

Introduction

Several of our most popular sports are pitch based. Pitches occupy a significant amount of land in urban areas and most villages have a pitch or recreation ground. The provision of pitches, therefore, has implications for both sports development and land use planning.

From the perspective of players, many of these pitches and, where they exist, their related changing pavilions, are of poor quality. At the same time, because they can be used for only a few hours each week their owners find them expensive to manage and maintain. Moreover, with their limited capacity for use, there is a very real limit to the amount of income which can be generated from those pitches owned by local authorities. Inevitably, therefore, with the growing pressure for more intensive land use within settlements and growing pressure on local authority budgets, these large flat areas are increasingly seen as potential development sites.

To counter such pressures, **sportscotland** actively promotes greater recognition of the facility needs of the pitch sports. As a statutory consultee on planning applications which propose development on playing fields, it opposes the granting of permission for such developments unless there is clear evidence that there is no long term need for particular playing fields, or adequate arrangements are in place for replacement provision of at least comparable community benefit. **sportscotland's** long term objective is to improve the quality of provision for pitch sports.

Accordingly, **sportscotland** believes that local authorities should include a clear policy to protect playing fields in their statutory Local Plans. In addition, it wishes to see local authorities paying greater attention to the facility needs of the pitch sports and the way in which they manage and maintain their public pitches. These pitches are a vital local and national resource as they accommodate those clubs and teams which do not own or lease their "home" pitches.

This Guide provides a recommended methodology for local authorities to assess the need for pitches in their area. Chapter 2 sets out the policy context, Chapter 3 briefly considers trends in participation in the pitch sports and Chapter 4 considers the value of sports pitch strategies. Chapters 5 to 9 describe the five basic stages in preparing a pitch strategy.

To be effective, a sports pitch strategy must also link with the local authority's land use plans and its sport and recreation strategy. General guidance on sport and recreation strategies is contained in *Sport Matters – Planning for the Future* (Scottish Sports Council, 1995).

Guide to the Preparation of Sports Pitch Strategies

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Introduction

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Accordingly, **sportscotland** believes that local authorities should include a clear policy to protect playing fields in their statutory Local Plans. In addition, it wishes to see local authorities paying greater attention to the facility needs of the pitch sports and the way in which they manage and maintain their public pitches. These pitches are a vital local and national resource as they accommodate those clubs and teams which do not own or lease their "home" pitches.

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To be effective, a sports pitch strategy must also link with the local authority's land use plans and its sport and recreation strategy. General guidance on sport and recreation strategies is contained in *Sport Matters – Planning for the Future* (Scottish Sports Council, 1995).

Although a sports pitch strategy should relate to all the pitches in an area, councils will find it sensible to link the preparation of a sports pitch strategy to their Best Value review of those pitches they own and manage themselves.

The National Policy Context and the Planning System

Sport 21

Sport 21 (Scottish Sports Council, 1998) sets out the national strategy for sport. In terms of pitches it identifies:

- Demand for more synthetic grass pitches, particularly for secondary schools and hockey development.
- A requirement for only a limited number of new grass football and rugby pitches, but a pressing need to enhance the quality of existing pitches and associated changing pavilions and open up school pitches for greater community use.
- A need for more cricket pitches and in particular, artificial cricket wickets.
- A general need to ensure that the present level of provision of pitches of all kinds is maintained and quality is improved.
- A need for local authorities to co-ordinate local assessments of pitch provision and need.

In principle **sportscotland** supports the creation of “pitch sport centres” containing a number of pitches of different sizes and types wherever there is sufficient demand in urban areas. Subject to local needs, these centres should generally include a full size floodlit synthetic pitch, one or more full size grass pitches, dedicated soccer sevens pitches, dedicated floodlit 5-a-side courts and changing and social accommodation. There are good examples of such centres at Hamilton Palace Sports Ground and the Glasgow Green Football Centre. The advantages of pitch sport centres include:

- More cost effective provision of pitches and changing accommodation.
- More cost effective management.
- On-site groundstaff can deliver high standards of maintenance in a cost-effective way, leading to higher quality pitches and lower levels of vandalism.
- Opportunities to promote coaching.
- Opportunities to create clear development pathways from small-sided to adult play at a single location.
- Opportunities to provide floodlighting arising from the larger area of each site and the greater distance of some pitches from site boundaries and neighbouring properties.

However, it is unrealistic to consolidate all the pitches in an area into a small number of pitch sport centres. There will be many locations where it may be sensible to retain or provide one or two local pitches; for example, adjacent to established indoor sports facilities, on primary school sites and in disadvantaged areas where residents may lack access to personal transport. Clubs may also be interested in leasing single pitch sites.

National Planning Policy Guidance

Formal guidance from the Scottish Executive to planning authorities is currently given in National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPGs). NPPG11, published in 1996, deals with *Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space*. As far as pitches and playing fields are concerned, there are two key issues for the planning system:

- Ensuring that enough land is allocated for use as pitches and playing fields, to satisfy both current and future needs.
- Providing pitch and playing field sites with an appropriate level of protection from development.

NPPG11 recommends that councils should determine the amount of open space, including playing fields, required in their areas and include this in their development plans. This involves making a local assessment of levels of provision and need on the basis of a range of factors, including the quality and value of the facilities and open space at a local level. In most authorities, planning departments will have to work with their recreation departments to survey the adequacy of existing provision and formulate the sport and leisure content of development plans.

By and large, however, planning authorities have tended to rely on the long-established National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) “six acre standard”. For every 1,000 people in an area, this standard calls for a minimum of:

- 1.6-1.8 hectares (4.0-4.5 acres) for outdoor sport of which 1.2 hectares (3.0 acres) is for pitch sports.
- 0.6-0.8 hectares (1.5-2.0 acres) for children’s playing space.

However, the standard is over-simplistic and using it is an inappropriate way to plan for the pitch sports. For example:

- The standard takes no account of the shape or dimensions of areas of land, the quality of pitches or other facilities. It also takes no account of the specific sports accommodated within an area. For example, an area with only grass football pitches and no provision for rugby, hockey, cricket, tennis or bowls could satisfy the standard.

- Sports development initiatives, such as small-sided games, Team Sport Scotland and the appointment of football, hockey and rugby development officers, are increasing the level of junior participation in pitch sports and this should feed through into increasing demand for adult pitches over the next decade.
- Football and rugby are no longer exclusively male sports but are now played by both genders, increasing the demand for pitches.
- The rise of artificial surfaces has had a major impact on hockey and a synthetic pitch can accommodate many more matches than a traditional grass pitch.
- The pitch sports are not universally popular throughout the country, leading to differences – often significant ones – in the need for pitches from one area to another.
- The standard makes no mention of floodlit facilities, yet rising standards of play and the growth of mid-week games demand floodlit training or even match facilities.
- The standard takes no account of variations in the age, gender and socio-economic characteristics of local communities.

For planners, however, the NPFA standard has two important strengths. The first is that it avoids the need to undertake a time-consuming amount of local data gathering and analysis of demand and supply for the pitch sports. Related to this, it helps to ensure a reasonably common approach to the required level of provision across all those areas which use it. The second is that the development industry has accepted it, albeit somewhat reluctantly, and therefore does not generally challenge it.

From the point of view of sport, the NPFA standard's main weakness is that it makes it possible for planners (including Inquiry Reporters at appeal) to make apparently objective judgements on the adequacy or otherwise of local pitch provision without any reference to either the needs of local sport or the quality and carrying capacity of facilities. In consequence, local authority recreation and leisure departments – the only local agencies likely to have a comprehensive overview of local sports needs – have traditionally provided relatively little input to Local Plans. Their priority has been to manage and maintain publicly owned pitches as best they can with the resources available.

NPPG11 contain a number of specific policy recommendations relating to the protection of playing fields and sports pitches, both public and private. Loss of amenity is of course an important planning issue but purely in terms of their value to sport, playing fields should not be redeveloped unless:

- Analysis demonstrates that there is a clear long term excess of pitches and open space.

- In the case of school playing fields, it has been established that they will not be required in future by the school or community.
- The retention or enhancement of the facilities can best be achieved by the redevelopment of part of the site which would not affect its sporting potential.
- Alternative provision of equal community benefit would be made available.

Unlike the NPPG11 “quantity” recommendations, these “protection” policy recommendations are usually well reflected in Local Plans. As a result, developers are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain planning consent for the redevelopment of pitches and playing fields and, where they do, they can be required to make “alternative provision of equal community benefit”.

This means that Local Plan policies tend first to promote and then protect a level of pitch provision which has been determined without any reference to specific local needs. **sportscotland** believes that all forms of planning for pitch sports should be driven by an evaluation of local needs, coupled with issues relating to long term quality and sustainability.

This view is endorsed in *Rethinking Open Space* (Kit Campbell Associates, 2001), a research report commissioned by the Scottish Executive, which suggests a range of methodologies to plan for different types of open space and recommends the use of this Guide in relation to playing fields.

Why Does Scotland Need Sports Pitches?

Playing fields are a vital resource for sport. Of the seven sports identified as being most able to deliver the strategy set out for Scottish sport in *Sport 21*, three are pitch based sports (football, rugby and hockey) and another is athletics. Unless sufficient sports pitches are available of the right type, the right quality and in the right locations then the chances of achieving the goals set out in *Sport 21* are considerably constrained.

Ultimately, sports pitches are needed so that people can play pitch sports and for no other reason. Playing fields may also have amenity value as greenspaces within built up areas, and if a pitch is no longer required for sports purposes it could be converted to some other form of greenspace for which there is a local need. However this is a separate issue which should be addressed in a comprehensive open space strategy rather than a sports pitch strategy.

The methodology presented here relates to sports pitches and not open space. Many pitches are also used as public open space and Local Plans frequently confuse the two but they are in fact quite different, as evidenced by the “No Ball Games” notices in many open spaces. Large flat areas of pitches with few trees or other landscaping are also unattractive as amenity open space.

Trends in Pitch Sport Participation

sportscotland monitors participation in most forms of sport and recreation through the Scottish Opinion Survey (*Sports Participation in Scotland 1999, Research Report no 56*). An overview of sports clubs, including those for the pitch sports, is provided in *Sports Clubs in Scotland (sportscotland Research Report no 75)*. These reports can be downloaded from the **sportscotland** website.

The table below summarises the percentage of the adult population (age 16+) playing the main pitch sports at least once in the most popular four week period of the year:

	1987-89	1992-94	1997-99
Cricket	1%	*	*
Football (5a-side, outdoors)	n/a	4%	5%
Football (11-a-side)	n/a	4%	4%
Hockey	1%	*	1%
Rugby	1%	1%	1%

Note: n/a = not available, * = less than 0.5%

Overall levels of participation in the pitch sports have remained fairly constant for over a decade, although more women now play cricket, football and rugby. The only growth in participation identified in the Survey is in 5-a-side football. As a result, the number of full-size pitches required to accommodate adult participation has probably remained roughly constant through the 1990's. The profile of adult pitch sport players in 1997-9 was:

Cricket

Gender 85% male, 15% female
 Age 25% 16-24, 35% 25-34, 35% 35-54, 5% 55+
 Social class 45% AB, 38% C1, 8% C2, 10% DE

Football (11-a-side)

Gender 95% male, 5% female
 Age 55% 16-25, 27% 25-34, 15% 35-54, 3% 55+
 Social class 19% AB, 30% C1, 27% C2, 24% DE

Football (5-a-side outdoors)

Gender 96% male, 4% female
 Age 51% 16-24, 30% 25-34, 18% 35-54, 1% 55+
 Social class 22% AB, 30% C1, 23% C2, 26% DE

Hockey

Gender 47% male, 53% female
 Age 59% 16-24, 20% 25-34, 17% 35-54, 4% 55+
 Social class 31% AB, 36% C1, 19% C2, 14% DE

Rugby

Gender 94% male, 6% female
 Age 40% 16-24, 38% 25-34, 22% 35-54
 Social class 30% AB, 25% C1, 25% C2, 19% DE

The Scottish Opinion Survey gives only limited information on participation by young people because of low sample sizes. However, the most popular sports (including PE lessons) in 1999 included the following pitch sports:

	Girls		Boys	
	8-11	12-18	8-11	12-18
Football	37%	24%	84%	78%
Hockey	n/a	18%	n/a	n/a
Rugby	n/a	n/a	n/a	12%

There have been significant and still evolving changes in the pattern of participation in pitch sports by young people. This has been driven by two complementary initiatives: Team Sport Scotland, which has encouraged young people to take part in pitch sports, and the development of small-sided mixed games such as soccer sevens and mini-rugby.

Progressively it is likely that children of primary age, and probably also some children in the early years of secondary school, will play only small-sided versions of the main pitch sports. This will obviously have implications for pitch planning as there will be a need for more small-sided pitches. If more of these children continue to play the pitch sports as they grow older, there may also be a need for more full size pitches. In addition, the development of women's participation will have implications for the design of changing pavilions as they will increasingly have to be able to accommodate both genders simultaneously. A review of the development of soccer sevens can be found in *Soccer Sevens: Issues for the Future* (**sportscotland** Research Report no. 74). Other factors influencing demand for pitches are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Why Do Councils Need Sports Pitch Strategies?

The planning system is critically important in terms of ensuring that there is sufficient local land for pitches. However, it tends not to address the issues which determine the quality of sports pitches: management, maintenance and budgets. Accordingly there is a need to marry these issues to planning considerations. This is best done through a sports pitch strategy. Ideally, such strategies should involve not only the local authority but all local pitch owners and managers who contribute to meeting the needs of the pitch sports, such as local independent schools and higher education institutions. Even when there is no “public” access to some of these pitches, they contribute to meeting local needs as the teams based at them might otherwise require additional public pitches.

Sports pitch strategies can also provide useful background information for development control purposes. The pressure on planning authorities to determine planning applications within eight weeks makes it difficult for them to initiate widespread consultations with local sports interests whenever there is a proposal to develop a pitch site for some other use. A comprehensive sports pitch strategy, clearly linked to Local Plan policies, should overcome this problem and, if necessary, provide useful background information in the event of an appeal against a refusal of planning permission.

Common Problems with Pitch Provision

There are a number of common problems faced by those managing and maintaining pitches, organising games and, most importantly, the people who play and train, including:

- **Poor quality playing surfaces.** Badly drained grass pitches provide poor playing surfaces and are often unplayable. There are still too many mineral (red blaes) pitches, especially in the west of Scotland.
- **Inadequate changing accommodation.** Many changing pavilions are in poor condition. Very few are designed for female use. As a minimum, changing pavilions should be wind and watertight, have adequately sized, separate changing rooms for each team and match officials, toilets, hot showers, first aid facilities and be accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Inadequate provision for junior small-sided games.** Small-sided games are often played on uneven grass areas delineated by cones rather than on marked-out pitches.
- **Lack of central venues.** It is easiest to organise small-sided play when there are a number of pitches at a single site which can be used as a central venue. This maximises participation by children and makes the best use of adult supervisors. Many adults also use central venues for outdoor 5-a-side football.

- **Pitches not meeting appropriate league rules.** As teams progress up competitive leagues, governing bodies often require that they have better playing and ancillary facilities. Teams may have to turn down promotion to a higher league if they cannot obtain access to facilities which meet specific league rules.
- **Lack of practice facilities.** If players are to improve, they require access to training facilities as well as match pitches. The facilities required range from artificially surfaced nets for cricket to floodlit pitches and training areas.
- **Inadequate provision of artificial pitches.** Artificial surfaces provide more consistent playing and practice conditions than grass and are essential for hockey.
- **Uneconomic pitch sites.** There are too many small publicly-owned sites, typically with only one pitch, which are uneconomic to manage and maintain.
- **Vandalism and unauthorised use.** Isolated and infrequently used pitch sites, and especially pavilions, are often subject to vandalism and damage from unauthorised use.
- **Inappropriate or inadequate maintenance of publicly owned pitches.** CCT contracts have sometimes promoted standardised maintenance regimes which may not be appropriate for different pitches.
- **Lack of parking.** Where pitch sites have inadequate on-site parking, players are likely to park in nearby streets and may cause nuisance to local residents.

There is always a danger in any strategy of post-rationalising an existing level of supply which has evolved over many years. However, these common problems suggest that the existing pattern of provision often needs fundamental change if it is to better satisfy present and future needs. Particularly in urban areas, there may be a good case for undertaking a fundamental review and possibly inventing a new pattern of provision for the pitch sports. This may involve disposal of some pitches in order to generate the resources needed either to provide new pitch sport sites or enhance existing ones.

Sports Pitch Strategies and Pitch Sports Strategies

There is a fundamental difference between a sports pitch strategy and a pitch sports strategy. The former is concerned with pitch provision, management and maintenance issues while the latter is concerned primarily with sports development for which facility provision is just one issue. This Guide is concerned with the former. However, it is clearly desirable that sports pitch strategies should take full account of the views of governing bodies of sport and the needs of sports development.

Sports Pitch Strategies and Open Space Strategies

Sports pitch strategies can be either stand-alone or set within the context of a wider open space strategy. The main advantages of doing a wider strategy are:

- It makes it easier to clarify and distinguish between the respective roles of pitches and open space in the local scene.
- Local Plan policies must relate to the provision of both pitches and open space.
- It provides rational, factually based arguments to use when seeking to negotiate planning agreements with developers for both pitches and open space.

Against this, the main arguments in favour of a “pitches-only” strategy are:

- Planning sports pitches requires particular knowledge of the pitch sports.
- The amount of data gathering is significantly less than for a wider pitches and open space strategy.
- Policy-making is normally simpler.

Although **sportscotland** believes that pitch-related issues are normally best tackled within the context of an open space strategy, its role relates only to sport and physical recreation and not informal use of other open spaces such as children’s play areas or urban parks. The remainder of this Guide therefore gives advice only on the pitch sport components of these wider strategies or the preparation of a pitches-only strategy.

Desirable Outcomes from a Sports Pitch Strategy

A pitch strategy is needed to tackle the problems associated with quality of pitch provision and not simply to ensure that there are enough pitches for the various matches or practice/training sessions which might be staged in any given area. The desirable outcomes from the preparation and implementation of a pitch strategy are therefore:

- Adequate levels of provision of grass and artificially surfaced pitches and training areas to meet the reasonable practice, training and match play needs of schools, clubs, teams, players of all ages and both genders, coaches and governing bodies.
- The protection through the planning system of those pitches needed to meet local and possibly wider needs, together with allocations of land in Local Plans for additional pitches where the level of pitch provision is either inadequate or will become so as a result of planned population growth.
- Pitches and ancillary accommodation of a quality which fosters participation in the pitch sports by making the experience enjoyable and encourages players to develop their skills, limited only by their commitment and abilities.
- Cost-effective public and club provision.
- Adequate resources for the management and maintenance of publicly-owned pitches.

Against this background, there is no universally recognised methodology for preparing pitch strategies. Accordingly the methodology proposed here seeks to build on the experience of those authorities in Scotland and England which have prepared or are preparing strategies. In essence, the proposed methodology entails comparing the supply of pitches with the demand for them in order to prepare planning, management and maintenance policies which will deliver high quality, sustainable provision.

There are five main steps in the preparation of a strategy:

- Step 1 Decide the scope of the strategy.
- Step 2 Prepare an inventory of facilities.
- Step 3 Estimate demand.
- Step 4 Compare supply with demand
- Step 5 Produce a Sports Pitch Strategy - a provision, management and maintenance strategy with related action plan.

There is a critical final stage in the process – using the strategy to develop appropriate land use policies for incorporation in Local Plans. Appendix A examines this stage in more detail.

Steps 2 and 3 can proceed in parallel. For example, the inventory might be prepared by the planning department and the demand estimate by the department responsible for sport and recreation. Ideally much of the required information should be collected by the department responsible for open space maintenance as part of its day to day work. A considerable amount of demand information can be obtained when teams seek bookings of local authority pitches.

In view of the importance of pitch strategies to Local Plans, they should normally be prepared by a partnership between local authorities' sport and recreation and planning departments. The planning department is likely to have some sort of database of open space and therefore it will be sensible to use it to check the pitches database. **sportscotland** also maintains a database of sports facilities and this provides a further means of cross-checking the draft local pitches database.

Step 1: Defining the Scope of a Sports Pitch Strategy

Deciding the scope of the strategy comes down to determining the range of sports to be included and the geographical area to which it will relate. Pitch sports can be grouped as either essential or optional:

- **Essential:** football (including soccer sevens), rugby, hockey, cricket and in some areas shinty.
- **Optional:** American football, cricket nets, outdoor 5-a-sides football, multi-sport areas and shinty.

Ideally, pitch sports strategies should include both match and training needs including the need for floodlit facilities. Where resources are limited, however, the priority should be on pitches for competitive matches.

Ideally, the geographical area to be covered by the strategy should relate to the area from which teams in local competitive leagues are drawn. These areas often straddle local authority boundaries and where this is the case it may be desirable for two or more councils to work together. However, as this is not always easy to arrange, a more usual approach is for a strategy to relate to an individual council area.

Timescale

Pitch strategies are dependent on information from local clubs and leagues. The best time for obtaining information from them is usually towards the end of their playing seasons - spring for the winter sports and late summer for the summer ones – as club and league secretaries' administrative duties are "winding down". It may also be possible for those involved in preparing the strategy to attend the annual general meetings of local leagues in order to explain the importance of the strategy and seek co-operation. It is desirable to inspect the condition of pitches a good way through each playing season to determine levels of wear.

Step 2: Supply–Preparing an Inventory of Local Pitches

All council areas contain a variety of sports pitches in terms of sizes, surfaces, quality and ancillary accommodation. Few councils however, have a comprehensive inventory of all the pitches in their areas. Some may only have a listing of those pitches they own themselves, possibly drawn up to prepare maintenance specifications following the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). These inventories are often out of date. The first step in preparing a strategy is therefore to prepare an up to date inventory of both publicly and privately owned pitches and their ancillary accommodation.

Sources of Basic Information

Preparing an inventory can be a time consuming process, especially as it is important to include qualitative as well as quantitative information. The first step is to identify pitch sports sites. Initial sources of this basic information are likely to include:

- **sportscotland's** facilities database.
- Data held in council departments, principally those responsible for recreation, education and planning.
- Local sports directories.
- The governing bodies for the pitch sports, which should be able to provide details of pitch-owning clubs.
- Use of aerial photographs to identify pitch sites.

Pitches come in a variety of sizes; with natural and artificial surfaces; with good or poor drainage; with and without floodlights; sheltered and exposed; with good, bad or no changing accommodation; in locations with varying degrees of accessibility; and with or without conflict with neighbouring properties. As a result their attractiveness to players, when they can be used, and their playing capacity – the maximum number of times they can be used during the season without unacceptable deterioration – varies considerably. This means that it is never enough simply to count the number of pitches for each sport.

The minimum information it will be desirable to include in the database is:

- Name of pitch or playing field.
- Address and location map.
- National grid reference.
- Ownership and tenure.

- The home club or teams using the pitch(es).
- Details of the body responsible for management (including lettings or bookings) and maintenance.
- Details of each pitch (sport, type and condition of surface, size) and any improvements required.
- Total area of land on each site.
- Access (e.g. public, voluntary club, school, etc.).
- Details of on-site changing accommodation including the number and size of team and match official changing rooms, toilets, showers, potential for mixed sex use; and accessibility for people with disabilities; an appraisal of the quality of the facilities and any improvements required.
- The maximum number of bookings allowed by day or per week.
- Details of on-site parking and any improvements required.
- Availability (e.g. are club-owned pitches available for booking by other clubs for training or matches?)
- The availability of floodlighting and any improvements required
- Other constraints on use e.g. potential nuisance to neighbours when pitch is in use, dog fouling, etc.

The best way of gathering this information is on the ground but inspecting a large number of pitch sites can be both time consuming and expensive. Some councils have sent self-completion questionnaire surveys to known pitch owners, such as schools, but this approach is very unlikely to result in a comprehensive database. However, it can be used as an initial step with inspections then being made of the sites for which questionnaires have not been completed. Appendix B contains advice on undertaking a postal survey of local schools and clubs.

Because of the effort required to compile a comprehensive inventory, it is important that, once created, it is kept up to date. This can be done by maintaining the inventory as a computerised geographical information system (GIS). It should be viewed as a corporate resource rather than a departmental one, and regularly updated through contact with users and managers and analysis of planning permissions.

Proposed Pitches

The number and type of pitches in an area is likely to change over time. New pitches may be created, school pitches opened up to community use, clubs or other pitch owners may upgrade their facilities and some pitches may be lost to development. As a result, the final step in creating the database of pitches is to consider how the present range of pitches and training areas is likely to change over the next few years. Sources of information to help with this may include:

- Development proposals in the existing Local Plan.
- Information obtained from the schools or clubs surveys.
- Local authority sport and recreation strategies.
- School PPP proposals.
- Further and higher education institutions.
- Local authority capital programmes for new and improved pitch sport facilities (it is normally sensible to include only firm commitments with funding in place).

Analysis of the Pitches Database

Once the database is complete, the next step is to determine the total number of pitches for each sport which can realistically be available at the peak match times in each week, taking account of the condition and maintenance needs of each individual pitch. The easiest way of doing this is to use a spreadsheet summarising the number of pitches of different types and sizes available at different times of the week, by sport. If the strategy is to include training as well as match play, the analysis must take this into account when the carrying capacity of pitches is determined.

There are often constraints on the level of pitch use. For example, schools and pitch-owning clubs may not allow “outside” teams to hire their pitches. Where the local authority has no control over these policies it cannot increase the capacity of pitches and therefore must reflect the owners’ policies when calculating the total capacity of pitches in the area.

If there is no hard evidence relating to the maximum number of bookings allowed on particular pitches it is necessary to make an appropriate assumption. This can most easily be based on the council’s policy on the acceptable level of use of its own pitches. If there is no such policy, it should relate to the pattern of match play in the sport under consideration, the condition of individual local pitches and their maintenance regimes. If, for example, football matches are played on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings, valid assumptions might include each public pitch being used:

- Once on both Saturday and Sunday (two bookings per week).
- Once on a Saturday and twice on a Sunday (three bookings per week).

Qualitative Issues

Up to this point, the analysis of supply has been almost completely quantitative – that is, the number of pitches available for each sport. However, quality is vitally important if playing standards are to improve and sports development initiatives designed to introduce new participants to the pitch sports are to be successful. An important part of the exercise is to identify which pitches or pitch sites should be enhanced. Being able to demonstrate deficiencies in the quality of facilities is an essential first stage in securing additional investment.

There is no recognised standard for classifying pitch quality. South Lanarkshire Council has classified its own pitches as a basis for facility charges: pitches are graded A, B or C on the basis of playing surface, maintenance and changing accommodation. Details of the criteria used can be found in Appendix C.

One simple way of adding a qualitative dimension to the database is to class particular pitches or pavilions as being of either an acceptable or unacceptable standard. The definition of what is deemed to be acceptable or unacceptable can be determined locally but is likely to include issues such as:

- The condition of the pitch surface.
- The frequency with which individual pitches are unfit for play - often a good indicator of their quality or need for additional drainage or maintenance.
- Whether there is on-site changing accommodation of an acceptable standard.
- Whether pitches meet the specific requirements of different leagues and governing bodies.

The outcome of the supply analysis should be, as a minimum, a comprehensive database of local pitches with an indication of their quality and the extent to which they can sustain regular usage. It may also be desirable to include an indication of the relative popularity of public pitches. This constitutes the “supply” or “provision” side of the supply-demand equation.

Step 3: Estimating the Demand for Pitches

There is always a danger in using existing levels of participation as the key indicator of demand because the facilities available in an area may be constraining the amount of demand which can be converted into participation. Assessing the demand for pitch sport facilities in an area is a matter of:

- Identifying existing levels of participation.
- Assessing the extent to which demand is constrained by lack of, or poor quality of, facilities.
- Forecasting the impact of sports development initiatives.
- Forecasting the impact of demographic changes.

The main demand is for pitches for matches. However, concentrating exclusively on match play will fail to identify the growing demand for practice and training and the need for dedicated 5-a-side football courts or multi-courts. These are best considered separately as they have potentially different land use and management implications.

Match Play Demand

Existing Levels of Participation

The existing level of participation in match play is best assessed in terms of the **number of bookings** for each of the different pitch types required on any particular day. The key facts required are therefore:

- The total number of matches in the strategy area, on each day of the week, involving male, female, adult or junior teams for each of the sports included in the strategy.
- The type of pitch required by each of these teams (eg full size, small-sided or synthetic).
- The time of day when matches must start, if there is one.

The easiest ways of establishing these facts are:

School Matches

- Through the local authority Education Department.

Community Matches

- Through analysis of league fixture lists. These can be provided by league secretaries whose names and addresses can be obtained from national governing bodies. There is normally a single “match day” for each competitive league and leagues usually have rules specifying the facilities required for matches.
- By obtaining details of the number of referees required for matches at different times. Most leagues have a referees/umpires co-ordinator who is responsible for ensuring that all matches have qualified referees.

In practice, because of the need for daylight, it may be sufficient to assess demand for the winter pitch sports on Saturdays and Sundays only. Some cricket matches are played on midweek evenings in summer and so it may be necessary to investigate the demand at these times as well as weekends. To calculate the potential maximum number of pitch bookings for a league which includes teams from outside the study area, it is necessary to “pair” each team from outside the area with one within it and then “pair” any remaining teams within the area.

The easiest way of checking that all local leagues have been included is by studying league results printed in local newspapers. The needs of cup competitions can generally be ignored as the teams entering them also play in local leagues. Accordingly cup competitions do not increase the number of pitches required in an area.

Outside the leagues, games are played between pub or other casual teams which are not under the aegis of the governing body. However, as most of these matches are played on public pitches it is often possible to identify the teams involved by comparing local authority pitch booking records with league fixture lists. Unauthorised use of pitches is more difficult to quantify.

Some authorities keep comprehensive records of pitch bookings which can be used to reveal information on:

- clubs or teams regularly using public pitches, with contact details.
- casual matches involving occasional teams;
- cancelled bookings and/or “no shows”.

Identifying Facility-Related Constraints on Demand

Where a team does not have ready access to a “home” pitch (whether owned or leased) it is likely to approach its local authority to book a public one. Booking requests for public pitches can be a rich source of information on unmet demand, provided councils keep records of the number of requests for pitch bookings they cannot meet. If necessary, booking procedures should be amended to record such information. In addition, pitch-owning clubs may be constrained from running

additional teams by lack of pitch capacity.

Unused public pitches in an area, however, do not automatically indicate a lack of demand. For example, rugby teams will not wish to book pitches which are known to be affected by dog fouling. Nor does a decline in public pitch bookings necessarily indicate falling demand. When Glasgow City Council investigated why bookings of its pitches had dropped by 45% over a five year period in the early 1990s, it discovered that the main factor was the poor quality of pitches resulting in teams booking pitches in neighbouring council areas. There are many reasons why teams may not wish to book particular pitches. For example, mineral based pitches (e.g. blaes or ash) are unpopular with most players, as are pitches with poor or no changing accommodation. This means that there is a need to “get behind the numbers” to understand the factors affecting the use of public pitches by canvassing the views of clubs, teams, local leagues and governing bodies.

The Views of Clubs and Teams

Most councils seek very little information from clubs or teams booking their pitches other than a name, telephone number and an address for their invoice. However, bookings procedures can be used to monitor demand. If confirmation of bookings was made only on receipt of additional information which would assist in the preparation and monitoring of a sports pitch strategy, councils could readily build up a valuable database on the clubs and teams using their pitches, including details of:

- The leagues in which teams play and key factors such as match days, start times and league requirements.
- Teams' views on particular pitches or changing accommodation.
- Areas in which there is a particular shortage of pitches.
- Demand for access to training facilities.

The Views of Local Leagues

Most – but not all – pitch sports match play is organised through governing bodies and their affiliated local leagues. This means that contacting appropriate governing bodies and local league secretaries is a vital early step in the process of preparing a strategy. The key information they should be able to provide includes:

- **Their perceptions of the key needs of their sports** at the local and possibly wider than local level e.g. an area may lack an adequate venue for major games such as local league finals or suitable training facilities for local governing body squads.

- **Trends in league participation.** The number of teams in a particular division is usually limited by the number of weekends per season. Where a sport is growing in popularity, leagues tend to respond by creating extra divisions. This can place additional pressure on pitches both throughout the season and at the end of it for any “show games” which may be staged.
- **Constraints on league expansion.** Local leagues may have the potential to expand but be unable to do so for a variety of reasons such as a lack of pitches at certain times or in certain areas.
- **League seasons** which have implications for the management of pitches, such as the need to cater for the different requirements of winter and summer leagues.

Summary of Existing Demand

Demand must be summarised using the same units as for supply – that is, in terms of potential pitch bookings by league and sport. The outcome of the analysis of match demand should be a statement of the total number of bookings for different types of pitches required for match play by men, women, boys and girls at the specific periods when matches are played in a typical week in the main playing season for each sport. In practice, however, the midweek periods can normally be ignored for football, rugby and hockey. An example of how to produce a typical demand summary for football leagues is provided in Appendix D. Casual or non-league games can be included in a separate category if required.

Trends in Demand

Demand may change as a result of changes in underlying demand and local demographic changes. Current demand trends in the pitch sports include:

Football

- A shift from Saturday afternoon more competitive leagues to Sunday morning more recreational leagues.
- The growth of soccer sevens for children aged 7-11.
- The growth of female participation and therefore a need for changing accommodation which can be used simultaneously by both genders.

Rugby

- The growth of mini-rugby on Sundays.
- The growth of female participation and therefore a need for changing accommodation which can be used simultaneously by both genders.
- Declining participation by clubs’ lower teams.

Hockey

- The shift from grass to artificial pitches; no “serious” hockey is now played on grass pitches.

- A decline in the number of facility-owning clubs; more clubs depend on local authority facilities and as a result lack a home base.

Cricket

- The development of artificial wickets, resulting in fewer cancelled matches.

Forecasting the Impact of Sports Development Initiatives

Pitch strategies should seek to anticipate and forecast changes to the pattern of demand arising from sports development initiatives, insofar as they will affect the need for pitches and training areas. The main factors likely to affect future demand levels are:

- **Initiatives** like Team Sport Scotland, **sportscotland's** Youth Sport Strategy and the appointment of increasing numbers of sport-specific development officers and School Sport Co-ordinators. In addition, the Scottish Football Association and Scottish Rugby Union are respectively promoting soccer sevens and mini-rugby for young players. In the short term they have created a need for small-sided pitches. In the longer term this may lead to higher levels of adult participation. Information on these initiatives should be available within local authority sport and recreation strategies and governing body development plans.
- **Governing body development plans.** In accordance with the *Sport 21* strategy, **sportscotland** is actively encouraging and assisting governing bodies to become more professional in their approach to sports development planning and delivery. Ultimately this process links to the development of excellence through the Scottish Institute of Sport and Regional Institutes, within which cricket, football, hockey and rugby are core sports. It will therefore be essential for local pitch strategies to reflect and take full account of needs identified in governing body development plans.
- The active **promotion of girls' and women's participation** in rugby, football and cricket. Information on this should be available in governing body and local authority sport and recreation strategies.

Forecasting the Impact of Demographic Changes

Changes in population numbers and age structure will influence demand for pitches. At a national level, the age structure of the population is projected to change notably over the next 20 years. The number of children aged under 16 is projected to fall to 85 per cent of its 1998 level by the year 2021. A similar reduction is projected in the numbers of 16-44 year olds. The potential demand base for pitch sports will therefore contract. However, local variations in demographic change can be significant and the pitch strategy should take these into account. As pitches require significant areas of land, the strategy should adopt a long term planning perspective.

Training and Practice

There is a limit to how much players can improve by playing only in matches. Training, practice and coaching are at least as important for those players and teams wishing to improve. The widespread lack of floodlit training areas for football and rugby, however, creates something of a chicken and egg problem. Evidence of demand is illustrated by some clubs training on grass areas dimly lit by nearby street lights, security lighting or car headlights. Midweek occupancy levels at floodlit artificial turf pitches also tend to be high.

Training facilities generally require a smaller area of land than a match pitch. If a training area is constructed with a “high capacity” surface it can be used by different teams on different nights of the week. A high level of use also justifies investment in floodlights. Suitable high capacity surfaces include reinforced grass (for rugby and football) and artificial turf (for football and hockey). Indoor training areas with artificial turf are costly but may be justified for elite squads.

Existing practices are usually a poor guide to the demand for training because most teams are unable to obtain access to suitable facilities. It is therefore best to concentrate on identifying the facility-related constraints on demand for training facilities.

Football and rugby teams should avoid using match pitches for training because of the extra wear and tear to the surface. There should preferably be dedicated training areas for these sports. There is no easy way of identifying the demand for these facilities other than by surveying clubs and teams. The survey should seek to identify the proportion of clubs wanting to use training facilities, when they are required and for how long. Hockey clubs will require access to synthetic grass pitches and cricket clubs to net practice facilities.

Response rates to self-completion questionnaire surveys of sports clubs are often low – indeed, a 30% response is quite good. However, the results can be extrapolated to other teams in an area to provide an estimate of total training requirements per week. If the capacity of a typical training area is known it will then be possible to calculate the total number of training areas required for each sport.

Floodlit 5-a-side Courts and Multi-Courts

5-a-side and multi-courts are used both for 5-a-side league matches and training purposes. Accordingly it is difficult to separate match play and training requirements. *5-a-side Football (sportscotland Research Report no.76)* provides information on typical patterns of participation at different types of facility including indoor halls, subdivided synthetic grass pitches and dedicated 5-a-side courts. Assessment of demand should take account of any 5-a-side centres provided by the private sector. The provision of floodlit 5-a-side courts can help to reduce the demand for indoor football in sports halls and therefore it may be necessary to create links between a sports pitch strategy and any local indoor sports provision strategy.

Step 4: Comparing Supply and Demand

The first step is to make a simple **quantitative** comparison of the assessed supply and demand for each of the pitch sports for the days of the week and times of year for which pitches are required. Saturdays and Sundays should be evaluated separately as leagues are normally played on a particular day. The purpose of this comparison is simply to establish whether there are enough pitches in the area without taking account of wider qualitative issues. This requires:

- Comparison of the number of pitch bookings and when they are required with the number of bookings which could be available on those days.
- An assessment of mid-week training needs, primarily floodlit provision.

The analysis should consider school/college pitches and the extent to which they are available for use by non-school/college teams. This should quantify the extent to which existing pitches can accommodate demand at the peak weekend periods and if necessary highlight the need to “open up” education pitches for community use.

The purpose of this simple analysis is to identify whether there are too many or too few pitches in relation to demand, ignoring all issues relating to their quality. It should identify whether the land area used for pitches is:

- Too little, in which case there is a need for more land to be allocated for pitches.
- About right, in which case the amount of land currently used for pitches needs to be retained;
- Unnecessarily generous, in which case it *may* be possible to allow the redevelopment of some pitch sites.

The next step is to include **qualitative** issues, for example using the “acceptable/unacceptable” classification suggested in Chapter 6. This will gauge the extent to which the existing supply is able to provide an acceptable number and quality of pitches to satisfy the legitimate needs of the pitch sports. The analysis should identify the key strategic issues which contribute to any quantitative and qualitative shortfalls in provision.

Identifying the Key Strategic Issues

Pitches and related ancillary facilities are expensive to provide and maintain. Some clubs and governing bodies may consider that local authorities have a duty to provide facilities but not to charge an economic price for their use. Such views are unrealistic. Strategies have to focus on key issues and provide reasoned justification for making difficult choices between competing priorities for limited resources. In some instances it may be desirable to attempt to create new patterns of demand rather than attempt to meet existing ones.

The next step, therefore, is to identify what the key issues actually are through analysis of the pitches database and comparison of demand with supply. Typical examples of key issues include:

The pattern of demand

- Disproportionate levels of demand on the peak day of the week with many pitches lying idle for much of the rest of the time.
- A build-up of cancelled fixtures at the end of the winter season placing severe pressure on pitches in early summer when some pitches should be rested, or used for cricket which requires much shorter grass.

Issues relating to existing pitch provision

- Poor quality pitch surfaces (and therefore almost certainly poor soil structure and drainage) leading to severe limitations on their use and suitability.
- The need to increase the “carrying capacity” of existing pitches, for example by providing better drainage, improving maintenance or reconstructing them.
- Pitches with unacceptable surfaces e.g. red blaes
- The need for additional and improved changing provision in order to make existing unserviced pitches acceptable.
- The need for additional artificial turf pitches or training areas.
- The balance between junior and adult pitches.
- Inadequate provision for small-sided games and junior coaching either midweek or on weekend mornings.
- Over-capacity in some sports but shortfalls in provision in others.
- Providing for school and other education sector needs.
- School pitches lying idle at times of peak community demand because of access difficulties or lack of changing accommodation suitable for community users.
- Inadequate floodlit facilities for midweek practice and training for the winter pitch sports or artificial wickets and nets for cricket.
- Spare capacity and therefore opportunities for additional sports development work.
- Clubs requiring enclosed pitches or other facilities in order to meet league requirements.
- A lack of facilities for “show games” staged at the end of the playing season.

Pitch Management Issues

- The number of bookings allowed on pitches.
- Excessive wear on a limited number of pitches.
- Very high maintenance costs but low income from public pitches.
- Recurrent vandalism to goals or changing pavilions taking pitches out of use for long periods.
- Clubs booking several pitches for each match but using only one.

These key issues can be tackled through the sports pitch strategy.

The Need for a “Strategic Reserve” of Pitches

An important consideration when comparing supply with demand for pitches is that there should *always* be a “strategic reserve” of pitches – in other words, a surplus of supply. The reasons for this are:

- There will usually be some pitches out of use because, for example, they are waterlogged or the surface is damaged and the pitches need to be “rested”.
- As the demand for each of the different pitch sports changes independently of the others, it will be necessary to keep the number of pitches for each sport under review. Sometimes it may be possible to re-mark a pitch from, say, football to rugby; but a need for an additional rugby pitch does not automatically mean a local need for one less football pitch.
- The various sports development initiatives currently being pursued should mean a rise in pitch sport participation over the next decade.
- The growing need for small-sided pitches for soccer sevens, mini-rugby and other junior coaching initiatives.

The required level of this “strategic reserve” will vary from one part of the country to another according to a range of factors including the quality of existing pitches and the level of use. Local experience will be the best guide as to the appropriate level of this reserve, but it should never be less than 10% and will often be higher than this. In principle, the strategic reserve should be greater where pitch drainage is poor and levels of pitch use and rainfall are high.

The sportscotland Facilities Planning Model

Councils may also find it helpful to make use of **sportscotland's** Facilities Planning Model (FPM). It allows pitch provision to be seen in its regional context, using standardised supply and demand parameters. In many areas local leagues will cross local authority boundaries but it will rarely be the case that adjoining authorities are preparing pitch strategies simultaneously and can take full account of cross-border demand and supply. However the FPM does not take account of demand levels varying across the country nor the qualitative differences in facilities. It is no substitute for a locally derived pitch strategy.

Step 5: The Sports Pitch Strategy

The purpose of having a strategy is to tackle those key issues identified in the comparison of supply and demand for sports pitches. In addition, a strategy can assist the planning authority in determining planning applications affecting playing fields and in preparing Local Plans. The strategy is likely to relate mainly, but not exclusively, to those pitches owned by the local authority.

There will usually be a range of options for tackling the key issues and it will be necessary to evaluate their impact on land requirements and capital and revenue budgets. Policy options are likely to include a mixture of:

- Changes to existing pitches, training areas and related changing accommodation.
- Provision of new pitches, training areas and changing accommodation.
- Changes to management of pitches and training areas.
- Changes to maintenance of pitches and training areas.
- Sports development initiatives.

Whole Life Costs

As an initial step, it will be useful to analyse the costs of providing and maintaining existing council-owned pitches and pitch sites. This process should ideally link to a Best Value review.

Research for **sportscotland** (*Tayside Pitch Sports Study, Research Report no 27, 1992*) examined these costs. The maintenance costs and use of a sample of different types of pitches were monitored over a year. The study also estimated the costs of providing pitches including the need for occasional re-investment in, for example, redoing sand slits or replacing the carpet on synthetic pitches. It then calculated the whole life costs of pitches over ten and twenty year periods and calculated the average whole life costs per match.

Thanks to CCT, many local authorities will be able to calculate appropriate figures for their own pitches. Typical local authority pitch charges are likely to meet only a small proportion of the cost of providing public pitches, resulting in fairly high subsidy levels. This does not affect the supply and demand elements of preparing a pitches strategy. However, it is likely to be significant when determining management and charging or other local authority policies relating to pitches.

Provision Issues

Changes to Existing Pitches and Training Areas

The supply-demand comparison is likely to have identified a need to improve a number of existing pitches and training areas and/or provide some new ones. The policy options are likely to include:

- Improving pitches which are well located but often unplayable in order to increase their carrying capacity, for example by providing or re-instating sand slits to link up to existing drainage or re-constructing selected pitches using a sand carpet specification.
- Converting blaes or other mineral pitches to natural or synthetic grass surfaces.
- Converting some full-size pitches into pitches suitable for small-sided games.
- Creating permanently marked out small-sided pitches on spare land at existing pitch sites.
- Re-marking pitches for a different sport.
- Reducing the number of pitches on a particular site to allow pitches to be re-oriented, moved to even out wear, increase safety margins or increase the size of sub-standard pitches.
- Providing additional floodlighting - but note that floodlighting standard grass pitches may not be cost effective as they have a limited carrying capacity in winter. It may be necessary to reconstruct pitches if they are to be floodlit in order to increase their playing capacity by, for example, providing a reinforced grass surface.
- Promoting the use of portable goals in order to reduce casual or un-booked usage of public pitches.
- Providing artificial cricket wickets on the edge of established squares or in practice net areas.
- Meeting the qualitative requirements of specific clubs eg for the enclosure of specific pitches – but note that this might have an impact on the availability of those pitches and therefore the earlier quantitative supply-demand comparison may have to be re-worked.
- Designating particular pitches as venues for end of season show games and providing the appropriate spectator or other ancillary accommodation. Such pitches might be used by those teams playing in higher leagues with specific requirements for such things as a fenced pitch, dugouts, floodlighting and spectator facilities.
- Selling off the poorest and least used pitches to create resources to enhance other pitches.

- Upgrading or replacing changing pavilions which are unusable or simply of an unacceptable standard.
- Altering changing pavilions to make them usable by men and women at the same time.

The Provision of New Pitches and Training Areas

In some areas there may be a need for additional pitches to satisfy demand. In others a review of whole life costs may indicate a need to reduce the net costs to councils of providing and operating pitches. One way of doing this may be to consolidate provision at the “sports pitch centres” referred to in Chapter 2. Where new housing growth generates a need for additional pitches it may be possible to secure funding through Section 75 (“planning gain”) agreements with house builders.

The emphasis in funding programmes of targeting school sports facilities is likely to increase the provision of synthetic grass pitches at secondary schools. They should be designed with floodlights and changing accommodation which will allow them to be used by local teams and clubs out of school hours.

Policy options for new pitches and training areas include:

- Providing natural grass and reinforced grass pitches.
- Providing synthetic grass pitches and training areas.
- Providing high intensity training, practice and playing facilities eg a 5-a-side soccer centre.
- Consolidating one and two-pitch sites onto a smaller number of larger sites - but note that the former single pitch sites may still be required to function as kick-about areas or other forms of open space and should not automatically be developed for some other use.
- Promoting the creation of multi-sports clubs.

The Management of Pitches and Training Areas

There is often a poor link between booking systems and information on the use and condition of pitches. This can lead to particular pitches being over- or under-played and over- or under-maintained. Pitches might be suitable for higher levels of use if given additional maintenance. In addition, pitches on school sites may have the potential to accommodate some community use without suffering unacceptable damage to the playing surface.

The review of the costs of providing and maintaining pitches may lead councils to conclude that sites with only one or two pitches are uneconomic. Instead of consolidating small pitch sites onto larger pitch sports centres, an alternative approach is to lease them to local clubs. Bury Metropolitan Borough Council in England is one example of a council which has transferred the day to day management of many of its pitches to clubs. When financial pressures led it to consider trebling pitch hire charges, it offered local clubs the choice of these increased charges or managing and maintaining pitches themselves. The clubs initially opposed both alternatives but have progressively accepted “self-management”. The Council now undertakes basic pitch maintenance and clubs – or in some cases a consortium of clubs – are responsible for everything else. The clubs also retain the income from hiring the pitches out to others.

Policy options to consider include:

- Changing booking procedures to reduce the amount of play on over-used pitches and even out wear.
- Determining the maximum number of bookings allowable each week for individual pitches according to their quality and carrying capacity.
- Tightening up procedures to prevent multiple bookings of local authority pitches.
- Negotiating with schools to “open up” their pitches for (greater) community use. This may require alterations to school buildings to make changing facilities accessible or provide hot water for showers, negotiations over caretakers’ or cleaners’ overtime or improvements to pitches and possibly their re-marking. Schools will need to be convinced that proposals will not lead to over-playing of pitches and prejudice their primary function of curriculum use. For further advice see *Guide to Community Use of School Sports Facilities* (sportsotland, 2000).
- Reviewing charging policies and linking the charge for individual pitches to their quality.
- Encouraging clubs to lease those sites with only one or two pitches, subject to safeguards for their use by other teams or clubs. This may also make it easier for clubs to seek other sources of funding, such as the Lottery, to enhance facilities.

Changes to Maintenance Regimes

One effect of CCT was to reduce the costs of pitch maintenance. Another was to reduce levels of maintenance and to determine the timing and extent of maintenance by specification rather than the needs of individual sites. Policy options to consider will include:

- Reviewing maintenance regimes to improve pitch quality and increase the playing capacity of key pitches.
- Cutting back the maintenance of unused areas to promote environmental benefits.

Pitch owners should inspect their pitches at regular intervals. If there is evidence of deterioration they should change the maintenance regime, reduce the amount of use or, if necessary, invest in upgrading them.

Sports Development Initiatives

The assessment of demand should already have taken account of the local impact of sports development initiatives. Where there is a clear surplus of pitches, an alternative to disposal might be to work with governing bodies, schools and local clubs to stimulate demand by, for example:

- Creating and promoting junior coaching schemes.
- Creating additional local leagues.
- Developing female football, rugby and cricket.

Consultations Over the Draft Strategy

The Best Value regime places a general duty on local authorities to consult their communities over many issues. Before a draft pitch sport strategy is adopted, therefore, councils should consult the pitch sports interests in their area. The particular interests it will be desirable to consult will vary from one area to another but should include all local pitch owners, local pitch sport leagues and possibly individual clubs.

Strategy Action Plan

The final step in the preparation of the strategy will be to prepare an annual action plan for its implementation. This is likely to be the responsibility of the local authority's recreation department. The key headings in the action plan are likely to include:

- Priorities.
- Targets.
- Performance indicators.
- Funding requirements/budget bids.
- Sports development initiatives.
- Monitoring mechanisms.

Implementation of the strategy through annual action plans should impact on local pitch sport clubs and leagues and therefore it is desirable to involve them in the implementation process. This can best be achieved through the creation of a local "development forum" for each of the pitch sports. This should encourage clubs, the governing body and local authority to work together to monitor local pitch needs and jointly promote sports development initiatives. Some councils have encouraged the

development of these forums by including a small levy on their pitch hire charges which is then made available to the forums to spend on developing their sport. Forums can also provide a means of simplifying pitch booking procedures by agreeing a season-long series of bookings of appropriate pitches for each local league. Perhaps most importantly, such initiatives can provide a vital link between a sports pitch strategy and a pitch sports strategy.

Dissemination of the Strategy and Action Plan

A strategy which nobody knows about is likely to have little impact. It should not simply be a reference document for local authority use but should also be disseminated to the local clubs, schools and other bodies likely to be affected by it. In addition, local authorities are asked to provide a copy of their pitches strategy to **sportscotland**. **sportscotland** is a statutory consultee on all planning applications involving playing fields and will make use of local pitches strategies when commenting on planning applications. Councils should also send a copy of the pitches database to **sportscotland** so that it can update its national sports facilities database.

Implementation and Review

Once the strategy is adopted it should be implemented otherwise it is a waste of time and effort. Implementation should not solely be a matter for the local authority but a shared responsibility with the other components of the development forum for each sport.

The Best Value regime requires local authorities to undertake a root and branch review of each of their services at least every five years. Local Plans also look five years ahead and there will obviously be advantages in reviewing pitch strategies and Local Plans at the same time. However, the demand for local pitches can change more quickly than this as new clubs or teams are formed and some disband. This means that there is often a need to review pitch strategies more frequently than every five years. As the process is a fairly lengthy one, it will probably be sensible to have at least an annual liaison meeting with local league secretaries to identify the extent to which the needs of their sport are changing. The development forum referred to above will be an even better way of achieving this.

Input to Local Plan Policies

The Scope of Local Plan Policies

NPPG11 indicates that councils should:

- Carry out an analysis of existing open spaces, including playing fields and sports pitches.
- Include a statement in its development plan of the extent of educational and community requirements for playing fields and sports pitches, and include policies for their protection.
- Identify any shortfall in the level of provision and seek to remedy it through Local Plan allocations of land.
- Identify those pitch sites it will be desirable to protect from development.
- Identify those pitch sites it will be desirable to improve or enhance.
- Identify the criteria against which the planning authority will be willing to consider proposals for the redevelopment of pitch sites.

The Total Level of Provision Required

The total level of pitch provision required in an area can be derived from the demand summary in Chapter 7. However, the “total level of provision required” is not the same thing as the assessed level of demand for pitches and training areas because of the need for the “strategic reserve” of pitches for each sport referred to in Chapter 8.

Traditionally, where Local Plans have included an overall level of provision it has normally been expressed in area terms, such as X ha per Y people. However, it is better expressed as:

- The total number of pitches (of different sizes or types) required for each sport.
- The total number of training areas (of different sizes or types) required for each sport.
- The proportion or number of pitches and training areas which should be floodlit.

The strategic reserve allows for change in the number of pitches for each sport within the overall number of pitches.

Tackling an Identified Shortfall in Provision

Where there is a shortfall of pitches in an area, the Local Plan should include land allocations and proposals for additional pitches. These areas should ideally be served by public transport and located where floodlighting will be acceptable. For obvious reasons, the land in question must also be fairly flat, capable of being easily drained and an appropriate size and shape.

Local Provision Standards

The amount of land required for pitches to meet the needs of the local population, including the strategic reserve, can be used as the basis for a local provision standard. The simplest way of doing this is to calculate the average number of people per pitch in the area and from this, an area of land per person. The calculation should take account of:

- The pitch requirements.

- Minimum safety surrounds.
- Land for a changing pavilion and equipment/goal storage.
- Land for access and car parking.

Section 75 Agreements

Provision standards can be useful in planning for large new housing developments. If a proposal is likely to generate a significant level of population growth in an area, this will put additional pressure on community facilities such as sports pitches. Unless there is a compensating increase in these facilities, there will be a “planning loss” to the local community. It is reasonable for planning authorities to require developers either to provide or contribute to the cost of sports or other facilities in order to prevent this. These facilities can be provided “on site” as part of the development or “off site” at an appropriate location.

Any off-site facilities funded, or partly funded, through a developer’s contribution obtained through a Section 75 agreement must be related to the proposed development in terms of both size and location. This means that councils cannot ask developers to fund more pitches or other facilities than will be required by the residents of their development. The scale of facilities required can therefore best be assessed using the local provision standard referred to above. If necessary, the standard can include a distance threshold to identify potential off-site locations.

Distance thresholds are likely to vary from one area to another but there are likely to be two main distance thresholds appropriate for use in pitch planning:

- Fairly short “walk-in” thresholds relating to casual kickabout areas and other areas for small-sided boys and girls football teams in urban areas. These facilities are likely to be used almost exclusively by participants living within a few minutes walk. Small-sided football teams, for example, tend to be formed by local boys or girls clubs which usually attract their members from a small area such as a particular neighbourhood. Mini-rugby and Kwik Cricket teams, on the other hand, are usually based at established rugby or cricket clubs.
- A longer threshold relating to adult pitches for formal match use including pitch sport centres, central venues for small-sided matches and other intensively used facilities such as synthetic grass pitches which attract users from a wide catchment. The majority of users of these facilities will not be able to walk to them and so it is desirable that they should be located where they will be served by public transport. Adult teams tend to attract players from a wider area than the immediate environs of their home ground.

The Protection, Enhancement or Development of Pitch Sites

The planning system has an important role to play in protecting pitches from development. Paragraph 44 of NPPG11 states that the disposal of pitches should be entertained only if the land is surplus to long term requirements as either pitches or amenity open space. Paragraph 47 extends this broad principle to three important tests which must be satisfied if pitches are to be redeveloped for some other purpose:

- The retention of the pitches can best be achieved by the redevelopment of part of the site – for example, selling off a small unused area in order to generate the funds to enhance one or more existing pitches;
- There would be no loss of amenity and alternative provision of equal community benefit and accessibility will be made available – for example, if a replacement pitch of at least equal quality and accessibility is provided;

- There is a clear long term excess of pitches, taking into account long term strategy, recreational and amenity value and any shortfall in adjoining local plan areas – for example, as demonstrated by a pitch strategy.

While the planning system can protect pitch sites, the main thrust of the policy guidance in NPPG11 is to prevent pitch provision falling below whatever level may be required in an area. In principle it allows the consolidation of several small pitch sites onto a larger site where appropriate.

NPPG11 can also be interpreted as allowing councils to grant planning consent for the development of a pitch site if the development will result in improvements to the quality and playing capacity of other pitch sites – provided the overall level of provision required in the area will still be adequate to meet identified needs. This means, for example, that a council might sell one or more unpopular and poorly used mineral pitches in order to generate the resources to convert other mineral pitches to a natural or synthetic grass surface. Councils could also use a Section 75 agreement to achieve the same result when a developer seeks planning consent for the redevelopment of a privately owned pitch.

The location of a pitch sports centre is likely to be an important issue in the event of proposals to undertake such a consolidation. The planning system seeks to promote sustainability. In principle, therefore, all pitches and training areas should be readily accessible on foot, by bicycle and by public transport as well as by car. However, this is not an argument for the retention of a large number of uneconomic small pitch sites scattered throughout an urban area. There are two main reasons for this:

- The “home and away” pattern of participation means that pitch sport players are constantly having to travel to different pitches to play matches.
- Players join a particular team or club because it offers the opportunity to play at a certain standard (or, in the case of former pupil teams, because of a particular school allegiance) and not necessarily because it is the closest to where they live.

Local Plan Policy: Summary

In summary, **sportscotland** looks to planning authorities to include a policy for playing fields in their Local Plan which:

- Is based on a comprehensive assessment of local needs.
- Encourages greater community access to school and other educational pitches and playing fields where they have the capacity to absorb additional use.
- Promotes the general enhancement of the quality of sports pitches and ancillary facilities.
- Promotes the use of Section 75 agreements to procure replacement pitches or improvements to existing ones.
- Takes account of population change, especially arising from major new housing development.
- Protects existing levels of pitch provision and strategically important pitch sites, but allows the consolidation, where appropriate, of small existing pitch sites into larger, higher quality and more cost effective pitch sport centres.

Surveys

Councils may decide to undertake a postal questionnaire survey of known pitch providers, schools and clubs in order to gather information on both pitches and the needs of pitch users.

Clubs

Most of the community demand for pitches comes from teams fielded by established clubs. They can be open clubs, former pupil clubs and clubs associated with non-sporting organisations such as higher education institutions, companies or the Civil Service. Some will own their home pitch(es), others will have a short or long term lease and yet others will rely on hiring public pitches. Establishing the extent to which these clubs and teams require access to pitches is a key aspect of assessing demand. Establishing the extent to which they control pitches is an equally important aspect of determining supply.

A self-completion questionnaire is an obvious way of obtaining this information. However, response rates are often low and this can make it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from the results. For example, a club survey for the City of Edinburgh Council in 1996 achieved a response rate of only 31%. An alternative approach is to undertake a telephone interview survey, but this can be extremely time consuming. The type of information collected from the questionnaire should include:

- Details of the number of playing members and teams the club currently fields on a regular basis for each sport it plays; separate details are required for boys', girls', men's and women's teams.
- Whether the club has any plans to change the number of teams it fields.
- The name(s) of the leagues in which each of their teams play and when during the week matches are supposed to take place.
- Details of each team's designated home pitch for matches with its location (address), who owns it, how it is booked, when it is normally available for use, type, dimensions, surface and comments on its condition and availability.
- The extent to which each team trains or practises each week, or would like to be able to do so.
- The pitch or other playing area used for training and practice, with comments on its size, surface, floodlighting (if any), condition and availability.
- Details of ancillary facilities such as changing pavilions.
- Details of any quantitative or qualitative requirements the club or specific teams may have, eg for the enclosure of its pitch or other measures needed to conform with league rules.
- Future development plans, eg to start a women's or junior team, and facility constraints on implementing such plans.

Schools and Other Educational Institutions

sportscotland's database of pitches suggests that approximately 30% of Scotland's pitches are on school sites and most pitch sport players are introduced to their sport at school. Schools are also important off-peak users of some public pitches and providers of off-site pitches in some areas. At present their on-site pitches are little used by community teams and clubs. However, one of the functions of a strategy is to challenge and re-appraise current practice with a view to finding better ways of doing things. If school pitches are currently used to only a limited extent by community users, therefore, it does not follow that this should always be the case. Initiatives such as soccer sevens, Team

Sport Scotland, **sport**scotland's Youth Sport Strategy and the Lottery funded School and Community Sports Facilities Programme are promoting stronger links between schools and clubs which are likely to increase pressures for community use of many school pitches, especially for small-sided games and junior coaching.

It is therefore important to identify both schools' needs for access to pitches and the contribution school pitches make, or could make, to meeting wider community demands. Education departments should be able to provide basic details of school pitches and ancillary facilities but perhaps less information on levels of school use, existing or potential community use, or condition of pitches. It is usually necessary to contact schools (and other education institutions such as colleges and universities) directly for such information.

One way of doing this is by means of a postal questionnaire. This should be sent to schools, as a matter of courtesy and good practice, through the Education Department. The information it will be desirable to obtain normally includes:

- Details of on-site and off-site pitches.
- School curricular PE and extra-curricular pitch use.
- Details of any use of pitches for matches and coaching by external clubs and teams.
- Information on pitch sport trends at schools.

South Lanarkshire Council's Pitch Classification

Class A Pitches

Well maintained high specification pitches with good drainage – able to withstand heavy use over full season.

- Be under strict control as to use in order to preserve a high quality playing surface.
- Undergo renovation works during the summer in preparation for the ensuing season.
- Having changing accommodation for teams suitable for the size of the facility including showers, toilets etc.
- Be located in an area of demand that provides good site access for the user.

Class B Pitches

Well maintained pitches with good drainage able to withstand heavy use over the full season.

- Be under control as to use in order to preserve playing surface.
- Have adequate changing, shower and toilet accommodation.

Class C Pitches

Pitches located in areas of low demand, poor drainage or receiving only minimum maintenance.

- Having no changing, showering or toilet accommodation.
- Pitches of poor quality – placed on a waiting list for improvements.

Demand Summary – Football Example

This appendix contains an example of how to estimate demand for pitches. It relates to football, but the same method can be used for other sports.

Knowing the number of teams and how many matches they play it is possible to calculate the total number of matches played on a single day. Taking account of how long a match lasts, it is then possible to derive the minimum number of pitches required to accommodate these matches within a typical time slot. Once current pitch requirements are known, it is then sensible to consider whether there is a need to include an allowance for possible future growth in demand.

Strategic Reserve

It is never sensible to have only just enough pitches as this can lead to significant disruption of match programmes if some pitches are out of use for any reason. Allowance should be made for a strategic reserve of at least 10% of the minimum number of pitches required. In this example a figure of 15% has been used.

Small-sided Football

The following example is based on a two hour booking which could be a typical Sunday morning time slot. A future growth of 25% in demand for small-sided football has been added.

Example

			<u>37 x 28 m</u>
Under 7s	16 matches/day	8 pitch-hours	4 pitches
Under 8s	30 matches/day	15 pitch-hours	8 pitches
Sub-total			12 pitches
Future Growth (25%)			3 pitches
Strategic Reserve (15%)			2 pitches
Total, say			17 pitches
			<u>55 x 37 m</u>
Under 9s	32 matches/day	22 pitch-hours	11 pitches
Under 10s	18 matches/day	12 pitch-hours	6 pitches
Sub-total			17 pitches
Future Growth (25%)			4 pitches
Strategic Reserve (15%)			3 pitches
Total, say			24 pitches

Note: These calculations assume there is a short gap at half-time and between matches. Therefore matches played 10 minutes each way require a pitch for a total of 30 minutes (U-7, U-8) and 15 minutes each way matches require a pitch for a total of 40 minutes (U-9, U-10).

UEFA Recommendations

Further expansion of the small-sided leagues will arise from the “binding recommendation” by UEFA that all U-12 football should be small-sided by the start of season 2001/02. If implemented, this will result in existing U-10 teams playing small-sided games for the next two seasons as U-11 and U-12 teams, creating a need for additional pitches of 55 x 37 metres.

Youth Football

In this example youth football comprises 11-a-side games for U-11 to U-17 teams on full size pitches. There are no rules at present covering the most appropriate pitch sizes for these age groups. All matches are played on full size pitches and therefore this represents the “worst case” scenario in land use terms. It is desirable that every team should have a designated home pitch and possible for each pitch to have two teams using it as their “home” venue. Age groups play for the following periods:

U-11 and U-12	25 or 30 minutes each way
U-13 and U-14	30 or 35 minutes each way
U-15 and U-16	35 or 40 minutes each way
U-17 and U-18	40 or 45 minutes each way

Games Per Week

If all the teams are drawn from one council area it is simple to calculate the number of pitches required. The following example shows what to do where leagues include teams from outside the council area. The number of teams in each league in season 2000/01 and therefore the total number of matches played each week is:

Example

<i>League</i>	<i>Teams in Council area</i>	<i>Teams outside Council area</i>	<i>Maximum matches/week on pitches in Council area</i>
U-11, Premier	7	4	5
U-11, Division 1	5	7	5
<i>Sub-totals</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>10</i>
U-12s, Premier	6	5	5
U-12s, Division 1	5	7	5
U-12s, Girls	4	2	3
<i>Sub-totals</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>13</i>
U-13, Premier	7	3	5
U-13, Division 1	6	4	5
<i>Sub-totals</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>10</i>
U-14, Premier	3	3	3
U-14, Division 1	7	3	5
U-14, Division 2	2	7	2
U-14, Girls	7	5	6
<i>Sub-totals</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>16</i>
Under 15s, Premier	5	3	4
Under 15s, Division 1	6	3	4
<i>Sub-totals</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>8</i>
Under 16s, Premier	4	2	3
Under 16s, Division 1	4	3	3
Under 16s, Girls	3	0	3
<i>Sub-totals</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>9</i>
U-17	4	4	4
Totals	85	65	70

Notes:

- If there is an odd number of teams in a particular league, one team is "rested" each week.
- To calculate the maximum number of matches on pitches within the Council's area each week, each team from outside the Council area is "paired" with a team from within the area, which is assumed to play at home; the balance of teams based in the Council area is then divided by two and the two results added.

This table demonstrates that there can be a *maximum* of 70 U-11 to U-17 matches staged within the Council's area on a single day (This is a worst case scenario; a sensible arrangement of fixtures would require fewer pitches). If league rules require that matches are played on Sundays and kick off between 1200-1500 hours, this means that each pitch can be used for two games on Sundays giving a total need for **35 pitches** for youth 11-a-side games for season 2000/01.

Future Change in 11-a-side Youth Demand

The main factors likely to affect the number of 11-a-side youth teams at U-13 to U-18 level are:

Expansion of Small-Sided Play for Older Children

In the short term there may be a slight contraction of the 11-a-side leagues as the present U-10 small-sided teams continue in small-sided play to the age of U-12. In the longer term, however, assuming that all the present U-10 small-sided players move into 11-a-side play when they reach the age of 12, there will be a slight expansion in the number of 11-a-side teams. In addition, there should be an increase in the number of girls' teams with the introduction of new age groups until eventually there may be a girls' league in each year group. In the short term it is probably sensible to plan on the basis of the present number of 11-a-side youth teams continuing, but in the longer term there could well be a need to plan for more 11-a-side pitches for the U-13 to U-18 leagues. This growth could amount to around 15% of the number of teams and therefore the number of pitches required.

Small-sided Team Development

The growth in the number of small-sided U-7 to U-11 teams over the next decade should lead to the formation of more 11-a-side teams as players reach the age of 12. However, it takes two to three small-sided teams to create one 11-a-side team and so the number of additional 11-a-sided teams created from new small-sided teams is unlikely to be large. An increase of around 10% in the number of 11-a-side teams might be expected.

Total 11-a-side Youth Demand

The growth rates of 10% and 15% referred to above give a total future growth in youth demand for 11-a-sides of 25% and a strategic reserve of 15%. This gives a total pitch requirement, assuming that all matches are played within the present Sunday afternoon limited time slot, of:

Existing need	35 pitches
Future growth (25%)	9 pitches
Strategic reserve (15%)	5 pitches
Total, say	49 pitches

XYZ Men's Football League

The XYZ League operates in two sections, with matches played on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings:

Example

<i>League</i>	<i>Teams in Council area</i>	<i>Teams outside Council area</i>	<i>Maximum matches/week on pitches in Council area</i>
<i>Saturday Section</i>			
Premier Division	10	3	6
Division 1	9	3	6
Division 2	11	2	6
<i>Sub-totals</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Sunday Section</i>			
Division 1	8	0	4
Division 2	10	1	5
Division 3	10	2	6
Division 4	12	0	6
Division 5	12	0	6
Division 6	9	1	5
<i>Sub-totals</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>32</i>

The maximum number of pitches needed currently within the Council's area on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings is therefore 18 and 32 respectively. Because the League rules require that matches start at 1400 on Saturdays and 1030 on Sundays, each pitch can be used only once on each of these days for league games.

Changes in XYZ League Demand

The key factor determining the future growth of adult football is likely to be the number of pitches available for youth 11-a-side games. If this is inadequate, it will constrain the number of youth teams and, subsequently, the number of adult teams – assuming that few individuals start to play league football as adults without first playing in age group teams. If, however, the number of youth teams expands, more players are likely to join adult teams.

The wholesale movement of players through the age group system is unlikely to occur and, in addition, existing adult players will retire from playing as they grow older. Overall, however, the next ten years could easily see the development of additional adult teams and it seems reasonable to plan on this basis. Assuming, for example, the formation of 12 additional teams in this league, this would result in

six additional matches which would require a minimum of three additional pitches (assuming all six teams are based in the council area) split between, say, one for Saturdays and two for Sundays. This gives a total demand for pitches in the XYZ League of:

<i>Saturdays</i>	
Existing demand	18 pitches
Allowance for growth	1 pitch
Strategic reserve (15%)	2 pitches
Total, say	21 pitches

<i>Sundays</i>	
Existing demand	32 pitches
Allowance for growth	2 pitches
Strategic reserve (15%)	4 pitches
Total , say	38 pitches

Summary

By repeating this exercise for each of the small-sided games associations, youth and adult leagues and taking account of casual booking for informal games, it is possible to assemble a complete picture of demand for football pitches in the area.

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