

Housing, Health and Communities Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	28 October 2025
Report Title	Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) update
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Jay Jenkins, Leisure & Technical Services Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To agree to the adoption of the Swale Playing Pitch Strategy 2025–2040 Stage C Assessment Report and Stage D Report and Action Plan. 2. To agree existing Officer resource be prioritised for the delivery and ongoing monitoring of the Strategy.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council has developed a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) for 2025 – 2040 which analyses Swale’s sports pitches in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility. It considers pitches that are available for public use provided by the Council and other organisations. The PPS sets out the Council’s intended approach and priorities for ensuring there is sufficient provision to meet current and future demand.
- 1.2 This report provides the current position regarding the PPS and seeks the Council adoption of Stages C and D.
- 1.3 Work on the PPS has been undertaken by independent consultants (Strategic Leisure) and uses the research, consultation, site assessments, data analysis and mapping that underpins the study to set direction and determine priorities for future provision.
- 1.4 The PPS follows Sport England guidance and is supported by National Governing Bodies of Sport. This helps to provide robust evidence for supporting the Swale Local Plan process. Members have been updated throughout the process and Community and Leisure Committee previously signed off Stage B of the process and an update was provided to Housing, Health and Communities Committee in July 2025.
- 1.5 The document recognises the balance needed between setting priorities

for action and the pressure on budgets in the public sector. It therefore identifies the need for a partnership approach with Sport England, National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), schools, local clubs, and private facility operators, to enable delivery of the action plan as resources allow.

- 1.6 The findings are based on a technical assessment which pulled together the latest baseline data that the recommendations are informed by. This included physical visits to sites, consultation with site owners and consultation with users.

2 Background

- 2.1 The existing Swale PPS expired in 2023. The new strategy will cover the period in line with the Local Plan, 2024 – 2040. Previous PPS reports have been reviewed by this Committee on 31 October 2023, 9 January 2024, 6 March 2024 and 3 July 2025.
- 2.2 The primary purpose of producing the PPS is to provide the Council with a strategy to fulfil effectively the Sport England objectives relating to promoting, protecting, enhancing and providing sports facilities as appropriate and as set out in Sport England's Planning for Sport Guidance. It will achieve this by:
- Accurately auditing the supply of pitches and ancillary facilities, and the demand for pitches, within Swale (from which deficiencies and surpluses in provision can be measured).
 - Assessing whether the current supply (in terms of the quantity, quality, and accessibility of the provision) in Swale is adequate to meet both current and future demand.
 - Developing a clear, succinct and deliverable strategy, in the form of a set of recommendations and an Action Plan which addresses deficiencies and surpluses in provision.
- 2.3 The strategy forms part of the robust evidence base for the new Swale Local Plan ensuring that facilities can be improved or developed to cater for new communities and existing residents. It will also support the work of the Property and Leisure Teams in relation to a strategic approach to the Council's own assets.
- 2.4 Scope of the study includes:
- Football (including 3G pitches)
 - Rugby Union
 - Cricket
 - Hockey (sand/water-based pitches)
 - Bowls
 - Netball
 - Tennis

- Athletics
- 2.5 The PPS has been developed through several stages in accordance with Sport England's PPS Guidance:
- Stage A – Prepare & Tailor the Approach
 - Stage B – Gather Supply and Demand Information
 - Stage C – Assess Supply and Demand Information and Views
 - Stage D – Develop the Strategy
 - Stage E – Deliver the Strategy
- 2.6 Since the last update to Committee, consultation meetings with relevant governing bodies and Sport England have been undertaken with a steady flow of data between the consultants and the various NGB's.
- 2.7 Subsequently all the NGBs and Sport England have signed off Stage C and D. Recommendations have been summarised in Appendix I and Strategy Stage C (the assessment) and D (the actual strategy and action plan) are enclosed as Appendix II and Appendix III respectively.
- 2.8 Once adopted by the Council, work on Stage E, the delivery and on-going monitoring of the strategy, can begin.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To agree to the adoption of the Swale Playing Pitch Strategy 2025–2040 Stage C Assessment Report and Stage D Report and Action Plan.
- 3.2 To agree existing Officer resource be prioritised for the delivery and ongoing monitoring of the Strategy.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Failure to adopt a PPS is not a feasible option given the requirements of Sport England and the value that this robust assessment will give to the developing Local Plan and improvement of facilities to the community.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with facility providers, clubs, schools, appropriate NGBs, Sport England, Town and Parish Councils, Kent County Council Sports Service, countywide partners, health organisations and local leagues.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Community: To enable our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time safely in our borough and to support community resilience
Financial, Resource and Property	The PPS will ensure that the Council and its partners are providing cost-effective services and are making best use of the appropriate resources and property. By adopting a robust PPS, the Council will stand a better chance of being successful with external grants and developer contributions to assist in delivery of the action plan. At this stage, no additional costs to the Council have been identified. However, there may be requests for contributory funding for individual projects as they are developed, and which will go through the usual budget request process. The lead and drive to deliver and monitor the Strategy and Action Plan will inevitably take officer time but will form a priority for existing resources.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The PPS will underpin key sections of the Local Plan relating to Open Space. This is a required element of the Local Plan process, providing a robust evidence base for decisions. It will therefore assist in the Planning Inspectorate process. By providing a robust strategy that is endorsed by Sport England, the Council will be better placed to defend any challenges which may be presented by developers.
Crime and Disorder	The provision and good management of a broad range of playing pitches and facilities can make a positive contribution to managing issues of crime and disorder by providing diversionary activities and encouraging community cohesion.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Where possible, developments and maintenance regimes which are “environmentally friendly” will be considered and adopted.
Health and Wellbeing	By providing and supporting a broad range of quality facilities across Swale, there will be greater opportunities for people to participate in healthy activities.
Safeguarding of Children, Young	None identified

People and Vulnerable Adults	
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Without a strategy that is endorsed by Sport England, Swale will be at risk of not having the Local Plan agreed, missing funding opportunities, losing challenges to planning applications by developers and not providing high quality facilities for its residents. By maintaining its own pitches and facilities to agreed standards, the Council will ensure their facilities are safe and fit for purpose.
Equality and Diversity	Issues of equal opportunity will be addressed through applications for any changes to existing or new developments, ensuring that such facilities are compliant and fit for purpose.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified.

7 Appendices

Appendix I – Swale Borough Council Stage C & D Recommendations Summary.

Appendix II – Swale Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy Stage C Assessment Report 2025-2040.

Appendix III – Swale Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy Stage D Report and Action Plan 2025-2040.

8 Background Papers [\(links required\)](#)

- [Housing, Health and Communities Committee Minutes 3 July 2025](#)
- [Community Committee Minutes 6 March 2024](#)
- [Community Committee Minutes 9 Jan 2024](#)
- [Community Committee Minutes 31 October 2023](#)