



OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

**PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY
LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT**

JANUARY 2026

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

CONTENTS

PART 1: INTRODUCTION	1
PART 2: SUPPLY AND DEMAND ANALYSIS	4
PART 3: LOCAL PLAN CONSIDERATIONS.....	10
PART 4: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	20
APPENDIX 1: PLAYING PITCH CALCULATOR – A STEP BY STEP GUIDE.....	21
APPENDIX 2: SITE BY SITE EMERGING HOUSING ALLOCATIONS.....	24

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

The City Council's Planning Policy and Leisure Team's commissioned Knight Kavanagh and Page Ltd to produce a new Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) for the City. This interim report has been produced to provide detail of the first stages of that work to help inform the development of the Council's Local Plan in relation to playing fields and playing pitch provision (including servicing ancillary facilities). It uses interim findings and assumptions from the emerging PPS.

The PPS, when complete, will update and replace the existing study (which covers up to 2036), and will identify current and future needs to 2045 for pitch provision in Oxford. This will include actions for meeting these, as well as helping to guide relevant policies and to establish a framework for the Council to utilise for future planning applications. This work is to be finalised in late-2026.

Local plan

The Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan, the Oxford Local Plan 2045 (which covers the period 2025-2045) for Oxford. This will guide overall housing requirements, allocate sites for housing, employment and other uses, and provide policies to manage development in the city including measures to protect and enhance the natural and historic environment. It will replace the current Oxford Local Plan 2036 (covering the period 2016-2036).

The formal 'Submission' (Regulation 19) consultation is planned for early 2026, before submission for public examination by the Planning Inspectorate later in 2026. Whilst the timetable for adoption is subject to the progress of the examination, the Council currently envisages this to be in the summer of 2027.

Playing Pitch Strategy

The Oxford PPS was commissioned in July 2025 with a view to updating the Council's existing PPS and to help inform the Local Plan process. It is being delivered in accordance with Sport England's PPS Guidance, with this detailing five stages for developing the study:

- ◀ Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach
- ◀ Stage B: Gather information and views on supply of and demand for provision
- ◀ Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views
- ◀ Stage D: Develop the strategy
- ◀ Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date

Currently, the Stage B process is being undertaken, with this being close to completion for winter sports (football, rugby union and hockey). It is to commence for summer sports (cricket and rugby league) in July 2026 (it can only be carried out during the playing season for the included sports).

Whilst the focus of the study is on the "main" pitch sports identified above, any other sports that are played on grass playing fields within Oxford are also included as standard. This can therefore cover the likes of lacrosse, Gaelic football and American football.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

The selection of sports to be included aligns with Sport England's PPS Guidance and its wider expectations. This states, via Paragraph A26, that:

“The larger pitch sports of football, cricket, hockey, rugby union and rugby league are likely to be the focus of a PPS. However, to ensure the robustness of the PPS, consideration needs to be given to other pitch sports that may be active in the area. While the level of detail may vary, any such sports and their clubs should be engaged early, supply and demand information gathered and then assessed alongside the larger sports.”

Methodology

To inform this report, emerging findings from the PPS have been utilised, with these specifically established to inform the Local Plan process. Where the information is known (i.e., for football, rugby union and hockey), a supply and demand analysis has been undertaken to identify the current and future picture for the sports. Where such information is not yet known (i.e., for the remaining sports), historical data has been acquired, and consultation has been undertaken with key stakeholders. This is so that assumptions can be drawn and a similar supply and demand analysis can be provided.

In conjunction with the above, the Council has also provided emerging information from the Local Plan process to inform and align with the PPS analysis. In particular, this includes details of emerging housing requirements that are being planned for and the proposed allocations to meet this need (whilst recognising the constraints of the City). The intention is for the Local Plan process and the PPS to continue to be aligned as the two projects progress and develop throughout 2026.

Through using emerging information from the PPS and the Local Plan, conclusions can be drawn that can inform policies relating to playing field land and playing pitch provision and the need to protect, enhance and provide facilities. In relation to this, specific regard is also given to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and in particular Paragraph 104 to ensure that the Oxford Local Plan is aligned. This identifies that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless:

- a) An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

In addition, Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator has been utilised, with this able to inform the potential need for new playing pitch provision, linked to future population increases and housing growth. It does this by providing the likely levels of demand that will be generated from housing allocations and developments, before converting this into the number of pitches potentially required to accommodate the increases for each sport. It also gives the associated costs of supplying the pitch provision and splits the total requirement into natural turf pitches to meet peak period demand, artificial grass pitches to meet training demand, and the additional number of changing rooms required to service the playing provision.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

Throughout the process, key stakeholders have been engaged to check and challenge the findings, with this taking place via the PPS Steering Group. This includes the following:

- ◀ Oxford City Council
- ◀ Sport England
- ◀ Football Foundation (FF)
- ◀ Oxford Football Association (OFA)
- ◀ England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB)
- ◀ Oxfordshire Cricket
- ◀ Rugby Football Union (RFU)
- ◀ Rugby Football League (RFL)
- ◀ England Hockey (EH)
- ◀ University of Oxford

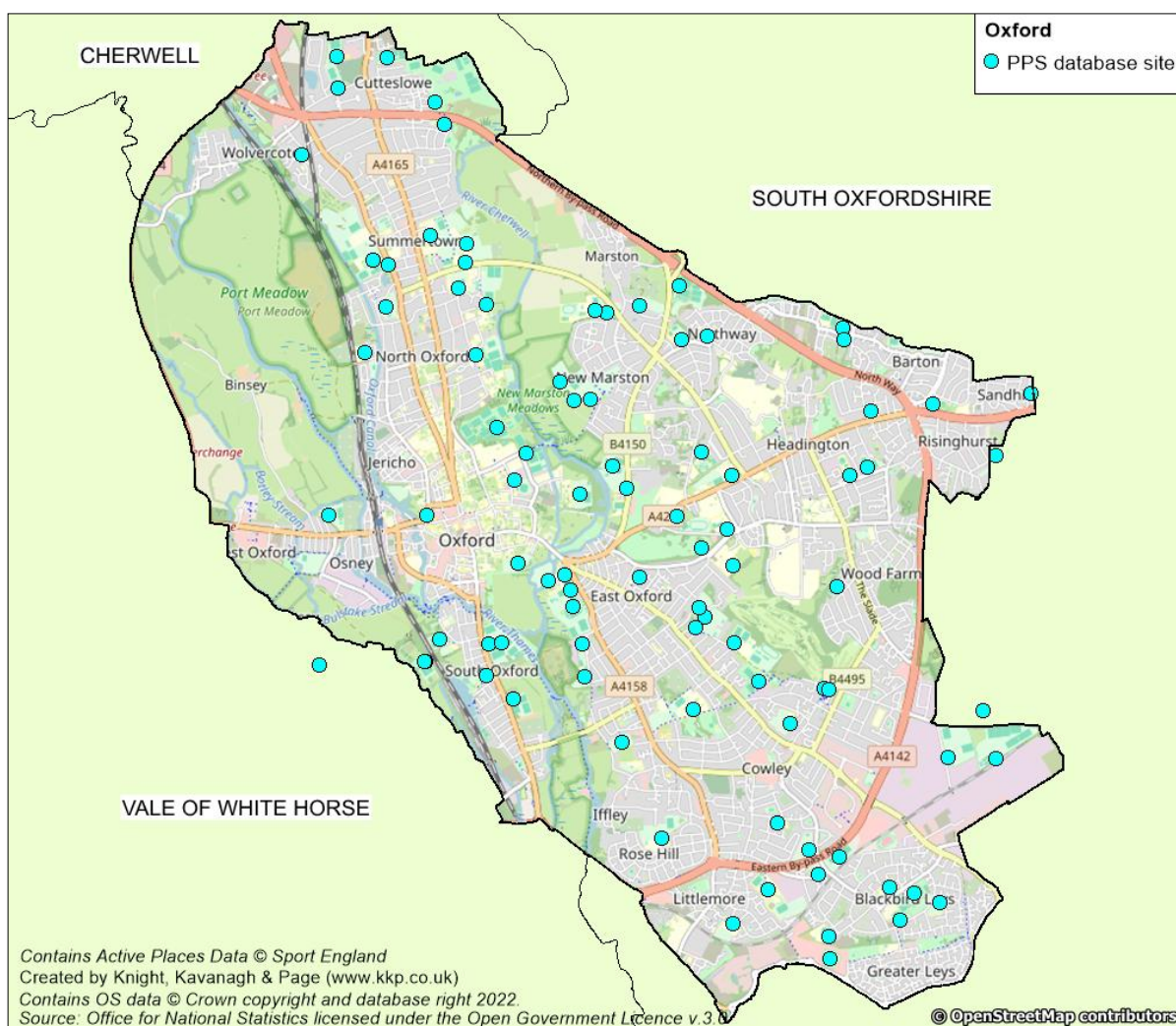
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PART 2: SUPPLY AND DEMAND ANALYSIS

This section details an interim supply and demand analysis from the ongoing Oxford PPS. It is broken down by sport to evidence the current picture for each and to identify whether there is an existing shortfall or surplus of provision, based on the PPS work to date. This can then be utilised to support the emerging Local Plan.

For reference, the playing pitch sites identified across Oxford have been mapped, below.

Figure 2.1: Playing pitch sites in Oxford



For football, rugby union and hockey, most of the required information for this study has been gathered as part of the PPS process, meaning that the findings are unlikely to significantly change as the project progresses. For the remaining sports, as the Stage B process is yet to formally begin, more emphasis has been placed on consultation with key stakeholders and on assumptions using more historical data.

Future demand, at this stage, is calculated based on what has been identified through population forecasts (up to 2045). This is via Office of National Statistics (ONS) based projections (2022-2047), which identifies that the population of Oxford will grow from 137,687 people currently to 164,334 people by 2045. However, other methods will be incorporated as and when the PPS progresses (including club aspirations and trend-based growth scenarios).

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

Football – grass pitches

The table below identifies current demand (i.e., spare capacity taking away overplay) across Oxford for each pitch type for football.

Table 2.1: Summary and demand for adult pitches (match equivalent sessions)

Pitch type	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Future total
Adult	13	14	-1	2.5	-3.5
Youth 11v11	-	12	-12	-	-12
Youth 9v9	3	7.5	-4.5	-	-4.5
Mini 7v7	6.5	-	+6.5	-	+6.5
Mini 5v5	6	-	+6	-	+6

As seen, there are existing shortfalls for adult, youth 11v11 and youth 9v9 pitches, whereas overall spare capacity exists for mini 7v7 and mini 5v5 pitches. When accounting for future demand, the shortfall for adult pitches is predicted to exacerbate.

The above means that the current supply of grass football pitches in Oxford is insufficient to meet existing demand, particularly for youth 11v11 football. However, whilst this could be overcome through increasing the supply, there are other methods that could be considered to alleviate the identified deficits, meaning it is not necessarily just a quantitative issue (see the conclusion of this section for further information).

Football – 3G pitches

To quantify the 3G demand for football, the FA has established a training model, which suggests that one 11v11 3G pitch can accommodate 38 affiliated teams (with capacity built in for other forms of demand). Given that there are a total of 457 teams currently based in Oxford (including disability and university-based teams), there is a theoretical need for 12 11v11 3G pitches (rounded down from 12.03). This means a current shortfall of 5.5 pitches.

Table 2.2: Current demand for 11v11 3G pitches in Oxford (38 teams per pitch)

Current number of teams	3G requirement	Current number of 11v11 size 3G pitch equivalents	Current shortfall (11v11 pitches)
457	12	6.5	-5.5

When considering future demand for an additional five teams (based on population growth up to 2045), there is potential demand for 12.25 11v11 3G pitches overall (rounded up from 12.16), which means a theoretical future shortfall of 5.75 pitches.

Table 2.3: Future demand for 11v11 3G pitches in Oxford (38 teams per pitch)

Future number of teams	3G requirement	Current number of 11v11 size 3G pitch equivalents	Future shortfall (11v11 pitches)
462	12.25	6.5	-5.75

In conclusion, there is insufficient supply of 3G pitches to meet current and anticipated future football training demand in Oxford, with a large shortfall identified.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

In addition, there is also potential demand for World Rugby compliant 3G provision to be established given existing usage levels and based on the deficits of grass pitch supply (see section below). This therefore also needs to be considered alongside the shortfalls for football as and when new pitches are proposed and developed.

Rugby union

As seen in the table below, an overall current shortfall is identified in Oxford in relation to rugby union provision. This amounts to a current deficit of 3.3 match equivalent sessions per week and a future deficit of 3.8 match equivalent sessions per week.

Table 2.4: Supply and demand balance for rugby union (match equivalent sessions)

Area	Actual spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Future total
Oxford	-	3.3	-3.3	0.5	-3.8

As shown, Oxford has an overall shortfall of rugby union capacity, although this is relatively minimal when compared to the national picture. Nevertheless, it is clear that demand levels are not being adequately catered for currently.

Moreover, there are several clubs located just outside of Oxford that may need to be factored into future planning decisions. This is because of the level of demand they draw from inside the City.

Hockey

For senior hockey, on the basis that there are 10 full size pitches which can accommodate hockey matches in Oxford, there is a theoretical opportunity to accommodate up to 80 teams across the City (one pitch can cater for four matches and eight teams on one day). As such, with 45 senior teams currently fielded, this suggests that there is theoretically ample spare capacity to accommodate existing demand levels. However, this does not account for the access, quality and security of tenure issues that exist, with these needing to be overcome to ensure that the adequacy of provision remains.

The table below highlights the current capacity of the full size hockey pitches within Oxford and identifies the issues that exist on a site-by-site basis.

Table 2.5: Summary of capacity at peak time for senior hockey

Site ID	Site	Potential capacity (teams)	Actual capacity (teams)	Current demand (teams)	Capacity balance (teams)	Comments
1	Banbury Road North Sports Ground	8	8	8	0	Pitch is played to capacity.
1	Banbury Road North Sports Ground	8	8	7	+1	Minimal spare capacity is provided.
10	Brookes Sport Headington	8	8	7	+1	Minimal spare capacity is provided.
24	Headington School	8	8	7	+1	Minimal spare capacity is provided.
28	Iffley Road Sports Centre	8	8	8	0	Pitch is played to capacity.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

Site ID	Site	Potential capacity (teams)	Actual capacity (teams)	Current demand (teams)	Capacity balance (teams)	Comments
33	Magdalen College Sports Ground	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use, meaning no capacity is provided.
57	St Edwards School	8	8	-	-	No spare capacity due to curricular usage on Saturdays.
57	St Edwards School	8	8	-	-	No spare capacity due to curricular usage on Saturdays.
64	The Dragon School	-	-	-	-	Unavailable for community use, meaning no capacity is provided.
68	The Oxford Academy	8	-	-	0	Pitch requires resurfacing to adequately accommodate demand.

In terms of quantity, there is a sufficient supply of hockey provision in Oxford to meet demand. However, the sport is not currently being adequately provided for, primarily due to access and quality issues at several sites. This therefore needs to be overcome if the existing supply is to be considered adequate to accommodate existing usage levels.

Cricket

There are six affiliated cricket clubs in Oxford which collectively provide 60 teams. This equates to 25 senior men's, four senior women's and 31 junior teams (24 junior boys' teams and seven junior girls' teams). Whilst the PPS supply and demand analysis cannot yet be provided, findings from the ongoing consultation process with clubs, the ECB and Oxfordshire Cricket indicates a likelihood of significant shortfalls being identified.

In addition to the demand levels outlined above, consultation with Oxfordshire Cricket identifies that club participation is growing significantly and that there is a substantial level of exported demand that must also be factored into planning decisions. Several clubs that are based in Oxford are having to utilise provision outside of the City due to a lack of capacity and ongoing access issues.

Furthermore, it should be referenced that three existing cricket sites in Oxford are subject to potential development proposals. This could further impact on supply levels and create additional shortfalls over and above what is already thought to exist. Over the past 20 years, it is reported that eight cricket squares have been lost, placing further pressure on the remaining facilities.

Rugby league

There is just one rugby league club in Oxford City, with this being Oxford University RLFC. The Club consists of two senior men's teams and one senior women's team, all of which play matches on the pitch at Iffley Road Sports Centre. However, the Club additionally accesses a pitch at Oxford Rugby Club (in Vale of White Horse District) for all its training demand.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

Consultation with the University of Oxford highlights no issues in terms of capacity or quality concerns in relation to the pitch at Iffley Road Sports Centre. As such, rugby league activity within the City is considered to be adequately catered for at present, although this is still to be fully determined through the PPS process. There being no community-based demand adds to this likelihood.

Other sports

This section focuses on other sports that are played on grass pitches and where some form of supply and/or demand in Oxford has been identified. It does not include sports where no current, formal activity has been identified in the City, although that is not to say that other sports have not been played historically, that they are not played informally, or that some demand is not exported to where supply and demand exists in neighbouring local authorities.

The majority of the additional playing pitch activity across Oxford takes place for the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University, with both hosting a catalogue of 'other' grass pitch sports. Collectively, this includes the following:

- ◀ American football
- ◀ Australian rules football
- ◀ Baseball
- ◀ Croquet
- ◀ Lacrosse
- ◀ Softball
- ◀ Ultimate Frisbee

Separate from the sporting provision offered by the universities, community-based lacrosse is seen via Oxford City Lacrosse Club. The Club accesses either the hockey pitch or the 11v11 3G pitch at The Oxford Academy for all its training and match demand.

Overall, existing supply is considered to be adequate across the aforementioned sports in Oxford, with this linked to lower participation levels and a propensity for use of artificial surfaces. This, however, still needs to be fully determined by the ongoing PPS process.

Conclusion

The existing position identifies the presence of playing pitch shortfalls across Oxford, particularly for football and rugby union, with a deficit also expected to exist for cricket. Moreover, where spare capacity exists or where demand is being met, this does not equate to a surplus of provision, with any spare capacity instead considered as a solution to overcoming shortfalls (i.e., via site/pitch re-configuration). As a result, no playing pitch provision can be deemed surplus to requirements, meaning that there is a clear need to protect all existing provision. This is unless an alternative planning policy exception is met, as per Paragraph 104 of the NPPF.

Notwithstanding the above, most of the current shortfalls identified can likely be met by better utilising current provision. This can be achieved via methods such as improving quality, installing additional sports lighting, enabling access to existing unused provision, such as at unavailable education sites (e.g. via community use agreements), and bringing disused sites back into use. That being said, there could be a need for some new provision in specific areas to completely alleviate existing and future deficits, especially if other forms of eradicating the shortfalls are not possible (e.g., financially) or where they are not the preferred approach. It is, however, recognised that the constrained nature of the City and competing land demands could make this challenging.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

In relation to football, there is also a specific shortfall of 3G pitches that can only be met through increased provision (although existing playing field land could be utilised for this, subject to plans being policy compliant). Furthermore, proposed housing growth across the City is also likely to necessitate the need for new facilities (see Part 3).

PART 3: LOCAL PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to identifying requirements and informing policy relating to existing playing field and playing pitch supply and demand, the PPS can set out an approved approach to needs relating to new housing developments and overall housing growth. This can then assist in securing investment into current provision (e.g., via Section 106 contributions) and the creation of new facilities, where required.

As will be set out within the PPS as it progresses, it is recommended the Council uses Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator as a tool for helping to determine the additional demand for pitches that will be derived from housing growth and, where applicable, to estimate the likely developer costs and/or contributions required to provide this. This could form the basis of the Council developing a process and guidance for requiring developers to provide facilities or to obtain developer contributions.

Please see Appendix 1 for more information in relation to the Playing Pitch Calculator and how it can be used, particularly in regard to whether new provision should be sought or whether investment should be directed to improving existing sites. Please also note that the future demand derived from the housing growth calculations should not be seen as additional future demand compared to other methods used within the PPS to forecast increases (e.g. population growth and club aspirations), as set out in Part 2 of this report. In effect, increases from housing growth will likely absorb increases from other projection tools/methods.

Notwithstanding the above, given the current pitch shortfalls identified in Part 2 of this report, the need to cater for housing growth is likely to be amplified. This is because it is evident that the existing supply in its current form will not be able to adequately accommodate significant increases in demand. Accounting for this within the Local Plan process is therefore clear.

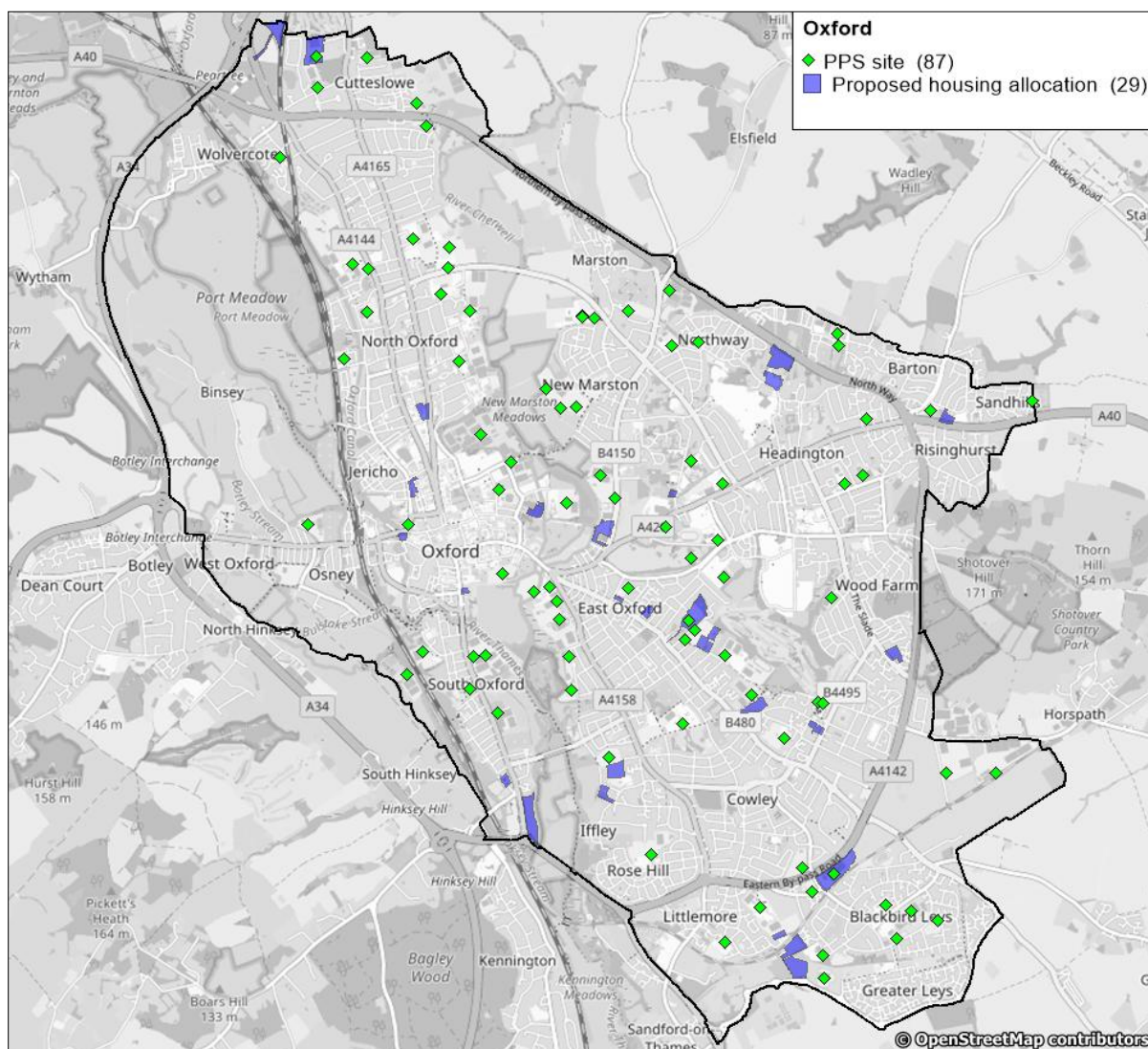
Overall Local Plan requirements

The emerging Oxford Local Plan identifies a need for the delivery of 9,267 dwellings within the City (2025-2045), with this equating to 463 dwellings per annum. Currently, this requirement is set to be supplied across 50+ allocations (which will generally be the largest development sites and sites of more than 10 dwellings), although a proportion is also to be attributed to windfall sites (which will be typically smaller developments) that will arise throughout the whole 20-year period.

The known housing allocations, as identified in the Council's Regulation 19 submission draft Local Plan are shown via the mapping below.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

Figure 3.1: Emerging Local Plan allocations against key PPS sites



The playing pitch demand that will be generated from housing growth totalling 9,267 dwellings can be seen in the following table, using Sport England’s Playing Pitch Calculator. This is based on resultant population increase of 22,240 (2.4 people per dwelling). The demand is shown in match equivalent sessions per week for most sports, except for cricket, where match equivalent sessions are by season. Training demand is expressed in either hours or match equivalent sessions - where expressed in hours, it is expected that demand will use either a 3G pitch (football demand) or a sand-based artificial pitch (hockey demand). Where expressed in match equivalent sessions, it is expected training will take place on sports-lit grass pitches (i.e., for rugby union).

Table 3.1: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 9,267 dwellings

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport for 9,267 dwellings	
	Match demand	Training demand
Adult football	3.13 match equivalent sessions	51.65 match equivalent sessions
Youth football	15.77 match equivalent sessions	
Mini soccer	6.93 match equivalent sessions	
Rugby union	0.52 match equivalent sessions	0.52 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.22 match equivalent sessions	0.22 match equivalent sessions

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport for 9,267 dwellings	
	Match demand	Training demand
Adult hockey	3.35 match equivalent sessions	10.05 match equivalent sessions
Junior hockey	0 match equivalent sessions	1.97 match equivalent sessions
Cricket	81.3 match equivalent sessions	N/A ¹

For reference, the table below translates the estimated demand into new provision, with associated capital and lifestyle costs. In total, it is set out that up to 30.53 pitches will be required to meet the demand. The capital cost of providing this is estimated at £5,504,504 in addition to lifecycle costs of £648,079 per annum. In addition, up to 37.09 changing rooms will be needed at a predicted cost of £7,954,985.

Table 3.2: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision (9,267 dwellings)

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new pitches			Changing rooms	
	Number to meet demand	Capital cost	Yearly lifecycle cost	Number	Capital cost
Adult football	3.13	£373,958	£73,670	6.25	£1,341,370
Youth football	15.77	£1,558,329	£314,782	21.43	£4,596,679
Mini soccer	6.93	£216,109	£42,790	0 ²	£0
Rugby union	0.52	£94,834	£17,544	1.04	£223,538
Rugby league	0.22	£34,838	£6,445	0.45	£95,803
Cricket	1.76	£659,064	£121,268	3.52	£755,178
Hockey	0.84	£871,019	£22,646	1.68	£359,295
3G	1.36	£1,696,353	£48,933	2.72	£583,121

In total, the need for provision equates to (rounding to nearest whole number):

- ◀ Three adult, 16 youth and seven mini soccer pitches
- ◀ One rugby union pitch
- ◀ Two cricket pitches
- ◀ One hockey pitch
- ◀ One 3G pitch

Whilst the above is significant and clearly means that some level of new playing pitch provision will be required over the Local Plan period, it is likely that not all the additional demand will necessitate the creation of additional playing fields. This is because most developments will be of a small enough scale to only warrant contributions to improving existing sites, whilst others may not require any investment due to their size or because of sufficient provision already existing within the immediate area. As referenced above, the process for determining need on a site-by-site basis (or as a group of developments within a particular locality) is further set out in Appendix 1.

To further emphasis the above, calculations have been carried out to determine the scale of development required for at least a whole pitch to be needed for any of the playing pitch sports and for any of the formats of play. The result of this is a determination that only those with over 598 dwellings are likely to necessitate the need (firstly for youth football), with those under this threshold much more likely to only need to provide contributions towards improving the existing supply of facilities. The table below runs a scenario for a 600-dwelling development to emphasis this point.

¹ Training generally takes place away from pitch provision via nets so is therefore not accounted for.

² Changing rooms are not considered a requirement for mini soccer activity.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

Table 3.3: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 600 dwellings

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport for 600 dwellings	
	Match demand	Training demand
Adult football	0.20 match equivalent sessions	3.34 match equivalent sessions
Youth football	1.02 match equivalent sessions	
Mini soccer	0.45 match equivalent sessions	
Rugby union	0.03 match equivalent sessions	0.03 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.01 match equivalent sessions	0.01 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.22 match equivalent sessions	0.65 match equivalent sessions
Junior hockey	0 match equivalent sessions	0.13 match equivalent sessions
Cricket	5.26 match equivalent sessions	N/A

The development of 600 dwellings results in up to 1.98 pitches being required, but crucially only youth football has sufficient demand for a whole pitch by itself. The capital cost is estimated at £356,375 in addition to lifecycle costs of £41,958 per annum. In addition, up to 2.4 changing rooms will be needed at a predicted cost of £515,059

Table 3.4: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision (9,267 dwellings)

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new pitches			Changing rooms	
	Number to meet demand	Capital cost	Yearly lifecycle cost	Number	Capital cost
Adult football	0.20	£24,212	£4,770	0.40	£86,848
Youth football	1.02	£100,889	£20,380	1.39	£297,625
Mini soccer	0.45	£13,989	£2,770	0	£0
Rugby union	0.03	£6,140	£1,136	0.07	£14,473
Rugby league	0.01	£2,256	£417	0.03	£6,203
Cricket	0.11	£42,671	£7,851	0.23	£48,894
Hockey	0.05	£56,398	£1,466	0.11	£23,264
3G	0.09	£109,820	£3,168	0.18	£37,751

Notwithstanding the above, the cumulative effect of housing growth must also be recognised, particularly where several developments are proposed within the same locality. Whilst these may not individually require the creation of new provision, they could collectively warrant additional facilities when accounting for demand increases across the area. The impact of ongoing and completed developments should therefore be accounted for as part of the planning application process, with a formalised Stage E PPS process able to assist with this (i.e., through monitoring increases and the impact this is having on supply).

Area-by-area need

Within the emerging Oxford Local Plan, the City is split into four broad infrastructure areas, as shown via the imagery overleaf (note that the West and Central areas are merged). The emerging allocations are then also split into these infrastructure areas, with this allowing for a more localised analysis of growth, including needs relating to playing fields and playing pitches. The following section therefore takes a look at the four infrastructure areas in turn and assesses the resultant playing pitch demand that may derive from the housing growth attributed to each and what this may necessitate in terms of new provision and/or provision improvements. This can then evidence which areas are most likely to be in need, although it is acknowledged that, in practice, behaviour and use of facilities is unlikely to stick rigidly to the boundaries. Needs will also be highly dependent on a variety of factors including the existing position in terms of facility quality and the level of spare capacity.

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Figure 3.2: Overview of Local Plan infrastructure areas³

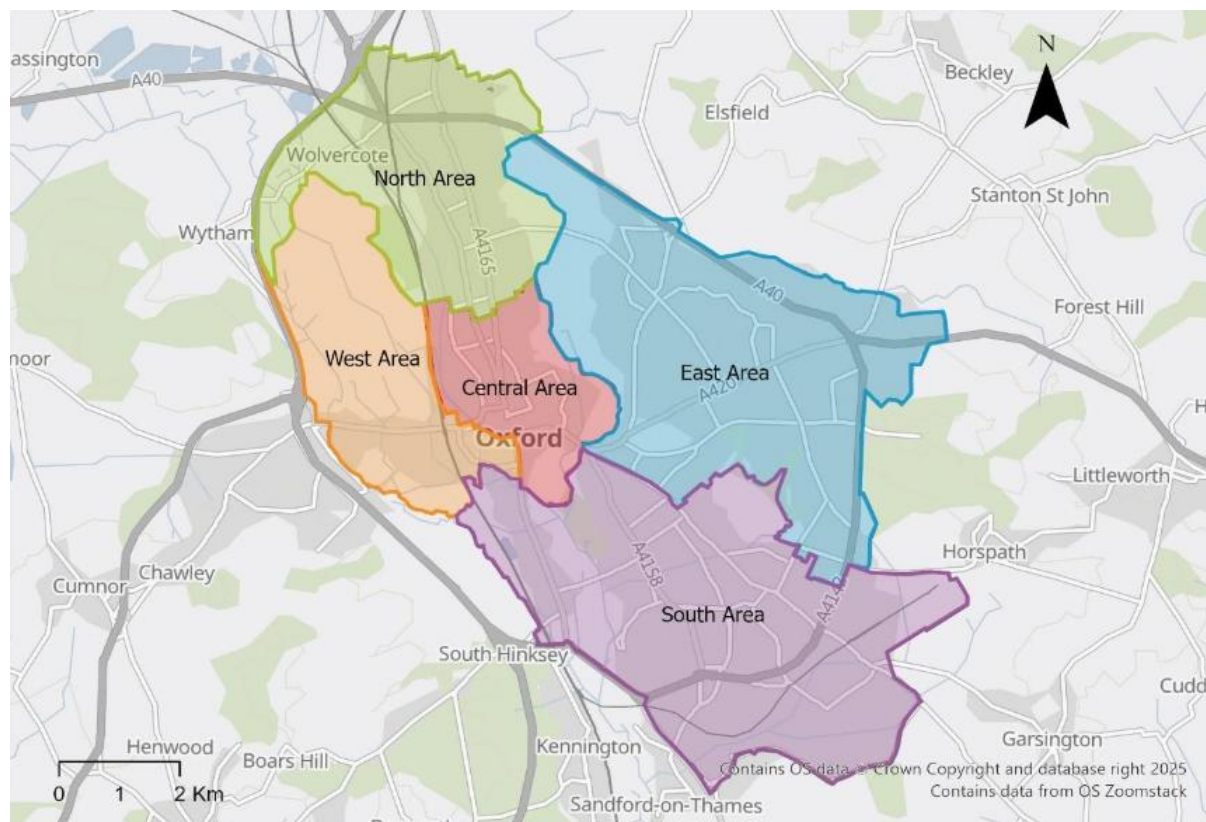


Table 3.5 identifies the allocated housing within each Infrastructure Delivery Plan Area and what has been used for the purposes of this high-level analysis. It should however be noted that the figures used are the minimum requirements across the allocations where they are set out in the draft Local Plan policies. Some sites in the emerging Local Plan are allocated without a minimum requirement being set (in which case they have been excluded), whilst some non-residential sites also allow for an element of housing (again with no minimum expectation). As previously referenced, it is also expected that there will be additional housing coming forward through windfall development, with these being on sites that are not allocated through the Local Plan.

Table 3.5: Housing growth figures by Infrastructure Area

Infrastructure Area	No. of proposed dwellings
North	524
South	1,671
East	518
Central & West	985

For a site-by-site breakdown, please refer to Appendix 2.

North Area

The playing pitch demand that will be generated from housing growth totalling 524 dwellings can be seen in the following table, using Sport England’s Playing Pitch Calculator. This is based on resultant population increase of 1,258 (2.4 people per dwelling).

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PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

Table 3.6: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 524 dwellings

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport for 524 dwellings	
	Match demand	Training demand
Adult football	0.18 match equivalent sessions	2.92 match equivalent sessions
Youth football	0.89 match equivalent sessions	
Mini soccer	0.39 match equivalent sessions	
Rugby union	0.03 match equivalent sessions	0.03 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.01 match equivalent sessions	0.01 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.19 match equivalent sessions	0.57 match equivalent sessions
Junior hockey	0 match equivalent sessions	0.11 match equivalent sessions
Cricket	4.6 match equivalent sessions	N/A ⁴

For reference, the table below translates the estimated demand into new provision, with associated capital and lifecycle costs. In total, it is set out that 1.73 pitches will be required to meet the demand. The capital cost of providing this is estimated at £311,378 in addition to lifecycle costs of £36,661 per annum. In addition, up to 2.1 changing rooms will be needed at a predicted cost of £450,036.

Table 3.7: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision (524 dwellings)

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new pitches			Changing rooms	
	Number to meet demand	Capital cost	Yearly lifecycle cost	Number	Capital cost
Adult football	0.18	£21,253	£4,167	0.35	£75,875
Youth football	0.89	£88,157	£17,808	1.21	£260,070
Mini soccer	0.39	£12,224	£2,420	0 ⁵	£0
Rugby union	0.03	£5,364	£992	0.06	£12,645
Rugby league	0.01	£1,971	£365	0.03	£5,419
Cricket	0.10	£37,280	£6,860	0.20	£42,717
Hockey	0.05	£49,269	£1,281	0.09	£20,323
3G	0.08	£95,960	£2,768	0.15	£32,986

In total, the need for provision does not equate to a whole pitch for any of the sports or pitch types, although for youth football it is close. This therefore implies that no new facilities will be required, although the cumulative impact of developments will need to be monitored, particularly if minimum requirements are exceeded and/or if a significant number of windfall developments come forward.

South Area

The playing pitch demand that will be generated from housing growth totalling 1,671 dwellings can be seen in the following table, using Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator. This is based on resultant population increase of 4,010 (2.4 people per dwelling).

⁴ Training generally takes place away from pitch provision via nets so is therefore not accounted for.

⁵ Changing rooms are not considered a requirement for mini soccer activity.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

Table 3.8: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 4,010 dwellings

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport for 4,010 dwellings	
	Match demand	Training demand
Adult football	0.56 match equivalent sessions	9.31 match equivalent sessions
Youth football	2.84 match equivalent sessions	
Mini soccer	1.25 match equivalent sessions	
Rugby union	0.09 match equivalent sessions	0.09 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.04 match equivalent sessions	0.04 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.60 match equivalent sessions	1.81 match equivalent sessions
Junior hockey	0 match equivalent sessions	0.35 match equivalent sessions
Cricket	14.66 match equivalent sessions	N/A ⁶

For reference, the table below translates the estimated demand into new provision, with associated capital and lifestyle costs. In total, it is set out that up to 5.50 pitches will be required to meet the demand. The capital cost of providing this is estimated at £992,477 in addition to lifecycle costs of £116,850 per annum. In addition, up to 6.69 changing rooms will be needed at a predicted cost of £1,434,311.

Table 3.9: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision (4,010 dwellings)

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new pitches			Changing rooms	
	Number to meet demand	Capital cost	Yearly lifecycle cost	Number	Capital cost
Adult football	0.56	£67,428	£13,283	1.13	£241,862
Youth football	2.84	£280,967	£56,77	3.86	£838,785
Mini soccer	1.25	£38,963	£7,715	0 ⁷	£0
Rugby union	0.09	£17,100	£3,163	0.19	£40,306
Rugby league	0.04	£6,282	£1,162	0.08	£17,274
Cricket	0.32	£118,833	£21,865	0.63	£136,163
Hockey	0.15	£157,053	£4,083	0.30	£64,784
3G	0.25	£305,852	£8,823	0.49	£105,137

In total, the need for provision equates to the potential need for new pitches, particularly in regard to youth and mini football. However, the figures remain relatively minimal when compared to the overall findings across Oxford, and the actual need will depend on the capacity and quality of the existing supply, the potential for improvements, and the cumulative impact of the developments.

East area

The playing pitch demand that will be generated from housing growth totalling 518 dwellings can be seen in the following table, using Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator. This is based on resultant population increase of 1,243 (2.4 people per dwelling).

⁶ Training generally takes place away from pitch provision via nets so is therefore not accounted for.

⁷ Changing rooms are not considered a requirement for mini soccer activity.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

Table 3.10: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 518 dwellings

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport for 518 dwellings	
	Match demand	Training demand
Adult football	0.17 match equivalent sessions	2.89 match equivalent sessions
Youth football	0.88 match equivalent sessions	
Mini soccer	0.39 match equivalent sessions	
Rugby union	0.03 match equivalent sessions	0.03 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.01 match equivalent sessions	0.01 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.19 match equivalent sessions	0.56 match equivalent sessions
Junior hockey	0 match equivalent sessions	0.11 match equivalent sessions
Cricket	4.54 match equivalent sessions	N/A ⁸

For reference, the table below translates the estimated demand into new provision, with associated capital and lifecycle costs. In total, it is set out 1.71 pitches will be required to meet the demand. The capital cost of providing this is estimated at £307,652 in addition to lifecycle costs of £36,22 per annum. In addition, 2.07 changing rooms will be needed at a predicted cost of £444,662.

Table 3.11: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision (518 dwellings)

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new pitches			Changing rooms	
	Number to meet demand	Capital cost	Yearly lifecycle cost	Number	Capital cost
Adult football	0.17	£20,900	£4,117	0.35	£74,966
Youth football	0.88	£87,102	£17,595	1.20	£256,970
Mini soccer	0.39	£12,078	£2,391	0 ⁹	£0
Rugby union	0.03	£5,300	£981	0.06	£12,493
Rugby league	0.01	£1,947	£360	0.02	£5,354
Cricket	0.10	£36,835	£6,778	0.20	£42,206
Hockey	0.05	£48,679	£1,266	0.09	£20,080
3G	0.08	£94,812	£2,735	0.15	£32,592

The need for provision does not equate to a whole pitch for any of the sports or pitch types, although for youth football it is close. This therefore implies that no new facilities will be required, although the cumulative impact of developments will need to be monitored, particularly if minimum requirements are exceeded and/or if a significant number of windfall developments come forward.

Central & West area

The playing pitch demand that will be generated from housing growth totalling 985 dwellings can be seen in the following table, using Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator. This is based on resultant population increase of 2,364 (2.4 people per dwelling).

⁸ Training generally takes place away from pitch provision via nets so is therefore not accounted for.

⁹ Changing rooms are not considered a requirement for mini soccer activity.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

Table 3.12: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 985 dwellings

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport for 985 dwellings	
	Match demand	Training demand
Adult football	0.33 match equivalent sessions	5.49 match equivalent sessions
Youth football	1.68 match equivalent sessions	
Mini soccer	0.74 match equivalent sessions	
Rugby union	0.06 match equivalent sessions	0.06 match equivalent sessions
Rugby league	0.02 match equivalent sessions	0.02 match equivalent sessions
Adult hockey	0.36 match equivalent sessions	1.07 match equivalent sessions
Junior hockey	0 match equivalent sessions	0.21 match equivalent sessions
Cricket	8.64 match equivalent sessions	N/A ¹⁰

For reference, the table below translates the estimated demand into new provision, with associated capital and lifestyle costs. In total, it is set out that up to 3.25 pitches will be required to meet the demand. The capital cost of providing this is estimated at £585,111 in addition to lifecycle costs of £68,888 per annum. In addition, up to 3.94 changing rooms will be needed at a predicted cost of £845,569.

Table 3.13: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision (985 dwellings)

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new pitches			Changing rooms	
	Number to meet demand	Capital cost	Yearly lifecycle cost	Number	Capital cost
Adult football	0.33	£39,750	£7,831	0.66	£142,582
Youth football	1.68	£165,641	£33,460	2.28	£488,593
Mini soccer	0.74	£22,974	£4,549	0 ¹¹	£0
Rugby union	0.06	£10,080	£1,865	0.11	£23,761
Rugby league	0.02	£3,703	£685	0.05	£10,183
Cricket	0.19	£70,057	£12,890	0.37	£80,273
Hockey	0.09	£92,585	£2,407	0.18	£38,191
3G	0.14	£180,320	£5,202	0.29	£61,985

In total, the need for provision equates to the potential need for new pitches, particularly in regard to youth and mini football. However, the figures remain minimal, especially when compared to the overall findings across Oxford, and the actual need will depend on the capacity and quality of the existing supply, the potential for improvements, and the cumulative impact of the developments.

Other considerations

Whilst use of the Playing Pitch Calculator for this report has utilised data from the emerging PPS, there are nuances that may need to be accounted for as when the study progresses and should the tool be utilised by the Council to inform future requirements of new development. These could increase demand inputs and as a result increase the requirement for new pitch provision and the likely threshold at which point it is required.

¹⁰ Training generally takes place away from pitch provision via nets so is therefore not accounted for.

¹¹ Changing rooms are not considered a requirement for mini soccer activity.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

An example of the above comes in relation to cricket, with Oxfordshire Cricket reporting relatively high levels of exported demand (demand based in Oxford currently playing outside of the City). Inclusion of this demand would increase the requirements for new cricket pitches and/or the level of investment into existing cricket facilities (only demand playing in Oxford has currently been factored in).

Conclusion

It is clear that overall housing growth across Oxford during the Local Plan period (2025-2045) will result in the need for additional playing pitch capacity. However, whilst this need means that some level of new playing pitch provision will be required over the Local Plan period, it is likely that not all the additional demand will necessitate the creation of additional playing fields. There several moving factors that will influence this. Nevertheless, it is key that this overall requirement is identified and that a formalised and standardised approach is utilised to establish need as and when planning applications come forward. Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator provides at least a starting point for this and could be utilised by the Council, where applicable, particularly where development is proposed that would impact upon provision.

It is clear that most developments in the City will be of a small scale and only warrant contributions to improving existing sites. Where developments do not warrant the creation of new playing pitch provision, it is considered likely that other mechanisms will still be needed to address additional playing pitch pressures including developer contributions that can bring about improvements to existing facilities, especially given the current shortfalls that have been identified. Again, the Playing Pitch Calculator can be used to determine the level of contribution required, and the PPS, when complete, can be used to identify suitable sites and the works that the investment can achieve.

The area-by-area analysis suggests that the South and the Central & West infrastructure areas will be most in need of new provision and/or contributions towards improving existing facilities. However, this will still be dependent on several factors. The cumulative impact of developments should be monitored, whilst the requirements will also be influenced by any additional developments that come forward as well as on the current supply and demand picture, which the PPS will fully determine as it progresses.

PART 4: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has identified two key factors that need to be considered as part of the emerging Local Plan process in Oxford. These are summarised below.

Existing supply and demand

There are current shortfalls of provision across the “main” playing pitch sports in Oxford. This means that no existing provision can be considered surplus to requirements, and that all playing field land requires ongoing protection in alignment with Paragraph 104 of the NPPF (Exception A cannot be met). Development should therefore only be supported if “the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location” (Exception B), or “the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use” (Exception C).

The above should be reflected via a policy within the Local Plan. This will ensure existing sites are appropriately protected to meet current and future needs, whilst also providing a clear framework for any playing field sites that are to be allocated or that come forward for development in the future. A common site-specific argument is that a site should be considered surplus to requirements if it is not meeting any need currently or because there are no localised shortfalls of that particular facility; however, just because it may not be required in its current form does not mean that it could not be required for an alternative playing pitch purpose (e.g. through conversion for another sport) or that demand will not arise in the future.

Future supply and demand

The level of housing growth in Oxford and the associated population growth that comes with it will increase demand for playing field land and playing pitch provision across the City. As such, there is a clear need to identify methods to support new provision and the improvement of existing provision within the Local Plan process. Furthermore, a framework should be developed that can be used to secure the required level of investment and infrastructure delivery, both in regard to improving existing facilities and in relation to providing new facilities. This will then ensure that the growth in usage can be adequately accommodated, which is particularly pertinent given the shortfalls that are already identified. Population increases are only likely to exacerbate this without action being taken.

The PPS will assist in identifying if new facilities are required to support a development and/or whether contributions are needed towards improving existing provision. The PPS, alongside tools such as Sport England’s Playing Pitch Calculator (which offers an approved, formalised and standardised approach that can be used for all housing developments), will also provide a guide in relation to associated costs.

APPENDIX 1: PLAYING PITCH CALCULATOR – A STEP BY STEP GUIDE

The following process should be followed to help inform the potential playing pitch needs that any relevant housing development (or group of developments) may require and/or should look to consider. In accordance with National Planning Policy Guidance, contributions should not be sought from developments of 10 units or less, and which have a maximum combined gross floor space of no more than 1,000 square metres (gross internal area).

Any obligations sought should be based on a tailored approach to each development, considering the population derived from the development. This will then enable a determination to be made as to whether the demand can be met by existing facilities (in which case no action is required), whether contributions will be needed toward enhancing existing provision, or whether new provision is required (either as part of the development or separately). All of this should be carried out using the robust evidence base provided as part of the PPS to help with clearly justifying the needs arising and how they are to be met.

Step 1	Determine the playing pitch requirement resulting from the development
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The Playing Pitch Calculator will be pre-populated with the current population of Oxford and the current demand data from the PPS (2025/2026). To determine the playing pitch needs resulting from a development, all that is required is the input of the new population that will derive from a proposal (utilising a standardised people per dwelling figure i.e. 2.4).

The calculator provides an estimation of the number of new pitches that would be required to meet the match equivalent sessions that will derive from the development. The associated costs for providing these are also identified (although please note that these are indicative costs and appropriate local work should be undertaken to determine the true costs involved).

Step 2	Determine whether new provision is required and whether this should be on site
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For large-scale developments that generate high levels of demand, new pitch provision may be required to meet the population growth. This is particularly the case when the calculator identifies a need for multiple pitches and across multiple sports. It is less likely to be required if demand does not equate to a whole pitch for any sport or format of play, although several similarly sized developments within a locality could alter this.

When on site provision is required, priority should be placed on the creation of multi-pitch and multi-sport sites with appropriate ancillary facilities such as a clubhouse and adequate car parking, as well as ensuring the provision contributes towards reducing current shortfalls. This will ensure that the provision is sustainable and attractive to potential users, with single pitch sites less likely to be accessed and generally being more difficult to maintain in a cost-effective manner.

Other useful questions when deciding on new provision include:

- ◀ Are there any teams/clubs playing outside of the local area (exported demand) which could utilise provision at the site?
- ◀ Do any local clubs identify existing plans/demand for access to new provision that could become priority (or partner) users?
- ◀ Are there any overplayed sites in the local area where existing demand could be transferred to a new site?
- ◀ Do any local clubs identify any latent demand (i.e. if they had access to more pitches they could they field more teams?)

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

To further help determine the sustainability of establishing new provision, consideration should be given to the potential management opportunities which may be available onsite:

- ◀ Is the local authority in a position to take on further outdoor sports facilities from a financial point of view?
- ◀ Is an education establishment to be provided as part of the development which offers a potential management option?
- ◀ Is there a leisure trust in place which has the capacity to take on the management?
- ◀ Is there an opportunity for a trust based model of management, for example, by formation of a Community Interest Company (CIC) or Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)?
- ◀ Is there an existing sports club that has the capacity to take on the management?

Where the calculator does not create demand for a whole pitch, which is often the case for small and mid-sized developments, it is recommended that a contribution is instead sought to increasing the capacity of an existing nearby site to meet the demand that is to be generated from the development. When identifying a site for off-site contributions, the PPS and in particular the PPS Action Plan should be used as a go-to resource as this will identify all sites within Oxford and identify any improvements that are required (in effect, the developer contributions will help to action specific recommendations).

In particular, the proximity and location of existing playing pitch sites should be considered and whether they would help serve the new development. This could be informed by identifying the analysis area in which the development sits and if there are any particularly key sites within the locality. Initially, a one-mile radius could be drawn around the site to help identify the nearest priority sites. This may also require consultation with neighbouring authorities when the development sits close to boundary lines.

The off-site decision should also be based on the potential to improve the existing facilities within an appropriate catchment of a development and the ability for this to create additional capacity, as well as how realistic it is given the nature of the local area. For example, there may be some poor quality playing fields that could potentially be improved with additional drainage and long-term maintenance works, along with enhanced changing provision, to enable use to be increased. This will then create additional capacity to meet the increased demand generated from the development.

Sites that are already of an overall good quality should not be considered, unless there is a particular enhancement that could still take place (e.g., the creation of an artificial surface). Similarly, sites that theoretically require improvements still need to be analysed to ensure that the improvements will be successful and that investment will lead to increased usage.

It may also be the case that contributions will be required from one development to several sites, rather than it being focused on one particular venue. This is particularly because the needs of multiple sports may need to be factored in, and because the best site for one may not be the best site for the others.

Further discussions in relation to site identification should be held with relevant parties (e.g. NGBs, landowners, facility operators and user groups), and any further necessary evidence gathered (e.g. a feasibility study) to help identify the specific works that are required, and to ensure they will provide the necessary additional capacity to meet the needs. It will also be important to demonstrate that the specific works can be delivered within an appropriate timescale in relation to the occupation of the development site.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

For football, there may also be an opportunity, subject to location, to allocate contributions as partnership funding to unlock Football Foundation grant funding. This can then be used to further improve or create new facilities where there is need identified in the PPOSS and where they are LFFP priorities. This would then leverage more investment into sport than simple developer investment into an existing site.

Step 3	Consider design principles for new provision
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Where new provision is required, the exact nature and location of provision associated with developments should be fully determined in partnership with each relevant NGB. Further to this, each pitch sport NGB provides national guidance in relation to the provision of new pitches and associated ancillary facilities.

In addition, consideration within designs should be given to further investment and site development in the future. An example of this is enabling the potential for an artificial pitch to be established, even if one is not proposed currently.

There is also a need to ensure that the location of playing pitches and ancillary facilities are appropriately located in the context of any additional outdoor sports provision and indoor sports provision (if also being provided onsite). This to ensure a cohesive approach to the whole sporting offer.

For all developments community use agreements between providers and users should also be established to ensure that demand can continue to be provided for in the long-term. This is especially the required when facilities will be managed by private or commercial operators and/or educational establishments.

Step 4	Calculate the financial contribution required
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The Playing Pitch Calculator provides indicative costs that should be used as a starting point for the level of investment to be secured from the developer, both for new provision requirements and where off-site contributions are identified. This is based on Sport England's Cost Guidance: <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/cost-guidance/>

Notwithstanding the above, wherever possible, detailed local costs should be used, taking into account local nuances and any site-specific context. A clear and transparent methodology for calculating up to date costs for the required works, including appropriate ancillary provision, should therefore be presented. If an obligation will be directed to an off-site project, it should be ensured that the outlined costs cover the needs of the required works and that it will achieve the required capacity uplift.

For the development of new provision, depending on how the needs are to be met, the cost of any required land purchase should also be included in the financial contribution. This aspect does not form part of the Playing Pitch Calculator.

Along with any capital costs for the works, the Playing Pitch Calculator also includes an annual lifecycle cost towards the new or enhanced provision that should be provided. This is required to cover the day to day maintenance for an agreed long-term period (Sport England recommends that this should cover a minimum of 15 years) and to help ensure a sinking fund exists for any major replacement work e.g. the future resurfacing of an artificial pitch.

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY – LOCAL PLAN INTERIM REPORT

APPENDIX 2: SITE BY SITE EMERGING HOUSING ALLOCATIONS

Infrastructure Area	Site allocations included (excluding sites that do not have a minimum requirement)	Total housing net gain (based on minimum requirements across allocations)
North	Diamond Place and Ewert House (135) Elsfield Hall (27) Oxford North remaining Phases (161) Oxford University Press Sports Ground (90) Pear Tree Farm (111)	+ 524 dwellings
South	474 Cowley Road (14) Bertie Place Recreation Ground (25) Cowley Marsh Depot (83) Crescent Hall (75) Former Iffley Mead Playing Field (84) Kassam Stadium (290) Overflow Car Park at Kassam Stadium (100) Redbridge Paddock (200) Sandy Lane Recreation Ground (300) Templars Square (500)	+ 1,671 dwellings
East	East Oxford Bowls Club (10) Government Buildings & Harcourt House (68) Jesus College Sports Area (40) Land Surrounding St Clement's Church (50) Lincoln College Sports Ground (24) Marston Paddock Extension (20) Oxford Brookes Marston Road Campus (42) Rectory Centre (21) Ruskin Campus (30) Ruskin Field (28) Thornhill Park - Phase 2 (170) Union Street Car Park (15)	+ 518 dwellings
Central & West	Banbury Road University Sites Parcel B (54) Botley Road Sites around Cripsey Road including River Hotel & Westgate Hotel (20) Faculty of Music (23) Jowett Walk South (14) Manor Place (43) Nuffield Sites (Island Site/ Worcester St Car Park & Pub/ Land South of Frideswide Square) (59) Osney Mead (247) Oxford Railway Station & Becket Street Car Park (52) Oxpens (450) St Thomas School & Osney Warehouse (10) West Wellington Square (13)	+ 985 dwellings