



Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy – Update 2021

Babergh and Mid- Suffolk District Councils

June 2021

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Executive summary

Background and Context

- 1 Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils adopted their existing Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity (LSPA) Strategy in 2017 following a comprehensive review of the leisure services, facilities and partnerships across both Districts.
- 2 The Councils articulated their vision to ***“support, encourage and inspire their communities to be more active and achieve a better quality of life”*** and a strategic aim ***“To support and enable increased levels of sport and physical activity participation across Babergh and Mid Suffolk; to support the improvement of health and wellbeing within our communities, particularly those from disadvantaged groups”***.
- 3 The Strategy established a robust policy position and a clear set of strategic priorities for how the Joint Councils would support the delivery of sport and physical activity services in the future. It set out what the Councils will continue to do, building on success of the past; what they will support and enable through new ways of working; and what they will no longer do, promoting self-reliance where appropriate.
- 4 Four years on, and in the wake of the biggest public health crisis for generations, the Councils have taken a positive and proactive step to reviewing and updating the LSPA Strategy at a time when supporting residents to be more active has never been more important. Physical activity levels have fallen during the Covid-19 pandemic and inactivity remains a ‘ticking timebomb’ in terms of the long-term public health of communities – a fundamental issue that only the public sector is likely to tackle.
- 5 Since 2017, the development of a new Joint Local Plan, the successful delivery of investment schemes across the Councils’ core leisure facilities, the changing nature of sport and leisure activities and the current and likely future impact of Covid-19 upon communities provide a strong rationale for a review and refresh of the LSPA Strategy. The review also coincides with the development of the Councils’ new Wellbeing Strategy and the two documents are fundamentally connected.
- 6 The existing Strategy is progressive and aligns strongly with wider sector thinking on the role of physical activity in a more holistic sense, way beyond traditional sport and leisure activities taking place in conventional facilities. It highlights and fully embraces a strategic shift towards supporting wider health and wellbeing outcomes across the Districts and identifies physical inactivity, particularly amongst specific groups as a key challenge for the Councils and their partners to address. The approach to this project has therefore been one of reviewing, updating and where possible, strengthening the existing LSPA Strategy rather than starting completely afresh.
- 7 Covid-19 has had a severe impact over the past 15 months on sport and leisure provision and the physical and mental health and wellbeing of communities across the UK. Babergh and Mid Suffolk have an elderly population with over 50% of the population living in rural communities. Following a year of reduced activity and limited social mobility, the prevalence of frailty and mental health conditions have escalated hugely and are a major concern for the Councils and their health and social care partners.
- 8 Being more active is widely recognised to have a powerful positive impact upon an individual’s physical and mental health and wellbeing. Many of the direct and indirect health impacts of Covid-19 can be treated, at least in part, through increased physical activity and the public leisure

sector alongside wider community groups and partners therefore have a pivotal role to play in supporting communities to recover from the pandemic.

- 9 The updated LSPA Strategy represents a critical and timely opportunity to identify new ways in which the Councils and their partners can support residents to be more active.

Key Requirements

- 10 The Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy (SLC) supported the Councils previously in developing their joint strategic approach and have now been commissioned to review and update the LSPA Strategy through delivery of the following key workstreams:
- ▶ To update the evidence base for indoor sport, leisure and physical activity facilities to account for recent investment in core facilities, future population growth and the changing demographic profile of the Districts
 - ▶ To consider changes in participation trends and a strategic shift from ‘sport’ and ‘leisure’ to ‘physical activity’ in a more holistic sense linked to a stronger understanding of the health and wellbeing benefits of being active
 - ▶ To identify opportunities to support this shift through enhanced and increased opportunities to be active in local, community settings as well as core sports and leisure facilities, particularly given the rural nature of the Districts
 - ▶ To explore the current role and future potential of community facilities in providing access to sport and physical activity opportunities
 - ▶ To understand the impact of Covid-19 on facilities, services and providers and to assess the longer-term implications of the pandemic on the sustainability of sports and leisure provision across the Districts
 - ▶ To identify priority areas and opportunities for investment into infrastructure, services, programmes and partnerships to inform development of a ‘pipeline’ of projects over the next five years.

Update to the Evidence Base

- 11 Audits of sport and leisure provision in the Districts have been undertaken and include both formal sports and leisure facilities and informal spaces and places that can accommodate physical activity including village halls, community centres and open spaces and playgrounds.
- 12 The audits found that 88% of parishes in Babergh (65 of 74) and 77% of parishes in Mid Suffolk (86 of 111) have at least one community building which is or could be used for formal and informal physical activity. Many village halls and community centres are well-used for group activities such as Fit Villages, yoga, fitness classes and dance but it is apparent that programming capacity is limited and the space/functionality of these facilities does not always meet requirements of users.
- 13 There is a good supply of outdoor pitches and courts in both Babergh and Mid Suffolk but the condition of these is variable and many tennis and netball courts require resurfacing. All wards in both Districts contain grass football pitches, but many are in a poor condition and there is high demand from football clubs for artificial grass pitches to accommodate all-weather match play and training.
- 14 Recent investment into the Councils’ four core leisure facilities has significantly improved provision of public health and fitness facilities in Stowmarket and Sudbury, and the new

swimming pool in Hadleigh provides high quality provision to support the growing population in this area of Babergh.

- 15 Updated supply and demand assessments undertaken by SLC show a theoretical oversupply of swimming pool space in Babergh based on the estimated capacity during peak times across all of the facilities against estimated peak time demand. **However**, a large proportion of the existing supply of pool space (c. 800 sqm) is located on school sites (Ipswich High School and Royal Hospital School) with limited public access. Fully publicly accessible pool space is also largely dependent upon the new Hadleigh Pool and at Kingfisher LC in Sudbury which is c. 35 years old.
- 16 The total supply of sports halls in Babergh is sufficient to meet current and future estimated demand. **However**, a key challenge for sports hall provision in the District is that all of these are on education sites, limiting access during the day and providing the Council with limited control in how they are managed in terms of community use. The age and condition of a number of sports halls is also an issue and the current oversupply could quickly shift to an undersupply if facilities reach the end of their economic life, are withdrawn from public use or deteriorate in quality to such extent as to significantly impact upon their ability to meet the needs of users.
- 17 There is a theoretical oversupply of swimming pool space in Mid Suffolk based on the estimated capacity during peak times across all of the facilities against estimated peak time demand. However, this includes the pool at MOD Wattisham (325 sqm) where access is restricted to vetted clubs / community groups outside of Army use hours which will, in reality, significantly reduce its ability to meet local demand. Excluding MOD Wattisham would leave supply and demand broadly in balance but heavily reliant on the fully publicly available space provided at Mid Suffolk and Stradbroke leisure centres. The total water space also includes 3 small pools that currently only offer swimming lessons and a members only health club and spa facility which will be less accessible than a public swimming pool.
- 18 There is an undersupply of swimming lesson spaces in Mid Suffolk and large developments in Stowmarket, Thurston, Woolpit and surrounding area will likely place significant strain on the already stretched water space at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre.
- 19 The total supply of sports halls across Mid Suffolk is just about sufficient to meet current and future estimated demand. However, as with the pool at MOD Wattisham, access to the sports hall is heavily restricted and if removed from the assessment, leaves an undersupply of sports hall space equivalent to 4 badminton courts.
- 20 Sports hall provision in Mid Suffolk is also heavily reliant upon education sites (4 of the 7 identified), limiting access during the day and providing the Council with limited control in how they are managed in terms of community use. The age and condition of the only fully publicly accessible sports halls at Mid Suffolk LC and Debenham LC is also a key issue. As with Babergh, the current oversupply shown for Mid Suffolk could quickly shift to an undersupply if facilities reach the end of their economic life, deteriorate in quality or are withdrawn from public use.
- 21 The large housing developments in Capel St Mary/East Bergholt/Brantham and Great Cornard in Babergh, and Stowmarket and Thurston/Woolpit/Elmswell in Mid Suffolk are priority areas for the Councils to consider additional and improved sport and physical activity provision due to the scale of the developments and the likely pressure this will place on the capacity of existing provision.

Stakeholder Engagement

- 22 A comprehensive programme of stakeholder engagement which included discussions with 44 strategic stakeholders and 11 sport national governing bodies, and 254 responses to four bespoke surveys issues to Sports Clubs, Schools, Town and Parish Councils, Village Hall Committees and Voluntary Groups. Strategic stakeholders included District and County Council

Officers, Leisure providers, Active Suffolk, health partners (including both CCG's) and community organisations such as Community Action Suffolk and One Life Suffolk.

- 23 A number of key challenges emerged from the stakeholder engagement including the limited availability of core facilities, the challenges with accessibility given the rural nature of the Districts, exacerbated by poor public transport and the dangerous nature of roads for walking and cycling alongside the limited awareness amongst residents of local opportunities to be active.
- 24 The impact of Covid-19 on physical and mental health has been profound and it is unclear how this will influence residents' willingness and confidence to return to activity. The lockdowns and social distancing have also placed huge financial strain on the Councils and their respective leisure operator partners and the future leisure market remains uncertain.
- 25 Stakeholders identified a number of opportunities to address these challenges and support increased engagement in sport and physical activity across the districts. Common themes included more locally based provision and targeted outreach activity, better use and activation of green and open spaces and improved signposting of activities and awareness of the benefits of being 'everyday active'.
- 26 A strong, recurring theme with all stakeholders is the importance of partnership working and the opportunity to build sustainable relationships with the Councils and within communities. This will require the Councils to commit more staffing resources to help develop and sustain good working relationships, potentially through the newly structured and resourced Communities Team.

New Strategic Outcomes and Objectives

- 27 Identifying a clear set of strategic aims and aspirations is central to the development of any effective strategy. It should provide a clear line of sight or 'golden thread' which connects an overall Vision for sport and physical activity provision in the Districts right through to the delivery of specific actions on the ground.
- 28 Whilst this commission is intended as a review and refresh of the existing LSPA Strategy rather than a fundamental re-write, SLC has taken the opportunity to review the framework and strategic priorities of the existing Strategy and to explore, with the Councils, a new outcomes-based approach to the updated Strategy.
- 29 SLC has observed that the existing strategic priorities are weighted towards increasing participation and engagement by four identified target groups (older people, children and young people, disabled people and those experiencing mental health issues) with one additional priority focusing on enablers (volunteers) and one on the facilities and places for people to be active.
- 30 Whilst some people within these identified target groups will remain a priority moving forwards, SLC believe that they are currently too broadly defined and that there is an opportunity to re-frame the approach to ensure it focuses less upon a general cohort of the population and more upon the specific groups and localities that are most likely to be inactive and experience greatest health inequalities.
- 31 It is also recognised that the current target cohorts will inevitably include many people who are already active and will equally omit a large proportion of the population who do not fall within these groups but face similar challenges and barriers to being active. For example, those on low income, without access to a vehicle or from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. In short, it feels like too much of a 'broad-brush' approach to categorisation of target groups which would benefit from a more refined and insight-led focus across the wider community.

32 Discussion with the Strategy Project Group and through the Member workshops reached a consensus that the updated Strategy needs to increase activity across all ages and communities but to direct greater focus and resource to the least active and those experiencing the greatest health inequalities, irrespective of demographic groups.

33 SLC has identified an opportunity to strengthen the framework of the updated LSPA Strategy to help direct and deliver the Councils' future aspirations for leisure, sport and physical activity across the Districts. It is proposed that the updated Strategy is developed within a framework which:

- ▶ Establishes an overall **Vision** for the future of sport and physical activity in Babergh and Mid Suffolk
- ▶ Defines the required **Strategic Outcomes** or end results
- ▶ Identifies the **Strategic Objectives** that need to be achieved to help get the right results
- ▶ Develops the specific **Actions** required to meet the objectives and support delivery.

34 Through discussion with the Strategy Project Group, it is considered that both the existing Vision and Strategic Aim stand true today. They articulate the Councils' commitment to increasing activity levels as a mechanism to improve health and wellbeing and reference the need to tackle inequalities by supporting those from disadvantaged groups.

Vision:

35 *"Mid Suffolk and Babergh will support, encourage and inspire their communities to be more active and achieve a better quality of life."*

Strategic Aim:

36 *"To support and enable increased levels of sport and physical activity participation across Babergh and Mid Suffolk; to support the improvement of health and wellbeing within our communities, particularly those from disadvantaged groups"*

37 However, in line with the aforementioned rationale, SLC propose a subtle change to the Strategic Aim to replace 'disadvantaged groups' with 'less active people experiencing greater health inequalities'. This better reflects the outcome-based approach to providing support across the wider community for those who will benefit most from being more active rather than specific groups.

38 The Strategic Outcomes and supporting Strategic Objectives fall into three distinct but interrelated 'themes' which form the building blocks of the updated LSPAS Strategy:

- ▶ **Active People** – What outcomes do the Councils want to see and for whom?
- ▶ **Active Places and Spaces** – What infrastructure, places and spaces are needed to contribute to these outcomes?
- ▶ **Active Partnerships** – Who are the key partners and enablers and how should the Councils work with them to help contribute to these outcomes?

Table ES1: Strategic Outcomes and Objectives

Strategic Outcomes	Strategic Objectives
Strategic Theme: Active People	
1. Reduced levels of inactivity amongst communities and in localities experiencing greater health inequalities	Develop insight into <i>which</i> groups are less active and <i>where</i> , to ensure resource is targeted where it is most needed and will have the most impact
	Increase the number and frequency of people from identified target groups and localities taking part in regular physical activity
	Leverage external funding to support targeted interventions
2. Increased opportunities for all residents to move more through an accessible, diverse and inclusive programme of activities.	Develop a diverse and inclusive physical activity programme in collaboration with communities which is delivered in local settings and makes use of technology through an enhanced digital offer
	Raise awareness of all residents of the opportunities to be active locally and the physical and mental health benefits of being more active
	Establish effective, ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programmes and initiatives to understand what works and to inform future design and delivery
Strategic Theme: Active Places and Spaces	
3. Sustainable community sport, leisure and physical activity facilities that enable and support all residents to be active	Support the provision of sustainable indoor and outdoor facilities which are accessible to all, meet evidenced need and provide development pathways from beginners to elite level performance
	Increase locally based provision through more community use of schools, community centres, village halls and sports club facilities
	Maximise the opportunities for CIL/Section 106 to support the facility infrastructure required to meet the needs of a growing population
4. Green and open spaces providing formal and informal opportunities for all residents to be ‘everyday active’	Protect and maintain sustainable green and open spaces that provide opportunities for formal and informal outdoor sport, recreation and physical activity
	Activate green and open spaces through development of a co-ordinated programme of outreach activities and use of digital technology
	Support and promote clear, safe routes that enable confident, active travel through early intervention into the planning stages

Strategic Outcomes	Strategic Objectives
	of new development and through the Councils' wider approach to sustainable travel Enhance opportunities for active play through playgrounds and youth provision (such as skate parks/cycle parks) and by utilising digital tools.
Strategic Theme: Active Partnerships	
5. A strong, sustainable and strategically aligned ecosystem of partnerships supporting all residents to be more active	Take a lead role in establishing a 'whole system' multi-agency approach to tackling inactivity Work with health partners to establish physical activity as a core prevention measure to improve local health outcomes Support schools, sports clubs, Town and Parish councils and community sector partners to maintain and develop physical activity opportunities, particularly for people from less active groups Work closely with leisure operator partners to develop and deliver a diverse and inclusive programme of activities in community settings across the Districts
6. A skilled, knowledgeable and enabled workforce and volunteer base supporting communities to be more active.	Increase the volunteer base of sport and physical activity clubs and groups to build capacity, resilience and support growth in participation levels Increase the skills and capability of sports clubs to diversify their offer and appeal to a wider audience, particularly less active groups Support the upskilling of the leisure operator workforce to deliver targeted and specialist health and wellbeing interventions and a more inclusive service Work with partners across the integrated care system to increase awareness and understanding of physical activity opportunities to 'make every contact count'.

Making it Happen

39 Building upon the proposed Strategic Outcomes and Objectives described in Table ES1, SLC has developed a set of draft high level actions which form the next layer of the updated LSPA Strategy and seek to address three fundamental questions:

► **What?**

What high-level actions are needed to achieve the Strategic Objectives and contribute to the Strategic Outcomes?

► **How?**

How are these high-level actions going to be achieved and what are the more specific detailed actions that sit below these?

► **Who?**

Who will lead on the actions and what role will partners play in helping to deliver them?

- 40 The high-level actions set out in Section 7 of this report are designed to act as a starting point from which the Councils will need to review, discuss and develop further in partnership with stakeholders to ensure there is strong buy-in and ownership by those involved in delivery of the Strategy.
- 41 In addition to the high-level actions which are designed to support delivery of the Strategic Objectives of the updated LSPA Strategy, SLC has developed a pipeline of potential infrastructure projects which are designed to meet identified need for future built provision across the Districts.
- 42 These projects are described in Section 7.3 of the report and are informed by the facility audits, supply and demand assessments, stakeholder engagement and a local understanding of the landscape of provision. They seek to address identified weaknesses or deficits in provision and increasing pressures on the capacity of existing facilities, particularly within areas of significant planned housing growth.

1. Introduction

Background and approach to updating the Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils adopted their existing Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity (LSPA) Strategy in 2017 following a comprehensive review of the leisure services, facilities and partnerships across both Districts.
- 1.1.2 In 2017 the District Councils articulated their **vision** to *“support, encourage and inspire their communities to be more active and achieve a better quality of life”*.
- 1.1.3 This was accompanied by a clear **strategic aim** focused on improving health and wellbeing and targeting resources to support disadvantaged groups: *“To support and enable increased levels of sport and physical activity participation across Babergh and Mid Suffolk; to support the improvement of health and wellbeing within our communities, particularly those from disadvantaged groups”*.
- 1.1.4 The Strategy established a robust policy position and a clear set of strategic priorities for how the Joint Councils would support the delivery of sport and physical activity services in the future. It set out what the Councils will continue to do, building on success of the past; what they will support and enable through new ways of working; and what they will no longer do, promoting self-reliance where appropriate.
- 1.1.5 The Strategy was developed and adopted concurrently with a Leisure Facilities Strategy for 2017-2030 which reviewed the current state of the Councils’ public leisure facility provision, identified gaps in provision and highlighted key issues, risks and investment opportunities moving forwards.
- 1.1.6 Four years on, and in the wake of the biggest public health crisis for generations, the Councils have taken a positive and proactive step to reviewing and updating the LSPA Strategy to ensure it aligns with current strategic priorities and the future role of the Councils at a time when supporting residents to be more active has never been more important.
- 1.1.7 Since 2017, the development of a new Joint Local Plan, the successful delivery of investment schemes across the Councils’ core leisure facilities, the changing nature of sport and leisure activities and the current and likely future impact of Covid-19 upon communities provide a strong rationale for a review and refresh of the LSPA Strategy.
- 1.1.8 This report describes the updated evidence base and key themes from stakeholder engagement and sets out the proposed new strategic outcomes, objectives and high-level actions for the future delivery of leisure, sport and physical activity services across the Districts. It is not proposed to act as the public facing strategy document but seeks to provide the detailed background information to the Councils in support of the updated LSPA Strategy. It is proposed that the Councils, following review and approval of this report, develop a shortened, public facing version of the updated Strategy and work up the more detailed Action Plan with its partners.

1.2 Terms of Reference

- 1.2.1 The Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy (SLC) supported the Councils previously in developing their joint strategic approach and have now been commissioned to review and update the LSPA Strategy through delivery of the following key workstreams:

- ▶ To update the evidence base for indoor sport, leisure and physical activity facilities to account for recent investment in core facilities, future population growth and the changing demographic profile of the Districts
- ▶ To consider changes in participation trends and a strategic shift from ‘sport’ and ‘leisure’ to ‘physical activity’ in a more holistic sense linked to a stronger understanding of the health and wellbeing benefits of being active
- ▶ To identify opportunities to support this shift through enhanced and increased opportunities to be active in local, community settings as well as core sports and leisure facilities, particularly given the rural nature of the Districts
- ▶ To explore the current role and future potential of community facilities in providing access to sport and physical activity opportunities
- ▶ To understand the impact of Covid-19 on facilities, services and providers and to assess the longer-term implications of the pandemic on the sustainability of sports and leisure provision across the Districts
- ▶ To identify priority areas and opportunities for investment into infrastructure, services, programmes and partnerships to inform development of a ‘pipeline’ of projects over the next five years.

1.2.2 It is recognised that the existing Strategy already aligns strongly with wider sector thinking on the role of physical activity in a more holistic sense, way beyond traditional sport and leisure activities taking place in conventional facilities. It highlights and fully embraces a strategic shift towards supporting wider health and wellbeing outcomes across the Districts and identifies physical inactivity, particularly amongst specific groups as a key challenge for the Councils and their partners to address.

1.2.3 Four years on and this position has not changed. Inactivity remains a ‘ticking timebomb’ in terms of the long-term public health of communities and a fundamental issue that only the public sector is likely to tackle. For this reason, the approach to this project has been to review, update and where possible, strengthen the existing LSPA Strategy rather than starting completely afresh. It should be noted that the update to the evidence base includes a high-level audit of indoor and outdoor facilities but does not constitute a full, Sport England compliant Playing Pitch Strategy or Built Sports Facility Strategy.

1.2.4 As outlined in this report, the project has involved significant engagement with a wide range of stakeholders to seek feedback on what has happened over the previous four years and understand more about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. It has also benefitted from regular engagement with a Strategy Project Group consisting of elected Members, council officers and wider partners including Active Suffolk, Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG and West Suffolk CCG.

1.3 Impact of Covid-19

1.3.1 The decision to update the LSPA Strategy has been partly driven by the challenges arising from the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

1.3.2 Covid-19 has had an enormous impact on the landscape of leisure, sport and physical activity provision. The lockdown periods and ongoing social distancing restrictions has created a huge financial challenge for local authorities and their leisure operator partners and community-based sport clubs. Government support through the National Leisure Relief Fund has not been sufficient to cover the losses incurred through the periods of closure and there remains considerable uncertainty regarding the length of the recovery period and the future market for leisure centre operations.

- 1.3.3 Across the UK there is a real threat of permanent closure of leisure centres. A recent survey by the District Councils Network revealed that 1 in 3 District Councils expect to be forced to close some or all of their leisure centres within the next year¹. Establishing sustainable contractual arrangements with Abbeycroft Community Leisure in Babergh and Everyone Active in Mid Suffolk to enable the continued provision of core leisure facilities will need to be a key priority for the Councils in the updated LSPA Strategy. Equally, it will be important to explore opportunities for additional, community-based delivery of services, through strong partnership working, to facilitate activity amongst less active groups.
- 1.3.4 The health impact of the pandemic is profound. On top of the acute illness associated with severe cases of Covid-19, the impact of long Covid presents a new and unknown challenge to the public health of communities. Long Covid, symptoms of which includes breathlessness, fatigue and anxiety for over 12 weeks after first infection, has affected c.700,000 people in the UK and c.57,000 in the East of England². Clinics have been established across the country to assess needs and make referrals to aid recovery and physical activity providers have already been recognised as an important partner and referral route.
- 1.3.5 Physical deconditioning and poor mental health and wellbeing are two indirect health impacts of Covid-19, prominent across all demographics. Throughout the pandemic the occurrence of mental health disorders, frailty and other conditions associated with social isolation and sedentary behaviour has increased significantly and are a major concern for health partners across the Districts.
- 1.3.6 The delay to receiving medical treatment and undergoing elective surgery means that in some areas waiting lists have extended from 18 weeks pre-Covid to c.18-24 months. As a result, there is a large cohort of adults living in pain with their condition deteriorating as they wait for surgery. This is of particular concern in Babergh and Mid Suffolk due to the large elderly population in both Districts. Helping to prepare patients for surgery will be a key opportunity for partnership working between local NHS bodies, the Councils and their leisure partners.
- 1.3.7 Being more active is widely recognised to have a powerful positive impact upon an individual's physical and mental health and wellbeing. Many of the direct and indirect health impacts of Covid-19 can be treated, at least in part, through increased physical activity and the public leisure sector alongside wider community groups and partners therefore have a pivotal role to play in supporting communities to recover from the pandemic.
- 1.3.8 The updated LSPA Strategy therefore represents a critical and timely opportunity to identify ways in which the Councils and its partners can support residents to be more active.

1.4 The Structure of the Strategy Report

- 1.4.1 As noted above, this report is not designed to act as the public facing Strategy document but seeks to provide a suitably detailed account for Council Members and Officers of how the existing Strategy has been reviewed and updated. Following its review and subject to its approval at Full Council meetings in July 2021, it is proposed that the Councils develop a public facing version of the Strategy and develop the Action Plan with its partners.
- 1.4.2 The remaining sections of the Strategy report are structured as follows.

¹ <https://districtcouncils.info/press-releases/one-in-three-councils-expect-to-be-forced-to-close-leisure-centres-forever-new-survey/>

² Office for National Statistics – 1 April 2021

Table 1: Report Structure

Section		Key Content
2	Strategic Review	A summary of the wider local, regional and national strategic context for the updated LSPAS
3	Population Demographics and Health Statistics	A draft Vision, Strategic Outcomes and Objectives for the new Strategy.
4	Updated Evidence Base for Sport and Physical Activity Facilities	Facility audits, supply and demand assessments and future housing growth
5	Stakeholder Engagement	Key themes from engagement with strategic stakeholders, sports clubs, schools, community groups and parish and town councils.
6	Strategic Outcomes and Objectives	A new strategy framework and identified Strategic Outcomes and Objectives
7	Making it Happen	Priority actions for delivery of the updated LSPAS – services, programmes and built infrastructure

2. Strategic Review

Local, Regional and National Strategic Context

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The updated LSPA Strategy forms part of a wider strategic context and is a key component of an integrated framework of Council strategies supporting improved health and wellbeing outcomes and increased community cohesion across the Districts.
- 2.1.2 It also supports a countywide and national strategic policy to improve local health and social outcomes by tackling inactivity. Driven by a clear mandate from Government and Sport England, many local authorities and their partners are placing particular emphasis on identifying, targeting and engaging with inactive and less active groups.
- 2.1.3 This section explores the local, regional and national strategic context and drivers that inform, connect and support the Councils' delivery of leisure, sport and physical activity and the approaches that will underpin the new LSPA Strategy.

2.2 Local Strategic Context

Corporate Plan 2019-2027

- 2.2.1 The Councils' vision, as described in the jointly agreed Corporate Plan 2019-2027, is to build *"great communities with bright and healthy futures that everyone is proud to call home."* This vision is underpinned by six strategic priorities: Environment, Economy, Housing, Wellbeing, Customers and Communities.
- 2.2.2 Each of these six priorities are supported by their own strategies which define the required outcomes and each has (or will have) a delivery plan and programme board which provides a governance structure for sub-strategies and projects. The Councils aspire for all actions and investments to be outcome driven, and the programme boards will enable improved needs-based decision making with suitable performance management and evaluation processes in place.
- 2.2.3 The LSPA Strategy will be an important sub-strategy of the Councils' existing Communities Strategy and new Wellbeing Strategy. However, despite the direct association with Communities and Wellbeing, sport and physical activity has a role to play within all six core strategic priorities.

Communities Strategy 2019-2036

- 2.2.4 Three key challenges for Babergh and Mid Suffolk are identified within the Communities Strategy: an ageing population, increasing social isolation and increasing housing demand. It adopts the following approaches in seeking to tackle these issues:
- ▶ **A place-based approach** – community inspired and community led outcomes
 - ▶ **A collaborative approach** – working with communities and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to develop a more integrated, joined-up service
 - ▶ **A devolved approach** – exploring opportunities for communities to take ownership of assets and services
 - ▶ **A needs-based approach** – evidence-based and insight-led approach to addressing inequalities and focusing resources

- ▶ **A preventative approach** – directing investment towards prevention
- ▶ **An enabling approach** – empowering and enabling communities to help themselves
- ▶ **A partnership approach** – identifying and working with partners who are best placed and suitably skilled to support and deliver shared outcomes
- ▶ **An intelligence led approach** – identifying and using data to better understand the needs of communities and prioritise resources
- ▶ **An inclusive approach** – developing new ways to engage and connect with communities, providing all groups with an opportunity to be heard
- ▶ **A values-based approach** – ensuring that the Councils’ organisational values are reflected through its relationship with communities.

2.2.5 These approaches reflect the Councils’ commitment to their communities and sets out the principles for future investment and how they will work to support local people in their local environment live happier, healthier and more active lives.

Wellbeing Strategy

2.2.6 The new Wellbeing Strategy identifies five themes that are designed to address an overarching outcome for **“All residents to live happy, healthy and independent lives.”** These are:

- ▶ Place and Environment
- ▶ Mental and Physical Health
- ▶ Education and Learning
- ▶ Work and Local Economy
- ▶ People and Community.

2.2.7 The Strategy focuses on influencing those wider determinants of health which the Councils and other agencies, have some control over. It sets out a series of desired outcomes and required objectives, below which a number of tactics are outlined to inform action-planning and delivery.

2.2.8 The new Wellbeing and LSPA Strategies have been developed concurrently and are fundamentally connected. The LSPA Strategy forms a key pillar of the Mental and Physical Health theme in the Wellbeing Strategy but also has a role to play in supporting all of the other themes.

Joint Local Plan

2.2.9 The update to the LSPA strategy is partially driven by the publication of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Pre-Submission (Reg 19) Document (November 2020) which outlines the proposed planned development in the Districts up to 2037. This development plan identifies a provision of 5,075 new homes in Babergh and 8,285 new homes in Mid Suffolk, in addition to homes with outstanding planning permissions at 1st Apr 2018, 4036 in Babergh and 3831 in Mid Suffolk.

2.2.10 A windfall allowance of 500 homes in each District is also identified (windfall sites are defined as sites not specifically identified in the development plan). Data from the Office for National Statistics (2016-based population projections) identifies a projected population increase over the plan period of approximately 7,300 people in Babergh and 9,300 people in Mid Suffolk. The largest developments are identified in Sproughton, Hadleigh and Capel St. Mary in Babergh and in Stowmarket, Thurston, Elmswell and Woolpit in Mid Suffolk.

- 2.2.11 In addition to the provision outlined within the Joint Local Plan, a large mixed use strategic development site on the northern edge of Sudbury was granted planning permission in 2018. The site, known as Chilton Woods, has been acquired by Taylor Wimpey whose proposal includes 1150 new homes and a range of community facilities and green space within the parishes of Chilton, Acton, Long Melford and Sudbury.
- 2.2.12 The Joint Local Plan aspires to develop a clear vision for the towns of Hadleigh and Sudbury in Babergh and Eye, Needham Market and Stowmarket in Mid Suffolk. Vision Groups are being established for each and it will be important that the new LSPA Strategy can support these groups to ensure the provision of sport and physical activity facilities and services is sufficient to meet the needs of a growing population.

2.3 Regional Strategic Context

- 2.3.1 The new LSPA Strategy will play a critical role in supporting countywide health and wellbeing outcomes within Babergh and Mid Suffolk. It will establish and strengthen the role of the Councils in contributing to these outcomes through the delivery of sport and physical services across the Districts.
- 2.3.2 Suffolk County Council, Active Suffolk and regional health partners, such as the Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG and the West Suffolk CCG provide additional strategic direction for the LSPA Strategy update. The County also benefits from a partnership of local authorities, public sector bodies, the voluntary sector and private companies in the Most Active County partnership which helps to coordinate efforts to address levels of inactivity in Suffolk

Suffolk Joint Health & Wellbeing Board – Strategy Refresh 2019-2022

- 2.3.3 The Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board is made up of partners from the Local Authorities and the CCGs. In 2019 they released an update to their Strategy.
- 2.3.4 There is strong synergy between the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Strategies and this regional Health and Wellbeing Strategy, both expressing a commitment to address inequalities, build stronger, more resilient communities and embed prevention. Collective action across a range of organisations is also one of the key principles behind the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 2.3.5 Four priorities have been identified in the updated Health and Wellbeing Strategy, all of which can be supported by the Councils' LSPA Strategy for Babergh and Mid Suffolk. Examples of identified areas of focus that the LSPA Strategy can make to these priorities is shown in italics.
- ▶ Every child in Suffolk to have the best start in life. *(Increase the number of children across the Districts who are a healthy weight)*
 - ▶ People of working age are supported to optimise their health and wellbeing. *(Prevent cardiovascular disease in Suffolk including support to be healthy at work)*
 - ▶ Older people have good quality of life. *(Reduce the impact of frailty on the lives of older people by providing opportunities to be and stay active)*
 - ▶ People in Suffolk have the opportunity to improve their mental health and wellbeing. *(Enable and support people to help themselves by building in 'everyday activity' that becomes a habit and acts as a catalyst for feeling better about themselves and the world around them).*
- 2.3.6 Additionally, the four priority cohorts within the population identified in the existing LSPA Strategy are echoed within the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, emphasising its strong alignment with the countywide context.

Active Suffolk – Strategic Vision

- 2.3.7 Active Suffolk is one of 43 Active Partnerships across England, dedicated to increasing the number of people taking part in sport and physical activity, funded primarily by Sport England and local authorities in Suffolk.
- 2.3.8 Active Suffolk has set out a Strategy Vision for 2017-2025 for how they intend to improve the health and wellbeing of residents by inspiring everyone to be more active.
- 2.3.9 Their priorities, which they will work with local authorities and other local partners to achieve, are to:
- ▶ Improve health and wellbeing by increasing participation and reducing inactivity
 - ▶ Strengthen community, social and economic wellbeing across Suffolk
 - ▶ Demonstrate leadership across the sector to build insight infrastructure and capacity.
- 2.3.10 There are strong parallels between the aims of the LSPA Strategy and Active Suffolk's own priorities who are a key partner in supporting the delivery of shared goals across the Districts.

Suffolk Sports Facility Framework – District Developments

- 2.3.11 Suffolk County Council and Active Suffolk play a key role in monitoring the planning and delivery of sports and leisure developments across the County through the Suffolk Sports Facilities Framework Strategic Group. The key purpose of the group is to ensure there is clear visibility on planned developments for East and West Suffolk, Ipswich, Babergh and Mid-Suffolk and a joined-up approach to delivery across local authority boundaries.
- 2.3.12 The group meet regularly to discuss progress on the delivery of projects, highlight any emerging plans for future developments and explore potential opportunities for cross-boundary provision through a partnership approach.
- 2.3.13 Given the proximity of Ipswich to both Babergh and Mid-Suffolk, its potential housing growth and the age and condition of Ipswich Borough Council's sports and leisure facilities, it will be important for the Councils to keep abreast of any future development plans in Ipswich. Similarly, the housing growth planned for the A14 corridor will potentially need some cross-boundary collaboration with West Suffolk District Council to ensure the sport and physical activity needs of the growing population can be met by a suitable mix and scale of facilities.

2.4 National Strategic Context

- 2.4.1 The new LSPA Strategy update is also informed by national policy developed by Public Health England and Sport England.

Public Health England Strategy 2020-2025

- 2.4.2 Tackling inequalities is a fundamental principle of the Public Health England Strategy which emphasises the importance of prevention, a place-based approach and behaviour change to achieve a healthier population, all of which are recognised within the Council's collective strategies.

Sport England – Uniting the Movement

- 2.4.3 In January 2021, Sport England launched their new 10-year strategy, 'Uniting the Movement'. The strategy marks a shift in thinking towards a greater emphasis on health and wellbeing and tackling inequalities. Much like the Councils' Communities and Wellbeing strategies, it aims to support people to live healthier, happier and more fulfilling lives.
- 2.4.4 Uniting the Movement highlights five big issues where Sport England see the greatest potential for preventing and tackling inequalities in sport and physical activity. These are:
- ▶ Recover and Reinvent – *supporting the recovery of the sector from the impacts of Covid-19 and building towards greater inclusivity, relevance and resilience*
 - ▶ Connecting Communities – *working with communities to support the network of organisations that provide direct benefits in bringing people together to improve their physical and mental wellbeing in their place*
 - ▶ Positive Experiences for Children and Young People – *supporting positive experiences of physical activity for children and young people*
 - ▶ Connecting with Health and Wellbeing – *working collaboratively to improve sport and physical activity messaging, experiences and opportunities so that they are inclusive of all and creating meaningful partnership links with health systems*
 - ▶ Active Environments – *making the choice to be active easier by creating and supporting active spaces including dedicated facilities, community spaces and the wider built environment within a place.*
- 2.4.5 The Councils' Communities and Wellbeing Strategies emphasise a collaborative approach to partnership working and recognise that many organisations are able to support communities and contribute to a more active place. Given the rurality of the districts, connecting communities is a critical focus for the Councils to prevent social isolation and maximise opportunities for residents to engage with group activity.
- 2.4.6 The Joint Councils have committed to an approach that extends beyond the core leisure centres and physical assets. Whilst the population recover confidence to return to indoor activities, the wider active environment is critically important to encourage people to be active in different ways. New initiatives in the Districts, such as Our Parks in partnership with the Most Active County team, are testing new ways to support residents with a place-based approach.
- 2.4.7 The wider strategic context, both on a regional and national level provides a robust and consistent framework of shared outcomes, insight and initiatives that the Councils can draw upon and align with through development of the updated LSPA Strategy.

3. Population Demographics and Health Statistics

Where are we now? A snapshot of the Districts

3.1 Population Demographics

3.1.1 Table 2 provides a snapshot of the population, demographics and access statistics within Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

Table 2: Population, Demographics and Access in Babergh and Mid Suffolk (Source: ONS, Suffolk Observatory, Joint Local Plan)

Babergh	Mid Suffolk
Babergh has a population of approximately 92,036	Mid Suffolk has a population of approximately 103,895
Both Districts have an ageing population. The proportion of the population aged 65 or over is 25% in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, compared to 18% nationally.	
There are fewer children and young people in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, 19% of the population are under 18 compared to 21% nationally.	
In Babergh 25% of the population live in Sudbury and Great Cornard.	20% of the population of Mid Suffolk live in Stowmarket.
69% of the population in Babergh live in rural areas, much higher than the national average of 18%.	In Mid Suffolk 75% of the population live in rural areas.
The Joint Local Plan identifies an additional 5075 new homes in Babergh in addition to 4036 homes with outstanding planning permissions at 1 st April 2018 and a windfall allowance of 500. ³	The Joint Local Plan identifies an additional 8285 new homes in Babergh in addition to 3831 homes with outstanding planning permissions at 1 st April 2018 and a windfall allowance of 500.
The projected population increase identified by the ONS is 7300 (+8% to 2037).	The projected population increase identified by the ONS is 9300 (+ 9% to 2037)
In both Districts approximately 98% of the population are white (85% nationally).	
Babergh has lower than average levels of deprivation. 11% of children live in low-income families (17% nationally). The parishes with the lowest income decile are in Sudbury East (ID 3), Great Cornard (ID 3) and	In Mid Suffolk 10% of children live in low-income families, compared to 17% nationally. The Income Decile (ID) is below 5 in only four parishes, all of which are in Chilton (ID 2), Combs Ford (ID 2) and St. Peters (ID 4) in Stowmarket and Needham Market (ID 4).

³ Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Pre-Submission (Reg 19) Document (November 2020) – Page 42

Babergh	Mid Suffolk
Hadleigh North (ID3), and Sproughton and Pinewood (ID 4) in the Ipswich Fringe	
A higher proportion of the population own a vehicle. In Babergh 14% of households own no vehicle (25.8% nationally) and 46% own at least 2 vehicles (32% nationally). Households without a vehicle are concentrated in towns, for example 28% households in Sudbury have no car or van.	11% of households in Mid Suffolk do not own a vehicle and 50% of households own a minimum of 2 vehicles. The greatest proportion of households without a car or van is in the built-up areas of Needham Market (20%) and Stowmarket (18%).

3.2 Population Health

3.2.1 Table 3 provides a snapshot of the population health statistics within Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

Table 3: Population Health in Babergh and Mid Suffolk (Source: ONS, Public Health England, Suffolk Observatory)

Babergh	Mid Suffolk
In both Districts the proportion of adults in good health is above average.	
The prevalence of mental health disorders is lower than average in Babergh and Mid Suffolk.	
21% of 4-5yr olds in Babergh are overweight or obese, and 30% of 10-11 yr olds. This is better than the national average of 23% and 34%, respectively.	21% of 4-5yr olds in Mid Suffolk are overweight or obese, and 28% of 10-11 yr olds.
62% of adults in Babergh are classified as overweight or obese (nationally 62%).	69% of adults in Mid Suffolk are classified as overweight or obese, significantly higher than the national average.
Life expectancy in both Districts is higher than the national average.	
The mortality rate from causes considered preventable by lifestyle factors is lower in Babergh and Mid Suffolk than the national average.	
14.3% of adults in Babergh walk and 0.4% of adults cycle for travel at least three times per week. This is significantly lower than average: nationally 23% and 3.1% of adults walk or cycle, respectively, for travel three times per week.	12.2 % of adults in Babergh walk and 1.5% of adults cycle for travel at least three times per week.
Across both Districts adults are slightly more active than average (see below).	
Children in Babergh and Mid Suffolk are considerably less active than the national average. 38% of children meet physical activity recommendations, compared to 47% nationally.	

- 3.2.2 The statistics presented in Table 3 represent data collected by Public Health England and the Office of National Statistics pre-Covid. While the up-to-date statistics are not available, it is widely acknowledged that Covid-19 has exacerbated health inequalities and worsened many wider determinants of health. Section 3.3 explores the wider impact of the coronavirus pandemic on population health.

3.3 Implications of Covid-19 on Population Health

- 3.3.1 As the pandemic has progressed, existing health issues have been exacerbated and new problems have arisen. Consultation with health partners, including Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG and West Suffolk CCG, members of the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and local social prescribers has highlighted a series of concerns and priorities for the Districts.
- 3.3.2 A major concern is the general ‘deconditioning’ of the population, particularly amongst older people due to the months of lockdown and limited activity. Frailty is already a priority area for Integrated Neighbourhood Teams in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, with a high proportion of elderly residents and care homes. Increased sedentary behaviour throughout the pandemic has increased rates of frailty and reduced strength, confidence and independence.
- 3.3.3 The delay to treatment and elective surgery caused by the pandemic is a critical concern for NHS England and local providers. Elective surgery waiting lists have increased from c.18 weeks pre-Covid to c.18-24 months. As a result, there is a large proportion of the population awaiting treatment, often in considerable pain with their condition worsening as a result. Supporting these residents to re-build their strength, pre-surgery will be a key priority for health partners, and collaboration with the District Councils, their leisure operating partners and community providers will be important to support the need to help get people moving again.
- 3.3.4 In addition to limited physical movement, there has been a huge impact of restricted social mobility. The implications of Covid-19 upon mental health extends throughout the population but groups of particular concern for health partners include children and young people, the elderly and those who have been shielding.
- 3.3.5 The prevalence of long Covid is a new and relatively unknown challenge for health partners. Long Covid is defined by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) as, ‘signs and symptoms that develop during or following an infection consistent with Covid-19 which continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis’. Symptoms of long Covid are wide-ranging and fluctuating, and can include breathlessness, chronic fatigue, “brain fog”, anxiety and stress⁴.
- 3.3.6 In the UK, approximately 700,000 people are experiencing sustained symptoms over 12 weeks post-infection, including c.57,000 in the East of England⁵. The uncharted nature of the virus raises serious concerns over the duration of long Covid and the long-term consequences for sufferers, for example in the UK, 59% of long Covid patients (411,000 people) have experienced symptoms for over 9 months.
- 3.3.7 Sustained symptoms of long Covid are affecting people of all ages and in all states of health. During the height of the pandemic, it was apparent that those with pre-existing health conditions were more likely to develop acute illness and require hospitalisation. In comparison, 72% of those suffering with long Covid had no pre-existing health conditions. As a result, a new cohort of healthy individuals now require significant support from the health and care system.

⁴ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/post-Covid-syndrome-long-Covid/>

⁵ Office for National Statistics – 1 April 2021

- 3.3.8 Long Covid clinics and assessment centres have been established across the UK to treat patients. The centres bring together doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists to offer both physical and psychological assessments and refer patients to appropriate treatment and rehabilitation services. For Babergh and Mid Suffolk, the Suffolk and North East Essex Long Covid Assessment Service is a virtual clinic which refers patients directly to the appropriate services or specialist clinics for their needs⁶.
- 3.3.9 In addition to specialist clinics, it has been widely recognised that physical activity and moving more is a powerful treatment route for those with less severe symptoms. For example, the Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG signpost people to One Life Health Walks, Active Suffolk Activity Finder and Keep Suffolk Moving pages.
- 3.3.10 There is a critical role for physical activity to support both those suffering directly from long Covid and those suffering indirect consequences of Covid, for example mental health disorders and frailty.
- 3.3.11 The updated LSPA Strategy, alongside the Councils' wider Wellbeing Strategy, will therefore need to play a significant role in supporting individuals, clubs and organisations to recover from the immediate impact of Covid-19 and to create the conditions for residents to embed physical activity into their everyday lives, building resilience and improving long-term health outcomes.

3.4 Sport and Physical Activity Participation

- 3.4.1 The Sport England Active Lives Survey has provided high level estimates of population activity levels twice a year since November 2015.
- 3.4.2 The Active Lives survey groups the population into the following three levels of activity (where activity includes cycling for sport and leisure or travel, fitness activities, walking for leisure or travel, sporting activities and dance):
- ▶ Active (at least 150 minutes a week)
 - ▶ Fairly active (an average of 30-149 minutes a week)
 - ▶ Inactive (less than 30 minutes a week)
- 3.4.3 In the May 2016-2017 Active Lives Survey, 20% of the population in Babergh and 25% of the population of Mid Suffolk were deemed 'inactive', compared to a national average of 26%. Those considered 'active' formed 62% of the population in Babergh and 60% in Mid Suffolk, compared to a national average of 62% (see Table 4).

Table 4: Active Lives data for Babergh, Mid Suffolk, Suffolk and England comparing May 16/17 to May 19/20

Area:	Babergh		Mid Suffolk		Suffolk		England	
	May 16/17	May 19/20	May 16/17	May 19/20	May 16/17	May 19/20	May 16/17	May 19/20
Inactive	20.0%	20.7%	25.8%	21.5%	25.6%	23.5%	25.6%	25.5%
Fairly Active	17.7%	13.1%	13.8%	14.2%	14.7%	12.4%	12.4%	11.7%

⁶ <https://ipswichandeastsuffolkccg.nhs.uk>

Area:	Babergh		Mid Suffolk		Suffolk		England	
Active	62.2%	66.3%	60.4%	64.4%	59.7%	64.1%	62.0%	62.8%

- 3.4.4 In the last Active Lives Survey (May 2019-2020) the proportion of inactive people in Babergh was recorded at 21% and the proportion of active people had increased to 66%. In Mid Suffolk 22% of the population are inactive and 64% are active. In both Babergh and Mid Suffolk the averages are better (lower percentage of inactive people and higher percentage of active people) than the national and Suffolk county average and the overall trend in activity levels across the Districts is a positive one.
- 3.4.5 The data implies that younger adults (16-34) in Babergh are significantly less active but older people (75+) in Babergh are more active than their counterparts in Mid Suffolk and the rest of Suffolk.
- 3.4.6 Disabled people in the districts are significantly less active than non-disabled people. In Babergh 47% of those with a disability class themselves as active, compared to 71% of people without a disability. In Mid Suffolk only 37% of those with a disability are active, compared to 70% of those who do not.
- 3.4.7 There is an Active Lives survey for Children and Young People based on activity levels during the academic year. For the academic year 2019-2020, 37.1% of children and young people in Suffolk were active, 26.0% fairly active and 36.9% inactive. This is considerably worse than the national average of 44.9% active and 31.2% inactive.
- 3.4.8 Activity levels have changed during Covid-19. The most recent Active Lives data, collected in mid-November 2020 and shown in Table 5, documents the change in activity levels during the pandemic.

Table 5: Active Lives Data for England, Suffolk, Babergh and Mid Suffolk from November 2019/20 reflecting the impact of Covid-19

Area	Active (> 150 minutes)			Fairly Active (30-150 minutes)			Inactive (< 30 minutes)		
	% of adults	Change from baseline	Change in last 12 months	% of adults	Change from baseline	Change in last 12 months	% of adults	Change from baseline	Change in last 12 months
England	61.4	-0.7%	-1.9%	11.5	-0.9%	-0.7%	27.1	+1.6%	+2.6%
Suffolk	63.2	+5.7%	+1.9%*	10.9	-4.4%	-2.2%*	26.0	-1.3%*	+0.3%*
Babergh	62.7	+7.1%*	-0.0%*	12.0	-3.5%*	-2.4%*	25.3	-3.6%*	+2.4%*
Mid Suffolk	64.2	+3.4%*	-1.2%*	13.3	-0.1%*	+2.9%*	22.6	-3.4%*	-1.7%*

**no significant change
 Baseline data established in November 2015/16*

- 3.4.9 Nationally there has been a significant decrease in the proportion of active adults and a significant increase in the proportion of inactive adults within the 12 months preceding November 2020. There has been no statistically significant change to activity levels in Babergh or Mid Suffolk and in both Districts the proportion of inactive adults remains below the national average.
- 3.4.10 Sport England have identified that activity levels have reduced the most amongst younger adults (16-24) and pensioners, those from more deprived areas and within Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities. The data has highlighted that inequalities have been exacerbated with the most active individuals becoming more so and the least active individuals taking part in less physical activity than pre-Covid.

3.5 Leisure Facilities Participation Data

- 3.5.1 The Councils' leisure operators, Abbeycroft Leisure (Babergh) and Everyone Active (Mid Suffolk) have provided headline data on usage of the four core indoor sports and leisure facilities – Kingfisher Leisure Centre and Hadleigh Pool in Babergh and Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre and Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre.
- 3.5.2 A summary of usage data from 2017/18 to 2019/20 is provided in Table 6

Table 6: Usage Data of Core Leisure Facilities 2017/18 - 2019/20

Facility	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Variance 2017-20
Kingfisher LC	278,683	282,251	311,635	+ 11.8%
Hadleigh Pool	121,221	116,576	127,780	+5.4%
Total Babergh	399,904	398,827	439,415	+10%
Mid Suffolk LC	904,023	893,817	888,172	-1.75%
Stradbroke Pool	103,590	105,582	103,579	0%
Total Mid Suffolk	1,007,613	999,399	991,751	-1.6%

- 3.5.3 Usage levels across the Babergh facilities have increased by c. 10% over the 3-year period some of which can be explained by the success of the free swim initiative and also due to a change in management system, enabling more accurate visit data.
- 3.5.4 Usage across the Mid Suffolk facilities has remained relatively stable over the period with casual swimming dropping slightly and health and fitness increasing. The reduction in 2019/20 is likely to be a result of reduced visits in the month leading up to the first lockdown at the end of March 2020.

4. Updated Evidence Base for Sport and Physical Activity Facilities

Facility audits and supply and demand assessments on core provision linked to current and future population

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 SLC has undertaken an audit of facilities that support sport and physical activity across the Districts in order to provide the Councils with a clear and up to date position on current provision.
- 4.1.2 In addition to dedicated sports facilities, the audit includes community buildings, parks and open spaces which have the capacity to host less-traditional physical activity beyond the core built provision.
- 4.1.3 The facility audits include:
- ▶ Sports / leisure centres
 - ▶ Outdoor sports and leisure facilities (including grass pitches, artificial pitches and hard courts)
 - ▶ Community facilities (village halls, community centres and sports pavilions)
 - ▶ Parks and play areas, including the provision of multi-use games areas (MUGAs)
- 4.1.4 Previous audits provided by the Council have been used as a baseline and updated through use of Sport England's Active Places Power audit data, other desktop research and satellite imagery (Google Earth) where appropriate. The update has also been informed through consultation with National Governing Bodies, schools, sports clubs and Parish and Town councils.
- 4.1.5 The audits include information on public accessibility, identifying how many facilities per town or parish are on school sites, community sport club sites and publicly accessible land (e.g. recreation grounds).
- 4.1.6 In addition, SLC has undertaken supply and demand assessments for core sports and leisure provision (20/25m swimming pools, 3+ court sports halls and health and fitness facilities) to establish how well the current core facility provision meets identified need, both now and in the future taking account of planned housing growth.
- 4.1.7 This section provides a summary of the key outputs from the facility audits and supply and demand assessments. Copies of the full audits for both Districts are provided in Appendices 1 and 2 and more detail on the supply and demand assessments is provided in Appendix 3.

4.2 Sports and Leisure Centres including Schools with Community Use

- 4.2.1 The leisure portfolio of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils includes four core facilities: Hadleigh Pool and Kingfisher Leisure Centre operated by Abbeycroft Leisure in Babergh; and Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre and Stradbroke Leisure Centre operated by Everyone Active in Mid Suffolk.

4.2.2 In addition to the Council owned and managed facilities there are a number of schools and commercial sport and leisure facilities in the two Districts. For the purpose of the audit and the supply and demand assessments, sport and leisure facilities are classified as those with at least one of the following:

- ▶ Health and Fitness Suite (gym)
- ▶ Sports Hall
- ▶ Swimming Pool.

Babergh

4.2.3 The audit has identified 17 sport / leisure facilities in Babergh, including 8 schools and 7 private/commercial clubs.

4.2.4 There is a variable level of community-use in schools with three of these, Hadleigh High School, East Bergholt High School and the Ormiston Academy Trust, providing community-use during weekday evenings and weekends through a management agreement with Abbeycroft Leisure. A similar arrangement with Abbeycroft Leisure for operation of Holbrook Academy was ceased during the Covid-19 pandemic and the school has changed their community-use arrangements to remove public-access sessions.

4.2.5 **All sports halls in Babergh are located on school sites and public access to them is reliant on suitable community-use agreements with those schools.**

4.2.6 Since adopting the existing LSPA strategy in 2017, Babergh District Council has invested £4.43M in its two core facilities:

- ▶ Hadleigh Pool and Fitness (£2.03M) - new 5-lane 25m pool to replace the previous pool which has been demolished and replaced with green space
- ▶ Kingfisher Leisure Centre (£2.4M) – extension of health and fitness suite from 54 to 100 stations, new exercise studios and refurbished wet and dry changing rooms.

4.2.7 There are 7 private/commercial facilities 3 of which have a health and fitness suite, and 5 have a swimming pool, for example First Strokes is a small swimming pool (18 x 7m) in Sproughton and Pinewood which hosts swimming lesson providers and is open for Pay and Play. Lett's Swim in Hadleigh is a new compact pool open for private hire and swimming lessons.

Mid Suffolk

4.2.8 The audit has identified 18 sport / leisure facilities in Mid Suffolk.

4.2.9 In addition to the Council-owned core facilities in Stowmarket and Stradbroke, Debenham Sports and Leisure Centre, which is owned and managed by Debenham Village Hall Trust, includes a 4-court sports hall and 32 station health and fitness suite.

4.2.10 There are 8 private / commercial facilities and 7 schools including Thurston Community College which is operated by Abbeycroft Leisure under a community-use management arrangement.

4.2.11 Since adopting the existing LSPA strategy in 2017, Mid Suffolk District Council has invested £1.4M in its two core facilities linked to a new management agreement with Everyone Active and a further £60K in Debenham Sports and Leisure Centre:

- ▶ Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre (£1.2M) - extension to the health and fitness suite from 60 to 100 stations and general improvements to the interior of the building

- ▶ Stradbroke Swim and Fitness Centre (£200K) – refurbishment to the interior and improved pool plant but no extension to the capacity of the facility.
- ▶ Debenham Sports and Leisure Centre (£60K) – investment in gym facilities.

4.2.12 In Mid Suffolk the private / commercial facilities are predominantly bespoke health and fitness suites, some of which have studios attached, and compact swimming facilities. There are 3 private swimming pools (all 10 x 5m) in Redlingfield, Wortham and Gosbeck which host swimming lessons.

4.3 Community Facilities

4.3.1 Community facilities are a critical part of the landscape of provision, particularly given the rural nature of the Districts and their ability to support opportunities for residents to be active locally within accessible and familiar neighbourhood-based settings.

4.3.2 Most village halls, community centres and sports pavilions across the Districts offer some form of activity including exercise and dance classes and martial arts and some halls are large enough to host badminton, for example Rattlesden Village Hall and Blackbourne Community Centre.

4.3.3 Community Centres act as a hub for wider local activities and have great potential for hosting increased levels of outreach work. Initiatives such as Active Suffolk's Fit Villages have been extremely successful in delivering local opportunities to be active in rural areas, particularly amongst older people.

4.3.4 Across the 74 towns and parishes in Babergh there are 89 village halls, community centres and sports pavilions (as shown in Table 7). This equates to 1 facility per 1000 residents. All core and hinterland villages, except Chilton (Lavenham ward) have at least one. There are 9 parishes (8 Hamlets, 1 Hinterland Village) without their own village hall but in most cases they either share or have access to a hall in a neighbouring village.

4.3.5 There are 111 towns and parishes in Mid Suffolk with 113 community buildings, equal to 1.1 facilities per 1000 residents (Table 8). However, the distribution of community facilities is uneven, and 25 parishes do not have their own village hall, including 7 Hinterland Villages.

4.4 Outdoor Sports and Physical Activity Facilities

4.4.1 The audit of outdoor sports and physical activity facilities includes:

- ▶ Football pitches (adult, youth, junior; grass and artificial grass pitches)
- ▶ Rugby Pitches
- ▶ Cricket Pitches
- ▶ Netball Courts
- ▶ Tennis Courts
- ▶ Hockey Pitches
- ▶ Multi-Use Artificial Grass Pitches
- ▶ Bowls Greens
- ▶ Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs)
- ▶ Playgrounds.

- 4.4.2 Table 7 and Table 8 provide an overview of all pitches in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, respectively, regardless of their ownership and status for community use. This provides the Council with an understanding of the total quantity of facilities that exist across the Districts. A summary of the proportion of pitches on school sites in each District is presented in Table 9 and the full audits are provided in Appendices 1 and 2.
- 4.4.3 Many parishes contain space for informal play and activity (see Appendix 1 and 2). The Council's Open Space Assessment (Ethos) provided the baseline audit of playgrounds and multi-use games areas for informal activity and was updated using desktop research and satellite imagery.

Babergh

- ▶ There are 126 football pitches in total (1.4 per 1000 residents). There are 119 grass football pitches including 61 adult, 27 youth and 31 junior pitches and 7 artificial grass pitches.
- ▶ There are 38 rugby pitches in Babergh, however these are concentrated in Hadleigh and Stour and are predominantly school pitches (61%).
- ▶ Cricket is well spread out across the District with 34 pitches across 20 of the 24 wards.
- ▶ There are 99 marked tennis courts in Babergh (1.1 per 1000 residents), many of these are joint use macadam or artificial grass pitches shared with Netball. 65% of tennis courts in Babergh are on school sites. There are 51 marked netball courts (0.6 per 1000 residents) in the District, 80% of which are on school sites. The condition of courts varies considerably across public, club, state school and private school sites.
- ▶ There are 14 bowls green with an affiliated club.

Mid Suffolk

- ▶ There are 135 football pitches in Mid Suffolk (1.3 per 1000 residents) including 130 grass pitches: 73 adult, 26 youth and 31 junior and 5 artificial grass pitches.
- ▶ There are 13 rugby pitches in Mid Suffolk located in 5 wards with 8 of these on school sites.
- ▶ There are 31 cricket pitches. Only 8 wards do not contain a cricket pitch.
- ▶ Mid Suffolk has 96 marked tennis courts (0.9 per 1000 residents) and 46 netball courts (0.4 per 1000 residents), often shared between the two sports. 44% of tennis courts and 70% of netball courts are on school sites. Many courts, especially those on a tarmac surface, require re-surfacing.
- ▶ Mid Suffolk contains 31 bowls greens, each with an affiliated club.

Table 7: Audit of Town and Parish Facilities by ward in Babergh

Ward (Babergh)	Population (ONS mid-2019)	Total Facilities (community-use and private)							Facilities per 1000 residents						
		Comm. Facilities (Indoor) ⁷	Football (Grass + AGP)	Rugby Pitches	Cricket Pitches	Tennis Courts	Netball Courts	Bowls Green	Comm. Facilities (Indoor)	Football Pitches	Rugby Pitches	Cricket Pitches	Tennis Courts	Netball Courts	Bowls Green
Assington	2589	4	2	0	1	0	0	0	1.5	0.8	0	0.4	0	0	0
Box Vale	2788	6	10	0	2	2	0	1	2.2	3.6	0	0.7	0.7	0	0.4
Brantham	2559	1	4	0	1	2	1	1	0.4	1.6	0	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.4
Brett Vale	3205	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	1.9	0.9	0	0	0	0	0
Bures St Mary & Nayland	2831	3	7	0	2	6	4	0	1.1	2.5	0	0.7	2.1	1.4	0
Capel St Mary	2880	2	7	0	0	2	0	1	0.7	2.4	0	0	0.7	0	0.3
Chadacre	6121	6	4	0	2	0	1	0	1.0	0.7	0	0.3	0	0.2	0
Copdock & Washbrook	3196	5	6	0	2	2	0	1	1.6	1.9	0	0.6	0.6	0	0.3
East Bergholt	2947	1	11	2	2	7	5	1	0.3	3.7	0.7	0.7	2.4	1.7	0.3
Ganges	2458	1	3	0	0	1	0	1	0.4	1.2	0	0	0.4	0	0.4
Great Cornard	9751	4	9	4	2	12	10	1	0.4	0.9	0.4	0.2	1.2	1.0	0.1
Hadleigh North/South	8933	6	12	10	2	7	6	1	0.7	1.3	1.1	0.2	0.8	0.7	0.1

⁷ Community Facilities includes: Village Halls, Community Centres and Sports Pavilions

Ward (Babergh)	Population (ONS mid-2019)	Total Facilities (community-use and private)							Facilities per 1000 residents						
		Comm. Facilities (Indoor) ⁷	Football (Grass + AGP)	Rugby Pitches	Cricket Pitches	Tennis Courts	Netball Courts	Bowls Green	Comm. Facilities (Indoor)	Football Pitches	Rugby Pitches	Cricket Pitches	Tennis Courts	Netball Courts	Bowls Green
Lavenham	5154	6	4	0	1	4	0	0	1.2	0.8	0	0.2	0.8	0	0
Long Melford	5746	4	6	0	2	0	1	0	0.7	1.0	0	0.3	0	0.2	0
North West Cosford	2698	7	4	7	9	8	3	1	2.6	1.5	2.6	3.3	3.0	1.1	0.4
Orwell	2580	8	4	1	1	17	5	0	3.1	1.6	0.4	0.4	6.6	1.9	0
South East Cosford	2655	7	2	0	1	0	1	0	2.6	0.8	0	0.4	0	0.4	0
Sproughton & Pinewood	5867	2	3	0	0	3	0	1	0.3	0.5	0	0	0.5	0	0.2
Stour	3232	3	14	10	2	11	12	2	0.9	4.3	3.1	0.6	3.4	3.7	0.6
Sudbury NW/NE/SE/SW	13846	7	11	4	2	15	2	2	0.5	0.8	0.3	0.1	1.1	0.1	0.1
Babergh Total	92036	89	126	38	34	99	51	14	1.0	1.4	0.4	0.4	1.1	0.6	0.2

Table 8: Audit of Town and Parish Facilities in Mid Suffolk

Ward (Mid Suffolk)	Population (ONS mid-2019)	Total Facilities (community-use and private)							Facilities per 1000 residents						
		Comm. Facilities (Indoor) ⁸	Football (Grass + AGP)	Rugby Pitches	Cricket Pitches	Tennis Courts	Netball Courts	Bowls Green	Comm. Facilities (Indoor)	Football Pitches	Rugby Pitches	Cricket Pitches	Tennis Courts	Netball Courts	Bowls Green
Bacton	2,940	6	6	0	0	0	0	1	2.0	2.0	0	0	0	0	0.3
Battisford & Ringshall	3,912	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	1.3	0.3	0	0	0	0	0
Blakenham	3,180	4	8	0	0	2	0	1	1.3	2.5	0	0	0.6	0	0.3
Bramford	2,442	1	2	0	0	5	0	1	0.4	0.8	0	0	2.0	0	0.4
Chilton / St Peter's / Stow Thorney / Combs Ford*	21,936	3	15	4	4	17	12	2	0.1	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.8	0.5	0.1
Claydon & Barham	6,062	7	7	0	1	6	4	1	1.2	1.2	0	0.2	1.0	0.7	0.2
Debenham	3,294	4	6	1	1	5	4	2	1.2	1.8	0.3	0.3	1.5	1.2	0.6
Elmswell & Woolpit	6,349	2	7	0	3	4	0	1	0.3	1.1	0	0.5	0.6	0	0.2
Eye	3,047	4	7	0	2	3	2	1	1.3	2.3	0	0.7	1.0	0.7	0.3
Fressingfield	2,902	7	4	0	0	4	1	1	2.4	1.4	0	0	1.4	0.3	0.3

⁸ Community Facilities includes: Village Halls, Community Centres and Sports Pavilions

*Stowmarket Wards

Ward (Mid Suffolk)	Population (ONS mid-2019)	Total Facilities (community-use and private)							Facilities per 1000 residents						
		Comm. Facilities (Indoor) ⁸	Football (Grass + AGP)	Rugby Pitches	Cricket Pitches	Tennis Courts	Netball Courts	Bowls Green	Comm. Facilities (Indoor)	Football Pitches	Rugby Pitches	Cricket Pitches	Tennis Courts	Netball Courts	Bowls Green
Gislingham	3,211	7	2	0	3	5	0	2	2.2	0.6	0	0.9	1.6	0	0.6
Haughley, Stowupland & Wetherden	5,611	7	13	0	3	9	6	4	1.2	2.3	0	0.5	1.6	1.1	0.7
Hoxne & Worlingworth	2,735	7	6	0	2	3	0	2	2.6	2.2	0	0.7	1.1	0	0.7
Mendlesham	2,960	4	4	0	0	2	0	2	1.4	1.4	0	0	0.7	0	0.7
Needham Market	6,119	6	5	0	1	2	2	1	1.0	0.8	0	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2
Onehouse	2,882	2	7	3	2	3	3	1	0.7	2.4	1.0	0.7	1.0	1.0	0.3
Palgrave	2,907	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	2.1	0.3	0	0	0	0	0
Rattlesden	3,238	6	3	0	1	0	1	0	1.9	0.9	0	0.3	0	0.3	0
Rickinghall	2,944	4	6	0	0	2	2	1	1.4	2.0	0	0	0.7	0.7	0.3
Stonham	3,031	7	3	0	1	2	0	2	2.3	1.0	0	0.3	0.7	0	0.7
Stradbroke & Laxfield	3,094	5	4	1	3	9	4	3	1.6	1.3	0.3	1.0	2.9	1.3	1.0
Thurston	5,901	4	8	4	3	12	4	1	0.7	1.4	0.7	0.5	2.0	0.7	0.2
Walsham-le-Willows	3,198	5	10	0	1	1	1	1	1.6	3.1	0	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Mid Suffolk Total	103,895	113	135	13	31	96	46	31	1.1	1.3	0.1	0.3	0.9	0.4	0.3

Table 9: Proportion of Outdoor Pitches on School Sites in Babergh and Mid Suffolk

District	Adult Football Pitches	Youth Football Pitches	Mini Football Pitches	Rugby Pitches	Cricket Pitches	Tennis Courts	Netball Courts
Babergh	25 %	37 %	42 %	61 %	35 %	65 %	80 %
Mid Suffolk	16 %	32 %	73 %	62 %	19 %	44 %	70 %

4.5 Supply and Demand Analysis

4.5.1 An updated supply and demand assessment has been undertaken to provide an indication of the balance of supply and demand for key areas of indoor sport and physical activity provision in each District.

4.5.2 It is important to note that this assessment only takes account of supply and demand within the Districts and does not take account of imported or exported demand across local authority boundaries. It will therefore be important for the Councils to keep abreast of neighbouring authorities' plans for the future development of sport, leisure and physical activity facilities and to adopt a collaborative approach to meeting current and future demand from a growing population.

4.5.3 Assessments for each of the types of provision listed below have been undertaken based on population and demographic data for each District currently (2019 ONS mid-year estimates) and in the future (2036 ONS population projections).

- ▶ Health and fitness (gyms)
- ▶ General Swimming
- ▶ Swimming Lessons
- ▶ Sports halls.

4.5.4 The assessment for health and fitness, general swimming and swimming lessons are based on SLC's latest methodologies and most up to date participation rate assumptions. The methodologies used have changed in some respects from those used in the previous Leisure Facilities Strategy work undertaken for the Councils, so the findings are not directly comparable with previous results. The main changes are summarised below:

- ▶ Health and fitness – demand levels based on updated age-based participation rates with socio-economic and ethnicity-based sensitivity factors applied.
- ▶ General swimming – demand levels based on updated participation rates with socio-economic and ethnicity-based sensitivity factors applied. The model considers demand in the peak period against capacity of existing provision in the peak period (rather than current / assumed usage levels)
- ▶ Swimming lessons – demand levels based on updated participation rates with socio-economic and ethnicity-based sensitivity factors applied.

4.5.5 An up-to-date audit of supply has also been used to inform the assessments. The key findings of the assessment in terms of the balance of supply and demand for these key types of provision are summarised in this section for each local authority area. It should be noted that these assessments exclusively consider supply and demand within each District and do not take account of imported or exported demand across the local authority boundaries.

4.5.6 Full details of the supply and demand assessment, including the mapping of facility provision, is provided in Appendix 3 and a summary of the findings for each District is provided below.

Babergh

4.5.7 Based on 2019 mid-year estimates, Babergh has a population of 92,036 people which will increase to 99,442 by 2036. The demand generated by this population, taking into account demographic factors including age, ethnicity and socio-economic status, has been compared with existing levels of supply in the district.

Table 10: Babergh Supply and Demand Assessment – Key Headlines

Provision	Supply and Demand Analysis		Comments
	2019	2036	
Health and Fitness	Undersupply of 81 stations	Undersupply of 91 stations	There are 9 facilities with community access and 331 stations in total. Facilities are concentrated in the areas with the highest population density and there is no health and fitness provision north of Sudbury.
General Swimming	Oversupply of 817 sqm	Oversupply of 815 sqm	There is a theoretical oversupply based on the estimated capacity during peak times across <u>all</u> of the facilities against estimated peak time demand. However , a large proportion of the existing supply of pool space (c. 800 sqm) is located on school sites (Ipswich High School and Royal Hospital School) with limited public access. Fully publicly accessible pool space is largely dependent upon the new Hadleigh Pool and at Kingfisher LC in Sudbury which is c. 35 years old.
Swimming Lessons	Oversupply of 790 pupils	Oversupply of 989 pupils	8 of the 9 pools identified through the supply audit offer swimming lessons as part of their programming.
Sports Halls* <i>*Size referenced using the number of</i>	Oversupply of 20 badminton courts	Oversupply of 20 badminton courts	The total supply of sports halls across the District is sufficient to meet current and future estimated demand. However , a key challenge for sports hall provision in the District is that <u>all</u> of these are on education sites, limiting access during the day and providing the Council with limited control in how they are

Provision	Supply and Demand Analysis		Comments
	2019	2036	
<i>badminton courts</i>			managed in terms of community use. The age and condition of a number of sports halls is also an issue and the current oversupply could shift to an undersupply if facilities reach the end of their economic life or deteriorate in quality to such extent as to significantly impact upon their ability to meet the needs of users.

Mid-Suffolk

4.5.8 Based on 2019 mid-year estimates, Mid Suffolk has a population of 103,895 people which will increase to 112,973 by 2036. The demand generated by this population, taking into account demographic factors including age, ethnicity and socio-economic status has been compared with existing levels of supply in the district.

Table 11: Mid Suffolk Supply and Demand Assessment - Headlines

Provision	Supply and Demand Analysis		Comments
	2019	2036	
Health and Fitness	Oversupply of 7 stations	Undersupply of 18 stations	<p>There are 11 facilities with community access and 485 stations in total which is sufficient to meet current and future demand.</p> <p>Facilities are concentrated in the areas with the highest population density, for example in Stowmarket, Thurston, Needham Market, Eye and Stradbroke.</p> <p>Note: Since undertaking the assessment, SLC has been advised that a new PureGym fitness facility is soon to open in Stowmarket. It is unclear how many stations will be provided and the facility has <u>not</u> been included in the assessment. However, it will be a significant addition to the local supply and will lead to a likely theoretical oversupply of provision.</p>
General Swimming	Oversupply 350 sqm <i>*Excluding the MOD Wattisham pool the</i>	Oversupply 356 sqm <i>*Excluding the MOD Wattisham pool the</i>	As with Babergh, there is a theoretical oversupply based on the estimated capacity during peak times across <u>all</u> of the facilities against estimated peak time demand. However , this includes the pool at MOD Wattisham (325 sqm) where access is restricted to vetted clubs / community groups

Provision	Supply and Demand Analysis		Comments
	2019	2036	
	<i>oversupply is reduced to 25 sqm.</i>	<i>oversupply is reduced to 31 sqm.</i>	outside of Army use hours which will, in reality, significantly reduce its impact on demand. The total water space also includes 3 small pools that currently only offer swimming lessons and a members only health club and spa facility.
Swimming Lessons	Undersupply of 429 pupils	Undersupply of 81 pupils	5 of the 7 pools identified through the supply audit offer swimming lessons as part of their programming.
Sports Halls* <i>*Size referenced using the number of badminton courts</i>	In balance, supply equals current demand <i>*Excluding the MOD Wattisham sports hall results in an undersupply of 4 courts.</i>	Undersupply of 1 badminton court, broadly in balance. <i>*Excluding the MOD Wattisham sports hall results in an undersupply of 3 courts.</i>	The total supply of sports halls across the District is just about sufficient to meet current and future estimated demand. However , as with the pool at MOD Wattisham, access to the sports hall is also restricted and it is unclear the extent to which it will be able to meet demand. As with Babergh, sports hall provision is heavily reliant upon education sites (4 of the 7 identified), limiting access during the day and providing the Council with limited control in how they are managed in terms of community use. The age and condition of the only fully publicly accessible sports halls at Mid Suffolk LC and Debenham LC is also an issue and the current oversupply could shift to an undersupply if facilities reach the end of their economic life or deteriorate in quality to such extent as to significantly impact upon their ability to meet the needs of users.

4.6 Implications of Planned Housing Growth

- 4.6.1 The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Pre-Submission (Reg 19) Document (November 2020) outlines the proposed planned housing developments up to 2037. The Joint Local Plan has planned for 9611 homes in Babergh and 12,616 homes in Mid Suffolk.
- 4.6.2 Table 12 and Table 13 provide a high-level assessment of the existing sport and physical activity facility provision within the areas in Babergh and Mid Suffolk where the largest developments are due to take place.

Table 12: Implications of housing growth in Babergh on sport and physical activity provision.

Town/Parish	No. new dwellings ⁹	Assessment
Sproughton	1514	<p>Sproughton and Pinewood Ward has limited sport and physical activity provision, especially indoor facilities with only 0.3 village halls/community centres per 1000 residents. However, Suffolk One Sports Centre (with the only 6 court Sports Hall in the Districts) is in Pinewood & there is a well-used multi-sport playing field in Sproughton village.</p> <p>The location of Sproughton, on the Ipswich Fringe, and the new development on the east of the A14 means that residents are likely to use facilities within Ipswich.</p>
Hadleigh	871	<p>The new swimming pool at Hadleigh will likely support demand from the current and future population, however access to other sport and physical activity provision is limited to school sites, for example Hadleigh High School Leisure Centre. Hadleigh Town Council are developing plans to update the facilities and pitches at Layham Road Sports Ground.</p>
Capel St Mary	792	<p>Capel St Mary has good provision of indoor community facilities and football pitches (2.4 per 1000 residents) but limited access to other outdoor sport and physical activity provision. East Bergholt Sports Centre provides evening and weekend access to the Sports Hall and Health and Fitness Suite but there is no swimming provision in the South East of the District.</p> <p>The planned development in Capel St Mary is expected to increase the population by a third and the Council should consider how the provision of sport and physical activity facilities can be increased to support the future population.</p>
Sudbury (Chilton Woods)	1,150	<p>Sudbury and Great Cornard currently has reasonably good provision of facilities with Kingfisher LC, Sudbury Sports Centre at Ormiston Academy and Great Cornard Sports Centre at Thomas Gainsborough School providing a combination of publicly accessible pool space, sports halls, health and fitness provision, outdoor pitches and artificial grass pitches.</p> <p>However, significant development is planned for the area with 1,150 new dwellings at Chilton Woods, north of Sudbury and a further 554 in Great Cornard and consideration will therefore need to be given as to how the sport and physical activity needs of this growing population are to be met.</p>
Great Cornard	554	

Table 13: Implications of housing growth in Mid Suffolk on sport and physical activity provision.

Town/Parish	No. new dwellings	Assessment
Stowmarket	1768	Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre is located in Stowmarket, however the sports hall and swimming pool at the Council’s core leisure facility are at capacity. The provision of football pitches per 1000 residents in Stowmarket is lower than the average across the District. The housing development in Stowmarket will put greater pressure on facilities which are already at limited capacity and with deteriorating conditions.
Thurston	1489	<p>Thurston has relatively good provision of outdoor sports provision, however access is limited to school sites, primarily at Thurston Sports Education Centre. There is no other sport or leisure centre in Thurston and the closest swimming pools are in Stowmarket and Bury St. Edmunds.</p> <p>The significant development in Thurston, and Woolpit and Elmswell in the neighbouring Wards, will require action from the Councils to ensure provision of facilities and space for physical activity can cater for the increased demand. This is especially true for swimming provision.</p>
Elmswell Woolpit	834 717	<p>The Elmswell and Woolpit Ward has a low provision of indoor and outdoor sport and physical activity provision. The Blackbourne Centre in Elmswell acts as a good community-based centre for local sport and physical activity but wider provision is limited. The ward only has 0.3 community indoor facilities per 1000 residents, the second lowest of all Mid Suffolk Wards.</p> <p>In addition to the concerns made above in regard to development across Thurston and Woolpit, there are concerns that access to green and open space is being reduced by new developments.</p>
Barham	615	Claydon and Barham currently have good provision of all facilities within the audit. There are 1.2 community indoor facilities, 1.2 football pitches, 1 tennis courts and 0.7 netball courts per 1000 residents. Residents of Barham are likely to use facilities in Ipswich.

4.6.3 In addition to specific town/parish needs, there are a number of additional considerations during planning process which can promote residents to be more active in less-traditional ways, for example:

- ▶ Ensuring developments provide access to green and open space which can be used for formal and informal activity.
- ▶ Proactively work with planners, Suffolk County Council and Highways to build in safe walking and cycling routes that can be used for active travel.

- Identify opportunities for active play and youth provision (e.g. skateparks and BMX tracks) within new developments and linked to new schools.

4.7 Summary

- 4.7.1 Audits of sport and leisure provision in the Districts have been undertaken and include both formal sports and leisure facilities and informal spaces and places that can accommodate physical activity, for example village halls, community centres and open spaces and playgrounds recognised in the Open Spaces Assessment.
- 4.7.2 The audits found that 88% of parishes in Babergh (65 of 74) and 77% of parishes in Mid Suffolk (86 of 111) have at least one community building which is or could be used for formal and informal physical activity. Many village halls and community centres are well-used for group activities such as Fit Villages, yoga, fitness classes and dance, however it has become apparent that programming capacity is limited, and the space/functionality does not always meet requirements.
- 4.7.3 There is a good supply of outdoor pitches and courts in both Babergh and Mid Suffolk however the condition of these is variable and many tennis and netball courts require resurfacing. All wards in both Districts contain grass football pitches, but many are in a poor condition and there is high demand from football clubs for artificial grass pitches to accommodate all-weather match play and training.
- 4.7.4 Recent investment into the Councils' four core leisure facilities has significantly improved provision of health and fitness in Stowmarket and Sudbury, and the new swimming pool in Hadleigh provides high quality provision to support the growing population in this area of Babergh.
- 4.7.5 Updated supply and demand assessments undertaken by SLC show a theoretical oversupply of swimming pool space in Babergh based on the estimated capacity during peak times across all of the facilities against estimated peak time demand. **However**, a large proportion of the existing supply of pool space (c. 800 sqm) is located on school sites (Ipswich High School and Royal Hospital School) with limited public access. Fully publicly accessible pool space is also largely dependent upon the new Hadleigh Pool and at Kingfisher LC in Sudbury which is c. 35 years old.
- 4.7.6 The total supply of sports halls in Babergh is sufficient to meet current and future estimated demand. **However**, a key challenge for sports hall provision in the District is that all of these are on education sites, limiting access during the day and providing the Council with limited control in how they are managed in terms of community use. The age and condition of a number of sports halls is also an issue and the current oversupply could quickly shift to an undersupply if facilities reach the end of their economic life or deteriorate in quality to such extent as to significantly impact upon their ability to meet the needs of users.
- 4.7.7 There is a theoretical oversupply of swimming pool space in Mid Suffolk based on the estimated capacity during peak times across all of the facilities against estimated peak time demand. However, this includes the pool at MOD Wattisham (325 sqm) where access is restricted to vetted clubs / community groups outside of Army use hours which will, in reality, significantly reduce its ability to meet local demand. Excluding MOD Wattisham would leave supply and demand broadly in balance but heavily reliant on the fully publicly available space provided at Mid Suffolk and Stradbroke. The total water space also includes 3 small pools that currently only offer swimming lessons and a members only health club and spa facility which will be less accessible than a public swimming pool.
- 4.7.8 There is an undersupply of swimming lesson spaces in Mid Suffolk and large developments in Stowmarket, Thurston, Woolpit and surrounding area will likely place significant strain on the already stretched water space at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre.

- 4.7.9 The total supply of sports halls across Mid Suffolk is just about sufficient to meet current and future estimated demand. However, as with the pool at MOD Wattisham, access to the sports hall is heavily restricted and if removed from the assessment, leaves an undersupply of sports hall space equivalent to 4 badminton courts.
- 4.7.10 Sports hall provision in Mid Suffolk is also heavily reliant upon education sites (4 of the 7 identified), limiting access during the day and providing the Council with limited control in how they are managed in terms of community use. The age and condition of the only fully publicly accessible sports halls at Mid Suffolk LC and Debenham LC is also a key issue. As with Babergh, the current oversupply shown for Mid Suffolk could quickly shift to an undersupply if facilities reach the end of their economic life, deteriorate in quality or are withdrawn from public use.
- 4.7.11 The large developments in Capel St Mary/East Bergholt/Brantham and Great Cornard in Babergh, and Stowmarket and Thurston/Woolpit/Elmswell in Mid Suffolk are priority areas for the Councils to consider additional and improved sport and physical activity provision.

5. Stakeholder Engagement

Key Themes from Stakeholder Consultation

5.1 Introduction and Approach

- 5.1.1 The existing LSPAS was informed by consultation with Council officers, strategic partners, sports clubs, schools and voluntary organisations to seek feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the provision at the time and what opportunities existed for developing leisure, sport and physical activity opportunities across Babergh and Mid Suffolk.
- 5.1.2 As part of this review and update of the LSPAS, SLC has adopted the same approach to gather views on progress since 2017, key successes and areas for improvement, the impact of Covid-19, future challenges, opportunities and priorities for sport and physical activity provision across the Districts and what the Councils' future role should be in supporting this.
- 5.1.3 In order to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, SLC facilitated virtual meetings with key strategic stakeholders and issued four bespoke online questionnaires to wider stakeholders including sports clubs, schools, community groups and Parish and Town Councils.
- 5.1.4 This section provides an overview of the key, recurring themes captured through the engagement and which have informed the development of the updated LSPAS. Further detail is provided in Appendix 4 alongside the full Survey responses in Appendix 5.

5.2 Response to Engagement

- 5.2.1 SLC has engaged with a total of 44 strategic stakeholder partners through virtual meetings. These key partners were identified through discussion with the Councils' project team and included Council officers, leisure operator partners (Abbeycroft Leisure and Everyone Active), Active Suffolk, Suffolk County Council, Community Action Suffolk, One Life Suffolk, Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG and West Suffolk Social Prescribing, Suffolk Family Carers and Stowmarket Integrated Neighbourhood Team.
- 5.2.2 In order to gather sport specific information, SLC also engaged with either regional or national representatives of 11 national governing bodies: Suffolk FA, England and Wales Cricket Board, England Hockey, Rugby Football Union, England Netball, Lawn Tennis Association, England Athletics, Swim England, British Gymnastics, Badminton England and British Cycling.
- 5.2.3 In addition to these discussions there was a good response to the online surveys with a total of 254 responses (compared to 121 in 2017) broken down as follows:
- ▶ Sports Clubs – 129 responses
 - ▶ Schools – 32 responses
 - ▶ Community Groups – 11 responses
 - ▶ Town and Parish Councils – 54 responses
 - ▶ Village Halls/Community Centres – 28 responses.
- 5.2.4 Town and Parish Councils are key partners for the District Councils, however only 28% engaged with the process with some responding to say they did not think this was relevant to them or part of their remit. This perhaps reflects a disconnect between the self-perceived of the role of the Town and Parish Councils in supporting local opportunities for their residents to be active.

- 5.2.5 A small number of Parish Clerks responded to indicate that their parish was too small or their residents too elderly to consider participation in sport and physical activity. This highlights a need for the messaging of the updated LSPA Strategy to clearly articulate the definition of ‘activity’ in the broadest and most inclusive sense and to work in partnership with Town and Parish Councils to identify ways in which they can support opportunities for people to be active at a very local level.

5.3 Progress made since 2017

- 5.3.1 As part of the engagement with strategic stakeholders, views were sought on the progress made by the Councils since 2017 in delivering the strategic priorities of the existing LSPAS. Some of the key, general themes that emerged included:

- ▶ **Strong investment in core facilities** - It was widely recognised through the stakeholder engagement that the Council has made significant progress since 2017 in increasing the capacity and improving the quality of its core sports and leisure facilities. Total investment of c.£7M into core leisure facilities across both Districts alongside a further c.£2M through Community Grants, Section 106 and CIL funding in support of community provision has been a positive step in sustaining and improving the current facility infrastructure.
- ▶ **Positive partnerships** - There was also recognition of the Councils’ positive partnership working with its leisure operators and other partners such as Active Suffolk and SCC which has seen the successful delivery of a number of programmes and initiatives designed to increase participation in sport and physical activity, particularly amongst older people.
- ▶ **Developing relationship with Health** - A stronger relationship with health partners is developing through the Councils forming closer links with the CCGs and by being part of the new Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs). However, it is recognised that the Council and its delivery partners such as Everyone Active could further strengthen these links by embedding themselves more firmly within the INTs and playing a stronger role as part of the ‘connect’ space between the INTs and local residents.
- ▶ **Still too traditional in approach** - Some stakeholders feel that the Councils’ approach since 2017 has been quite ‘traditional’, focusing upon delivery through its core facilities. Whilst Abbeycroft Leisure have been a willing partner in delivering community outreach work, Everyone Active are generally considered to have played a more traditional, facility management role in recent years. This was an observation accepted by Everyone Active themselves and something that they are planning to address as part of the new management agreement for Mid Suffolk.
- ▶ **Limited profile of LSPAS** - The existing LSPAS has not had as high a profile as it should have. Stakeholders were unsure how embedded it has been within the Councils’ wider strategic framework and uncertain of the role it has played in providing strategic direction to the provision of sport and physical activity services across the Districts.
- ▶ **Lack of visibility in terms of action plan, governance and performance management** - It has been difficult for the Councils to track progress and measure the outputs of the existing LSPAS. No action plan was developed and no governance structure put in place to help guide delivery.

5.4 Key Challenges

- 5.4.1 There were a number of key challenges that emerged as recurring themes through both the discussions with strategic stakeholders and the survey responses. These include:
- ▶ The ongoing financial impact of Covid-19 upon leisure operators and continued uncertainty regarding the extent to which the market will return to pre-Covid conditions and how long this might take. This will impact negatively upon income streams for a further 12-18 months.

- ▶ Increasing pressure on Council budgets and resources available to support the future provision of facilities and services.
- ▶ There is concern amongst Town/Parish Councils and sports clubs that the provision of appropriate facilities to support physical activity has not increased to match the growing population.
- ▶ The rural nature of Districts continues to be a challenge in terms of travel / access to core facilities, particularly for families without multiple cars. In addition, safe active travel is a challenge in the Districts as many of the roads are dangerous for walking and cycling.
- ▶ There is a strong reliance on school facilities to meet the needs of clubs across the Districts, particularly in terms of sports halls and this reliance on school provision limits daytime accessibility.
- ▶ There are limited funding cycles for commissioned initiatives (e.g. Fit Villages, Active Schools) and a need to ensure successful programmes are maintained and a strong legacy built.
- ▶ Existing health inequalities have widened further as a result of Covid-19 with activity levels dropping more amongst low-income groups and those with disabilities or long-term health conditions.
- ▶ There will be significant health implications resulting from 'long Covid' and lengthening waiting lists for elective surgery. People are likely to remain debilitated for longer periods than pre-Covid and there are likely to be significant challenges regarding the general deconditioning of residents, particularly older people who may be less confident to re-engage in activities.
- ▶ The affordability of sport and physical activity may become more of a challenge amongst low-income groups given the impact of Covid-19 on jobs and the economy.
- ▶ Lack of awareness about local opportunities to be active remains a key challenge. The surveys highlighted the difficulty sports clubs face in promoting their activities and raising awareness locally.
- ▶ One of the biggest challenges for sports clubs in increasing or sustaining membership and providing a more inclusive offer is the lack of qualified coaches and supporting volunteers. Sports clubs specifically identified a lack of specialist coaching and equipment as a major challenge to meeting the needs of disabled participants.
- ▶ Local facilities, including village halls, community centres and sport pavilions, are well used for activities. However, they are rarely fit for purpose and lack space and/or ancillary facilities to support larger activities. Local facilities also struggle to cater for arts and cultural activities, for example dance and theatre classes and productions, due to a lack of space, staging, heating, sprung flooring, lighting etc.

5.5 Future Priorities and Opportunities

5.5.1 Stakeholders were asked what they considered to be the key priorities and opportunities for the future delivery of sport and physical activity provision across the Districts. Many of these reflect opportunities to tackle the challenges being faced across the Districts.

- ▶ To provide more opportunities for residents to be active in local settings by recognising and strengthening the role of community facilities for sport, physical activity, arts, cultural and social activities which all contribute to improved health and wellbeing.
- ▶ To challenge and support leisure operator partners to be more outward-facing and to deliver more targeted community outreach through the activation of local spaces and community-based facilities.
- ▶ To continue to strengthen the relationship with health partners, particularly through the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and links with social prescribing teams.

- ▶ To facilitate greater partnership working across providers, sports clubs, Town and Parish councils, schools and wider partners in a place.
- ▶ To support development of a less traditional and more inclusive and diverse mix of facilities and activities which appeal to a wider audience, particularly those less active.
- ▶ To develop more of a 'blended' offer which makes use of digital platforms and open space, reflecting changes in behaviour through Covid-19.
- ▶ To support and maintain the role played by schools in providing facilities for use by the community.
- ▶ To increase awareness of what is available and where through more comprehensive and joined-up signposting and by making 'every contact count'.
- ▶ To support and strengthen the role of parish and town councils in providing local opportunities to be active and to strengthen links across the different tiers of local authorities.
- ▶ To provide a longer-term view and strategic direction in support of CIL/S106 allocations linked to future development.
- ▶ To develop an approach to evaluation of community grant applications which is more strategically driven and aligned with the priorities of the new LSPA Strategy.
- ▶ To provide opportunities for building more 'everyday' activity into lifestyles through active travel and 'incidental' movement.
- ▶ To strengthen awareness of opportunities to engage with and be active in natural green spaces.
- ▶ To support volunteers and coaches across the Districts and identify opportunities to provide training for more inclusive activities for those with a disability or long-term health condition.

"Try to establish a 'collective thinking' with different groups and work together to ensure maximum provision for all residents across the district."

Figure 1: Word cloud showing the recurring challenges and opportunities from all survey responses (sports clubs, schools, voluntary groups, town/parish councils).




5.6 Impact of Covid-19

- 5.6.1 Stakeholders highlighted that the impact of Covid-19 on sport and physical activity across the Districts has been widespread and sports clubs and providers face an uncertain future and continuing challenges as a result.
- ▶ Covid-19 has highlighted and exacerbated existing health inequalities with activity levels decreasing the most in more deprived communities and amongst people with a disability or long-term health condition.
 - ▶ There remains huge financial pressure on leisure operators and their local authority partners which, combined with the uncertainty of the future market and return of income streams, is a major concern for the future sustainability of core leisure provision.
 - ▶ Sports clubs have suffered financially and whilst support from small grants has been welcomed, the loss of membership and opportunities for fundraising and revenue-generation has left many clubs in financial difficulties.
 - ▶ Existing clubs and activity providers, including the leisure operators have raised concerns over the willingness of people to return to their activity or facility, especially for indoor sports and activities.
 - ▶ Some providers have adapted well to the new environment with many offering an online alternative to engage with participants. However, the shift towards an online offer must consider the issue of digital exclusion and isolation, particularly amongst older people.
 - ▶ The deconditioning of residents arising from the pandemic is a major concern with health partners warning that falls prevention will be a priority for the coming months and increased waiting lists for elective surgery meaning people will be in pain for longer and will limit their ability to be active.
 - ▶ Many residents have been socially isolated for a significant period of time leading to a potential lack of confidence regarding reintegration to pre-Covid activity.
 - ▶ Children and young people have missed out on many months of structured physical activity as well as social interaction and development.
 - ▶ Anti-social behaviour has increased at sites and recreational grounds in the Districts which could be tackled through structured youth sport and physical activities.
- 5.6.2 There have also been some positive shifts which have evolved throughout the pandemic. One example is the wave of volunteers emerging within communities, suggesting an opportunity to harness this social movement to support the recovery of the Districts from Covid-19 and the longer-term provision of opportunities to be active. One Life Suffolk have already witnessed this newfound enthusiasm, with 49 people signed up for Health Walk training in January, equivalent to a years' worth of intake pre-Covid.
- 5.6.3 A second potential opportunity is an increased understanding and appreciation of the benefits of being active in building resilience and improved physical and mental wellbeing. **Maintaining this momentum and energy will be a key challenge for the new LSPAS and there has arguably never been a greater need for the Council to support its residents to be active.**

5.7 Role of the District Councils

- 5.7.1 Stakeholders were asked what role they consider the District Councils should play to be in supporting the landscape of provision of sport and physical activity facilities and services across the District. Some of the key themes included:


- ▶ Taking the lead in bringing the right partners together to establish a clear, common strategic direction and continuing oversight through strong governance.
- ▶ Having an eye on the wider health and wellbeing landscape, helping to 'join the dots' and providing the 'glue' to knit it all together
- ▶ Supporting and empowering people to do things for themselves to build community resilience and ownership – help them to maintain and sustain.
- ▶ Investing in new and existing facilities to meet identified demand and increase accessibility.
- ▶ Providing stronger insight into the needs and motivations of communities to better understand what people want.
- ▶ Coordinating and mapping of activity provision across the Districts to aid signposting and awareness.
- ▶ Providing funding and advice for clubs and community groups to support new initiatives which widen participation amongst less active groups.
- ▶ Directing, supporting and challenging their leisure operator partners to deliver a more outward-facing service which focuses upon increased engagement by less active communities
- ▶ Facilitating wider community engagement and partnerships.
- ▶ Improving access to core facilities, including transportation.
- ▶ Funding to improve or maintain facilities and equipment in schools.



“Think of it similarly to how Facebook matches adverts to its users. We could match clubs and activities to our communities if we understood their motivations better.”

5.7.2 There was also recognition by stakeholders of the important role for Town and Parish Councils to play in supporting their residents to be more active. Whilst the direct delivery of activities is not necessarily within the traditional remit of Town/Parish Councils, the survey responses highlighted their role as an enabler through:

- ▶ Promoting opportunities to be active in local settings.
- ▶ Sourcing grants and providing funding for local activities and initiatives.
- ▶ Providing local representation to support wider partnerships.
- ▶ Working across boundaries with neighbouring parishes to coordinate a wider 'clustering' approach to provision of facilities and activities.



“The Parish Council is perfectly placed to coordinate, support, encourage and part fund local initiatives, ensuring proper transparent consultation and engagement.”

5.7.3 It is important that Town and Parish Councils understand their power to influence community sport and leisure, through allocating funding and facilitating and promoting local activities. It should be a key priority for the District Councils to improve the awareness within this tier of local government, and to work proactively to advise and support CIL, S106 and community grant applications.

5.8 Sport National Governing Bodies

- 5.8.1 11 National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport were consulted as part of the LSPA Strategy Update. The NGBs primarily focus on clubs and generally rely on county level representation, often through Active Suffolk who are key partners for sports clubs and community groups delivering activity.
- 5.8.2 The general theme arising from consultation with NGBs was that Babergh and Mid Suffolk is not a high priority area, although there are pockets of unmet demand for some sports including football, badminton, swimming and gymnastics. Further details are provided in Appendix 7 – NGB Sport Information.
- 5.8.3 There are many active sports clubs in the Districts, football is the most popular sport with 27 clubs in Babergh and 37 clubs in Mid Suffolk. 3G provision is a priority for Suffolk FA and an update on all 3G projects in the Districts is provided in Appendix 7.
- 5.8.4 Netball is popular locally and 10 teams in Mid Suffolk now play out of the new England Netball standard facility in Needham Market. For both England Netball and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), resurfacing of tarmac courts in the area is a priority.
- 5.8.5 A lack of available indoor sports provision is considered to be an issue for sports clubs in Babergh and Mid Suffolk. There are high levels of participation in badminton and netball, however the clubs are limited by the accessibility of sports halls and the reliance of school facilities. The LTA highlighted the very limited supply of indoor courts in the region.
- 5.8.6 Swim England highlighted Babergh and Mid Suffolk as an area with high Water Deprivation Index and also commented on the reliance on private school facilities in Babergh.
- 5.8.7 Across most sports a major challenge is sustaining sufficient volunteers and coaches. Several NGBs prioritise coaching and improving access, including coached opportunities, for disabled participants.
- 5.8.8 Development areas for NGBs often focus on urban areas of high deprivation and therefore Babergh and Mid Suffolk are not priority areas for specific outreach projects by any NGBs.
- 5.8.9 The full account of NGB comments and information on participation rates in each sport can be found in Appendix 7.

5.9 Summary

- 5.9.1 A comprehensive programme of stakeholder engagement has been undertaken to inform the updated LSPA Strategy including discussions with 44 strategic stakeholders and 11 national governing bodies and 254 responses to four bespoke surveys issues to Sports Clubs, Schools, Town and Parish Councils, Village Hall Committees and Voluntary Groups. Strategic stakeholders included District and County Council Officers, Leisure providers, Active Suffolk, health partners (including both CCG's) and community organisations such as Community Action Suffolk and One Life Suffolk.
- 5.9.2 A number of challenges emerged from the stakeholder engagement including the limited availability of core facilities, the challenges with accessibility given the rural nature of the Districts, exacerbated by poor public transport and the dangerous nature of roads for walking and cycling and the limited awareness of opportunities amongst residents.

- 5.9.3 The impact of Covid-19 on physical and mental health has been profound and it is unclear how this will influence residents' willingness and confidence to return to activity. This is a major concern for partners across the Districts.
- 5.9.4 The lockdowns and social distancing have placed huge financial strain on the Councils and their respective leisure operator partners and the future leisure market remains uncertain.
- 5.9.5 Stakeholders identified a number of opportunities to address these challenges and support increased engagement in sport and physical activity across the districts. Common themes included more locally based provision and targeted outreach activity from leisure operators, better use and activation of green and open spaces and improved signposting of activities and awareness of the benefits of being 'everyday active'.
- 5.9.6 A strong, recurring theme with all stakeholders is the importance of partnership working and the opportunity to build sustainable relationships with the Councils and within communities. This will require the Councils to commit more staffing resources to help develop and sustain good working relationships, potentially through the newly structured and resourced Communities Team.

6. Strategic Outcomes and Objectives

A new outcomes-based approach for the updated Strategy

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 Identifying a clear set of strategic aims and aspirations is central to the development of any effective strategy. It should provide a clear line of sight or ‘golden thread’ which connects an overall Vision for sport and physical activity provision in the Districts right through to the delivery of specific actions on the ground.
- 6.1.2 Whilst this commission is intended as a review and refresh of the existing LSPAS rather than a fundamental re-write, SLC has taken the opportunity to review the framework and strategic priorities of the LSPAS and to explore, with the Councils a new outcomes-based approach to the updated Strategy.

6.2 Review of current Strategic Priorities

- 6.2.1 The existing LSPAS has six Strategic Priorities. Four of these focus on increased participation by specific population groups:
- ▶ Increase the number and frequency of **children, young people (1-18 years) and families** across the District regularly taking part in traditional and non-traditional physical activity.
 - ▶ Increase the number and frequency of **older people** regularly taking part in traditional and non-traditional physical activity to reduce social isolation and to improve health and wellbeing.
 - ▶ Increase active participation and benefits to **participants with mental health issues** through sport and physical activity.
 - ▶ Improve the engagement and uptake of **those with physical and learning difficulties** into community and leisure facilities, ensuring facilities are accessible and activities are available to all.
- 6.2.2 The remaining two Strategic Priorities seek to support and facilitate increased participation across the Districts through a commitment to:
- ▶ Increase the volunteer base of sport and physical activity clubs and groups to build capacity, resilience and support growth in participation levels.
 - ▶ Support the provision of sustainable community sport and leisure facilities and the spaces and infrastructure that individuals, clubs, schools and groups can access and use to take part.
- 6.2.3 SLC has observed that these strategic priorities are weighted towards increasing participation and engagement by four identified target groups and with one priority focusing on enablers (volunteers) and one on the facilities and places for people to be active.
- 6.2.4 Whilst some people within these identified target groups will remain a priority moving forwards, SLC believe that they are currently too broadly defined and that there is an opportunity to re-frame the approach to ensure it focuses less upon a general cohort of the population and more upon the specific groups and localities that are most inactive and experiencing greatest health inequalities.

- 6.2.5 It is also recognised that the current target cohorts will inevitably include many people who are already active and will equally omit a large proportion of the population who do not fall within these groups but face similar challenges and barriers to being active. For example, those on low income, without access to a vehicle or from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.
- 6.2.6 In short, it feels like too much of a ‘broad-brush’ approach to categorisation of target groups which would benefit from a more refined and insight-led focus across the wider community.
- 6.2.7 Discussions with the LSPA Strategy project group and through the Member workshops reached a consensus that the updated strategy needs to increase activity across all ages and communities but to direct greater focus and resource to the least active and those experiencing the greatest health inequalities, irrespective of demographic groups.
- 6.2.8 The existing strategic priorities refer directly to both ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ physical activity. It was apparent through stakeholder engagement that this broad definition of physical activity should be maintained within the updated strategy and clearly communicated to raise awareness of ‘non-traditional’ activities, particularly those everyday tasks and activities with ‘*incidental movement*’. Examples include:
- ▶ Gardening
 - ▶ Cleaning
 - ▶ DIY
 - ▶ Dancing
 - ▶ Performing Arts / Amateur Dramatics
 - ▶ Museum trips
 - ▶ Walking to the shops/school/GP
 - ▶ Playing with children/grandchildren
 - ▶ Tai Chi
 - ▶ Geocaching
 - ▶ Rock Climbing
 - ▶ Parkour
 - ▶ Skateboarding
 - ▶ Litter Picking.

6.3 A New Strategy Framework

- 6.3.1 SLC has identified an opportunity to strengthen the framework of the updated LSPA Strategy to help direct and deliver the Councils' future aspirations for leisure, sport and physical activity across the Districts.
- 6.3.2 SLC propose that the updated LSPA Strategy is developed within a framework which:
- ▶ Establishes an overall **Vision** for the future of sport and physical activity in Babergh and Mid Suffolk
 - ▶ Defines the required Strategic **Outcomes** or end results
 - ▶ Identifies the Strategic **Objectives** that need to be achieved to help get the right results
 - ▶ Develops the specific **Actions** required to meet the objectives and support delivery.
- 6.3.3 The framework starts with a Vision that captures the ambition of the Councils and describes what it wants to be over the long-term (the next 10+ years).
- 6.3.4 The Vision is then built upon through the development of Strategic Outcomes which describe the intended results and demonstrate the impact and success of the updated LSPA Strategy.
- 6.3.5 Below these sit the Strategic Objectives which describe the things that the Councils and their partners are working to achieve that will contribute to the Strategic Outcomes. These should be developed on the basis of a much shorter timeframe in order to provide sufficient flexibility to respond to new opportunities and challenges.
- 6.3.6 Finally, the framework includes an Action Plan, to be developed, owned and delivered by the Councils and their partners. It shall identify the specific actions and interventions needed to achieve the Strategic Objectives which subsequently contribute to the Strategic Outcomes and ultimately to the realising of the Vision.

Figure 2: The Strategy Framework



- 6.3.7 This proposed framework has been adopted successfully in similar strategies and is considered by SLC to be best practice in developing a strategic approach to the delivery of leisure, sport and physical activity in a place.

6.3.8 The existing LSPA Strategy has the following Vision and Strategic Aim.

Existing Vision:

Mid Suffolk and Babergh will support, encourage and inspire their communities to be more active and achieve a better quality of life.

Existing Strategic Aim:

To support and enable increased levels of sport and physical activity participation across Babergh and Mid Suffolk; to support the improvement of health and wellbeing within our communities, particularly those from disadvantaged groups.

6.3.9 Through discussion with the Strategy Project Group, it is considered that both the existing Vision and Strategic Aim stand true today. They articulate the Councils' commitment to increasing activity levels as a mechanism to improve health and wellbeing and reference the need to tackle inequalities by supporting those from disadvantaged groups.

6.3.10 However, in accordance with the points noted in 6.2, SLC recommend replacing 'disadvantaged groups' with 'less active people experiencing greater health inequalities' in the Strategic Aim. This better reflects the outcome-based approach to providing support across the wider community for those who will benefit most from being more active rather than specific 'groups'.

Proposed New Strategic Aim:

To support and enable increased levels of sport and physical activity participation across Babergh and Mid Suffolk; to support the improvement of health and wellbeing within our communities, particularly those from less active groups experiencing greater health inequalities.

6.3.11 SLC has developed a set of Strategic Outcomes and Objectives for the updated LSPA Strategy which are proposed to replace the Strategic Priorities of the existing Strategy. These have been informed by the comprehensive stakeholder engagement outlined in this report, discussion with the Strategy project group and through two workshops with Members from both Councils.

6.3.12 The Strategic Outcomes and supporting Strategic Objectives fall into three distinct but interrelated 'themes' which form the building blocks of the updated LSPAS Strategy:

- ▶ Active People – What outcomes do the Councils want to see and for whom?
- ▶ Active Places and Spaces – What infrastructure, places and spaces are needed to contribute to these outcomes?
- ▶ Active Partnerships – Who are the key partners and enablers and how should the Councils work with them to help contribute to these outcomes?

Table 14: Strategic Outcomes and Objectives

Strategic Outcomes	Strategic Objectives
Strategic Theme: Active People	
1. Reduced levels of inactivity amongst communities and in	Develop insight into <i>which</i> groups are less active and <i>where</i> , to ensure resource is targeted where it is most needed and will have the most impact

Strategic Outcomes	Strategic Objectives
<p>localities experiencing greater health inequalities</p>	<p>Increase the number and frequency of people from identified target groups and localities taking part in regular physical activity</p>
	<p>Leverage external funding to support targeted interventions</p>
<p>2. Increased opportunities for all residents to move more through an accessible, diverse and inclusive programme of activities.</p>	<p>Develop a diverse and inclusive physical activity programme in collaboration with communities, which is delivered in local settings and makes use of technology through an enhanced digital offer</p>
	<p>Raise awareness of all residents of the opportunities to be active locally and the physical and mental health benefits of being more active</p>
	<p>Establish effective, ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programmes and initiatives to understand what works and to inform future design and delivery</p>
<p>Strategic Theme: Active Places and Spaces</p>	
<p>3. Sustainable community sport, leisure and physical activity facilities that enable and support all residents to be active</p>	<p>Support the provision of sustainable indoor and outdoor facilities which are accessible to all, meet evidenced need and provide development pathways from beginners to elite level performance</p>
	<p>Increase locally based provision through more community use of schools, community centres, village halls and sports club facilities</p>
	<p>Maximise the opportunities for CIL/Section 106 to support the facility infrastructure required to meet the needs of a growing population</p>
<p>4. Green and open spaces providing formal and informal opportunities for all residents to be ‘everyday active’</p>	<p>Protect and maintain sustainable green and open spaces that provide opportunities for formal and informal outdoor sport, recreation and physical activity</p>
	<p>Activate green and open spaces through development of a co-ordinated programme of outreach activities and use of digital technology</p>
	<p>Support and promote clear, safe routes that enable confident, active travel through early intervention into the planning stages of new development and through the Councils’ wider approach to sustainable travel</p>
	<p>Enhance opportunities for active play through playgrounds and youth provision (such as skate parks/cycle parks) and by utilising digital tools.</p>

Strategic Outcomes	Strategic Objectives
Strategic Theme: Active Partnerships	
<p>5. A strong, sustainable and strategically aligned ecosystem of partnerships supporting all residents to be more active</p>	Take a lead role in establishing a ‘whole system’ multi-agency approach to tackling inactivity
	Work with health partners to establish physical activity as a core prevention measure to improve local health outcomes
	Support schools, sports clubs, Town and Parish councils and community sector partners to maintain and develop physical activity opportunities, particularly for people from less active groups
	Work closely with leisure operator partners to develop and deliver a diverse and inclusive programme of activities in community settings across the Districts
<p>6. A skilled, knowledgeable and enabled workforce and volunteer base supporting communities to be more active.</p>	Increase the volunteer base of sport and physical activity clubs and groups to build capacity, resilience and support growth in participation levels
	Increase the skills and capability of sports clubs to diversify their offer and appeal to a wider audience, particularly less active groups
	Support the upskilling of the leisure operator workforce to deliver targeted and specialist health and wellbeing interventions and a more inclusive service
	Work with partners across the integrated care system to increase awareness and understanding of physical activity opportunities to ‘make every contact count’.

6.3.13 It should be noted that during the process of developing and refining the Strategic Outcomes shown in Table 14, there were comments about the phrasing of Strategic Outcome 1 and the use of the phrase ‘Reduced levels of inactivity’. It was felt that this might easily be misread or misinterpreted as reducing levels of activity which would of course be a negative thing for the Councils to do. An obvious solution, and one which was suggested, would have been to change this to ‘Increased levels of activity amongst communities and in localities experiencing greater health inequalities’. However, the outcome is specifically about tackling inactivity i.e. shifting from no activity into some form of activity. The suggested change described above would therefore mean a subtle but important move away from this and would encompass already active people from these communities being more active. For this reason, the Strategic Outcome remains as originally drafted.

7. Making it Happen

Priority Actions to support delivery of the updated Strategy

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 Building upon the proposed Strategic Outcomes and Objectives described in Section 6, SLC has developed a set of draft high level actions which form the next layer of the updated LSPA Strategy.
- 7.1.2 These high level actions are designed to act as a starting point from which the Councils will need to review, discuss and develop further in partnership with stakeholders to ensure there is strong buy-in and ownership by those involved in delivery of the Strategy.
- 7.1.3 In addition to this, SLC has developed a list of potential infrastructure projects which have been informed by the audits, supply and demand and gap analysis, stakeholder engagement and discussions with the Councils project team.
- 7.1.4 This section sets out the proposed high-level actions together with a summary of the potential infrastructure projects identified through the study as being a priority in meeting current and future demand for sport and physical activity facilities.

7.2 High-Level Actions

- 7.2.1 SLC's approach to action planning addresses three fundamental questions:
1. **What?**
What high-level actions are needed to achieve the Strategic Objectives and contribute to the Strategic Outcomes?
 2. **How?**
How are these high-level actions going to be achieved and what are the more specific detailed actions that sit below these?
 3. **Who?**
Who will lead on the actions and what role will partners play in helping to deliver them?
- 7.2.2 The How and Who will need to be developed by the Councils and their partners as part of detailed action planning following formal adoption of the updated Strategy. To assist this process, SLC has developed a set of high-level actions linked to each of the proposed new Strategic Objectives and identified an indicative list of key partners who are likely to be required to support delivery of each set of actions, as shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Strategic Objectives and High Level Actions

No.	Strategic Objectives	High-Level Actions	Key Partners
Active People			
1.1	Develop insight into which groups are less active and where, in order to ensure resource is targeted where it will have the most impact	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify sources of insight and ensure these are able to reflect changing/evolving needs over time 2. Work with partners to identify priority groups and localities 3. Engage with community groups/leaders to establish a better understanding of specific barriers faced by less active people. 	Community groups/leaders, Health Partners, INTs, Active Suffolk, Public Health England, Sport England, Disability Forum, Local Dementia Alliances, Everyone Active and Abbeycroft
1.2	Increase the number and frequency of people from identified target groups and localities taking part in regular physical activity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain and build upon existing successful targeted programmes 2. Work with leisure operators to design and deliver new insight-led outreach programmes that cater for all ages 3. Identify key contact points / signposters to help raise awareness. 	Everyone Active and Abbeycroft, Social Prescribers, Primary Care Network, Sports Clubs
1.3	Leverage external funding to support targeted interventions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Map existing funded programmes and commissioning cycles 2. Work with partners to proactively explore and secure new funding sources to support targeted programmes 3. Explore ways to ‘scale up’ programmes using external funding and improve longer term sustainability. 	Active Suffolk, Community Action Suffolk, OneLife, Everyone Active and Abbeycroft
2.1	Develop a diverse and inclusive physical activity programme in collaboration with communities,	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify programming gaps and capacity issues – what and where? 	Everyone Active and Abbeycroft,

No.	Strategic Objectives	High-Level Actions	Key Partners
	which is delivered in local settings and makes use of technology through an enhanced digital offer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Develop new innovative, non-traditional activities that appeal to a wider audience 3. Identify appropriate local settings for hosting activities 4. Support talented athletes through development pathways. 5. Build capacity in the community for locally led activity. 	Community Groups, Disability Forum, NGBs, Sports Clubs
2.2	Raise awareness of all residents of the opportunities to be active locally and the physical and mental health benefits of being more active	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Map opportunities to be active locally. 2. Develop an accessible platform for residents to source activities. 3. Develop a simple message / campaign to support awareness of benefits of being active. 4. Promote non-traditional activities, including simple everyday tasks, arts and social activities which result in residents moving more. 	Community Action Suffolk, Town/Parish Councils and Village Hall Committees, Council Communications Team, Sports Clubs
2.3	Establish effective, ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programmes and initiatives to understand what works and to inform future design and delivery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify a baseline of data from which to measure progress. 2. Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for physical activity interventions linked to social value. 3. Embed and proactively manage a performance management framework with Everyone Active and Abbeycroft. 4. Work with community groups and delivery partners to define and monitor key performance indicators that can be used to measure the impact of wider programmes. 	Everyone Active & Abbeycroft, Active Suffolk, OneLife, Community Action Suffolk

No.	Strategic Objectives	High-Level Actions	Key Partners
Active Places and Spaces			
3.1	Support the provision of sustainable indoor and outdoor facilities which are accessible to all, meet evidenced need and provide sporting pathways from beginners to elite level performance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support priority projects which will have the biggest impact and meet the needs of the residents (see separate list of Priority Projects) 2. Identify innovative, partnership-based approaches to facility developments which meet shared priorities 3. Work with leisure operators to ensure high quality and accessible core facilities. 	Everyone Active & Abbeycroft, Town/Parish Councils and Village Hall Committees, Health Partners
3.2	Increase locally based provision through more community use of schools, community centres/village halls and sports club facilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify projects and initiatives which enable activation of local community facilities. 2. Protect, encourage and support schools to open for community-use. 3. Develop a mapping tool/platform to enable communities to view/find facilities in their area (linked to local facility audit) 	Town/Parish Councils and Village Hall Committees, Schools, Community Action Suffolk, Active Suffolk
3.3	Maximise the opportunities for CIL/Section 106 to support the facility infrastructure required to meet the needs of a growing population	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan is aligned with the updated LSPA Strategy to support allocation of S106 and CIL monies according to evidenced need. 2. Develop evaluation criteria for community grant funding applications which align strongly to the Strategic Outcomes of the LSPA Strategy. 	Town/Parish Councils and Village Hall Committees, Community Groups, Planning Officers
3.4	Enhance opportunities for active play through playgrounds and youth provision (such as skate parks/cycle parks) and by utilising digital tools.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore new, innovative options for active play to be incorporated into new developments and to replace traditional playgrounds in existing settlements. 2. Work with the community, including schools and local interest groups (e.g. historical society, botanical society) 	Public Realm Officers, Town/Parish Councils, Schools, Heritage Sites, Community Groups

No.	Strategic Objectives	High-Level Actions	Key Partners
		<p>to develop a wide range of routes for the Love Exploring App.</p> <p>3. Work with Town and Parish Councils to identify opportunities for improved youth provision (e.g. skate parks and cycle parks), particularly in areas with high levels of anti-social behaviour.</p>	
4.1	<p>Protect and maintain sustainable green and open spaces that provide opportunities for formal and informal outdoor sport, recreation and physical activity</p>	<p>1. Work with Town and Parish councils to ensure playing pitches and play areas are sufficient to meet need and are well maintained</p> <p>2. Explore opportunities for sports clubs to play a stronger role in helping to ‘manage’ outdoor pitches</p> <p>3. Work with planners to ensure green and open space is allocated in new developments.</p>	<p>Town/Parish Councils, Planning Officers, Suffolk County Council</p>
4.2	<p>Activate green and open spaces through development of a co-ordinated programme of outreach activities and use of digital technology</p>	<p>1. Adopt a co-design approach with local communities to identify what activities people want in their parks and open spaces.</p> <p>2. Identify local community ‘champions’ and support them to stimulate interest from the bottom up.</p> <p>3. Deliver a series of intergenerational ‘pop up’ events in key parks to stimulate interest and engagement by local residents</p> <p>4. Explore use of technology to enable stronger awareness of and easy access to active routes, spaces and places.</p> <p>5. Provide opportunities for environmental volunteering with incidental activity, for example community gardening and litter picking walks.</p>	<p>Everyone Active & Abbeycroft, Suffolk County Council Most Active County, Public Realm Team, Active Suffolk, Town/Parish Councils</p>

No.	Strategic Objectives	High-Level Actions	Key Partners
4.3	Support and promote clear, safe routes that enable confident, active travel through early intervention into the planning stages of new development and through the Councils' wider approach to sustainable travel	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist with the development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan 2. Work with the new Sustainable Travel Officer to develop resources which support and promote active travel 3. Strengthen links with SCC Highways to ensure the Council well positioned to influence potential improvements to active travel routes. 	Town/Parish Councils, Planning Officers, Suffolk County Council
Active Partnerships			
5.1	Take a lead role in establishing a 'whole system' multi-agency approach to tackling inactivity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a formal body and governance structure for delivery of the Strategy and reporting of progress. 2. Engage with key agencies and community stakeholders to establish new/build on existing partnerships to deliver the Strategy. 	All partners
5.2	Work with health partners to establish physical activity as a core prevention measure to improve local health outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen the role of the Councils and their leisure operator partners within Integrated Neighbourhood Teams. 2. Work with social prescribing teams to develop a clear and coordinated approach across providers. 	Health Partners, Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, Social Prescribers
5.3	Support schools, sports clubs, Town and Parish councils and community sector partners to maintain and develop physical activity opportunities, particularly for people from less active groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and promote local opportunities to be active through the Districts' network of community organisations & groups. 2. Explore how new, wider partners can help broaden opportunities for residents. 	Schools, Sports Clubs, Town/Parish Councils and Community Sector Partners (CAS, OneLife)
5.4	Work closely with the leisure operator partners to develop and deliver a diverse and inclusive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with leisure operator partners to develop a resourced and targeted outreach programme, delivered 	Everyone Active & Abbeycroft, Town/Parish Councils

No.	Strategic Objectives	High-Level Actions	Key Partners
	programme of activities in community settings across the Districts	in association with key community partners and based on local insight. 2. Proactively manage the performance of leisure operator partners in delivering against required outcomes and through the use of meaningful and measurable KPIs.	and Village Hall Committees
6.1	Increase the volunteer base of sport and physical activity clubs and groups to build capacity, resilience and support growth in participation levels	1. Promote and support individuals and clubs to embrace and participate in volunteer training. 2. Consider reward / incentive scheme for recognising volunteer work. 3. Encourage and support volunteering in non-traditional activities, for example community gardening and litter picking.	Sports Clubs, Active Suffolk, Community Action Suffolk, OneLife, Town/Parish Councils
6.2	Increase the skills and capability of sports clubs to diversify their offer and appeal to a wider audience, particularly less active groups	1. Identify areas for workforce development to progress into a health and wellbeing service, to support outreach activities and specialist interventions. 2. Support the upskilling of club volunteers and coaches through identifying suitable external funding and / or signposting to relevant training opportunities.	Sports Clubs, Disability Forum, Dementia Alliance, Active Suffolk, Sport England, NGBs,
6.3	Support the upskilling of the leisure operator workforce to deliver targeted and specialist health and wellbeing interventions and a more inclusive service	1. Identify skills gaps in the existing workforce. 2. Work with leisure operator partners to upskill new and existing staff in delivering effective outreach and providing a wider, more specialist health and wellbeing service within core facilities. 3. Ensure all staff have appropriate awareness training to support a fully inclusive service.	Everyone Active & Abbeycroft, Disability Forum, Dementia Alliance, Sport England, Health Partners

No.	Strategic Objectives	High-Level Actions	Key Partners
6.4	Work with partners across the integrated care system to increase awareness and understanding of physical activity opportunities to ‘make every contact count’.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Embed physical activity providers across the Districts into the ‘Connect’ space for each Integrated Neighbourhood Team. 2. Develop easy access ‘tools’ for signposters and connectors on opportunities to be active locally. 	Health Partners – INTs, Everyone Active & Abbeycroft, Social Prescribers, Community Groups

7.3 Project Pipeline – Facility Infrastructure

- 7.3.1 In addition to the high-level actions which are designed to support delivery of the Strategic Objectives of the updated LSPA Strategy, SLC has developed a pipeline of potential infrastructure projects which are designed to support identified need for future built provision across the Districts.
- 7.3.2 These projects are informed by the facility audits, supply and demand assessments, stakeholder engagement and a local understanding of the landscape of provision. They seek to address identified weaknesses or deficits in provision and increasing pressures on the capacity of existing facilities, particularly within areas of planned development.
- 7.3.3 Table 16 and Table 17 present a summary of the identified priority projects for Babergh and Mid Suffolk respectively, and are categorised by locality. The scope and scale of projects vary with some being more extensive, involving potential development of new facilities and some are smaller scale improvements or extensions to existing provision. Some are projects that are already planned but provide an opportunity for the Councils to support, guide and influence their delivery and others are yet to be worked through and will likely require involvement from the Councils to undertake some initial feasibility and scoping work.
- 7.3.4 In addition to the specific, locality-based projects, SLC has identified the following six recurring strategic issues regarding facility provision which impact upon both Districts:
1. Insufficient local swimming lesson provision and lack of public swimming opportunities.
 2. Limited community use of school facilities and high reliance on those who do have community use arrangements.
 3. Limited capacity in community buildings that do not satisfy local requirements.
 4. Limited mid-scale multi-use indoor provision.
 5. Delay/non delivery of Suffolk FA's Local Football Facilities Plan
 6. Multiple organisations and groups working in isolation.
- 7.3.5 Table 18 considers ways in which the Councils could address these strategic issues.

Table 16: Priority Infrastructure Projects - Babergh

Location	Potential Project	Summary	Timeframe
South East Babergh	Increase public swimming provision in the South East of Babergh	<p>There is currently no fully publicly accessible swimming provision in the Southeast of Babergh. Ipswich High School and Royal Hospital School are both independent schools with swimming pools that are used for clubs and swimming lessons only and only available outside school hours.</p> <p>The Council should explore opportunities to increase public swimming provision in the SE of Babergh by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with the two schools to understand what capacity they may have to extend community use and what support they would require to enable this. Undertaking feasibility work into the provision of a compact pool in SE Babergh to add capacity. 	Short term (1-2 years)
South East Babergh	Increase community use of dryside sports facilities in schools	<p>In addition to swimming pools, there are good quality dryside facilities at Ipswich High School and Royal Hospital School, however both are limited in terms of community use. Further to this Holbrook Academy have recently closed their facilities to the general public and ended their partnership with Abbeycroft. Whilst the school intends to allow use by certain clubs and groups this move will have a negative impact upon publicly accessible sports hall provision in this part of Babergh.</p> <p>It is recommended that the Council, in partnership with Abbeycroft, work with all of these schools to explore opportunities for extended community use, including potential investment options to support long term financial sustainability.</p>	Short term (1-2 years)
Hadleigh	Layham Road Sports Ground – Community Sports Hub	<p>Housing developments in Hadleigh are expected to increase the population by c.15%. Hadleigh Town Council are already developing plans to update the facilities and pitches at Layham Road Sports Ground, including a new full-size 3G pitch and pavilion. There is an opportunity to work with the Town Council and existing rugby, football and tennis clubs to develop a Community Sports Hub to also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional capacity of grass football and rugby pitches 	<p>Short term (1-2 years)</p> <p>Live, ongoing Project</p>

Location	Potential Project	Summary	Timeframe
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved ancillary facilities/sports pavilion including a community room/exercise studio to accommodate group activities. Resurfacing of tennis and 5-a-side courts. 	
Hadleigh	Sports hall at Hadleigh Pool & Leisure	<p>Sports hall provision in Hadleigh is limited to the high school which is only available outside school hours and at capacity during peak times.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to explore the feasibility of a new 4-court Sports Hall at Hadleigh Pool and Leisure to accommodate demand for indoor sports without the restrictions of school-based facilities. Alternatively, explore provision of a new/extended sports hall at the expanding High School, together with enhanced community access included in the design.</p>	Medium term (3-5 years)
East Bergholt	Improved facilities at East Bergholt Sports Centre	<p>The East Bergholt Sports Centre is on the East Bergholt High School site and managed by Abbeycroft for community use. 1158 new dwellings are planned across East Bergholt, Capel St Mary and Branham which will place additional strain on the facilities at East Bergholt Sports Centre.</p> <p>Given the existing infrastructure and established leisure management presence, there is an opportunity to develop the facilities to support increased community access. Potential options for expansion include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional / extended sports hall Extended health and fitness suite Extend small 3G pitch to full size Refurbish tennis/netball courts. 	Medium Term (3-5 years) in line with large developments
Capel St Mary	Community Sport & Wellbeing Hub	<p>As in East Bergholt, the development of 792 new dwellings in Capel St Mary will add pressure to the limited sports and physical activity facilities in the area. Capel St Mary Community Trust and Parish Council are already developing plans to transform their playing fields into a multi-sport Community Hub with a new 3G pitch in addition to the existing grass pitches and bowling green.</p>	<p>Short term (1-2 years)</p> <p>Live, ongoing project</p>

Location	Potential Project	Summary	Timeframe
		<p>Plans for the proposed hub building include a small gym and community/function space with catering facility alongside changing provision.</p> <p>This represents an excellent opportunity for the Council to work with the Trust and wider health partners to embed community wellbeing facilities into the plans and provide locally accessible and inclusive opportunities to be more active.</p>	
<p>Sudbury / Great Cornard</p>	<p>Develop Masterplan for sports provision across Sudbury and Great Cornard (including Chilton Woods Development)</p>	<p>Sudbury and Great Cornard currently has reasonably good provision of facilities with Kingfisher LC, Sudbury Sports Centre at Ormiston Academy and Great Cornard Sports Centre at Thomas Gainsborough School providing a combination of publicly accessible pool space, sports halls, health and fitness provision, outdoor pitches and an artificial grass pitch.</p> <p>However, significant development is planned for the area with 1,150 new dwellings at Chilton Woods, north of Sudbury and a further 554 in Great Cornard and consideration will therefore need to be given as to how the sport and physical activity needs of this growing population are to be met.</p> <p>It is recommended that the Council undertakes more detailed work in developing a masterplan for future facility provision across Sudbury and Great Cornard to help inform the S106 and CIL allocations during development. This may include exploring a Community Sport and Wellbeing Hub as part of the Chilton Woods development and / or improvements to the collection of indoor and outdoor facilities in the south of Great Cornard including the Sports Centre, Cornard United FC and Sudbury RUFC with strong links to Great Cornard Country Park. Collaboration across these sites and clubs, with other community groups and health partners, could provide an excellent sport and wellbeing offer to cater for the growing population.</p>	<p>Short term planning and medium/long term delivery</p> <p>Live, ongoing project</p>

Table 17: Priority Infrastructure Projects - Mid Suffolk

Location	Potential Project	Summary	Timeframe
Stradbroke	Community Health and Wellbeing Hub	Stradbroke Swim and Fitness Centre has recently been refurbished, its location next to the village sports field, tennis courts, community centre, bowls club and health centre provides an excellent opportunity for the Council, Everyone Active and health partners to develop a joined-up Community Wellbeing Hub in partnership with local stakeholders including Stradbroke High School.	Medium / long Term
Eye	Hartismere School and The Moors Play Area.	<p>Hartismere School in Eye are undertaking a project to extend their community sporting facilities, including a larger sports hall and a new health and fitness suite, and arts facility.</p> <p>It is recommended that the Council consider CIL investment to support the project and work with the school to ensure the facilities are accessible for community use.</p> <p>Nearby play area is also being updated with the Council’s support and there is scope to improve the whole site including the community centre, ancillary facilities and youth provision. A partnership approach that encompasses stakeholders across these two sites and links with the Hartismere Hospital could widely benefit residents in the north of the District.</p>	<p>Medium term (3-5 years)</p> <p>Live, ongoing project at Hartismere School</p>
Debenham	Community Sport and Wellbeing Hub based at Debenham Leisure Centre	<p>The Debenham Sport and Leisure Centre is an important community facility and there are multiple objectives identified in the Neighbourhood Plan to further develop the site and wider sport and leisure provision in the area. These are subject to funding and the Council could assist by exploring the feasibility of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional swimming provision through a ‘compact’ swimming pool north of the village to support community swimming in this rural part of the District • 3G artificial grass pitch (upgrade to existing 2G pitch or additional provision) • Youth facilities. 	Medium term (3-5 years)

Location	Potential Project	Summary	Timeframe
Ipswich Fringe	Snoasis (Great Blakenham)	<p>The Snoasis (now known as Valley Ridge) project in Great Blakenham is still at a relatively early stage. The plans are for a family friendly leisure destination with indoor ski slope, water park and outdoor activities such as high ropes and archery alongside self-catering lodges and 450 room hotel.</p> <p>As the brief develops the Council should explore whether the development has potential to support wider sport, health and wellbeing provision. For example, provision of a new publicly accessible sports hall (possibly even 8-court) as part of a regional scale sports provision to cater for large events and elite performance. An 8-court hall has long been an identified strategic need within the countywide strategic facilities framework (no 8-court provision in Suffolk) and would also significantly support community use which is currently reliant on school-based facilities.</p> <p>The Council should also stay in contact with Ipswich BC regarding any plans for new sports hall provision.</p>	<p>Short term planning and medium/long term delivery</p> <p>Live, ongoing project</p>
Claydon	Claydon High School - Improved community sports facilities	<p>There is significant housing growth planned for Claydon and Barham (690 new homes) and Claydon High School are already developing plans to improve their community sports facilities.</p> <p>It is recommended that the Councils work with and support Claydon High School through CIL and S106 allocations to extend and improve their indoor facilities (sports hall and health and fitness provision) and to ensure this investment is secured through a Community Use Agreement.</p>	<p>Medium term (3-5 years)</p>
Stowmarket	Community Sports and Wellbeing Hub - Chilton Fields	<p>Sport and physical activity provision in Stowmarket is a high priority for the Council given the planned development of 1768 new homes and the existing pressure on sport and physical activity provision in the Town.</p>	<p>Short term (1-2 years)</p> <p>Live, ongoing Project</p>

Location	Potential Project	Summary	Timeframe
		<p>It is recommended that the Councils continue to lead on the project to develop a new, innovative Community Sports and Wellbeing Hub in partnership with Stowmarket High School, Stowmarket Town Council, Suffolk FA, local sports clubs and health partners which has the potential to address a number of key sports facility deficits and contribute strongly to local health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The Council should undertake more detailed feasibility and masterplanning work to explore options for the most suitable location, design and facility mix to potentially include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floodlit 3G artificial grass pitch • Sports hall • Community and health facilities and spaces (e.g. co-location with health partners) • Floodlit Netball/Tennis courts • Compact Athletics Facility (as recommended by England Athletics to support wider athletics and off-track running instead of traditional 400m tracks) • Trim trail • Cycling and running/pedestrian routes with links to wider open spaces • Improvements to Grass Pitches. 	
Stowupland	Stowupland High School – Improved community sports facilities	<p>Planned housing growth (461 new homes) in Stowupland and significant development in nearby Stowmarket will increase pressure on local facilities (Mid Suffolk LC and Stowupland High School) and warrant further consideration for improved provision. The School is a potential home site for Stowupland Falcons FC (a large junior football club currently using Needham Market FC’s 3G AGP). It has outdoor pitches and a sports hall with the potential to extend its community use offer by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending opening hours • Improving the health and fitness offer • Upgrading the sports hall and changing facilities • Resurface tarmac tennis/netball courts. 	Medium term (3-5 years)

Location	Potential Project	Summary	Timeframe
Needham Market	Improve outdoor formal and informal provision in Needham Market	Needham Market Town Council are seeking to improve outdoor physical activity provision at two sites: Crowley Park and the playing field at the former middle school. The latter is located adjacent to the new housing development, relocated library, new netball venue and the existing Community Centre – due to be extended with a café. The community centred location provides an excellent opportunity to improve the open space and create a new play offer.	Short term (1-2 years) Live, ongoing project
Wattisham	Explore opportunities for increased community use of facilities at MOD Wattisham	There are significant sports facilities at MOD Wattisham, including a 25M swimming pool, 4-court sports hall and full-size AGP, which are currently accessible only to approved community groups and clubs. The Babergh/Mid Suffolk border location makes it accessible to both Districts. It is recommended that the Council engage further with the site to explore opportunities to extend community access to the facilities where possible.	Short term (1-2 years)
Thurston	Support development of delivery plan for sports & play provision in Thurston in response to current housing development growth.	Major housing growth is planned in Thurston, Woolpit and Elmswell with over 3000 new homes due to be built before 2037. Facilities in Thurston are limited to the school site which is only available at evenings and weekends. Residents choose to travel to Mid-Suffolk Leisure Centre or Bury Leisure Centre to access swimming provision, both of which are already under strain with current demand. Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council have published a Statement of Common ground with West Suffolk Council which addresses swimming provision in Bury and the cross-boundary usage by residents in Thurston. The Council should support the Parish Councils to develop a locality-based plan for future sport, physical activity and play provision across the wider area to meet the needs of a growing population. Priority areas should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swimming provision • Sports hall • Active Play (including Youth Provision, e.g. Skatepark) • Football provision, including 3G AGP 	Short term planning and medium/long term delivery

Location	Potential Project	Summary	Timeframe
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible community space. 	
Elmswell	Explore opportunities for new provision at Blackbourne Centre/Sports Ground (Elmswell)	<p>The Blackbourne Community Centre and Sports Ground provides excellent village-based community sports facilities. The Parish Council are due to receive a new land parcel which, with support from the District Council, they could use to extend their sports provision for the village and the wider area. Opportunities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports pitches Extend/New Sports Hall Extended Community Centre/Indoor provision 	Medium term (3-5 years)
Walsham-le-Willows	Support Walsham-le-Willows Sports Club to extend their provision	<p>Walsham-le-Willows is an exemplar village Sports Club seeking to broaden their sports and community offer. There is an opportunity to add a full size AGP to reduce their reliance on grass football pitches. This would provide space to develop a small sports hall, health and fitness facilities as well as extend community wellbeing activities.</p>	Medium term (3-5 years)

Table 18: Strategic Issues across both Districts.

Strategic Issue	Priority Project	Summary
Insufficient swimming lesson provision & lack of public swimming opportunities	Scoping and feasibility work to identify areas for innovative compact swimming facilities to meet demand for local community	<p>The private sector has developed compact swimming pools which are available for private hire and swimming lessons i.e. the new Lett’s Swim compact pool in Hadleigh and First Strokes in the Ipswich Fringe. Compact pools cost significantly less to build and operate than typical leisure centre pools (normally 25m x 4 lane minimum) and support the high demand for private swimming lessons, though not currently generally used for school swimming lessons.</p> <p>There is an opportunity for Babergh and Mid-Suffolk District Councils to explore a new innovative model to increase swimming provision in the Districts through public compact pools. There are a number of redundant/underused outdoor pools that could be converted and support the demand for swimming lessons in the District and reduce pressure on the four pools. Compact pool provision could be explored in:</p>

Strategic Issue	Priority Project	Summary
	<p>swimming provision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beyton (redundant pool at Thurston Community College Sixth Form) • Great Cornard Sports Centre (currently operating as an all year around lido) • Shotley (a potential area for a compact pool due to its waterfront environment. • Debenham (previous feasibility project and model developed)
<p>Limited community use of school facilities</p>	<p>Review opportunities to extend community access & provision on school sites</p>	<p>There is a great reliance on school facilities in both Babergh and Mid-Suffolk. In Babergh the only available sports hall provision is on school sites. Several secondary schools have been mentioned above as specific priority projects to maintain or extend community access, however there are outdoor and indoor facilities in many primary schools across the Districts which could also be utilised by the local community with some support from the Councils.</p> <p>Opportunities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review opportunities to include sport and physical activity provision (sports halls and outdoor pitches in particular) in plans to extend existing or build new schools against the Schools Infrastructure Delivery Plan (for example Thurston, Woolpit, Hadleigh High School) 2. Review and develop new model Community Use Agreements to enable more community activity whilst maintaining safeguarding, security and financial sustainability.
<p>Limited capacity in community buildings that do not satisfy local requirements</p>	<p>Develop a district wide Community Buildings (Village & Community Halls) Infrastructure Improvement Plan (CBIIP)</p>	<p>The facilities audit shows a variety of provision per parish without a standard approach. The existing facilities are in many case ageing and not large enough to accommodate sustainable indoor physical activity and wellbeing programmes – especially with Covid restrictions. The audit provides a high-level overview of the provision and the Districts would benefit from completing the village hall survey to better understand local provision. Anecdotally through the survey, halls and community centres appear well used but capacity is restricted for new activities or larger groups.</p> <p>Developing a District wide Community Buildings Infrastructure Improvement Plan (CBIIP) would identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities for new community facilities including potential redevelopment and/or refurbishment • Opportunities to invest in ancillary facilities that will support local physical activity, health and wellbeing.

Strategic Issue	Priority Project	Summary
		<p>The allocation of Babergh and Mid Suffolk Grant and CIL funding for projects within the above categories could be based on a set of criteria designed to measure the likely impact of projects upon community wellbeing.</p>
<p>Limited mid-scale multi-use indoor provision</p>	<p>Scoping and feasibility work to identify community settings (e.g. in core villages) to establish a model for mid-scale community sport and leisure hubs (e.g. as in Elmswell at the Blackbourne Centre).</p>	<p>There is demand for publicly accessible indoor sports and activity provision but the rural, disparate nature of the Districts presents a challenge in accessing core facilities. The model of a 2-3 court sports hall with community rooms, outdoor pitches & play provision plus ancillary facilities like at Blackbourne Community Centre (Elmswell) could be replicated elsewhere and is an ideal solution for providing local access to facilities in rural areas.</p> <p>Many village halls are too small for indoor sport & sustainable level health and fitness activities. Badminton England suggested that minimum 2-court sports halls are ideal in rural areas to encourage clubs to play recreational badminton but also enable them to compete in local leagues.</p> <p>Larger indoor spaces within community settings will also support the growing sport of short mat bowls (very popular with older adults) as well as catering for martial arts and a range of health and fitness group exercise classes etc. Such venues will also support performing arts activities in particular ballet, dance, drama etc. which can be integral parts of village life but often with insufficient space to accommodate large enough audiences to make such activities sustainable.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to scope possible locations for new or extended halls, ideally located at village hall/ recreation grounds with outdoor pitches to provide a multi-sport hub for a local community. This could be linked to the proposed Community Buildings (Village & Community Halls) Infrastructure Improvement Plan (CBIIP) above.</p>
<p>Delay/non delivery of Suffolk FA's Local Football Facilities Plan</p>	<p>Support implementation of FA's Local Football Facilities Plans across the districts</p>	<p>There are District-wide plans in place for priority football projects which, subject to meeting the necessary criteria, should attract 70/80% funding from The Football Foundation. These include full size football-specific 3G AGP provision, grass pitch improvement and increases to pitch and training capacity for club football at a local level. There are also several proposed changing facility improvements on community venues which will have the capacity to support wider community activity as a more sustainable facility.</p>

Strategic Issue	Priority Project	Summary
		<p>It is recommended that the Councils work closely with Suffolk FA and local clubs to review the priority projects and explore opportunities to deliver these, potentially as part of wider projects e.g. Stowmarket Community Sports Hub.</p>
<p>Multiple organisations and groups working in isolation</p>	<p>Explore opportunities for greater collaboration and partnership working</p>	<p>Given the financial pressures on sport and physical activity providers, services and facilities across the Districts, there is a need to explore new joint models for delivery and long-term sustainability by fostering greater collaboration and partnership working.</p> <p>As well as sport and physical activity providers, there is a need to work closely with Health and Social Care partners, Sports Clubs, Schools and Community and Voluntary Sector Partners. This partnership working will be critical to achieve the aspiration for co-located sports and health facilities at Community Sport and Wellbeing Hubs and will be essential to understand the needs of the community and work with them to identify additional sources of funding to help develop sustainable solutions. The Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs), both in terms of the Core Leadership Team and ‘Connect Space’, represent an existing network of partners who support population health and identify priority areas in their local plan. Embedding physical activity providers within the INTs will be an important step to facilitate partnership working with health and social care.</p> <p>The potential Community Sports and Wellbeing Hub project in Stowmarket is a good example of the Council leading a partnership approach, bringing together stakeholders including Stowmarket High School, Town Council, Everyone Active, local sports clubs and health partners to explore new infrastructure. This approach should be replicated for other potential projects and programmes (not just capital infrastructure) across the District to explore new, creative and sustainable delivery models.</p>

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Facility Audit – Babergh (provided as separate document)

Appendix 2: Facility Audit – Mid Suffolk (provided as separate document)

Appendix 3: Supply and Demand Assessment (provided as separate document)

Appendix 4: Stakeholder Engagement – Analysis (provided as separate document)

Appendix 5: Survey Responses (provided as separate document)

Appendix 6: Updated Playing Pitch Strategy Action Plan (provided as separate document)

Appendix 7: NGB Sport Specific Gap Analysis (provided as separate document)



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