately for the protection and/or enhancement of existing sport and recreation facilities and identify sites best suited for development/ new provision or refurbishment in future Local Plan priorities.
- ✦ Make strategic proposals for local authority-controlled facilities such as investment in new and enhanced facilities and rationalisation, including cross-boundary co-ordination of local authority provision if appropriate.
- ✦ Help inform wider fixed asset/property reviews.
- ✦ Assess the continued value of retaining land for playing pitches where the land has high potential development value for other uses, subject to ensuring compliance with relevant planning policy.
- ✦ Enable the authorities to plan appropriately, in compliance with planning policy, for the creation of new and/or replacement sport facilities, including opportunities for relocation and to allocate sites for development within emerging local plans.
- ✦ Identify the potential for a strategic approach to the role of education sites in meeting community needs with a district or sub-regional approach in addition to individual recommendations.
- ✦ Identify whether existing sports infrastructure is fit for purpose to deliver local and corporate priorities and wider health and wellbeing outcomes in an efficient way, now and in the future.
- ✦ Identify where pitches are under-used or in such poor condition that release for other uses may be considered appropriate, subject to ensuring compliance with planning policy.
- ✦ Provide policy recommendations and practical proposals for securing investment into sport and open space.
- ✦ Use the findings to identify how best to meet local needs and to develop a means of calculating developer contributions to fund appropriate works.
- ✦ Act as a tool for the four authorities and partner organisations to guide resource allocation and investment and set priorities for sports moving forward.
- ✦ Identify how sport and recreation infrastructure can help deliver national, regional, local and Sport England strategies.
- ✦ Identify how sport, physical activity and recreation can contribute to corporate agendas for each authority.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- Support an increase in formal and informal sport activity rates to improve the health and wellbeing of the whole community including through consultation with public health colleagues to deliver healthier lifestyles and achieve positive health outcomes.
- Promote sports development and help unlock latent demand by identifying changes in demand for different sports and where the lack of facilities might be suppressing the formation of teams and/or failing to meet community needs.

In addition, specific planning objectives have been to:

- Help provide a robust evidence base for the preparation and support of the Black Country Plan (which will now be replaced by four separate local plans).
- Help meet “Duty to Co-operate” requirements under Section 110 of the Localism Act.
- Inform policies on green infrastructure, leisure, outdoor sports facilities and health and well-being in emerging local plans.
- Guide decisions on planning applications affecting existing playing pitches or generating demand for new provision.

The PPOSS for each local authority has been developed in accordance with Sport England guidance and under the direction of a Steering Group including each council, Sport England, Active Black Country and National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs). This has ensured that a consistent approach has been applied across the project.

Scope

A wide range of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities have been included across all four Black Country authorities. In full, this covers:

- Athletics
- Cricket
- Football (including 3G pitches)
- Hockey (sand/water based AGPs)
- Rugby union (including 3G pitches)
- Tennis
- Bowls
- Cycling
- Golf
- Netball
- Rugby league (including 3G pitches)
- Water sports (e.g., sailing and water skiing)

In addition, other grass pitch sports have been included where they have been identified as having a presence.

Study area

The study area is considered to be the whole boundary area of each of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Further to this, existing analysis areas have also been used within each authority to allow for a more localised assessment of provision and the examination of outdoor sport supply and demand at a local level. These are summarised in the table below.

Table 1.1: Summary of the study area

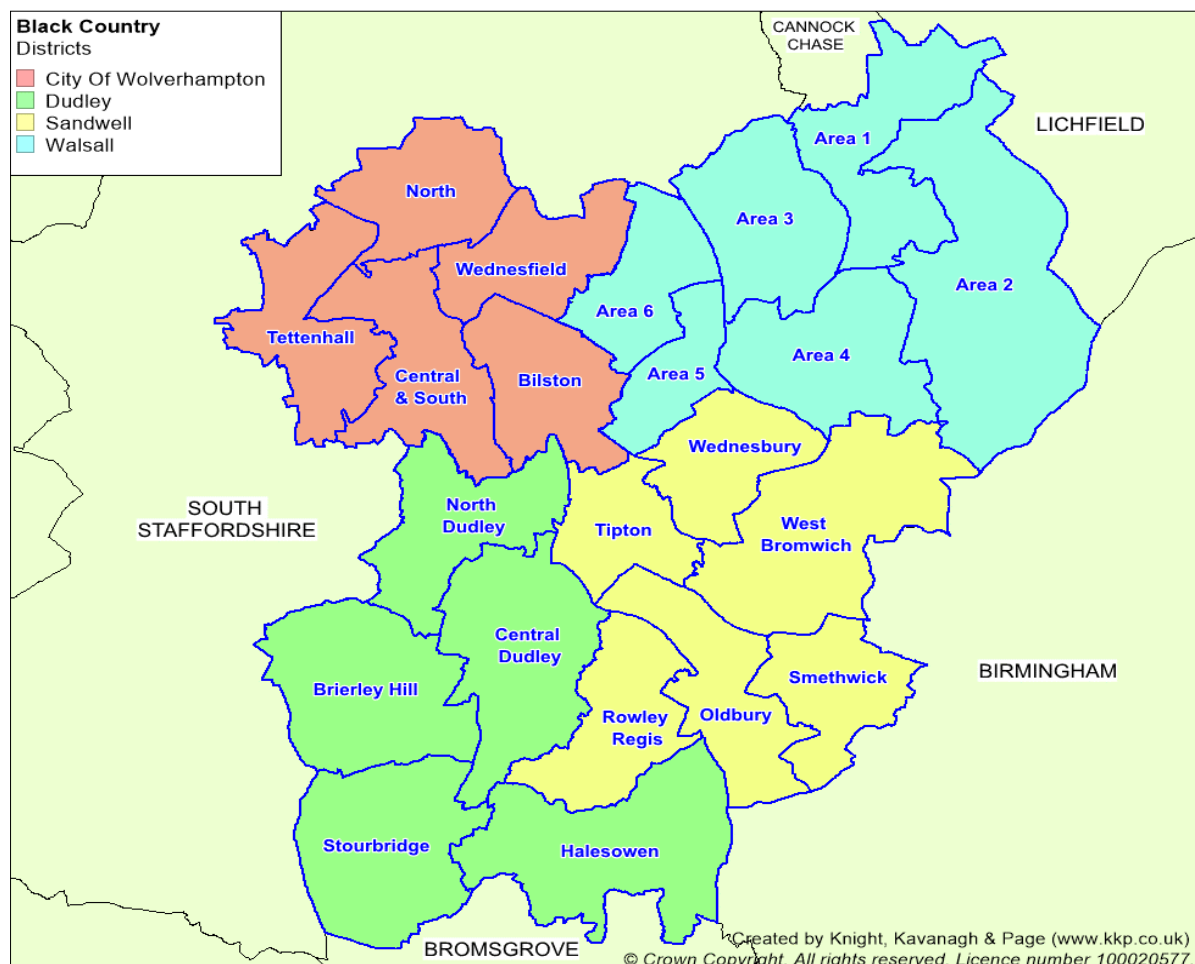
Local authority	Analysis areas
Dudley	Brierley Hill
	Central Dudley
	Halesowen
	North Dudley
	Stourbridge

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Local authority	Analysis areas
Sandwell	Oldbury
	Rowley Regis
	Smethwick
	Tipton
	Wednesbury
	West Bromwich
Walsall	Brownhills / Pelsall / Rushall / Shelfield (Area 1)
	Aldridge / Streetly / Pheasey / Walsall Wood (Area 2)
	Bloxwich / Blakenall / Birchills / Leamore (Area 3)
	St Matthew's / Paddock / Palfrey / Pleck (Area 4)
	Darlaston / Bentley (Area 5)
	Willenhall / Short Heath (Area 6)
Wolverhampton	Bilston
	Central & South
	North
	Tettenhall
	Wednesfield

For the boundary lines, please refer to the figure below.

Figure 1.1: Analysis area map



BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

PART 2: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Summarised below are the key findings across the four Black Country authorities for each included sport/facility type relating to aspects such as quantity, quality, levels of demand (including exported/imported demand) and the presence of current and future shortfalls. Such issues are considered most important to the overarching strategic framework due to the potential impact they have on supply and demand across local authority boundaries and, as such, across the Black Country.

Notwithstanding the above, it must be noted that, where spare capacity is identified in a local authority, this cannot be relied upon to offset shortfalls of provision and other issues elsewhere within the Black Country. It may not necessarily be accessible to the demand that needs access, meaning there is still a requirement to consider the individual PPOSS findings and recommendations in respect of the local picture for supply and demand.

2.1: Black Country summary

Football

- There are 729 football pitches in the Black Country across 330 sites, with 577 pitches available for community use across 229 sites.

Table 2.1: Summary of grass football pitches available to the community

Local authority	No. of pitches available for community use					
	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Dudley	43	23	33	29	26	154
Sandwell	86	13	21	12	7	139
Walsall	68	15	37	13	14	147
Wolverhampton	63	23	28	18	5	137
Black Country	260	74	119	72	52	577

- Of the community available pitches, 39 are assessed as good quality, 282 are assessed as standard quality and 256 are assessed as poor.

Table 2.2: Football pitch quality summary (community use pitches)

Local authority	Pitch quality		
	Good	Standard	Poor
Dudley	10	76	68
Sandwell	5	51	83
Walsall	9	90	48
Wolverhampton	15	65	57
Black Country	39	282	256

- A total of 1,460 teams are identified from within 367 clubs.
- Demand is highest for youth 11v11 football, followed by adult football, whilst it is lowest for mini 5v5 football.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Table 2.3: Summary of teams

Local authority	No. of teams					
	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	Total
Dudley	89	116	70	74	64	413
Sandwell	109	108	59	43	29	348
Walsall	121	130	83	74	38	446
Wolverhampton	86	74	38	34	21	253
Black Country	405	428	250	225	152	1,460

- There is a current and future shortfall of adult, youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitch capacity.
- Supply of mini 7v7 pitches is currently meeting demand, although future growth will result in a capacity shortfall.
- Both current and future demand for mini 5v5 football is being met.

Table 2.4: Supply and demand analysis by pitch type and local authority

Pitch type	Local authority	Match equivalent sessions per week				
		Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	Dudley	-	16	16	3	19
	Sandwell	6.5	23.5	17	2	19
	Walsall	14	7	7	5	2
	Wolverhampton	17.5	19	1.5	2.5	4
	Black Country	38	65.5	27.5	12.5	40
Youth 11v11	Dudley	-	7.5	7.5	4	11.5
	Sandwell	3	13	10	2	12
	Walsall	-	5	5	7.5	12.5
	Wolverhampton	4.5	2	2.5	5.5	3
	Black Country	7.5	27.5	20	19	39
Youth 9v9	Dudley	1	10.5	9.5	-	9.5
	Sandwell	1	10	9	-	9
	Walsall	11	10.5	0.5	0.5	0
	Wolverhampton	13.5	2.5	11.5	-	11.5
	Black Country	26.5	33.5	7	0.5	7.5
Mini 7v7	Dudley	2	3	1	-	1
	Sandwell	0.5	1	0.5	-	0.5
	Walsall	1	1.5	0.5	1	1.5
	Wolverhampton	2	-	2	-	2
	Black Country	5.5	5.5	0	1	1
Mini 5v5	Dudley	2	1	1	-	1
	Sandwell	2	0.5	1.5	-	1.5
	Walsall	2.5	-	2.5	-	2.5
	Wolverhampton	2.5	-	2.5	-	2.5
	Black Country	9	1.5	7.5	0	7.5

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- Projected housing growth across the Black Country is likely to create demand equating to the need for 69.66 grass football pitches.

Table 2.5: Likely demand generated from housing growth for grass football pitches

Local authority	Pitches			
	Adult	Youth	Mini	Total
Dudley	4.17	8.72	6.46	19.35
Sandwell	3.44	5.27	2.27	10.98
Walsall	7.10	12.51	6.57	26.18
Wolverhampton	4.47	5.82	2.86	13.15
Black Country	19.18	32.32	18.16	69.66

3G

- There are currently 23 full size 3G pitches provided across the Black Country, with 19 available for community use (two in both Sandwell and Wolverhampton are unavailable).

Table 2.6: Summary of full size 3G supply

Local authority	No. of full size pitches available for community use
Dudley	4
Sandwell	4
Walsall	9
Wolverhampton	2
Black Country	19

- Based on the FA training model of one full size pitch being required to accommodate every 38 football teams within an authority, there is an overall shortfall of 15.5 full size pitches currently and 17.5 full size pitches when accounting for future demand.

Table 2.7: Summary of 3G shortfalls

Local authority	Current shortfall	Future shortfall
Dudley	4.75	5.25
Sandwell	4.50	4.50
Walsall	2.75	3.50
Wolverhampton	3.50	4.50
Black Country	15.50	17.75

- For the shortfalls to be met, new pitches are required that are fully accessible to the community and floodlit. The picture in each authority is further summarised in the table below.

Table 2.8: Summary of supply and demand analysis

Local authority	Comments
Dudley	There are currently four full size 3G pitches provided, all of which are floodlit and available to the community. There is, however, a need for 8.75 full size 3G pitches, meaning a current shortfall of 4.75 pitches. When factoring in future demand, this increases to 5.25 pitches.

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0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99



BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- Scope also exists for additional World Rugby provision to cater for Walsall clubs.
- Projected housing growth across the Black Country is likely to create demand equating to 3.67 additional full size pitches.

Table 2.9: Likely demand generated from housing growth for 3G pitches

Local authority	3G pitches required
Dudley	1.02
Sandwell	0.58
Walsall	1.38
Wolverhampton	0.69
Black Country	3.67

Cricket

- There are 48 grass wicket squares provided across the Black Country, with 44 available for community use.

Table 2.10: Summary of grass wicket squares available for community use

Local authority	Squares available for community use
Dudley	11
Sandwell	6
Walsall	13
Wolverhampton	14
Black Country	44

- Of the community available squares, 21 are assessed as good quality, 22 as standard quality and just one as poor quality.

Table 2.11: Cricket pitch quality summary (community use pitches)

Local authority	Pitch quality		
	Good	Standard	Poor
Dudley	6	5	-
Sandwell	5	1	-
Walsall	5	8	-
Wolverhampton	5	8	1
Black Country	21	22	1

- There are 29 cricket clubs collectively providing 231 teams.

Table 2.12 Summary of cricket teams

Local authority	No. of teams		
	Senior male	Senior female	Junior
Dudley	35	6	35
Sandwell	19	2	19
Walsall	25	1	28
Wolverhampton	29	3	29
Total	108	12	111

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- There is an overall capacity shortfall for Saturday cricket.
- Overall spare capacity exists for Sunday and midweek cricket.

Table 2.13: Cricket supply and demand analysis

Format of play	Local authority	Match equivalent sessions per week				
		Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Total
Saturday cricket	Dudley	-	65	65	-	65
	Sandwell	-	23	23	-	23
	Walsall	24	14	10	-	10
	Wolverhampton	24	49	25	-	25
	Black Country	48	151	103	0	103
Sunday cricket	Dudley	48	65	17	-	17
	Sandwell	28	23	5	-	5
	Walsall	84	14	70	-	70
	Wolverhampton	108	49	59	-	59
	Black Country	268	151	117	0	117
Midweek cricket	Dudley	74	65	9	-	9
	Sandwell	16	23	7	-	7
	Walsall	104	14	90	-	90
	Wolverhampton	120	49	81	-	81
	Black Country	314	150	164	0	164

- Projected housing growth across the Black Country is likely to create demand equating to 4.42 cricket pitches.

Table 2.14: Likely demand generated from housing growth for cricket pitches

Local authority	Pitches
Dudley	1.43
Sandwell	0.50
Walsall	1.23
Wolverhampton	1.26
Black Country	4.42

Rugby union

- There are 54 rugby union pitches in the Black Country, with 38 available for community use.

Table 2.15: Summary of rugby union pitches

Local authority	No. of senior pitches	No. of junior/mini pitches
Dudley	2	1
Sandwell	4	-
Walsall	19	1
Wolverhampton	6	5
Black Country	31	7

- Of the community available pitches, two are assessed as good quality, 15 as standard and 21 as poor.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Table 2.16: Rugby union pitch quality summary (community use pitches)

Local authority	Pitch quality		
	Good	Standard	Poor
Dudley	-	2	1
Sandwell	1	1	2
Walsall	-	10	10
Wolverhampton	1	2	8
Black Country	2	15	21

- There are 10 clubs collectively fielding 64 teams.
- All clubs from Dudley are exported outside of the Borough to South Staffordshire and Bromsgrove.

Table 2.17: Summary of rugby union demand

Local authority	No. of rugby union teams				
	Senior male	Senior female	Junior boys	Junior girls	Mini mixed
Dudley	-	-	-	-	-
Sandwell	3	1	-	-	-
Walsall	13	1	14	3	12
Wolverhampton	3	1	7	-	6
Total	19	3	21	3	18

- There is a current and future shortfall of rugby union pitch capacity.

Table 2.18: Rugby union supply and demand analysis

Local authority	Match equivalent sessions per week				
	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current demand	Future demand	Future total
Dudley	-	-	0	-	0
Sandwell	1.5	0.5	1	-	1
Walsall	1.25	5.5	4.25	-	4.25
Wolverhampton	1.5	4.5	3	0.5	3.5
Black Country	4.25	10.5	6.25	0.5	6.75

- Projected housing growth across the Black Country is likely to create demand equating to 2.77 rugby union pitches.

Table 2.19: Likely demand generated from housing growth for rugby union pitches

Local authority	Pitches
Dudley	-
Sandwell	0.13
Walsall	1.99
Wolverhampton	0.65
Black Country	2.77

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Rugby league

- There are no rugby league pitches and no demand has been identified.
- Any residual need is unlikely to be sufficient enough for a club to be created, with individuals instead likely to travel to form part of the clubs based in other, nearby authorities.

Hockey

- There are 12 full size, hockey suitable AGPs in the Black Country, all of which are available for community use.

Table 2.20: Summary of full size hockey pitch supply

Local authority	No. of full size pitches available for community use
Dudley	1
Sandwell	2
Walsall	4
Wolverhampton	5
Black Country	12

- Of the pitches, two are assessed as good quality, six as standard quality and four as poor quality.

Table 2.21: Hockey pitch quality summary (community use pitches)

Local authority	Pitch quality		
	Good	Standard	Poor
Dudley	-	-	1
Sandwell	-	1	1
Walsall	-	2	2
Wolverhampton	2	3	-
Black Country	2	6	4

- There are 10 clubs identified, collectively providing 64 teams and catering for 1,155 playing members.
- All Dudley based demand is exported out of the Borough to Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Birmingham.
- Two clubs exported demand from Sandwell into Walsall.

Table 2.22: Summary of hockey demand

Local authority	No. of competitive teams			No. of members
	Senior men	Senior women	Junior	
Dudley	-	-	-	0
Sandwell	5	1	3	100
Walsall	16	6	9	550
Wolverhampton	16	6	2	505
Black Country	37	13	14	1,155

- There is a need to protect all the pitches that are currently provided in addition to quality and access improvements.
- There may be a requirement for new provision in Dudley and/or Sandwell.

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Table 2.23: Summary of supply and demand analysis

Local authority	Comments
Dudley	At least one suitable pitch needs to be provided, meaning there is a need to improve the pitch at Coseley Leisure Centre or develop new provision. This will be sufficient to return exported demand.
Sandwell	There is currently a requirement for two hockey suitable AGPs. As the pitch at Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy is not serving any purposeful means, it therefore needs to be enhanced or an additional pitch is required. However, if a pitch is provided in Dudley, only one pitch in Sandwell will be required as imported demand can return.
Walsall	All four existing pitches require protection, with emphasis required on securing tenure.
Wolverhampton	All five pitches require protecting, including the currently unused pitch at WV Aldersley.

- Projected housing growth across the Black Country is likely to create demand equating to 0.67 hockey pitches.

Table 2.24: Likely demand generated from housing growth for hockey pitches

Local authority	Pitches
Dudley	-
Sandwell	0.05
Walsall	0.33
Wolverhampton	0.29
Black Country	0.67

Tennis

- There are 334 tennis courts across the Black Country across 104 sites.
- Of the courts, 199 are available for community use across 60 sites, with most unavailable courts located at schools.

Table 2.25: Summary of tennis court supply

Local authority	Courts available for community use	Courts unavailable for community use
Dudley	49	40
Sandwell	35	22
Walsall	41	22
Wolverhampton	74	51
Black Country	199	135

- Only 114 courts are serviced by sports lighting, representing just 34% of the total provision across the region.

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Table 2.26: Summary of courts with sports lighting

Local authority	Courts with sports lighting	% of courts with sports lighting
Dudley	23	26%
Sandwell	10	18%
Walsall	24	38%
Wolverhampton	57	47%
Black Country	114	34%

- Of the courts, 82 are assessed as good quality, 160 as standard quality and 92 as poor quality.

Table 2.27: Tennis court quality summary

Local authority	Court quality		
	Good	Standard	Poor
Dudley	24	29	36
Sandwell	8	32	17
Walsall	2	48	13
Wolverhampton	48	51	26
Black Country	82	160	92

- There are 14 clubs identified.
- Where membership is known, there are 2,899 members across the clubs equating to 1,953 senior members and 946 junior members.

Table 2.28: Summary of tennis club demand

Local authority	No. of clubs	No. of members	
		Senior	Junior
Dudley	3	393	275
Sandwell	2	114	100
Walsall	3	451	207
Wolverhampton	6	995	364
Black Country	14	1,953	946

- For clubs, there are capacity shortfalls for five clubs in Dudley and Walsall, whilst supply is seemingly sufficient in Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Table 2.29: Summary of supply and demand analysis (club activity)

Local authority	Comments
Dudley	There are current capacity shortfalls for Halesowen and Wall Heath tennis clubs as well as future shortfalls for Quarry Bank TC.
Sandwell	Supply is sufficient to meet demand, although further exploration is required to fully determine membership at Wednesbury TC.
Walsall	Streetly TC is operating above capacity, whilst Walsall TC needs its own home venue with at least one floodlit court or two non-floodlit courts.
Wolverhampton	Supply is sufficient to meet demand.

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- In regards to non-club courts, none are identified as having capacity issues, with focus instead needing to be placed on improving quality to promote and increase informal/recreational play.

Netball

- There are 278 netball courts across the Black Country at 120 sites.
- Of the courts, only 89 are available for community use across 28 sites, with most unavailable courts located at schools.

Table 2.30: Summary of netball court supply

Local authority	Courts available for community use	Courts unavailable for community use
Dudley	14	73
Sandwell	27	35
Walsall	13	47
Wolverhampton	35	34
Black Country	89	189

- Only 63 courts are serviced by sports lighting, representing just 27% of the provision compared to a national average of 38%.

Table 2.31: Summary of netball courts with sports lighting

Local authority	Courts with sports lighting	% of courts with sports lighting
Dudley	4	5%
Sandwell	23	37%
Walsall	7	12%
Wolverhampton	29	41%
Black Country	63	34%

- Of the courts, 82 are assessed as good quality, 158 as standard quality and 92 as poor quality.

Table 2.32: Netball court quality summary

Local authority	Court quality		
	Good	Standard	Poor
Dudley	6	52	29
Sandwell	20	29	13
Walsall	4	52	4
Wolverhampton	20	46	3
Black Country	50	179	49

- The Dudley Netball League exports out of Dudley, into Sandwell, due to a lack of suitable provision.
- The Walsall Netball League also exports to Sandwell, although this is through choice.
- Demand in Wolverhampton is being met.

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Table 2.33: Summary of supply and demand analysis

Local authority	Comments
Dudley	Whilst there are a large quantity of netball courts provided, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand, contributing to the Dudley Netball League being unable to use a central venue in the Borough despite it expressing an aspiration to do so. Options should therefore be explored to accommodate such demand.
Sandwell	Sandwell is relatively well catered for regarding netball and focus should therefore be placed on protecting the facilities at George Salter Academy and Phoenix Collegiate and ensuring that the quality of the provision remains adequate to meet the demand. Should demand relocate to Dudley, it is also imperative that any Sandwell-based demand remains provided for and that the provision remains sustainable.
Walsall	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand. However, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided within the Borough.
Wolverhampton	All demand is seemingly being catered for through use of WV Active Aldersley.

Bowls

- There are 96 bowling greens provided.

Table 2.34: Summary of bowling green supply

Local authority	No. of greens
Dudley	28
Sandwell	18
Walsall	29
Wolverhampton	21
Black Country	96

- Of the greens, 69 are assessed as good, 19 as standard and eight as poor quality.

Table 2.35: Summary of bowling green quality

Local authority	Green quality		
	Good	Standard	Poor
Dudley	9	13	6
Sandwell	17	1	-
Walsall	26	3	-
Wolverhampton	17	2	2
Black Country	69	19	8

- There are 82 clubs identified.
- Where membership is known, there are 2,882 members across the clubs equating to 2,841 senior members and 41 junior members.

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Table 2.36: Summary of bowls club demand

Local authority	No. of clubs	No. of members	
		Senior	Junior
Dudley	23	808	3
Sandwell	16	412	8
Walsall	26	890	11
Wolverhampton	17	731	19
Black Country	82	2,841	41

- There are 14 clubs operating above the recommended capacity limit for use of a single green, although none report any particularly capacity concerns.
- Four clubs are operating below what would be considered a sustainable level and therefore require support.
- Some unused greens are in existence which may offer a solution for some of the larger clubs, if required (strategic reserve).

Table 2.37: Summary of supply and demand analysis

Local authority	Comments
Dudley	Five clubs are operating above capacity limits, whilst two are operating below sustainable levels. However, no clubs report any issues, suggesting that supply is sufficient to meet demand.
Sandwell	One club is operating above capacity limits, whilst one is operating below a sustainable level. However, no clubs report any issues, suggesting that supply is sufficient to meet demand.
Walsall	Five clubs are operating above capacity, whilst one is operating below sustainable levels. As there are four unused greens, these may offer strategic reserve for some of the larger clubs.
Wolverhampton	Three clubs are operating above capacity limits. However, no clubs report any issues, suggesting that supply is sufficient to meet demand.

Cycling

- There are cycling facilities provided in Dudley, Sandwell and Wolverhampton, whilst Walsall is without provision.
- A total of eight venues provide for cycling.

Table 2.38: Summary of cycling supply

Local authority	Facilities
Dudley	Manor Abbey Stadium provides a 400-metre cycling track.
Sandwell	Sandwell Valley Country Park features a range of surfaced and unsurfaced cycling tracks as well as a mountain bike trail and a pump track, whilst Hadley Stadium is also used for cycling activity.
Walsall	No dedicated provision provided.
Wolverhampton	Ashmore Park and East Park provide cycle speedway tracks, Bilston Pump Park and Hilton Road Playing Fields provide BMX pump tracks and WV Aldersley has an asphalt cycling track.

- A total of 15 cycling clubs are identified.

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Table 2.39: Summary of cycling demand

Local authority	Clubs
Dudley	Halesowen Cycling Club, Stourbridge Cycling Club and Stourbug.
Sandwell	Bangladeshi Association Cycling Club, Hadley Stadium Cycling Club, Lightwoods Community Cycle Club and Smethwick Beat the Streets Community Cycling Club.
Walsall	Pelsall Social Cycling Club and Walsall Road Cycling Club.
Wolverhampton	Wednesfield Aces, Wolverhampton Wheelers, Wolverhampton Racing Cycling Club, East Park Wolves Cycle Speedway Club and Let Us Play Cycling.

- Supply is generally sufficient to meet demand, although facilities require protection and some quality improvements are necessary.

Athletics

- There are nine sites providing athletics facilities.

Table 2.40: Summary of athletics supply

Local authority	Facilities
Dudley	The Dell Stadium provides a 400-metre track and Manor Abbey Stadium provides a 350-metre track.
Sandwell	400-metre tracks are provided at Hadley Stadium, Phoenix Collegiate and Tipton Sports Academy, whilst Sandwell Academy has a 200-metre track.
Walsall	The University of Wolverhampton provides a 200-metre track.
Wolverhampton	WV Active Aldersley provides a 400-metre track and The King's Church of England School provides a 200-metre, albeit this is not available for community use.

- A total of 21 clubs undertaking athletics and/or running activity.
- One Park Run is held in each authority every Saturday.

Table 2.41: Summary of athletics demand

Local authority	Clubs
Dudley	Dudley & Stourbridge Harriers Athletics Club, Halesowen Athletics & Cycling Club, Dudley Kingswinford Running Club, Sedgley Striders, Yellow Army Running Club, Stourbridge Running Club, Dudley Ladies Running Club, Halesowen Triathlon Club and Action Heart Running Club.
Sandwell	Tipton Harriers, Black Country Running Club, Sandwell Valley Running Club, West Bromwich Harriers and Warley Wasps Triathlon & Running Club.
Walsall	Walsall Arboretum Running Club, Aldridge Running Club, Sneyd Striders and Jog Walsall.
Wolverhampton	Wolverhampton & Bilston Athletics Club, Jolly Joggers Wolverhampton and Sedgley Striders.

- Supply is generally sufficient to meet demand, with no need for additional facilities.

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Golf

- There are 22 sites across the Black Country providing golf facilities.
- Across the sites, there are 20 standard hole courses, one Par 3 course and eight driving ranges.

Table 2.42: Summary of golf supply

Local authority	No. of golf sites
Dudley	3
Sandwell	5
Walsall	8
Wolverhampton	6
Black Country	22

- There are 7,025 members attached to the sites that offer a membership.

Table 2.43: Summary of golf demand

Local authority	No. of clubs	No. of members
Dudley	3	1,325
Sandwell	5	932
Walsall	8	2,669
Wolverhampton	6	2,099
Black Country	22	7,025

- Supply is generally sufficient to meet demand, with all aspects of the golfing market accommodated across the area.

Outdoor water sports

- Outdoor water sport activity takes place at a variety of sites across the Black Country via a mix of natural bodies of water and built facilities.

Table 2.44: Summary of outdoor water sport supply

Local authority	Facilities
Dudley	Dudley Water Sports Centre accommodates diving, rowing, open water swimming, sailing, snorkelling, wakeboarding and water skiing, whilst Dudley Canal and Himley Hall can also be used.
Sandwell	Swan Pool accommodates sailing, canoeing and open water swimming.
Walsall	Chase Water Sports Centre provides for water skiing, knee boarding, trick skiing, wakeboarding and wake surfing, whilst Sneyd Water Activity Centre provides for canoeing, kayaking, power boating, sailing and windsurfing. Aldridge Marina and The Swag are also used for some activity.
Wolverhampton	Canoeing takes place on the Staffordshire & Worcester Canal, whilst boat racing takes place along the Staffordshire Union Canal.

- A total of 18 clubs provide for some form of outdoor water sports demand.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Table 2.45: Summary of outdoor water sports demand

Local authority	Clubs
Dudley	Dudley, Waterski & Wakeboard Club, Dudley Nautilus Sub-Aqua Club, Dudley Sailing Club, Dudley Dolphin British Sub-Aqua Club, Dudley Rowing Club, Netherton Open Water Swimming Club and Warley Wasps Triathlon & Running Club.
Sandwell	Sandwell Valley Sailing Club, Oldbury Swimming & Triathlon Club and Birmingham Canoe Club.
Walsall	Aldridge Sailing Club, Chase Open Water Swimming Club, Chase Sailing Club, Pier 52 and Royal Sutton Coldfield Canoe Club.
Wolverhampton	Wolverhampton Canoe Club, Wolverhampton Boat Club and Chillington Divers.

- Given that it is not a coastal area, the Black Country is very well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports, with most activities provided for in some form.

Other grass pitch sports

- American football, baseball/softball and Gaelic football are all identified as having supply and/or demand in the Black Country.
- There is a need for facility solutions to better accommodate all three sports.

Table 2.46: Summary of other grass pitch sport supply and demand

Sport	Local authority	Comments
American football	Dudley	Black Country Vipers has one team which uses a 3G pitch at Stourbridge Rugby Club. This is sufficient to meet its demand.
	Sandwell / Walsall	Sandwell Steelers uses an over marked football pitch at Tipton Sports Academy for matches, 3G pitches at Gosepl Oak Academy and Portway Leisure Centre for training, and exports some demand to Walsall Rugby Club in Walsall. Providing one venue for all activity should be explored.
Baseball/softball	Dudley/ Wolverhampton	Stourbridge Titans Baseball Club previously used a diamond at Thorns Leisure Centre but now exports to Colton Hills Community School, in Wolverhampton. Options should be explored to return this activity.
	Wolverhampton	Wolverhampton Baseball Club uses the diamond at Colton Hills High School and this sufficient to meets its need, although a community use agreement should be sought.
Gaelic football	Wolverhampton	St Marys Gaelic Football Club uses an overmarked football pitch at Aldersley High School for its activity. This is undersized and therefore insufficient to meet its needs.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2.2: Cross-boundary demand

Due to the proximity of the four Black Country authorities, the relationship between them and the issues that are present, some demand is displaced (imported/exported) across boundary lines. This is sometimes through choice, but is often due to a lack of suitable provision and/or capacity within a particular area. As such, given the joint nature of this study, the councils should work together to return as much of the demand as possible to ensure that it is adequately accommodated in a suitable location and that it does not put added pressure on supply within the authority that it is imported into.

The table below summarises where displaced demand has been identified in the PPOSS between the four authorities and where it expresses the desire to return.

Table 2.47: Summary of displaced demand

Sport	Local authority demand is exported from	Local authority demand is imported to	Comments
Football	Dudley	Sandwell	Cradley Town FC uses a number of sites in Sandwell due to a lack of availability in Dudley.
	Dudley	Sandwell	Halas Hawks FC uses a number of sites in Sandwell due to a lack of availability in Dudley.
	Dudley	Sandwell	Stourbridge FC uses a number of sites in Sandwell due to a lack of availability in Dudley.
	Dudley	Walsall	Dudley Town FC's 1 st team exports to Aspray Arena due to a lack of suitable venues in Dudley; it requires a pitch capable of meeting football pyramid criteria.
	Dudley	Wolverhampton	Sedgley & Gornal FC exports a proportion of its demand to sites in Wolverhampton due to not being able to access a site large enough in Dudley to accommodate all of its teams.
	Sandwell	Walsall	Great Barr Harriers FC exports a team to the University of Aston Recreation Centre.
	Sandwell	Walsall	Oldbury United FC exports a team to the University of Aston Recreation Centre.
	Sandwell	Dudley	Oldbury United FC utilises Cradley Town FC for three of its teams due to a lack of pitches in Sandwell.
	Sandwell	Dudley	Bustleholme FC groundshares with AFC Birmingham due to no suitable venue being available in Sandwell.
Cricket	Dudley	Sandwell	Coseley CC accesses a secondary venue in Sandwell for its 3 rd Saturday team due to a lack of capacity in Dudley.
Hockey	Dudley	Sandwell	Old Halesonians HC uses Ormiston Forge Academy for some of its demand (accessing a site in Birmingham for the remainder) due to no hockey suitable provision being available in Dudley.
	Dudley	Wolverhampton	Dudley Ladies HC fields its demand at SWB Academy as no hockey suitable provision is available in Dudley.
	Sandwell	Walsall	West Bromwich HC accesses Aston University Recreation Centre for all of its demand following the 3G conversion of the pitch at George Salter Academy.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Sport	Local authority demand is exported from	Local authority demand is imported to	Comments
Netball	Dudley	Sandwell	The Dudley Netball League currently utilises a central venue in Sandwell for all of its demand but has an aspiration to use a site in Dudley.
Athletics	Sandwell	Walsall	West Bromwich Harriers uses Walsall Rugby Club as a home base following the loss of access to a site in Oldbury.
Other grass pitch sports	Dudley	Wolverhampton	Stourbridge Titans Baseball Club uses Colton Hills Community School due to no provision existing within Dudley.
	Sandwell	Walsall	Sandwell Steelers American Football Club uses Walsall Rugby Club for its junior matches due to a lack of provision in Sandwell.

In addition to the table above, there is also additional imported and exported demand identified in relation to the Black Country and other local authority areas, especially Birmingham (e.g., into/from Sandwell) and South Staffordshire (e.g., into/from Wolverhampton), but also relevant to the likes of Bromsgrove and Lichfield. As such, a partnership approach should also be sought with these authorities in an attempt to return the demand, where required and possible.

Overarching recommendations when it comes to exported/imported demand are as follows:

- Through cross-authority working, seek to return demand to its home local authority through identifying sites that meet requirements in terms of factors such as location, accessibility capacity, quantity, quality and level of play.
- Where such provision does not exist, strive to create/provide appropriate facilities through actioning recommendations in individual PPOSS documents e.g., through pitch quality improvements, alleviating overplay, securing tenure and securing community access to currently unavailable sites.
- To ensure demand is adequately re-located, carry out further consultation with affected clubs/teams/users to fully determine their requirements and to discuss potential options, supported by relevant NGBs if necessary.
- Seek funding to enable the relocation, where required, potentially via S106 contributions.
- Ensure access to provision that is currently used by exported demand is protected until it is no longer required.

2.3: Individual authority summaries

The above has been formulated using the findings from each of the individual authorities. As such, the key findings for each authority are summarised below to identify how the overarching summary has been developed, as well as to evidence any additional local authority specific issues and findings that will need to be addressed in addition to the Black Country wide approach.

Dudley

Football

- The audit identifies a total of 176 grass football pitches across 94 sites, including 152 pitches available for community use across 75 sites.
- Lapsed/disused pitches are identified at eight sites, and nine council sites previously provided more pitches than they currently do.
- Of the community available pitches, ten are assessed as good quality, 78 as standard and 64 as poor.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- ▶ A total of 413 teams from within 100 clubs are identified and there is a trend of significant growth in recent years.
- ▶ There are high levels of exported demand, with a large number of teams playing in neighbouring authorities due to a lack of pitch capacity and availability.
- ▶ There is a current and future shortfall of adult, youth 11v11, youth 9v9 and mini 7v7 match equivalent sessions, whilst minimal spare capacity exists on mini 5v5 pitches.

3G

- ▶ There are four full size 3G pitches, all of which are floodlit and available for community use.
- ▶ There are also 30 smaller sized 3G pitches across nine sites.
- ▶ One full size pitch (at Thorns Leisure Centre) is not FA accredited and it is poor quality having reached the end of its lifespan, whereas the remaining pitches are assessed as good quality and can be used competitively.
- ▶ One pitch (at the Dell Stadium) is World Rugby compliant, although it is not currently in use for this purpose.
- ▶ The existing 3G provision is reported to be operating at or close to capacity at peak times, with all current community activity being football-based.
- ▶ With 413 football teams, there is a calculated shortfall of 4.75 full size 3G pitches to meet training needs.
- ▶ When accounting for future demand for an additional 14 teams (based on population increases), the shortfall increases 5.25 pitches.
- ▶ No demand has been identified from other sports for access to 3G provision.

Cricket

- ▶ In total, there are 12 grass cricket squares, with 11 available for community use.
- ▶ Six are considered to be good quality and the remaining six are standard quality; none are assessed as poor.
- ▶ There are non-turf wickets accompanying grass wicket squares at six sites and there are standalone non-turf wickets at nine sites.
- ▶ Six clubs report a demand for new, improved or additional training facilities.
- ▶ There are eight clubs which collectively provide 76 teams.
- ▶ Five clubs export demand to neighbouring local authorities, representing a substantial amount of exported demand.
- ▶ For senior cricket, both current and future shortfalls are evidenced on Saturdays and Sundays, whilst there is overall spare capacity during midweek for junior cricket.

Rugby union

- ▶ There are six sites containing a total of seven senior and three junior rugby union pitches, with two senior and one junior pitch available for community use.
- ▶ All of the pitches are school-based and each pitch is either standard or poor quality.
- ▶ Despite four clubs drawing players from the area, none have a need or a want to play within the Borough, meaning that there is no clear requirement for community available rugby union pitches.

Rugby league

- ▶ There are no rugby league pitches and no demand has been identified.
- ▶ Any residual need is unlikely to be sufficient enough for a club to be created, with individuals instead likely to travel to form part of the clubs based in other, nearby authorities.

Hockey

- ▶ There is one full size hockey suitable AGP provided at Coseley Leisure Centre, and this is floodlit and available to the community.
- ▶ There are seven smaller size pitches, of which two (at Windsor High School & Sixth College and The Earls High School) are large enough for some form of hockey demand.
- ▶ Aspirations exists to convert the pitches at Coseley Leisure Centre and Windsor High School & Sixth Form College to 3G.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- ◆ The pitch at Coseley Leisure Centre is assessed as poor quality and is not known to have been resurfaced since it was installed in 2000, and the pitch at Windsor High School & Sixth Form College is also poor quality.
- ◆ There are no affiliated hockey clubs identified although Kingswinford, Old Halesonians and Dudley Ladies hockey previously played in the Borough.
- ◆ Dudley Ladies and Old Halesonians hockey clubs have a preference to return their demand to Dudley, whereas Kingswinford HC is considered to be a Birmingham-based club given how long it has played in the City for.
- ◆ Focus should be placed on ensuring that at least one suitable venue for hockey is provided, meaning there is either a need to improve the quality at Coseley Leisure Centre, or, if 3G proposals at the site are to go ahead, there is a requirement to develop a new full size sand-based AGP elsewhere.
- ◆ The creation of a second hockey-suitable AGP could also be sought to ensure that all future can be met within Dudley.

Tennis

- ◆ There are a total of 89 tennis courts identified across 28 sites, with 49 courts categorised as being available for community use at 17 sites.
- ◆ Of the courts, 24 are assessed as good quality, 29 as standard quality and 36 as poor quality.
- ◆ There are three tennis clubs.
- ◆ There is a shortfall of provision for club-based tennis, whilst quality is inadequate standard for informal play.

Netball

- ◆ There is a large supply of outdoor netball courts, with 87 identified across 60 sites; however, only 14 courts at five sites are available for community use.
- ◆ Six courts are assessed as good quality, 52 as standard quality and 29 as poor quality.
- ◆ Clubs form part of the Dudley Netball League, with all matches played at George Salter Academy, which is located in Sandwell (exported demand).
- ◆ The League would like to use a venue in the Borough to better accommodate its demand but no suitable venues currently exist.

Bowls

- ◆ There are 28 crown green bowls greens provided across 26 sites as well as one flat green (at Stevens Park (Wollescote)).
- ◆ There are also two disused greens (at Buffery Park and Gornal & Sedgley Labour Club).
- ◆ Overall, nine crown greens are assessed as good quality, 13 as standard quality and six as poor quality, whilst the flat green is assessed as standard.
- ◆ There are 23 crown green clubs using bowling greens and one flat green club.
- ◆ All clubs report that existing membership can be accommodated on the current level of provision and that no potential members are being turned away, suggesting that supply is sufficient to meet demand.

Cycling

- ◆ Manor Abbey Stadium provides a 400-metre cycling track.
- ◆ The track is of an overall adequate quality; however, resurfacing will be required in the near future as it reaches the end of its lifespan.
- ◆ High demand for cycling is identified, with three clubs in operation (Halesowen Cycling Club, Stourbridge Cycling Club and Stourbug) in addition to cycling initiatives.

Athletics

- ◆ There are two purpose-built athletics tracks (one at the Dell Stadium and one at Manor Abbey Stadium).
- ◆ Both tracks are assessed as good quality.
- ◆ Eight clubs have a current focus on athletics and/or running activity.
- ◆ Supply is sufficient to meet demand but requires protection to ensure this remains the case.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Golf

- There are currently three golf sites collectively providing two standard hole courses, one 9-hole course and one driving range.
- Membership is higher than the national average.
- It is considered that there is a sufficient level of golf provision.

Water sports

- Dudley Water Sports Centre provides facilities that are compatible with a number of water sports and other water-related activities.
- Dudley Canal is also used for some water sport activities such as canoeing and kayaking, whilst Himley Hall has a lake that is frequently used for sailing.
- Dudley Water Sports Centre is home to numerous clubs, whilst Dudley Canal and Himley Hall also host activity.
- Through Dudley Water Centre, Dudley Canal and Himley Hall, supply is sufficient to meet demand.

Other grass pitch sports

- Black Country Vipers (American Football Club) accesses the 3G pitch at Stourbridge Rugby Club for its activity, which is sufficient.
- Stourbridge Titans Baseball Club is exported from the Borough.

Sandwell

Football

- There are 171 grass football pitches across 70 sites, with 139 pitches available for community use across 48 sites.
- Lapsed/disused pitches are identified at five sites.
- Of the available pitches, five are assessed as good quality, 51 as standard and 83 as poor.
- A total of 348 teams from within 115 clubs are identified.
- There are high levels of exported demand identified, with a large number of clubs and teams playing in neighbouring authorities due to a lack of pitch capacity and availability within the Borough.
- There is a current shortfall of adult, youth 11v11, youth 9v9 and mini 7v7 match equivalent sessions, whilst minimal capacity exists on mini 5v5 pitches.
- When incorporating future demand, shortfalls are predicted to worsen on adult and youth 11v11 pitches.

3G

- There are six outdoor full size 3G pitches, all of which are floodlit and four of which are available for community use.
- There is also a full size indoor pitch (at West Bromwich Albion FC Academy), although this is also unavailable for community use.
- There are also 13 smaller sized 3G pitches across six sites, all of which are available for community use and floodlit.
- Four of the six full size pitches are on the FA register for match play (pitches at Sandwell Academy and West Bromwich Albion FC Academy are not), whereas none are World Rugby compliant.
- All of the full size pitches are good or standard quality and within their recommended lifespans.
- The existing community available 3G provision is reported to be operating at or close to capacity, especially at peak times, with all current community activity identified as being football-based.
- There is a calculated current and future deficit of 4.5 full size 3G pitches to meet football training needs.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Cricket

- There are six grass cricket squares, with all six available for community use.
- Numerous others sites previously provided grass wicket squares, including council parks.
- There is one accompanying non-turf wicket and 15 standalone non-turf wickets at 14 sites.
- The audit of community available grass wicket cricket squares found five to be good quality and the remaining one to be standard quality; none are assessed as poor.
- Four clubs report a demand for new, improved or additional training facilities.
- There are five clubs which collectively provide 40 teams.
- Two clubs (Old Hill CC and Smethwick CC) export demand to sites in Birmingham, whilst one club (Coseley CC) imports demand.
- There is a shortfall for Saturday and midweek cricket, whilst spare capacity exists on Sundays.

Rugby union

- There are seven sites containing the same number of pitches, all of which are senior although only four are available for community use.
- Of the community available pitches, one is assessed as good quality and two as poor.
- Two community rugby union clubs are identified; Warley RUFC and Wednesbury RUFC.
- There is overall spare capacity on rugby union pitches in Sandwell, although a localised shortfall exists for Wednesbury RUFC.

Rugby league

- There are no rugby league pitches and no demand has been identified.
- Any residual need is unlikely to be sufficient enough for a club to be created, with individuals instead likely to travel to form part of the clubs based in other, nearby authorities.

Hockey

- There are two full size hockey suitable AGPs (at Ormiston Forge Academy and Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy).
- Both pitches are available for community use; however, the pitch at Ormiston Forge Academy is without floodlighting.
- The pitch at Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy is assessed as poor quality.
- Old Halesonians HC is the only hockey club playing in the Borough, although the Club previously played in Dudley and considers this to be its home authority (imported demand).
- Both Wednesbury HC and West Bromwich HC export demand.
- There is a requirement for two hockey suitable AGPs, which is not currently being met due to quality and floodlighting issues at Ormiston Forge Academy.

Tennis

- There are a total of 57 tennis courts identified across 18 sites, with 35 courts categorised as being available for community use at 12 sites.
- Eight courts are assessed as good quality, 32 as standard quality and 17 as poor quality.
- Discussions are ongoing regarding development plans at Tipton Sports Academy, whilst the Council is also working with the LTA on a potential parks development project for 2022.
- There are two tennis clubs; Old Hill TC and Wednesbury TC.
- Club-based demand is being met, although improvements are required to satisfy informal play.

Netball

- There are 62 courts identified across 24 sites, with 27 courts available for community use.
- There are 20 courts assessed as good quality, 29 as standard quality and 13 as poor quality.
- The courts at George Salter Academy and Phoenix Collegiate are accessed by the Dudley Netball League and the Walsall Netball League, respectively.
- Both leagues import demand and the Dudley Netball League has a preference to relocate to its home authority (Dudley).
- Supply meets demand, with a large number of community available netball courts provided and with a good number of these being dedicated to netball.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Bowls

- There are 18 crown green bowls greens provided across 17 sites.
- Three disused greens have also been identified, whilst the green at Cradley Sports & Social Club is at risk to development.
- In total, 17 greens are assessed as good quality and one is standard quality.
- There are 16 clubs.
- All clubs report that existing membership can be accommodated on the current level of provision, suggesting that supply is sufficient to meet demand.

Cycling

- Sandwell Valley Country Park features a range of surfaced and unsurfaced cycling tracks as well as a mountain bike trail and a pump track.
- Two national cycling routes run are evident; Route 5 (from Reading to North Wales) and Route 81 (from Aberystwyth to Wolverhampton).
- Cycling is also encouraged along canal towpaths throughout the Borough.
- There are four prominent cycling clubs, although none are currently affiliated.

Athletics

- There are four purpose-built athletics tracks (at Hadley Stadium, Phoenix Collegiate, Sandwell Academy and Tipton Sports Academy).
- The track at Hadley Stadium is also assessed as poor quality and is no longer useable.
- Five clubs have a current focus on athletics and/or running activity.
- Given how well provided for the Borough is, the track at Hadley Stadium is deemed surplus to requirements in its current form.

Golf

- There are currently five golf sites.
- In addition, there is disused provision at Brandhall Golf Club, which previously provided an 18-hole course but did not re-open following initial Covid-19 restrictions.
- Across the sites there are two 18-hole courses, three 9-hole courses and a driving range.
- Overall, clubs operating a membership scheme are below the national membership average, suggesting that provision is well placed to meet demand.

Water sports

- Swan Pool provides facilities that are compatible with a number of water sports and other water-related activities and it is home to several clubs.
- Through Swan Pool, supply is sufficient to meet demand.

Other grass pitch sports

- Sandwell Steelers American Football Club has to split its activity across numerous venues, with no dedicated provision existing.

Walsall

Football

- The audit identifies a total of 179 grass football pitches across 60 sites, including 147 pitches available for community use across 48 sites.
- Lapsed/disused pitches are identified at four sites.
- Of the available pitches, nine are assessed good quality, 89 as standard and 48 as poor.
- A total of 446 teams are evidenced, with a general trend of growth in recent years.
- Dudley Town FC (Step 6) imports demand as its requirements cannot be met in Dudley.
- There are shortfalls for youth 11v11 and mini 7v7 football, whilst adult, youth 9v9, and mini 5v5 pitches all provide current and future spare capacity.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

3G

- There are nine full size 3G pitches, of which all are floodlit and available for community use.
- There are also 22 smaller sized 3G pitches across five sites.
- Six full size pitches are on the FA register and one pitch is World Rugby compliant.
- All full-size pitches are good or standard quality and within their life expectancy.
- The existing 3G provision is reported to be operating at or close to capacity at peak times.
- With 446 football teams currently playing, there is a calculated shortfall of 2.75 full size 3G pitches to meet training needs, increasing to 3.5 pitches when factoring in future demand.
- The creation of additional full size 3G pitches that are World Rugby compliant in strategically viable locations would also relieve pressure on rugby union grass pitches.

Cricket

- In total, there are 13 grass cricket squares, all of which are available to the community.
- Five are assessed as good quality and eight are assessed as standard quality (none are assessed as poor quality).
- There are non-turf wickets accompanying grass wicket squares at five sites and there are 10 standalone non-turf wickets at nine sites.
- There are eight affiliated clubs which collectively provide 54 teams.
- One club (Streetly CC) exports some demand (into Lichfield).
- Demand for senior cricket is currently being met; however, a future shortfall is evident in regards to Saturday cricket.
- It is expected that junior cricket will be able to be satisfied taking into account both current and future demand.

Rugby union

- There are 16 sites containing a total of 25 senior and one mini rugby union pitches, of which 14 senior and the mini pitch is available for community use across eight sites.
- There are 12 senior pitches assessed as standard quality and 14 as poor quality (none are assessed as good quality).
- There are five rugby clubs providing 43 teams.
- There is currently an insufficient supply of provision for rugby union to accommodate existing demand.

Rugby league

- There are no rugby league pitches and no demand has been identified.
- Any residual need is unlikely to be sufficient enough for a club to be created, with individuals instead likely to travel to form part of the clubs based in other, nearby authorities

Hockey

- There are four full size hockey suitable AGPs, all of which are available to the community and floodlit.
- Two pitches (at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy) are assessed as poor quality and have considerably exceeded their expected lifespans.
- Five hockey clubs consist of 34 teams.
- To ensure supply can meet demand, all four full size pitches are required.

Tennis

- There are a total of 63 tennis courts identified across 20 sites, with 41 courts categorised as being available for community use at 13 sites.
- Of the courts, two are assessed as good quality, 48 as standard quality and 13 as poor quality.
- There are three tennis clubs.
- For club-based tennis demand to be met, Walsall TC requires a dedicated home venue with a sufficient number of courts.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- For non-club activity, quality improvements are required to better cater for informal and recreational play.

Netball

- There is a total of 60 netball courts identified across 17 sites, with 13 courts at five sites are available for community use.
- All 60 of the courts are over marked by other sports provision and only seven of the courts are serviced by floodlighting
- Of the community available courts, there are none rated as good quality, 13 rated as standard and two as poor.
- Given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a club/league facility to be provided in Walsall.

Bowls

- There are 29 crown green bowls greens provided across 28 sites.
- Overall, 26 greens are assessed as good quality and three as standard quality (none are assessed as poor quality).
- There are 26 clubs using bowling greens.
- One club indicates a need for access to an additional green (this being Willenhall Nordley BC).
- Supply is deemed to be sufficient for all remaining clubs.

Cycling

- There are no purpose built cycling facilities identified in the area.
- There are two British Cycling affiliated clubs (Pelsall Social Cycling Club and Walsall Road Cycling Club), both of which use the road network for activity.

Athletics

- There is one purpose-built athletics track, provided at the University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Campus).
- The track is standard quality with resurfacing required in the near future.
- Four clubs have been identified that have a current focus on athletics and/or running activity, with none of these having a requirement for a purpose-built facility.
- The supply of dedicated athletics facilities is sufficient to meet demand, although quality improvements may be required in the near future.

Golf

- There are currently seven golf sites, collectively providing six standard hole courses, one par 3 course and two driving ranges.
- All but one of the clubs is operating above the national average for membership, although none of the clubs have a significantly low base.
- As no clubs have a significantly low membership and as levels have recently increased, it is apparent that each venue is required.

Water sports

- Chasewater Water Sports Centre provides facilities that are compatible with a number of water sports and other water-related activities.
- In addition, Sneyd Water Activity Centre is also used for some water sport activities such as canoeing and power boating, whilst The Swag is a reservoir frequently used for sailing.
- Aldridge Marina also caters for canoeing.
- Numerous clubs are identified (Aldridge Sailing Club, Chase Sailing Club and Pier 52).
- The Borough is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority and this is sufficient to meet demand.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Other grass pitch sports

- ◀ No supply or demand for other sports is identified, although informal activity may take place.

Wolverhampton

Football

- ◀ The audit identifies a total of 203 grass football pitches across 106 sites, including 137 pitches available for community use across 58 sites.
- ◀ Lapsed/disused pitches are identified at six sites.
- ◀ 15 community available pitches are assessed as good quality, 65 as standard and 57 as poor.
- ◀ 253 teams from within 87 clubs are identified, with a recent trend of significant growth.
- ◀ There are high levels of imported and exported demand, with a large number of teams playing in neighbouring authorities.
- ◀ There is a current shortfall of adult match equivalent sessions, whilst some capacity exists on youth 11v11, youth 9v9, mini 7v7 and mini 5v5 pitches.
- ◀ After factoring in future demand, shortfalls on adult pitches are exacerbated and a shortfall emerges on youth 11v11 pitches.

3G

- ◀ There are four full size 3G pitches, of which all are floodlit.
- ◀ Two pitches are available for community use (at City of Wolverhampton College and Our Lady & St Chad Catholic Academy) and two are not (at Heath Park School and Sir Jack Hayward Training Ground).
- ◀ There are also eight smaller sized 3G pitches across six sites.
- ◀ The community available full size 3G pitches are currently FA approved and can therefore host competitive matches.
- ◀ The pitch at the City of Wolverhampton College is at the end of its lifespan and is therefore assessed as poor quality.
- ◀ The existing 3G provision is reported to be operating at or close to capacity at peak times, with all current community activity being football-based.
- ◀ With 253 football teams currently playing, there is a shortfall of 3.5 full size 3G pitches to meet training needs, increasing to 4.5 pitches when factoring in future demand.
- ◀ No demand has been identified from other sports for access to 3G provision.

Cricket

- ◀ In total, there are 13 grass cricket squares, with 11 available for community use.
- ◀ The audit of community available grass wicket cricket squares identifies five as good quality, seven as standard quality and one as poor quality (at Claregate Park).
- ◀ There are non-turf wickets accompanying grass wicket squares at five sites and there are standalone non-turf wickets at 15.
- ◀ Four clubs report a demand for new, improved, or additional training facilities.
- ◀ There are eight clubs identified, collectively providing 61 teams.
- ◀ There is both a current and future shortfall of provision to accommodate Saturday cricket, whereas spare capacity exists in relation to Sunday and midweek cricket.

Rugby union

- ◀ There are four school sites providing rugby union pitches, all of which are available for community use.
- ◀ Each pitch is assessed as poor quality.
- ◀ Wolverhampton RUFC are based just over the border, in South Staffordshire, but are considered to be a Wolverhampton club.
- ◀ The Club has a shortfall of provision.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Rugby league

- There are no rugby league pitches and no demand has been identified.
- Any residual need is unlikely to be sufficient enough for a club to be created, with individuals instead likely to travel to form part of the clubs based in other, nearby authorities.

Hockey

- There are five full size hockey suitable AGP's, all of which are floodlit and available to the community.
- All pitches are good or standard quality.
- There are four affiliated hockey clubs identified (Dudley Ladies, Wolverhampton, Finchfield and Old Wulfrunians hockey clubs).
- Dudley Ladies HC previously accessed The Dell Stadium, in Dudley, before its conversion to 3G in 2016 (imported demand).
- Current supply of AGP's within Wolverhampton can accommodate the existing demand for hockey within the City but there is a need for all of the existing pitches to be protected.

Tennis

- There are 125 tennis courts identified across 28 sites, with 74 courts available at 17 sites.
- Of the courts, 51 are assessed as good quality, 51 as standard quality and 26 as poor quality.
- There are six tennis clubs.
- Supply is sufficient to meet demand for clubs.
- For non-club activity, quality improvements are required to better cater for play.

Netball

- There is a large supply of outdoor netball courts, with 69 identified across 19 sites; however, only 35 courts at 10 sites are available for community use.
- Of the available courts, 15 are rated as good quality, 20 as standard and none as poor.
- The Wolverhampton Netball League uses WV Active Aldersley as a central venue.
- The supply of netball courts is considered to be sufficient to meet demand.

Bowls

- There are 21 crown green bowls greens provided across 18 sites.
- There are also four disused greens identified.
- Overall, 17 greens are assessed as good quality, two as standard and two as poor.
- There are 17 clubs using bowling greens.
- All clubs report that existing membership can be accommodated on the current level of provision, suggesting that supply is sufficient to meet demand.

Cycling

- There are two cycle speedway tracks, one asphalt track and two pump tracks.
- There are several local clubs, with membership relatively high.
- Supply is sufficient to meet demand provided that it is protected.

Athletics

- There are two purpose-built athletics tracks, a 400-metre track WV Active Aldersley and a 200-metre track at The King's Church of England School.
- Four clubs as well as a few programmes have a current focus on athletics and/or running activity, although only one has a requirement for a purpose-built facility.
- The supply of dedicated athletics facilities is sufficient to meet demand.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Golf

- ◀ There are seven golf sites, collectively providing seven courses and four driving ranges.
- ◀ All but one club (Wergs Golf Club) operate above the national membership average.
- ◀ Supply of golf provision is relatively high and well varied, although each site is required to continue to meet demand.

Water sports

- ◀ Staffordshire and Worcester Canal provides facilities that are compatible with water sports.
- ◀ Despite not having a large outdoor water sports facility like that provided elsewhere within the Black County, the City still has three clubs participating.

Other grass pitch sports

- ◀ Wolverhampton Baseball Club accesses a diamond at Colton Hill High School and the site also accommodates Stourbridge Titans Baseball Club (imported demand).
- ◀ St Mary's Gaelic Football Club uses an overmarked and undersized football pitch at Aldersley High School, with aspirations existing for a dedicated venue to be provided.

PART 3: OVERARCHING SPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to help develop the recommendations/actions and to understand the potential impact, a number of relevant scenario questions are tested against key issues for each outdoor sport, resulting in sport specific recommendations. These scenarios can be seen in the individual strategies for each local authority.

The recommendations within the individual strategy documents have now, where appropriate, been applied across the Black Country area to enable a joined-up approach to addressing key issues identified. These are identified below. The Steering Group should look to implement these on a Black Country-wide basis to enable joint working on strategic and cross-boundary issues and for efficiency purposes.

Implementation of these recommendations and actions are discussed further in the delivery section of this report (Part 6).

3.1: Sport-by-sport recommendations

Football

- ◀ Protect existing quantity of pitches, including lapsed and disused provision, until all demand is being met (unless replacement provision meets Sport England requirements and is agreed upon and provided).
- ◀ Where pitches are overplayed and assessed as poor or standard quality, prioritise investment and review maintenance regimes to ensure they are of an appropriate standard to sustain use and improve quality.
- ◀ Use the Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) as a guide to determine suitable sites for grass pitch investment and update the priority projects within it following this study.
- ◀ Utilise the Football Foundation's PitchPower web app to assist in the improvement and ongoing maintenance of provision.
- ◀ Consider pitch re-configuration where capacity of one pitch type can be used to reduce shortfalls of another, and where it can better accommodate what demand is received.
- ◀ Transfer play from sites which remain overplayed to alternative sites with spare capacity (or 3G provision), or to sites which are not currently available for community use.
- ◀ Consider bringing lapsed/disused sites back into use as well as pitches that were previously marked out at sites still in use.
- ◀ Work to accommodate latent and future demand at sites which are not operating at capacity or at sites which are not currently available for community use.
- ◀ Seek a resolution to identified exported/imported demand, particularly where evidenced between the four Black Country authorities.
- ◀ Look to secure tenure for those clubs accessing unsecure sites.
- ◀ Seek to gain access to sites not currently available for community use, particularly where a large number of pitches are provided.
- ◀ Improve ancillary facilities where there is a demand to do so and where it can benefit the wider footballing offer.
- ◀ Where appropriate, develop partnerships and/or lease arrangements with large, sustainable, development-minded clubs to manage their own sites.
- ◀ Ensure that any housing developments are provided for and assess the need for new pitch provision and/or off-side contributions through master planning on an individual basis.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

3G

- ◆ Protect current stock of 3G pitches.
- ◆ Resurface pitches that have reached the end of their lifespans and ensure a sinking fund is in place for all pitches so that refurbishment can take place when required (the expectation is that sites should already have a sinking fund in place to enable this).
- ◆ To alleviate identified competitive and training demand shortfalls, look to create additional 3G pitches, focusing on strategic locations (see Figure 2.1).
- ◆ Where shortfalls exist in sub areas close to local authority boundary areas, ensure the relevant councils work together to focus on sites that can meet cross-border needs, minimise the pitch requirements and ensure an unsustainable oversupply is not created.
- ◆ Ensure, where possible, that any existing and new 3G pitches have community use agreements in place.
- ◆ Encourage more match play demand to transfer to 3G pitches and ensure all pitches are FA tested (and re-tested every three years) so that they can accommodate competitive fixtures.
- ◆ For World Rugby compliant pitches, ensure re-resting every two years to ensure they remain accredited.
- ◆ Ensure that all new 3G pitches are constructed to meet FA/RFU recommended dimensions and quality performance standards.
- ◆ Ensure, where possible, that any new 3G pitches are priced competitively against the cost of hiring a grass pitch and are aimed at local grassroots clubs; this can be achieved when pitches are established through external funding by adding appropriate terms and conditions to the funding agreement.

Cricket

- ◆ Protect existing quantity of cricket squares.
- ◆ Improve quality at sites assessed as poor or standard and ensure quality is sustained at sites assessed as good.
- ◆ Address overplay via quality improvements, an increase in NTPs accompanying grass wickets and increased utilisation of existing NTPs.
- ◆ Consider bringing lapsed/disused squares back into use, where identified, as another means of reducing shortfalls.
- ◆ If overplay cannot be alleviated through the abovementioned methods, explore the feasibility of creating new cricket squares, particularly if future growth aspirations are realised.
- ◆ Seek a resolution to identified exported/imported demand, particularly where evidenced between the four Black Country authorities.
- ◆ Pursue improved security of tenure for clubs without ownership or a long-term lease arrangement in place.
- ◆ Improve the changing facilities where there is a need to do so.
- ◆ Consider options to increase and improve stock of suitable practice facilities.
- ◆ Continue to support ECB initiatives such as All Stars and Dynamos and ensure unaffiliated demand and recreational cricket is provided for.
- ◆ Ensure that any housing developments are provided for and assess the need for new pitch provision and/or off-side contributions through master planning on an individual basis.

Rugby union

- ◆ Protect existing quantity of rugby union pitches.
- ◆ Improve pitch quality at all sites used by clubs through improved maintenance and/or the installation of drainage systems.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- ◀ Where possible, install additional floodlighting to allow training demand to be dispersed and to create further capacity.
- ◀ Explore the potential creation of additional World Rugby compliant 3G pitches in strategic locations and where sufficient demand can be evidenced.
- ◀ Seek a resolution to identified exported/imported demand, particularly where evidenced between the four Black Country authorities.
- ◀ Support aspirations for ancillary facility enhancements where improvements are required.
- ◀ Ensure that any housing developments are provided for and assess the need for new pitch provision and/or off-side contributions through master planning on an individual basis.

Rugby league - grass pitches

- ◀ Ensure any future rugby league activity is signposted to clubs in neighbouring authorities so that demand can be met.

Hockey (sand/water-based AGPs)

- ◀ Protect existing sand-based pitches that are in current use for hockey, unless it can be evidenced that demand can be accommodated without the pitch in question (or unless replacement provision is secured).
- ◀ To improve the capacity of the existing pitch stock, explore the installation of floodlighting where it is not currently provided and the extension of opening hours where availability is currently limited.
- ◀ Create additional pitches where demand is not being met and as a resolution to returning exported activity (i.e., to Dudley and Sandwell).
- ◀ Resurface pitches that have reached the end of their lifespans and ensure a sinking fund is in place for all pitches so that refurbishment can take place when required.
- ◀ Ensure, where possible, security of tenure is provided to all clubs.
- ◀ Improve the ancillary offer supporting pitches where it is required.
- ◀ Consult England Hockey regarding any proposals for the development of new 3G pitches or proposed conversions to 3G to ensure a sufficient supply of hockey provision remains and that it will still be sustainable.
- ◀ Ensure that any housing developments are provided for and assess the need for new pitch provision and/or off-side contributions through master planning on an individual basis.

Tennis

- ◀ Protect existing quantity of courts.
- ◀ Seek to improve court quality at sites assessed as poor or standard quality and sustain quality at sites assessed as good, especially at sites in use by clubs or that are (or could be) well used for recreational demand.
- ◀ Seek to improve park provision as a priority to create a year-round recreational tennis option to meet local demand, especially at sites with multiple courts.
- ◀ Explore options to further improve the recreational tennis offer via utilisation of technology provided by the LTA (e.g., Clubspark) to support the customer journey and through investment into facilities and accompanying ancillary provision.
- ◀ Ensure sinking funds are put into place by providers, where possible, for long-term sustainability.
- ◀ Explore installation of additional floodlighting at club-based venues, particularly at sites operating above the capacity guidance.
- ◀ Provide additional court space for clubs operating above the capacity guidance, potentially via better utilisation of existing provision.
- ◀ Improve ancillary provision, where it is required.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Netball

- ◆ Protect existing quantity of courts.
- ◆ Seek to improve poor quality courts quality through resurfacing and/or improved maintenance.
- ◆ Seek a resolution to demand that is exported and that wants to return by identifying and securing access to provision within home authorities.
- ◆ Explore opportunities to gain access to sites not currently available for community use, especially where multiple courts are provided and where demand is not being met.
- ◆ Facilitate improved engagement between England Netball and schools.
- ◆ Look to continue and expand the use of courts for England Netball initiatives such as Back to Netball and Walking Netball.

Bowls

- ◆ Retain existing quantity of greens where demand is being met.
- ◆ Explore opportunities to provide clubs operating above the capacity guidance with access to additional green space, where such demand exists.
- ◆ Monitor clubs operating below the capacity guidance to ensure they remain sustainable and provide support to clubs with plans to increase membership so that growth can be maximised.
- ◆ Seek to improve poor and standard quality greens.
- ◆ Support clubs to improve ancillary facility quality where it is required.
- ◆ Where clubs are facing capacity pressures, retain any unused/disused greens in the locality as strategic reserve should they be required and ensure that any potential development of unused or disused greens is mitigated in line with planning policy.

Cycling

- ◆ Protect existing stock of purpose-built facilities.
- ◆ Work to deliver recommendations identified in the British Cycling 2022 Commonwealth Games Needs Assessment.
- ◆ Pursue quality improvements where required through track resurfacing and/or improved maintenance.
- ◆ Seek to improve ancillary facilities supporting the provision where there is a need to do so.
- ◆ Explore creation of additional facilities, or the re-instatement of old facilities, if it is determined that demand would be sufficient.
- ◆ Improve public transport and road links to provision, where necessary.
- ◆ Look to continue and expand British Cycling programmes such as HSBC UK Go-Ride and HSBC UK Breeze.

Athletics

- ◆ Protect existing quantity of tracks that remain in use.
- ◆ Where sufficient usage is not being received, consider re-purposing the provision whilst exploring the development of innovative athletics facilities as part of this (i.e., at Hadley Stadium).
- ◆ Seek to improve provision through resurfacing when it is required and via enhanced maintenance.
- ◆ Support providers to retain or gain TrackMark status.
- ◆ Support clubs, running groups, events and England Athletics initiatives such as Park Run and pursue increased participation, where possible.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

- ◀ Continue to increase participation both within affiliated clubs and the wider running market, signposting potential club members from the likes of Parkrun events and other health initiatives.

Golf

- ◀ Protect all existing golf provision.
- ◀ Sustain course and ancillary facility quality and seek improvements where necessary.
- ◀ Support clubs in membership retention and potential growth and encourage clubs and providers to work more collaboratively in terms of creating pathways for players.

Water sports

- ◀ Seek to ensure that existing provision is retained and supporting facilities remain of sufficient quality.
- ◀ Support clubs to maximise demand and fully utilise the unique facilities offered.

Other grass pitch sports (American football, baseball/softball, Gaelic football)

- ◀ Protect existing provision is retained for continued use.
- ◀ Explore opportunities to provide dedicated provision where required.
- ◀ Seek resolution to exported demand.

3.2: Cross-sport opportunities/recommendations

In addition to the sport-by-sport recommendations identified above, it should also be noted that some of the issues and opportunities are applicable to multiple sports. Where this is case, there is scope for partnership working to ensure that the recommendations, when carried out, have maximum impact. This approach can also be more economically viable.

Examples of the above include:

- ◀ Improving pitch quality – several sites across the Black Country have provision for more than one sport, particularly the key centres and hub sites identified in the individual PPOSS documents. Where quality improvements take place, this should therefore consider how the enhancements can apply across the provision, such as through implementing an improved maintenance regime site-wide.
- ◀ Improving ancillary provision – as above, many clubhouses at sites are servicing multiple sports and any improvement should therefore recognise this. Consideration should also be given as how to best accommodate all users when enhancements, re-configurations and new developments take place.
- ◀ Improving access to education sites – most education sites, particularly secondary schools, have a wide range of sports facilities for several sports. As such, any community use agreements established should cover access to all of these, where possible.
- ◀ Establishing lease agreements – tenure agreements do not necessarily have to be entered into by one club. Where a site is used by multiple, large development-minded clubs, an umbrella organisation could be established to take over the management of a site, where it is considered suitable.

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- ◆ Developing/converting artificial surfaces – relevant sporting bodies should work together when new artificial (3G and sand) pitches are established or where a conversion is proposed. This is to ensure that usage can be maximised whilst also safeguarding the relevant sports and the viability of existing pitches and users. Primarily, this is for the Football Foundation, County FA and EH to work together on, ensuring there is no duplication of provision, that no conversions take place that will be detrimental to a sport, and that new pitches are located in the best possible areas.
- ◆ Utilising shared surfaces – when existing provision is refurbished or when new provision is developed, consideration should be given to maximising use by ensuring multi-sport accessibility, especially when one sport is unlikely to utilise all capacity. An example of this is for the development of court sport, which should consider the needs of both tennis and netball, whilst the development of a 3G surface can consider the needs of not only football but also sports such as rugby union, rugby league, American football and lacrosse. Sand-based surfaces can also cater for several sports as well as hockey, including tennis and netball.
- ◆ Securing developer contributions – it is unlikely that a housing development will only generate demand for one sport, meaning a joined-up approach should be sought to determine where funding can go. This could be through contributions going to a different site/s for each relevant sport, or through all contributions being pooled for a site/s that will benefit each sport appropriately (or a combination of both).
- ◆ Creating new provision – for significantly large housing developments, or where significantly large shortfalls currently exist, there could be a need for a new site to be established. Where this is the case, consideration should be given as to what sports should be included within this, and how a site masterplan can be designed to ensure that they can be accommodated without any future issues. This should take into account pitch configuration, ancillary facility needs, peak time access requirements and long-term sustainability.

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PART 4: OVERARCHING STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The strategic recommendations have been developed via a combination of information gathered during consultation, site visits and analysis, which culminated in the production of the individual assessment reports and the individual strategies. They reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed across the Black Country and apply across all outdoor sports facilities, rather than being specific to one sport.

The recommendations all fall under three broad aims, shown below, which in turn are based on the Sport England themes of protect, enhance and provide. Whilst the same recommendations apply to each authority, the scale to which they need to be acted upon and the steps required to achieve them may differ. As such, for further guidance, please refer to the individual strategy documents, which set out more specific direction.

AIM 1

To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sport facilities where it is needed to meet current and future needs.

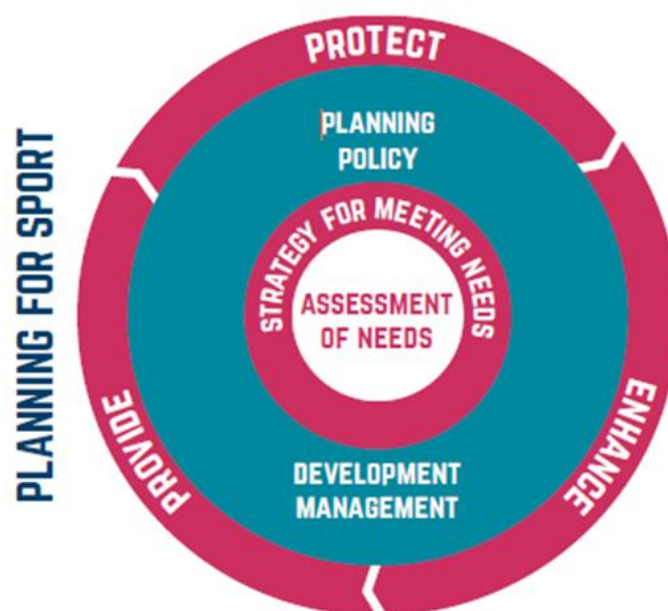
AIM 2

To **enhance** outdoor sport facilities and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

AIM 3

To **provide** new outdoor sport facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.

Figure 3.1: Sport England themes



Source: Sport England, Planning for Sport Guidance (June 2019)

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AIM 1

To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sports facilities where it is needed to meet current and future needs.

- a. Ensure, through the use of the PPOSS, that outdoor sports facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.
- b. Secure tenure and access to sites through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
- c. Maximise community use of education facilities where needed.

Recommendation (a) – Ensure, through the use of the PPOSS, that outdoor sport facilities are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.

The individual PPOSS assessment reports show that in each local authority, all existing playing field and outdoor sport sites cannot be deemed surplus to requirements because of shortfalls now and in the future. As such, all provision requires protection or replacement until all identified shortfalls have been overcome, including lapsed, disused, underused and poor quality sites. There is a requirement for such provision to help meet and alleviate the identified shortfalls.

When shortfalls are evident, provision can only be permanently lost when the current picture changes to the extent that the site in question is no longer needed as a result of no shortfalls existing, or unless replacement provision is provided and agreed upon by all stakeholders. NPPF paragraph 99 states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- ✦ An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- ✦ The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- ✦ The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

Existing policies in the Black Country Core Strategy and individual 'Black Country Authorities' Local Plans also support the protection of playing fields and outdoor sports facilities. The PPOSS should be used to help inform the implementation of these policies and inform the development of replacement policies. It should be used to help inform development management decisions that affect existing or new provision and accompanying ancillary facilities, with all applications to be assessed by the Local Planning Authority on a case-by-case basis taking into account site specific factors alongside national guidance and local planning policy.

In addition, Sport England is a statutory consultee on planning applications that affect or prejudice the use of sports facilities that been active within the last five years and will use the PPOSS to help assess that planning application against its planning policy. Sport England will oppose the loss of provision unless it complies with one of more of the following policy exceptions:

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Policy Exception E1:

'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'. Where a PPOSS cannot demonstrate that the site, or part of a site, is clearly surplus to requirements then replacement of the site, or part of a site, will be required to comply with the remaining Sport England policy exceptions.

Policy Exception E2

'The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity and quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use'.

Policy Exception E3

The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

- ♦ Reduce the size of any playing pitch;
- ♦ Result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
- ♦ Reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain quality;
- ♦ Result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site;
- ♦ Prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site'.

Policy Exception E4:

'The playing field or fields to be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new playing field site or sites:

- ♦ of equivalent or better quality and
- ♦ of equivalent or greater quantity;
- ♦ in a suitable location and;
- ♦ subject to equivalent or better management arrangements.

Policy Exception E5

'The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice of use, of the area of playing field'.

Notwithstanding the above, there may be instances where the loss of provision can be supported and seen as a positive development, in line with the NPPF, local planning policy and Sport England's policy exceptions. For example, it may be appropriate to consider rationalisation of certain low value sites (i.e. one/two pitch sites with no changing provision) to generate investment in creating bigger and better venues (hub sites). It is vital, however, that there is no net loss of facilities and that replacement provision is in place and available for use prior to existing provision being lost.

There may also be instances where re-purposing provision can be supported. For example, a site may be unused and not required for its current sporting purpose but could help overcome identified shortfalls for other sports by converting the facilities that are provided.

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Recommendation (b) – Secure tenure and access to sites through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.

A number of sites across the Black Country provide playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities but either do not provide community access or do so in an unsecure manner. As a result, any capacity at these sites is discounted as long-term access cannot be guaranteed.

Securing community access

A number of education sites are being used across the local authorities for competitive play. In some cases, such use has been classified as secure; however, this is commonly not the case, which presents a risk for users as access could technically be terminated at any time. Securing community use at such sites will therefore help to create additional capacity and could help to address deficiencies.

For education sites, NGBs, Sport England and other appropriate bodies such as Active Black Country and the Football Foundation can often help to negotiate and engage with providers where the local authority may not have direct influence. This is particularly the case at sites that have received funding from these bodies or are going to receive funding in the future as community access can be a condition of any agreement.

Some non-education sites are also without security of tenure, such as venues that are operated privately or commercially, or that have development proposals in place. Providers of these sites should also be engaged to understand if a secure usage agreement can be implemented to safeguard access. Where this is not possible, users should be encouraged to transfer demand to alternative sites, at which point additional work may be required to ensure such demand can be catered for.

Alternative management models

To further improve security of tenure, the councils should also explore possible alternative options for the future management of some sites within their portfolios, including lease arrangements or community asset transfer. Potential benefits of these include reducing costs, which may allow for the retention and possible improvement of other retained sites, as well as potentially opening up new routes to the improvement of sites and access to external funding opportunities through club-led management models.

Local sports clubs that may be suitable to take on the operation of a site should be supported by partners to achieve sustainability across a range of areas including management, membership, funding, facilities, volunteers and partnership work. For example, club development should be supported and clubs should be encouraged to develop evidence of business and sports development plans that can generate income via their facilities.

In light of local authority budget constraints, it is increasingly important for the councils to work with voluntary sector organisations to enable them to take greater levels of ownership and support the wider development and maintenance of facilities. To facilitate this, where practical, they should support and enable clubs to generate sufficient funds, providing that this is to the benefit of sport.

Long-term leasehold

Where lease arrangements are sought, agreements should be for a minimum of 25 years, as recommended by Sport England and NGBs, so clubs are in a position to apply for external funding. This is particularly the case at poor quality sites, possibly with inadequate ancillary facilities, so that quality can be improved and sites developed.

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For clubs with leaseholds already in place, these should be reviewed when fewer than 25 years remain on existing agreements to secure extensions, thus improving security of tenure and helping clubs attract funding for site developments. Any club with less than 25 years remaining on an agreement is unlikely to meet conditions of grants funded by external partners.

Community Asset Transfer

This is the transfer of management and/or ownership of public land and buildings from its owner (usually a local authority) to a community organisation (such as a Development Trust, a Community Interest Company or a social enterprise) for less than market value, to achieve a local social, economic or environmental benefit.

Community based organisations are often much more effective at engaging people than other types of organisations because they are close to and directly accountable to their community. They can mobilise a lot of volunteer time and energy, whilst delivering services that make them more inclusive and responsible than state run examples. Asset transfer can, for example:

- ◀ Help local authorities meet policy objectives.
- ◀ Make better use of underused assets.
- ◀ Open and increase opportunities for clubs/organisations to access grant funding for which local authorities cannot apply.
- ◀ Open opportunities to revenue generation and greater self-dependence.
- ◀ Improve assets through increased time and resource (both financial and volunteer) than what the local authority may be able to contribute.
- ◀ Reduce costs to the local authority and protection against further budgetary cuts.
- ◀ Give sports clubs and community organisations more security and sustainability and help transition clubs away from being funding dependent.
- ◀ Enable people to protect the assets in their communities – including iconic heritage buildings and open spaces.
- ◀ Involve people in designing and running the services from which they benefit.
- ◀ Be a catalyst for getting people more involved as volunteers.
- ◀ Keep money in the local economy through enterprise and locally owned assets.

The Sport England Community Sport Asset Transfer Toolkit is a bespoke, interactive web based tool that provides a step by step guide through each stage of the asset transfer process should this be an option for the Council to consider. It can be accessed via: <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/community-assets-and-rights>

Asset transfer policy

The PPOSS should help inform each policy on asset transfer (whether via leasehold or community asset transfer).

Each club or organisation interested in acquiring a site should be required to meet service and/or strategic recommendations. An additional set of criteria should also be considered, which takes into account club quality, aligned to its long-term development objectives and sustainability. The following table highlights some recommended criteria, as a starting point, that can be used to determine suitability.

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Table 4.1: Recommended criteria for lease of sport sites to clubs/organisations

Criteria
Based within the local authority area, in communities closest to the facility
Hold current NGB affiliation for their sport(s) – e.g., England Football Accreditation.
Hold a current 'ClubMark' or equivalent quality accreditation which includes governance, equality and diversity and safeguarding
Provide a clear pathway for the development of children, young people and adults
Able to demonstrate an inclusive approach to all members of the wider community and to benefit as wide and diverse a range of local people as possible
Have the appropriate skillset and depth of volunteers/members required to make self-management sustainable
Have fit-for-purpose governance to manage an asset
Due diligence is carried out through reviewing business and development plans or other appropriate documents and assessing financial viability/sustainability to manage the asset.
Need to be a legal entity - usually in the form of a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, society, Charitable Incorporated Organisation or Community Interest Company - that exists to deliver social, economic, or environmental benefit to the Borough and can demonstrate community benefit objectives with surpluses/profits reinvested back into the community to further their aims.

Linked to the above, the councils could establish core outcomes to derive from clubs taking on management duties to ensure that the most appropriate are assigned sites. Outcomes may, for example, include:

- ◆ Increasing participation.
- ◆ Supporting the development of coaches and volunteers.
- ◆ Commitment to quality standards.
- ◆ Improvements (where required) to facilities, or at minimum retaining existing standards.

In addition, clubs should be made fully aware of the associated responsibilities/liabilities when considering taking on provision within multi-use public playing fields. It is important in these instances that the sites, to some degree, remain available for other purposes or for other users.

Recommendation (c) - Maximise community use of education facilities where there is a need to do so

A large number of sporting facilities are located on education sites and making these available to sports clubs can offer significant benefits to both the schools and local clubs, as well helping to reduce identified shortfalls. It is, however, common for school provision not to be fully maximised for community use, even on established community use sites.

To maximise community use, a more coherent, structured relationship with schools and higher/further education sites is recommended. Across the Black Country, pricing policies at facilities can be a barrier to access at some education sites but physical access, poor quality and resistance from schools to open up provision is also an issue, especially at private schools and academies.

Where poor quality is preventing access, remedial works may be required before community use can be established. The low carrying capacity of these facilities sometimes leads to them being played to capacity or overplayed simply due to curricular and extra-curricular use, meaning they cannot accommodate any additional use by the community.

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Although there are a growing number of academies over which local authorities have little or no control, it is still important to understand the significance of such sites and attempt to work with the schools where there are opportunities for community use. In addition, relevant NGBs have a role to play in supporting the Council to deliver upon this recommendation and communicating with schools where necessary to address shortfalls in provision.

As detailed earlier, the NGBs, as well as Active Black Country and Sport England, can often help to negotiate and engage with schools where the local authority may have limited direct influence. This is particularly the case at sites that have received funding from the relevant bodies or are going to receive funding in the future (e.g., to improve quality) as community access can be a condition of the funding agreement.

As a priority, community use options should firstly be explored at large schools offering numerous pitches as securing access to these will significantly reduce grass pitch shortfalls throughout the local authorities that they are based within. For schools that form part of multi-academy trusts, these should be addressed on a collective basis, with securing community access a co-ordinated approach between the schools and relevant stakeholders. Consideration should be given to a centralised booking system for community use of such facilities to minimise administration and make access easier for the users.

Where new schools are provided in major new residential developments, they should be designed to facilitate community access, with opportunities for meeting the community's outdoor sports needs explored at the outset to maximise the impact. An example of this is ensuring the provision of youth 11v11 and/or youth 9v9 grass football pitches, given current shortfalls and their suitability for the playing format of students, or multi-use provision such as courts that can accommodate both tennis and netball activity.

AIM 2

To **enhance** outdoor sports provision and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

Recommendations:

- d. Maintain quality and seek improvements where necessary
- e. Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites.
- f. Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding
- g. Secure developer contributions.

Recommendation (d) - Maintain quality and seek improvements where necessary

There are a number of ways in which it is possible to improve quality, including, for example, addressing overplay and improving maintenance. Given that the majority of councils face reducing budgets, it is currently advisable to look at improving key sites as a priority (e.g., the largest sites that are the most overplayed or the poorest).

With such pressures on budgets, any wide-ranging and direct investment into quality is unlikely and other options for improvements should be considered. This could be via asset transfer or clubs leasing/managing sites as highlighted in Objective 1, with clubs taking on maintenance, whilst other options may include equipment banks and the pooling of resources for maintenance.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Addressing quality issues

Quality across the Black Country is variable but generally most pitches are assessed as poor or standard quality. Where facilities are assessed as standard or poor quality and/or overplayed, maintenance regimes should be reviewed and, where possible, improved to ensure that what is being done is of an appropriate standard to sustain/improve pitch quality. Ensuring continuance of existing maintenance of good quality sites is also essential.

Based upon an achievable target, using existing quality scoring to provide a baseline, a standard should be used to identify deficiencies and investment should be focused on those sites which fail to meet the proposed quality standard. For the purposes of quality assessments, the Strategy refers to pitches and ancillary facilities separately as being of 'good', 'standard' or 'poor' quality. However, some good quality sites have poor quality elements and vice versa (e.g., a good quality pitch may be serviced by poor quality changing facilities).

It is also important to note the impact the weather has on quality. The worse the weather, the poorer facilities tend to become, especially if no drainage systems are in place or if existing drainage systems are inadequate. This also means that quality can vary, year on year, dependent upon the weather and levels of rainfall, which in turn means that maintenance might need to increase at specific times.

If a poor quality site receives little or no usage that is not to say that no improvement is needed. It may instead be the case that it receives no demand because of its quality, thus an improvement in said quality will attract demand to the site, potentially from overplayed standard or good quality sites (thus reducing capacity issues).

In addition, without appropriate, fit for purpose ancillary facilities, good quality provision may be underutilised, especially by adults and female users who have more of a requirement. Changing facilities form the most essential part of this offer and therefore key sites should be given priority for improvement. For the majority of sports, no senior league matches can take place without appropriate changing facilities and the same also applies to women's and girls' demand.

For football, The FA has a Pitch Improvement Programme aimed at improving the standard of grass pitches across England. For provision included in the programme, clubs can utilise the services of the Football Foundation's PitchPower web app to carry out a free on-site assessment of their pitches. This then provides the Grounds Management Association (GMA) with the detail needed to create a personalised, informative report to advise on how improvements can be made. Clubs then receive bespoke advice and support to help with any future actions, funding applications and equipment, with clubs getting access to discounted rates for machinery and consumables through local partnerships.

The tool is available across mobile apps and desktop and is open to access by all providers, including clubs, schools and local authorities. Following a PitchPower report, organisations can work towards the recommended dedicated maintenance regime identified to improve the quality of their pitches. Applicants are required to submit a PitchPower assessment for each of their pitches as a condition of a grant funding application for Football Foundation grass pitch investment, such as the Grass Pitch Maintenance fund.

For cricket and the ECB, the equivalent is the Grounds and Natural Turf Improvement Programme, which is jointly funded by the ECB, FA, Football Foundation and the GMA. Its aim is to raise the standards of sports surfaces as well as the understanding of sports turf management practices among grassroots sports clubs across England and Wales.

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Specifically for tennis, the LTA has secured a £22 million investment fund to be put into public tennis courts across Britain, together with an £8.5 million investment from the LTA. This will see thousands of public park tennis courts that are in poor or unplayable condition improved for the benefit of the local communities. The LTA is working with the Council to access the funding for improvements in Dudley.

For the improvement/replacement of AGPs refer to Sport England and the NGBs 'Selecting the Right Artificial Surface for Hockey, Football, Rugby League and Rugby Union' document for a guide as to suitable AGP surfaces: www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/artificial-sports-surfaces/

Addressing overplay

In order to improve the overall quality of the outdoor facility stock it is necessary to ensure that provision is not overplayed beyond recommended carrying capacity. This is determined by assessing quality (via a non-technical site assessment) and allocating a match limit to each (daily for hockey, weekly for football and rugby union and seasonal for cricket).

The FA, RFU, RFL, ECB and EH all recommend a number of matches that pitches should take based on quality, as seen in the table below. For other grass pitch sports, no guidelines are set by the NGBs although it can be assumed that a similar trend should be followed.

Table 4.2: Capacity of pitches

Sport	Pitch type	No. of matches		
		Good quality	Standard quality	Poor quality
Football	Adult pitches	3 per week	2 per week	1 per week
	Youth pitches	4 per week	2 per week	1 per week
	Mini pitches	6 per week	4 per week	2 per week
Rugby union	Natural Inadequate (D0)	2 per week	1.5 per week	0.5 per week
	Natural Adequate (D1)	3 per week	2 per week	1.5 per week
	Pipe Drained (D2)	3.25 per week	2.5 per week	1.75 per week
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	3.5 per week	3 per week	2 per week
Cricket	One grass wicket	5 per season	4 per season	0 per season
	One synthetic wicket	60 per season		
Hockey	Full size AGP	4 per day	4 per day	4 per day

For non-pitch sports, capacity is not linked to the number of matches taking place but rather the number of members (and other users) attracted to a site. For example, for tennis, a floodlit hard court is said to have capacity for 60 members, whereas a non-floodlit hard court has capacity for 40 members (this varies for grass courts). For bowls, a green is considered at capacity if it has over 80 members, whilst a membership of under 20 could be unsustainable.

It is imperative to engage with clubs to ensure that sites are not played beyond their capacity. Where overplay is identified, play should be encouraged, where possible, to be transferred to alternative venues that are not operating at capacity or, where possible, quality should be improved to increase capacity to appropriate levels. Where play is transferred, this may include transferring play to 3G pitches or to sites not currently available for community use but which may be in the future.

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For cricket, an increase in the usage of NTPs is key to alleviating overplay as this allows for the transfer of junior demand from grass wickets. It also does not require any additional playing pitch space as NTPs can be installed in situ on existing squares.

For rugby union, additional floodlighting can mitigate some of the overplay as it allows training demand to be spread across a greater number of pitches or unmarked areas. If permanent floodlighting is not possible, portable floodlighting is an alternative, as is the installation of a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch.

As mentioned earlier, there are also sites that are poor quality but are not overplayed. These should not be overlooked as often poor quality sites have less demand than others but demand could increase if the quality was improved. It does, however, work both ways as potential improvements may make sites more attractive and therefore more popular, which in the long run can lead again to them becoming poor quality pitches if not properly maintained.

Improving changing provision

There is a need to address changing provision at some sites across the Black Country. Sites which predominantly accommodate adult and female sport should be prioritised for improvements, with further focused placed on multi-pitch and multi-sport sites where demand tends to be highest.

The above is not to say that other sites do not require improvement, although there is a trend for younger junior age groups (particularly for football) not to require use of changing provision. Where this is the case, emphasis should be placed more on ensuring that suitable male and female toilet provision is provided.

Recommendation (e) – Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites

To allow for facility developments to be prioritised and programmed on a phased basis, the councils should adopt a tiered approach to the management and improvement of outdoor sport sites and associated facilities. This hierarchy is set out for each authority in its individual Strategy document and its individual action plan.

Recommendation (f) – Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding

It should be ensured that the funding secured for improved sports provision is directed to areas of need, underpinned by a robust strategy for improvement in outdoor sport provision and accompanying ancillary facilities (as provided by the PPOSS). To ensure that this is the case, a co-ordinated approach to strategic investment is required and the councils should, thus, maintain regular dialogue with local partners through the PPOSS Steering Group.

Although some investment in new provision will not be made by the councils directly, it is important that the Steering Group directs and leads a co-ordinated approach to facility development whether made at/by education sites, NGBs, sports clubs and the commercial sector. This is to ensure that the extent to which it addresses community need is optimised and duplication is avoided.

One of sport's key contributions is its positive impact on public health. It is therefore important to lever in investment from other sectors such as, for example, health and wellbeing. Sport and physical activity can have a profound effect on people's lives, and plays a crucial role in improving community cohesion, educational attainment and self-confidence.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Recommendation (g) – Secure developer contributions

It is important that the PPOSS informs policies and supplementary planning documents by setting out the approach to securing new and improved sport and recreational facilities through new housing development. Sport England recommends that a number of objectives should be implemented to enable this to be delivered:

- ◀ Planning consent should include appropriate conditions and/or be subject to specific planning obligations.
- ◀ Where developer contributions are applicable, a S106 agreement or equivalent must be completed that should specify, when applied, the amount that will be linked to Sport England's Building Cost Information Service from the date of the permission and timing of the contribution/s to be made.
- ◀ Contributions should also be secured towards the first ten years of maintenance on new pitches (lifecycle costs).
- ◀ External funding should be sought/secured to achieve maximum benefit from the investment into appropriate facility enhancement, alongside other open space provision, and its subsequent maintenance.
- ◀ Where new provision is provided, appropriate changing rooms and, where relevant, associated car parking should be located on site and locations should be sought which are accessible via public transport and active travel modes.
- ◀ All new or improved outdoor sports facilities on school sites should be subject to community use agreements.

For playing pitches, it is recommended that the councils use Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator as a tool for helping to determine the additional demand for pitches and to estimate the likely developer contribution required linking to sites within the locality. This should form part of the Council working with Sport England to develop a process and guidance for obtaining developer contributions.

The calculator uses the current number of teams by sports pitch type and calculates the percentage within each age group that play that sport. That percentage is then applied to the population growth. The additional teams likely to be generated are then converted into match equivalent sessions and associated pitch requirements in the peak period, with the associated costs (both for providing the pitch/facility and for its life cycle) then given. The calculator splits the requirement into peak time demand for natural turf pitches, training demand for artificial grass pitches, and the number of new changing rooms required.

The PPOSS should be used to help determine the likely impact of a new development on demand and the capacity of existing sites in the area, and whether there is a need for improvements to increase capacity of existing provision or if new provision is required. Where a development is located within access of existing high-quality provision, this does not necessarily mean that there is no need for further provision or improvement to existing provision, as additional demand arising from the development is likely to result in increased usage (which can result in overplay or quality deterioration).

Where it is determined that new provision is required to accompany a development, priority should be placed on providing facilities that contribute towards alleviating existing shortfalls within the locality. To determine what supply of provision is provided, it is imperative that the PPOSS findings are taken into consideration and that for particularly large developments consultation takes place with the relevant NGBs and Sport England. This is due to the importance of ensuring that the stock of facilities provided is correct to avoid provision becoming unsustainable and unused. The preference is for multi-pitch and potentially multi-sport sites to be developed, supported by a clubhouse and adequate parking facilities which consider the potential for future AGP development.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

In addition, consideration also needs to be given to access to a site where new outdoor sports provision is to be established. This includes ensuring appropriate and sufficient access by car, such as through ensuring a large enough car park is provided, as well as access by public transport and through active travel modes (e.g., walking and cycling). It is imperative that the provision is accessible to all and this also includes the access road, which should be suitable for all users, regardless of their travel preferences.

The guidance provided by the Playing Pitch Calculator should form the basis for negotiation with developers to secure contributions to include provision and/or enhancement of appropriate provision and subsequent maintenance (lifecycle costs), and planning policy should provide the link to attaining the contributions that are to be sought. S106 contributions could also be used to improve the condition of pitches in order to increase pitch capacity to accommodate more matches.

Where S106 contributions are provided, the Black Country authorities should look to pool together the funds, where necessary, to deliver facility improvements that can help address key issues. This is particularly the case for large-scale developments that will have an impact on more than the local authority in which it is based. Furthermore, where major developments are in locations that have implications for more than one local authority, such as new settlements, urban extensions and cross-boundary developments, a sports facility masterplan should be developed. This should strategically consider the effects of both existing outdoor sports provision within all affected authorities and what new provision is required, with input from the PPOSS Steering Group key.

As well as considering needs across the Black Country authorities, recognition should also be given to other neighbouring authorities, especially where there is already significant evidence of cross-border supply and demand activity. An example of this is the relationship between Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire.

To further assist with identifying investment opportunities, additional analysis should be undertaken in regards to major housing sites to show the spatial relationship between the proposed developments and major opportunities for new provision and facility improvements at existing sites for each relevant sport. This can be achieved via using the action plans within the individual PPOSS reports to identify sites in need of investment, mapping these against housing growth sites to help determine those most suitable to receive associated investment.

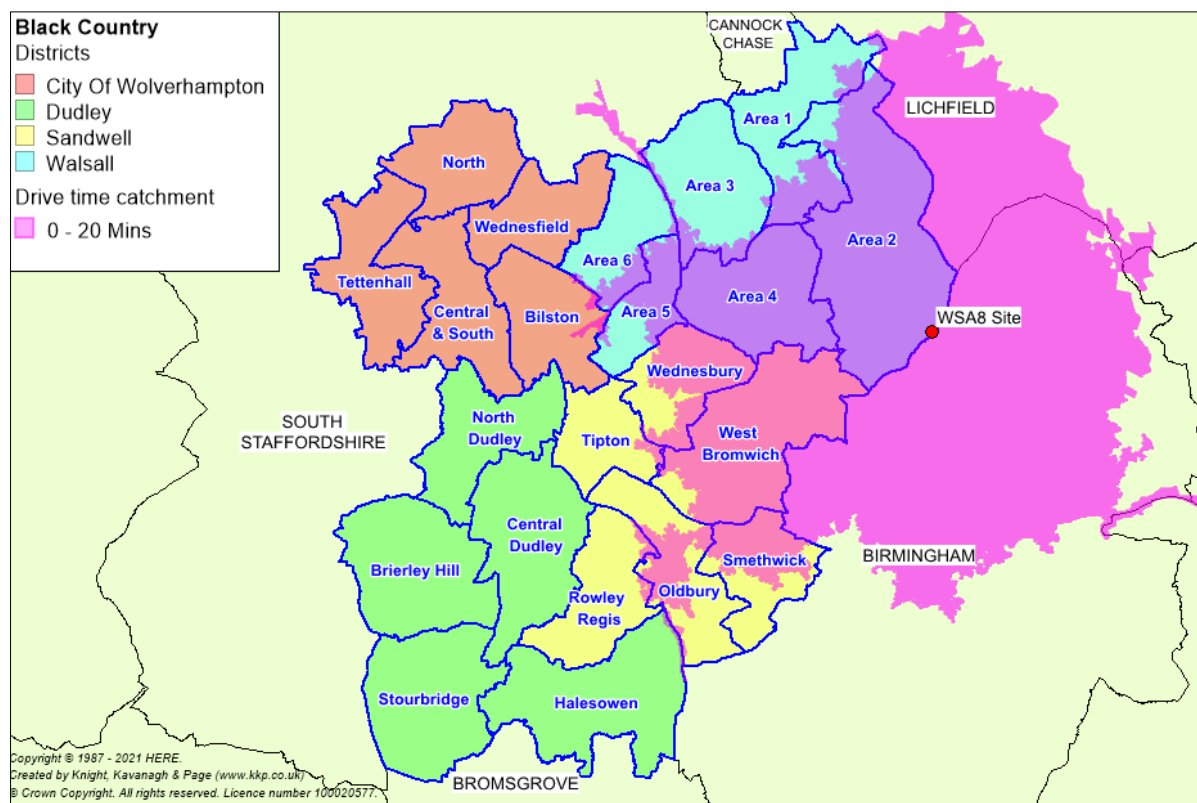
The above modelling will not only further help understand where investment should be directed, but it can in turn help secure contributions and provide evidence for securing funds for analysis areas that are different, but close by, to where the developments are located (including, where considered appropriate/necessary, cross-boundary areas). This is because some priority sites for investment may sit outside of an analysis area that is subject to the housing growth but that are still well placed to cater for the increased demand due to their location and importance.

Sport England often advises the use of a 20-minute drive time catchment area, recognising that sports teams and users do not necessarily acknowledge local authority boundary lines. Via Active Places, it also provides a Catchment Profile tool that can aid the mapping and site selection process.

An example of the process that can be undertaken is shown below, using a proposed housing allocation from Walsall (WSA8). A 20-minute drive time catchment from this site encompasses several analysis areas in the Black Country (as well as in Lichfield and Birmingham), not only covering Walsall but also Sandwell, in addition to a small area of Wolverhampton. This is evidenced in the figure below.

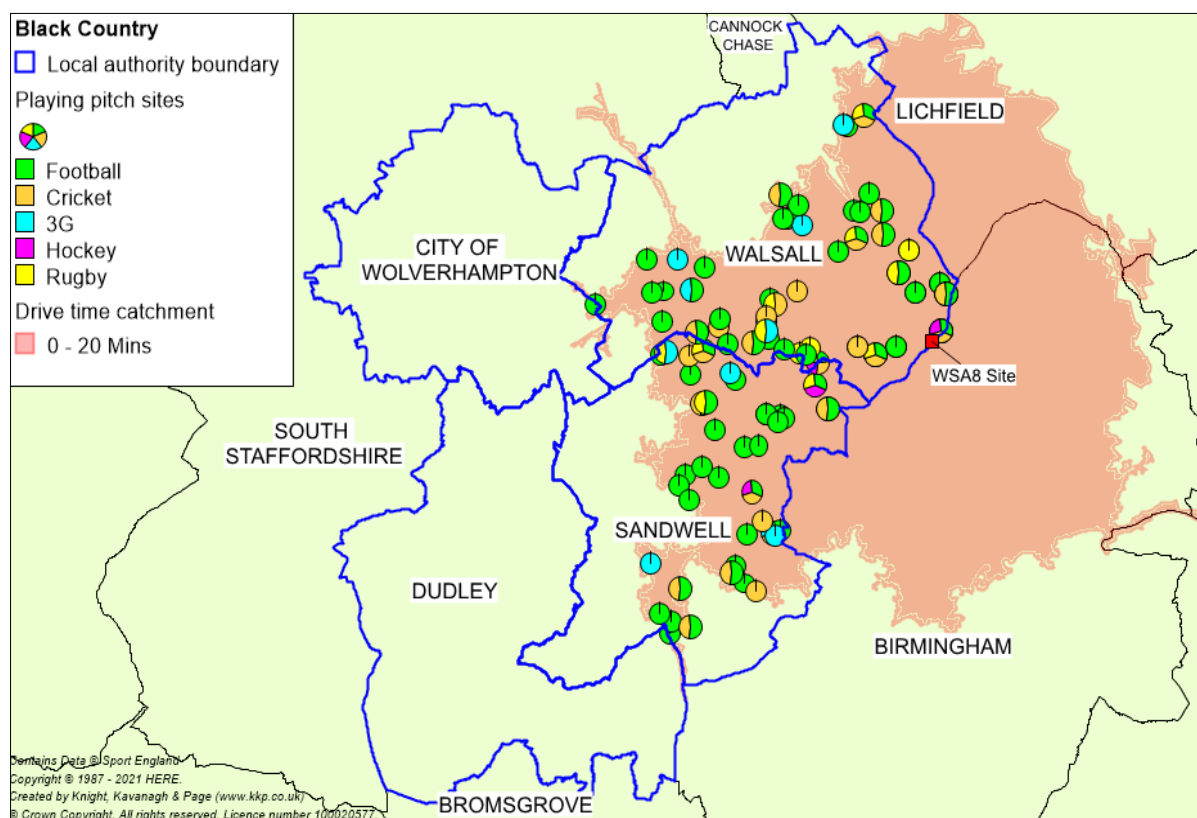
BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Figure 5.1: Example mapping exercise for securing developer contributions



Using this drive time catchment area, it is then possible to map all playing pitch sites identified in the PPOSS, including for each sport, as shown below.

Figure 5.1: PPOSS sites within the example catchment area



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AIM 3

To **provide** new outdoor sports facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.

Recommendations:

- h. Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock.
- i. Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.

Recommendation (h) - Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock

The councils and partners should work to rectify identified inadequacies and meet identified shortfalls as outlined in the individual assessment reports and strategies, as well as the sport-by-sport specific recommendations (Part 3) and the following Action Plan (Part 5) of this report. To help enable the above, it is important that the current levels of provision are protected, maintained and enhanced to secure and improve provision both for now and in the future.

Maximising use of existing provision through a combination of the following will help to reduce shortfalls and accommodate future demand:

- ✦ Improving quality in order to improve the capacity to accommodate more demand.
- ✦ Transferring demand from overplayed sites to sites with spare capacity.
- ✦ The re-designation of facilities e.g. converting an unused pitch (or pitch type) for one sport to instead cater for another sport (or another pitch type).
- ✦ Securing community use at school sites including those currently unavailable.
- ✦ Working with commercial and private providers to increase usage.

The PPOSS identifies priority sites that should be focused upon as a starting point, including those that are presently overplayed and/or poor quality, or unused sites that are particularly large. It also advises how specific issues can be overcome.

Recommendation (i) - Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock

The Steering Group should use and regularly update the Action Plan within this Strategy. The Action Plan lists recommendations for each site, focused upon both qualitative and quantitative improvements, which if delivered will lessen the need for new provision.

Linked to the above, although there are identified shortfalls, most current and future demand is currently being met and most shortfalls can be addressed via quality improvements and/or improved access to sites that are presently used minimally or that are currently unavailable. Adding to the current stock, particularly in the short term, is therefore not recommended as a priority, except for localised exceptions and for 3G and sand-based pitches, the shortfall for which cannot be reduced without new stock.

Large scale housing developments (see recommendation G) and the establishment of new schools may also necessitate the need for new provision. Where new schools are developed, there is an opportunity to combine the building of the School to the development of a new multi-sport site that will be of a benefit to the School as well as the wider community.

PART 5: OVERARCHING ACTION PLAN

The following strategic action plan provides recommendations that can help achieve what is set out in Part 3 and Part 4 of this document. This includes options for consideration with regards to improving facilities, improving security of tenure, securing developer contributions and adding to the existing stock of facilities. These have been chosen as they are considered to relate to each local authority included, although the extent to which may vary.

The recommendations have been put forward based on the evidence that has been gathered as part of the delivery of each individual PPOSS. However, it is recognised that not everything will be actionable by all of the authorities, at least in the short-term. It should instead be used as a long-term plan that can assist, where possible, with guiding future actions when it comes to playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities.

The individual strategies for the four local authorities contain site-by-site action plans that include recommendations for each site included across the study. These recommendations are generally linked to the strategic recommendations featured below but will still require consideration on their own merit in order to be adequately delivered.

Timescale

This refers to the timescale in which the recommendation should begin to be implemented, based on a short (1-2 years), medium (2-5 years) and long-term (5-10 years) basis. If possible, this should also be the target of adopting the recommendation within planning policy.

Lead

This refers to which organisation/s should take the lead on implementing and progressing the recommendations and references members of the Steering Group. As such, this can include the local authorities, Sport England, NGBs and Active Black Country.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Strategic Action Plan

Action	Recommendation	Timescale	Lead
A collaborative approach across the Black Country to deliver the recommendations and actions identified in this strategy and the individual strategies that all partners are committed to	Ensure a continued working relationship exists between relevant partners which should as a minimum include each of the local authorities, Sport England, the relevant NGBs and Active Black Country.	Short	Local authorities Sport England
	Establish an Implementation Group at the earliest opportunity made up of the local authorities, Active Black Country, NGBs and Sport England.		
	Develop a short-term action plan to identify and prioritise actions in the Strategy for the first years of implementation, then reviewing this annually (or every six months).		
	Agree a mechanism for engaging and updating elected members from the local authorities on progress with delivering the recommendations and the action plans from the study.		
	Collectively ensure that each individual PPOSS is kept up to date via a Black Country-wide annual review, utilising the supporting databases for each local authority and engaging all relevant partners and stakeholders from the Steering Group. This will prolong the lifespan of the study and lengthen the requirement for a full update.		
Protect existing outdoor sports facilities	Ensure local planning policy documents reflect the need to protect all outdoor sport facilities unless policy exceptions are met or unless the picture changes to the extent that no shortfalls exist.	Short	Local authorities
	Retain land where any sports facilities are out of current use (lapsed/disused) or are taken out of use so that it can be brought back into use in the future.		
	Ensure any net loss of provision is mitigated as per the NPPF and, for relevant provision, Sport England's playing fields policy.		
	Allow developments if they will result in wider sporting benefits (i.e., through re-purposing land for other sporting use) if there are pitches/facilities that are no longer required for the sport/s they currently provide for.		
Rationalisation of sites	Consider the loss and/or re-purposing of low value sites (i.e., those that contain one or two pitches with no changing provision) to generate investment and focus resources towards the development of bigger, better quality sites, providing that planning policy is met, relevant partners are supportive and that there is no net loss of provision or land.	Long	Local authorities NGBs
Secure tenure	Ensure used education sites have robust community use agreements in place. For those that do not, explore options to create such an agreement, potentially linked to future funding opportunities.	Medium	Local authorities Sport England NGBs
	For clubs with lease agreements in place with less than 25-years remaining, explore options to extend the arrangement.		
	Where tenure cannot be secured, ensure an appropriate mitigation package is in place to offset any permanent loss.		
	Work towards adopting a policy that supports community management and ownership of assets to local clubs, community groups and trusts, thus providing an opportunity for such entities to take ownership of facilities. Ensure that suitable clubs conform with set criteria to enable the sites to be sustainable and to attract funding for site improvement.		

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Action	Recommendation	Timescale	Lead
Maximise use of education facilities	Identify priority schools to focus on and establish a more coherent, structured relationship with them, focusing on the largest school that provide the most and/or best quality facilities.	Medium	Local authorities Active Black Country NGBs Sport England
	Identify specific key issues through engagement with individual schools and identify strategic solutions that can apply to multiple schools such as the creation of a centralised booking system.		
	Where required, seek internal investment to overcome issues currently preventing community use, such as to improve quality, and look to tie in community use agreements as a condition of the funding.		
	Ensure any new schools allow for community use via a secured agreement and that they provide the right facilities in order to attract demand and reduce local shortfalls via input from relevant NGBs.		
	Ensure pricing policies do not deter access.		
	Ensure existing community use agreements are upheld.		
	Use examples of best practice from other authorities/counties as a guide to increasing access, such as through hosting a workshop for schools. Consider asking counterparts from areas of best practice to provide an overview of work carried out e.g., Gloucester.		
Secure developer contributions	As standard, begin to utilise Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator as the basis for negotiation with housing developers. This should be used to ascertain the likely impact of a new development (or a group of developments) on demand and the capacity of existing sites, and whether there is a need for improvements to increase capacity or if new provision is required.	Short	Local authorities Sport England NGBs
	To assist with identifying investment opportunities, carry out additional analysis in regards to major housing sites to show the spatial relationship between the proposed developments and major opportunities for new provision and facility improvements for each relevant sport. This can be achieved via using the action plans within the individual PPOSS reports to identify sites in need of investment, with these then able to be mapped against housing growth sites to help determine those most suitable to receive associated investment with an appropriate catchment area.		
	Look to pool together S106 contributions, where necessary, to deliver facility improvements that can help address issues within an appropriate catchment area. This is particularly the case for large developments that will have an impact on more than the area in which it is based.		
	Where a development is not of a size to justify on-site provision, use contributions to improve existing sites within the locality that are most in need and will go the furthest to reducing shortfalls. Pooling contributions from individual allocations should also be considered to meet known shortfalls for natural turf cricket provision to satisfy peak time demand issues by providing new provision for clubs.		
	Where a development is of a size to justify on-site provision, focus on multi-pitch sites that reduce shortfalls, with accompanying clubhouse provision included given that single pitch sites without appropriate facilities can be unsustainable. Also ensure the site can accommodate artificial provision, if not immediately then at a later date as part of a phased approach.		
	Ensure consideration is given to the accessibility of the provision. This includes access by car as well as by public transport and active travel modes.		
	Ensure any new facilities are provided to a good quality and have an adequate operational structure in place to ensure sustainability.		
	For cricket, ensure that any proposals for new squares will attract demand, with such provision ideally located within proximity to an existing club that requires additional provision. It is also key to ensure that new developments do not prejudice the use of an existing or new square, which can happen when built in close proximity (ball strike issues).		
	Consult with appropriate NGBs when securing developer contributions in order to provide guidance on which sites the funding can go towards or on which new provision is required.		

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Action	Recommendation	Timescale	Lead
Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding	Ensure that appropriate funding is secured for improved sports provision and directed to areas of need, focusing on sites that need quality improvements, are overplayed or would benefit from additional provision. There should be a co-ordinated approach to direct investment, ensuring that there is no duplication of provision across local authority boundaries and ensuring that funding is allocated to sites that provide (or will provide) the best benefit to the wider sporting offer in the locality. The local authorities should work in partnership with each other to ensure that this is case and to deliver projects that mutually benefit their communities. Opportunities to do this should be discussed as part of an agenda item at each future PPOSS meeting and guided by the wider Steering Group.	Short	Local authorities NGBs
	Ensure the PPOSS is kept updated so that it continues to provide a robust evidence base to secure appropriate funding.	Long	Local authorities Sport England NGBs
Improve quality of provision	Prioritise the largest sites, poor quality sites and overplayed sites as improvements to these will have the biggest impacting on alleviating shortfalls and accommodating demand.	Short	Local authorities NGBs
	Engage with NGBs to secure investment into quality improvements and utilise tools that can aid with this e.g., through the Football Foundation's PitchPower web app or the LTA's Clubspark scheme.		
	Look at the best strategic locations for maintenance equipment banks for clubs to access for improved maintenance regimes on non-council managed sites.		
	Consider asset transfer of more sites to suitable clubs/organisations so that they can take over maintenance and attract additional funding, with council maintenance regimes then able to be concentrated and enhanced towards fewer sites.		
	Resurface AGPs, athletics tracks and courts when the current surface nears the end of its lifespan (estimated to be ten years, depending on usage) and ensure sinking funds are in place at all venues for long-term sustainability.		
	Ensure appropriate ancillary facilities are provided, particularly those servicing key sites. Changing facilities should be of an adequate size, able to accommodate both males and females as well as referees/umpires and should have separate enclosed shower and toilet facilities.		
Address overplay	Where sites are overplayed and assessed as poor or standard quality, improve quality to increase capacity and ensure no additional usage until overplay is eradicated.	Short	Local authorities NGBs
	For cricket, install NTPs to accompany overplayed grass wicket squares and encourage the transfer of junior demand to relieve capacity issues.		
	For rugby union and tennis, explore the creation of additional floodlighting to increase capacity and to enable demand to be dispersed, thus reducing concentrated levels of overplay.		
	Where overplay cannot be fully alleviated via other means, transfer demand to sites with actual spare capacity or to sites not currently available for community use but that could be in the future.		
Add to the overall facility stock	In the main, creating additional provision is not required as the majority of shortfalls can be overcome through other means, such as improving quality, securing tenure and alleviating overplay; however, an increase in 3G pitches is required, as is an increase in cricket squares (for peak time Saturday cricket), NTPs and sand-based AGPs. Additional provision may also be required following housing growth.	Medium	Local authorities NGBs
	Where new provision is required, give preference to multi-pitch sites and sites that are strategically located, possibility providing the ability to cater for demand from more than one local authority. Ensure an appropriate, sustainable management structure is in place as well as a robust business, usage and maintenance plan.		
	Utilise Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator to determine the level of new provision required where there is significant housing growth.		

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

PART 6: DELIVER THE STRATEGY AND KEEP IT ROBUST AND UP TO DATE

Delivery

The overarching PPOSS provides guidance for maintenance/management decisions and investment made across the Black Country authorities. By addressing issues identified in the individual strategies and by using the strategic framework presented in this document, the current and future sporting and recreational needs of the Black Country can be met. The study identifies where there is a deficiency in provision and identifies how best to resolve this in the future.

Production of the individual strategies and this overarching framework is the start of the planning process. Successful implementation and the benefits to be gained depend upon regular engagement between all partners involved and the adoption of a mutually bought into strategic approach. It is important that each document is used in a practical manner, supports engagement with partners and encourages partnerships to be developed in order to ensure that outdoor sports facilities are regarded as a vital aspect of community life and which contribute to the achievement of local authority priorities.

To help ensure that each PPS is well used it should be regarded as the key document within each study area guiding the improvement and protection of outdoor sports provision. It needs to be the document to which people and agencies regularly turn to for information in respect of how current demand should be met and what actions are required to improve the situation and meet future demand. To ensure that this is achieved the Steering Group need to have a clear understanding of how the PPS can be applied and therefore delivered.

The process of PPOSS development has already led to a number of benefits that assist its application and delivery. These include enhanced partnership work across different agendas and organisations and the pooling of resources along with strengthened relationships and understanding between stakeholders, members of the Steering Group and the sporting community.

The drivers behind the PPOSS and the work to develop the recommendations and action plans will have also highlighted, and helped those involved to understand, the key areas to which their input is necessary. Each member of the Steering Group should take the lead to ensure the PPOSS is used and applied appropriately within their area of work and influence and the role of the Steering Group should therefore not end with the completion of the study.

Following adoption of each PPOSS, a short-term Action Plan should be prepared by the councils, in consultation with relevant partners, in order to distil the existing action plans and to give the Steering Group a short-term focus. This would then need to be revised through regular meetings.

Monitoring and updating

It is important that there is regular annual monitoring and review against the actions identified in each strategy. This should be led by the councils and supported by all members of, and reported back to, the Steering Group. Understanding and learning lessons from how the PPOSS has been applied should be a key component of monitoring its delivery and be an on-going role of the group.

BLACK COUNTRY PLAYING PITCH & OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY OVERARCHING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Steering Group that takes the PPOSS forward should be an area group made up of the four local authorities included within the study as well as other partners such as the NGBs and Active Black Country. This offers benefits in terms of joint working on strategic and cross-boundary issues and will also be more efficient in terms of administration when compared to each authority having its own individual Steering Group.

KKP will provide the tools used to produce the PPOSS to the councils as well as training on how to use such tools, such as the supporting databases used to hold all information gathered. This will enable the monitoring and updating process to be carried out, which the councils should be responsible for. As a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years of the study being signed off, the information on which it is based will be considered to be out of date.

The nature of the supply and in particular the demand for outdoor sports facilities will be likely to have changed over three years. Therefore, without any form of review and update within this time period it would be difficult to make the case that the supply and demand information and assessment work is sufficiently robust.

Ideally progress on actions in the PPOSS should be reviewed on an annual basis from the date it is formally signed off. This will help to maintain the momentum and commitment built up during its development and, taking into account the time to develop the study, it should also help to ensure that the original supply and demand information is no more than three years old without being reviewed. A review should not be regarded as a particular resource intensive task. However, it should highlight:

- ◀ How delivery of the recommendations and action plan has progressed and any changes required to the priority afforded to each action (e.g. the priority of some may increase or reduce following the delivery of others)
- ◀ How the PPOSS has been applied and the lessons learnt
- ◀ Any changes to particularly important sites and/or clubs in the area (e.g. the most used or high quality sites for a particular sport) and other supply and demand information, what this may mean for the overall assessment work and the key findings and issues
- ◀ Any development of a specific sport or particular format of a sport
- ◀ Any new or emerging issues and opportunities.

Alongside regular Steering Group meetings a good way to keep the PPOSS up to date and maintain relationships is to hold annual sport specific meetings with pitch sport NGBs and other relevant parties. These could be part of a process of updating key supply and demand information plus, if necessary, amending assessment work, tracking progress in respect of implementing action plan recommendations and highlighting new issues and opportunities.

Meetings could be timed to coincide with annual NGB affiliation processes as this would help to signal changes in the number and nature of sports clubs in the area. Other information that is already collected on a regular basis such as pitch booking records for local authority and other sites could also feed into these meetings. NGBs will also be able to confirm any further performance quality assessments undertaken within the study area.

Appendix E - Stage E Summary Overview

Introduction

The Stage E assessment provides an update on the state of playing pitches in Walsall, focusing on changes in demand and supply since the 2022 Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS).

Sport Specific Changes

Tennis

Walsall Tennis Club: Now using Queen Mary Grammar School's facilities; although identified improvements are needed in court surface, fencing, and floodlights.

Walsall Park Tennis Courts: A total of 15 parks courts renovated under the LTA / DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system.

University of Wolverhampton: 4 tennis courts have been repurposed to only contain netball markings and posts.

Football

LMRCA Sports Club also known as Chris Nicholl Soccer Centre: Mini soccer pitch has been upgraded to a 3G surface.

Overall supply / demand balance: Small amendments to shortfall or spare capacities across different pitch types.

Cricket

General: New non-turf pitches (NTPs) installed at various parks locations targeting informal play for neighbourhoods with higher levels of deprivation.

Hockey

Beacon Hockey Club: Aldridge and Streetly Hockey Clubs have now merged to form Beacon HC. Pitches at Streetly are still being used by Beacon but not to the extent it was.

Facility Changes:

Sneyd Community:

Match officials state that the surface is not suitable for Matchplay anymore. Club can access pitch for training as a short-term option. Where possible Matchplay has been transferred to Willenhall E-ACT. Additional matches finding alternative venues.

Willenhall E-ACT :

Pitch has been resurfaced and both user clubs are happy with the arrangement.

Area Updates:

1. Brownhills / Pelsall / Rushall / Shelfield

Football: Increased spare capacity for adult and youth 11v11 football; shortfall for mini 7v7.

Cricket: New NTPs installed at Holland Park and Rushall Playing Fields.

Tennis: Renovations at Holland Park and Pelsall Community Centre.

2. Aldridge / Streetly / Pheasey / Walsall Wood

Football: Reduced spare capacity for adult football; shortfalls in youth and mini categories.

Cricket: Bronze Cricket Club applying for a grant to replace NTP.

Tennis: Renovations at Blackwood Park, including bringing second court back into use.

Emerging Developments:

Bronze Cricket Club applying for funds to replace non-turf pitch.

Streetly Academy – long term intention to resurface hockey compliant pitch with football compliant surface.

3. Bloxwich / Blakenall / Birchills / Leamore

Football: Increased spare capacity for adult football; shortfalls in youth and mini categories.

Cricket: NTP replaced at Reedswood Park.

Tennis: Court renovations at Leamore Park.

Hockey: Sneyd Community - Match officials identify surface is not suitable for Matchplay anymore. Club can only use the pitch for training.

Emerging Developments:

Ongoing feasibility work for the option of football suitable synthetic turf pitch and / or hockey compliant AGP at King George V Playing Fields

4. St. Matthew's / Paddock / Palfrey / Pleck

Football: Significant spare capacity for adult football; shortfalls in youth and mini categories.

Cricket: Multiple NTPs replaced or installed at various parks.

Tennis: Court renovations at Walsall Arboretum, Pleck, and Palfrey Parks.

Emerging Developments:

Queen Marys Grammar School - Planning Application submitted for synthetic turf hockey pitch overmarked with tennis markings to increase court numbers.

Aston University: Aspirations to install a football compliant 3G pitch. Unclear if this is a resurface or brand-new build.

5. Darlaston / Bentley

Football: Shortfalls in adult football; spare capacity in youth and mini categories.

Cricket: NTP installed at Bentley West Playing Fields.

Football Developments: Planning for sports lighting and spectator facilities at Darlaston Community Association.

Emerging developments:

FA has commented on a planning application for Darlaston Community Association to install sports lighting, spectator fencing and hardstanding paths and perimeter fencing.

6. Willenhall / Short Heath

Football: Spare capacity for adult football; significant shortfalls in youth and mini categories.

Cricket: NTP installed at Willenhall Memorial Park.

Hockey: Resurfacing at Willenhall E-Act Academy; additional pitch time requested by Bloxwich HC.

Tennis: Court renovations at Willenhall Memorial Park.

Appendix F - Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy – Stage E Assessment

July 2024

Stage E Introduction

The purpose of this Stage E assessment report is to offer a regular update of the current state of our playing pitches, identifying changes to both the demand and supply within the borough. This serves as a crucial opportunity for the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport and the local authority to update the existing action plan, ensuring that our facilities continue to meet the evolving needs of our community.

Since the initial assessment was undertaken in the 2022 Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) Walsall has seen changes in the landscape of sports participation. This report helps to update the evidence base will detail the shifts in demand for different sports, and the impact of community initiatives on pitch usage. Furthermore, it will update on the current supply of pitches, their condition, and the capacity to accommodate the borough's sporting ambitions.

The insights gathered in this assessment are intended to guide Walsall Council, Sport England, the NGBs, and sports pitch providers in making informed decisions that will enhance the quality and accessibility of sports facilities.

Summary non-pitch sports

Tennis

Current picture

Walsall Tennis Club is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites)

Stage E update.

Walsall Tennis Club current usage arrangement with Queen Mary Grammar School for Boys for use of 2 artificial grass non-floodlit courts shared with hockey. Court surface, fencing, floodlights and clubhouse to be considered. New Access point for Walsall club.

Streety LTC is a club deemed near capacity.

Summary pitch sports

Boroughwide sports

Supply demand balance

Sport	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Shortfall of Matchplay pitches due to pitch condition at Sneyd
Rugby league	Senior	No demand so no provision required	

Sport	◀ Priority recommendations	◀ Stage E Updates
Rugby union	◀ No action required.	◀ Since 2022, the action plan or the affiliated team numbers have not changed; However, from September 2024, adult men / women's numbers will be far more accurate due to a change in how the data is collected.

Sub Area Analysis

ANALYSIS AREA 1 - Brownhills / Pelsall / Rushall / Shelfield

Supply demand balance

Sport	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance
Football	Adult	Spare capacity of 1.5	Spare capacity of 2.5
Football	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 0.5	Sapre capacity of 2
Football	Youth 9v9	Spare capacity of 4.5	Spare capacity of 0.5
Football	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 3.5
Football	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 0.5	Spare capacity of 2
Football (3G pitches) ⁹	Full size	Shortfall of 0.75	Shortfall of 0.75
Cricket	Saturday	At capacity	At Capacity
Cricket	Sunday	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 12
Cricket	Midweek	Spare capacity of 18	Spare capacity of 18
Rugby Union	Senior	At capacity	At capacity

Overarching recommendations

Sport	◀ Priority recommendations	◀ Stage E Updates
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Protect provision. ◀ Improve changing facilities where required. ◀ Replace outdated NTP at Rushall CC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ 2 x new NTP's installed at Holland Park and Rushall playing Fields
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Protect provision. ◀ Seek to improve park courts such as Holland Park that are utilised in a local league 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Holland Park – courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system. ◀ Pelsall Community Centre - courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system. Fencing completely replaced as part of this.

Site ID	Site	Management	Aim	Sport	Stage E Update
38	Holland Park	Council	Enhance Protect	Football	
				Tennis	Holland Park – courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system.
52	Ormiston Shelfield Community Academy	School	Enhance Protect	Football	Met with Trust & LA and discussed support available for Grass Pitches
				3G	3G Pitch is not on 3G Pitch Register. This is a priority for the school to ensure remedial work is complete for an interim period as Central Venue Leagues run out from this venue
				Rugby Union	
				Netball	
63	Rushall Olympic Football Club (Dales Lane)	Sports Club	Protect	3G	Need to add in around pitch being maintained on FA pitch register and resurfaced when required
108	Pelsall Community Centre	Council	Enhance Provide	Tennis	LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment complete (2024) providing 2 non-floodlit macadam courts in good playable condition; technology for booking and player access. Fencing completely replaced as part of this.
			Protect	Lawn Bowls	

ANALYSIS AREA 2 - Aldridge / Streetly / Pheasey / Walsall Wood

Supply demand balance

Sport	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance
Football	Adult	Spare capacity of 5	Spare capacity of 2
Football	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 1
Football	Youth 9v9	Spare capacity of 3	Shortfall of 0.5
Football	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 1	Shortfall of 0.5
Football	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 1	Shortfall of 6
Football (3G)	Full size	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1
Cricket	Saturday	Shortfall of 14	Shortfall of 14
Cricket	Sunday	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2
Cricket	Midweek	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2
Rugby Union	Senior	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1

Sport	Priority recommendations	Stage E Updates
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve existing provision at to enhance square quality and reduce overplay. Explore the means of installing additional provision to support existing and future projected shortfalls for Saturday peak time cricket. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bronze Cricket Club are in the process of applying for a County Grant Fund to replace Non-Turf Pitch.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade existing floodlights provided at The Streetly Academy to LED as to better service hockey demand. Ensure a sinking fund is provided as to financially prepare for pitch the replacement at The Streetly Academy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Streetly Academy, previously used by Aldridge and Streetly HCs. These two clubs have now merged to form Beacon HC. The pitch is still used by Beacon but not to the extent it was. There is a long-term intention to resurface with a 3G football carpet.
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Seek to improve park courts such as Blackwood Park that are utilised in a local league 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackwood Park – courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system. Oak Park – courts not invested in by LTA and remain in disrepair and unusable.

Site ID	Site	Management	Aim	Sport	Stage E Update
50	Oak Park Active Living Centre	Council	Enhance Protect	3G	Also need to ensure pitch is on FA pitch register
51	Oak Park Leisure Centre	Council	Enhance Protect Enhance	Lawn Bowls	
				Tennis	LTA project did not move forward. Site is in disrepair and unplayable for tennis.
78	The Streetly Academy	School	Protect Provide	Football	Site on GPMF and are now showing as GOOD quality as per latest PP report. Site is showing to have 2 x 5v5, 1 x 9v9 and 1x11v11.
				Cricket	
				AGP	The Streetly Academy , previously used by Aldridge and Streetly HCs. These two clubs have now merged to form Beacon HC. The pitch is still used by Beacon but not to the extent it was. There is a long-term intention to resurface with a 3G football carpet.
				Tennis	
				Netball	
104	Bronze Cricket Club	Sports Club	Provide Protect Enhance	Cricket	Bronze is in the process of applying for a County Grant Fund to replace NTP. This may be from next year's budget
120	Blackwood Park	Council	Protect Enhance	Tennis	Blackwood Park – courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system. Developed second useable court

ANALYSIS AREA 3 - Bloxwich / Blakenall / Birchills / Leamore

Supply demand balance

Sport	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance
Football	Adult	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 4.5
Football	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 1
Football	Youth 9v9	At capacity	Shortfall of 2
Football	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1
Football	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity
Football (3G)	Full size	Shortfall of 0.75	Shortfall of 0.25
Cricket	Saturday	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 12
Cricket	Sunday	Spare capacity of 24	Spare capacity of 24
Cricket	Midweek	Spare capacity of 38	Spare capacity of 36
Rugby Union	Senior	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall of 1.5

Overarching Recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations	Stage E Updates
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Utilise spare capacity at Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club. Improve square quality at Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 x NTP replaced at Reedswood Park
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resurfacing of pitches at Sneyd Community Association Centre and Willenhall E-Act Re-installation of new LED floodlights at Sneyd Community Association Centre. Explore the feasibility of installing an AGP at King George V playing fields (Bloxwich) to service Bloxwich HC and better supply the black country with greater hockey provision. If current hockey pitch is lost and a replacement is unable to be provided at the King George V Playing Fields site, a new pitch must be re-provided to accommodate the loss of current provision. Any loss of provision must be provided against SE and NPPF policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sneyd Community Association (used by Bloxwich HC.) Match officials identify surface is not suitable for Matchplay anymore. Whilst club can access pitch for training this is only short-term option. Where possible Matchplay been transferred to Willenhall E-ACT Ongoing feasibility work as to the option of pitch on King George Vth Playing Fields, and cost and ability to fund.
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Seek to improve park courts such as Leamore Park that are utilised in a local league. 	Leamore Park – courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system. Now includes third court on site within the footprint.

Site ID	Site	Management	Aim	Sport	Stage E Update
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16	Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club	Sports Club	Protect	Cricket	4 new Junior Age Group Teams since 2022.
				Lawn Bowls	
44	Leamore Park	Council	Protect Enhance Provide	Football	
				Tennis	Leamore Park – courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system. Added a third court in the space of the footprint.
				Netball	
				Lawn Bowls	
71	Sneyd Community Association	Community Association	Provide Enhance	AGP	Sneyd Community Association (used by Bloxwich HC). Match officials identify surface is not suitable for Matchplay anymore. Whilst club can access pitch for training this is only short-term option. Matchplay been transferred to Willenhall E-ACT

ANALYSIS AREA 4 - St. Matthew's / Paddock / Palfrey / Pleck

Supply demand balance

Sport	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance
Football	Adult	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 10
Football	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 7
Football	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 4	Spare capacity of 5
Football	Mini 7v7	At capacity	Shortfall of 1.5
Football	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 2
Football (3G)	Full size	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Saturday	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 10
Cricket	Sunday	Spare capacity of 36	Spare capacity of 34
Cricket	Midweek	Spare capacity of 36	Spare capacity of 32
Rugby union	Senior	Shortfall of 3.75	Shortfall of 3.75

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations	Steg E Updates
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Walstead Road Playing Fields. Where pitches remain overplayed, seek the transfer of demand. Improve security of tenure at key sites such as Aston University Recreation Centre and Blue Coat Church of England Academy Playing Fields Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs. Enable use of currently unavailable sites. Improve changing facilities where required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LMRCA Sports Club - also known as Chris Nicholl Soccer Centre. Mini Soccer pitch has been upgraded to a 3G surface.
3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aston University aspire to install a Football compliant 3G pitch and has spoken with BCFA regarding this. Unclear if this is a resurface or brand-new build.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Protect NTP at Pleck Park utilised for Last Man Stands Cricket. Improve changing facilities where required, such as at Walsall CC in its ambitions to create ECB compliant changing facilities and provide an improved social offer. Utilise spare capacity at Walsall YPF Cricket Club. Improve square quality at Walsall YPF Cricket Club. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing feasibility work as to the option of hockey pitch at Queen Mary's Grammar School as part of a complete development of their community and school sports pitch provision. Would impact on cricket with loss of second square. Planning application submitted and awaiting outcome. 2 x NTP's replaced at Pleck Park 1 x NTP replaced at Walsall Arboretum (Walsall YPF) 3 x NTP's installed at Broadway West Playing Fields, Palfrey Park and Walsall Arboretum (events field)

Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a sinking fund is in place at Aston University (Recreation Centre) as to financially prepare for the pitch replacement of existing provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aston University (used by Beacon HC, Aston Uni & West Bromwich HC) We believe there is no capacity for additional Saturday hockey. • Ongoing feasibility work as to the option of pitch at Queen Mary's Grammar School as part of a complete development of their community and school sports pitch provision. Planning application submitted and awaiting outcome.
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walsall Arboretum – Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system • Palfrey park - LTA/DCMS parks investment providing 2 good playable courts with technology for booking and player access. • University of Wolverhampton – 4 courts have been resurfaced and only contain Netball markings and posts. No tennis provision available. • Queen Marys Grammar School - Planning Application submitted for synthetic turf hockey pitch overmarked with tennis markings to increase court numbers. • Pleck park - LTA/DCMS parks investment providing 2 good playable courts with technology for booking and player access.

Site ID	Site	Management	Aim	Sport	Stage E Updates
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	University	Protect Enhance	Football	Latest PP report shows 6 x 11v11, 1 x 9v9 and 1 x 7v7. Not sure the University are looking at granting a club a tenure agreement. University is looking to apply to GPMF but need to do a new PP report as this is now over the 12-month-old threshold.
				Cricket	
				Rugby Union	
				AGP	Aston University (used by Beacon HC, Aston Uni & West Bromwich HC) We believe there is no capacity for additional Saturday hockey. University aspires to install a Football compliant 3G pitch and has spoken with BCFA regarding this. There is an identified shortfall in this area and could be an option. Not 100% sure if this is a resurface or brand-new build.
18	Blue Coat Church of England Academy Playing Fields	School	Enhance Protect	Football	Rushall Olympic currently have GPMF on site but understand are no longer users of the site. Tried to work with Total Football to start a new GPMF application and school were happy to do so, but cannot do anything until Rushall Olympic withdraw from grant T&Cs.
47	LMRCA Sports Club	Sports Club	Enhance Protect	Football	Also known as Chris Nicholl Soccer Centre. Mini Soccer pitch is a 3G surface and not currently on the FA 3G Pitch Register. BCFA have contacted the site but no progress yet.
				Lawn Bowls	
56	Pleck Park	Council	Protect Enhance	Football	
				Cricket	
				Tennis	Pleck Park - Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system.
				Lawn Bowls	
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	School	Protect Enhance	Cricket	
				Rugby Union	
				Tennis	Long-term lease agreement with Walsall Tennis Club. Court surface, fencing, floodlights and clubhouse to be considered. New Access point for Walsall club. Planning Application submitted for synthetic turf hockey pitch overmarked with tennis markings to increase court numbers.
				Netball	
81	University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Site)	University	Protect Enhance	3G	
				Tennis	These courts have been resurfaced and only contain Netball markings and posts. No tennis provision available.
				Netball	
				Athletics	

83	Walsall Arboretum	Council	Enhance Protect	Tennis	Walsall Arboretum – Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system.
				Lawn Bowls	
84	Walsall Cricket Club	Sports Club	Enhance Protect	Cricket	1 additional Junior Age Group Team since 2022 Women and Girls participation. 1 new softball team and 1 new hardball team.
				Lawn Bowls	
88	Walsall YPF Cricket Club	Sports Club	Enhance Protect	Cricket	1 additional Saturday Senior Team and 1 additional Sunday senior team from 2022 report. 1 additional Junior Age Group Team
91	West Walsall E-Act Academy	School	Enhance Protect	Football	PP report back in 2021 says 1 adult and 1 youth 11v11. Trust would need to produce new PP report if they were to apply to GPMF.
				3G	Pitch now on FA pitch register until 2027 having been tested in 2024.
				Tennis	
123	Palfrey Park	Council	Protect	Tennis	Palfrey Park - Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system.

ANALYSIS AREA 5 - Darlaston / Bentley

Supply demand balance

Sport	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance
Football	Adult	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2
Football	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Spare capacity of 7
Football	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 3	Spare capacity of 3
Football	Mini 7v7	At capacity	Spare capacity of 10
Football	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity
Football (3G)	Full size	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1
Cricket	Saturday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Sunday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Midweek	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby union	Senior	At capacity	At capacity

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations	Stage E updates
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Bentley West Playing Field and Great Bridge Road. Where pitches remain overplayed, seek the transfer of demand. Improve security of tenure at key sites such as Grace Academy Darlaston. Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs. Enable use of currently unavailable sites. Improve changing facilities where required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FA have commented on a planning application for Darlaston Community Association. proposal to install sports lighting, spectator fencing, spectator hardstanding paths and perimeter fencing.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 x NTP pitch installed at Bentley West Playing Fields

Site ID	Site	Management	Aim	Sport	Stage E Updates
26	Darlaston Community Association	Community	Protect Enhance Provide	Football	FA have commented on a planning application for this site. <i>proposal to install sports lighting, spectator fencing, spectator hardstanding paths and perimeter fencing. Reference made in Design and access statement to works being proposed to meet team requirements if successfully promoted.</i> Question if the 9v9 can still be marked out if these works are carried out.
				AGP	
				Lawn Bowls	
33	Grace Academy Darlaston	School	Provide Enhance	Football	
				3G	Site contacted over getting pitch on FA pitch register but no response.
				Rugby Union	
				Tennis	
				Netball	

ANALYSIS AREA 6 - Willenhall / Short Heath

Supply demand balance

Sport	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance
Football	Adult	Shortfall of 0.5	Spare capacity of 3.5
Football	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 4
Football	Youth 9v9	At capacity	Shortfall of 6
Football	Mini 7v7	At capacity	Shortfall of 7
Football	Mini 5v5	At capacity	Shortfall of 9
Football (3G)	Full size	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Saturday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Sunday	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Midweek	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby union	Senior	At capacity	At capacity

Sport	Priority recommendations	Stage E Updates
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 x NTP installed at Willenhall Memorial Park
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since 2022, the action plan or the affiliated team numbers have not changed; However, from September 2024, adult men/women's numbers will be far more accurate due to a change in how we collect the data.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. AGP at Willenhall E-Act Academy should be prioritised for a new pitch installation given the surfaces 17-year lifespan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Willenhall E – Act Academy (used by Bloxwich HC & Wednesbury HC) the pitch was resurfaced and both clubs are happy with the arrangement. Bloxwich have requested additional pitch time for 24/25 due to increase in teams (by 1) and concerns about the playability of Sneyd.
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Seek to improve park courts such as at Willenhall Memorial Park via implementation of LTA products and improvement to court surfaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Willenhall Park - Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system.

Site ID	Site	Management	Aim	Sport	Stage E Updates
92	Willenhall E-Act Academy	School	Protect Enhance	Football	
				AGP	Willenhall E – Act Academy (used by Bloxwich HC & Wednesbury HC) the pitch was resurfaced and both clubs are happy with the arrangement. Bloxwich have requested additional pitch time for 24/25 due to increase in teams (by 1) and concerns about the playability of Sneyd.
				Tennis	
				Netball	
93	Willenhall Memorial Park	Council	Provide Provide Enhance	Football	
				Tennis	Willenhall Park - Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system.
				Lawn Bowls	

Appendix G - Stage E Action Plan

Introduction

The purpose of this Stage E assessment report is to offer a regular update of the current state of our playing pitches, identifying changes to both the demand and supply within the borough. This serves as a crucial opportunity for the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport and the local authority to update the existing action plan, ensuring that our facilities continue to meet the evolving needs of our community.

Since the initial assessment was undertaken in the 2022 Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) Walsall has seen changes in the landscape of sports participation. This report helps to update the evidence base will detail the shifts in demand for different sports, and the impact of community initiatives on pitch usage. Furthermore, it will update on the current supply of pitches, their condition, and the capacity to accommodate the borough's sporting ambitions.

The insights gathered in this assessment are intended to guide Walsall Council, Sport England, the NGBs, and sports pitch providers in making informed decisions that will enhance the quality and accessibility of sports facilities.

PART 6: ACTION PLAN

The site-by-site action plan seeks to address key issues identified in the previous Assessment Report. It provides recommendations based on current levels of usage, quality and future demand, as well as the potential of each site for enhancement. It is separated by analysis area and includes information pertaining to the sub sections below.

The Stage E update column provide updates on club developments (mergers growth or shrinkage in terms of demand, as well as any key information on site developments in terms of pitch numbers, quality, or changes if use that partners are aware of.

Summary non-pitch sports

Sport	Current picture	Future picture	Stage E update
Tennis	<p>Walsall TC is nomadic and is searching for a dedicated home venue. In addition, there is a requirement to focus on informal activity at non-club courts and improving the recreational tennis offer (e.g., at local authority sites)</p>	No change	<p>Walsall Tennis Club current arrangement with Queen Mary Grammar School for Boys for use of 2 artificial grass non-floodlit courts shared with hockey. Court surface, fencing, floodlights and clubhouse to be considered. New Access point for Walsall club.</p> <p>Streetly LTC is a club deemed near capacity.</p>
Bowls	<p>Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold.</p> <p>Walsall Arboretum is operating below the required membership to be sustainable.</p> <p>Leckie Senior Citizens BC may require support to ensure future viability.</p>	<p>Five sites are currently known to be operating above the recommended capacity threshold.</p> <p>Shortfalls aren't expected to increase but could need monitoring relative to changes in demographics in the Borough.</p>	

Cycling	High demand for cycling is identified within Walsall, especially through latent demand. As it is, likely that the majority of this is for cycling via the road network, and with two road cycling clubs in existence, focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority is sufficient to accommodate requirements.	No change	
Netball	Whilst there is a large quantity of netball courts provided in Walsall, the large majority are serving no purpose outside of curricular and extra-curricular demand due to a variety of factors including poor quality, a lack of floodlighting and a limited community offering. However, given that the Walsall Netball League exports to a central venue in Sandwell and given that this is its preference, there is no clear requirement for a facility to be provided in Walsall.	No change	
Athletics	No provision within catchment. All provision based in Area 4. This serves all demand across Walsall. Need to protect quality and improve when needed in the future.	No change	
Golf	With seven golf facilities in Walsall, supply is reasonable for the area, particularly given the variance of the facilities with standard-hole courses, Par 3 courses and driving ranges all being supplied. Furthermore, a variety of operational structures are in place, with some facilities prioritising membership and others prioritising pay and play usage and with some offering a high price point and others offering a low price point. This suggests that all types of golfers can be catered for.	No change	

Water sports	Outdoor water sports within Walsall are fairly well catered for through facilities such as: Sneyd Water Activity Centre, Brownhills Canoe & Outdoor Centre and The Swag. Chasewater Water Sports Centre also represents a large facility outside of the borough, meaning that Walsall is particularly well catered for when it comes to outdoor water sports given that it is not a coastal authority. This seemingly adequately caters for demand, with all associated clubs openly advertising to attract new members.	No change	
Other sports	There is no other demand identified for other sports in Walsall. No supply or demand for the following sports was identified: American Football, Gaelic Football and Baseball/Softball.	No change	

ANALYSIS AREA 1 - Brownhills / Pelsall / Rushall / Shelfield

Summary

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area One	Adult	Spare capacity of 1.5	Spare capacity of 2.5	Spare capacity of 1
Football	Area One	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 0.5	Spare capacity of 2	Shortfall of 2.5
Football	Area One	Youth 9v9	Spare capacity of 4.5	Spare capacity of 0.5	Spare capacity of 4.5
Football	Area One	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 3.5	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area One	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 0.5	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 0.5
Football (3G pitches) ⁹	Area One	Full size	Shortfall of 0.75	Shortfall of 0.75	Shortfall of 1
Cricket	Area One	Saturday	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area One	Sunday	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 12
Cricket	Area One	Midweek	Spare capacity of 18	Spare capacity of 18	Spare capacity of 18
Rugby union	Area One	Senior	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required		No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Shortfall of supply of match play pitches due to pitch condition at Sneyd	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations	Stage E Updates
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Clayhanger Park and Fordbrook. Formalise community use agreements for clubs utilising unsecure sites. Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs such as Fordbrook to Pelsall Villa Colts. Enable use of currently unavailable sites. Improve changing facilities where required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches. Identify a site suitable to provide an additional full-size pitch. Potential options (which require full feasibility work to determine their viability) include, Manor Farm School, Ormiston Shelfield Academy and Elmwood School. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve changing facilities where required. Replace outdated NTP at Rushall CC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 x new NTP's installed at Holland Park and Rushall playing Fields
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since 2022, the action plan or the affiliated team numbers have not changed; However, from September 2024, adult men/women's numbers will be far more accurate due to a change in how we collect the data.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Seek to improve park courts such as Holland Park that are utilised in a local league 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holland Park – courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system. Pelsall Community Centre - courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system. Fencing completely replaced as part of this.
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Water sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Other sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim	Stage E Update
20	Brownhills Ormiston Academy	Football	School	Two adult, one youth 9v9 and two mini 7v7 pitches all of a standard quality and unavailable for community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime. Explore the possibility of opening pitches to community use.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	
		Rugby Union		One non floodlit poor quality senior pitch with no community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular demand. Explore the possibility of opening pitches to community use.	School RFU		L	L	L		
		Netball		Four poor quality non floodlit macadam courts not available to the community.	Explore the possibility to resurface courts as to improve curricular offering. Explore the possibility of opening pitches to community use.	School EN		L	L	M		
24	Clayhanger Park	Football	Council	Two poor quality adult pitches with poor quality ancillary provision that are available for community use and overplayed. Site has been identified by the LFFP for pitch improvement projects.	Following the LFFP, explore possibilities to improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime and potential investment into drainage systems as to alleviate overplay. Also, if possible, improve poor quality ancillary provision.	Council CFA FF	Local	M	M	M	Protect	
29	Fordbrook	Football	Council	Five poor quality adult pitches, two youth 9v9 pitches and overmarked mini 7v7 on one of the adult pitches. Pelsall Villa Colts FC aspire to gain a 25-year lease of the site. Site has been targeted for pitch improvements in the LFFP. Site has no ancillary offering.	If possible, grant Pelsall Villa Colts a 25-year lease of the site. This can in turn provide the Club with much needed secure pitch access whilst also enabling investment into pitch improvements and long term the installation of ancillary provision on site.	Council CFA FF	Local	H	S	H	Protect Provide Enhance	

38	Holland Park	Football	Council	One adult and one youth 9v9 pitch, both of which are of a standard quality with an additional poor quality mini 5v5 pitch. Site is open to community use and has actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session on the youth 9v9 pitch.	Utilise actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session on the youth 9v9 pitch. Improve quality of mini 5v5 pitch as to bring it up to the level of playing surface seen on the adult and youth 9v9 pitches.	Council CFA FF	Local	H	S	L	Enhance Protect	
		Tennis		Two poor quality non floodlit macadam tennis courts open to community use. Site is used for a local tennis league.	Given the sites importance and high usage through in the local tennis league, the two courts should be prioritised for re-surfacing as to improve quality.	Council LTA SE		H	M	H		Holland Park – courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system.
48	Manor Farm School Community Association	3G	Community charity	One 60 x 35 metre 3G pitch open to community use with no accompanying floodlights.	Explore the possibility to install floodlights on site. Maximise utilisation and sustain levels of quality of provision. Ensure a sinking fund is in place for the site	Council CFA FF	Local	S	L	M	Provide Protect	
52	Ormiston Sheffield Community Academy	Football	School	Two poor quality adult pitches open to community use that are played at capacity.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular and community demand.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	S	L	L	Enhance Protect	Met with Trust & LA and discussed support available for Grass Pitches
		3G		One standard quality 106 x 70 metre 3G pitch that was surfaced in 2011 and is not FA or FIFA approved	Given the age of the surface, if financially viable install a new surface as to renovate the quality of provision.	School CFA, FF SE		H / M	S	H		3G Pitch is not on 3G Pitch Register. This is a priority for the school to ensure remedial work is complete for an interim period as Central Venue Leagues run out from this venue
		Rugby Union		One poor quality, non-floodlit senior rugby pitch that is open to community use but un-used.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular and community demand.	School RFU		S	L	L		

		Netball		Four standard quality, non-floodlit macadam courts that are open to community use. Site is used for back to netball sessions.	Ensure quality of courts sustain to a good level as to provide a good playing surface for back to netball sessions.	School EN		S	L	L		
54	Pelsall Cricket & Sports Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality Cricket square open to community use with actual spare capacity for midweek play.	Utilise actual midweek spare capacity. Continue current maintenance programs as to ensure good quality is sustained.	Sports Club ECB	Local	S	L	L	Protect	
55	Pelsall Village School	Football	School	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch open to community use with actual spare capacity discounted due to pitch quality.	Improve pitch quality through a more rigorous maintenance program. This can then enable actual spare capacity to be utilised.	School CFA FF	Local	S	L	L	Enhance Protect	
61	Elmwood School	Football	School	One mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch both of which are of a poor quality. 5v5 has actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular and community demand. Utilise actual spare capacity.	School CFA FF	Local	S	L	L	Enhance Protect	
62	Rushall Cricket Club	Football	Sports Club	One poor quality adult pitch open to community use that has spare capacity discounted due to poor quality.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support community demand. Following this spare capacity can be utilised as pitch will have a larger carrying capacity.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	S	L	L	Protect Enhance Provide	
		Cricket		One standard quality square used by Rushall CC that have a rental agreement with WMBC. Site has spare capacity for Sunday and midweek play and has an NTP that is in need of replacement.	Replace on site NTP. Improve maintenance program as to raise quality from standard to good. Utilise spare Sunday and midweek capacity.	Sports Club ECB SE Council		S	L	S		
63	Rushall Olympic Football	3G	Sports Club	One FIFA approved, 105 x 72 metre floodlit 3G that	Sustain current levels of maintenance to continue quality of provision. Ensure	Sports Club CFA	Key Centre	M	L	M	Protect	Need to add in around pitch being maintained on FA pitch register and

	Club (Dales Lane)			is open to community use.	free capacity is utilised to maximise usage and revenue. Ensure sinking fund is set up.	FF						resurfaced when required
64	Rushall Playing Field	Football	Council	One standard qual adult pitch with actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session. Site is serviced by poor quality ancillary provision.	Improve poor quality on site ancillary provision. Utilise actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session.	Council CFA FF	Local	H	M	H	Enhance Protect	
66	Ryders Hayes School	Football	School	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch that is unavailable for community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular demand. Following this explore opening to community use.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect	
68	Shelfield Playing Field	Football	Council	Two standard quality adult pitches, serviced by poor quality ancillary provision with actual spare capacity of two match equivalent sessions.	Improve on site ancillary provision as to enhance the surrounding experience of using the site. Utilise actual spare capacity of two match equivalent sessions.	Council CFA FF	Local	M	M	H	Enhance Protect	
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green with no known user.	Continue current maintenance regime as to sustain levels of quality.	BCGBA Council		L	L	L		
69	Shelfield United FC (King George Crescent)	Football	Sports Club	Two adult, one youth 11v11, three youth 9v9, three mini 7v7 and two mini 5v5 pitches all of standard quality and open to community use. Site has spare capacity of 10 match equivalent sessions across all pitches other than the youth 11v11 pitch which is overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions. Site has been identified for pitch improvements in the LFFP.	Utilise actual spare capacity. Follow up on work done through the LFFP to improve pitch quality.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	H	S	L	Enhance Protect	
73	St James Primary School	Football	School	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch with no community use.	Retain for curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	

108	Pellsall Community Centre	Tennis	Council	Two poor quality non-floodlit macadam courts open to community use.	If viable re-surface existing courts as to improve quality of offering at the site.	LTA Council	Local	M	M	M	Enhance Provide	LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment complete (2024) providing 2 non-floodlit macadam courts in good playable condition; technology for booking and player access. Fencing completely replaced as part of this.
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality green. The local club has aspirations to grow its membership by 20 members.	Ensure that maintenance regime is very comprehensive as to enable a very good quality surface to accommodate large quantity of demand.	BCGBA Council	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
109	Rushall Labour Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green with a stable current and future membership balance.	Sustain green quality through current maintenance regime as to ensure quality does not decline.	Sports Club BCGBA Council	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
128	Walsall Wood School	3G	School	One 28 x 18 metre 3G pitch with no floodlights or community use.	Sustain for curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Local	M	L	L	Protect Provide	
	<i>Bush Ground (Pelsall Villa FC) disused site</i>	Football	Council	Former home ground of Pelsall Villa FC. The Club was expelled from the Midlands League after failing to fulfil fixtures. It has since disbanded, and the ground has become derelict. A supermarket is currently progressing plans to develop the site.	Ensure any loss of provision meet both NPPF and Sport England Playing Field Policy. If plans to develop a supermarket do not progress, consider opportunities to reinstate to reduce shortfall on grass pitch stock.	Council CFA FF SE	Local	M	M	M	Protect Enhance Provide	

ANALYSIS AREA 2 - Aldridge / Streetly / Pheasey / Walsall Wood

Summary

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area Two	Adult	Spare capacity of 5	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 4
Football	Area Two	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 5.5
Football	Area Two	Youth 9v9	Spare capacity of 3	Shortfall of 0.5	Spare capacity of 3
Football	Area Two	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 1	Shortfall of 0.5	Spare capacity of 1
Football	Area Two	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 1	Shortfall of 6	Spare capacity of 1
Football (3G)	Area Two	Full size	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1.25
Cricket	Area Two	Saturday	Shortfall of 14	Shortfall of 14	Shortfall of 14
Cricket	Area Two	Sunday	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2
Cricket	Area Two	Midweek	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2
Rugby union	Area Two	Senior	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required		No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Shortfall of matchplay pitches due to pitch condition at Sneyd	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

Summary non-pitch sports

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations	Stage E Updates
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Doebank Park, Aldridge Community Centre and St Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College. • Formalise community use agreements for clubs utilising unsecure sites such as Aldridge School. • Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs if appropriate. • Enable use of currently unavailable sites. • Improve changing and other facilities where required, such as the covered stand at BBG Stadium Oak Park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. • Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches. • Look to provide an additional full-size pitch within the Analysis Area to cater for future demand, with Aldridge Airport outlined as the priority site (consider need for two full size pitches if it can accommodate demand from further afield than just this analysis area). Other potential sites, if Aldridge Airport is not viable (all of which require a full feasibility to determine viability include Barr Beacon Leisure Centre and Shire Oak Academy). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Improve existing provision at to enhance square quality and reduce overplay. • Explore the means of installing additional provision to support existing and future projected shortfalls for Saturday peak time cricket. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bronze is in the process of applying for a County Grant Fund to replace Non-Turf Pitch.
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of existing provision. • Seek aiding the installation of new floodlights at Aldridge Rugby Club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2022, the action plan or the affiliated team numbers have not changed; However, from September 2024, adult men/women's numbers will be far more accurate due to a change in how we collect the data.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade existing floodlights provided at The Streetly Academy to LED as to better service hockey demand. • Ensure a sinking fund is provided as to financially prepare for pitch the replacement at The Streetly Academy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Streetly Academy, previously used by Aldridge and Streetly HCs. These two clubs have now merged to form Beacon HC. The pitch is still used by Beacon but not to the extent it was. There is a long-term intention to resurface with a 3G football carpet.
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Seek to improve park courts such as Blackwood Park that are utilised in a local league 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackwood Park – courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system. • Oak Park – courts not invested in by LTA and remain in disrepair and unusable.
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Water sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Other sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim	Stage E Update
2	Aldridge Rugby Club	Rugby Union	Sports Club	Two poor quality senior pitches, one of which is floodlit. The Club report frequent drainage issues of the site. Ambitions of the Club are to install floodlights on the second pitch.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime to support club demand. Seek possible grants and invest retained profits towards installation of floodlights on the second pitch.	Sports Club RFU SE	Local	M	L	L	Enhance Protect	
3	Aldridge School	Football	School	Two adult, one youth 9v9 and three mini 5v5 pitches all of which are of standard quality and open to community use. Spare capacity has been discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Look to formalise a community use agreement to provide users with security of tenure.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance Provide	
		Cricket		One poor quality NTP with no community use.	Replace existing NTP as to improve quality.	School ECB		L	L	L		
		Rugby Union		One poor quality, non-floodlit senior pitch that is open to community use but is unused.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime to support curricular demand. Then explore establishing a link with a Club to utilise the pitch.	School RFU		L	L	L		
		Netball		Four standard quality macadam courts and two good quality artificial courts all of which are non-floodlit and not open to the community.	Explore the possibility of opening provision to the community as to utilise the standard quality offering. If viable seek to install floodlights on site.	School EN		L	L	L		
4	Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club	Football	Sports Club	Two adult and one youth 11v11 pitch all of standard quality and open to community use. Adult pitches have spare capacity of 1.5 match equivalent sessions, whilst the youth 11v11 is	Utilise actual spare capacity on adult pitches and if possible, re-distribute balance of supply usage as to reduce	Sports Club CFA FF SE	Local	M	M	H	Provide Protect Enhance	

				overplayed by four. The Club have expressed a formal interest in installing a 3G pitch however they have not progressed with ambitions.	overplay on the youth 11v11 pitch.							
		Cricket		Two standard quality Cricket squares with one accompanying non turf wicket. Site has no spare capacity for additional Cricket.	Improve square quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support Club demand.	Sports Club ECB		L	L	L		
8	Barr Beacon Leisure Centre	Football	School	Two adult and four youth 11v11 pitches all of which are of a poor quality and available for community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular and external demand.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance Provide	
		Cricket		One standalone NTP that is available for community use and un-used.	Seek means of utilise available existing provision.	School ECB		L	L	L		
		Rugby Union		One poor quality senior pitch that is open to community use but unused.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular demand. Following this seek methods to entice local clubs to access the site.	School RFU		L	L	L		
		Netball		Four standard quality, non-floodlit macadam courts that are open to community use.	Explore possibility of installing floodlights on site. Aim to maximise community use of courts.	School EN		L	L	L		
9	BBG Stadium Oak Park	Football	Sports Club	Two standard quality adult pitches, one of which has actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions. Site is used by Walsall Wood FC who expressed an interest to develop two 5v5 3G pitches on the council land behind the main stand. Existing drainage for the pitches are not connected to the sewers which limits its effectiveness. Covered stand is also in need of repaid due to	Support 3G development aspiration, considering potential programme of use for affiliated and recreational football. There is a need to understand what this development may have on any full-size pitch proposal. If financially viable connect current drainage to nearby sewer system to enhance	Sports Club CFA FF SE	Local	M	M	H	Provide Enhance	

				very old rusty framework holding the stand and rotten wooden benches for seating.	drainage. Renovate the existing covered							
14	Blackwood School	Football	School	One poor quality mini 7v7 pitch that is open to community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime to support curricular demand.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect	
28	Doebank Park	Football	Council	Two adult, one youth 9v9 and one mini 7v7 pitch all of which are of a standard quality. Site has actual spare capacity of three match equivalent sessions and has been identified for pitch improvements in the LFFP.	Seek possibility to improve pitch quality following site identification from the LFFP. Utilise actual spare capacity of three match equivalent sessions.	Council CFA FF	Local	L	M	L	Enhance Protect	
45	Leighswood School	Football	School	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch that is unavailable for community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular demand.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
50	Oak Park Active Living Centre	3G	Council	One 106 x 70 metre floodlit FA approved community use pitch that was laid in 2017. Site was targeted for a second 3G pitch, however a feasibility study deemed it not achievable	Given the feasibility study deemed the site not feasible for a second 3G, efforts should be focused on ensuring pitch quality is sustained and capacity is as utilised as possible. Ensure a sinking fund is in place for the site as to guarantee long term sustainability.	Council CFA FF	Local	M	L	M	Enhance Protect	Also need to ensure pitch is on FA pitch register
51	Oak Park Leisure Centre	Lawn Bowls	Council	One good quality bowling green with stable current and future demand for quantity of users.	Maintain current levels of maintenance as to ensure quality of provision does not decline in quality.	BCGBA Council	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect Enhance	
		Tennis		Three lapsed tennis courts that the LTA are looking to re-instate.	Look to support the LTA in bringing back the lapsed provision into existence.	Council LTA		M	M	M		LTA project did not move forward. Site is in disrepair and unplayable for tennis.
70	Shire Oak Academy	Football	School	Four adult and one mini 5v5 pitch all of which are to a standard quality and unavailable to community use. Site received	Continue the delivery of pitch improvement plan as to further enhance quality. Explore possibilities to	School CFA FF	Key Centre	M	S	L	Enhance Protect	

				a pitch improvement plan visit within the last six years.	open the site up to the public.							
		Cricket		One standalone NTP that is available from community use and un-used.	Explore means of utilising existing provision.	School ECB		L	L	L		
		Rugby Union		One poor quality senior pitch that is open to community use but un-used. Pitch has actual spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions discounted due to poor quality.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular demand. Following this actual spare capacity will no longer be discounted and the school should seek means of utilising.	School RFU		L	L	L		
		Netball		Two standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights that are open to community use.	Seek possibility to install floodlights if feasible and open to community use as to support existing demand.	School EN		L	L	L		
72	St Francis Of Assisi Catholic Technology College	Football	School	Two adult, two youth 11v11 and one youth 9v9 pitch all of which is of a poor quality and open to community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular and community demand.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	M	M	L	Enhance	
		Cricket		One standalone NTP that is open to community use and unused.	Seek to protect existing provision as to ensure it is not replaced.	School ECB		L	L	L	Protect	
		Tennis		Six standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights that are not open to community use. Courts are overmarked by netball.	Seek possibility to install floodlights on site. Following this explore opening to community use.	School LTA		L	L	L	Provide	
		Netball		Six standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights that are not open to community use. Courts are overmarked by tennis.	Seek possibility to install floodlights on site. Following this explore opening to community use.	School EN		L	L	L		

76	The Aldridge Airport	Football	Council	Five standard quality youth 9v9 pitches open to community, with actual spare capacity of four match equivalent sessions. Site is preferred option for 3G installation to address current shortfalls.	Utilise spare capacity of four match equivalent sessions. Explore possibility to enhance quality of existing provision. Explore the possibility of installing a full size 3G pitch to address current shortfalls.	Council CFA FF	Local	H	S	H	Enhance Protect Provide	
		Tennis		Two lapsed tennis courts that the LTA have intentions to bring back into existence.	If feasible look to support the LTA in its ambitions to re-instate the lapsed provision.	Council LTA		M	M	M		
77	The Mckechnies Ground	Football	Sports Club	One youth 11v11, one youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch all of which is to a standard quality and open to the community. The mini 5v5 pitch has actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session.	Utilise existing spare capacity on 5v5 pitch.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	H	S	L	Enhance	
78	The Streetly Academy	Football	School	One adult and one youth 9v9 pitch that are of a standard quality and open to community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to support curricular and community demand.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	M	S	L	Protect Provide	Site on GPMF and are now showing as GOOD quality as per latest PP report. Site is showing to have 2 x 5v5, 1 x 9v9 and 1 11v11.
		Cricket		One standalone NTP open to community use and un-used.	Protect existing provision.	School ECB		L	L	L		
		AGP		One standard quality 100 x 60 metre sand dressed pitch that was installed in 2012. The school has plans to upgrade the accompanying floodlights that were first installed in 1999. Site has spare capacity for matches and training.	Upgrade existing floodlights to LED specification as to better service Streetly HC training sessions as well as football demand. Utilise spare capacity. Ensure a sinking fund is in place for the site.	School CFA FF		M	M	L		The Streetly Academy, Aldridge and Streetly HCs have merged to form Beacon HC. The pitch is still used by Beacon but not to the extent it was. There is a long-term intention to resurface with a 3G football carpet.
		Tennis		Three standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights that are open to community use. Courts are overmarked by netball.	Seek possibility to install floodlights and increase community usage.	School LTA		L	L	L		

		Netball		Three standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights that are open to community use. Courts are overmarked by tennis.	Seek possibility to install floodlights and increase community usage.	School EN		L	L	L		
80	The Veseyans Sports & Social Club	Football	Sports Club	One mini 7v7 and one youth 9v9 pitch both of which are open to community use. Pitches are overmarked on the rugby pitch and are of a standard quality.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support demand. If pitch is predominantly used for football purposes, ensure grass is cut to appropriate length and football markings remain clear.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	L	M	L	Protect Enhance	
		Rugby Union		Four senior and one mini pitch all of which are of a standard quality and two have accompanying floodlights. Site has actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session as well as having overplay of 1.5 match equivalent sessions.	Re-distribute current pitch allocation as to reduce overplay on site.	Sports Club RFU		M	M	L		
98	Druids Heath Golf Club Ltd	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole course club with the highest membership rates within Walsall of 550 people.	Sustain existing course maintenance to ensure quality does not decline.	Sports Club EG	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
99	Fairlawns Club	Tennis	Commercial	Two good quality community use macadam courts with no floodlights.	Explore the possibility of installing floodlights on site and ensure court quality does not decline through effective maintenance.	Sports Club LTA	Local	L	L	L	Provide Protect	
100	Great Barr Golf Club	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole course club with 423 members. Site has the largest potential demand of golf clubs within Walsall as identified by England Golf.	Sustain existing course maintenance to ensure quality does not decline.	Sports Club EG	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
104	Bronze Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality square with an accompanying poor quality NTP that needs replacing. Site has actual spare capacity for additional Sunday and midweek cricket.	Replace poor quality NTP with a new surface as to improve provision. Utilise actual spare capacity available for Sunday and midweek play.	Sports Club ECB SE	Local	M	L	L	Provide Protect Enhance	Bronze is in the process of applying for a County Grant Fund to replace NTP. This may be from next year's budget

105	Streety Sports Club	Football	Sports Club	Two standard quality adult pitches that are open to community use and have no spare capacity during peak period.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support demand	Sports Club CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Enhance Protect	
		Cricket		One standard quality square with no spare capacity for additional cricket. Site is overplayed by 4 sessions a season.	Seek possibility to install an NTP as to alleviate current overplay.	Sports Club ECB	Key Centre	L	L	L	Provide Protect	
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green accessed by Streety BC who have the maximum number of members per green following loosely defined guidelines by the BCGBA.	Ensure green maintenance maintains to a good standard as to support the high demand seen.	Sports Club BCGBA	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect	
111	Aldridge Community Centre	Football	Community	Two poor quality adult pitches open to community use with actual spare capacity discounted due to quality.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support demand. Following this utilise spare capacity that will become available through the pitches having larger carrying capacities.	Community CFA FF	Local	M	M	L	Enhance Protect	
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality green with sustainable current and future membership figures at its site.	Ensure green maintenance maintains to a good standard as to support current demand.	Community BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
112	Anchorage 55+ Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green accessed by Anchorage 55+ BC.	Ensure green maintenance maintains to a good standard as to support current demand.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
113	Aldridge Library	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality floodlit bowling green accessed by Aldridge Cons BC and Aldridge Cons B BC. Site has sustainable current future membership figures.	Ensure green maintenance maintains to a good standard as to support the high demand seen.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
114	Queslett BC	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green accessed by Queslett BC. Current membership figures of the Club are unknown.	If provision is being accessed by a club, ensure green maintenance maintains to a good standard. If no-one	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	M	M	L	Protect Provide	

					is accessing the site approach larger scales clubs in the area for a possible second green as to alleviate overplay.							
116	Streetly Methodist Recreation Centre	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality green with sustainable current and future membership figures at its site.	Ensure green maintenance maintains to a good standard as to support the high demand seen.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
120	Blackwood Park	Tennis	Council	One poor quality non floodlit macadam court open to community use and is used in a local Walsall league.	Improve court quality through re-surfacing of existing provision as to support demand from the local league.	Council LTA SE	Local	M	M	L	Protect Enhance	Blackwood Park – courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system. Developed second useable court
124	Streetly Tennis Club	Tennis	Sports Club	Ten standard quality community use artificial tennis courts, nine of which are floodlit. Club have ambitions to re-surface two of its older courts soon.	Re-surface two of the older courts when required. Seek possibility to install floodlights on the remaining court.	Sports Club LTA	Local	M	M	M	Enhance Protect Provide	
127	St Peters Catholic Primary	Football	School	One poor quality 5v5 pitch with no community use.	Retain for curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect	

ANALYSIS AREA 3 - Bloxwich / Blakenall / Birchills / Leamore

Summary

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area Three	Adult	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 4.5	Spare capacity of 1.5
Football	Area Three	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 0.5	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area Three	Youth 9v9	At capacity	Shortfall of 2	At capacity
Football	Area Three	Mini 7v7	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area Three	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Football (3G)	Area Three	Full size	Shortfall of 0.75	Shortfall of 0.25	Shortfall of 0.75
Cricket	Area Three	Saturday	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 12
Cricket	Area Three	Sunday	Spare capacity of 24	Spare capacity of 24	Spare capacity of 24
Cricket	Area Three	Midweek	Spare capacity of 38	Spare capacity of 36	Spare capacity of 38
Rugby union	Area Three	Senior	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall of 1.5
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required		No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Shortfall of supply of matchplay pitches due to pitch condition at Sneyd	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

Overarching Recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations	Stage E Updates
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Leamore Park. Where pitches remain overplayed, seek the transfer of demand. Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs where appropriate. Consider reconfiguration of pitch layouts at sites such as Leamore Park Enable use of currently unavailable sites. Improve changing facilities where required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. • Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches. • Consider installation of an additional pitch as to address the shortfall of 0.75 match equivalent sessions within the analysis area, with Leamore Park identified as a priority site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 x NTP replaced at Reedswood Park
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Utilise spare capacity at Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club. • Improve square quality at Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Improve quality at King George V Playing Fields (Bloxwich) to reduce overplay. • Explore the feasibility of increasing floodlighting at the sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2022, the action plan or the affiliated team numbers have not changed; However, from September 2024, adult men/women's numbers will be far more accurate due to a change in how we collect the data.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resurfacing of pitches at Sneyd Community Association Centre and Willenhall E-Act • Re-installation of new LED floodlights at Sneyd Community Association Centre. • Explore the feasibility of installing an AGP at King George V playing fields (Bloxwich) to service Bloxwich HC and better supply the black country with greater hockey provision. • If current hockey pitch is lost and a replacement is unable to be provided at the King George V Playing Fields site, a new pitch must be re-provided to accommodate the loss of current provision. Any loss of provision must be provided against SE and NPPF policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sneyd Community Association (used by Bloxwich HC.) Match officials identify surface is not suitable for Matchplay anymore. Whilst club can access pitch for training this is only short-term option. Where possible Matchplay been transferred to Willenhall E-ACT • Ongoing feasibility work as to the option of pitch on King George V Playing Fields, and cost and ability to fund.
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Seek to improve park courts such as Leamore Park that are utilised in a local league. 	<p>Leamore Park – courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system. Now includes third court on site within the footprint.</p>
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Water sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Other sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim	Stage E Update
15	Bloxwich Academy	Football	School	Two poor quality adult pitches open to community use and are played at capacity with curricular demand.	Improve pitch quality through a more robust maintenance regime.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	
		Rugby Union		One poor quality senior rugby pitch open to community that is unused.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support curricular and community demand.	School RFU		L	L	L		
		Netball		Two poor quality, non-floodlit macadam courts with no community use.	Improve court quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support curricular demand	School EN		L	L	L		
16	Bloxwich Stafford Road Sports Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality community use square with an accompanying NTP. Site has spare capacity for Sunday and midweek play.	Utilise existing spare capacity for Sunday and midweek Cricket.	Sports Club ECB	Local	M	L	L	Protect	4 new Junior Age Group Teams since 2022.
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality green and clubhouse with floodlights servicing the rinks. The site the most heavily used within Walsall with 94 current members, making it over capacity.	Ensure green maintenance is to a very good standard as to sustain current quality and accommodate for the large demand.	Sports Club BCGBA		M	L	L		
17	Lane Head Football Club	Football	Sports Club	One standard quality adult pitch open to community use that is overplayed by 1 match equivalent session.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to alleviate overplay.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	M	M	L	Protect Enhance	
23	Christ Church CE Primary School (Bloxwich)	Football	School	One poor quality 5v5 pitch with no community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	
42	King George V Playing	Football	Council	Four standard quality adult pitches open to the	If approved by all relevant governing bodies and	Council CFA	Key Centre	H	S	H	Protect Enhance	

	Fields (Bloxwich)			community with actual spare capacity of three match equivalent sessions. Site has been targeted by Walsall Council for the development of a new hockey pitch at the loss of some of the existing provision. Consultation with the Club state the land has a clause deeming it fit for sport purposes only. Site is located minutes from Bloxwich HC's clubhouse.	Sport England, provide a replacement AGP at King George V Playing Fields as to provide Bloxwich HC with a replacement pitch. The loss of any grass pitches should be mitigated in accordance of NPPF and Sport England Playing Field Policy. Policy E4 is most applicable given known shortfalls for grass pitches.	FF EH SE					Provide	
		Cricket		One standard quality square with spare capacity for Saturday, Sunday and midweek play.	Utilise spare capacity for Saturday, Sunday and midweek play.	Council ECB		M	M	L		
		Rugby Union		Two poor quality senior pitches open to community use that are overplayed by 1.5 match equivalent sessions	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to alleviate overplay.	Council RFU		L	L	L		
		Lawn Bowls		One standard quality green accessed by Benton Senior Citizens BC who have sustainable membership figures for both current and future demand.	Improve current maintenance of the green as to improve quality.	Council BCGBA		L	L	L		
44	Leamore Park	Football	Council	Two standard quality youth 11v11 and one poor quality mini 7v7 pitch all of which are open to community use. Site is overplayed by 1.5 match equivalent sessions.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support community demand. Explore the possibility of re-configuring current	Council CFA FF	Key Centre	H	S	H	Protect Enhance Provide	

				Site is outlined as a priority for the installation of a full size 3G.	layout as to alleviate overplay. Look to install a full size 3G as to better support current shortfalls of provision.							
		Tennis		Two poor quality non-floodlit macadam courts that are open to community use. Site is used for a Walsall tennis league. Courts are overmarked with netball.	Improve current court quality as to supply the Walsall tennis league with better quality provision. Explore feasibility of installing floodlights.	Council LTA SE		M	M	L		Leamore Park – courts renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access/ booking system. Added a third court in the space of the footprint.
		Netball		Two poor quality public use macadam courts with no floodlights. Courts are overmarked with tennis.	Improve current court quality and explore the feasibility of installing floodlights.	Council EN		M	M	L		
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green accessed by Leamore & Blakenall BC who have sustainable current and future demand numbers.	Ensure green maintenance is to a very good standard as to sustain current quality and accommodate for the large demand.	Council BCGBA		L	L	L		
71	Sneyd Community Association	AGP	Community Association	One poor quality 110m x 70m floodlit community use pitch utilised by Bloxwich HC. The surface was installed in 2005 and is yet to be replaced, leading to the club and league cancelling fixtures as the pitch is unsafe.	Replace the existing surface that is passed its lifespan and has been deemed unsafe to better provide Bloxwich HC with a new pitch. Replace floodlights that service only half a pitch with LED floodlights.	Community Association Council EH SE CFA FF	Key Centre	H	S	H	Provide Enhance	Sneyd Community Association (used by Bloxwich HC.) Match officials identify surface is not suitable for Matchplay anymore. Whilst club can access pitch for

				Floodlights on site are also a major issue and Club only access on set of changing rooms on site which is handed to the opposition team.	If replacement provision can be provided to Bloxwich HC at King George V Playing Fields whilst meeting Sport England Exemption tests, then site should still be targeted for converting into a purpose-built hockey facility to improve the lack of supply for hockey provision across the Black Country. If current hockey pitch is lost and a replacement is unable to be provided at the King George V Playing Fields site, a new pitch must be re-provided to accommodate the loss of current provision. Any loss of provision must be provided against SE and NPPF policy.							training this is only a short-term option. Matchplay has been transferred to Willenhall E-ACT
82	Walsall Academy	Football	School	One poor quality adult pitch open to community use that is played to capacity.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support curricular and community demand.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect Provide	

		Netball		Four standard quality, non-floodlit macadam courts with no community use.	Retain for curricular demand.	School EN		L	L	L		
		Rugby Union		One poor quality senior pitch with no community use.	Improve pitch quality through enhanced maintenance regime as to better support curricular demand.	School RFU		L	L	L		
96	Bloxwich Golf Club	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole golf course with a grade II listed building as its clubhouse.	Continue current maintenance as to ensure quality.	Sports Club EG	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
107	Bloxwich Bowls Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green utilised by Bloxwich BC; Palfrey & Caldmore Senior Citizens BC and British Rail BC. The site is currently operating over the BCGBA capacity guidelines.	Ensure green maintenance is to a very good standard as to sustain current quality and accommodate for high demand.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
121	Stan Ball Centre	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green with no known user.	Continue current maintenance as to support the un-identified Club utilising the site.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Provide Protect	
	<i>Glastonbury Crescent (lapsed site)</i>	Football	Council	Former stadium site owned by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council. Provision has been approached by Lane Head FC for the potential of taking on the site.	Ensure any loss of provision meet both NPPF and Sport England Playing Field Policy.	Council CFA, FF SE	Local	M	S	M	Protect Provide Enhance	

ANALYSIS AREA 4 - St. Matthew's / Paddock / Palfrey / Pleck

Summary

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area Four	Adult	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 10	Shortfall of 2
Football	Area Four	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 7	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area Four	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 4	Spare capacity of 5	Shortfall of 4.5
Football	Area Four	Mini 7v7	At capacity	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall of 0.5
Football	Area Four	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 1
Football (3G)	Area Four	Full size	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Four	Saturday	Spare capacity of 12	Spare capacity of 10	Spare capacity of 12
Cricket	Area Four	Sunday	Spare capacity of 36	Spare capacity of 34	Spare capacity of 36
Cricket	Area Four	Midweek	Spare capacity of 36	Spare capacity of 32	Spare capacity of 36
Rugby union	Area Four	Senior	Shortfall of 3.75	Shortfall of 3.75	Shortfall of 3.75
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required		No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Shortfall of supply of matchplay pitches due to pitch condition at Sneyd	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations	Steg E Updates
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Walstead Road Playing Fields. Where pitches remain overplayed, seek the transfer of demand. Improve security of tenure at key sites such as Aston University Recreation Centre and Blue Coat Church of England Academy Playing Fields Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs. Enable use of currently unavailable sites. Improve changing facilities where required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LMRCA Sports Club - also known as Chris Nicholl Soccer Centre. Mini Soccer pitch has been upgraded to a 3G surface.

3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. • Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aston University aspire to install a Football compliant 3G pitch and has spoken with BCFA regarding this. Unclear if this is a resurface or brand-new build.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Protect NTP at Pleck Park utilised for Last Man Stands Cricket. • Improve changing facilities where required, such as at Walsall CC in its ambitions to create ECB compliant changing facilities and provide an improved social offer. • Utilise spare capacity at Walsall YPF Cricket Club. • Improve square quality at Walsall YPF Cricket Club. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing feasibility work as to the option of hockey pitch at Queen Mary's Grammar School as part of a complete development of their community and school sports pitch provision. Would impact on cricket with loss of second square. Planning application submitted and awaiting outcome. • 2 x NTP's replaced at Pleck Park • 3 x NTP installed at Broadway West playing fields / Walsall Arboretum (events field) and Palfrey Park • 1 x NTP replaced at Walsall YPF (Walsall Arboretum)
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Improve quality at Handsworth and Walsall Rugby Club's to reduce overplay. • Explore the feasibility of increasing floodlighting at the sites as and when needed. • Provide support for Walsall Rugby Clubs three-tiered clubhouse re-development, of which it is currently working on stage two. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2022, the action plan or the affiliated team numbers have not changed; However, from September 2024, adult men/women's numbers will be far more accurate due to a change in how we collect the data.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a sinking fund is in place at Aston University (Recreation Centre) as to financially prepare for the pitch replacement of existing provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aston University (used by Beacon HC, Aston Uni & West Bromwich HC) We believe there is no capacity for additional Saturday hockey. • Ongoing feasibility work as to the option of pitch at Queen Mary's Grammar School as part of a complete development of their community and school sports pitch provision. Planning application submitted and awaiting outcome.
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walsall Arboretum – Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system • Palfrey park - Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system • University of Wolverhampton – 4 courts have been resurfaced and only contain Netball markings and posts. No tennis provision available. • Queen Marys Grammar School - Planning Application submitted for synthetic turf hockey pitch overmarked with tennis markings to increase court numbers. • Pleck park - Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system.

Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Water sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Other sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim	Stage E Updates
7	Aston University (Recreation Centre)	Football	University	Five adult, three youth 9v9 and one mini 5v5 pitch all of which are of a good quality and open to community use. Site has spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure	Continue current maintenance regime as to sustain level of quality. Explore granting a club a tenure agreement for the site as to utilise spare capacity.	University CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	Latest PP report shows 6 x 11v11, 1 x 9v9 and 1 x 7v7. Not sure the University is looking at granting a club a tenure agreement. University is looking to apply to GPMF but needs to do a new PP report as this is now over the 12-month-old threshold.
		Cricket		One good quality square with no spare capacity for additional play due to unsecure tenure.	Continue current maintenance to retain quality. Explore granting a club a tenure agreement to use spare capacity.	University ECB		L	L	L		
		Rugby Union		One standard quality senior pitch open to community use - at capacity during peak times.	Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program.	University RFU		L	L	L		
		AGP		One floodlit 100 x 70m pitch open to community use installed in 2015. Is used by West Bromwich HC as primary and Aldridge and Walsall HC as the secondary bookers of the site. Aldridge and Walsall currently access the site every Saturday from 14:30-17:30 with senior training every Monday from 20:00-22:00. Site is at capacity and future demand results in overplay of one match equivalent session per week.	Continue current maintenance program as to sustain current levels of quality. If a new AGP pitch were to be installed within Walsall, Aldridge and Walsall HC could potentially relocate to grant the Club a preferable allocation. Ensure sinking fund is in place for refurbishment when necessary.	University CFA FF		L	L	M		Aston University (used by Beacon HC, Aston Uni & West Bromwich HC) We believe there is no capacity for additional Saturday hockey. University aspires to install a 3G pitch and has spoken with BCFA regarding this. There is an identified shortfall in this area and could be an option. Not 100% sure if this is a resurface or brand-new build.

18	Blue Coat Church of England Academy Playing Fields	Football	School	Two adult and one mini 7v7 pitch all of which are to a standard quality and open to community use. Spare capacity is discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program as to support curricular and community demand.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect	Rushall Olympic currently has GPMF on site but understand are no longer users of the site. Tried to work with Total Football to start a new GPMF application and school were happy to do so, but cannot do anything until Rushall Olympic withdraw from grant T&Cs.
36	Handsworth Rugby Club (Charles Lewis Memorial Ground)	Rugby Union	Sports Club	One standard quality senior pitch that is open to community use and overplayed by two match equivalent sessions.	Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance to support community demand. Will support reducing overplay.	Sports Club RFU	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect	
37	Handsworth Rugby Club (Walstead Road)	Rugby Union	Sports Club	One poor quality senior pitch with spare capacity of 0.25 match equivalent sessions.	Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program as to support community demand.	Sports Club RFU	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect	
40	Joseph Leckie Academy Playing Fields	Football	School	One poor quality youth 9v9 pitch with no community use.	Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program as to support curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	
		Cricket		One standalone NTP that is open to community use but un-used.	Protect existing provision as to allow for Cricket play.	School ECB		L	L	L		
		Tennis		Three standard quality, non-floodlit macadam courts with no community use. Courts are overmarked by netball.	If possible open courts to community use. Following this, explore the possibility of installing floodlights as to enhance tennis and netball demand.	School LTA		L	L	L		
		Netball		Three standard quality, non-floodlit macadam courts with no community use. Courts are overmarked by tennis.	If possible open courts to community use. Following this, explore the possibility of installing floodlights as to enhance netball and tennis demand.	School EN		L	L	L		

47	LMRCA Sports Club	Football	Sports Club	One adult and one mini 5v5 pitch both of which are of a standard quality. 5v5 pitch has actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session.	Utilise actual spare capacity on the 5v5 pitch. Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program as to support community demand.	Sports Club CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect	Also known as Chris Nicholl Soccer Centre. Mini Soccer pitch is a 3G surface an not currently on the FA 3G Pitch Register. BCFA have made contact with the site but no progress as of yet.
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green formerly accessed by British Rail BC who have now moved to Bloxwich BC.	Look to provide a Club with the current green. Sustain current levels of green maintenance as to ensure green quality does not decline.	Sports Club BCGBA		M	M	L		
49	Mayfield Preparatory School	Football	School	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch with spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Retain for curricular use.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
56	Pleck Park	Football	Council	One standard quality adult pitches open to community use with actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session.	Utilise actual spare capacity on adult pitch. Enhance pitch quality through an improved maintenance program as to support community demand.	Council CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	
		Cricket		Two standalone NTP's that are open and used by the community. Site is used for Last Man Stands Cricket.	Protect existing provision as to ensure site can continue to be used for Last Man Stands.	Council ECB		M	M	L		
		Tennis		Two poor quality community use macadam courts with no floodlights. Site is used in the local Walsall tennis league.	Enhance court quality as to improve court quality. Site should be prioritised given its current poor quality and increased demand from the local league.	Council LTA SE		M	M	L		Pleck park - Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system.
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green used by Pleck	Sustain current levels of green maintenance	Council BCGBA		L	L	L		

				Sons & Daughters of Rest BC who have sustainable current and future membership rates.	as to ensure green quality does not decline.							
58	Queen Marys Grammar School	Cricket	School	Two standard quality squares, one of which has an accompanying NTP. Site has no spare capacity for additional Cricket due to unsecure tenure.	Seek possibility to grant the third team of Walsall CC increased tenure as to utilise spare capacity on site.	School ECB	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	
		Rugby Union		Four standard quality senior pitches with no community use. Site has actual spare capacity of 2 match equivalent sessions discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Four standard quality senior rugby pitches with no community use. Given the large number of pitches, explore the possibility of partnering with a Rugby Club to use spare capacity.	School RFU		L	L	L		
		Tennis		Two standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights or community use. Courts are overmarked by netball	Explore possibility to install floodlights as to enhance tennis offering on site.	School LTA		L	L	L		Long-term lease agreement with Walsall Tennis Club. Court surface, fencing, floodlights and clubhouse to be considered. New access point for Walsall club. Planning Application submitted for synthetic turf hockey pitch overmarked with tennis markings to increase court numbers.
		Netball		Two standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights or community use. Courts are overmarked by tennis.	Explore possibility to install floodlights as to enhance netball offering on site.	School EN		L	L	L		
59	Reedswood E-Act Primary Academy	Football	School	One poor quality mini 5v5 pitch that is unavailable for community use.	Retain for curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect	

60	Reedwood Park	Cricket	Council	One poor quality standalone NTP that is open for community use.	Seek possibility of re-surfacing existing NTP as to enhance quality of offering to community use.	Council ECB	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect	
81	University of Wolverhampton (Walsall Site)	3G	University	One FA approved, 98 x 63 metre floodlit community use 3G pitch. Pitch was installed in 2017 and is of a good quality.	Sustain current maintenance regime to prolong good quality surface. Aim to maximise utilisation to reduce cases of instant perishability. Ensure sinking fund is in place for refurbishment when necessary.	University CFA FF	Hub site	M	L	M	Protect Enhance	
		Tennis		Four standard quality non floodlit macadam courts open to community use. Courts are overmarked by Netball	Explore the possibility to install floodlights on site as to improve tennis and netball offering.	University LTA		L	L	L		These courts have been resurfaced and only contain netball markings and posts. No tennis provision available.
		Netball		Four standard quality non floodlit macadam courts open to community use. Courts are overmarked by Tennis.	Explore the possibility to install floodlights on site as to improve netball and tennis offering.	University EN		L	L	L		
		Athletics		One standard quality 200m track that was installed in 2004. The site is not TrackMark accredited and is deemed of a standard quality with some wear and tear issues identified.	Seek possibility of addressing wear and tear issues present at the site as to enhance track quality. Address issues limiting the surface from being granted TrackMark accredited.	University EA SE		H	M	H		
83	Walsall Arboretum	Tennis	Council	Two poor quality non floodlit macadam courts open to community use. Site is used for a Walsall tennis league.	Enhance court surface as to improve court quality. Site should be prioritised given its current poor quality and increased demand from the local league.	Council LTA SE	Local	M	M	L	Enhance Protect	Walsall Arboretum – Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system.

		Lawn Bowls		One standard quality bowling green utilised by Leckie Senior Citizens BC. The Club currently have 12 members, putting them at risk of long-term sustainability.	Seek means of attracting new members to the site as to increase the likelihood of long-term sustainability. Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance green quality.	Council BCGBA		L	L	L		
84	Walsall Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One good quality square with spare capacity for additional two senior teams on Sundays.	Utilise spare capacity for Sunday Cricket.	Sports Club ECB	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect	1 additional Junior Age Group Team since 2022 Women and Girls participation. 1 new softball team and 1 new hardball team.
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green with no known user.	Identify who is currently using the site, following this sustain current maintenance of the green as to protect current quality.	Sports Club BCGBA		L	L	L		
85	Walsall FC (Bescot Stadium)	Football	Sports Club	One good quality stadium pitch unavailable for community use	Sustain current maintenance regime as to guarantee good quality.	Sports Club CFA, FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect	
		3G		One good quality FA approved, 100m x 60m floodlit pitch. The pitch was installed in 2010 and has since been re-surfaced in 2017.	Sustain current maintenance regime as to prolong good quality. Ensure a sinking fund is in place to guarantee long term sustainability on site.	Sports Club CFA FF		M	L	H		
86	Walsall Rugby Club	Rugby Union	Sports Club	Two standard quality senior pitches that are overplayed by two match equivalent sessions. Site is re-developing its clubhouse and is in the process of stage two in its three-tiered re-development.	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community offering. This shall in turn reduce current overplay. Continue the re-development of the clubhouse.	Sports Club RFU	Key Centre	H	M	H	Protect	

				Stage three shall involve converting the players and referees changing rooms.								
		3G		One 100 x 60 metre FA approved rugby compliant pitch that was installed in 2018 following investment from the RFU. Site holds a significant presence for Rugby within Walsall.	Sustain current levels of maintenance as to ensure supply remains of a good quality for as long as possible. Ensure capacity usage is as high as possible as to increase Club revenue. Put aside enough finances as to ensure a sinking fund is in place.	Sports Club CFA FF		M	L	H		
88	Walsall YPF Cricket Club	Cricket	Sports Club	One standard quality square with an accompanying NTP. Site has spare capacity for one Saturday team, two Sunday teams and six midweek fixtures Cricket.	Utilise spare capacity for an additional Saturday team, two Sunday teams and midweek demand.	Sports Club ECB	Local	M	S	L	Enhance Protect	1 additional Saturday Senior Team and 1 additional Sunday senior team from 2022 report. 1 additional Junior Age Group Team
89	Walstead Road Playing Fields	Football	Sports Club	One adult, two youth 11v11 and two youth 9v9 pitches, all of which are of a standard quality and open to community use. Site is overplayed by 4 match equivalent sessions.	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community offering. This shall in turn reduce current overplay.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Enhance Protect	
90	West Bromwich Albion (Palm Training Ground)	Football	Sports Club	Nine good quality adult pitches used by Championship level West Bromwich Albion for training purposes. Site has no community use.	Sustain current levels of maintenance as to ensure quality does not decline.	Sports Club CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect	
91	West Walsall E-Act Academy	Football	School	Two standard quality adult pitches with spare	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance	School CFA, FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Enhance Protect	PP report back in 2021 says 1 adult and 1 youth 11v11. Trust would need

				capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	community and curricular offering.							to produce new PP report if they were to apply to GPMF.
		3G		One 104m x 60m pitch which is no longer FA accredited. The pitch was installed in 2015 and is of a standard quality	Seek possibility to improve current maintenance regime as to prolong the lifespan of the surface for as long as possible. Maximise usage wherever possible as to increase revenue. Ensure a sinking fund is in place for the long-term sustainability of the site.	School CFA FF		M	L	H		Pitch now on FA pitch register until 2027 having been tested in 2024.
		Tennis		Eight floodlit standard quality artificial courts that are open to community use.	Seek methods of increasing court usage given the presence of floodlights and the site already being open to community use.	School LTA		L	L	L		
95	Aldridge Road Driving Range	Golf	Sports Club	A 30 bay driving range which is good quality. The site is allocated for development for residential property.	If the site is to be lost for development, an independent needs assessment should be undertaken to determine any need for mitigation aligning to NPPF.	Sports Club EG	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
95A	Calderfields Country & Country Club	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole golf course. c330 members.	Maximise usage of driving range as to increase Club revenue. Sustain current maintenance as to ensure course quality is to standard.	Sports Club EG	Local	L	L	L	Protect	

103	Walsall Golf Club	Golf	Sports Club	One 18-hole golf course with 415 members following England Golf affiliation data.	Sustain current maintenance as to ensure course quality is to standard.	Sports Club EG	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
110	Lichfield Road Bowls Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green used by Lichfield Road BC who have 24 members putting them at risk of being too low for long term sustainability.	Continue current maintenance regime as to ensure quality remains. Seek means of attracting new members as to ensure the long-term sustainability of the site.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
123	Palfrey Park	Tennis	Council	One standard quality non-floodlit macadam court open to community use.	Seek means of installing floodlights on site.	Council LTA	Local	L	L	L	Protect	Palfrey park - Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system.

ANALYSIS AREA 5 - Darlaston / Bentley

Summary

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area Five	Adult	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2
Football	Area Five	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Spare capacity of 7	Shortfall of 1.5
Football	Area Five	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 3	Spare capacity of 3	Shortfall of 3
Football	Area Five	Mini 7v7	At capacity	Spare capacity of 10	At capacity
Football	Area Five	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Football (3G)	Area Five	Full size	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1.25
Cricket	Area Five	Saturday	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Five	Sunday	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Five	Midweek	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby union	Area Five	Senior	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required		No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Shortfall of supply of matchplay pitches due to pitch condition at Sneyd	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations	Stage E updates
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Bentley West Playing Field and Great Bridge Road. Where pitches remain overplayed, seek the transfer of demand. Improve security of tenure at key sites such as Grace Academy Darlaston. Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs. Enable use of currently unavailable sites. Improve changing facilities where required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. • Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches. • Consider installation of an additional pitch as to address shortfalls, with Darlaston Recreation Ground outlined as the priority site. • Assess the provision provided at Grace Academy Darlaston and plan in the short to medium term to replace current surface. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FA have commented on a planning application for Darlaston Community Association. proposal to install sports lighting, spectator fencing, spectator hardstanding paths and perimeter fencing.
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 x NTP pitch installed at Benley West Playing Fields
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Improve quality at Grace Academy Darlaston to enable spare capacity to be utilised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2022, the action plan or the affiliated team numbers have not changed; However, from September 2024, adult men/women's numbers will be far more accurate due to a change in how we collect the data.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Ensure any development of lapsed/disused provision meets Sport England requirements. • If possible, support Breakaways BC in increasing membership figures as to ensure long term sustainability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Seek to open courts provided at Grace Academy Darlaston and Pool Hayes Academy to the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim	Stage E Updates
11	Bentley Road North Playing Field	Football	Council	Four standard quality adult pitches that are open to community use and overplayed by 2.5 match equivalent sessions.	Improve current maintenance regime to enhance community offering. Will help alleviate overplay of 2.5 match equivalent sessions.	Council CFA FF	Local	M	M	L	Protect	
		Lawn Bowls		Two good quality bowling greens used by Breakaways BC which has 21 members putting them at risk of being too low for long term sustainability.	Continue current maintenance regime to maintain quality. Attract new members to ensure the long-term sustainability of the site.	Council BCGBA		L	L	L		
12	Bentley West Playing Field	Football	Council	Five poor quality youth 9v9 pitches that are open to community use and overplayed by six match equivalent sessions.	Improve current maintenance regime to enhance community offering. Will help alleviate overplay of six match equivalent sessions.	Council CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	
13	Bentley Youth Sports Ground	Football	Sports Club	One adult and one youth 9v9 pitch, both of a standard quality. Adult pitch is overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions whilst the 9v9 has actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session.	Utilise spare capacity of one match equivalent session. Improve current maintenance regime to enhance community offering and alleviate overplay. Explore the idea of re-configuring site to better balance demand. If re-configured, ensure this takes place in conjunction with neighbouring pitches to ensure enough youth 9v9 pitches remain.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	

26	Darlaston Community Association	Football	Community	One standard quality adult pitch with actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session.	Utilise actual spare capacity of one match equivalent session. Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community offering.	Community CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance Provide	FA have commented on a planning application for this site. <i>Proposal to install sports lighting, spectator fencing, spectator hardstanding paths and perimeter fencing. Reference made in Design and access statement to works being proposed to meet team requirements if successfully promoted.</i> Question if the 9v9 can still be marked out if these works are carried out.
		AGP		One smaller sized AGP that has no community use despite being serviced with floodlights. Provision was installed in 1998 and has not had a replacement surface installed. Site has been outlined for 3G replacement in the LFFP.	Given the age of provision, site should be prioritised for the installation of a 3G pitch as to address current shortfalls. Development shall involve both converting and enlarging existing provision as to provide a full sized 3G.	Community EH CFA FF SE		H	S	H		
		Lawn Bowls		One good quality bowling green with no known user of the site.	Identify who is accessing the site. If unused, site could be used as overspill for larger clubs. Alternatively, green can be targeted for a club in need of relocating.	Community BCGBA		L	L	L		

33	Grace Academy Darlaston	Football	School	One standard quality adult pitch open to community use, with spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Explore means of granting a club a form of tenure at the site as to utilise spare capacity.	School CFA, FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Provide Enhance	
		3G		One floodlit 100 x 60 metre pitch that is not FA or FIFA accredited. The pitch was installed in 2013 and is of a standard quality.	Ensure maintenance regime of the site is robust to prolong the lifespan of the surface. Given the surfaces nine-year lifespan, consider the requirement of replacing the current surface. Maximise capacity usage as to increase revenue for the site.	School CFA FF SE		H	M	H		Site contacted over getting pitch on FA pitch register but no response.
		Rugby Union		One poor quality senior pitch with potential spare capacity discounted due to poor pitch quality.	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance community offering. Following this utilise the actual spare capacity that will be generated.	School RFU		L	L	L		
		Tennis		Four standard quality floodlit macadam courts with no community use. Courts are overmarked by netball.	Explore the means of opening courts to community use.	School LTA		L	L	L		
		Netball		Four standard quality floodlit macadam courts with no community use. Courts are overmarked by tennis.	Explore the means of opening courts to community use.	School EN		L	L	L		

35	Great Bridge Road	Football	Council	One poor quality adult pitch that has been identified for pitch improvements by the LFFP. Site is also serviced by poor ancillary provision.	Improve current maintenance regime to enhance community offering and follow through the work taken place in the LFFP. Enhance existing poor quality ancillary provision.	Council CFA FF	Local	M	M	H	Provide Enhance	
43	Kings Hill Park	Football	Council	Two standard quality youth 9v9 pitches and one poor quality youth 11v11 pitch. Youth 9v9 pitches have actual spare capacity of two match equivalent sessions.	Utilise actual spare capacity present on the youth 9v9 pitches. Improve maintenance of the youth 11v11 pitch as to develop quality.	Council CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	
57	Pool Hayes Academy	Football	School	Three standard quality adult pitches that are unavailable for community use.	Explore means of opening to community use. Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance curricular offering	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect Provide Enhance	
		Tennis		Three standard quality non floodlit macadam courts unavailable for community use.	Explore means of opening to community use and the installation of floodlights.	School LTA		L	L	L		
67	Salisbury Primary School	Football	School	One poor quality youth 11v11 pitch with no community use.	Retain for curricular demand.	School CFA, FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
125	Friar Park	Netball	School	One standard quality macadam court with no floodlights - open to community use.	Retain for curricular demand.	School EN	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
	<i>Darlaston Town FC (lapsed site)</i>	Football	Council	Former stadia site of Darlaston Town FC, which folded in 2013 and has since re-formed as a phoenix club accessing a different site.	Protect existing provision. Explore the possibility of bringing lapsed provision back into life as to better support demand across the area.	Council CFA FF SE	Local	M	M	M	Protect Enhance Provide	

ANALYSIS AREA 6 - Willenhall / Short Heath

Summary

Sport	Analysis area	Pitch type	Current supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)	Current Stage E supply / demand balance	Future supply/ demand balance (match equivalent sessions)
Football	Area Six	Adult	Shortfall of 0.5	Spare capacity of 3.5	Shortfall of 0.5
Football	Area Six	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 1
Football	Area Six	Youth 9v9	At capacity	Shortfall of 6	At capacity
Football	Area Six	Mini 7v7	At capacity	Shortfall of 7	At capacity
Football	Area Six	Mini 5v5	At capacity	Shortfall of 9	At capacity
Football (3G)	Area Six	Full size	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Six	Saturday	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Six	Sunday	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Cricket	Area Six	Midweek	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby union	Area Six	Senior	At capacity	At capacity	At capacity
Rugby league	Walsall	Senior	No demand so no provision required		No demand so no provision required
Hockey (sand AGPs)	Walsall	Full size	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy	Shortfall of supply of matchplay pitches due to pitch condition at Sneyd	Sufficient supply if quality improvements are undertaken at Sneyd Community Association and Willenhall E-Act Academy

Overarching recommendations

Sport	Priority recommendations	Stage E Updates
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. Improve pitch quality at key sites to alleviate overplay, especially at key, poor quality and/or overplayed sites such as Willenhall Memorial Park. Where pitches remain overplayed, seek the transfer of demand. Improve security of tenure at key sites such as Beacon Primary School. Consider asset transfer of sites to clubs. Enable use of currently unavailable sites. Improve changing facilities where required, such as Willenhall Memorial Park which currently has no ancillary provision and has been targeted for the installation of some offering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
3G pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all existing pitches have a sinking fund in place. • Ensure all existing pitches remain on the FA register to host competitive matches. 	
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 x NTP installed at Willenhall Memorial Park
Rugby union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2022, the action plan or the affiliated team numbers have not changed; However, from September 2024, adult men/women's numbers will be far more accurate due to a change in how we collect the data.
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • AGP at Willenhall E-Act Academy should be prioritised for a new pitch installation given the surfaces 17 year lifespan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willenhall E – Act Academy (used by Bloxwich HC & Wednesbury HC) the pitch was resurfaced and both clubs are happy with the arrangement. Bloxwich have requested additional pitch time for 24/25 due to increase in teams (by 1) and concerns about the playability of Sneyd.
Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Ensure any development of lapsed/disused provision meets Sport England requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Tennis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect provision. • Seek to improve park courts such as at Willenhall Memorial Park via implementation of LTA products and improvement to court surfaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willenhall Park - Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system.
Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek possibility of opening courts at Willenhall E-Act Academy to community use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Site ID	Site	Sport	Management	Current status	Recommended actions	Partners	Site hierarchy tier	Priority	Timescales	Cost	Aim	Stage E Updates
6	Aspray Arena	3G	Sports Club	One good quality floodlit, FIFA approved 105 x 70 metre pitch that was installed in 2018. Site also has five 30 x 18 metre floodlit 3G pitches that were installed in 2015.	Continue current maintenance regimes as to prolong good quality of the site. Ensure a sinking fund is in place for all six surfaces as to ensure long term sustainability. Ensure capacity usage of site is as high as possible as to maximise revenue.	Sports Club CFA FF	Local	M	M	H	Protect	
10	Beacon Primary School	Football	School	One mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch both of which are of a poor quality. Spare capacity has been discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Improve current maintenance regime as to enhance curricular offering.	School CFA, FF	Local	M	L	L	Protect	
31	Goals Soccer Centre (Black Country)	3G	Commercial	Ten 30 x 22 metre 3G pitches with four 50m x 30m pitches that were installed in 2017 and are of a good quality.	Ensure maintenance of the site is robust as to prolong the pitches lifetimes as long as possible.	Commercial CFA, FF	Local	M	M	H	Protect	
39	Jane Lane School	3G	School	One 34 x 23 metre non floodlit 3G pitch with no community use. The pitch was installed in 2011 and is of a standard quality however it has received less demand than regular 3G surfaces due to the lack of community demand.	Retain for curricular demand.	School CFA FF	Local	M	M	H	Protect	
57	Pool Hayes Academy	Netball	School	Three standard quality macadam courts with no floodlights or community use.	Explore the means of installing floodlights on site. Following this open courts to the community if viable.	School EN	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
		Football		Three standard quality adult pitches with no community use.	Explore the means of opening pitches to the community.	School CFA, FF		L	L	L		

75	St Thomas More Catholic School	Football	School	Two youth 9v9, one mini 7v7 and one mini 5v5 pitch all of a standard quality and open to community use. Pitches have spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Explore the means of granting a tenure agreement to the Club as to utilise spare capacity. Improve pitch quality through a more robust maintenance regime.	School CFA FF	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
92	Willenhall E-Act Academy	Football	School	One adult and four youth 9v9 pitches all of which are standard quality. The youth 9v9 pitches have spare capacity discounted due to unsecure tenure.	Explore the means of granting a tenure agreement to the Club as to utilise spare capacity. Improve pitch quality through a more robust maintenance regime.	School CFA FF	Key Centre	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	
		AGP		One 98m x 61m floodlit AGP pitch that was installed in 2005 and has significantly passed its life expectancy. Pitch is used by Wednesbury HC who stress the need to replace the pitch, something the school is also aware of. The pitch currently has current spare capacity of 2.5 match equivalent sessions, however, it requires pitch quality to be to standard for this to be utilised.	Site should be prioritised for the re-installation of a new hockey purpose AGP. Given the 17-year lifespan of the pitch it has been scheduled for a surface replacement over the summer of 2022.	School EH SE		H	S	H		Willenhall E – Act Academy (used by Bloxwich HC & Wednesbury HC) the pitch was resurfaced and both clubs are happy with the arrangement. Bloxwich have requested additional pitch time for 24/25 due to increase in teams (by 1) and concerns about the playability of Sneyd.
		Tennis		Three standard quality floodlit macadam courts with no community use.	Seek the means of opening to community use as to utilise the standard quality floodlit provision.	School LTA		L	L	L		
		Netball		Three standard quality floodlit macadam courts with no community use.	Seek the means of opening to community use as to utilise the standard quality floodlit provision.	School EN		L	L	L		

93	Willenhall Memorial Park	Football	Council	Three poor quality community use adult pitches that have been targeted in the LFFP for pitch improvements. Site is overplayed by 0.5 match equivalent sessions. Pitches have no accompanying ancillary provision, resulting in it being targeted for the need of installing some offering.	Enhance pitch quality through a better maintenance regime following work identified in the LFFP. Site should also be targetter for the installation of some form of ancillary provision to accompany the pitches.	Council CFA FF	Local	H	M	H	Provide Provide Enhance	
		Tennis		Two poor quality macadam courts with no floodlights that are open to community use. Courts are used for a local tennis league.	Courts should be prioritised for re-surfacing given its poor quality and high demand from the local tennis league. If feasible floodlights should also be installed.	Council LTA SE		M	M	L		Willenhall Park - Renovated under the LTA/ DCMS Parks Investment programme (completed 2024) with technology access / booking system.
		Lawn Bowls		One standard quality green with no known user.	Following this if the green is unused, site could possibly be used as overspill for larger clubs. Alternatively, green can be targeted for a Club in need of relocating.	Council BCGBA		L	L	L		
106	Amery Bowls Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green with no known user.	Identify who is accessing the site. Following this if the green is unused, site could possibly be used as overspill for larger clubs. Alternatively, green can be targeted for a Club in need of relocating.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect	

115	Short Heath Liberal Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality green accessed by Short Heath Liberal BC and Chart BC who have combined membership figures of 111 people. This is the most heavily used green within Walsall and is currently operating over BCGBA capacity.	Continue current green maintenance as to ensure quality does not decline. Following this site should potentially explore utilising a second green given how membership levels are nearly double BCGBA guidelines.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
117	Trinity Bowls Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality green used by Willenhall Trinity BC. Site is currently marginally operating over BCGBA capacity.	Continue current green maintenance as to ensure quality does not decline.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
118	Yale Bowls Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality bowling green used by Elay BC who have sustainable current and future demand levels.	Continue current green maintenance as to ensure quality does not decline.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect	
119	Willenhall Liberal Club	Lawn Bowls	Sports Club	One good quality floodlit green used by Willenhall Nordley BC. The site is serviced by very dated changing rooms in poor condition. The club states that improvements are needed to make the provision more accessible for all users, particularly female members.	Continue current green maintenance as to ensure quality does not decline. Efforts should be made to improve ancillary provision.	Sports Club BCGBA	Local	L	L	L	Protect Enhance	

Cabinet – 12 February 2025

Walsall Housing Allocations Policy

Portfolio: Councillor Garcha – Resident Access and Housing Support

Related portfolios: Councillor Elson – Children and Young People
Councillor Pedley – Adult Social Care

Service: Customer Engagement

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 To ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligation by having in place a housing allocations scheme that administers all housing nominations to housing associations in Walsall in accordance with relevant legislative requirements.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Housing authorities are legally required to have a housing allocation scheme for determining priorities and procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation in their administrative area, regardless of whether or not they own housing stock. The law requires that households in specific categories of housing need are prioritised within the scheme. These are referred to as the 'Reasonable Preference' groups.
- 2.2 Whilst some interim revisions to the policy were completed in 2022 and early 2024, the Council's current Housing Allocations Policy essentially dates back to 2010. Last year, the Council undertook to complete a full review of the policy, and following an initial scoping review and a subsequent public consultation, a refreshed and revised policy has been developed and is set out in Appendix A.
- 2.3 The refreshed policy contains a series of revisions as detailed elsewhere in this report; however the more substantive amendments are centred on the following:
- Increasing the number of priority bands from two to four that cater for those households who qualify for statutory Reasonable Preference.

- Excluding households from joining the housing register who have no recognised statutory housing need, except for households who wish to either downsize their home or release an adapted property.
- Prioritising Care Leavers and households who wish to foster.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the revised Housing Allocations Policy attached as Appendix A.
- 3.2 That Cabinet delegates authority to make any future amendments to the Walsall Housing Allocations Policy to the Director of Customer Engagement, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resident Access and Housing Support.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) sets out the legislative framework through which Local Authorities should maintain and operate their Housing Allocation Schemes. The Act gives 'reasonable preference' to certain categories of applicant, namely households who are
 - statutorily homeless,
 - occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions,
 - needing to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability, and
 - needing to move to a particular locality in the administrative area of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).

As part of this requirement the Council maintains a Housing Allocations Policy and as a non-stock owning authority, the Policy firstly sets out who qualifies to join the Council's Housing Register and secondly how the Council will prioritise households to nominate to vacant properties supplied to the Council from housing associations who operate in Walsall.

- 4.2 In February 2023 whg notified the Council of their intention to close the waiting list that had previously been used to select households to vacant properties supplied to it from local housing associations. This meant it was necessary for the Council to launch a new housing register to ensure that customers were still able to apply for housing supplied to the Council. In September 2023 the Council launched its own independent Housing Register and commenced nominations from the new Register in February 2024. As of last December (2024), 4,570 households were registered for housing of which 39% (1,760)

qualified for Reasonable Preference with the remainder being assessed as having no specific housing need as identified in law.

- 4.3 In compliance with the Housing Nominations Agreement, housing associations operating in Walsall are obliged to forward at least 50% of their vacant properties to the Council for nomination from the Housing Register. In 2023/24, 780 such properties were received from a grand total of 1,468 that were let across the borough (53%). By way of context the number of social housing lettings in Walsall has declined by 42% since 2017/18 when 2,530 lettings were achieved. This overall decline has been part of a consistent national trajectory since 2012.

The review of the Housing Allocations Policy

- 4.4 The current Housing Allocations Policy essentially dates back to 2010, though minor revisions to the policy were completed in 2022 and early 2024. Last year, the Council undertook to complete a full review of the current Policy, and following an initial scoping exercise the following key parts of the Policy were identified as in need of review:

- The residency test set out in the local connection test – currently two years.
- To explore the potential benefits of increasing the number of bands within the Policy applicable to those who would qualify for statutory Reasonable Preference in order that the Policy could fully differentiate between higher and lower levels of housing need. Currently the Policy has 2 priority bands to accommodate those in Reasonable Preference with the third band (Band C) catering for those households registering with no identified housing need.
- To consider whether those without a recognised housing need (in statute) should be excluded from joining the Housing Register, particularly in view of continuing supply and demand issues that seem unlikely to subside.
- To consider whether the Council should prioritise households who wish to downsize their home or release an adapted property.
- To consider adopting a choice-based lettings approach or to continue with making direct nominations.
- To make the Policy more navigable and to introduce greater clarity over who qualifies for Reasonable Preference and the level of priority to be awarded.
- To consider any other emerging themes that came from the consultation.

- 4.5 Officers commenced a comprehensive period of consultation in April 2024 that involved both a programme of targeted focus groups and stakeholder meetings as well as a web-based survey that commenced on 07 May 2024 and concluded on 22 July 2024. The web-based survey achieved a total of 615 responses including 402 directly from households either registered or in the process of registering with the Council for housing, representing 6% of applicants contacted. In addition, a further 213 responses were from a combination of residents (115) and third sector organisations and officers of the Council (98). In all a total of twelve focus groups/stakeholder meetings were conducted.

- 4.6 In line with both the scoping review (set out in 4.4 above) and the conclusion of the public consultation, the key policy amendments to the Housing Allocations Policy are detailed in 4.7 to 4.21 below. Of note, officers have conducted a series of testing exercises on the revised Policy and are satisfied that the new and revised Policy is fit for purpose.

The Residency Test

- 4.7 The current Residency Test forms one of three independent qualifications applied to the Local Connection Test (LCT), with close family members (currently resident in Walsall) and employment in Walsall being the other two. To meet the LCT at least one of these tests must be fulfilled as a gateway to joining the Housing Register. By far the most applied LCT is the Residency Test which is currently set at two years uninterrupted residency in Walsall although it should be noted there are a series of exemptions to applying this test, including members of the Armed Forces, persons owed a homeless duty by the Council, care leavers supported by the Council, or persons fleeing domestic abuse or hate crime. Guidance in applying a residency test is set out in the statutory code, *Providing social housing for local people (2024)*. The statutory code recommends a two-year residency test. Of note, recent case law (*Khayyat and Ibrahim v Westminster City Council 2023*) has confirmed that a local housing authority can lawfully exclude individuals when applying a residency test who would otherwise be entitled to receive a statutory Reasonable Preference in an Allocations Policy (and therefore be placed on the Housing Register).
- 4.8 Broadly speaking respondents from the focus groups were in favour of retaining the two-year residency test on condition that the exempted groups, in particular care leavers, homeless households and victims of domestic abuse were retained. For the web-based survey there is overwhelming support for the retention of the two-year residency requirement, where 73% of register applicants were in favour, with 78% from the remaining respondents (officers, residents and third sector organisations) also in favour. It is therefore proposed to retain the two-year residency test and apply existing exemptions as set out in Appendix One of the current Policy.

Increase the number of bands

- 4.9 The proposal to increase the number of bands within the Housing Allocations Policy is to enable the Policy to be more responsive to the varying degrees of applicant housing need, thereby providing greater flexibility to differentiate between higher and lower levels of need. Currently the Policy is restricted in its ability to do this as it only has 2 priority bands, with the third band (Band C) restricted to those households registering with no identified housing need. In compliance with the Policy this latter band is currently suspended at present in order that the Council can meet its statutory housing duties. In any event it is very rare for available properties to be nominated to persons in Band C due to the acute supply and demand issues.
- 4.10 In addition to the above, Section 166A(3) of the Housing Act 1996 gives housing authorities the power to frame their allocation scheme to give *Additional Preference* to particular descriptions of people who fall within the statutory

Reasonable Preference categories who have *urgent* housing needs. For example, this includes those who need to move urgently because of a life-threatening illness or sudden disability or those who are homeless and require urgent re-housing because of violence or threats of violence. The *Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England* advises that 'all housing authorities must consider, in the light of local circumstances, the need to give effect to this provision' (i.e. Additional Preference).

- 4.11 With only two priority bands (Band A and B) it is difficult to apply Additional Preference. This lack of differentiation is exposed for example between those overcrowded by two or more bedrooms (Reasonable Preference) and those who are victims of domestic abuse (Additional Preference) both of whom would currently qualify for Band A. From the consultation there has been overwhelming support to increase the number of priority bands within the Policy, with 70% of housing applicants in favour, and 76% from the remaining pool of respondents (officers, residents and third sector organisations) also in favour. The focus groups who took part in the consultation were also broadly in favour of increasing the number of priority bands. It is therefore proposed to introduce four housing need bands within the Policy that will award varying degrees of priority within the Policy with Band A the highest. This proposal with the designated housing need bandings is detailed in Section C of the revised Policy (Appendix A attached).

Exclude households with no statutory need

- 4.12 Given the current supply and demand issues for social housing accommodation in the borough the review has also considered the option to exclude those without a recognised statutory housing need from joining the housing register. At the present time, future projections for available relets suggest the demand for vacant properties far outweighs supply and this places significant pressures on the Council's ability to house those who have a recognised statutory housing need, leaving the overwhelming majority of those without a statutory need unlikely to ever receive an offer of accommodation.
- 4.13 In compliance with the Housing Nominations Agreement, housing associations operating in Walsall are obliged to forward at least 50% of their vacant properties to the Council (a National standard) from which it can nominate households selected from the Housing Register. This target is consistently achieved and stood at around 53% last year (2023/24) totalling 780 properties supplied to the Council for nomination. However, to illustrate the acute supply/demand issue, 4,574 applicants were registered on the Council's Housing Register in December 2024, of which 1,760 (39%) qualified for a statutory Reasonable Preference.
- 4.14 From the consultation, those who took part in the focus groups had mixed views about the proposal to exclude those with no statutory housing need. Those in favour of this proposal cited the 'false hope' that was generated by allowing any individual to join the register irrespective of need, whilst those against thought that as a matter of principle any person regardless of need should be able to join the register. This view was mirrored in the public survey, where 62% of housing applicants were in favour of exclusion with a similar 65% from the

remaining pool of respondents (officers, residents and third sector organisations) also in favour.

- 4.15 At his point it should be noted that a revised whg Housing Allocations Policy (the largest stockholder in the borough) has recently been introduced that excludes applicants from joining their register who would qualify for Reasonable Preference (i.e. those with a recognised statutory housing need). By default it thereby prioritises households without a recognised statutory housing need to register for housing, particularly those impacted solely by affordability. This development therefore provides an enhanced housing opportunity for those households with no statutory housing need in the borough who would be disqualified from joining the Council's Housing Register.
- 4.16 In view of the current acute supply and demand issues it is recommended to proceed with the proposal and exclude households from joining the Council's Housing Register who have no lawfully recognised housing need. This will enable the Council to focus more on its statutory duties in relation to housing and from the customer perspective will avoid the inevitable raised hopes from applicants with no recognised housing need.

Prioritise households who wish to downsize or release either an adapted or single level property

- 4.17 Aside of the overall supply and demand issue outlined elsewhere in this report, there is also a distinct mismatch between supply and household need by property type, largely centred on a shortage of larger properties needed by households with families and the need for adapted or single level properties on account of medical need (often related to mobility). To partly address this, it is proposed to prioritise households who wish to downsize or release either an adapted or single level ground floor property. In order to maximise this option a high degree of priority is needed in order to encourage such moves. This proposal received a strong response in favour in the consultation, with 76% of housing applicants in favour and 82% of the remaining pool of respondents also in favour (officers, residents and third sector organisations). All the focus groups supported this proposal.
- 4.18 It is unlikely that the above proposal will generate a large volume of properties however it is important where possible to stimulate any strategy aimed at making the best use of existing stock. It is proposed that the following levels of priority be awarded to households which are either downsizing or releasing an adapted home, a single level property, or a property designated as a 'sanctuary home' (adapted to meet the needs of persons experiencing domestic abuse, e.g. the installation of a strong room):
- **Band A:** Housing Association tenants currently under-occupying a property by at least two bedrooms, or currently under-occupying a house, or who wish to release an adapted property where the said adaptations are no longer in use.
 - **Band B:** Housing Association tenants who currently occupy an Intermediate or Advanced Level Sanctuary property.

- Band C: Housing Association tenants currently resident in a flat or maisonette under-occupying by one bedroom.

Choice based lettings or direct nominations

- 4.19 The last segment of the review has focussed on whether to adopt a choice-based lettings approach to nominations, or to continue with making direct nominations. The Council currently offers vacant homes by making a direct offer of accommodation to the applicant who is top of the list for each vacant property. The list is drawn up by applying the rules of the Policy. Another way of allocating properties – choice-based lettings - is to enable applicants to express an interest in a vacant property that has been advertised either on a website or through a newsletter. In this system, whoever comes top of the list from those who have expressed an interest in a particular property (often referred to as a 'bid') based strictly in full accordance with the rules of the Policy, will be offered the vacant property once the closing date for 'bids' has been reached.
- 4.20 The introduction of a choice-based (CBL) scheme received support through the consultation exercise both in the focus groups and through the web-based survey. The choice-based lettings approach received 47% support from housing applicants with 28% preferring to stick with the Direct Offer approach. From the remaining pool (i.e. officers, residents and third sector organisations) 41% were in favour of CBL with 37% in favour of continuing with Direct Offers. The focus groups were divided on this issue, largely based on identifying specific groups who it was felt might benefit (not unfairly) from a CBL scheme set against those who would not. It was felt that CBL would help care leavers, persons with learning disabilities and young people. Other focus groups had mixed views on the impact of CBL, specifically on people moving on from temporary accommodation or people affected by domestic abuse.
- 4.21 The consultation feedback on CBL and Direct Nominations has been demonstrably less conclusive compared with the other proposals. A CBL or Direct Nomination approach will not impact on how the Policy will determine who qualifies to join the Council's Housing Register and how the Council subsequently prioritises households within the Policy. Due to the considerable alterations to both the Councils administrative and software systems (incurring associated costs) and the likely extension of policy rollout timescales, it is proposed not to introduce CBL at this time. By way of indication, soft market testing has indicated that costs in the region of £25k to £30k would be incurred to transform the current software system into one that is compatible with CBL. This option can be reconsidered in any future Policy review, when there will be further information available on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Direct Nomination approach and whether this needs to be changed.

Other themes emerging from the review

- 4.22 In consideration of any other issues that came from the consultation, two clear concerns emerged centred on how the Policy would treat Care Leavers and those households who wish to foster and who need larger accommodation to do so, particularly as the former group were often directed via the homeless route to acquire accommodation. Consequently, it is proposed that the new

Policy will place all Care Leavers supported by the Council into Band A, and those not supported by the Council but who would meet the Local Connection Test into Band C. Officers have also worked closely with colleagues in Children's Services to ensure that the Policy enables households who wish to foster to be awarded Band A priority whilst at the same time safeguarding against as far as possible the allocation of a larger home to a household that subsequently withdraws or declines from fostering. In addition, and irrespective of housing need all members and former members of the UK Armed Forces will be able to join the scheme. This follows the recent statutory guidance update but goes further by enabling such applicants to join the register irrespective of whether they have a specific housing need.

Council Plan priorities

4.23 There is a broad range of health, well-being and socio-economic inequalities brought about by people in housing need not being able to access adequate housing. A Housing Allocations Policy that provides a fair and equitable allocation of social housing homes within the confines of housing supply and meeting those in housing need, will have the following beneficial impacts on the Council Plan:

- ***Prosperous and Innovative - Skills and jobs for all.*** The provision of a stable home that meets household needs remains a key enabling factor to accessing employment. The proposed revised Policy will ensure a fair and efficient process in allocating housing and will also enable people to join the register in housing need and who need to move to access or maintain employment opportunities.
- ***Thriving and Happy – Child-friendly borough.*** Preventing homelessness and meeting housing need for families with children will provide a secure environment from which to grow up and build a stable life. Specifically for children, the Policy provides priorities for households that are overcrowded, households wishing to foster, Care Leavers and to households seeking to downsize their existing home and thus freeing up larger accommodation suited to families.
- ***Healthy and Well - Homes for all.*** A good secure and affordable home is fundamental to feeling safe and well and enables residents to invest in their community and build a sense of community. Preventing homelessness and meeting housing need can also promote independence and can improve mental and physical health and overall wellbeing.

Risk management

4.24 There is a risk of challenge to the Scheme if it is not following the most up to date legislation and statutory guidance, and this proposal is in line with relevant legislation and statutory guidance and mitigates that situation.

Financial implications

- 4.25 There will be some additional short-term costs associated with implementing and administering the above policy changes. This will be associated with completing a comprehensive review of all current housing applications on the Register and any software changes needed to improve the customer-facing on-line portal. In terms of staffing implications, and in consideration of the Council's current financial position, the costs associated with the review of all the existing housing applications will be met from existing resources.
- 4.26 In terms of any software requirements, officers have issued a 12-month extension to the current provider to extend the existing contract until 31.03.26 to allow for new system implementation. This contract includes both the online housing register portal and Homelessness administration system. The revenue cost of the extension is £24,538, which is funded from existing budgets. During the extension, a review of the current provider arrangements will take place to determine the ongoing requirements and delivery of the contract. This may result in additional dual running costs if a new provider is awarded the contract as there will need to be a lead time for transferring of data and system build. This can be met from within existing budgets.
- 4.27 By way of context, the original contract for the housing allocations and homelessness administration systems with the current provider involved a one-off capital cost of £112,000 for the relevant modules, with an additional operating annual revenue cost of £24,538 per year as described in paragraph 4.26. Market engagement with other suppliers has demonstrated that financial models for the provision of this type of software is estimated to be in the region of £40,000, with no upfront or ongoing capital requirement. Therefore, the annual revenue pressure from 1st April 2026 will be in the region of £40,000 per year and will form part of budget setting process for 2026/27
- 4.28 There may be efficiencies as a result of implementing the proposed policy changes, but further review work is required to identify what these might be. As noted elsewhere in this report by excluding households with no recognised statutory housing need it is likely that the implementation of the new policy may see a 60% reduction in applications reaching the formal assessment stage, dependent on housing market demand.

Legal implications

- 4.29 The Housing Act 1996 requires Housing authorities to have a housing allocation policy for determining priorities and procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation in their administrative area regardless of whether they own housing stock. Local authorities must allocate in accordance with their policy and all aspects of the allocation process must be covered in the policy.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.30 The appointment of any future provider to administer the Housing Register and associated systems will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Contract Rules and the Procurement Act 2023 and associated regulations.

Property implications

- 4.31 As a non-stock owning authority (excluding temporary accommodation) there are no direct property implications for the Council. However, the Council retains units of temporary accommodation following stock transfer, and the efficient nomination of households to housing association properties may benefit the effective use of the temporary accommodation.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.32 There are a broad range of health, well-being and wider socio-economic inequalities brought about by people effected by a lack of adequate housing. The effective allocation of housing to those in housing need will help to ensure the Council meets its objective of a Marmot Council and provides a robust platform to galvanise resources to provide the security of a stable home and healthier environment from which to build a stable, inclusive and active life.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.33 The implications for reducing inequalities have been taken into account and assessed as set out in a detailed Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) at Appendix B. No negative impacts were identified in the assessment. Positive impacts were identified for Care Leavers (now formerly recognised in the new policy), young people, persons affected by disability and gender.

Staffing implications

- 4.34 There are no additional staffing implications attached to the proposals detailed in this Report. If households without any statutory housing need are excluded from joining the housing register (as set out in section 4.16 above) some administrative efficiencies maybe achieved through a reduction in registrations.

Climate Impact

- 4.35 There are no direct climate change implications for the Council.

Consultation

- 4.36 The review has been guided by a full and comprehensive public consultation as outlined above. In addition, staff and third sector organisations have been part of the consultation including the Walsall Housing Working Group, Walsall Connected, Walsall Homelessness Steering Group, Refugee Migrant Centre as well as various frontline team meetings such as Housing & Welfare,

Homelessness, Transition & Leaving Care Service, Temporary Accommodation, Young Persons and Mental Health teams.

- 4.37 Scrutiny Overview Committee considered the revised Policy on 26 September and the Policy was noted.

5. Decide

- 5.1 A 'do nothing' option would mean that the existing Policy would continue. However, the new proposed Policy would provide a greater focus on those in statutory housing need and prioritisation of those groups. It is recommended that the new Policy is adopted.

6. Respond

- 6.1 If approved, the amended Housing Allocations Policy will be circulated to our housing association partners who help us house households in accordance with the Policy.

7. Review

- 7.1 There will be an annual Lettings Review report which will monitor and assess the impact of the Policy.

Appendices

Appendix A: Draft revised Housing Allocations Policy

Appendix B: Equalities Impact Assessment

Background papers

None

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Signed



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12 February 2025

Signed

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12 February 2025

Walsall Council Housing Allocations Policy



Walsall Council



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Section A: Policy overview

1. Overview and legal context

- 1.1 This policy sets out who qualifies to join the Council's Housing Register, how to join the Register and how the Council will prioritise and nominate households to vacant properties supplied to the Council from housing associations who operate in Walsall. To do this the Council is obliged to meet various statutory requirements as outlined below. The Council will only nominate households to vacant homes in accordance with this policy. This Policy applies to all new and existing applicants.
- 1.2 Social and affordable rented housing is housing owned by both local authorities and housing associations for which guideline rents are determined through the national rent regime. Walsall Council no longer owns any housing stock, so by default this policy applies exclusively to vacant properties supplied to the Council from housing associations who operate in Walsall. Generally, housing associations will offer to the Council at least 50% of their vacant properties.
- 1.3 The Housing Act 1996, as amended, requires all local authorities to make housing allocations in accordance with an Allocations Policy. The policy must give reasonable preference to groups in assessed housing need as defined by Section 166A (3) of the Housing Act 1996 as set out below:
 - a) people who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the 1996 Act
 - b) people who are owed a duty by any housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under s.192(3)
 - c) people occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
 - d) people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability, and
 - e) people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others)
- 1.4 Section 150 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 states that a local authority must publish a Tenancy Strategy. The Strategy sets out the matters that registered providers of social housing operating in their district must 'have regard' to when formulating policies relating to:
 - a) the kinds of tenancies that they grant;
 - b) the circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular kind;
 - c) where they grant tenancies for a certain term, the lengths of the terms; and,
 - d) the circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy at the end of an existing tenancy.
 - e) This Black Country Tenancy Strategy has been adopted in response to the Localism Act 2011.
- 1.5 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'Priority Need.' These include:
 - a) an enhanced prevention duty extending the period a household is threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days (referred to as the Prevention Duty); and,
 - b) a duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation (referred to as the Relief Duty).
- 1.6 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and accompanying statutory code came into effect on 01 October 2021. The Act extends priority need for homeless assistance to persons who are homeless as a consequence of being a victim of domestic abuse (Section A4.4 of the statutory code).

2. Statement on choice

- 2.1 Section 166A (2) also provides that an allocation scheme must include the opportunity for applicants to express preferences about the accommodation to be allocated to them. The Council believes that any eligible applicant under this scheme should be able to express a preference over the property and the area in which they would like to live. However, this must be set against the need for the Council in some instances to resolve a person's housing situation urgently, for example homeless households to whom there is a statutory duty to house or households at risk of violence. In addition, local housing pressures may also limit the degree of choice that the Council is able to offer.

3. Policy Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 Through this policy the Council aims to:

- provide a transparent and understandable housing allocations scheme
- ensure that properties allocated under this scheme are let fairly to fulfil the Council's legal and equality obligations
- help fulfil the Council's responsibilities to people in housing need
- facilitate the delivery of the Council's strategic housing priorities
- contribute to community sustainability, neighbourhood regeneration and social inclusion

4. Equality, accessibility and monitoring

- 4.1 Walsall Council is committed to ensuring that its policy and procedures in nominating people to properties covered by this scheme are non-discriminatory and that all eligible customers are able to access the service, taking account of any vulnerability or other specific need(s). This commitment extends to the needs of the groups protected by the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.2 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty requires local authorities to give due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not in their exercise of a public function.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Council will ensure that this policy complies with current equality legislation and with the relevant statutory codes and guidance. This policy has been subject to an Equality Audit and this will be reviewed when appropriate.

- 4.3 To identify the needs of our customers the application form will have specific questions relating to vulnerability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disabilities and other relevant criteria. This information will be used to monitor the impact of the policy on minority and specific needs groups and to make such amendments, as may be required, to ensure no group is disadvantaged by the policy.
- 4.4 The Council will ensure that the system is as accessible as possible to any applicant and will monitor who is applying for housing and who is receiving any offer of housing (via nomination). Applicants who have any difficulty reading or understanding this Policy will be offered the following services:
- An interpretation service if their first language is not English.
 - Signing if speech or hearing is impaired.
 - Provision of documents in large print, Braille or on computer disk or audiotape if an applicant is visually impaired.
 - An interview to explain the content of this document and information about where independent advice can be obtained about the Council's scheme.

- 4.5 The Council will monitor the policy and outcomes to ensure that it is meeting all legal requirements and that the aims and objectives set for the policy are being met. Monitoring will be used to ensure that:
- Those in the 'reasonable preference' categories are given priority for housing based on their respective needs
 - Those wishing to downsize their property or release an adapted property are enabled to do so
 - The Council is complying with its Equality Act duties
 - There is overall customer satisfaction with the scheme

5. Information sharing, confidentiality and data protection

- 5.1 Information received in relation to an application and subsequently sent to registered social housing providers when nominating households to vacant properties, will be treated in confidence in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation.
- 5.2 Confidential Information held about applicants will not be disclosed to third parties apart from:
- Where the individual has consented to the disclosure
 - Where the Council is required by law to make such a disclosure.
 - Where disclosure is made in accordance with a recognised information sharing protocol or for
- 5.3 The Council has certain duties under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act with which it will comply. The FOI duty does not apply to registered social housing providers. At all times in this policy 'the Council' refers only to Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council.



Section B: Who can apply to join the Housing Register?

1. Who can apply?

- 1.1** Anyone over the age of 16 can apply to join the Council's Housing Register if their current address is their only home or residence and they are not already registered on the Housing Register by virtue that they form part of someone else's housing application. However, only the following groups of persons will qualify to be included on the register:

- 1) Any person aged 18 years or older who meets the eligibility and qualification rules.
- 2) Any person aged 16 or 17 who meets both the eligibility and qualification rules and/is:

- statutorily homeless
- has one or more children
- would have their welfare seriously jeopardised if accommodation was not made available
- a looked after child who is fully supported by the Council's Children's Services

In law, a minor cannot hold a legal estate in land. Therefore, if the applicant is aged between 16 and 17 years, they may be required to provide details of a trustee and/or a guarantor before they can actively be considered for housing. The trustee/guarantor can be an appropriate adult or a social worker. The Council will be able to provide advice to 16 and 17 year olds on trustees and guarantors.

- 1.2** Joint applications will be accepted and will be treated as one application. The housing need of the full household will be considered in assessing housing need.
- 1.3** Only children for which the applicant is the legal guardian will be accepted as part of the household. Where there is another legal guardian, a decision will be made on a case-by-case basis to agree whether it is reasonable to accept the child as part of the household on the application. Proof of Child Benefit may also be required to confirm the residency of dependent children. See also Section C/4.5 regarding prospective foster carers, adoptive parents and legal guardians.

2. Qualifying Persons

- 2.1** Local housing authorities may only nominate persons to be allocated accommodation who are defined as 'Qualifying Persons' (s.160ZA (6)(a) Housing Act 1996). With the exception of persons described in Section 3.1 below, under section 160ZA(7) the Council has been granted the power by Government to decide the classes of people who are, or who are not, 'Qualifying Persons'.
- 2.2** To be a Qualifying Person to join the Council's housing register, applicants must meet all the following:
- 1) have a local connection to Walsall - this is as set out in Appendix One on page 37. A list of exemptions to this local connection is also set out in Appendix One.
 - 2) have a specific housing need as set out in Section C/1.7 on page 13.
 - 3) be exempt or excluded from the categories of persons outlined in Section 3 on page 10.
- 2.3** Applicants with housing related arrears or recoverable related debts will, subject to 2.2 above, be deemed as Qualifying Persons and will be able to join the Housing Register. However, in most cases applicants will not be nominated for a vacant property until the arrears or debts are cleared by the applicant(s). For clarity arrears in this context will include:
- current or former rent arrears regardless of tenure (including temporary accommodation arrears)
 - a financial claim due to damage to a former social housing property; or,
 - legal costs arising from court action in connection with a current or former tenancy.
 - Mortgage arrears
 - Council Tax arrears

In all cases it will be the responsibility of the applicant to prove to the Council that any arrears have been cleared.

- 2.4** Where income meets required income thresholds, the Council will proactively support applicants to access accommodation available through shared ownership schemes. Shared Ownership schemes enable an applicant to buy part of a property and rent the remaining part from either a local authority or a housing association.

3. Non-qualifying persons

3.1 Persons ineligible due to the application of the Government's rules for allocating housing accommodation

Some persons are deemed ineligible due to the Government's rules for allocating housing accommodation. This applies to certain groups of people from abroad, people subject to immigration control (unless they fall within a class prescribed by regulations as eligible) and any other person as prescribed by the Secretary of State. These households will not be able to join the Housing Register. These regulations are set out in the statutory code Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England. Anyone who is impacted or believes they may be impacted by these rules can approach the Council for advice.

3.2 Persons disqualified because they have the financial means to meet their own housing need.

Households deemed with sufficient income or capital to meet their own housing needs will not qualify for the Housing Register. This means that they are judged to be able to afford to house themselves, either by privately renting or buying a home of an appropriate size for their needs.

Households with a gross income above £50,000 per year will not qualify to join the Housing Register. The incomes of all adult members above the age of 21 and seeking to be rehoused with the applicant(s) will be used to assess household income. Households with capital (savings, investments or other assets) of £16,000 or more will also not qualify.

The Council may choose not to apply the above criteria where based on the households income/assets the applicant's housing need/situation cannot be resolved in a reasonable period of time (for example, if their current property is likely to give rise to an imminent serious risk of harm and/or result in hospital admission) or on grounds of affordability where it is clear that the specific housing need cannot be met by the household concerned.

3.3 Persons disqualified because they own a residential property.

Homeowners will only qualify to join the Scheme in exceptional circumstances with the first assessment to explore options for the applicant to remain in their own home. This could include money and debt advice, advice on funding repairs and maintenance or advice on home adaptations, including possible grant assistance.

Where the Council concludes that it is not possible for the applicant to remain in their current home there will be an assessment of whether they can resolve their housing need(s) by moving to alternative market housing in the borough. This will be determined by assessing whether the applicants' borrowing potential, savings, assets, equitable resources and income are sufficient for them to purchase or rent a property in the borough that will meet their needs.

The Council may choose not to apply the above criteria where the applicant's housing need/situation cannot be resolved in a reasonable period of time (for example, if their current property is likely to give rise to an imminent serious risk of harm and/or result in hospital admission) or on grounds of affordability where it is clear that the specific housing need cannot be met by the household concerned.

3.4 Persons disqualified due to serious unacceptable behaviour including non-compliance with a current or former tenancy agreement:

Persons will be disqualified where the Council is satisfied having considered all available evidence, that an applicant or a member of their current or prospective household has committed such serious behaviour or conduct (including criminal convictions) that warrants disqualification to join the

housing register. This will include where the behaviour has led to the failure to adhere to the terms of any current or previous social housing or private rented sector tenancy agreement. This includes committing acts causing or likely to cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or others in the locality of where they live or where they have previously lived or where an applicant or a member of their current or prospective household is the subject of actions being taken by a landlord (or some other competent body) on grounds of alleged anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Non-qualification will apply until the applicant (or a member of their prospective household) has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the Council, that circumstances have changed such that the previous conduct is unlikely to reoccur. This could include demonstrating cooperation with support agencies leading to a substantial improvement in behaviour.

Any new application will normally only be reconsidered where there has been no reasonable cause for complaint or concern against the applicant (or members of their prospective household) for a continuous period of 12 months.

The above rules may not apply to:

- a) persons seeking housing in order to receive care and support from a Council approved scheme or Government programme or for households who would otherwise qualify for Band A (Additional Preference).
- b) persons where the Council has reason to believe that an applicant's unacceptable behaviour is due at least in part to a physical or mental health condition or a learning disability. In considering the case the Council will consult with relevant agencies.

3.5 Persons disqualified because they have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances

Where the Council is satisfied that a housing applicant has acted unreasonably or deliberately to worsen their housing circumstances in the last 12 months in order to qualify for housing, the applicant will not qualify to join the housing register for a period of 12 months.

3.6 Persons disqualified because they have provided false information or withheld information

Applicants who deliberately or recklessly fail to provide information that they would have been reasonably expected to provide (or where the Council obtains information that would affect their housing application) or who provide false information to fraudulently support their application will be deemed as non-qualifying persons and will be excluded from joining the housing register for at least five years from the point of their initial application. Examples of this would include:

- failure to disclose criminal convictions
- failure to disclose previous or on-going anti-social behaviour
- making false statements about details of household members
- allowing, enabling or deceiving a third party to make a false statement or provide false information on the applicant's behalf

3.7 Persons disqualified because they have committed benefit fraud

Applicants or any member of their household who have previous convictions for benefit fraud including the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 will be excluded from joining the housing register for at least five years from the point of their initial housing application.

Section C: Priority Banding System

1. How we prioritise applicants

- 1.1 In order to ensure that the Council fulfils both its statutory and strategic commitments, this policy is structured to ensure that households in certain specific types of housing need have a degree of priority over others. This is achieved by operating a priority banding system based on the level of urgency and respective housing need. All households who qualify to join the Housing Register are placed into one of four bands as set out in 1.7 below. Those households placed into Band A have the most urgent housing need. Those in Band D have the lowest.
- 1.2 Where an applicant's circumstances change the Council will review the degree of housing need priority given to the applicant (See also Section E/2 and E/3)
- 1.3 All housing applicants have a right to request a formal review of any decision relating to the above (see Section F/2).
- 1.4 The law requires Local Authorities to frame their allocations policy to give reasonable preference for housing to certain categories of households, known as the Reasonable Preference categories, as outlined in Section A. Households who qualify for Reasonable Preference will be placed into one of Priority Bands B, C or D as set out in Section 2.6 below.
- 1.5 Households who qualify for Reasonable Preference and are in an exceptionally urgent need to be rehoused will be given Additional Preference. Households awarded Additional Preference will be placed into Priority Band A. As to what constitutes 'urgent need' is defined throughout the Policy.
- 1.6 It is recognised that housing need is wider than the categories of person(s) as set out in 1.4 above, in particular with regard to making the best possible use of available housing stock. Accordingly, some other households will also qualify to join the housing register. These groups are outlined in Section 6 below.
- 1.7 The full assessment criteria for qualification to the relevant housing need banding is set out further in this section. Applicants will be placed into the following bands strictly in compliance with the rules and regulations contained in this policy:

Band	Housing Need Circumstances
Band A households awarded Additional Preference	<p>A. Homeless households who are Eligible, Unintentionally Homeless and in Priority Need (see Section C/2.2a).</p> <p>B. Homeless households who are homeless and in temporary accommodation that would not be suitable for more than a short period of time, or where the Council needs to move applicants out of temporary accommodation to manage the budgetary impact on the Council (see Section C/2.2b).</p> <p>C. Households living in housing conditions which give rise to an imminent risk of serious harm to health or wellbeing (see Section C/3.3)</p> <p>D. An applicant who has an extremely urgent and immediate need to move for medical reasons or due to a disability, which is being exacerbated by their current housing situation (see Section C/4.3)</p> <p>E. Applicants who need to move immediately due to domestic abuse, extreme violence or extreme harassment (see Section C/4.5)</p> <p>F. Foster carers and those approved by the Council to adopt (see Section C/4.5)</p> <p>G. Armed forces personnel in urgent housing need (see Section C/4.5)</p> <p>H. Care Leavers supported by Walsall Children's Services (see Section C/4.5)</p> <p>I. Households currently under-occupying their property by at least two bedrooms or who are under-occupying a house (see Section C/6.2(a) and (b))</p> <p>J. Households occupying adapted properties where the adaptations are no longer in use (see Section C/6.4).</p> <p>K. Households occupying a ground floor flat (see Section C/6.5).</p>

Band	Housing Need Circumstances
Band B households in Reasonable Preference	<p>A. Households who are eligible for assistance and homeless under Section 189B of the Housing Act 1996 (Relief Duty) (see Section C/2.1a).</p> <p>B. Households resident in public or private sector properties directly affected by clearance and clearance programmes as per Section C/3.1a</p> <p>C. Households living in overcrowded conditions and whose housing circumstances have been assessed as being two bedrooms short of what they need (see Section C/3.1b)</p> <p>D. Households who qualify for Reasonable Preference under medical or disability grounds (see Section C/4.2).</p> <p>E. Persons in supported housing seeking a move-on to settled accommodation under the Council's Move-On requirements as set out in Section C/4.4.</p> <p>F. Housing Association tenants who currently occupy an Intermediate or Advanced Level Sanctuary Scheme property who wish to vacate the property as per Section C/6.3.</p>
Band C households in Reasonable Preference	<p>A. Households who are eligible for assistance and homeless under Section 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996 (Prevention Duty) (see Section C/2.1b).</p> <p>B. Applicant's living in overcrowded conditions and whose housing circumstances have been assessed as being one bedroom short of what they need (see Section C/3.1c).</p> <p>C. Households who qualify under Hardship Grounds (see Section C/5).</p> <p>D. All Care Leavers not supported by Walsall Children's Services (see Section C/4.4).</p> <p>E. Housing Association tenants currently resident in a flat or maisonette under-occupying by one bedroom, and who wish to transfer to a property to which they are eligible with fewer bedrooms (see Section C/6.2c).</p> <p>F. Members and former members of the UK Armed Forces with no recognised housing need (see Section C/6.6).</p>
Band D households in Reasonable Preference	<p>A. Households deemed by the Council to be intentionally homeless and have a priority need for accommodation and owed the section 190 duty (see Section C/2.1c).</p> <p>B. Other households who are deemed to qualify for Band D as set out in this policy</p>

2. Applicants who are homeless:

- people who are homeless within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996; and
- people who are owed a homelessness duty by the local authority under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996

2.1 Circumstances when reasonable preference will be awarded.

Applicants assessed, as meeting the criteria for this reasonable preference category will be:

Households who are eligible for assistance and homeless under Section 189B of the Housing Act 1996 (Relief Duty). These households will be placed into Priority Band B.

Households who are eligible for assistance and homeless under Section 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996 (Prevention Duty). These households will qualify for Priority Band C.

Households deemed by the Council to be intentionally homeless and have a priority need for accommodation and owed the section 190 duty. These households will be placed into Priority Band D

2.2 Circumstances when additional preference (Band A) will be awarded

Applicants assessed, as meeting the criteria for additional preference will be:

- a) Homeless persons who are Eligible, Unintentionally Homeless and in Priority Need.
- b) Households where an applicant is homeless and in temporary accommodation that would not be suitable for more than a short period of time, or where the Council needs to move applicants out of temporary accommodation to manage the budgetary impact on the Council.

3. Applicants occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions

3.1 Circumstances when reasonable preference will be awarded

Applicants will be awarded reasonable preference in the following circumstances:

- a) Households' resident in properties subject to a Demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order. These households will qualify for Priority Band B.
- b) Households living in overcrowded conditions and whose housing circumstances have been assessed as being two bedrooms short of what they need. These households will qualify for Priority Band B
- c) Households living in overcrowded conditions and whose housing circumstances have been assessed as being one bedroom short of what they need. These households will qualify for Priority Band C.

3.2 For the purposes of assessing overcrowding this policy will adhere to the Bedroom Standard and will allocate a separate bedroom to:

- 1) a person living together with another as husband and wife (whether that other person is of the same sex or the opposite sex)
- 2) a person aged 21 years or more
- 3) two persons of the same sex aged 10 years to 20 years
- 4) two persons (whether of the same sex or not) aged less than 10 years
- 5) two persons of the same sex where one person is aged between 10 years and 20 years and the other is aged less than 10 years
- 6) any person aged under 21 years in any case where he or she cannot be paired with another occupier of the dwelling.
- 7) 28+ weeks pregnant woman with or without partner and no other children

For ease of reference, the table below shows the bedroom entitlement for adults and children according to the bedroom standard:

Household Members:	1 bedroom	2 bedrooms
Single adults over 21	X	
Couple (married or cohabiting) wishing to live together	X	
28+ weeks pregnant woman with or without partner and no other children		X
One child	X	
2 children under 10 regardless of sex	X	
2 children of the same sex aged between 10 and 21	X	
2 children of different sexes aged between 10 and 21		X

Please note the following:

- a) Applicants who deliberately worsen their circumstances may have their level of priority reduced
- b) Generally, children will only be included in the overcrowding calculation at their main place of residence
- c) Subject to all the suitability requirements set out in this policy, all household members aged 18 or above and currently resident in properties to which the overcrowding priority set out in this policy applies will be considered for properties using this priority. For example, a single person or couple living in a property can move using this priority if it relieves the current household's overcrowding situation. Following such a move the remaining household still in situ will have their overcrowding priority reassessed

3.3 Circumstances when additional preference (Band A) will be awarded

Customers will be awarded additional preference in the following circumstances:

- a) Households living in conditions which give rise to an imminent risk of serious harm and where the Council has served a Prohibition Order under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004.
- b) Where an officer from the Council has determined that a private sector property (tenanted) contains one or more serious Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Health & Safety Rating System that are having a severe impact on the household and that cannot be easily rectified.
- c) Where there is a significant risk to the health and well-being of the occupant(s), and where there is no prospect of the issues being remedied in a period of time that the Council's Housing Standards Team considers reasonable
- d) Applicants without access at all to any of the following facilities:
 - A bathroom or kitchen
 - An inside WC
 - Hot or cold-water supplies, electricity, gas or adequate heating.

Applicants who have access to shared facilities in shared accommodation will not qualify under the criteria set out above.

- e) Demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). Where the applicant's property is subject to demolition or subject to a CPO for redevelopment and where the said household is particularly vulnerable, e.g. being surrounded by voids and therefore isolated

- 3.4** For tenants of a Housing Association (HA) or local authority (LA) the imminent risk of harm will be assessed taking into account the responsibility on that landlord to resolve the problem or to transfer the tenant immediately. Therefore, only in exceptional cases, e.g. where it would be unreasonable or impossible for the HA or LA landlord to resolve the risk of imminent harm, will additional preference be awarded.

4. Applicants who need to move on medical or welfare grounds including grounds relating to a disability

- 4.1** Applicants awarded Medical Priority include people who need to move on medical grounds because of their disability or access needs and includes people with a mental disability as well as those with a physical disability. It may apply to the applicant or a member of their household. The assessment for this priority will not be of the applicant's health but how their accommodation affects their health, for example they may require a wet room or single level ground floor accommodation.

4.2 Circumstances when reasonable preference will be awarded on medical or disability grounds

Applicants whose housing is unsuitable for medical reasons or due to a disability but who are not housebound, or whose health or safety is not at such a risk level to require immediate urgent re-housing will be awarded reasonable preference and placed into Priority Band B. For all cases evidence will be required from a relevant medical professional and must be of their professional opinion. The following are examples that may qualify for the reasonable preference priority:

- 1) Children with severe neurological conditions where their long-term needs cannot be met without alternative suitable settled accommodation.
- 2) A person whose disability means that re-housing would enable them to overcome physical barriers created by their current accommodation.
- 3) A person with a long-term medical debilitating condition whose current accommodation is having a significant impact on their condition and where their quality of life would be improved by moving to alternative settled accommodation which may or may not be closer to support.

4.3 Circumstances when additional preference (Band A) will be awarded - Medical or Disability grounds

Additional Preference will be awarded to an applicant who has an extremely urgent and immediate need to move for medical reasons or due to a disability which is being exacerbated by their current housing situation. An officer (who may be an Occupational Therapist if required) from the Council will make the assessment according to clear criteria. Evidence will be required from a relevant medical professional and must be of their professional opinion. The following are examples of cases that may qualify for additional preference:

- 1) Where there is an immediate life-threatening condition which is seriously affected by the current housing and where re-housing would make it significantly easier to manage
- 2) Where the applicant or household member has a terminal illness, and requires rehousing to facilitate the on-going provision of care;
- 3) Where the applicant or household member has a life limiting condition where the current accommodation is affecting the occupant's ability to retain independence or enable adequate care;
- 4) Where the applicant or household member has a worsening or life-changing condition that severely impairs their mobility, meaning they are unable to carry out day-to-day activities and are unable to access facilities inside and outside of their accommodation and requires rehousing into accommodation suitable for their use;
- 5) Where their current property leaves a person at risk of infection, e.g. where an applicant is suffering from late-stage or advanced HIV infection
- 6) Where the applicant or household member has a Care Plan but cannot be discharged from hospital, a rehabilitation unit or residential care until a suitable adapted property is provided.
- 7) Where the applicant or household member, due to long term limited mobility is unable to access essential parts of the property (e.g. bathroom/toilet) and where no alternative measures can be put in place to address the situation and therefore the applicant or household requires re-housing into accommodation suitable for their use.
- 8) Where the applicant or household member has a severe health or disability condition and where the property significantly affects their ability to lead a normal life and which puts them at risk of admission to hospital or residential care.
- 9) Where the applicant or household member requires significant disabled adaptations to meet their needs and this is not possible in their current accommodation or would not be cost effective.
- 10) Where the applicant or household member is elderly or disabled or has a progressive illness and is likely to require admission to hospital or residential/nursing care in the immediate future and re-housing would enable the person to remain at home.

4.4 Circumstances when reasonable preference will be awarded on welfare grounds

The Council has identified some circumstances where the provision of alternative accommodation is required due to the social and welfare needs of the household. The following persons will qualify.

A – Persons moving from supported or refuge accommodation

Residents of listed supported or refuge accommodation schemes who have been placed into the said scheme either by the Council or where the scheme is contracted by the Council will be placed into Priority Band B. A designated list will be maintained of the accommodation provision to which this category of priority applies. Households can register when they move into the supported or refuge accommodation but under this priority will only be considered for a nomination when the following conditions have been met:

- a) The applicant has had an appropriate assessment of housing need
- b) Where needed the applicant has engaged with the supported or refuge housing scheme to acquire the skills needed to live independently
- c) The supported or refuge housing scheme provides evidence by way of a move-on report outlining the applicant's readiness for move-on, i.e. clarifying that they are 'tenant ready'.
- d) The applicant's readiness for move-on is verified by an officer of the Council

Households who qualify as above and agree to move from the supported housing scheme to other interim accommodation (in agreement with the Council) and thereby free up accommodation in the said supported housing scheme will be entitled to retain their banding priority and registration date for up to 12 months after their move away from the said scheme.

B – Care Leavers not supported by Walsall Children's Services.

Care Leavers aged under 25 who meet the definition of a Care Leaver and who are not supported by Walsall Children's Services and who meet the wider qualification requirements of this policy will qualify for Band C.

4.5 Circumstances when additional preference will be awarded on welfare grounds

A – Households who need to move on account of domestic abuse, extreme violence or extreme harassment.

Applicants who need to move immediately due to domestic abuse, extreme violence or extreme harassment will be awarded additional preference. This includes hate crime, disability, racial, homophobic or transgender harassment and will be awarded for circumstances where there is a high risk to the person or their household's safety if they remain in the property/area and they therefore require an immediate move. Persons who are a witness giving evidence and where the police have recommended that the person be urgently re-housed will also be awarded additional preference.

The assessment will be made by a senior officer within the Council and will be based on evidence provided by the household and other appropriate statutory and voluntary agencies. This could include the Police, Social Services, referrals by multi-agency risk assessment conferences, domestic violence organisations and lesbian and gay support groups. Normally households who qualify under this priority will not be placed within 3 miles of either their current property or any perpetrator.

B - Foster carers and/or those approved by the Council to adopt

Additional preference will be given to children and their families/carers where the children are the subject of care proceedings and where the local authority has requested assistance with the provision of appropriate housing in the exercise of their functions under Section 27 of the Children Act 1989 and the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities.

Additional preference will be given to potential foster carers who need to move to a home with more bedrooms and who have completed the Skills to Foster Training and have been recommended by the Council to become Foster Carers.

Additional preference will be given to households requiring additional bedrooms and holding a Special Guardianship Order, holders of a Child Arrangement Order or family and friend's carers who have taken on the care of a child because the parents are unable to provide care, and the child/children concerned is/are waiting to move to live with these carers pending the provision of appropriate housing.

Additional preference will also be considered for existing foster carers requiring additional bedrooms and who are willing to either expand the number of children living with them or if they experience an increase in household number brought about by a change in family circumstances, e.g. an elderly relative joins the household for care and support reasons.

C - Armed forces personnel in urgent housing need

The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 provide that local housing authorities must frame their allocation scheme to give additional preference to the following persons if they fall within one or more of the statutory reasonable preference categories and are in urgent housing need:

- a) Former members of the Regular Armed Forces
- b) Serving members of the Regular Armed Forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability (including a relevant mental health condition) which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.
- c) Serving or former members of the Reserve Armed Forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability (including a relevant mental health condition) which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.
- d) Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease, to be entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their Service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service.

For the purposes above, the terms 'regular forces' and 'reserve forces' are defined by section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

D – Care Leavers

Young people in care, ready to move out of care and referred by Walsall's Children's Services will be placed into Priority Band A on condition that the following criteria as assessed by their Personal Advisor in the WCS are met:

- a) They are ready to move to independent settled housing.
- b) They possess the life skills for independent living and to manage a tenancy including management of a rent account.
- c) A support package has been assessed and is in place if necessary.

All Care Leavers aged under 25 outside of the above cohort who are supported by Walsall Children's Services and who meet the wider requirements of this policy will also qualify for Band A subject to the wider conditions set out in this policy.

In recognition of the additional challenges faced by care experienced young people, and the corporate parenting duties which fall upon the Customer Engagement directorate, consideration should be given to certain key factors in advance of any offer of a tenancy being made. It is therefore good practice for Allocations Officers to liaise with the young person and their allocated Personal Advisor ahead of a formal offer to ensure that the property meets the young person's needs and does not increase risk to the young person or otherwise jeopardise their successful transition to independence. Therefore, officers involved with supporting care experienced young people to secure a tenancy should, in advance of any offer being made, take account of:

- The need to maintain supportive relationships for the young person
- The importance of ease of access to education, employment and training

- The need to be aware of risks around exploitation and avoidance of areas where this could pose an additional risk to the young person
- Any additional needs or diagnoses and the ability for the young person to access universal services to support these needs to be met
- The preference to secure a home near to an area that the young person has a connection and history of residing in during their time in care

5. Applicants who need to move to a particular locality within the local authority's district, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others.

5.1 Circumstances when reasonable preference will be awarded

All households who qualify under 'hardship grounds' will be placed into Priority Band C. The categories of people who will be awarded reasonable preference on the grounds of hardship are:

- a) Employment Hardship - applicants who need to move for employment purposes (see Note A below)
- b) Support Hardship - applicants who need to move to be near relatives to give or receive support (see Note B below)
- c) Medical Need Hardship - applicants who need to move to access medical treatment/social service facilities (see Note C below)
- d) Right to Move - applicants who have a right to move under the Government's Right to Move Regulations (2015). (see Note D below).

Note A) Employment Hardship Applicants will need to show that they need to move to take up or continue an employment opportunity not available elsewhere. They will only be considered where travel time would be more than 90 minutes each way and they do not have their own transport. The factors considered to determine a need to move on the grounds of employment hardship will be those set out in Note D below.

Note B) Support Hardship Applicants will need to evidence that they require substantial and on-going support from relatives or friends or it is essential that they give substantial and on-going support to relatives or friends. This will only be considered where there is a severe mental health, medical or welfare issue and there are reasons why this support cannot be achieved or maintained through reliance on public transport or the applicant's own transport.

Examples of the information required in order to assess this priority include:

- Confirmation of name and address of the person who is to provide the care and the person who is to receive care
- Evidence of their care requirements (Doctor, Social Services)
- Benefits relating to any disability or care, e.g. Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment (PIP) information

Note C) Need to move to access medical treatment/social service facilities

Applicants will need to evidence that they have a need to access medical care and/or social services facilities that cannot realistically be met through reliance on public transport, the applicant's own transport, or through provision put in place by health or social services. The Council will factor in the following:

- Confirmation of name and address of the medical or social provision to which they need access
- Evidence of their care requirements (e.g. doctor, Social Services)
- Evidence that no other provision is available, and no assistance can be provided to enable them to access the service

- A determination by the Council that the need to access the medical treatment/social services facilities is essential

Note D) Right To Move – hardship cases

To meet the Allocation of Housing Qualification Criteria for the Right to Move (England Regulations 2015), a local connection criterion may not be applied to existing social tenants seeking to transfer from another local authority district in England who:

- have reasonable preference under Section 166(3)(e) because of a need to move to the Local Authority's district to avoid hardship, and
- need to move because the tenant works in the district, or needs to move to take up an offer of work

Applicants must need to move, not simply want to move. Factors to consider in determining 'need' are:

- The distance and/or time taken to travel between home and work. In this instance a need to move would be established where it would take the applicant more than 90 minutes each way and they do not have their own transport.
- Availability and affordability of transport as against earnings.
- Nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available nearer home.
- Other personal factors, for instance medical conditions, childcare
- Length of work contract.
- Testing as to whether failure to move would mean a lost opportunity to improve employment circumstances or prospects?

For the purposes of this section of the policy, the term 'work' will only apply to long-term employment and not employment that is 'marginal' by nature. In this context the Council will consider:

- a contract of less than 12 months to be short-term.
- a contract of less than 16 hours per week to be marginal
- the level of earnings
- whether the work is regular or intermittent (particularly relevant for the self-employed).

The tenant must be able demonstrate that he/she has a genuine job offer and that he/she has a genuine intention to take it up. Appropriate evidence could include:

- A formal offer letter.
- A contract of employment.
- Wage/salary slips covering a certain period, or bank statements (zero hour contracts).
- Tax and benefits information, for example proof of receipt of working tax credit

5.2 Circumstances when additional preference (Band A) will be awarded

There are no additional preference criteria for this category

6. Additional classes of persons who qualify to join the scheme

6.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that where possible the best possible use is made of the existing social housing stock in Walsall. Accordingly, to encourage and enable households to move to more appropriate accommodation some households who would not otherwise qualify for Reasonable Preference will qualify to join the scheme. In addition, and in recognition of the Council's commitment to facilitate access to social housing for both current members and veterans of the UK Armed Forces, all members and former members will qualify to join the scheme irrespective of any housing need.

6.2 Households under-occupying their property

It is known that a significant number of social housing properties in the borough, in particular houses, are under-occupied. Where possible the Council will support incentives designed to enable those affected to move to accommodation that is better suited to their needs. To support this objective this policy provides 'under-occupying' households with varying degrees of priority to make 'downsize' moves in the following circumstances:

- a) housing association tenants in Walsall currently under-occupying a property by at least two bedrooms and who wish to transfer to a property to which they are eligible with fewer bedrooms will qualify for Band A.
- b) housing association tenants in Walsall currently under-occupying a house and who wish to transfer to a property to which they are eligible with fewer bedrooms will qualify for Band A.
- c) housing association tenants in Walsall currently resident in a flat or maisonette under-occupying by one bedroom, and who wish to transfer to a property to which they are eligible with fewer bedrooms will qualify for Band C.

6.3 Households occupying Sanctuary Scheme properties

Households moving to more suitable accommodation from intermediate or advanced level sanctuary scheme properties will qualify for Band B.

6.4 Households occupying adapted properties where the adaptations are no longer in use

Households who are living in a adapted housing association property in Walsall where the adaptations are no longer in use will qualify for Band A where the adaptations are in good working order and where there is a demonstrable need for the property and adaptations are in situ. For the purposes of this policy the definition of an Adapted Property is set out in Appendix Two.

6.5 Housing Association tenants who wish to release a ground floor flat

Housing association tenants in Walsall who wish to release a ground floor flat with a walk-in shower or wet room and transfer to a property to which they are eligible with the same number or fewer bedrooms will qualify for Band A.

6.6 Members and former members of the UK Armed Forces

All Members of the UK Armed Forces (whether Regular or Reserve) and UK Armed Forces veterans with no recognised housing need will qualify to join Band C. For the purposes of this section:

- The Reserve Forces consist of the Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Marines Reserve; the Army Reserve (formerly known as the Territorial Army) and the Royal Air Force Reserves (formerly Royal Auxiliary Air Force).
- The Ministry of Defence (MOD) defines a veteran as: "anyone who has served for at least one day in Her Majesty's Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve), or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations". The term 'Armed Forces' is defined by section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

Section D: Housing Nomination process

1. Short-listing procedure

- 1.1 Accommodation will be nominated through direct offers of accommodation complicit with this policy based on the respective banding priority and registration date, i.e. within the pool of applicants who are eligible for the property type, the household in the highest ranked Priority Band and earliest registration date is considered first (see also Section 1.3 and 3.1 below).
- 1.2 Where there is justifiable evidence to do so, the Council will operate a property quota system to ensure that it meets both its statutory obligations to those owed additional and reasonable preference and its strategic objectives in enabling balanced, sustainable communities. For example, the Council may choose to allocate 30% of void properties to Band A, 50% to Band B and 15% to Band C and so forth.
- 1.3 In certain circumstances, for example where a statutory duty to provide accommodation is owed, the Council reserves the right to nominate households to suitable accommodation outside of the procedure outlined in 1.1 above where the following housing need and/or circumstances apply:
 - There is a threat to life
 - Emergency cases whose homes are damaged by fire, flood or other disaster may be provided with another tenancy if it is not possible to repair the existing home, or if any work to repair is to take such a long period of time that there will be serious disruption to family life.
 - Households who, on police advice, must be moved immediately due to serious threats to one or more members of the household, or whose continuing occupation would pose a threat to the community.
 - An applicant who has an exceptional need that is not covered in the Allocations Scheme. For example, where child or public protection issues require re-housing.
 - Where a statutory duty to provide accommodation is owed, and where it is in the best interests of both the household and the Council to make a statutory offer of suitable accommodation
 - Households who are seeking to release accommodation as set out in Section C/6.
 - Other exceptional circumstances as authorised by the Head of Customer Engagement.

2. Offers of accommodation

- 2.1 Just prior to nomination to the respective housing association property the applicant will be informed by the Council. Details of the nominated household are then sent to the housing association.
- 2.2 Although the council will validate all applications at the point of nomination (excluding Right to Rent checks), housing associations may also validate the applicant to satisfy their own Allocations Policy before entering into a contractual agreement (tenancy agreement).
- 2.3 Each housing association property has a series of household compositions that is best matched to the property concerned based on its size, the type of property and facilities contained within. This standard is set by the individual housing association and the said association will provide this information to the Council when providing the property to the Council for nomination. Of note, where the household composition permits, it is perfectly acceptable to make offers of flats to households with children.
- 2.4 Consideration should be given to extend both the notice period given to accept or reject an offer of accommodation and/or the tenancy commencement date in circumstances where a disabled person(s) requires additional time on account of their personal circumstances. This includes any extra time needed for an Occupational Therapist to make an assessment as required.

3. Allocation of Adapted Properties

- 3.1** Properties which are adapted or which the Council believe are suitable for adaptation may be nominated directly to the most appropriate applicant irrespective of Band date order. This may for example, depending on the characteristics of the property, include cases where a ground floor flat is available and an applicant with high needs requires such accommodation. In these circumstances an assessment may be made by an occupational therapist to ascertain the extent to which a household's needs match the adaptations attached to the property. The assessment will be based on existing and future predictable need.
- 3.2** For the purposes of this policy, the definition of an 'Adapted Property' outlined in Appendix Two will apply at all times.

4. Circumstances where a successful nomination can be refused

- 4.1** With the Local Government Ombudsman Investigation into complaint no 11 011 766 against Kettering Borough Council (16.01.13) in mind, the Council's partner organisations who have signed up to the Council's Housing Nominations Agreement reserve the right to refuse a nomination made on one of its properties, for example:
- on risk or management grounds, for example where a perpetrator of domestic violence, hate crime or other offences would be re-housed close to previous victims
 - on affordability grounds, where it is clear that the sustainability of the tenancy would be at risk based on the household's income
 - where an applicant's housing details differ from those held by the Council
 - where the applicant has gained an advantage by providing false information or by withholding false information.
 - where the applicant exhibits behaviours that would disqualify him/her from becoming a tenant as set out in Section B/3 – non-qualifying persons.
 - where the applicant is considered by the housing association not to be 'tenant ready' and therefore unable to maintain or sustain a tenancy

5. Local Lettings Plans

- 5.1** The Council recognises that partner organisations, in consultation with the Council, may from time to time need to adopt a Local Lettings Plan (LLP). The Council may decide itself to propose and subsequently coordinate or support a LLP. It is expected that all proposals for new LLP's must consider the following:
- a) A clear description of the issue or problem which should be evidenced
 - b) A clear description of the issue or problem which should be evidenced
 - c) An explanation as to how the existing allocations policy is either failing or contributing to the issue/problem identified or does not meet the intended outcome of the proposed LLP
 - d) An explanation as to how the proposed LLP will differ from the respective mainstream allocations policy.
 - e) The effect that the introduction of the LLP will have on neighbouring communities
 - f) The estimated length of time for which the LLP will operate
 - g) The method(s) of community consultation to be used
 - h) Time scales as to when the LLP will be reviewed

6. Type of tenancy issued

- 6.1** Households who become tenants of a property owned by a housing association will normally be granted an Assured Tenancy

Section E: The Housing Register

1. Joining the Housing Register

- 1.1 In order to join the housing register a registration form must be completed. Forms can only be completed online. Help and assistance can be provided by visiting a Walsall Connected Centre.
- 1.2 Qualifying applicants will be required to provide proof of identity. Applicants will have the choice of producing at least one of the following; Drivers Licence, Passport, Birth Certificate, Home Office documentation (where applicable). Proof of Child Benefit will also be required to confirm the residency of dependent children. Proof of income (last 3 months bank statements for all accounts in the household) and proof of current address will be required.
- 1.3 Expectant mothers in receipt of a Maternity Certificate Form MAT B1 will be classed as having a dependant.
- 1.4 Once an application for accommodation under this Scheme has been submitted the Council will endeavour to inform the applicant of the outcome of their application within 20 working days of receipt of ALL relevant information required to process the application.
- 1.5 Where the notification confirms a decision that an applicant is ineligible to join the register the applicant will be given the reasons for the decision based on the relevant facts of the case. Applicants are prohibited from making another separate application within 12 months after receiving the decision unless there is a change to their housing circumstances. Applicants will be notified in writing of their right to request a review of the decision.

2. The requirement to inform the Council of a change in housing circumstances

- 2.1 It is the responsibility of the applicant to inform the Council of a change of circumstances and, where requested, provide proof of the change. Notification of a change in circumstances should be done without undue delay and within 3 weeks of the change. Examples of a change in circumstances include but are not limited to:
 - Any confirmed pregnancy
 - Any member of the family or any other person on the application form who has left the accommodation currently in occupation
 - Any changes of name or address, for either themselves or members of their respective household
 - Any additions to the household (proof of residence and identification will be required)
 - Any significant change in income which is likely to have a material effect on the application
 - A change in status of accommodation (e.g. Notice to Quit)
 - A change in an applicant's medical situation
 - A change in immigration status

If a change in circumstances is not reported in a timely manner, the effective registration date may be amended.

- 2.2 If an applicant has changed address a Change of Circumstance Form should be completed immediately. The date of application will be that of the first application (when it was accepted by the Council). The level of housing need and corresponding banding placement may be adjusted to reflect the details outlined in the new application (See also Section E/3 below).
- 2.3 Where a Housing Register entry is amended following receipt of a notification of change, the Council will inform the applicant in writing of any changes in banding placement etc.

3. Adjustments to housing need priority

- 3.1** Where an applicant's circumstances change the Council will review the degree of housing priority given to the applicant. On occasions where an applicant's housing priority changes resulting in their application moving up or down the priority bandings, the following will apply:
- a) Moving up a band: The date the higher priority band was awarded will act as the date used in the short-listing process
 - b) Moving down a band: The date on the original application will be the date used in the short-listing process
- 3.2** Under Section 167(2A) of the Housing Act 1996, the Council reserves the right to reduce any housing priority awarded within this policy:
- 1) where any behaviour of the applicant (or a member of his household) affects his suitability to be a tenant. Bad behaviour would include unacceptable behaviour which was not serious enough to justify a decision to exclude or remove the applicant from the register, but which could be taken into account in assessing the level of priority to be awarded. An example of such behaviour could be low level anti-social behaviour to which there is no immediate threat.
 - 2) where there is evidence that an applicant has acted unreasonably in order to gain a higher priority within the register.
- 3.3** The Council reserves the right to review an applicant's priority banding and assess the current relevance of that priority to their housing need and circumstances.
- 3.4** Households involved in the above process have a Right to a Review (See Section F/2)

4. Removal or suspension from the Housing Register

- 4.1** An application may be removed from the housing register in the following circumstances:
- 1) At the applicant's request.
 - 2) If the applicant becomes ineligible under one of the non-qualification grounds set out in Section B.
 - 3) Where the applicant fails to reply to a review letter and subsequent reminder or fails to reply for requests of further information within a given time period
 - 4) When the applicant has been re-housed
- 4.2** In circumstances 2 to 4 above the applicant will be notified in writing and informed of the reason why their registration has been removed and of their right to request a review of that decision
- 4.3** An applicant will be suspended after having received three offers of suitable accommodation (or one suitable offer in the case of homeless applicants) and has either refused all three offers, or not responded to an offer(s) within a reasonable time frame. In this instance their housing application will be suspended for 12 months. The onus will be on the applicant to inform the Council of their wish to take their application out of suspension and at this point the relevant housing needs of the applicant will be reassessed. The registration date will match the date that the application is taken out of suspension.
- 4.4** All housing applicants have a right to request a formal review of any decision relating to their removal or suspension from the Housing Register (see Section F/2).

Section F: Miscellaneous

1. Conflicts of interest

- 1.1 Where an officer of the Council is directly or indirectly involved with a housing register application or nomination of accommodation to an applicant who is known to them in a personal or social context (i.e. relative, friendship or other associate), the officer will be expected to disclose to their line manager that a conflict of interest may exist. The manager will then make appropriate arrangements for the officer to be excluded from any decision-making process associated with the allocation covered either by this policy or associated procedures.
- 1.2 Officers who knowingly fail to disclose a conflict of interest outlined above may be subject to disciplinary action.

2. Reviews and Appeals

- 2.1 Reviews and Appeals are dealt with in the 'Your Right To A Review' document, available from Walsall Connected sites.
- 2.2 Section 166 and 167 of the Housing Act 1996 contain provisions relating to the rights of applicants to request reviews of decisions made in respect of their application. The Council will at all times ensure that these obligations are met.
- 2.3 Applicants will be informed in writing of their right to request a review within 21 calendar days of receiving a decision about their housing application, concerning any of the decisions shown below:
 - That an applicant is not eligible for an allocation of social rented housing, due to being subject to immigration control or being an ineligible person from abroad.
 - That an applicant is not within a class of persons qualifying to join the Scheme.
 - The degree of preference they have been afforded for an allocation of social rented housing, including any changes made (either adverse or positive) to the degree of preference they are entitled to.
 - The facts of their case which are likely to be, or have been, taken account of when deciding whether to make a nomination to a Registered Provider, including their medical condition or other welfare needs.
 - The type of social rented housing for which an applicant will be considered.
 - The extent of an applicant's household.
 - Whether a nomination constitutes a final offer within the terms of the Scheme.

Reviews will be carried out by Walsall Council's Housing Allocations Manager or will be delegated to an appropriate officer who was not involved in the original decision.

3. Complaints

- 3.1 Complaints should first be made using the Council's complaints procedure. A copy of the current procedure is available on the Council's website.
- 3.2 A customer has the right to continue with their complaint to the Ombudsman service. The Local Government Ombudsman is an independent service run by central government to make sure that local authorities provide the required standard of service to their customers.
- 3.3 The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about how the Council has done something, but they cannot question what has been done simply because someone does not agree with it. The Ombudsman will normally deal with a complaint if a customer feels they have been treated unfairly because of maladministration. For example, if the Council has:
 - Delayed taking action without good reason
 - Taken into account facts which are not relevant or ignored facts which are relevant

- Not followed their own rules or complied with the law
- Not taken action that they had promised to
- Given a customer the wrong information
- Not reached a decision in the correct way

3.4 The Ombudsman will not normally investigate:

- Until after the Council has had the opportunity to review its decision (normally by going through the complaints process)
- Matters which have been, are, or could be dealt with by the courts or the internal review procedure
- Matters which the customer was aware of more than twelve months before making the complaint
- The aim of the Ombudsman is to have the Council put right any wrongs which may have been done to the complainant and to ensure that things are done right in the future.

3.5 All complaints to the Ombudsman must be in writing. Applicants can request assistance from their local Councillor or get another advocate to write on their behalf. The contact details for the Local Government Ombudsman for the Walsall area are:

Local Government Ombudsman,
53-55 Butts Road,
Coventry
CV1 3BH

Tel: 0300 061 0614.

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Appendices

Appendix One

Local connection test

As per Section B/2.2, the following factors will be taken into account in determining whether or not an applicant has a local connection with the Walsall Council area. An application is awarded a local connection if an applicant or a member of their household included in their application qualifies under at least one of the following:

- has lived in the Council's area continuously for the 2 years immediately preceding their application and that residence was of their choice.
- has close family living in Walsall who have lived in the area for the 5 years immediately preceding their application and that residence was of their choice. Close relatives will include parents, adult children or biological brothers and sisters unless there are exceptional circumstances, and who are not estranged; or
- has settled employment in the Walsall Council area. Employment is defined as paid employment for at least 16 hours or more per week for a continual period of at least 6 months and is not work that is considered to be temporary, casual or seasonal and to travel to work by public transport would take the employee more than 90 minutes each way and they do not have their own transport. See Section D/6 Note D.

There are a number of exemptions to the local connection test. These are:

- 1) Where the applicant is owed a homeless duty by the Council.
- 2) All Care Leavers aged under 25
- 3) Where Walsall Council has placed an applicant into temporary accommodation or a contracted supported housing scheme outside of the Council's area. That period of time in such accommodation will count as residence in Walsall.
- 4) Where the Council agrees that there are exceptional circumstances requiring a move into the Walsall area. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis. Examples where circumstances may be considered to be exceptional include:
 - Reasons of safety, for example when an applicant is fleeing domestic abuse or hate crime from another area, or
 - An applicant is on a witness protection programme and the Council has agreed that a move to the Walsall area is essential.
- 5) The Council will consider any application from a gypsy or traveller household where the applicant may not meet the 2-year continuous period of residence rule, if the period has been broken by travelling. The facts of each case will be considered when deciding whether the rule should be waived.
- 6) Applicants who satisfy the right to move criteria. The Right to Move qualification regulations 2015 states that local connection qualification rules must not be applied to existing social tenants who seek to move from another Council district in England, and who have a need to move for work related reasons to avoid hardship.
- 7) Where at the date of application the applicant is not currently resident in the Walsall area whilst either:
 - receiving medical or respite care
 - serving a custodial sentence

the applicant will be considered to have a local connection for residence as long as they had been living in the Council's area for 2 continuous years prior to their current accommodation circumstances.

8) Members and former members of the UK Armed Forces and the Reserve Forces:

- all members of the UK Armed Forces and UK Armed Forces Veterans
- bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner
- serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service
- divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence.

9) For the purposes above, the terms 'Armed Forces' and 'Reserve Forces' are defined by section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

10) Persons who qualify under Section D/7 Additional Classes of Persons who qualify to join the Register.

The onus will be on the applicant to prove their continuous residence through official documentation as prescribed in a list published from time to time by the Council, demonstrating at least two years residency in Walsall.

Though not exhaustive, the following documentation may be used to form proof of residency:

- Housing Benefit records
- Council Tax Benefit and Council Tax Reduction records
- Council Tax records
- Housing Services system records
- Tenancy agreement
- Utility bills (gas, electric, water)
- Television license and telephone bills (landline only)
- Full bank statements showing name, address and date of issue
- Credit card statements
- Department for Work and Pensions benefit notification letters
- Educational establishment records
- Any Council records which can legally be used for this purpose

Medical cards, mobile telephone bills/statements, catalogue bills/statements and confirmation (both written and verbal) from Members will not be considered under any circumstances.

Appendix Two

Definition of Adapted Property

For the purposes of this policy, the following definition will apply to the term 'Adapted Property':

An adapted property is one that contains one or more of the following key features:

- Stair Lift
- Ceiling track hoists
- Vertical Lift
- Step Lift
- Significant ramping to entrance
- Bathrooms – where significant adaptations have been made, for example walk-in shower, level access
- Kitchen – with significant adaptations, for example, lowering or raising of work surfaces, installation of variable height work surfaces, installation of sinks and other work surfaces with knee space beneath for use from a wheelchair
- Adaptations for people with sensory impairments (e.g. colour and texture contrasts, flashing door bells)
- Ground floor extensions (or internal alterations) for bathrooms, bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens and circulation spaces that are fully accessible to a wheelchair user with or without assistance.
- Any other substantial modification defined as meeting the needs of a disabled person by an Occupational Therapist of the local authority

If a property has any of the following features but none of the above it is not defined as an adapted property.

- Grab rails
- Handrails
- Stair rails
- Cubicle or Chiltern Shower
- Minor ramping to entrance
- Raised sockets
- Lowered light switches
- Level access

Appendix Three

Glossary of Terms

Applicant

This can refer to single or joint applicants forming one household

Assured Tenancy

Tenancy granted to Housing Association tenants giving them the right to remain in the property unless the landlord can prove to the Court that there are grounds for possession.

Closing Order

A local authority's legal power to stop anyone living in a property that is unfit for human habitation

Compulsory Purchase Order

A legal power used by local authorities and other public bodies to acquire property for specific purposes

Domestic Abuse

Section 48 of statutory guidance Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse states:

When considering whether a person has experienced domestic abuse, local authorities should take account of the cross-government definition. This defines domestic violence and abuse as: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can include, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse.

Disabled Persons

Persons who have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Homelessness Prevention Duty

Section 195 of the 1996 Act – the 'prevention duty' - places a duty on housing authorities to work with people who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days to help prevent them from becoming homelessness

Homelessness Relief Duty

Section 189B of the 1996 Act – the 'relief duty' - requires housing authorities to help people who are homeless to secure accommodation. The duty applies when the housing authority is satisfied that the applicant is both homeless and eligible for assistance. The housing authority is obliged to take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure suitable accommodation with a reasonable prospect that it will be available for their occupation for at least 6 months.

Housing Register

The list of people seeking to acquire accommodation By law, some people are excluded from joining the register.

Housing Association

A provider of affordable housing including supported accommodation.

Key Worker

A key worker is someone employed by the public sector in a frontline role delivering an essential public service in the areas of health, education and community safety and where there are serious recruitment and retention problems in the said line of employment.

Local Lettings Plan

A Local Lettings Plan is where a designated set of residential units (which can be defined by a geographical area) are allocated outside of the terms of the mainstream Housing Allocations Policy (i.e. this policy).

Looked after children

Children who are 'looked after' by a local authority (e.g. Walsall MBC) under any one of a number of legal arrangements

Mutual Exchange

Council or housing association tenants who agree to swap properties with another tenant with the approval of both landlords

Notice to Quit

Legal notice served on a secure tenant who no longer occupies the property as his only or principal home or a non-secure tenant to bring the tenancy to an end

Purpose Built Sheltered Schemes

A block of self-contained units built with the needs of older people in mind. The blocks contain communal facilities and a Community Alarm system. A Housing support service is provided by a warden, either residential or non - residential.

Possession Order

A court order requiring a household to move out of the property they occupy

Qualifying Persons

Persons who are eligible to join the Housing Register

Reasonable Preference Categories

Groups of people that through law local authorities must give priority to when allocating accommodation

Shared Ownership

A scheme that allows an applicant to buy part of a property and rent the remaining part from a local authority or housing association

Sheltered Housing

A group of self-contained dwellings for older people, who can live independently and are able to manage alone, but who prefer the added security of an alarm system and a resident or visiting warden

Supported Housing

Housing provided for vulnerable people who need support to live independently

Customer Engagement

Walsall Council
Civic Centre
Darwall Street
WS1 1TP

Email: allocations@walsall.gov.uk
Web: www.walsall.gov.uk

APPENDIX B:**Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Policies, Procedures and Services**

Proposal name	Review of Housing Allocations Policy		
Directorate	Customer		
Service	Money Home Job		
Responsible Officer	Neville Rowe – Strategy Analyst		
Proposal planning start	01/04/2024	Proposal start date (due or actual date)	Mid 2025

1	What is the purpose of the proposal?	Yes / No	New / revision
	Show which category the proposal is and whether it is new or a revision.		
	Strategy	No	Revision
	Procedure	Yes	
	Guidance	No	
	Is this a service to customers/staff/public?	Yes	
	If yes, is it contracted or commissioned?	No	
	Other - give details	Internal Policy	
2	What is the business case for this proposal? Please provide the main purpose of the service, intended outcomes and reasons for change?		
3	Who is the proposal likely to affect?		
	People in Walsall	Yes	Detail
	All		Households who register on the Housing Register
	Specific group/s	X	
	Council employees		
	Other (identify)		
4	Please provide service data relating to this proposal on your customer's protected characteristics.		
	Introduction Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) sets out the legislative framework through which Local Authorities should maintain and operate their Housing Allocation Schemes. The Act gives 'Reasonable Preference' to certain categories of applicant, namely households who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutorily homeless • occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions, • needing to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability, and • needing to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others) 		



As part of this requirement the Council maintains a Housing Allocations Policy and as a non-stock owning authority, the Policy sets out who qualifies to join the Council's Housing Register and how the Council will prioritise households to nominate to vacant properties supplied to the Council from housing associations who operate in Walsall.

The current Housing Allocations Policy essentially dates back to 2010, though minor revisions to the policy were completed in 2022 and early 2024. Last year, the Council undertook to complete a full review of the current policy, and following an initial scoping review the following key areas were identified as in need of review:

- 1) To Review the residency test set out in the local connection test – currently two years
- 2) To explore the potential benefits of increasing the number of bands within the policy applicable to those in statutory Reasonable Preference in order that the policy could fully differentiate between higher and lower levels of housing need. Currently the policy has 2 priority bands to accommodate those in Reasonable Preference with the third band (Band C) catering for those households registering with no identified housing need
- 3) To consider as to whether those without a recognised housing need (in statute) should be excluded from joining the register, particularly in view of continuing supply and demand issues that seem unlikely to subside.
- 4) To consider as to whether the Council should prioritise households who wish to downsize their home or release an adapted property
- 5) To consider adopting a choice-based lettings approach or to continue with making direct nominations
- 6) To make the policy more navigable and to introduce greater clarity over who qualifies for Reasonable Preference (based solely on housing need) and the level of priority to be awarded
- 7) To place Care Leavers and those wishing to foster into Band A priority

Walsall Key Demographic Data

Walsall is a metropolitan borough which was formed in 1974 and is one of seven authorities that makes up the West Midlands conurbation and is one of four local authorities comprising the Black Country Region. Walsall contains six urban district centres: Walsall Town Centre, Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston and Willenhall. The Borough covers 40 square miles and is bisected by the M6 motorway. Socio-economically, there is a stark geographic divide between the West and the less deprived East. Nationally, Walsall has high levels of deprivation and among local authorities in England. The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation now ranks Walsall as the 25th most deprived English local authority (out of 317), placing Walsall within the most deprived 10% of districts in the country (33rd in 2015, 30th in 2010 and 45th in 2007).

Census 2021 data demonstrates a Walsall population of 258,478, 49.2% of the population are male with 50.8% female. Customers that have a housing register account (active or closed), the lead applicant accounted for 69% Female. Currently, Walsall has around 117k units of which 24% are housing provider owned and 76% privately owned, (Source, Live tables on dwelling stock (including vacants) - GOV.UK).

Of the 76% privately owned, it is estimated that around 13.4k are privately rented which

accounts for around 15% of the privately owned stock. Overall housing growth (5.4%) has just about kept up with household growth (6.3%) between 2011 and 2021 (ONS population projections) and household size has shifted from 2.49 to 2.51 (Black Country SHMA 2021). 15.7% of households in Walsall, are single person households who have one person aged less than 66 years, in comparison 12.6% of single households are aged 66 years and over. (Source: Census 2021, ONS)

The east of the Borough has an older population and a slower growth (<1% in 9 years). Conversely the centre, south & west of the borough continues to see rapid population growth and a much younger population, such as Blakenall wards with a median age of 31 and a growth of 7.8% compared to 2011. In comparison Aldridge Central and South has a median age of 48 and a growth rate compared to 2011 of 12%. (Source: Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Walsall). The age range on our housing register of the lead applicant (both active and closed) is as follows:

Under 16s now account for 22.4% of the Walsall population, and over 65s, 17.6%. Walsall's dependency ratio has continued to rise with 0.65 dependants: 1 working age adult in 2019 (England 0.57). There are estimated to be 9000 additional over 60s by 2031. (Source: Office for National Statistics). In regard to the housing register 57% of lead applicants were under 35 and 2.7% were over age 65.

85.2% of Walsall's population were born in the UK, whilst 14.8 were born in another country. The minority ethnic population (i.e. all those who identify as other than White British) has increased from fewer than 1 in 4 residents in 2011 to 1 in 3 in 2021 (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Ethnic Profile

Walsall	2021	2011
White	4.4%	1.9%
Asian	18.7%	15.2%
Black	4.6%	2.3%
Mixed	3.3%	2.7%
Other	2.1%	0.8%
White British	67.4%	76.9%
<i>Minority Ethnic</i>	<i>32.6%</i>	<i>23.1%</i>

Source: Census 2021 and Census 2011.

Housing Register Ethnic Profile of lead applicant in Walsall;

White	6.5%
Asian	13.1%
Black	12.8%
Mixed	5.6%
Other	4.1%
White British	56.8%
<i>Minority Ethnic</i>	<i>43.2%</i>

Note: 33% of respondents who took part in the web-based survey were from a Black or Minority Ethnic background. 69% of applicants on the housing register are female.

61% of the population is of working age, broadly in line with the national figure. 76% are classed as economically active, slightly below both the regional and national averages. Of the households that have at least one person aged 16 to 64, 14% are classed as workless (12k) and as revealed elsewhere in this document lack of labour market access is a regular component of homeless households in the borough [\[1\]](#). 27% of the working age population have an NVQ Level 4 or above, this compares to a regional figure of 39% and a national figure of 44%.

In terms of income and employment scales, the average wage in Walsall (£548 p/w gross) is 6% below the regional average and 12% below the national. Of note 8% of persons aged 18 to 24 claim out of work benefits – this compares to 6% regionally but is almost twice the national equivalent. According to DWP figures (02/22), Walsall is ranked fourth out of all West Midland authorities in the percentage of working age people (6%) receiving unemployment related benefits [\[2\]](#).

[\[1\]](#) Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics 2022

[\[2\]](#) *ibid*

People affected by debt, low incomes, unemployment, insecure housing or receiving out of work benefits covering all the protected characteristics are more likely to seek social rented housing largely on account of affordability. Deprivation is deeply entrenched in Walsall and has worsened during the current economic downturn. Forty-four out of one-hundred and sixty-seven neighbourhoods (LSOAs) are now amongst the 10% most deprived in England compared to 34 in 2015. There are extremes of deprivation in Walsall, with central and western areas typically much more deprived than eastern areas, although pockets of deprivation exist even in the more affluent parts of the borough. The following data is provided in the context of the protected characteristics and the proposal to approve the revised housing allocations policy.

5	Please provide details of all engagement and consultation undertaken for this proposal. (Please use a separate box for each engagement/consultation).
---	--

Consultation Activity

Complete a copy of this table for each consultation activity you have undertaken.

Complete a copy of this table for each consultation activity you have undertaken			
Type of engagement/consultation	Walsall Housing Working Group	Date	25/07/23 & subsequent meetings
Who attended/participated?	Service providers – Housing Associations		
Protected characteristics of participants	A cross section of staff and third sector stakeholders including those from different ethnic, age, gender, disability related groups.		

Type of engagement/consultation	Walsall Connected	Date	24/08/23
Who attended/participated?	Service providers – Walsall Hubs operated by staff and the voluntary sector		
Protected characteristics of participants	A cross section of staff and third sector stakeholders including those from different ethnic, age, gender, disability related groups.		

Type of engagement/consultation	Walsall Homeless Steering Group	Date	20/07/23 & subsequent meetings
Who attended/participated?	Service providers of homeless services across Walsall		
Protected characteristics of participants	A cross section of staff and third sector stakeholders including those from different ethnic, age, gender, disability related groups.		

Type of engagement/consultation	TLC team meeting	Date	19/06/24
Who attended/participated?	Staff in the form of managers and personal advisers		
Protected characteristics of participants	A cross section of staff and third sector stakeholders including those from different ethnic, age, gender, disability related groups.		

Type of engagement/consultation	Domestic Abuse Walsall Services	Date	16/07/24
--	---------------------------------	-------------	----------

Who attended/participated?	Staff, support workers, customers did not turn up to the consultation		
Protected characteristics of participants	A cross section of staff and third sector stakeholders including those from different ethnic, age, gender, disability related groups.		
Type of engagement/consultation	Refugee Migrant Centre, client meeting x2	Date	14 & 16/05/24
Who attended/participated?	Staff, customers		
Protected characteristics of participants	A cross section of staff and third sector stakeholders including those from minority ethnic groups, various age, gender, disability related groups.		
Type of engagement/consultation	NASH DOM community centre	Date	17/07/24
Who attended/participated?	Staff, customers		
Protected characteristics of participants	A cross section of staff and third sector stakeholders including those from Eastern European ethnic groups, various age, gender, disability related groups.		
Type of engagement/consultation	Frontline teams, housing & welfare, TA team, YP Team & Allocations	Date	Various dates
Who attended/participated?	Staff		
Protected characteristics of participants	A cross section of staff and third sector stakeholders including those from all ethnic groups, various age, gender, disability related groups.		
Type of engagement/consultation	Email link to survey, 7000 emails	Date	05/07/24
Who attended/participated?	Members of the public that have signed up to the housing register.		
Protected characteristics of participants	A cross section of the public including those from all ethnic groups, various age, gender, disability related groups. The web-based survey achieved a total of 615 responses including 402 directly from households registered or in the process of registering with the housing register representing 6% of applicants contacted and 213 from a combination of residents		

	(115) and third sector organisations and officers of the Council (98).
6	<p>Concise overview of all evidence, engagement and consultation</p> <p>Officers commenced a comprehensive period of consultation in April that involved both a programme of targeted focus groups as well as a web-based survey that commenced on 07 May and concluded on 22 July. The web-based survey achieved a total of 615 responses including 402 directly from households registered or in the process of registering with the housing register representing 6% of applicants contacted and 213 from a combination of residents (115) and third sector organisations and officers of the Council (98). 33% of respondents who took part in the web based survey were from a Black or Minority Ethnic background.</p> <p>From the pool of proposed amendments, it is clear that the following ones should be considered for their respective impacts on equality:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To review the 2-year residency test set out in the local connection test 2) To explore the potential benefits of increasing the number of bands within the policy applicable to those in statutory Reasonable Preference 3) To consider as to whether those without a recognised housing need (in statute) should be excluded from joining the register, particularly in view of continuing supply and demand issues that seem unlikely to subside. 4) To consider as to whether the Council should prioritise households who wish to downsize their home or release an adapted property 5) To consider adopting a choice-based lettings approach or to continue with making direct nominations 6) To place Care Leavers and those wishing to foster into Band A priority <p>Broadly speaking respondents from the focus groups were in favour of retaining the two-year residency test on condition that the exempted groups, in particular care leavers, homeless households and victims of domestic abuse were retained and regularly</p>

reviewed. For the web-based survey there is overwhelming support for the retention of the two-year residency requirement, where 73% of register applicants in favour, with 78% from the remaining pools (i.e. officers, residents and third sector organisations) also in favour. It is therefore proposed to retain the two-residency test and apply existing exemptions as set out in Appendix One of the current policy.

The proposal to **increase the number of bands** within the policy is essentially centred on enabling the policy to be more responsive to the varying degrees of applicant housing need by enabling it to have greater flexibility to differentiate between higher and lower levels of need, for example between those fleeing domestic abuse, those overcrowded by two or more bedrooms and those overcrowded by one. From the consultation there has been overwhelming support to increase the number of priority bands within the policy, with 70% of housing applicants in favour, and 76% from the remaining pool of respondents (i.e. officers, residents and third sector organisations) also in favour. The focus groups who took part in the consultation were also broadly in favour of increasing the number of priority bands. It is therefore proposed to introduce four housing need bands within the policy.

The proposal to **exclude those without a recognised statutory housing need from joining the housing register** has largely been brought about by the fact that present time demand for vacant properties far outweighs supply and this places significant pressures on the Council's ability to house those who have a recognised statutory housing need, leaving the overwhelming majority of those without a statutory need unlikely to ever receive an offer of accommodation. Currently, the Council's Housing Register has 3,840 households seeking accommodation, 1,995 of whom qualify for at least one of the Reasonable Preferences categories as outlined elsewhere, leaving 48% without any recognised statutory housing need. Of note, the number of social housing relets in Walsall in line with the national picture continues to decline year on year. By way of number lettings are down 46% over last 5 years: 2,530 (2017/18), 1,660 (2020/21), 1,365 (2022/23). Approximately half of these properties were let each year through the Council's Allocations Policy under its Nominations Agreement with local social housing providers.

From the consultation, for those who took part in the focus groups had mixed views for the proposal to exclude those with no housing need from joining the register. Those in favour of this proposal cited the 'false hope' that allowing any individual to join the register can generate, whilst others thought that as a matter of principle any person regardless of need should be able to join the register. This view was mirrored in the survey, where 62% of housing applicants were in favour of exclusion with a like 65% from the remaining pool of respondents (i.e. officers, residents and third sector organisations) also in favour.

Aside of the overall supply and demand issue outlined elsewhere in this EQiA there is also a distinct mismatch between supply and household need by property type, largely centred on a shortage of larger properties needed by households with families and the need for adapted or single level properties on account of medical need (often related to mobility). To partly address this, it is proposed to **prioritise households who wish to downsize or release either an adapted or single level property**. Past experience has shown that in order to maximise this option a high degree of priority is needed in order to encourage such moves. This proposal received a strong response in favour in the consultation, with 76% of housing applicants in favour and 82% of the remaining pool of respondents also in favour (i.e. officers, residents and third sector organisations). All the focus groups supported this proposal. It is unlikely that the proposal will generate a

large volume of properties however it is felt prudent to enable the policy where possible to stimulate any strategy aimed at making the best use of existing stock.

Specific to the **adoption of a choice-based lettings (CBL) scheme** the consultation feedback has clearly been less conclusive compared with the other proposals. The adoption or otherwise of a CBL scheme will not impact on how the policy will determine who qualifies to join the Council's Housing Register and how the Council subsequently prioritises households within the policy and from this perspective it is proposed to put this proposal on hold and to reassess at the next Allocations Policy review. The primary reasons behind this approach are:

- The policy will be reviewed post 12 months after its implementation to ensure it is meeting its objectives most notably by ensuring that properties are allocated fairly to fulfil the Council's legal and equality obligations. If this has been achieved then this would present a more opportune time to consider a choice based lettings approach.
- To adopt a choice based letting scheme would involve considerable alterations to both the Councils administrative and software systems incurring associated costs

The proposal to **place Care Leavers and those wishing to foster into Band A priority** has been developed as a consequence of the consultation exercise.

7	How may the proposal affect each protected characteristic or group? The effect may be positive, negative, neutral or not known. Give reasons and if action is needed.			
	Characteristic	Affect	Reason	Action needed No
	Age	Positive	<p>In regard to the housing register 57% of lead applicants are under 35 and 3% were over age 65. 48% of housing register respondents who took part in the web-based survey were aged under 35, with 3% being aged 65 or over.</p> <p>Young people are disproportionately affected by overcrowding and by expanding the number of priority bands the policy will be able to differentiate between those affected by extreme overcrowding and those overcrowded by one bedroom. In addition, the policy will also enable individual household members to be nominated to other properties to relieve overcrowding pressures. Giving a high</p>	No

			priority to households wishing to release family homes and those wishing to foster should also have a positive impact on young people.	
	Disability	Positive	The option to increase the number of priority bands will have a positive impact on households effected by disability in that households in more acute need in the context of disability will be placed into Band A and those with a less immediate need will be placed into Band B. In addition, giving a high priority to households wishing to release an adapted property should increase the supply of adapted homes.	no
	Gender reassignment	Neutral	Proposed amendments and changes in this context are generic and have no specific identified impact	No
	Marriage and civil partnership	Neutral	Proposed amendments and changes in this context are generic and have no specific identified impact	No
	Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral	Proposed amendments and changes in this context are generic and have no specific identified impact	No
	Race	Neutral	36% of housing register respondents who took part in the web-based survey were from a Black or Minority Ethnic background, set against a housing register make-up of 43%. The proposed amendments and changes in this context are generic and have no specific identified impact	No
	Religion or belief	Neutral	Proposed amendments and changes in this context are generic and have no specific identified impact	No
	Sex	Positive	73% of housing register respondents who took part in the web-based survey were female, set against a housing register make-up of 69%. Women are more likely to experience homelessness than men. Whether or not they are part of a household including men, women may have more distinctive	No

			housing needs, for example on average women are overrepresented in the provision of caring commitments, experience lower wages, and are at greater risk of intimate partner violence. Housing-and-gender-PBB-Spring-2022.pdf (wbq.org.uk) All of these housing needs are covered within the revised policy, the majority under legislation as per the Reasonable Preference categories outlined in the Housing Act 1996.	
	Sexual orientation	Neutral	Proposed amendments and changes are generic and have no specific identified impact	No
	Care Leavers	Positive	The revised policy will specifically recognize Care Leavers and for those supported by the Council will be placed into Band A.	No
	Armed Forces	Neutral	The policy will continue to give Band A priority to members or previous members of the Armed Forces under statutory regulation.	No
8	Does your proposal link with other proposals to have a cumulative effect on particular equality groups? If yes, give details.			(Delete one) No
	<p>This EQIA has been formulated having had regard to the law and regulatory requirements, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Housing Act 1996, Part 6 2. Homelessness Act 2002 3. Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 4. Localism Act 2011 5. Armed Forces Act 2006 6. Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 7. Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 8. Children Act 2004 9. Equality Act 2010 10. Domestic Abuse Act 2021 			
9	Which justifiable action does the evidence, engagement and consultation feedback suggest you take?			
	A	No major change required		

	B	Adjustments needed to remove barriers or to better promote equality		
	C	Continue despite possible adverse impact		
	D	Stop and rethink your proposal		
Action and monitoring plan				
Action Date	Action	Responsibility	Outcome Date	Outcome

Update to EqIA	
Date	Detail

Contact us

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Email equality@walsall.gov.uk

Inside Walsall: [http://int.walsall.gov.uk/Service information/Equality and diversity](http://int.walsall.gov.uk/Service_information/Equality_and_diversity)

Determination of the Scheme for coordinated admissions, and the Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Primary Schools for the 2026/27 academic year

Portfolio: Councillor Kaur – Education and Skills

Related portfolios:

Service: Admissions & Education Sufficiency, Access Service

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

To ensure that Walsall Council meets its statutory duty to offer a school place to all Walsall resident children, and to determine the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in accordance with the requirements of Section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the School Admissions Code 2021.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report sets out the proposed scheme for co-ordinated secondary and primary admissions and mid-year admissions for the 2026/27 academic year and the proposed admission arrangements for primary community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2026/27 academic year.
- 2.2 Walsall Council is not the Admission Authority for any of the secondary schools in the borough, all of whom must determine their own admission arrangements for 2026/27 by 28 February 2025.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That the Walsall admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary schools for the academic year 2026/27 as per Appendix A, are approved and determined.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 As a Local Authority, Walsall Council has the responsibility to draw up and agree schemes for secondary and primary admissions for the 2026/27 academic year. Walsall Council is the Admission Authority for all community and voluntary controlled Primary schools in Walsall. Section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 requires admission authorities to determine the admission arrangements for the 2026/27 school year by 28 February 2025.
- 4.2 This year, Walsall consulted to reduce some published admission numbers (PANs) within schools to ensure the Local Authority is aligned to lower birth rates in the area leading to a reduction in forecasted demand for reception places and increased surplus places.
- 4.3 Analysis of previous admissions data and forecasted demand has been undertaken across school and local planning areas, including:
- First preferences received for each school
 - Allocated places offered at each school
 - Maximum Number on Roll (NOR) at termly census points.
- 4.4 The following PAN reductions are recommended at local authority controlled schools:
- Salisbury Primary School – reduce by 15 places – from 45 to 30 places intake.
Rosedale Infant School – reduce by 30 places – from 90 to 60 places intake.
Pelsall Village School – reduce by 15 places – from 45 to 30 places intake.
- 4.5 The recommended PAN reductions reflect a measured approach to reducing surplus places over the next few years and have been discussed with all primary schools, with individual detailed conversations with schools and governors of the schools affected. All affected schools leadership and governors were supportive of the proposed reduction in admission number.
- 4.6 The LA can only consult on Admission Arrangements for maintained schools for which they are the Admission Authority. Conversations have also been held with the Academy Trusts to recommend that they consider PAN reductions as part of any Admission Arrangements consultations they undertake.
- 4.7 This overall approach taken ensures that the admission numbers across Walsall are forecasted to accommodate any impacts of increased migration into the area, as experienced by some other local LAs.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.8 The admission arrangements for primary community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2026/27 academic year set out a fair and equitable process for children wishing to be admitted to Walsall schools as part of the phased admissions transfer rounds in September 2026 and throughout the 2026/27 academic year as part of midyear admissions process.

- 4.9 These arrangements support the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities, specifically the priority that all children, especially those children who are looked after or have previously been in public care can have the best start and are safe, happy, healthy, and learning well.

Risk management

- 4.10 The admission arrangements will be included in Walsall's admissions booklet. This is the Council's composite prospectus, and this document will be published on Walsall Council's website. The provision of clear information will help parents and carers to decide upon their preferences when applying for a school place for their child and should contribute to a reduction in the number of admission appeals.
- 4.11 Children who miss education because they do not have a school place are at risk of failing to develop the skills necessary to enable them to enter the workforce. There are also significant safeguarding risks. The admissions arrangements and coordinated admissions process ensure that school places are offered fairly and equitably to applicants, and that children who cannot be offered one of their parent's preferred schools are allocated a place at an alternative school to mitigate against these risks.

Financial implications

- 4.12 There are no direct financial implications from this report. Schools are funded in part by pupil numbers on roll. It is therefore important for schools to forecast pupil numbers to ensure financial sustainability in budget setting.

Legal implications

- 4.13 All Local Authorities are required by section 88M of the School Standards and Framework Act and the Co-ordination Regulations, to have in place a scheme each year for co-ordinating admission arrangements for maintained schools and academies within their area.
- 4.14 Walsall Council, as an Admission Authority, has a statutory duty to determine the proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools. The details of the consultation are set out in section 15 below.
- 4.15 Admissions authorities are statutorily required to complete consultation on any changes to their proposed admission arrangements for the 2026/27 school year by 31 January 2025 and must determine (or finalise) these by 28 February 2025.
- 4.16 Walsall Local Authority consulted on the proposed Admission Arrangements as set out in Appendix A, in line with the School Admissions Code 2021.
- 4.17 In addition, all admissions authorities are required to consult on their admissions arrangements at least once every seven years even if there have been no changes during that period.

- 4.18 The proposed admission arrangements comply with the School Admissions Code (2021).

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.19 None.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.20 None.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.21 In line with the requirements of the School Admissions Code (2021), and in order to ensure greater equity and fair access to education provision full consideration has been given to the possible impact, direct or indirect, of the proposed admission criteria on equal opportunities. The challenges facing children and young people who have been in public care are well documented. The purpose of these changes is to ensure that all children who are looked after or who have been in public care are given highest admissions priority for their preferred schools. This is to ensure that these children and young people are given the best possible opportunity to thrive and achieve the best possible educational outcomes.

Staffing implications

- 4.22 None.

Climate Impact

- 4.23 None.

Consultation

- 4.24 Walsall Council opened a public consultation which recommended reducing the Published Admission Numbers (PANs) within three local authority-maintained schools in the borough.
- 4.25 As per the School Admissions Code 2021, consultation must last for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year.
- 4.26 Walsall Council opened an 8 week consultation on Monday 18 November 2024 and closed on Friday 10 January 2025.
- 4.27 Schools, governors, parents and other stakeholders were consulted during the consultation period via emails and school newsletters. The consultation proposals were also published on Walsall Council school admission web pages.

4.28 There have been no formal responses to the consultation received by Walsall Council.

5. Decide

5.1 Cabinet is asked to determine these admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary schools for the 2026/27 academic year in accordance with the recommendations as set out above in section 3 of this report.

6. Respond

6.1 The determined admission arrangements for 2026/27 will be published on the Walsall Council website once approved, prior to the required determination date of 28 February 2025.

7. Review

7.1 The admissions arrangements for Walsall community and voluntary controlled primary schools, and the scheme for coordinated admissions are reviewed annually.

Background papers

School Admissions Code (2021)

Appendix

Appendix A: Walsall School Proposed Admissions Arrangements 2026-2027

Author

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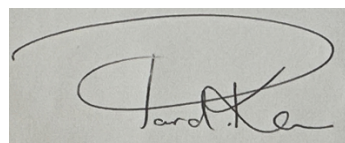
Signed



Colleen Male
Executive Director Children's Services

3rd February 2025

Signed



Councillor Kaur
Portfolio holder Education & Skills

3rd February 2025



Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR **PAST** OUR **PRESENT** AND FOR OUR **FUTURE**



Walsall School Proposed Admissions Arrangements 2026 - 2027

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Walsall Council participates in an inter-Local Authority coordinated admission scheme with several neighbouring Local Authorities, namely Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Staffordshire and Wolverhampton. This scheme allows these Local Authorities to coordinate applications for their schools to ensure that the children of their Local Authority receive the highest preference on their application form as detailed by the applicants. This scheme applies to Primary and Secondary applications for Reception, Infant-Junior and Secondary school transfers.

A single application is submitted online at Walsall Council website [School admissions | Walsall Council](#) for children who reside in Walsall, where they can details schools within Walsall and out of borough:

- **Secondary Applications** – can admit up to 5 preferences.
- **Primary & Infant-Junior Applications** – can admit up to 3 preferences.

All on-time applications are processed in the same manner without prejudice regardless of the order of the preferences, once over-subscription criteria has been applied to all the applicants at each school offers will be made. If a child can be offered more than one school place that has been listed, the Local Authority will be made for the school detailed highest on the application form.

PRIMARY ADMISSIONS

ADMISSION TO RECEPTION CLASS

If your child was born between **01.09.2021 and 31.08.2022** you must apply for a school place in Reception year before 15 January 2026.

Walsall Council's online application form will be live from 1 September 2025.

Applicants can detail up to three schools on their application form, the three schools should be listed in order of preference that they wish their child to be considered for a place.

Parents of children who are in nursery provision in Walsall and are resident in Walsall must apply online if they want their child to join a reception class in a Walsall primary school or in another local authority's area.

Attendance at a Walsall school's nursery provision or co-located children's centre does not guarantee a place at a Walsall primary school.

Preferences changed or added after the closing date without a significant change in circumstances will be processed as late applications. This will apply to applications submitted up to 27 February 2026.

When notifying a significant change of circumstances, the applicant must supply documentary evidence to confirm the change. An example of a significant change of circumstances is a house move that necessitates a change of preference(s). This would need to be validated by documentary evidence such as a solicitor's letter confirming exchange of contract or a copy of the tenancy agreement.

All applications for named schools will be considered in accordance with each school's published admission criteria. Schools that are their own Admission Authority will be provided with a list of information in respect of all applications naming their school, but not the rankings, together with copies of any supporting documentation. These schools will use the information provided to apply their admission criteria and will then inform the Admission & Education Sufficiency Team of the order in which all applications meet their admission criteria.

Where a child meets the admission criteria of more than one of the schools named on the online application form then Walsall Council will allocate a place at the highest ranked of those schools. Admission Authorities will be advised of the pupils to be offered places.

The table below gives details of Walsall primary schools, which are their own admission authorities: -

Foundation Schools	Voluntary Church of England Schools	Aided Catholic Schools	Academies
Manor Primary	Blue Coat CE (A) Infant	St Anne's Catholic Primary	All Saint's National Academy
	Blue Coat CE (A) Junior	St Francis Catholic Primary	Bentley West Primary School
	Cooper and Jordan CE (VA) Primary	St Joseph's Catholic Primary	Birchills CE Primary Community School

		St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary	Blackwood School
		St Mary's the Mount Catholic Primary	Bloxwich Academy
		St Patrick's Catholic Primary	Brownhills Primary Academy
		St Peter's Catholic Primary	Busill Jones Primary School
		St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary	Caldmore Primary Academy
			Croft Academy
			Edgar Stammers Primary Academy
			Fibbersley Park Primary Academy
			Greenfield Primary Academy
			Goldsmith Primary Academy
			Jubilee Academy Mossley
			Lodge Farm Primary Academy
			New Invention Learning Academy
			North Walsall Academy
			Park Hall Infant Academy
			Park Hall Junior Academy
			Pheasey Park Farm Primary
			Reedswood E-ACT Academy
			Rivers Primary Academy
			Ryders Hayes School
			St Bernadette's Catholic Primary
			Woods Bank Primary Academy
			Woodlands Academy of Learning

By 19 – 23 January 2026 (TBC), Walsall Council will exchange application data and supporting documentation in respect of pupils resident in Walsall, who have applied for schools outside the borough, with the appropriate maintaining Local Authorities. Similar information will be received for applications from out of borough residents who have expressed preferences for Walsall primary schools.

By 2 – 6 March 2026 (TBC), Walsall Council will input the results of all applications to Walsall schools and a list of potential offers will then be produced. These potential offers will then be exchanged with other Local Authorities in respect of the results of out of borough applications. The information received will state which Walsall residents have the potential offer of a place in an out of borough school. This information will be transferred onto the Walsall database, compared to rankings and will result in a list of provisional offers.

By 16-20 March 2026 (TBC), the provisional offers will be exchanged with other Local Authorities in respect of out of borough applications. The information received will state which Walsall residents have a provisional offer of a place in an out of borough school. These will be transferred onto the Walsall database, compared to rankings, and the results will be the final allocation of places at Walsall primary schools.

By 27 March 2026 (TBC), the final allocations will be exchanged with the other Local Authorities in respect of the results of out of borough applications.

If a Walsall child does not meet the admission criteria for any of their preferred schools then Walsall Council will allocate a place at the nearest alternative primary school with vacant places, after consultation with the relevant admission authority.

On the National Notification Date, 16 April 2026, email notification of the outcome of their application will be sent to all parents of Walsall resident children who submitted an online application and requested email notification.

The Local Authority will make just one offer of a school place to each child, further offers will only be made after the offer date if it is subsequently possible to offer a child one of their parents higher ranked preferences. An offer of a school place will not be withdrawn unless it is subsequently found to have been made in error, or as the result of a fraudulent, or intentionally misleading application, or the parent informs the Local Authority that they have made alternative arrangements for their child's education and no longer require a secondary school place.

TRANSFER FROM INFANT – JUNIOR SCHOOL

There are nine Infant Schools in Walsall where children can attend up to the age of seven, they must then move to a junior school to complete their primary education.

Infant school name	Junior school name
Alumwell Infant School	Alumwell Junior School
Blue Coat Infant School	Blue Coat Junior School
Delves Infant School	Delves Junior School
New Invention Infant School	New Invention Learning Academy
Palfrey Infant School	Palfrey Junior School
Park Hall Infant School	Park Hall Junior School
Rosedale Infant School	Short Heath Junior School
Sunshine Nursery & Infant School	Blakenall Heath Junior School
Whitehall Nursery & Infant School	Whitehall Junior School

Children who are already in attendance at a Walsall Infant School will not automatically transfer from the infant school to their corresponding Junior school. An application is required. An application should be made via Walsall Councils website, listing up to three preferences in order of requirement.

SECONDARY ADMISSIONS

If your child's date of birth is between 1 September 2014 – 31 August 2025, they are currently on roll in a primary school in year 6 and resides in Walsall a secondary school application should be completed.

Parents should complete an online application. This will enable Walsall parents of Year 6 children (who will transfer to secondary education in September 2026) to name up to five secondary schools, rank them in order of preference and give reasons for their preference. The online application may be used to apply for a place at any secondary school in or outside the borough.

Parents who name Queen Mary's Grammar School, Queen Mary's High School, The Walsall Academy, a Specialist Music Place at Aldridge School on the online form must also complete the school's own Registration Form.

Parents who name Blue Coat CE Academy, Brownhills School, Shire Oak Academy, St Francis of Assisi Catholic School or St Thomas More Catholic Business and Enterprise College on the online form must also complete the school's own supplementary information form.

Online applications must be submitted by the national closing date of **31 October 2025**.

Preferences, which are changed or added after the closing date up without a significant change in circumstances, will be processed as late applications.

All preferences which are changed or added after 28 November 2025 will be processed as late applications. When notifying a significant change of circumstances, the applicant must supply documentary evidence to confirm the change. An example of a significant change of circumstances is a house move that necessitates a change of preference(s). This would need to be validated by documentary evidence such as a solicitor's letter confirming exchange of contract or a copy of the tenancy agreement which confirms residence at the new address not just ownership.

All applications for named schools will be considered in accordance with each school's published admission criteria. Schools, which are their own Admission Authority, will be informed of all applications naming their school, but not the rankings. These schools will inform the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Team of the order in which all applicants meet their admission criteria.

Walsall Council will exchange application data and supporting documentation in respect of pupil's resident in Walsall, who have applied for schools outside the borough, with the appropriate maintaining Local Authorities. Similar information will be received for applications from out of borough residents who have expressed preferences for Walsall secondary schools.

By 3-7 November 2025 (TBC) Walsall Council will input the results of all applications to Walsall schools and a list of potential offers will then be produced. These potential offers will then be exchanged with other Local Authorities in respect of the results of out of borough applications. The information received will state which Walsall residents have the potential offer of a place in an out of borough school. This information will be transferred onto the Walsall database, compared to rankings and will result in a list of provisional offers.

By 5-9 January 2026 (TBC), the provisional offers will be exchanged with other Local Authorities in respect of out of borough applications. The information received will state which Walsall residents have a provisional offer of a place in an out of borough school. These will be transferred onto the Walsall database, compared to rankings and the results will be the final allocation of places at Walsall secondary schools.

By 9 - 13 February 2026 (TBC), the final allocations will be exchanged with the other Local Authorities in respect of the results of out of borough applications.

If a Walsall child does not meet the admission criteria for any of their preferred schools, then Walsall Council will allocate a place at the nearest alternative secondary school with vacant places following consultation with the relevant admission authority.

On the National Notification Date, 1 March 2026 (or the next working day), email notification of the outcome of their application will be sent to all parent/carer who are a resident in Walsall who submitted an online application.

The Local Authority will make just one offer of a school place to each child, further offers will only be made after the offer date if it is subsequently possible to offer a child one of their parents higher ranked preferences.

An offer of a school place will not be withdrawn unless it is subsequently found to have been made in error, or as the result of a fraudulent, or intentionally misleading application, or the parent informs the Local Authority that they have made alternative arrangements for their child's education and no longer require a secondary school place.

If there are more applications than there are places available, places will be allocated using the Oversubscription Criteria in the following order of priority:

1. Children and Young People in Care & previous Children and Young People in Care

Children and young people in care are children who at the time of application are:

- In the care of the Local Authority
- Being provided with accommodation by a Local Authority in the exercise of the social services functions.

Previous Children and young people in Care are children who

- were looked after but ceased to be so due to adoption (or became subject to child arrangements order or special guardianship order) immediately following having been looked after.
- Children who appear to a Local Authority to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care because of being adopted.

Supporting Evidence:

If the child for whom the application is being made is in the care of a local authority or previous children in care this must be indicated on the common application form, support of this must be added to the application by way of attachment.

2. Children who have a sibling in attendance at the school or paired junior school when the application is submitted and who will still be attending the school at the proposed admission date.

A sibling is a child who resides at the same address as the child for whom a place is being requested and is one of the following:

- A brother or sister sharing the same parents;
- A half-brother or sister sharing one common parent;
- A step-brother or sister (i.e. related by their parent's marriage);
- Any other child for whom it can be demonstrated that he or she is residing permanently at the same address (e.g. under the terms of a residence order).

3. Pupils for whom a place at the school is essential on medical or social grounds as supported in writing by a medical practitioner or a social worker. (Applications will be subject to verification by the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Manager)

If parents believe there are specific medical or social reasons for claiming priority for a child to attend a particular school, the relevant part of the application must be completed and evidence to support the claim must be submitted to the Local Authority.

Requests for such consideration will be subject to verification by the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Manager. This is necessary because parents will be asking the

Authority to assess the child as having a stronger case than many other children, some of whom may live closer to the school.

Medical Evidence

Medical evidence must be submitted in writing from a medical practitioner and should state why the preferred school is **the only school that can meet the child's needs**. This must relate to either the child or the parents, for example where the parent(s) or the child has a disability that may make travel to a school further away more difficult. Medical evidence, which relates to parent, will be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where the child lives with a single parent who has a medical condition or disability that may make travel to a school further away more difficult.
- Where the child lives with both parents and both parents have a medical condition or disability that may make travel to a school further away more difficult.
- Where a child lives with both parents and one parent has a medical condition or disability that may make travel to a school further away more difficult medical evidence may be considered if the other parent is unable to accompany the child on the journey to and from school because they are the sole carer for the other parent.

Social Evidence

Social evidence must be submitted in writing from an appropriate professional and should state why the preferred school is **the only school that can meet the child's needs**.

Please note that preferences are only given priority under the medical/social criterion in very exceptional cases where medical or social evidence clearly demonstrates that the preferred school is the only school which can meet the child's needs.

4. For applications to junior schools only. Attendance by the child at the relevant paired infant school when the application is made.

The paired infant and junior schools are:

Alumwell Infant	paired with	Alumwell Junior
Delves Infant	paired with	Delves Junior
New Invention Infant	paired with	New Invention Learning Academy
Palfrey Infant	paired with	Palfrey Junior
Rosedale CE (C) Infant	paired with	Short Heath Junior
Sunshine Infant and Nursery	paired with	Blakenall Heath Junior
Whitehall Nursery and Infant	paired with	Whitehall Junior Community

5. For applications to voluntary controlled Church of England primary schools only. Up to 25% of places may be allocated as 'Church Places' to children, regardless of

distance between home and school, whose parents are regular worshippers at a Christian church and whose application is supported in writing by the minister of the church where they worship.

The following voluntary controlled Church of England primary schools have 'Church Places';

- Christ Church CE (C) JMI
- Holy Trinity CE Primary
- Little Bloxwich CE (VC)Primary
- Old Church CE (C) Primary
- Rosedale CE (C) Infant
- St Giles CE Primary
- St John's CE Primary
- St Michael's CE (C) Primary

The number of Church places available is determined by the Admission Number of the school. Voluntary controlled Church of England primary schools:

- with an admission number of 30 will offer a maximum of 7 Church Places;
- with an admission number of 45 will offer a maximum of 11 Church Places;
- with an admission number of 60 will offer a maximum of 15 Church Places;
- with an admission number of 90 will offer a maximum of 22 Church Places.

If there is over-subscription for Church Places, priority will be given to those living closest to the school as measured in a straight line.

'Regular worshipper' is defined as attending a place of worship on at least one occasion per month over the past twelve months.

Supporting Evidence:

A supplementary information form (SIF) will need to be downloaded from the Walsall Council website [School admissions | Walsall Council](#) for applicants to submit to the school.

6. Distance between the home address and the school as measured in a straight line with those living closer to the school receiving the higher priority.

Distance will be measured in a straight line from the centre point of the home address to the centre point of the school address using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system with those living closer to the school receiving the higher priority.

LATE APPLICATION POLICY

The online portal will close for secondary applications on 31 October 2025.

The online portal will close for primary applications (Reception & Junior) 15 January 2026.

Late Applications and, where appropriate, schools' own Registration Forms, received after the Closing Date, are processed as late applications. Any request to change the name or ranking of a school made after the closing date will be processed in accordance with the late application policy.

Late applications will be considered for places after all the applications that were received by the Closing Date therefore, it is very likely that late applicants will not be offered a place at one of their preferred schools. If all preferred schools have been filled with on-time applications the closest school to the home address with vacancies will be allocated.

Applications received after the closing date will be passed to the appropriate Admission Authority for consideration under its Late Application Policy. Each Admission Authority is required to publish its own Late Application Policy which explains how late applications will be dealt with. The Late Application Policy for all Walsall community and voluntary controlled schools is shown below.

LATE APPLICATIONS RECEIVED UP TO 4 WEEKS AFTER THE CLOSING DATE

Late applications received up to four weeks after the Closing Date may be considered as being on-time but only where there are exceptional circumstances, including:

- Where the family were unable to submit their online application to Walsall Council on time because they moved into the Borough of Walsall after the Closing Date;
- The family were unable to comply with the admission timetable because of exceptional circumstances which prevented them from submitting their online application;
- When a single parent has been ill for some time.

In these cases, the circumstances must be given in writing at the time of application they will be subject to verification by the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Manager.

For secondary schools, this applies to applications received between 1 November 2025 and 29 November 2025.

For primary schools, this applies to applications received between 16 January 2026 and 14 February 2026.

LATE APPLICATIONS RECEIVED MORE THAN 4 WEEKS AFTER THE CLOSING DATE

Applications for schools received more than 4 weeks after the closing date but before the notification date will be processed as late applications and the applicant will receive notification of their offers as soon as possible after national offer day.

For secondary schools, this applies to applications received between 30 November 2025 and 28 February 2026.

For primary schools, this applies to applications received between 15 February 2026 and 15 April 2026.

LATE APPLICATIONS RECEIVED AFTER THE NOTIFICATION DATE (ONCE PLACES HAVE BEEN OFFERED)

Applications received after the notification date: a place will be offered at the highest ranked school if places are available.

For Walsall residents, if a place is not available at any of the preferred schools a place will be offered by Walsall Council at the nearest alternative Walsall school with vacant places, after consultation with the relevant admission authority and the child's name will be added to the waiting list for schools listed as preferences in admission criteria order, for any schools out of borough contact will have to be made with that Local Authority to request for the child to remain on the waiting list.

Offers for late applications will be made following National Offer Day as per the below table:

Date	Secondary Late Offer Days
16 March 2026	Late Offers - Phase 1 - Offers made for late applications received between 1/11/2025 & 28/02/2026
18 March 2026	Waiting List Positions available for Secondary 2026 applications
04 May 2026	Late Offers - Phase 2 - Offers made for late applications received between 01/03/2026 & 30/04/2026
22 June 2026	Late Offers - Phase 3 - Offers made for late applications received between 01/05/2026 & 21/06/2026
As Required	Further offers for late applications will be made as required

Date	Primary Late Offer Days
30 April 2026	Waiting list positions available for Reception 2026 & Junior 2026 applications.
4 May 2026	Late Offers - Phase 1 - Offers made for late applications received between 16/01/2026 & 30/04/2026
10 June 2026	Late Offers - Phase 2 - Offers made for late applications received between 1/05/2026 & 05/06/2026
As Required	Further offers for late applications will be made as required

WAITING LIST POLICY

Waiting Lists for all Walsall schools, other than Walsall Academy, will be maintained by Walsall Council until 31 August 2026, at this point they will be sent to the necessary school for coordinating in line with their midyear applications.

Parents may enquire about their child's position on any Waiting list by contacting the emailing the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Team, schooladmissionsadvice@walsall.gov.uk

Children in Care and previously children in care and those who are allocated to a school in accordance with Walsall's Fair Access Protocol must take precedence over those children on the waiting list.

Waiting lists are kept of all children who have been refused a place at any school that was ranked higher than the school at which they have been offered a place, for example

- If a child is offered a place at the school that was ranked 2nd on their application, then the child's name will only be placed on the waiting list for the school that was ranked 1st.
- If a child is offered a place at their parent's first preference school the child's name will not be added to any waiting list kept for lower ranked schools, unless requested in writing.

After 1 March 2026 (or next working day) for secondary transfers, or 16 April 2026 (or next working day) for primary admissions, a parent may contact the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Team to apply for a place at an oversubscribed Walsall school. Their child's name will be placed on the school's waiting list in admission criteria order.

Any vacancies will be offered based on the admission criteria for the school.

The Local Authority will continue to co-ordinate the primary and secondary phased rounds and will retain waiting lists until 31 August 2026.

After this, waiting lists for phased rounds will be held by the relevant admissions authority for a term only until 31 December 2026.

From 1 January 2027, parents who wish their child to be added to a new waiting list for a Walsall primary or secondary school should apply via either the primary or secondary mid-year admission application process.

MIDYEAR ADMISSIONS

APPLICATIONS FOR MIDYEAR ADMISSION TO WALSALL PRIMARY SCHOOL 2026/27

The Local Authority will coordinate the midyear admission process for applications to all Walsall primary schools and academies who have opted to join their co-ordinated scheme for the academic year 2026/27.

The list of primary schools and academies that have opted to join the Local Authority's scheme and those that have opted to co-ordinate their own arrangements for the academic year 2026/27 will be available on the Local Authority's website from 1 September 2026.

Parents who wish to apply for mid-year admission other than at the usual point of entry (Reception or Year 3 when transferring from an infant school to a junior school) for any school that has opted to join the Local Authority's Co-ordinated scheme should submit an online application via the school admission pages of the Walsall Council website.

Any supplementary information forms required by a school must be returned to the relevant school. Where a parent completes a supplementary form, it will not be regarded as a valid application unless the parent has also listed a preference for the school on their online midyear admission application.

Parents who wish to apply for mid-year admission other than at usual point of entry (Reception or Year 3) when transferring from an infant school to a junior school) for any school that has opted to co-ordinate their own mid-year admissions process should apply directly to their preferred schools.

Parents who wish to apply for mid-year admission to any school outside of the Walsall Local Authority area should contact the relevant local authority directly.

All Walsall maintained mainstream primary schools and academies must provide the Local Authority with accurate details of the number of vacancies in each year group on a weekly basis. This vacancy return process is to enable places to be offered to applicants for primary midyear admission at those schools that have opted to participate in the Local Authority's co-ordinated scheme without unnecessary delay. This process will also enable the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Team to fulfil its statutory duty to provide advice and guidance to parents and carers about school place availability in all primary schools in Walsall, not just those that are part of the Local Authority's co-ordinated scheme for mid-year admissions.

On receipt of an application for a primary midyear admission for a school that is part of the Local Authority's Co-ordinated admissions scheme for the academic year 2026/27 the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Team will assess the application in accordance with the relevant admissions criteria.

Once an application has been assessed in accordance with the published admission criteria of the preferred schools, the Local Authority must write to the applicant within 15 days of the receipt of their application to indicate one of the following outcomes:

- Where the child is eligible for a place at one or more of their parent's preferred schools they will be offered a place at the highest ranked preference;
- Where it is not possible to offer the highest ranked preference, where possible a place will be offered at a lower ranked preference and the offer letter will contain details of how the parent may appeal against the decision to refuse a place at the higher ranked school, and where there is a waiting list their child's name will be added to it. Waiting lists will be held until the end of the academic year and parents who wish their child's name to be added to the new waiting list will need to resubmit their online application at the start of each new term;
- If it is not possible to offer the applicant a place at any of their parent's preferred schools and the child is currently without a school place, a place will be offered at an alternative Walsall school, which has places available, following consultation with other admissions authorities where appropriate.

Parents of children with a statement of special educational needs or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) must contact Walsall Council's SEN Team or the Local Authority that issued their statement or EHCP if they wish their child to move to a new school.

APPLICATIONS FOR MIDYEAR ADMISSION TO WALSALL SECONDARY SCHOOLS:

Parents who wish to apply for admission to any Walsall mainstream secondary school other than at the usual point of entry (Year 7) must apply directly to their preferred schools.

Parents who wish to apply for places at schools outside of Walsall should contact the relevant local authority directly.

All Walsall mainstream secondary schools and academies must provide the Admissions and Education Sufficiency Team with accurate details of the number of vacancies in each year group on a weekly basis to enable the Local Authority to provide accurate advice to parents and carers on secondary school place availability in Walsall.

Schools must notify the Local Authority promptly of all direct applications that are received, and of the outcome of all applications for midyear admission.

School must inform each applicant in writing of the outcome of their application within 15 days of receipt of the application also including the details of how the applicant can appeal an admissions decision if appropriate.

Parents of children with a statement of special educational needs or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) must contact Walsall Council's SEN Team or the Local Authority that issued their statement or EHCP if they wish their child to move to a new school.

ADMISSION TO A YEAR GROUP OUTSIDE OF A CHILD'S CHRONOLOGICAL YEAR GROUP

Parents who wish to apply for their child to be admitted to a Walsall community or voluntary controlled primary school, in a year group other than that which is designated by their chronological age should submit a written request to Admissions & Education Sufficiency Manager.

Walsall Council, as admission authority for the school, will make the decision on whether or not to grant the request based on the individual circumstances of each case.

Requests will only be approved in circumstances where it is in the best interests of the child to be educated outside of their chronological year group.

Parents wishing to make an application for their child to be admitted out of their chronological year group to a voluntary aided or foundation school or academy, should write to the admission authority for the school. In either case, the letter should include details of why the parents/carers believe it is in the best interests of their child to be educated out of their chronological year group and should include supporting evidence from an appropriate professional.

Parents applying for midyear admission to a year group outside their child's chronological age, in a Walsall primary school will also need to submit an online midyear admission application to the Local Authority. Applications for midyear admissions for secondary schools must be completed with the secondary school directly.

POLICY FOR DEFERRED ENTRY TO RECEPTION

Children reach compulsory school age on the first day of the term following their fifth birthday. However, all Walsall primary schools provide full time places for pupils in a reception class from September in the year before children reach their fifth birthday.

If parents prefer their child to start school later than 1 September 2026, they have the option of deferring the child's entry until later in the 2026/27 school year. Parents opting for this must notify the school in writing of the date they wish their child to start in a reception class by Monday 1 June 2026.

Parents are not able to defer entry beyond the beginning of the term following their child's fifth birthday or beyond the academic year for which admission is sought.

The effect of this is that the place is held for that child and is not available to be offered to another child.

ADMISSION OF 'SUMMER BORN' CHILDREN TO RECEPTION

Summer born children, (born between 1 April and 31 August) reach compulsory school age in the September following their fifth birthday (or on their fifth birthday if it falls on 31 August). Parents of summer born children may submit a request for their child to be admitted to a reception class in the September following their fifth birthday, at the point at which other children in their age group are moving from the reception class to year 1.

Parents seeking deferred admissions to reception in a community or voluntary controlled primary school should make a request in writing to Walsall Council, providing details of the reason for the request and supporting medical evidence or evidence from the child's current head teacher, if

appropriate, demonstrating that deferred admission to Reception would be in the child's best interests.

Requests for deferred admission to Reception in respect of children who would normally be admitted in September 2026, should be submitted by 15 January 2026 where possible.

When an application for deferred admission to reception at the point at which other children in their age group are moving into Year 1 is received for a community or voluntary controlled primary school, Walsall Council, as admission authority for the school, will make the decision on whether to grant the request based on the individual circumstances of each case. Requests will only be approved in circumstances where it is in the best interests of the child to defer admission to Reception.

Parents seeking deferred admission to Reception in a voluntary aided school, foundation school or in an academy should submit a request directly to their preferred school. They must also notify the Local Authority in writing of the request and must complete a Local Authority application for the year of admission.

OVERSUBSCRIPTION CRITERIA FOR NURSERY SCHOOLS

Applications for nursery places should be made directly to the school.

If there are more applications than there are nursery places available, then places will be allocated using the Oversubscription Criteria in the following order of priority:

Priority for nursery places will be given to children born between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023. If places are oversubscribed, the following Oversubscription Criteria will apply:

- 1) Children in Care and all previous children in care, including those children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care because of being adopted
- 2) Pupils who have a sibling already in attendance at the school or paired junior school when the application is made and who will be still attending the school at the proposed admission date.
- 3) Pupils for whom a place at the school is essential on medical or social grounds and supported in writing by a medical practitioner or a Social Worker. (Applications will be subject to verification by the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Manager).
- 4) Distance between the home address and the school as measured in a straight line with those living closer to the school receiving the higher priority.

Where places are still available schools may only offer places to children who have attained the age of 3. If the remaining places are oversubscribed the Oversubscription Criteria 1-4, shown above, will apply.

If there is oversubscription in criteria 2 and 3, priority will be given to those living closest to the school as measured in a straight line.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

If you move house following submission of an application for any school place you must contact the Local Authority immediately as it may affect your child's application. Evidence will be required to show your new address, this would need to be validated by proof of address in the form of a utility bill, a solicitor's letter confirming completion of a house purchase and residency at the property as examples.

FRAUDULENT OR MISLEADING APPLICATIONS

The Local Authority will investigate any reports of an application that is suggested to be fraudulent or misleading. Any allegations that are confirmed by the Local Authority may result in the school place been withdrawn from the child.

The local Authority should be alerted to any potential fraudulent application by contacting the Admission & Education Sufficiency Team – schooladmissionsadvice@walsall.gov.uk

SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEALS

You can appeal at the standard points of admission (reception, year 3 or year 7), or mid-year if you've applied to move schools at a non-standard point. For appeals for schools outside Walsall Borough, you'll need to contact the relevant local authority.

It's important to be realistic about your reasons for appealing and the chances of being successful. An appeal can prolong the period of uncertainty for you and your child.

To make an appeal, you will have to set your case out in writing and attend an appeal hearing.

In reception, year 1 and year 2, the class size is limited to 30. Your application can be turned down if all the classes already have 30 children.

Complete your form, save a copy, and return to email AdmissionAppeals@walsall.gov.uk

You can also attach copies of evidence to your email. We accept scans and photos of original documents.

The deadline for you to submit your appeal form is 15 May 2026. Appeals received after this date may not be heard until the new school year, which starts 1 September 2026.

Appeals will take place during term time, up until late July 2026.

ADMISSION NUMBERS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR 2026/27

Listed below are the proposed admissions numbers for community and voluntary controlled primary schools for 2026/27. The admission number is the capacity of the school to admit children at the normal age of entry in the 2026/27 academic year, that is:

- Admissions into Reception in Infant and Primary Schools
- Admissions into Year 3 in Junior Schools

Community or Voluntary Controlled Primary Schools	Proposed Admission Number	Community or Voluntary Controlled Primary Schools	Proposed Admission Number
Abbey Primary	30	New Invention Infant	90
Alumwell Infant	90	Old Church CE (C) Primary	60
Alumwell Junior	90	Palfrey Infant	90
Barcroft Primary	60	Palfrey Junior	90
Beacon Primary	60	Pelsall Village	30
Blakenall Heath Junior	60	Pinfold Street Primary	60
Butts Primary	30	Pool Hayes Primary	30
Castlefort JMI	30	Radleys Primary	30
Christ Church CE (C) JMI	60	Rosedale CE (C) Infant	60
Chuckery Primary	60	Rushall JMI	30
County Bridge Primary	30	Salisbury Primary	30
Delves Infant	90	Short Heath Junior	90 (proposed to change 2029/30 to align with Rosedale Infant)
Delves Junior	90	St Giles CE Primary	60
Elmore Green Primary	45	St James Primary	30
Hillary Primary	90	St John's CE Primary	45
Holy Trinity CE Primary	30	St Michael's CE (C) Primary	60
King Charles Primary	60	Sunshine Infant and Nursery	60
King's Hill Primary	60	Walsall Wood	30
Leamore Primary	30	Watling Street JMI	30
Leighswood	60	Whetstone Field Primary	30
Lindens Primary	60	Whitehall Nursery and Infant	90
Little Bloxwich CE (VC) Primary	30	Whitehall Junior School	90
Lower Farm Primary	60		
Meadow View JMI	60		
Millfield Primary	30		

DEFINITIONS:

HOME ADDRESS:

The home address of a child is the permanent residence of a child in a residential property when the place is offered. The address must be the child's only or main residence and is either:

- owned by the child's parent(s) or guardian; or
- leased to or rented by the child's parent(s), or guardian under lease or written rental agreement of not less than six months duration.

Documentary evidence of ownership or rental agreement may be required together with proof of actual permanent residence at the property concerned. In certain circumstances the child's current school will be asked to verify the address given.

Where parents have shared responsibility for a child and the child lives with both parents for part of the week, the main residence will be determined as the address where the child lives for **most** of the week. Parents may be requested to supply documentary evidence to support the address used for the application.

The offer of a place is based upon the address of the child when the offer is made. If a child is offered a place at an oversubscribed school the place may be withdrawn if it is found that the child moved (before the place was offered) to a new address, which was further away from the school, and the child would not have qualified for a place under the distance criterion.

If a family moves between the application and the date of offer, the Admissions & Education Sufficiency Team must be informed as soon as possible of these circumstances.

If the home address is a flat (or apartment) and there is more than one flat at the same address, priority will be given to applicants living at the lowest numbered flat on the lowest floor.

SIBLING:

A sibling is a child who resides at the same address as the child for whom a place is being requested and is one of the following:

- A brother or sister sharing the same parents.
- A half-brother or sister sharing one common parent.
- A stepbrother or sister (i.e., related by their parent's marriage).
- Any other child for whom it can be demonstrated that he or she is residing permanently at the same address (e.g., under the terms of a residence order).

Proposed Local Early Years Funding Formula 2025/26

Portfolio: Councillor Kaur – Education and Skills

Related portfolios: Councillor Perry – Leader of the Council

Service: Children's Services: Education

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 The Early Years funding formula is the local process that is utilised (informed by national early years funding guidance) to allocate the Early Years block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding that the Council receives to the early years providers in Walsall.
- 1.2 This report seeks approval to utilise the recommended Local Early Years Funding Formula in allocating the Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to Early Years Providers in 2025/26.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Central Government, in line with the commitment set out in its manifesto document, introduced an Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) in April 2017 which was to deliver affordable, flexible and high quality childcare for all parents and children via a funding system which is fair for providers and local authorities.
- 2.2 The Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is paid to local authorities, who have a statutory duty to ensure sufficient early years places are available to meet the requirements in their area, and this funding is then paid by the local authority to providers based on the actual number of hours of funded childcare that is delivered.
- 2.3 The Early Years entitlements for 2025/26 include:
 - 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of children from 9 months up to 2 years old (extended to 30 hours from September 2025).
 - 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of 2 year old children (extended to 30 hours from September 2025).
 - 15 hours entitlement for 2 year olds receiving additional support.
 - 15 hours entitlement for all 3 & 4 year olds.
 - 15 hours entitlement for working parents of 3 & 4 year olds.

- 2.4 As the early years local funding formula will result in the Local Authority allocating funds to individual providers, and those providers utilising this for expenditure which will be significant (greater than £500,000), the approval of the formula is a key decision.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet approves the proposed Local Early Years Funding Formula as set out in Appendix A.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 In December 2024, the Department of Education (DfE) announced the local authority hourly funding rates for 2025/26 determined by the early years national funding formulae (EYNFF).
- 4.2 Local authorities are required to set a local Early Years Funding Formula for mainstream schools, nursery schools and private/voluntary early years providers in line with the Early Years entitlements: local authority funding operational guide 2025 to 2026 before the beginning of the financial year.
- 4.3 The agreed Early Years Funding Formula rates are then used to determine a budget share for all early years providers for 2025/26.

Proposed Early Years Funding Formula

- 4.4 Operational guidance sets out the funding factors that are permitted within the Early Years Local Funding Formula. These include a universal hourly base rate, a range of funding factor supplements including a mandatory deprivation factor and other discretionary funding factors, special educational needs inclusion fund (SENIF), disability access fund (DAF), early years pupil premium (EYPP) and additional funding in respect of maintained nursery schools.
- 4.5 Table 1 below sets out the proposed areas of the local Early Years Funding Formula (EYFF), highlighting the estimated cost of each area to be funded from the indicative allocation of £39.852m of Early Years Block Funding of the DSG that will be received in 2025/26, with a narrative describing each area set out below the table. The Table also shows that with the exception of the central expenditure, all of the funding received is passported directly to providers.
- 4.6 It should be noted that Early Years allocations are indicative at this stage and will be revised throughout the year as they are based on an estimated number of hours to be provided throughout the year. Final funding is then updated based on actual hours delivered.

Table 1 – Proposed 2025/26 Early Years Expenditure

Provision	Estimated Cost against Early Years Block of DSG for 2025/26 (£m)
3 & 4 Year Old Universal	13.754
3 & 4 Year Old Working Parents	4.555
2 Year Old Additional Support Parents	4.503
2 Year Old Working Parents (Apr-Aug)	1.113
2 Year Old Working Parents (Sep-Mar)	3.898
Under 2's - Apr-Aug	1.653
Under 2's - Sep-Mar	5.804
Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) - 3 & 4 Year Old	0.486
Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) - 2 Year Old	0.172
Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) - Under 2's	0.015
Maintained Nursery School (MNS) Supplement	2.175
Disability Access Funding (DAF) - 3 & 4 Year Old	0.196
Disability Access Funding (DAF) - 2 Year Old	0.042
Disability Access Funding (DAF) - Under 2's	0.016
Deprivation Supplement	0.119
SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF)	0.100
Central expenditure on early years entitlement	1.251
Total	39.852

Universal and additional hours for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds

- 4.7 The operational guidance states that all local authorities must pay a universal hourly base rate for all their childcare providers in each of their local early years funding formulae for all the early years entitlements. The universal base rate must, in all cases, be multiplied by the number of estimated hours of attendance of children at each setting. The proposed rates for each entitlement included within the funding formula are detailed in Appendix A.

Funding Supplements

- 4.8 Funding supplements are amounts of funding paid to providers in addition to the universal hourly base rate to reflect local needs or policy objectives. Local authorities may apply a supplement to the base rate for any of the entitlements. For the 3 and 4-year-old entitlements, it is mandatory for local authorities to include a deprivation supplement in their local funding formula.
- 4.9 The proposed funding formula does not include funding supplements for rurality or sparsity, flexibility, quality or English as an additional language as these are all discretionary supplements.

Deprivation Supplement

- 4.10 This supplement recognises deprivation in local authorities' areas and supports children in those areas in taking up the early years entitlements. Use of the deprivation supplement is mandatory for 3 and 4-year-olds and discretionary for 2-year-olds and children aged 9 months up to 2 years.
- 4.11 The proposed Walsall Local Early Years Funding Formula allocates deprivation funding to 3 & 4 year olds based on the number of children recorded on prior year January census and headcount, whose postcode falls within band A of the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI).

Entitlement hours for 2-year-old children and children aged 9 months up to 2 years old

- 4.12 The introduction of the new working parent entitlements for 2-year-old children and children aged 9 months up to 2 years old in 2024 to 2025 means that there is now two separate 2-year-old entitlements.
- 4.13 Local authorities must ensure that the final hourly funding rate they pay to providers for a child on the entitlement for families of 2-year-olds receiving additional support is at least equal to the final hourly funding rate for the 2-year-old eligible working parent entitlement.
- 4.14 As detailed in Appendix A, the proposed Walsall Early Years Funding Formula sets the same base rate of £8.04 per hour for both 2-year-olds receiving additional support and for the 2 year old eligible working parent entitlement.
- 4.15 For the entitlement for working parents of children aged 9 months up to 2 years, local authorities can use the same formula structure as the 2-year-old working parent entitlement or set a different formula. However, higher funding rates for these younger children should be reflected. Walsall's proposed rate for 2025/26 is £10.99.

Maintained Nursery Schools Supplement (MNSS)

- 4.16 Local authorities with MNS will receive supplementary funding for the 2025 to 2026 financial year for universal 3 and 4-year-old entitlement hours only. This funding was introduced to enable local authorities to protect their 2016 to 2017 funding rates for the universal 15-hour entitlement for MNS (that is, the rates that existed before the EYNFF).
- 4.17 In 2025/26, local authorities' MNS supplementary funding rates include a notional allocation to acknowledge the additional pressures that their MNSs may face in respect of increases to teachers pay and employer pension contributions.
- 4.18 From 2023/24, the funding for this supplement that is paid to local authorities was changed to ensure that it was shared more evenly across all local authorities with MNSS. The DFE introduced a minimum value and a cap value on the hourly funding rate that local authorities can receive for their MNSS and which can then be allocated to maintained nursery schools. In 2025/26, the minimum hourly rate is £5.27 and the cap has been set at £10 per hour.

- 4.19 The allocated funding to local authorities is based on an estimate of hours to be provided by maintained nursery schools. The final value paid to the local authority will vary based on the actual number of hours provided. All providers must be paid the same hourly base rate.
- 4.20 The local EYFF therefore proposes that for 2025/26, the full allocation that the authority receives for MNSS funding, of £5.27 per hour, is also utilised as the basis for allocating the MNSS funding i.e. the full value received will be passed on to maintained nursery schools based on the actual number of hours provided – if the number of hours increases the funding allocated to the local authority and then paid to the setting will also increase, and if the number of hours reduces so will the funding.

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

- 4.21 The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) gives providers additional funding to support children from families receiving additional support accessing an entitlement place. For 2025/26, EYPP covers all children who are accessing the entitlements and meeting the eligibility criteria detailed in Early Years Operational Guidance.

Disability Access Fund (DAF)

- 4.22 The DAF was introduced to support disabled children's access to the entitlements for 3 and 4-year-olds. From 2024 to 2025, DAF eligibility was extended to eligible 2-year-olds and children 9 months old to 2 years, accessing the entitlements.
- 4.23 DAF funds can be used, for example, to support providers in making reasonable adjustments to their settings and/or helping with building capacity, be that for the child in question or for the benefit of all children attending the setting. Settings may want to use DAF funding to pay for staff training to help meet children's specific needs, resources and adjustments to support the individual child's needs.

Special Education Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF)

- 4.24 All local authorities are required to have a SENIF for all children eligible for the entitlements and who have SEN regardless of the number of hours taken. These funds are intended to support local authorities to work with providers to recognise and support the low-level and emerging needs of individual children with SEN who are taking up the entitlements.
- 4.25 These funds also support local authorities to undertake their responsibilities to strategically commission SEN services as required under the Children and Families Act 2014. Children not eligible for entitlements or with more complex needs and in receipt of an education, health and care plan will continue to be funded via the high needs block of the DSG.

Central Expenditure on Early Years Entitlement

- 4.26 The Early Years Funding operational guidance allows local authorities to retain a percentage of their Early Years funding allocation to support the costs of internal services relating to Early Years provision.

- 4.27 In previous years, local authorities were able to retain up to 5% of the Early Years block funding allocation passing on a minimum of 95% of the funding to providers. However, in summer 2023, the previous government consulted on the minimum pass-through requirement and outlined their intention to increase this from 95% to 97%.
- 4.28 It has been confirmed that this change will be embedded over 2 years increasing the minimum pass-through rate to 96% in 2025/26 and 97% in 2026/27. This requirement applies separately to all entitlements.
- 4.29 In 2024/25, the Walsall EYFF retained £778k (2.3%) of the Early Years Funding Block meaning an average pass through rate of 97.7%. This was applied to all of the entitlements for children from 9 months to 4 years old.
- 4.30 For 2025/26, the proposed EYFF retains £1.25m (3.41%) of the Early Years Funding Block meaning an average pass through rate of 96.59% and also applies this to all of the entitlements. This is within the allowable rates detailed in the Early Years Funding Operational Guidance. This is shown in Appendix B.
- 4.31 This centrally retained funding is also included in the Central Expenditure Budget report shared with Schools Forum on 21 January 2025. This report sought Schools Forum approval to retain these funds and provides further detail as to how these funds will be spent.
- 4.32 Table 2 below details the 2024/25 pass-through rates for the 4 Black Country local authorities. The 2025/26 information is not yet available however the proposed pass-through rate of 96.59% is in line with Wolverhampton and Sandwell current rates.

Table 2 – Black Country LA 2024/25 Pass-through Rates	
LA	2024/25 Pass-through Rate
Walsall	97.7%
Wolverhampton	96.5%
Sandwell	96.9%
Dudley	98.8%

Detailed Funding Factor Values

- 4.33 Appendix A below confirms the proposed funding factors and their values for the 2025/26 Local Early Years Funding Formula.
- 4.34 It should be noted that the early years guidance also permits a number of additional discretionary supplements including rurality; quality; flexibility and English as a second language, however it is not proposed to use any of these permitted discretionary supplements in the 2025/26 Local Early Years Funding Formula. This is in line with prior years funding formula as agreed by Schools Forum and approved by Cabinet.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.35 The Council 2025-29 sets out the Council's vision and priorities for the next four years, where resources will be prioritised and how the Council will deliver these

against the We Are Walsall 2040 vision. Ensuring that a local EYFF is seen as equitable and is transparent to those who have been consulted with, such as Schools Forum, when setting the formula directly links to the Council's priorities for outcomes linked to providing a child friendly borough including ensuring children are school ready and working with education providers to ensure young people have the right pathway to education.

Risk management

- 4.36 Individual settings may see movements in the actual funds that are paid to them where the numbers of children taking up entitlement, have changed. Settings will, as they always have done, need to manage these changes within their overall funding. Where the impact of that is significant for any individual Early Years provider, the authority will work with those concerned to provide support in managing that.

Financial implications

- 4.37 The exact financial impact on individual providers cannot be predicted at this time as this will be dependent on actual hours of funded childcare that are delivered during 2025/26. This will be shared with providers by 28 February 2025 as recommended by the DfE.
- 4.38 Current financial modelling indicates that the proposed financial arrangements set out in Table 3 would be affordable within the Early Years Block funding provided within the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2025/26. It should be noted that, as the January 2025 census data is not yet available, prior year data has been used in the funding model to estimate affordability, however updated modelling will be undertaken once the January 2025 census data is available. Any risk associated with this is minimal as the funding allocation will also be updated to reflect any changes in the number of hours provided.
- 4.39 Payments are made to private, voluntary or independent (PVI) nurseries and Child Minders on a termly basis with 3 payments made per term. The first payment is 75% of their indicative allocation for the coming term, the second payment is the remaining 25% of their allocation updated for the latest portal data and the final payment then accounts for any further adjustments in pupil numbers by the end of the term.
- 4.40 Payments are made to schools and nursery schools on a termly basis with 2 payments made per term. The first payment is 100% of their indicative allocation for the coming term. The second payment is a final adjustment to the indicative allocation based on the latest census data available. The payment may be a payment for further funding or recovery of over payment.
- 4.41 Table 3 below shows the increase in rates for each funding entitlement for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Table 3 – Funding Entitlement Rate Increases					
Entitlement	2023/24 Rate	2024/25 Rate	2024 Rate Increase	2025/26 Rate	2025/26 Rate Increases
3 & 4 year Old Universal	£4.86	£5.40	£0.54	£5.58	£0.18
3 & 4 year Old Working Parents	£4.86	£5.40	£0.54	£5.58	£0.18
2 year old Additional Support Parents	£5.51	£7.95	£2.44	£8.04	£0.09
2 year old Working Parents	NA	£7.95	NA	£8.04	£0.09
Under 2's	NA	£10.85	NA	£10.99	£0.14

To note, the funding entitlements for 2 year old working parents and under 2's were not introduced until 2024/25 therefore there are no rates included in Table 3 above for 2023/24.

- 4.42 In 2023, the government consulted with local authorities on the approach to distributing entitlement funding for 2 year olds and under from 2024/25. The outcome of this lead to a larger increase in the funding linked to 2 year olds. The increase in 2024 for Walsall was £2.44 and the full increase was passed to providers.
- 4.43 Table 4 below shows the current 2024/25 rates for the 4 Black Country local authorities.

Table 4 – Comparison Rates for other Local Authorities				
Entitlement	2024/25 Walsall Rates	2024/25 Wolverhampton Rates	2024/25 Sandwell Rates	2024/25 Dudley Rates
3 & 4 year Old Universal	£5.40	£4.98	£5.06	£5.07
3 & 4 year Old Working Parents	£5.40	£4.98	£5.06	£5.07
2 year old Additional Support Parents	£7.95	£7.83	£8.48	£7.58
2 year old Working Parents	£7.95	£7.83	£8.48	£7.58
Under 2's	£10.85	£10.71	£11.61	£10.41

- 4.44 In summary, the Table shows that:
- Walsall's rates for 3 & 4 year olds exceed all of the other LAs by an average of £0.36 or 7%.
 - Walsall's rates for 2 year olds exceed both Wolverhampton and Dudley by an average of £0.25 or 3%. Sandwell rates for 2 year olds are higher than Walsall.
 - Walsall's rates for under 2's exceed both Wolverhampton and Dudley by an average of £0.29 or 3%. Sandwell rates for under 2's are higher than Walsall.

Other Grants Supporting Early Years Entitlements

- 4.45 As part of government reforms to expand the entitlements for funded childcare to children aged 9 months to school age, Central Government agreed to provide additional revenue and capital funding to local authorities to support the expansion of Early Years provision to ensure adequate provision is available to meet expected growth in demand.
- 4.46 This was split into a Delivery Support grant, for which Walsall received £60,534.27 revenue funding in 2023-24, and a Childcare Expansion Capital grant, for which Walsall received £430,887.04 capital funding in 2023-24.
- 4.47 Of the Delivery Support grant received in 2023-24, £52,812 was unspent as at the end of 2023/24 and carried forward into 2024/25 and is expected to be fully spent by March 2025. The Childcare Expansion Capital grant remained fully unspent in 2023/24 and was carried forward in full to 2024-25 and is expected to be fully spent by March 2025. No further revenue or capital funding is expected to be received.
- 4.48 In the March 2023 Spring Budget, the government announced an investment of £289m for a national wraparound childcare programme, to support all families who need to access wraparound childcare from 8am to 6pm. An expansion in the availability of wraparound care was to begin from September 2024, with every parent who needs it able to access term-time wraparound childcare by September 2026. The potential and confirmed funding allocations for Walsall are included in the Table 5 below.

Table 5 – National Wraparound Programme Grant Allocations			
2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 (Provisional)	Total
£17,662.98	£954,830.50	£534,815.70	£1,507,309.18

- 4.49 In January 2024, the DfE also launched an Early Years Financial Incentives pilot scheme to provide financial incentives to new and returning eligible early years workers to support the planned childcare expansion. The DfE selected a number of authorities to take part in the pilot and then split these into 2 groups – a control group who would not offer the incentive and a trial group who will offer the incentive.
- 4.50 Walsall were selected to be in the trial group and confirmed participation in the pilot with the DfE. The total amount of funding available for Walsall was £251,935 to support around 160 new starters, however, due to low take-up from Early Years providers, it was agreed with the DfE that that second payment for 2024/25 would be withheld. The first payment was received in March 2024, so was carried forward in full to 2024-25. The potential and confirmed funding allocations for Walsall are included in Table 6 below.

Table 6 – Early Years Incentives Pilot Grant Allocations			
	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Planned Allocation	£125,967.50	£125,967.50	£251,935.00
Actual Allocation	£125,967.50	£0	£125,967.50

- 4.51 The funding was made available to the LA as a Section 31 grant, however, the guidance states that the LA can only retain up to 5% of the grant to support internal administration costs and all funding must be spent by 31st March 2025. To date £6k has been spent on the pilot plus a further £6k on administrative costs. All remaining unspent funds at 31 March 2025 will be returned to the DfE.
- 4.52 Funding was available between 2021-22 and 2023-24 to cover the work done by Local Authorities in support of the Early Years Experts and Mentors Programme, which gives Early Years providers access to mentoring to improve their performance ratings. Walsall participated in the Summer Term of the 2023-24 academic year, so received £4,000 in the 2023-24 financial year which was carried forward in full to 2024-25. This will all be fully spent in 2024/25.
- 4.53 An Early Years Assurance Group has been set up comprising of Officers from across Children's services, Finance, Business Intelligence Hub and the Communications team to ensure that all of the Early Years programmes detailed in sections 5.9 through to 5.17 are on track, relevant governance procedures are in place and adhered to, timelines are agreed and deadlines are met. Updates from the group are then shared with the Director on a regular basis.

Legal implications

- 4.54 The DfE has prescribed the way in which early years providers should be financed for the 2025/26 financial year. These guidelines are set out in the Early Years Entitlements: local authority funding operational guidance 2025 to 2026 and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-funding-2025-to-2026/early-years-entitlements-local-authority-funding-operational-guide-2025-to-2026#local-authority-funding-of-the-entitlements---96-pass-through-requirement>

- 4.55 The purpose of these arrangements is to help secure greater consistency in the way in which funding is distributed to early years providers. The Council must follow the guidance issued by DfE within The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations, and the proposed Walsall local early years funding formula sets out how funding will be allocated to early years providers in Walsall within the prescribed arrangements.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.56 Schools are required to comply with the Council's procurement rules and policies in conducting their business.

Property implications

- 4.57 Unless any schools in Walsall were to close, there will be no property implications associated with this report.

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.58 The content of this report has taken into account the Marmot objectives and it is confirmed that the proposals have been tested against the relevant considerations in this respect. As such there has been no indication that the proposed school funding formula would have any adverse impact on the health and wellbeing of staff and pupils based at Walsall schools.

Staffing implications

- 4.59 If individual providers see movement in the actual funding paid to them, due to movements in pupil numbers or changes in need, there is a risk that staff posts may also need to be reduced.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.60 As part of the consultation on the implementation of an early years national funding formula, the government undertook a full equality impact assessment, taking into account the relevant protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010.

Climate Change

- 4.61 There are no direct Climate Change implications arising from this report.

Consultation

- 4.62 Consultation has been undertaken with Schools Forum, which is made up of representatives of maintained schools and academies within Walsall and representatives from the private sector for early years providers, on 21 January 2025. Any relevant comments or feedback will be added to the final version of this report prior to circulation to Cabinet.

5. Decide

- 5.1 That Cabinet approves the proposed Local Early Years Funding Formula that was recommended by Walsall's Schools Forum at their meeting on 21 January 2025.

6. Respond

- 6.1 Following the decision by Cabinet, indicative budget shares for all early years providers for 2025/26, will be distributed according to the approved early years funding formula by 28 February 2025.

7. Review

- 7.1 Schools will be expected to monitor and stay within their delegated budget. The local authority will continue to provide support to schools to ensure that robust financial monitoring is carried out. Walsall's Schools Forum will continue to receive financial performance reports to monitor usage of school's budgets.
- 7.2 For private and voluntary providers, regular support from the Early Years Team is provided to ensure continuity of provision.

Background papers

Schools forum Report 21 January 2025 – Proposed Local Early Years Funding Formula 2025/26

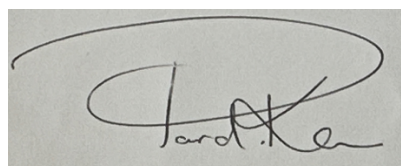
ESFA – Early years entitlements: local authority funding operational guide 2025/26

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Colleen Male
Executive Director Childrens & Customer
3 February 2025



Councillor Kaur
Portfolio Holder – Education & Skills
3 February 2025

Appendix A - Proposed Early Years Funding Formula 2025/26

Funding Factor	Unit / Description	2024/25 Rate / Value	2025/26 Rate / Value
3 & 4 Year Old Universal Entitlement	15 hours funded child care for all 3 & 4 year old children – rate per hour	£5.40	£5.58
3 & 4 Year Old Working Parents	Additional 15 hours funded childcare for eligible working parents – rate per hour	£5.40	£5.58
2 year old Additional Support	Rate per hour (previously known as the 2 year old disadvantaged entitlement)	£7.95	£8.04
2 year old working parent entitlement	15 hours April – August increasing to 30 hours from September 2025 – rate per hour	£7.95	£8.04
Under 2's working parent entitlement	15 hours April – August increasing to 30 hours from September 2025 – rate per hour	£10.85	£10.99
Deprivation Supplement – mandatory	Fixed annual sum per notional disadvantaged child derived from numbers recorded on January census & mapped by postcode to IDACI band A	£1140 pa p/p	£1140 pa p/p
Maintained Nursery Schools Supplement for 3 & 4 YO provision	Per Hour	£4.64	£5.27

Other Early Years Funding

Funding	Description	2024/25 Prescribed Rate	2025/26 Prescribed Rate
Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)	Additional funding to support disadvantaged children who meet the prescribed criteria	£0.68 per hour of universal free entitlement	£1.00 per hour of universal free entitlement
Disability Access Fund (DAF)	For children in receipt of disability living allowance – support access to free entitlement for all eligible children	£910 p/a lump sum	£938 p/a lump sum
Special Education Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) for all children with SEN eligible for entitlements	SENIF is targeted funding for children with lower or emerging SEN needs who are eligible for or taking up the entitlements regardless of the number of hours taken.	£640 per term	£640 per term

Appendix B – Hourly Rate Increases passed to Providers

Funding Entitlement / Factor	DSG Rate £	Rate Passed to Providers £	% of Funding passed to providers
3 & 4 year Old Universal	5.81	5.58	96%
3 & 4 year Old Working Parents	5.81	5.58	96%
2 year old Additional Support Parents	8.38	8.04	96%
2 year old Working Parents	8.38	8.04	96%
Under 2's entitlement	11.45	10.99	96%
Early Years Pupil Premium 3 & 4 year olds	1.00	1.00	100%*
Early Years Pupil Premium 2 year olds	1.00	1.00	100%*
Early Years Pupil Premium under 2's	1.00	1.00	100%*
Disability Access Fund 3 & 4 year olds	938.00	938.00	100%*
Disability Access Fund 2 year olds	938.00	938.00	100%*
Disability Access Fund Under 2s	938.00	938.00	100%*
Maintained Nursery Schools Supplement	5.27	5.27	100%*

*100% of the funding available must be passed to providers.

Cabinet – 12 February 2025

All Age Carers Strategy 2024-2027

Portfolio: Councillor Pedley – Adult Social Care

Related portfolios: Councillor Elson – Children and Young People

Service: Adults and Children's Services

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 Duties towards unpaid carers are woven through the Care Act 2014 and associated statutory guidance.
- 1.2 The local authority has a responsibility to identify and support young Carers. These responsibilities are set out in the Children Act 1989 (as amended by the Children & Families Act 2014) and under the Care Act 2014.
- 1.3 The All Age Carers Strategy pulls together the key principles underpinning the Care Act 2014 and the statutory duties placed on the Council regarding carers and details how the Council will meet those duties.
- 1.4 The aim of this strategy is to highlight the role of Carers in Walsall and outline our strategic intentions for improving the wellbeing of Carers living in the borough by helping them access quality services when they need them, and in a way that works best for them.

2. Summary

- 2.1 To update Cabinet on the All-Age Carers Strategy. A strategy designed to support all Walsall Carers to improve the quality of life for Carers to enable them to live a healthy and fulfilling life outside of their caring role.
- 2.2 Update Cabinet on progress of the All-Age Carers Strategy and delivery plan co-designed and to be co-delivered by Adult Social Care Commissioning and Children's services.
- 2.3 The strategy is in line with the vision outlined in We Are Walsall 2040. Walsall A community that cares. The All Age Carers Strategy will help in achieving the outcome: -

'By 2040 all carers will be supported to meet their needs and maintain their quality of life.'

And Our Council Plan 2025-2029. Key priority Supported and cared for. The All Age Carers Strategy will deliver on our commitment that we: -

'will have a clear and comprehensive carers strategy outlining how we will work with and support carers across the borough'

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet acknowledge the Walsall All Age Carers Strategy 2024-2027 is a joint and collaborative strategy across Adult and Children's Services.
- 3.2 That Walsall All Age Carers strategy 2024-2027 is approved.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1. The Care Act 2014 defines a Carer as 'An adult who provides or intends to provide care for another adult (adult needing care)" Section 10(3) of the Care Act 2014". And NHS England defines a Carer as 'Anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support'.
- 4.2. Carers provide unpaid care alongside their other responsibilities, with people often putting their lives on hold to provide care for a loved one, friend, neighbour or relative. This care could be for a few hours per day, or more and could be around the clock care. Anyone can become a Carer.
- 4.3. Carers often say they did not choose or plan to become Carers, and caring responsibilities can arise unexpectedly without any training, knowledge, or preparation. People do it out of love, kindness or a sense of duty. Many people do not see themselves as Carers because they are simply doing what they can for a relative, a friend or a neighbour who needs them because of their disability or illness.
- 4.4. The Council has a responsibility to identify and support young carers. These responsibilities are set out in the Children's Act 1989 (as amended by the Children & Families Act 2014) and under the Care Act 2014. The latter introduced new rights for young carers to ensure young carers and their families are identified and their needs for support are assessed.

- 4.5. Young Carers are children and young people under the age 18 who provide regular and ongoing care and emotional support to a family member who is physically or mentally disabled or misuses substances.
- 4.6. Under section 63 of the Care Act 2014 the Local Authority must assess the needs of a young carer who is approaching the age of 18 when:
- a. It appears that the young carer has needs for Support; and
 - b. It appears that the young carer is likely to have needs for Support after becoming 18.
- 4.7. Key statistics about Carers in Walsall:
- There were 26,415 unpaid Carers in Walsall in 2021
 - This represents 10% of the total population in the Borough
 - The majority of unpaid Carers are woman (66%)
 - The largest group of Carers is aged between 45-64 years of age
 - There are currently 276 young Carers from the age of 8 – 21 years of age
 - Over 60% of young Carers are female
 - The largest group of young Carers are aged 13 – 15 years old
 - Around 60% of Carers provide care for 20 hours or more per week
 - 35% of Carers in Walsall provide over 50 hours of care each week
 - The economic value of unpaid care is estimated to be around £605 million per year
 - Around 60% of Carers provide care for a spouse or partner
- 4.8. It was agreed at EDMT on 8 August 2024 to develop a 3 year 'All Age Carers Strategy 2024-2027,' and that Adult Social Care and Children's Services should collaborate to coproduce the strategy.
- 4.9. Adult Social Care Commissioning and Children's Services worked collaboratively to align and integrate their individual strategies to co-produce the All-Age Carers Strategy. The Draft All-Age Carers Strategy was presented at EDMT on 9 October 2024 and presented at Children's DMT on 24 October 2024, where it was signed off.
- 4.10. This strategy builds on the progress made over recent years in identifying and improving the experience and wellbeing for Carers. Carers of all ages have shared their experiences of what caring is like and what support they need. These views have shaped and informed the priorities in the strategy.
- 4.11. This strategy has been developed through a process of coproduction and ongoing communication with Carers, Carer's Hub, the voluntary sector, Walsall Young Carers service and other key stakeholders.
- 4.12. Both Adult Social Care and Walsall Young Carers service support carers of all ages and through the All-Age Carers strategy have set 6 priorities in line with the Care Act 2014.

Priority 1 - Identification and Recognition

- Priority 2 - Improving the health and well-being of unpaid Carers
- Priority 3 - Improving information, advice and guidance to Carers
- Priority 4 - Supporting Carers to have a good life outside of caring, as well as after caring ('Time for Me')
- Priority 5 - Improving Carers Assessment and Support
- Priority 6 - Crisis management and professional awareness.

- 4.13. In order to effectively address the gaps that exist in meeting the needs of carers in Walsall and to implement the strategic priorities within the strategy, the development of a delivery plan identifying the stages of work required over the next three years, considering the financial challenges which the Council and the health service are currently under, is being developed.
- 4.14. We will introduce a robust governance structure and Carers Matter Partnership Board, where partners and Carers will be represented. The Board will oversee the delivery of the strategic priorities within the Strategic Delivery Plan. The Commissioning Manager (CBS) will have overall responsibility for its delivery via the All-Age Carers Steering Group which will report to the Carers Matter Partnership Board.

Council Plan Priorities

- 4.15 The All Age Carers Strategy contributes to the Council's outcomes in the Borough Plan We Are Walsall 2040. With the vision for Walsall to be a community that cares. The All Age Carers Strategy will help in achieving the outcome: -

'By 2040 all carers will be supported to meet their needs and maintain their quality of life.'

And key area of focus in Our Council Plan 2025-2029. Key priority, Supported and cared for. The All Age Carers Strategy will deliver on our commitment that we: -

'will have a clear and comprehensive carers strategy outlining how we will work with and support carers across the borough'

Risk Management

- 4.16. Not applicable.

Financial Implications

- 4.17. Currently we are consulting on the priorities within the strategy. Until the consultation is completed the financial implications are unknown. Once this is completed it will be clearer what the potential financial envelope required will be if any and how it will be resourced.

- 4.18 Currently, there are no savings attached to this, if probable savings are identified at any future point they will be modelled and form part of future year budget plans.

Legal Implications

- 4.19. The proposals will facilitate compliance by the Council with its statutory obligations towards Carers in the borough of all ages in the borough of Walsall under the Children Act 1989 (as amended) and the Care Act 2014.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.19. Although adults currently have a commissioned provider, to deliver the three-year strategy the Council may have to go out to tender, or consider a variation of the current contract with the current provider.

Property Implication

- 4.20 Not applicable.

Health and Wellbeing implications

- 4.21 The All Age Carers strategy is intended to ensure that we improve the health and well-being of all carers in Walsall. The Care Act places “wellbeing at the heart of care and support”. Councils are directed to apply this wellbeing principle to adult carers, young carers, and parent-carers who fall within scope of the Care Act 2014. The Council is also required to promote wellbeing when carrying out any of its care and support functions. Wellbeing is integral to our carer’s strategy.

Staffing implications

- 4.22 Current staff in the commissioning team are not funded from long term budgets, but grants. To deliver and sustain the strategy longer term funding for key roles will need to be agreed. This will likely be done through the work on People Commissioning.
- 4.23 Walsall early help currently has 2 permanent young carers practitioners in place.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.24 To identify any anticipated impact on residents, service users and staff an Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for the lifetime of the strategy, clearly identifying any adverse impact on any of the protected characteristics and demonstrating if that impact is justified or if there are any mitigating actions to reduce the impact.

Consultation

- 4.25. As part of the development of the strategy there has been consultation and engagement with carers and commissioned providers and usage of National Surveys.
- 4.26. Carers have told us about the impact on them of caring, what is working well and what is needed.
- 4.27. The voice of Young Carers and promise to Young Carers has been included.
- 4.28. The Council have had an opportunity to identify the most important areas of work around Unpaid Caring in November DASS Chats.
- 4.29. Working closely with the coproduction lead ongoing consultation is taking place to ensure the priorities are right and delivery of the strategy is as required and so that the carer voice is central to delivery.

Climate Impact

- 4.30. Not applicable.

5. Decide

- 5.1. That Cabinet acknowledge the Walsall All Age Carers Strategy 2024-2027 is a joint and collaborative strategy across Adult and Children's Services.
- 5.2. That Cabinet approves the Walsall All Age Carers Strategy 2024-2027.

6. Respond

- 6.1. To help support the delivery of this strategy, the Council will work in partnership with Carers, Walsall Children's Service, Health and Adult Social Care, Walsall Together, statutory and voluntary agencies to provide the local steer for the commissioning and development of Carer services and the Carer Offer within the borough of Walsall.
- 6.2. Delivery Plan 2024-2027 currently being coproduced, will be discussed and agreed within the All-Age Carers Steering Group and brought back to EDMT and CMT in spring 2025.

7. Review

We will introduce a robust governance structure and Carers Matter Partnership Board, where partners and Carers will be represented. The Board will oversee the delivery of the strategic priorities within the Strategic Delivery Plan. The Commissioning Manager Community Based Services in Adult Social Care, will have overall responsibility for its delivery via the All-Age Carers Steering Group which will report to the Carers Matter Partnership Board.

Background Papers

None

Appendix

Appendix A: All Age Carers Strategy

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3 February 2025



Councillor Keir Pedley
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3 February 2025



Colleen Male
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3 February 2025



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Portfolio Holder
Children and Young People
3 February 2025

All Age Carers Strategy

Carers Matter – Our commitment
to Carers in Walsall Council

2024-2027



Walsall Council





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Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to highlight the role of Carers in Walsall and outline our intentions for improving the wellbeing of Carers living in the borough.

Our partnership with Carers, young Carers and their families, partner agencies, providers, health colleagues and community voluntary sector organisations is of paramount importance to deliver on the priorities highlighted in this strategy. Carers could be looking after someone who is a family member, partner or friend and need support to maintain their wellbeing and to support them in their caring role. We know that the support Carers give is unpaid, underestimated and often undervalued. In this document we have set out our strategic aims and priorities to support:

- Unpaid Carers
- Young adult Carers
- Young Carers

that are caring for family or friends living in Walsall. This strategy builds on the progress made over recent years in identifying and improving the experience and wellbeing for Carers. We are incredibly grateful to the Carers who have shared their experiences of what caring is like and what support they need. These views have shaped and informed the intentions in this strategy. We have included both national and local priorities with details of the proposed actions over the next 3 years. This strategy has been developed through a process of co-production and ongoing communication with Carers, our Carer's Hub, the voluntary sector, Walsall Young Carers service and other key stakeholders. We promise to support you and acknowledge and recognise your caring role in Walsall. We aim to improve our understanding of the needs of our Carers, and from this, help to design, shape and improve services in Walsall to meet these needs. Walsall will be a place where Carers are recognised, valued, and supported. Carers will be able to achieve their full potential, live their lives with confidence and resilience and access quality services when they need it, and in a way that works best for them.

We want Walsall Carers to be able to live a healthy and fulfilling life outside of their caring role.

We would like to thank any Carers in Walsall for the difference that they make to people's lives in Walsall.



Our commitment to Carers

As the Executive Directors of Adults and Children's Social Care we are proud to acknowledge the vital role that Carers play in our community. The selfless dedication and tireless work of Carers is essential in supporting our residents to live with dignity in their own homes, and we are extremely grateful for their contribution. Our Carers Vision sets out an ambitious 3-year plan to build on our current work and improve further the identification, support and recognition for Carers across the borough. We are committed to identifying and supporting more Carers, to improve their wellbeing and quality of life. The Council remains committed to delivering a range of measures to support Carers in Walsall. These include increased access to information, advice, and practical support, as well as training, education, and respite services. We are passionate about ensuring that Carers are recognised, valued and supported in every way possible. The Council is dedicated to working with Carers to ensure that they receive the help they need to maintain their own wellbeing, and to continue caring for their loved ones, friends and neighbours. Finally, we would like to express our deep appreciation for the contribution that Carers make to our communities, and we assure all Carers in Walsall that we remain committed to providing the support they need to continue their vital work.



We recognise the crucial importance of identifying and supporting young Carers in our Borough, ensuring their unique needs are met. Through active listening and engagement, we have understood what is essential to them in providing effective support. Our strategy is designed to help young Carers thrive, reach their potential, and make a successful transition to adulthood. By prioritising their wellbeing and offering targeted resources, we aim to create an environment where our young Carers are empowered and can continue to flourish.

We look forward to working with Carers to achieve our vision of a caring and supportive community for all.

Kerrie Allward
Executive Director - Adult Social Care

Colleen Male
Executive Director – Children's Services

Thank You

It's only right to start by thanking Walsall's Carers – of all ages - for the invaluable role they play in our community.

It's because of their dedication and hard work, that many of our most vulnerable residents can continue to live with dignity, in their own homes, supported by people they know and trust.

The council recognises the immense contributions that Carers make to our society 365 days a year, 24/7, and we remain committed to supporting you.

Caring can be a demanding and challenging role, and we want to assure all Carers that the council will remain here to offer the help and support you may need.

We know that our Carers are a diverse group of people, and it's important that the support they receive is useful to them and their circumstances.

We want our Carers to be able to access information, advice, and practical assistance easily, without any extra fuss, so they can do what they do, whilst also looking after themselves and their wellbeing.

It's quite simple – we want our Carers to receive the recognition, respect, and support they deserve, and we are committed to achieving this in every way possible.

Thank you for everything you do, and continue to do, for those you care for.



Councillor Keir Pedley
Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care

Councillor Stacie Elson
Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Who is considered to be a Carer

A Carer is anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid. If you are under the age of 18 you are defined as a young Carer.

Many Carers don't see themselves as Carers and it takes them an average of two years to acknowledge their role as a Carer. It can be difficult for Carers to see their caring role as separate from the relationship they have with the person for whom they care, whether that relationship is as a parent, child, sibling, partner, or a friend. It's likely that every one of us will have caring responsibilities at some time in our lives with the challenges faced by Carers taking many forms. Many Carers juggle their caring responsibilities with work, school and study and other family and social commitments. Some are not known to be Carers. They don't tell relatives, friends or health and care professionals about their responsibilities because of a fear of separation, guilt, pride or other reasons.

This means that the sort of roles and responsibilities that Carers have to provide varies widely including emotional as well as practical support. They can range from help with everyday tasks such as getting out of bed and personal care such as bathing, to emotional support such as helping someone cope with the symptoms of a mental illness. (Definition – NHS England 2024) Young Carers can have a wide range of caring roles and responsibilities, including house work, healthcare, intimate personal care and wider tasks such as translating for non-English speaking family members or managing the family budget. (Hidden from view – the Carers society 2013)

Many people do not see themselves as Carers because they are simply doing what they can for a relative, a friend or a loved one who needs them because of their disability or illness. Carers often put their lives on hold to provide care for a loved one, friend or relative. This care could be for a few hours a day or more and could be around the clock care.

Anyone can become a Carer. Carers tell us that often they do not choose or plan to become Carers, and caring responsibilities can arise unexpectedly without any training, knowledge, or preparation. People carry out their caring role out of love, kindness or a sense of duty for the cared for person who could not cope without this 'necessary and ongoing care.

National Context

According to Carers UK, nationally:

- 42% of Carers do not find it easy to access information and advice
- 8% of unpaid Carers in England are approaching their local authority for help
- 65% of Carers agreed that the increase in the cost of living was having a negative impact on their physical and/or mental health

Headline Facts & Figures

- Carers UK estimates there are 13.6 million unpaid Carers in the UK
- 1.4 million Carers provide more than 50 hours of care per week
- Carers save the economy £132 billion per year
- 40% of Carers have given up work to provide unpaid care
- 1 in 7 people in the workplace are also Carers
- 2/3rds of Carers are aged 51+

These statistics are often to the detriment of the Carer:

- 27% of unpaid Carers have bad or very bad mental health, rising to 31% for those caring for more than 50 hours a week, or for over 10 years
- More than three quarters of all Carers (79%) feel stressed or anxious, 49% feel depressed and half (50%) feel lonely.

Young Carers

- In the last census data (2011) there were 166,363 young Carers in England
- 2024 school census data said 53,976 pupils were recorded as young Carers, this is a low representation with 72% of schools across the country saying they do not have any young Carers.

The Children's Society report (Hidden from View 2013) shared:

- 1 in 12 young Carers spend more than 15 hours a week looking after a parent or sibling
- 1 in 20 young Carers said they missed school because of their caring responsibilities
- On average young Carers miss or cut short 48 school days a year
- The average annual income for families with a young Carer is £5,000 less than families who do not have a young Carer.
- 26% of young Carers said they have been bullied at school because of their caring role (Carers trust 2017)
- 97% of young Carers do not receive transition support, when they become adult carers

Our Duty To Carers

Key principles of the Care Act 2014 that link to duties of local authorities in supporting unpaid Carers.

- A carer has the right to request an assessment under Section 10 of the Act and the local authority has the duty to undertake an appropriate and proportionate assessment if there is an appearance of need.
- The purpose of the carer's assessment is to identify with the carer their personal outcomes, existing needs, and impact of the caring role on their individual wellbeing.
- A carer's assessment must also seek to establish if the caring role is sustainable and if the carer is willing and able to care for the adult needing care.
- The carer should have been provided with appropriate information and advice to enable them to work towards their priorities and personal outcomes, having been supported to identify their existing or potential set of personal strengths.
- Upon completion of a carer's assessment, the local authority should have a full picture of the carer's needs, priorities, and personal outcomes.
- The local authority must provide the carer with a copy of their assessment and their eligibility determination.

The local authority has a responsibility to identify and support young Carers. These responsibilities are set out in the Children's Act 1989 (as amended by the Children & Families Act 2014) and under the Care Act 2014.

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 and the Children and Families Act 2014 give guidance to health and social care, education, and local authorities to make sure that children and young people with SEND are properly supported.

The SEN Code of Practice 2015 provides guidance on the role of carers in supporting children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities. Here are some key points:

- The code emphasizes the importance of involving parents and carers in decision-making processes regarding the support and provision for children with SEN. It highlights that parents' views are paramount and should be considered in all decisions
- Local authorities are required to provide information and advice to carers about the support available, including respite care, training, and financial help. This is to ensure that carers are well-informed and supported in their roles
- The Walsall Local Offer is a single place of information, services, and resources for children and young people (aged 0-25) with special educational needs and disabilities in Walsall.
- The code also outlines the responsibilities of local authorities to identify and support young carers, ensuring that their needs are assessed and met appropriately. This includes providing timely assessments and direct help for families to ensure sustainable progress for children

For more information visit send.walsall.gov.uk/

Walsall Council has a responsibility to follow Ofsted guidance and:

- Identify children and young people in need of help and protection, including young Carers.
- Complete assessments that are timely and result in direct help for families and sustainable progress for children
- There is a clear focus on promoting Carers' wellbeing and taking account of the impact caring has on all aspects of their lives.
- Councils must provide and maintain an information and advice service for all Carers about what can be done to help them (and those they care for) prevent, reduce or delay the development of longer-term needs for care and support, and to help them look after their own wellbeing.

- A young carers assessment must consider the young carers wishes and aspirations as well as their needs for leisure, support with education, and future employment opportunities.
- A young carers assessment will identify and put in place measures to reduce the caring role and reduce any negative impacts it has.
- A Carer's eligibility for an assessment is based solely on them having the 'appearance of need' for care and support. Councils must offer an assessment on this basis.
- Eligibility for support is based solely on whether the Carer's role has (or is likely to have) a 'significant impact' on their wellbeing and as a result they are unable to achieve one or more of the wellbeing outcomes described in the Care Act; this is a lower threshold than the person being cared for, whose eligibility is based on being unable to achieve two or more of these outcomes.
- There are no requirements for Carers to be providing substantial and regular amounts of care, or for a set number of hours, to be eligible for an assessment or support. This is important where Carers may be providing care that fluctuates over time.
- Carers must be given a written copy of a council's decision about their eligibility for support.
- Carers eligible for support must get a support plan, including a personal budget "sufficient to meet their care and support needs" that can be spent in a number of ways. Carers must always be offered the option of taking some, or all, of their personal budget as a direct payment
- Young adult Carers receive transition assessments as they approach adulthood, to enable a 'whole family' approach to providing assessment and support as they become adult Carers
- Since April 2015 young Carers have been entitled to an assessment of their needs from the local authority to assess and support children and young people from taking on excessive or inappropriate care. If young carers have inappropriate or excessive caring responsibilities they may be identified as children in need under the terms of the childrens act and the family may be offered additional support by Childrens services.

The Care Act 2014 defines a Carer as 'An adult who provides or intends to provide care for another adult (adult needing care)' Section 10 (3) Care Act 2014"

NHS England defines a Carer as 'Anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid'.

Carers provide unpaid care alongside their other responsibilities, with people often putting their lives on hold to provide care for a loved one, friend, neighbour or relative. This care could be for a few hours a day or more and could be around the clock care. Anyone can become a Carer.

Carers tell us that often they do not choose or plan to become Carers, and caring responsibilities can arise unexpectedly without any training, knowledge, or preparation. People do out of love, kindness or a sense of duty.

Many people do not see themselves as Carers because they are simply doing what they can for a relative, a friend or a neighbour who needs them because of their disability or illness.

Caring In Walsall

- There were 26, 415 unpaid Carers in Walsall in 2021
- This represents 10% of the total population in the Borough
- The majority of unpaid Carers are woman (66%)
- The largest group of Carers are aged between 45-64 years old

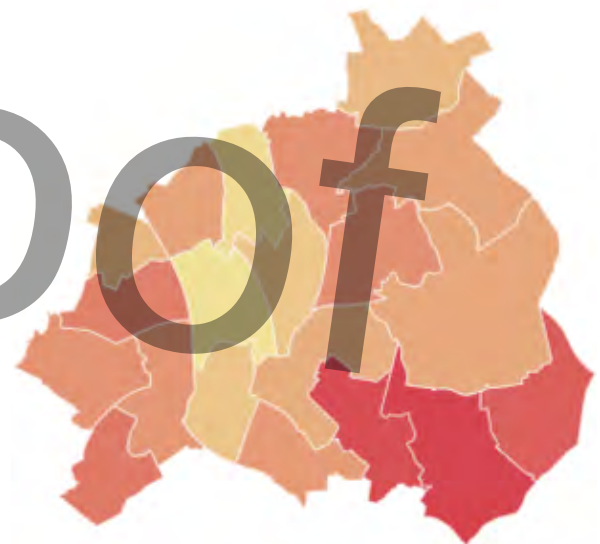
There are currently 276 young Carers from the age of 8 – 21 years old in Walsall

- Over 60% of our young Carers are female
- The largest group of young Carers are aged 13 – 15 years old

Unpaid Carer Change between 2011-21 by Ward, Census 2021

Indicates the change in proportion providing some form of unpaid care

Ward	2011%	2021%	Change
Pheasey Park Farm	12.6%	9.1%	-3.5%
Paddock	12.9%	9.6%	-3.3%
Streetly	12.8%	9.8%	-3.0%
Darlaston South	10.8%	8.2%	-2.6%
Short Heath	12.6%	10.1%	-2.5%
Rushall-Shelfield	12.7%	10.4%	-2.2%
Pelsall	13.0%	10.8%	-2.2%
Willenhall South	10.5%	8.3%	-2.2%
Bentley and Darlaston North	11.0%	8.9%	-2.1%
Palfrey	9.8%	7.8%	-2.1%
Bloxwich West	11.8%	9.8%	-1.9%
Aldridge North and Walsall Wood	12.6%	10.7%	-1.9%
Aldridge Central and South	12.6%	10.7%	-1.9%
St Matthews	10.3%	8.5%	-1.8%
Willenhall North	11.1%	9.4%	-1.6%
Brownhills	11.7%	10.1%	-1.6%
Pleck	9.4%	8.0%	-1.4%
Blakenhall	10.0%	8.6%	-1.4%
Bloxwich East	11.7%	10.6%	-1.1%
Birchills Leamore	9.7%	8.8%	-1.0%



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Caring In Walsall...

- Around 60% of Carers in the Walsall area provide care for 20 hours or more per week
- 35% of Carers in Walsall provide over 50 hours of care each week
- The economic value of unpaid care is estimated to be around £605 million per year
- Around 60% of Carers provide care for a spouse or partner

Unpaid Carers by Category and ward, Census 2021

Indicates the proportion providing care by hours per week

Ward	Provides 1 to 19 hours unpaid care a week	Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week	Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week
Aldridge Central and South	6.5%	2.0%	3.2%
Aldridge North and Walsall Wood	6.5%	1.9%	3.3%
Bentley and Darlaston North	4.3%	2.0%	3.6%
Birchills Leamore	3.5%	2.2%	3.5%
Blakenhall	3.4%	2.3%	3.6%
Bloxwich East	4.5%	2.3%	4.3%
Bloxwich West	5.1%	2.2%	3.5%
Brownhills	5.1%	2.2%	3.6%
Darlaston South	3.7%	2.2%	3.5%
Paddock	6.7%	1.9%	2.6%
Palfrey	4.0%	2.0%	2.8%
Pelsall	6.4%	2.1%	3.4%
Pheasey Park Farm	6.2%	1.7%	2.9%
Pleck	3.5%	2.4%	2.7%
Rushall-Shelfield	5.8%	2.0%	3.7%
Shorth Heath	5.6%	2.1%	3.6%
St Matthews	4.8%	1.9%	2.5%
Streetly	7.1%	1.5%	2.7%
Willenhall North	5.3%	1.9%	3.0%
Willenhall South	4.2%	2.1%	3.1%





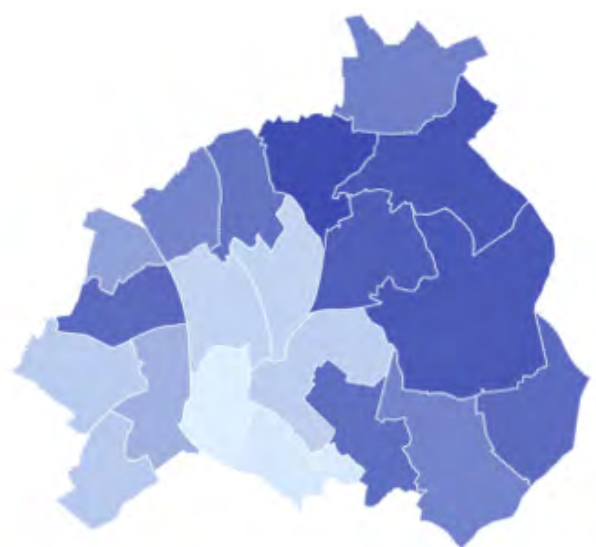
Caring In Walsall...

- Approximately 77% of Carers provide care within their home

Unpaid Carers by Category and ward, Census 2021

Indicates the proportion of the Ward's population whom provide some form of unpaid care

Ward	Change 2021%	2021%
Pelsall	9.1%	10.8%
Aldridge North and Walsall Wood	9.6%	10.7%
Aldridge Central and South	9.8%	10.7%
Bloxwich East	8.2%	10.6%
Rushall-Shelfield	10.1%	10.4%
Brownhills	10.4%	10.1%
Short Heath	10.8%	10.1%
Bloxwich West	8.3%	9.8%
Streetly	8.9%	9.8%
Paddock	7.8%	9.6%
Willenhall North	9.8%	9.4%
Pheasey Park Farm	10.7%	9.1%
Bentley and Darlaston North	10.7%	8.9%
Birchills Leamore	8.5%	8.8%
Blakenhall	9.4%	8.6%
St. Matthews	10.1%	8.5%
Willenhall South	8.0%	8.3%
Darlaston South	8.6%	8.2%
Pleck	10.6%	8.0%
Palfrey	8.8%	7.8%
Total	57,049	9.3%

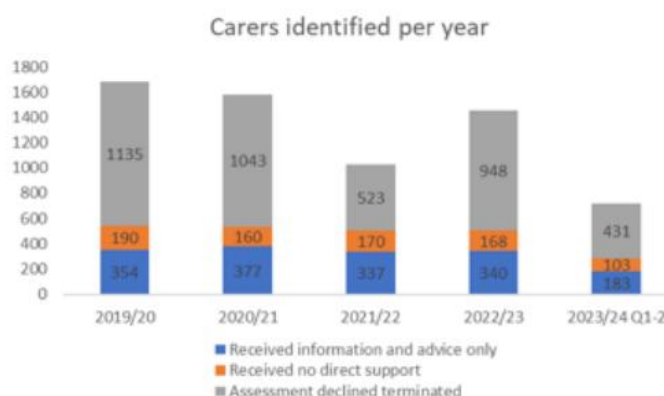


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Survey 100019529

Impact Caring has on you

As part of the development of this strategy there has been consultation and engagement with carers and commissioned providers and usage of National Surveys. The Survey of Adult Carers is a statutory biennial survey, carried out by local authorities across England on behalf of NHS Digital. The survey seeks the opinions of Carers aged 18 or over, on a number of topics that are considered to be indicative of a balanced life alongside their unpaid caring role. It used to monitor the impact of the national Carers strategy.

- The survey was comprised of **31** individual questions, **1** of which were bespoke to Walsall in order to obtain local intelligence.
- There are **26,415** known unpaid Carers in the borough living in Walsall.
- **1,534** Carers were known to Walsall Adult Social Care during the survey eligibility period of 01/09/2022 to 31/08/2023. Of these, **521** received a Carers assessment and/or review within the 12-month window and were therefore sent a copy of the survey. **1013** declined an assessment and were therefore ineligible to be surveyed.



Of the **521** Carers in receipt of an assessment and/or review during the period:

- **349** received information and advice only (of which replacement care provided to the cared-for person in **182** cases).
- **172** received no direct support (of which replacement care provided to the cared-for people in **121** cases).

A summary of the findings from the people who responded to the 2023-24 survey are:

- Response rate is the lowest since the survey was commissioned in 2012-13
- Overall satisfaction with Adult Social Care services has increased by 3.8%
- Carers reported quality of life has decreased by 0.6%
- The proportion of Carers who find it easy to find information about services has increased by 0.9%
- The proportion of Carers who report they have been included or consulted in discussions about the person they care for has decreased by 7.6%
- The proportion of Carers who reported they had as much social contact as they wanted increased by 2.5%

Respondents were encouraged to offer suggestions/comments, some of which can be found later in this section.

- 56% of Carers did not feel supported
- 59% said they did not know where to turn for information or advice
- Some Carers describe their role as a "24/7 job" with 75% of Carers reported feeling stressed as a result of their caring role.
- Carers have reported a sense of loss and grief for the life they had before starting caring
- Carers feel they did not have enough time to take care of their own health
- 78% of Carers reported that they did not feel their contribution to a society as a Carer was valued

What you have told us

- 60% of Carers reported that their caring role has had a negative impact on their physical health and 70% reported it had a negative impact on their mental health
- 54% of Carers reported that their caring role had become more difficult as a result of the pandemic
- 70% of Carers have they had lost touch with friends or found it difficult to maintain connections as a result of their caring role.
- 62% of Carers reported that they have experienced a loss of income



Carer / Respondent suggestions from recent consultation

"Need to speak to a person not a machine, telling you "will be in touch in the next 24-28 hours"

"Initial aids or help is good but fades after a few months, because I suffer with anxiety and depression, I lack the motivation to seek out help. Therefore, a monthly check in service could prove useful as sometimes when I have my dark periods talking to someone would be good"

"If the social services would be more helpful, efficient and supportive it would be very nice"

The Carer experience

"I am tired and feel I just can't cope as a Carer anymore"

"As I'm getting older I find it harder to look after my husband when I'm by myself. We are very grateful in what social services do for us but when there is a problem it is hard to speak to someone especially in the finance department. I'm still waiting for someone to call back and I have been trying to speak to someone since August to explain to me about the contribution we have got to pay because I think it's wrong"

"Carers are the forgotten, neglected group who save the NHS and indeed the country millions of pounds every year looking after relatives, young or elderly whilst having to put their own lives and the lives of their partners on hold and can only imagine what they may have enjoyed or achieved throughout all those lost years"

"Fatigue is a cause of stress that affects my well being. Uncertain about the future"

"I am stressed, tired and lonely because I am not having enough rest"

"The service I have received has been very good but like most things takes time and a lot of back and forth to get things sorted out. Other than that well done from my point and thanks for the help"

Positive reviews



"I have had great support from the social worker who was assigned to my mum- she was extremely helpful and compassionate. She also provided a lot of help about benefits etc"

The comments i have to give a truly blessing in disguise, how to lift my wife when she falls, if she falls, I can humbly say I have had support I never knew existed.

The work is good and I hope that I stay in good health myself and thank all Carers and council officials from the bottom of my heart"

"The help of Walsall Council has been very good. No complaints at the moment. Thank you all"

"I found social services always happy to help out in any situation. We have passion for care company and are very good"

"I didn't feel the support service was good in Sandwell as I never had a Carers assessment. I did manage to be offered a Carers assessment when moving house and under Walsall Council. I am very pleased with the care I received in finding my mom a suitable home, although I did get to a stage where my mom's care caused me alot of stress and pressure not having suitable support until a social worker was involved there at a cross stage"

Negative reviews



"I felt that I had no control social services took over and giving me no option or anything"

"No communication from one department to another, just passing the buck as the saying goes and getting nowhere. So stressful"

"Contact from social services was minimal, time consuming and lacked in appropriate support"

"I had to go through so many numbers and was passed around before i got any advice"

"I desperately need a holiday. Social services promised to find respite care but failed on the 2 occasions I requested it in the last 12 months"

What's going well?

What you have told us about the support you receive...

- “Thank you for this its appreciated”.
- “Thank you for the phone call its nice to know someone cares”.
- “Keep up the good work”.
- “She thanked us so much and said we had been a brick and that it was so good to talk to people who are interested and understand things. She said she loved us to bits!”
- “Thank you for all of your help and signposting for the information”.
- “Thank you ever so much for all your ongoing support and updates. I really appreciate it”.



Some of the things you have told us you need...

We will look to embed these into our priorities and delivery plans

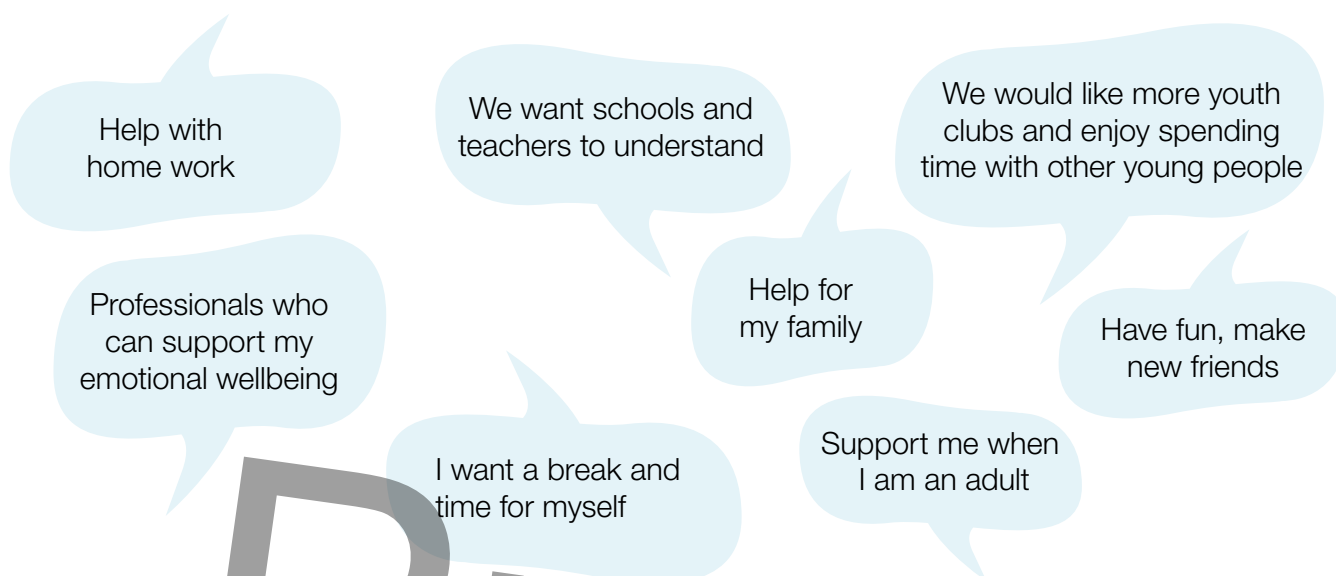
- “A visit or telephone call to advise on the help and benefits available to Carers.”
- “I feel council departments could learn from charitable organisations, in particular such as Age UK and Carers UK, who offer considerable information with regard to Carers. Perhaps adult social care departments could work more closely with these excellent charities, for the benefit of Carers.”
- “I think it would be useful if there was a number that a Carer could ring when feeling down and be able to speak to someone because sometimes you can feel completely alone and not wanting to put on family, just to talk things through. Sometimes that’s just enough, no more is needed.”
- “People disappear and you end up repeating your story over and over again.”
- “Access to Compliments and Complaints process – How can I give a compliment?”
- “A leaflet of benefits or of contacts which may be helpful would be good. Not everyone has the internet!”
- “There is some assistance available but it’s very difficult to get hold of.”
- “I need my own assessment and review... what was right for me 2 years ago isn’t now.”
- “Caring for someone is not easy at times so when you do need advice from services it is a little frustrating when your calls aren’t answered and you have to do the chasing. Also I don’t think you are always told about all the services that are available to yourself and the person you care for.”
- “Improvements to health and social care systems are needed urgently. I have felt unsupported and uncared for when trying to provide my mom with care. Funding was always being mentioned as a barrier to improve care.”
- “The importance of someone remaining within the home environment is the main desire of so many cared for people, but today it feels more driven by the financial needs of councils, rather than the Carer’s observation of the situation in which they find themselves and the wellbeing and safety of the person being cared for.”



The voice of Walsall Young Carers

We regularly consult with our young Carers to evaluate the service they receive and make sure they have access to the right support for their caring roles.

During young Carers action day we asked our young Carers what support and services were important to them. They shared:



Walsall Young Carers have agreed the following actions with young Carers practitioners:

Be aware	Listen
Increase the awareness and identification of young Carers and their needs.	To what young Carers and their families have to say. Improve the assessment and support of young Carers and their families
Work together	Have fun
Strengthen partnerships with services supporting young Carers. (we call this a multi agency approach)	Create opportunities for young Carers, providing support and positive things to do.

Our promise to young Carers:

- Young Carers have the same rights as other children and young people.
- Young Carers should be recognised and valued for their contribution to their families and society.
- Young Carers should be involved in the planning and delivery of services that affect them.
- Young Carers should have access to appropriate information, advice, and support.
- Young Carers should have the opportunity to enjoy a life outside their caring role.
- Young Carers should be protected from harm and exploitation.
- Young Carers should be supported to achieve their full potential.
- Young adult Carers are supported with transition

Our promise to Young Carers in Walsall has been implemented within the 6 key priorities for Carers.



Our Key Priorities for Carers

We want Walsall Carers to be able to live a healthy and fulfilling life outside of their caring role. We want to improve the quality of life for Carers. Walsall Borough Council's All age Carers Strategy links to:

- Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy where there is a strategic commissioning intention focused upon unpaid Carers. Commissioning Intention 4 - "We will improve our Carers support offer" This commissioning intention aims to enhance the Walsall Carers support offer, ensuring that unpaid Carers receive comprehensive, tailored support that recognises their invaluable contribution, promotes their wellbeing, and strengthens their ability to provide care. It will address the diverse needs of Carers, improve their resilience and ensure they have everything they need to provide and experience quality care.
- Walsall's Early Help Partnership Strategy, Approach and Response to Children, Young People & their Families.

Improving the quality of life for Carers is important to us because:

- We want to recognise the contribution they make. We know they play a vital role in supporting individuals who have physical or mental health needs, disabilities or age-related conditions. We want to acknowledge and recognise the valuable contribution they make to the independence and wellbeing of those they care for and society.
- We want to promote wellbeing. Caring for a loved one has multiple demands so we need to work to prevent burnout, stress and exhaustion by ensuring there is an 'offer' so Carers can maintain their own health and resilience and achieve their full potential.
- We want to be able to enhance the quality-of-care Carers provide by ensuring they have the skills and knowledge to manage complex care tasks, navigate the system and address the changing needs of the person they care for.
- We want to promote independence to ensure people remain living in their own homes for as long as possible. We want to make sure Carers are prevented from needing to use residential and nursing care where it is appropriate and safe to do so.
- We want to facilitate social inclusion to help Carers connect with others who are in similar situations, reducing common feelings of isolation and to provide emotional support/solidarity. Carers should have the opportunity to enjoy a life outside their caring role.
- We want to enable choice and control so Carers can make informed decisions about their caring role and the services they may wish to access. We want to ensure Carers can assert their rights, voice their concerns and navigate the system effectively. Young Carers should have access to appropriate information, advice, and support.
- We want to make sure Carers have financial sustainability by alleviating the monetary burden they may experience, ensuring they have the resources to sustain their important role.
- Young Carers have the same rights as other children and young people and should be protected from harm and exploitation.
- Carers should be involved in the planning and delivery of services that affect them.
- We want to facilitate social inclusion to help Carers connect with others who are in similar situations, reducing common feelings of isolation and to provide emotional support/solidarity.
- We want to enable choice and control so Carers can make informed decisions about their caring role and the services they may wish to access. We want to ensure Carers can assert their rights, voice their concerns and navigate the system effectively.
- We want to make sure Carers have financial sustainability by alleviating the monetary burden they may experience, ensuring they have the resources to sustain their important role.

Moving forward, and using Carer and partner organisation feedback, we have set out 6 key priorities to deliver upon. These are:-



Priority 1: Identification and Recognition

- We heard that it is important that we identify and recognise people with caring responsibilities. We aim to identify and recognise more unpaid Carers within Walsall. Many Carers provide care within a family network and do not want or need additional support. We know that many Carers and young people do not think of themselves as a 'Carer'. However, some Carers need support to prevent the escalation of their own needs, and those of the person they look after. We aim to identify Carers early, this will help to ensure Carers know where to go to when they require support, keeping them well for longer and helping to avoid crisis which necessitates involvement from statutory services.
- We will raise awareness, promote our Walsall Carers offer and young Carers service, train professionals in NHS, adult social care and other agencies to identify, champion and work with Carers. We particularly want to improve our links with hospitals, GP practices and education to promote support for Carers and raise the profile of caring. We will also utilise annual calendar events such as Carers Week, National Young Carers action day and Carers Rights Day.
- We will work with partners across the statutory, and the community and voluntary sector to ensure that Carers if they wish to, are identified earlier and provided with information, advice, guidance, and support. We will ensure that Carers continue to be involved as expert partners in the designing, commissioning, and evaluating of Carers services. Carers will be well informed and able to exercise choice in relation to the support services available to them.
- Carers are valued and respected as expert partners in the care of the person they look after. We will support former Carers and recognise that Carers need support to rebuild their lives after their caring commitment ends.
- Work with schools to ensure the school census figures reflect young Carers identified in Walsall Council.
- Continue the Young Carers Champion Roles with partners and the delivery of Walsall young Carers multi agency action group with partners
- We will continue to promote Walsall young Carers Identification card scheme with partners
- We will collaborate with partners throughout Walsall to identify and provide support to underrepresented young Carers who currently do not utilise available services.



Priority 2: Improving the health and well-being of unpaid Carers

- You told us that improving opportunities for Carers to maintain good wellbeing is essential to supporting Carers in their caring role. We will support Carers health, mental health and wellbeing to enable them to remain mentally and physically well.
- Our partnership work through Walsall Together aims to better support people and the communities they live in, so they can manage their own health and wellbeing needs, prevent ill health and live happier lives.
- The Walsall Wellbeing Outcomes Framework provides the infrastructure for our partnership to plan, report, and account for its activity. It will be used as a mechanism for analysing progress towards improved population wellbeing whilst simultaneously integrating it into all partnership activity.

- We intend to work in partnership with Carers, health and adult social care colleagues, the voluntary sector and employers to support Carers to maintain good physical and mental health, and to help Carers to carry on caring.
- Walsall Wellbeing Outcomes Framework which was created in 2023 following extensive engagement and consultation within the Borough. (<https://walsalltogether.co.uk/our-work/resilient-communities/walsallwellbeing-outcomes-framework>).
- We will encourage Carers to be known to their GP practice in order that appropriate support can be offered when required. We will encourage the training and development of Carer Champions and Young Carers champions within our GP practices across the Borough.
- We will develop a culture where professionals working with the cared for, acknowledge and respond to the needs of Carers to maintain their health and wellbeing before reaching the point of crisis.
- We will promote and raise awareness around Carers Rights and legislation across the Borough, ensure mechanisms are in place to ensure more employers are made aware of an employee with caring responsibilities and that employers can take simple, but effective action to enable Carers to balance their caring and employment responsibilities. Where possible we will aim to influence businesses to consider what flexible working practices might help both the employer and employee, recognise and supporting Carers in the wider community and society, raising awareness of caring among the wider population in order to build Carer friendly communities.
- Carers tell us that they need flexible working arrangements and better care for the person they care for to enable them to remain in employment. We will aim to become an exemplar employer leading by example and increasing the knowledge of our partners and businesses of issues that affect Carers. We will encourage the adoption of Carer friendly practices. We will also support former Carers to adjust to a life after caring. We will develop a Walsall Carers Charter with the voice of Walsall Carers. Its purpose is to be a statement of values, standards and principles that outlines Walsall's commitment to supporting Carers. It will cover various themes that will be defined by Carers, partners from health, Walsall Together, adult social care, the Council and voluntary sector. It will be promoted with all organisations and settings across Walsall to help support Carers and ensure that any future services are designed to better support Carers to continue in their caring role.
- We recognise the emotional demands on Carers and will offer Carers their own assessment and Care Plan and young adult Carers transition plan. Which will support Carers with the demands of caring. Improving wellbeing is a key area within our Carers assessment process. We will also promote wellbeing assessments through our commissioned and partner organisations. We will review Care Plans on at least an annual basis to ensure they continue to meet Carers needs.
- We will support Young Carers to have the same rights as other children and young people.



Priority 3: Improving information, advice and guidance to Carers

- You told us of the importance of having access to good quality information, advice and guidance about support services available in the Borough. You explained that this is key to enabling Carers to have choice and control and to be able to continue to care. We aim to improve access to clear, concise relevant information in a range of formats for our population that will help to avoid, reduce or delay the need for assessment and more intensive support. Information will be provided on a range of topics, including navigating the care system, accessing benefits, and managing their own health and well-being.

- We will use relevant sources of information across the Borough, within our Walsall Connected sites and other partner venues including GP practices, across the Internet through various digital platforms and social networking as well as through our new Wellbeing Directory which was introduced earlier in 2024. We will ensure that information is reliable, easily accessible and up to date which gives Carers the best chance of knowing what is on offer in their communities to support them at any stage in their caring journey.
- We will keep up-to-date with technological opportunities by developing and improving digital resources as a primary source of information, and utilising social networks to empower and enable collaboration within communities.
- As well as for Carers themselves, it is of paramount importance that we make information available for professionals and any agencies who come into contact with Carers.
- We will ensure that we signpost Carers who want more information about benefits, grants and financial management to relevant financial support and advice.
- We will review our personalisation offer for Carers to enable them to have more influence over their lives and increased flexibility around how they use the resources they are eligible for. For example, through direct payments.
- Increase the identification and awareness of young Carers by updating Walsall council Young Carers website and access to young Carers services
- We will continue to build partner relationships through Walsall young Carers multi agency action group offering services and support to young Carers and their families



Priority 4: Supporting Carers to have a good life outside of caring, as well as after caring ('Time for Me')

- We heard from you that being able to take a break (Time for Me) from caring responsibilities and having the opportunity to work and access education and leisure opportunities are vital areas of support to Carers. We aim to give Carers a break from their caring responsibilities, allowing them to recharge and pursue their own interests and needs. Carers should be able to maintain their social relationships with family, friends and others. Remaining socially connected has an impact on our mental and physical health, therefore, identifying and developing opportunities for Carers to meet others, either in the same situation or otherwise, is a key focus.
- We will support Carers to be able to access social and leisure interests away from their caring role as they choose. We will improve our offer to provide flexible options that enable choice and value for money and where possible look towards discounts for Carers as well as considering the introduction of a Carers lanyard to help show empathy, raise awareness and offer support
- We will have fun! Providing young Carers with access to our young Carers groups and enrichment activities. Creating new opportunities and positive things to do including family days, activities within the school holidays and Young Carers festival
- We will Provide a young adult Carers group to support young people transitioning to adult Carers
- We will support Carers through putting them in touch with the Carers Hub and our commissioned and non-commissioned services available in the Borough in order to establish new connections and a wider support network
- We will promote digital solutions such as through digital apps and social media, to enable Carers to form and sustain new networks of support. Hopefully this will lead to good support and fewer experiences of Carers feeling isolated.

- We will continue to support Carers to have a break from their caring role in a way that suits them to enable them to continue to work and to continue with their interests outside of their caring role. We will continue to ensure that Carers are aware of opportunities for them to participate in their communities or interests and support them to be able to do this. We will extend our support so Carers can remain in work, training and or education if they wish.
- For Carers whose role as a Carer has come to an end, we will link them to relevant support which could be bereavement support, support around their mental health as well as the wider Walsall Carers Offer. For some former Carers, there may be aspirations around providing care in their community or pursuing training or employment opportunities in the care sector.
- As sensitively as possible, we want to support former Carers to return them back to their life of their personal aspirations prior to becoming a Carer



Priority 5: Improving Carers Assessment and Support

- Through the discharge of the council's legal duties to adult Carers, we will improve how we identify the specific needs, challenges, and preferences of unpaid Carers, ensuring that support services are tailored to their individual circumstances and direct payments are applied if applicable.
- We will review (and amend as necessary) our current Carers assessment and support arrangements (including self-assessments) to ensure the most effective and affordable support arrangements are in place to deliver support to Carers equitably across Walsall. We will endeavour that the need for Carers to repeat their story is kept to a minimum.
- We will improve our partnership working and encourage Carer support providers to work together in true collaboration with each other for the benefit of Walsall Carers.
- We will continue to promote and explain Carers rights to an assessment and routinely offer one on the identification of need-suggest removal as carers assessment would identify need, explaining the benefits of an assessment to the Carer. Where an assessment identifies eligible needs, we will look to meet these with support from their local community in the first instance, avoiding the need for statutory provision wherever possible.
- We will offer information, advice and guidance to all Carers, as well as signposting to support from their local community.
- We will seek to increase the number of Carers who have their own Carers Assessment and recognise that needs change and therefore support will need to be reviewed. All Carers who have a Carer's assessment will be offered the choice to be referred to our Carers Hub for further advice, information and support and/or to be signposted to other appropriate support organisations.
- We will support Young adult Carers from 16 years of age with a transition assessment and plan to support their role as an adult Carer
- As previously mentioned, we will also promote wellbeing assessments through our commissioned and partner organisations.
- We will conduct an assessment for any child or young person identified as a Carer, considering their wishes and aspirations and implementing steps to lessen the caring role and its negative impacts. The assessment will include family members using a whole-family approach.
- We will look to co-produce with Carers of all ages to improve our Carers Assessments and support offered



Priority 6: Crisis management and professional awareness

- You told us that we need to do more to support Carers at point of crisis. We know that many Carers are able to manage their caring responsibilities independently of help from statutory agencies and have established family networks whom they can call on in a crisis. However, some do not have robust contingency arrangements and may need support.
- We aim to provide support to help Carers to plan effectively should a crisis occur and provide a prompt response and support in the event of such a situation.
- We will aim to ensure that professionals are trained and skilled in order to recognise a potential crisis and help to put arrangements in place to prevent one occurring. We will raise awareness with the promotion of Carer Champions within the Borough to raise the profile of unpaid Carers.
- We will ensure that Carers know where they can get help in the event of a crisis and our respite offer is clear. We will ensure that Carers who are eligible can access a break from caring and provide this in a cost-effective manner, doing the best we can within the resources available.
- We will ensure that robust arrangements are in place so that, in the event of a crisis, responses from Adult Social Care and partners are prompt, provide reassurance and show respect towards the feelings of the Carer and the cared for person.
- Young Carers practitioners will support young Carers and their families. If we have any concerns for young people and their family we will discuss this with young Carers and access the appropriate support through Walsall children's services and partners

Proof

The Walsall Wellbeing Outcomes Framework



- We will encourage Carers to be known to their GP practice in order that appropriate support can be offered when required. We will encourage the training and development of Carer Champions within our GP practices across the Borough.
- We will develop a culture where professionals working with the cared for, acknowledge and respond to the needs of Carers to maintain their health and wellbeing before reaching the point of crisis.
- We will promote and raise awareness around Carers Rights and legislation across the Borough, ensure mechanisms are in place to ensure more employers are made aware of an employee with caring responsibilities and that employers can take simple, but effective action to enable Carers to balance their caring and employment responsibilities. Where possible we will aim to influence businesses to consider what flexible working practices might help both the employer and employee, recognise and supporting Carers in the wider community and society, raising awareness of caring among the wider population in order to build Carer friendly communities.
- Carers tell us that they need flexible working arrangements and better care for the person they care for to enable them to remain in employment. We will aim to become an exemplar employer leading by example and increasing the knowledge of our partners and businesses of issues that affect Carers. We will encourage the adoption of Carer friendly practices. We will also support former Carers to adjust to a life after caring. We will develop a Walsall Carers Charter with the voice of Walsall Carers. Its purpose is to be a statement of values, standards and principles that outlines Walsall's commitment to supporting Carers. It will cover various themes that will be defined by Carers, partners from health, Walsall Together, adult social care, the Council and voluntary sector. It will be promoted with all organisations and settings across Walsall to help support Carers and ensure that any future services are designed to better support Carers to continue in their caring role.
- We recognise the emotional demands on Carers and will offer Carers their own assessment and Care Plan which will support Carers with the demands of caring. Improving wellbeing is a key area within our Carers assessment process. We will also promote wellbeing assessments through our commissioned and partner organisations. We will review Care Plans on at least an annual basis to ensure they continue to meet Carers needs.

If we deliver on our strategy, our aspirations and priorities...

As a Carer....

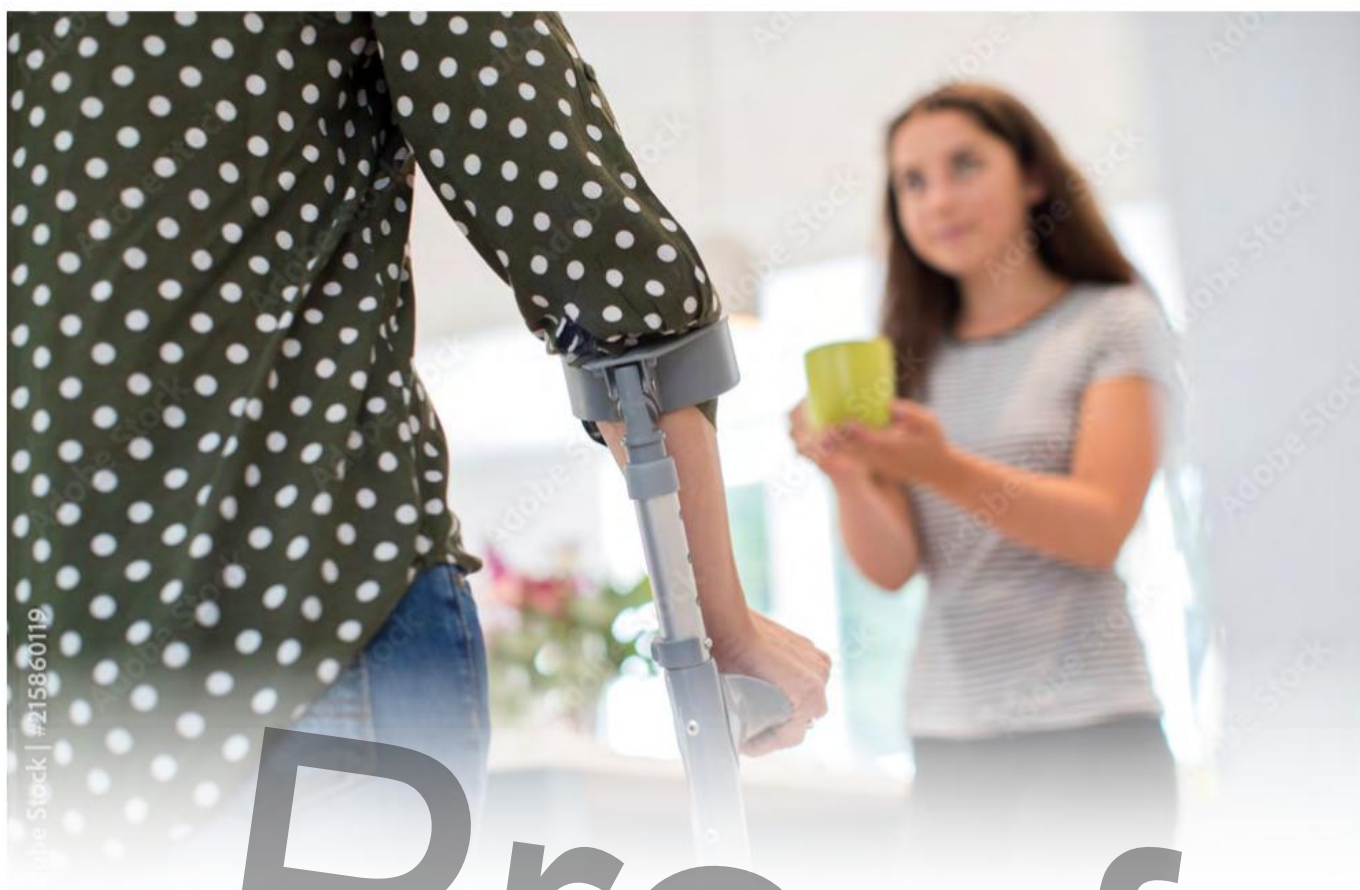
- I can meet with people who are also Carers so we can share our experiences and support each other.
- I will be treated with respect and dignity. My voice will be heard in planning what support I would like/need.
- I can live the life I want and do the things that are important to me as independently as possible.
- I will feel valued as a Carer for the contribution that I make to my community.
- I will be supported to manage my own well being in a way that makes sense to me.
- I will feel safe and supported to understand and manage the risks to me as a Carer.
- I will have access to respite care and other support services that will allow me to take a break from my caring responsibilities when needed.
- I know who to contact if something goes wrong.
- I will be offered my own Carers assessment.
- I will be treated with respect, dignity and feel valued and respected by professionals for the person I support.
- I will have a better choice of good quality affordable services for the person I care for.
- I will feel valued as a Carer for the contribution that I make to my community.
- I have a co-produced Carers Plan that sets out how I can be as active as I want to be and involved in my community.
- I will have a say in planning and monitoring future services as an expert with lived experience.
- I will know the Carers allowances I can claim and will receive the financial support that I am entitled to.
- I can maintain my links with family, friends and my community.
- I can live the life I want and do the things that are important to me as independently as possible.
- I have a plan for the future that helps me feel confident my cared for person will be OK.
- I will be supported as a former Carer.
- I will have reliable good quality support that help my cared for person live well and stay independent.
- I can access support in a timely way.
- I will know that the person I support will be supported as well.
- I can get information and advice that helps me as a Carer and is up to date and provided in a way that I can understand.
- I can get information and advice about my well being and how I can be as well as possible – physically, mentally, and emotionally.
- I will be aware of the activities, social groups, leisure, and learning opportunities in my community that can support me, as well as health and care services.
- I will know what my rights are and can get information and advice on what I need.
- I will have the same rights as other young people and children
- I will be supported to transition from a young Carer to an adult Carer
- I will be supported to achieve my full potential within education

Governance

'To help support the delivery of this strategy, we will work in partnership with Carers, Walsall Children's service, health and adult social care, Walsall Together and statutory and voluntary agencies to provide the local steer for the commissioning and development of Carer services and the Carer Offer within Walsall.

- We will also be mindful of the implementation of local and national priorities and strategies. We envisage that through building upon our strong approach to partnership working, adult Carers will have more support, choice and control to have a life of their own alongside their caring role.
- In order to effectively address the gaps that exist in meeting the needs of Walsall Carers and to implement the strategic priorities within this strategy, the following stages of work will need to be undertaken over the next three years, taking into account the financial challenges that the local authority and health service are currently under.
- We will introduce a robust governance structure and Carers Matter Partnership Board, where partners and Carers will be represented. The Board will oversee the implementation of the strategic priorities highlighted within the strategy with a clear 'Strategic Delivery Plan.'
- We will look to co-produce delivery of the Strategy with all stakeholders including Carers
- The Carers Matter Partnership Board will oversee and take responsibility for the implementation of the Carers strategic delivery plan across multi organisations across Walsall.
- Task and Finish groups will be formed to ensure the development and success of the strategic priorities identified within the delivery plan. Clear links to any commissioned services and the Walsall Carers Hub will be made
- Walsall young Carers action group will continue to meet and work in partnership supporting strategic priorities identified within the delivery plan.





What Next?

- We will introduce the Carers Matter Partnership Board which will develop an action plan setting out how we will deliver upon each of the priorities outlined in this strategy.
- We will continue to build partnerships to support young Carers through our multi-agency – Young Carers action Group
- We will regularly monitor and review progress against the action plan and our aspirations to support Carers within Walsall.
- Our ambition is to work with partners including Carers to progress an all-age multi-agency Carers strategy across Walsall.
- We will continue to promote the importance of caring and the value of Carers, celebrating the contribution that Carers make to our community.
- By delivering upon the priorities outlined in this strategy we aim to ensure that Carers in Walsall receive the support and recognition they deserve.

We want Walsall Carers to be able to live a healthy and fulfilling life outside of their caring role.

Do you need support now?

Please contact Walsall Council on: **0300 5552922** or at our website www.walsall.gov.uk

Walsall Council Carers page: <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/Carers>

Walsall Young Carers page: <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/children-and-young-people/early-help/early-help-children-and-young-people/young-Carers>

Walsall Young Carers email: youngCarersearlyhelp@walsall.gov.uk

You might find the following websites useful:

Walsall Carers Hub – our commissioned service Walsall Carers Hub is a service led by Forward Carers CIC with the regional charity, Midland Mencap as the lead delivery partner to provide support and services for unpaid Carers in Walsall: <https://walsallCarershub.org.uk/>

Forward Carers: <https://forwardCarers.org.uk/>

Employers for Carers: <https://www.employersforCarers.org/>

National family Carer network for Carers of a relative with autism or a learning disability: <https://www.hft.org.uk/our-services/family-Carer-support-service/>

Carers UK: <http://www.Carersuk.org/>

For financial support:

Carer benefits: <https://www.gov.uk/Carers-allowance>

Childrens society: <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/>

Carers society: <https://Carers.org/getting-support-if-you-are-a-young-Carer-or-young-adult-Carer/getting-support-if-you-are-a-young-Carer-or-young-adult-Carer>

Barnardos Sub Hub: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-support/young-Carers>

Carer's allowance: <https://www.gov.uk/Carers-allowance>

You can also find more information about local and national services on the Walsall Wellbeing Directory contains activities, services and groups to help all residents of the Walsall Borough live healthy, active and fulfilling lives.

You can find something to help you, whether you want to:

- keep healthy
- be sociable
- stay independent
- feel included
- improve your wellbeing
- get involved
- stay safe

Find suitable care and support:

<https://go.walsall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/walsall-wellbeing-directory>

*Thank you to all our local Carers
and to our partners, who worked
with us to develop our vision*



Proof

Recommendations from Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the utilisation of Council assets

Portfolio:	Councillor Andrew – Associate Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth & Regeneration
Related Portfolios:	Councillor Flint – Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing
Service:	Economy, Environment and Communities
Wards:	All
Key decision:	N/A
Forward plan:	N/A

1. Aim

To receive a recommendation from the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee made on 21 November 2024.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet considers the recommendations of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3. Report detail – know

At its meeting of 21 November 2024, the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on the underutilisation of Council Assets including Walsall Town Hall.

In September 2024, the Cabinet approved the Council's commercial strategy which provided a vision for the Council to be financially resilient, innovative and helps to achieve income generation from Council-owned buildings and land. It was noted that Walsall Town Hall, opened in 1903 and had been regularly used for community events up to 2017. The Committee noted that for the Town Hall to become viable event space, significant capital investment would be required to regenerate the space such as accessibility review, renewal of toilet facilities and bar/kitchen.

Members noted that overall, the Council owned 302 estate assets which were comprised of community buildings, schools, investment properties and ground leases which had a combined estimated value of £350m. Forest Art Centre (Walsall Arena) was highlighted as a good example of effective commercialisation of Council assets. However, there was a recognition that the Council was not a commercial company and therefore, needed to balance

commercialisation with public duty whilst being financially sustainable and generating income. This was supported by the encouragement for a social value strategy.

The Committee debated the item, and it was agreed that a review of Council assets and buildings should be undertaken to determine viability and safeguard assets which were of community value. In this respect, it was suggested that a dedicated team be established to prioritise and promote use of the Council's estate assets.

Resolved:

- 1. That, the Council undertake a review of which council estate assets were available, including their condition, economic viability and any future intentions for their use.**
- 2. That, the Cabinet develop a policy for safeguarding listed buildings and assets of significant community value and consider forming a dedicated team to promote the use of our estate assets, including our district town halls.**

4. Decide

The recommendations of the Committee are set out and the Cabinet could choose to:

1. Accept the recommendations as set out;
2. Reject the recommendations; and/or
3. Choose to receive a report in more depth at a future Cabinet meeting.

5. Respond

Following the decision of Cabinet, the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be advised of the outcome of their recommendation.

6. Review

Subject to the decision of Cabinet, further reports at Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings or Cabinet meetings may be required.

Background papers

None

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Cabinet – 12 February 2025

Recommendations from Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding grass cutting

Portfolio:	Councillor Murphy – Street Pride
Related Portfolios:	Councillor Flint – Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing
Service:	Economy, Environment and Communities
Wards:	All
Key decision:	N/A
Forward plan:	N/A

1. Aim

To receive a recommendation from the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee made on 14 January 2025.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet considers the recommendations of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3. Report detail – know

At its meeting of 14 January 2025, the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on the Council's grass cutting programme for 2025.

The Committee was informed about the 2024 grass cutting programme, which was projected to save £50,000. This saving was anticipated due to an amended schedule of cuts, reducing the frequency from bi-weekly or tri-weekly cuts to just one cut per year at 73 locations across all 20 wards.

A consultation was conducted regarding the 2024 programme, which revealed that 99 individuals had commented on the proposal, with only 51% of respondents expressing support. The consultation underscored the significance of permitting longer grass to enable the Borough to achieve the Government's biodiversity targets aimed at halting the decline of species by 2030 through rewilding and enhancing wildlife habitats. In this respect, there was a view that "rewilding" was used to justify less grass cutting in the Borough. However, Members recognised the importance of parks and open spaces which were critical for families and residents to enjoy outdoor spaces and for children to utilise valuable play areas.

As a result of a favourable financial settlement and concerns about the impact of the proposal, the saving on the introduction of rewilding was removed from the Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29.

There was a view that there had been a disconnect between Elected Members and the grass cutting programmes in recent years, which had resulted in negative feedback being received from residents. The Portfolio Holder for Street Pride has confirmed the development of a five-year amenity grass management programme. This initiative aimed to strategically manage grass areas through mapping green spaces to optimise their environmental impact and enhance their usability.

A lengthy discussion took place on the role of grass verges in the Borough and their effective use as a soakaway for surface water. In this respect, there was a view that due to parking issues within areas of the Borough, many residents decide to park on grass verges which ultimately deteriorate grass areas to look unkept and unsightly.

The Committee debated the item, and it was agreed that whilst Members note the Council's five-year plan for amenity grass management, the Cabinet should commit to the 2023 grass cutting programme and should look at the cost of tarmacking grass verges destroyed by parked cars which looked unsightly. It was also recommended that the responsibility for grass cutting be streamlined under a single Cabinet Portfolio Holder area. Currently, these responsibilities were divided between Street Pride and Health and Wellbeing. Therefore, the Cabinet should commit to reviewing and realigning the Portfolio Holder responsibilities to place grass cutting under one cohesive Portfolio Holder area for transparency.

The Cabinet should commit to produce plans to improve the public realm for each ward area of the Borough including analysing priorities of each area in consultation with Ward Members. The Committee also discussed Walsall and Bloxwich Town Deals, emphasising the need to involve children and young people in Council projects.

Resolved:

- 1. That, whilst Members note the Council's five-year plan for amenity grass management, the Cabinet should commit to the 2023 grass cutting programme and should look at the cost of tarmacking grass verges destroyed by parked cars.**
- 2. That, the Cabinet should commit to reviewing and realigning the Portfolio Holder responsibilities to place grass cutting under one cohesive Portfolio Holder area.**
- 3. That, the Cabinet should commit to produce plans to improve the public realm for each ward area of the Borough including analysing priorities of each area in consultation with Ward Members.**
- 4. That, all future development schemes should be reviewed in accordance with Walsall's 2040 vision, therefore, any Council promoted scheme should consult with local children and young people to gather their views and how they would like to see the future of the Borough.**

4. Decide

The recommendations of the Committee are set out and the Cabinet could choose to:

1. Accept the recommendations as set out;
2. Reject the recommendations; and/or
3. Choose to receive a report in more depth at a future Cabinet meeting.

5. Respond

Following the decision of Cabinet, the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be advised of the outcome of their recommendation.

6. Review

Subject to the decision of Cabinet, further reports at Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings or Cabinet meetings may be required.

Background papers

None

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