

# **Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy**

## **Annual Monitoring Report July 2023 – July 2025**

**November 2025**

## Contents

### 1. Introduction

**Sport-specific issues and recommendations**

### 2. Football

### 3. 3G Artificial Grass Pitches

### 4. Cricket

### 5. Rugby Union

(There are no Rugby League facilities in Sefton, nor current plans or proposals relating to Rugby League)

### 6. Hockey

### 7. Tennis

### 8. Bowls

### 9. **Other issues**

Disused sites

Housing scenarios

**Strategic issues**

### 10. Progress on strategic recommendations

**Overview**

11. Results, conclusions and next steps. The Conclusions also act as an Executive Summary.

## Key references:

- **December 2024 National Planning Policy Framework** – see [National Planning Policy Framework](#)
- **2013 Sport England Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance** [pps-guidance-october-2013-updated.pdf](#)
- **2023 Sefton Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy** – see [sefton\\_pposs\\_strategyactionplan\\_adopted\\_7-23.pdf](#)
- **2024 Local Football Facility Plan** – see [Sefton Local Football Facility Plan \(footballfoundation.org.uk\)](#)

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Sefton Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy (PPOSS)<sup>1</sup> was prepared by a Steering Group led by Sefton Council which also included Sport England and sports' National Governing Bodies, in line with Sport England guidance. Sefton Council adopted the PPOSS in July 2023. It deals with football (by far the most popular sport), third generation Artificial Grass pitches (3G pitches), cricket, rugby union, hockey, tennis and bowls.

1.2 Part 8 of the PPOSS refers to delivery (implementation), monitoring and updating. It suggests that ideally, the PPOSS should be reviewed on an annual basis by the Steering Group, and that these annual reviews should highlight:

- How delivery of the recommendations and action plan has progressed and any changes required to the priority afforded to each action (e.g. the priority of some may increase or reduce following the delivery of others)
- How the PPOSS has been applied and the lessons learnt
- Any changes to particularly important sites and/or clubs in the area (e.g. the most used or high-quality sites for a particular sport) and other supply and demand information, what this may mean for the overall assessment work and the key findings and issues
- Any development of a specific sport or particular format of a sport
- Any new or emerging issues and opportunities.

1.3 The Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy itself and Sport England guidance makes clear that such annual reviews will help to keep the Playing Pitch Strategy live and up to date. While there will come a point where the Steering Group will conclude that there have been significant changes to a sport or settlement area, it is considered that for Sefton this lies in the future.

1.4 This document is a Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy Annual Monitoring Report (PPOSS AMR). It has been prepared by the Steering Group, in line with part 8 of the PPOSS, based on a template supplied by Sport England. Sefton Council has led the process, which has included consultation and individual meetings with, and updates including annual returns from Steering Group members, notably the sports' National Governing Bodies, Sport England and the Council's Green Sefton and Communities officers who manage Sefton facilities. This included Steering Group meetings which took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025 and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

1.5 The baseline data in this Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy Annual Monitoring Report (PPOSS AMR) is taken from the 2023 Sefton Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy, the excel spreadsheet behind it and where relevant the Stage B and C Assessment Reports<sup>2</sup>. For the most part, this data is based on the supply and demand of the 2021 summer sports season and 2021/2022 winter sports season<sup>3</sup>. All seasons were and are still, expected to be played without an impact from the pandemic. Information newly presented in this review refers to 2025 (the 2024/25 winter) season for football and the 2023/24 winter season for other relevant sports, the summer season 2024 for tennis and 2025 for bowls. The Review uses information supplied by

---

<sup>1</sup> The 2023 Sefton Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy was adopted on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023. See [https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/7260/sefton\\_pposs\\_strategyactionplan\\_adopted\\_7-23.pdf](https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/7260/sefton_pposs_strategyactionplan_adopted_7-23.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> In cases where there are minor discrepancies between the tables in the PPOSS document, the Stage B & C Report and the excel spreadsheet (unpublished), for the most part the data in the written reports has been used.

<sup>3</sup> As set out in the Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy Stage B&C Report (unpublished).

National Governing Bodies, supplemented for football and 3G by the 2024 update of the Local Football Facility Plan.

- 1.6 This PPOSS AMR sets out a separate update for each sport which looks at:
- Notable changes in demand and supply, focussing on team or membership data, number and quality of pitches, courts and greens.
  - Any significant changes in the quality of ancillary facilities
  - A supply/demand overview
  - Any other key site-specific updates
  - A RAG (Red- Amber-Green) assessment and update of progress on implementing Sport-specific recommendations.

It also provides a RAG (Red- Amber-Green) assessment and update of progress on implementing the strategic recommendations of the PPOSS. The PPOSS AMR also includes an update on disused sites and the housing scenario/ population change situation.

1.7 This PPOSS AMR includes the following sections, each of which can be accessed separately by clicking on the links below:

- [Introduction](#)

**Sport-specific issues and recommendations:**

- [Football](#)
- [3G Artificial Grass Pitches](#)
- [Cricket](#)
- [Rugby Union](#) (there are no Rugby League facilities in Sefton, nor current plans or proposals relating to Rugby League)
- [Hockey](#)
- [Tennis](#)
- [Bowls](#)

**Other issues:**

- [Disused sites](#)
- [Housing scenarios](#)

**Strategic issues:**

- [Progress on strategic recommendations](#)

**Overview:**

- [Conclusions and next steps](#). The Conclusions also act as an [Executive Summary](#).

## Sport-specific issues and recommendations

### 2. Football (grass pitches)

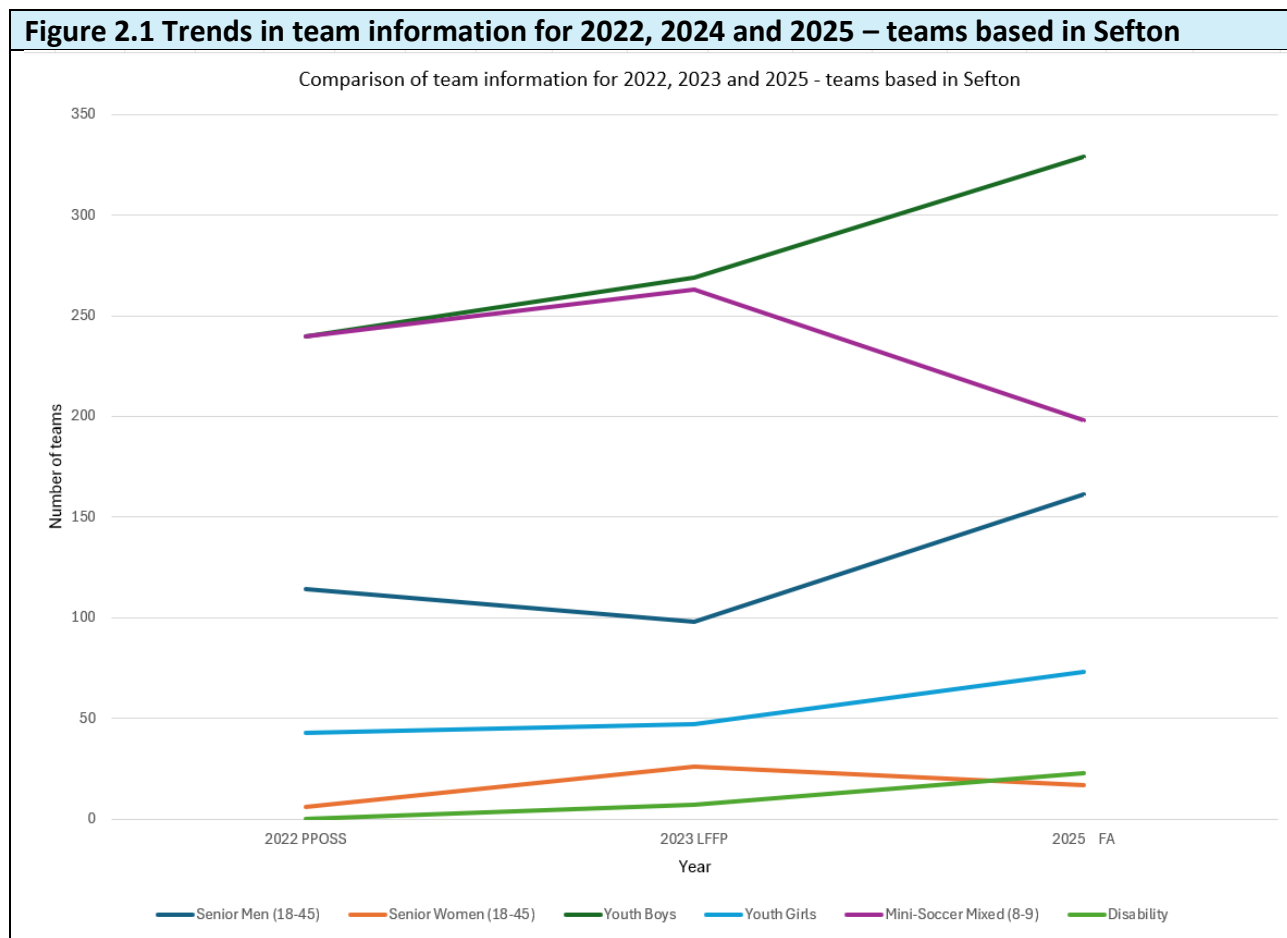
#### Football Demand Overview

2.1 Football information in the 2023 Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy is for 2022 (2021/22 season). Further information for 2023 (2022/23 season) is set out in the Local Football Facility Plan<sup>4</sup> which was updated February 2024. The Football Association (Liverpool County FA and Lancashire FA) and in some cases the Football Foundation, have provided information for 2025 (2024/25 season). This is the basis for the tables, figures and analysis in this section.

2.2 Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1 compare the overall number of teams in Sefton over time, by age group and sex, using 2025 data for clubs based in Sefton (Sefton home ground). This indicates overall growth in the number of teams between 2022 and 2025 in all age and male/female categories. A main exception is mini-soccer which is played in mixed teams, where there were 240 teams based in Sefton in 2022, rising to 260 in 2023 but falling to 198 in 2025. The overall number of teams based in Sefton has increased from 643 in 2022 to 701 in 2023 and 801 in 2025, with the most notable increases being in Senior Women’s teams (from 6 to 17 teams; though the 2025 total is less than the 2023 high of 26 teams) and disability teams (from 7 in 2023 to 23 in 2025). While was a decline in the number of Senior Men’s teams between 2022 (114 teams) and 2023 (98 teams), by 2025 the number of teams had increased again (161 teams).

Age Group	2022 (PPOSS)	2022 (PPOSS)	2023 (LFFP)	2025 (FA)	2025 (FA)
Senior Men (18-45)	114	114	98	161	161
Senior Women (18-45)	6	6	26	17	17
Youth Boys (12-17)	147	240	260	213	329
Youth Boys (10-11)	93			116	
Youth Girls (12-17)	21	43	47	46	73
Youth Girls (10-11)	22			27	
Mini-Soccer Mixed (8-9)	135	240	263	130	198
Mini-Soccer Mixed (6-7)	105			68	
Disability	n/k	n/k	7	23	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>801</b>

<sup>4</sup> See [Sefton Local Football Facility Plan \(footballfoundation.org.uk\)](https://footballfoundation.org.uk)



2.3 Table 2.2 below provides an overview of the number of football teams by age and sex, and hence changes in football demand between 2022 (2021/22 seasons, data from PPOSS) and 2025 (2024/25 season). This is based on team numbers in different age groups and for male and female teams in each of Sefton’s five settlement areas. The 2025 data in Table 2.2 is for clubs based in Sefton (Sefton home ground), bringing together data from Liverpool County FA and Lancashire FA.

**Table 2.2 Demand – number of teams by age group (2025 data is for Sefton- based clubs)**

Age Group	Settlement Area										Sefton as a whole	
	Bootle		Crosby		Formby		Sefton East		Southport		2022 PPOSS	2025 FA
	2022 PPOSS	2025 FA	2022 PPOSS	2025 FA	2022 PPOSS	2025 FA	2022 PPOSS	2025 FA	2022 PPOSS	2025 FA		
Senior Men (18-45)	43	96	16	19	13	8	16	15	26	23	114	161
Senior Women (18-45)	2	3	2	7	1	3	0	3	1	1	6	17
Youth Boys (12-17)	45	64	40	52	27	34	8	29	27	34	147	213
Youth Girls (12-17)	16	10	1	13	1	4	3	9	0	10	21	46
Youth Boys (10-11)	33	32	24	29	21	15	1	15	14	25	93	116
Youth Girls (10-11)	9	4	7	9	6	3	0	7	0	4	22	27

<b>Table 2.2 Demand – number of teams by age group (2025 data is for Sefton- based clubs)</b>												
Age	Bootle		Crosby		Formby		Sefton East		Southport		Sefton as a whole	
	2022 PPOSS	2025 FA	2022 PPOSS	2025 FA	2022 PPOSS	2025 FA	2022 PPOSS	2025 FA	2022 PPOSS	2025 FA	2022 PPOSS	2025 FA
Mini-Soccer Mixed (8-9)	36	28	31	42	50	17	1	20	17	23	135	130
Mini-Soccer Mixed (6-7)	30	11	43	23	13	6	4	9	15	19	105	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>778</b>

2.4 Liverpool Country FA have also provided information about the number of teams playing in Sefton in 2025 on matchdays, some of whom are not from Sefton-based clubs; comparable information from the 13 clubs with teams in Lancashire FA’s area is not available. However, the information, which is set out in Figure 2.3 below, indicates that teams that Sefton Senior leagues draw in teams from outside the Borough to a greater extent than teams leave Sefton for matches, at least for Senior Men’s and Women’s leagues and girls leagues. The Football Foundation have noted that Sefton is a complex area because there is so much import and export (of teams) to and from Liverpool and Knowsley for match play. Some of these teams playing out of the Borough could ideally train midweek in Sefton, and vice versa; on a 3G or grass pitch.

2.5 For example, in 2025 there were 17 Senior Women’s teams based in Sefton but 38 teams playing on matchdays (that is, in Sefton-based leagues). There were 46 Youth Girls (ages 12-17) teams based in Sefton, and 46 matches played in Sefton League venues. This situation is less clear cut for youth teams and mini-soccer, where the number of teams based in Sefton appears greater than the number of matches played in Sefton league venues. For example, Table 2.3 shows 213 Youth Boys (ages 12-17) based in Sefton, but 218 teams playing on match days

<b>Table 2.3 2025 comparison of teams in Sefton-based clubs and teams playing in latches in Sefton league venues</b>		
<b>Age Group and Male/ Female / Mixed split</b>	<b>Sefton-based clubs (2025) (data from Liverpool County &amp; Lancashire FA)</b>	<b>Matches played in Sefton league venues (2025) (data from Liverpool County FA)</b>
Senior Men (18-45)	161	178
Senior Women (18-45)	17	38
Youth Boys (12-17)	213	218
Youth Girls (12-17)	46	46
Youth Boys (10-11)	116	97
Youth Girls (10-11)	27	23
Mini-Soccer Mixed (8-9)	130	106
Mini-Soccer Mixed (6-7)	68	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>747</b>

2.6 The Local Football Facility Plan also indicates that in 2023, the total number of 112 female teams (including 39 dedicated mini girls’ teams) in Sefton is higher than local areas of a similar size. For 2025 (2024/25 season), the Football Foundation indicated that there were 80 female teams in Sefton-based clubs and 59 dedicated mini girls’ teams. It is understood that in the

2023/24 season Sefton had one of the largest girls’ leagues in the county – with at least 80 teams. For 2025 (2024/25 season) there were 69 teams in the girls’ league and 73 girls’ youth teams (Football Foundation and Table 2.1 data).

2.7 The increase in number of Girls’ and Women’s teams also reflects County FA and club priorities and opportunities. The local girls league is the Hightown Girls League and matches are played on a central venue basis. The local adult female league is the LCFA Women's League and matches are played on a home and away across Merseyside. Both are likely to continue to increase. Liverpool FA also runs the She Inspires Football League based at LCFA Sefton Sports Ground, providing a small sided 5v5 or 6v6 offer with 24 teams playing regularly (according to the Local Football Facility Plan).

2.8 The 2024 Local Football Facility Plan indicated that in Sefton there are seven football teams and four football sessions (presumably, each week) specifically for people with a disability. The Football Association indicated that in 2025 there are 23 such teams. This indicates considerable success for Liverpool County FA’s priority of increasing such provision.

2.9 While the overall number of teams has increased in Sefton between 2022 and 2025, analysis by settlement area as shown in Table 2.4 below shows a more varied picture. While there has been broadly steady growth in the number of teams in Bootle & Netherton, Crosby and Southport, there is a greater rate of increase in Sefton East. Table 2.2 shows this this is driven by all increased numbers of all youth and mini-soccer teams. However, there is a substantive drop in the overall number of football teams in Formby. Table 2.2 shows that the number of Senior Men’s teams in Formby reduced from 13 to 8 between 2022 and 2025. While number of Youth Boys (aged 12-17) and Youth Girls (aged 12-17) teams increased, there was a reduction in number or Youth Boys (aged 10-11) and Youth Girls (aged 10-11) teams and mini-soccer teams. (Table 2.5 below indicates that the number of Council-managed pitches available in Formby has remained almost stable).

<b>Table 2.4 Demand – number of teams by settlement area (2025 data is for Sefton- based clubs)</b>		
<b>Settlement Area</b>	<b>Number of teams (all ages/ sex)</b>	
	<b>2022 PPOSS</b>	<b>2025 FA</b>
Bootle & Netherton	214	248
Crosby	164	194
Formby	132	90
Sefton East	33	107
Southport	100	139
<b>Sefton as a whole</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>778</b>

### Football Supply Overview

2.10 The overall site supply situation has not changed significantly, although pitch supply and the configuration of pitches on each site may change annually (the balance between different pitch size/ age groups) and there is a need for ‘site rotation’ for Council sites in some leagues.

**Table 2.5 Comparison of pitch configuration on Council sites, between the PPOSS (2021/23 season), 2023/24 season and 2024/25 season**  
 2023/24 and 2024/25 information from Green Sefton (Oct 2024)

Site	11 v11 adult			11 v11 inter			9v9 youth			7v7 youth			5v5 mini		
	PPOSS	23-24	24-25	PPOSS	23-24	24-25	PPOSS	23-24	24-25	PPOSS	23-24	24-25	PPOSS	23-24	24-25
Ferryside/Bank End	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Preston New Rd	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Crossens Park	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Devonshire Rd / Tarleton Rd	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russell Rd Rec	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Meols Park	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	3	0	0	1	1	0	0
Portland St Playing Fields	3	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bedford Park	n/a	0	1	n/a	0	0	n/a	0	1	n/a	0	1	n/a	0	1
Carr Lane Rec	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sandbrook Rd Playing Fields	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Waterloo Rd Rec	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Southport Sub-total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Deansgate Lane	0	0	0	3	3	3	2	2	2	7	7	7	1	1	1
Smithy Green Rec	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KGV Field / Watchyard Lane	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Duke St Park	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Formby Sub-total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Buckley Hill Playing Fields	1	4	4	7	7	7	3	4	5	4	0	0	1	0	0
Litherland Sports Park	4	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	7	6	0	0	0
Netherton Activity Centre	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	6	0	6
Stuart Road Playing Fields	3	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Crosby, Bootle &amp; Netherton sub-total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Sefton-wide total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>

PPOSS says Netherton Activity Centre has 1 adult & 6 5v5 pitches + 3G pitches which are both 'of varying size' and 'full size sports lit' (assumed latter is in error)  
 For 2023-24 can assume quality unchanged, For 2024-25 assume quality not yet changed but Pitch Power reports & inspections will be carried out soon

2.11 Maghull FC received planning permission<sup>5</sup> in October 2023 for two entirely new, covered stands (for seating and standing respectively), new covered dugouts, 6 sports-lighting columns and associated works including ground boundary fencing and entry turnstiles, at a pitch on the playing fields at Tommy Gent Way, off Hall Lane, Maghull, in Sefton East. This was to allow provide the necessary facilities to allow Maghull Football Club to play in a higher league.

2.12 Community use of school sites does not seem to have increased significantly between 2021 and 2025. However, it should be noted that for Christ the King High School, Southport, the 2023 PPOSS states the site has *“Two poor quality adult [football] pitches that are open to community use and are un-used”*, whereas 2025 data from Lancashire FA shows that at least one of these pitches in used by Southport FC Under 18 Academy team.

2.13 With the high number of girls’ and women’s teams, there is still a need for pitches for these teams. Notably, there is a need for sites with a decent standard of ancillary facilities, notably toilets, appropriate for female teams.

2.14 2025 information from the Football Association shows that states that Sefton's largest (mainly male) local leagues (2024/25 season) include:

- Craven Minor League – 162 teams (home and away) (216 in 2023, according to LFFP)
- Hightown Junior League - 254 teams (central venue at multiple grass pitch sites, in ludes female provision from U7 to U13 age groups) (225 in 2023, according to LFFP)
- Bootle & Netherton Junior League - 89 teams (central venue at multiple grass pitch sites) ( 121 in 2023, according to LFFP)
- Sefton Junior Football League was established in 2022-23, and now caters for 17 Mini Soccer teams. The League continues to grow each season (U7-U8) (central venue at Goals Liverpool North and will access any future 3G pitch at St John Bosco High School, Netherton (see the [next section](#))
- Southport & District League – Male Adult 11v11 League (home and away basis), 21 teams
- She Inspires League – Female Adult 5v5 / 6v6 league, central venue at LCFA Sefton, 45 Teams

2.15 As indicated in Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, there is significant cross boundary migration in Sefton due to teams migrating both inwards (from Liverpool, Knowsley and West Lancashire) and outwards (to 3G pitch hub sites in Liverpool) to play or train at league central venues.

2.16 Hightown Junior League have stated their need for more pitches, to reflect demand. However, increasing numbers of teams come from outside the borough, so the success of the League means that Sefton is being called upon to meeting need from other outside the Borough. Nevertheless, Hightown Junior League and Sefton Council have been working together to identify additional sites for the 2024/25 season. There is some potential mismatch between sites which Hightown Junior League would like to use and what is available (in Council ownership). For example, Hightown Junior League would like more pitches on Carr Lane Recreation Ground (Southport), but site capacity/drainage, parking and potential overuse issues mean that this is unlikely to be feasible in the short-term. The level of past overplay on pitches on Carr Lane may affect the capacity of the site through the current season. Meols Park (Southport) and Stuart Road

---

<sup>5</sup> See DC/2023/1007, granted permission with conditions 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

Playing Fields (Bootle) could be available but it is understood that Hightown Junior League are not keen to use these sites. Future use of Brookvale Playing Fields by Hightown Junior League would need to be negotiated with Crosby Stuart Football Club, who manage the site. Sandbrook Road are part of a Home Advantage Programme with the League.

### Pitch Quality Overview

2.17 The Football Foundation’s PitchPower application<sup>6</sup> allows clubs and site managers to easily assess pitch quality, and helps to justify grants for improved pitch maintenance and quality. These PitchPower assessments plus other Football Foundation grant information provide a range of information about changes to pitch quality in Sefton since the pitch quality assessments carried out in 2021 and shown in the 2023 PPOSS.

2.18 Both the 2023 PPOS and 2024 Local Football Facility Plan identified priorities sites for pitch improvements. A comparison of these sites and Football Foundation information about recent EGPM/ GPMF funding is shown in Table 2.6 below. 15 of the priority sites identified in the Local Football Facility Plan have been assessed via PitchPower and are known to have 25 good or better (high or advanced) quality pitches, 4 basic quality and 23 poor quality pitches. The Plan indicates that the priority going forward is to concentrate on Local Authority owned sites that require improvements, and agree sustainable solutions for pitch maintenance.

<b>Table 2.6 Comparison of priority sites for grass pitch improvements and recent grant funding</b>		
<b>2023 PPOSS priority sites for grass pitch improvements</b>	<b>2024 LFFP priority sites for grass pitch improvements</b>	<b>2025 FF information Pitch (GPMF) or Machinery &amp; Equipment (EGPM) grants</b>
<b>Bootle &amp; Netherton</b>		
		Hugh Baird (South Sefton) College, Sterrix Lane (Litherland Athletic JFC) GPMF
Litherland Sports Park	Litherland Sports Park	
		LCFA, Drummond Road, Crosby GPMF
Netherton Activity Centre	Netherton Activity Centre	
Orrell Mount Park	Orrell Mount Park	
Stuart Road Playing Fields	Stuart Road Playing Fields	
Brookvale Playing Fields	Brookvale Playing Fields	
<b>Crosby</b>		
Buckley Hill Playing Fields	Buckley Hill Playing Fields	
		Liverpool Ramblers FC, Moor Lane, Crosby GPMF
		Sandy Lane Playing Fields, Highton (Hightown JFL) GPMF
The Hightown Club	The Hightown Club	
The Northern Club	The Northern Club	
<b>Formby</b>		
Deansgate Park	Deansgate Park	
-	Duke Street Park	

<sup>6</sup> See [Football Foundation | PitchPower](#)

<b>Table 2.6 Comparison of priority sites for grass pitch improvements and recent grant funding</b>		
<b>2023 PPOSS priority sites for grass pitch improvements</b>	<b>2024 LFFP priority sites for grass pitch improvements</b>	<b>2025 FF information Pitch (GPMF) or Machinery &amp; Equipment (EGPM) grants</b>
Smithy Green Rec Ground	Smithy Green Rec Ground	
-	Clarence Sports Field (Greenloons Formby JFC)	
<b>Sefton East</b>		
		Aintree Villa FC (Aintree Golf Centre, Melling Road) GPMF
-	Pimbley Playing Fields, Maghull	
Sandy Lane PF, Lydiate	<i>[already improved?]</i>	Sandy Lane PF, Lydiate (Lydiate Parish Council) GPMF
<b>Southport</b>		
		Ainsdale Sports Club (Southport & Ainsdale Amateurs), Liverpool Road EGPM
Carr Lane Recreation Ground	-	
Ferryside Lane Rec Ground	Ferryside Lane Rec Ground	Ferryside Lane Rec Ground GPMF
		Fleetwood Hesketh Sports Club GPMF
Meols Cop High School	-	
Meols Park	Meols Park	Meols Park GPMF
Portland Street Playing Fields	-	
-	Preston New Road Rec Ground	
Rookery Sports Ground	Rookery Sports Ground	Rookery Sports Ground (Southport Trinity FC) GPMF
Sandbrook Rd Playing Fields	Sandbrook Rd Playing Fields	
Southport and Birkdale Sports Club	Southport and Birkdale Sports Club	Southport and Birkdale Sports Club (Southport and Birkdale United) EGPM.

2.19 Sefton Council has undertaken to carry out PitchPower baseline quality assessments across its football pitch portfolio. Fifteen Council managed sites have been assessed (to the relevant date) by the local authority via PitchPower and are known to have 20 good or better (high or advanced) quality pitches, 19 basic quality and 42 poor quality pitches. On some of these sites, such as Buckley Hill Playing Fields, Netherton, and Deansgate Lane Playing Fields, Formby, these assessments have shown some pitch quality improvements as well as some declines in pitch quality since the PPOSS assessments. On Meols Cop Recreation Ground, Southport, a number of pitches moved from standard to good quality between the PPOSS and most recent PitchPower assessment.

2.20 Improvements to the quality of Sefton’s grass football pitches in recent years, funded by the Football Foundation’s Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund (GPMF) or Machinery & Equipment grants are set out in Table 2.7 below. These include a number of club sites, sites managed by Sefton Council, Lydiate Parish Council and Hightown Junior Football League. This should result in pitch quality improving even further over the next couple of seasons.

<b>Table 2.7 Clubs/leagues receiving Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund (GPMF) recently</b>				
<b>Clubs/leagues receiving GPMF</b>	<b>Site name</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Total GPMF Grant</b>	<b>Grant Spent (rounded to nearest '000)</b>
<b>Bootle</b>				
Litherland Athletic	South Sefton College	2024	<b>£23,040</b>	£6,000
<b>Crosby</b>				
Hightown Junior League	Sandy Lane Playing Fields	2021	<b>£17,784</b>	£14,000
LCFA Sefton	Drummond Road	2020	<b>£45,376</b>	£19,000
Liverpool Ramblers	The Ramblers	2023	<b>£25,600</b>	£13,000
<b>Formby - none</b>				
<b>Sefton East</b>				
Aintree Villa	Aintree Golf Centre	2022	<b>£3,840</b>	£2,000
Lydiate Parish Council	Sandy Lane Playing Fields	2023	<b>£13,866</b>	£0
Maghull	Maghull Cricket Club	2020	<b>£10,442</b>	£9,000
Northfield	Kingsfield Road	2020	<b>£29,040</b>	£6,000
<b>Southport</b>				
Fleetwood Hesketh Sports Club	Fleetwood Hesketh Sports & Social Club	2021	<b>£6,050</b>	£5,000
Southport Athletic	Ferryside Lane	2024	<b>£53,760</b>	£14,000

2.21 Southport Athletic have been successful in accessing £53,760 funding for pitch maintenance improvements over a 6-year period at Ferryside Lane, Southport. Crosby Stuart FC now manage Brookvale Playing Fields. Silcox FC are hoping to finalise self-management at Orrell Mount Park, Bootle. Both clubs have recently undertaken PitchPower assessments and they hope to access new pitch maintenance funding shortly. Hightown Junior League are due to take over management of Sandbrook Road Recreation Ground, Southport. This has allowed them to draw down Home Ground and other maintenance and other funding for grass pitch improvements at Sandbrook Road Recreation Ground. As above, Maghull Football Club have benefitted from ground improvements to allow them to play in a higher league.

### **Ancillary Facility Quality Overview**

2.22 There have few changes to the quality of ancillary facilities. The main Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy document does not provide a comprehensive list of football pitches with either ancillary facilities or their quality, although the PPOSS Stage B&C report lists 31 football sites with 32 dedicated changing rooms and facilities. 13 of these are good quality. 7 are standard quality. The remaining 12 are poor quality. The site-specific proposals in the 2023 Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy recommend the improvement of ancillary facilities for 9 of the sites with 12 poor quality facilities, as follows:

- Duke Street Park and Smithy Green Recreation Ground (Formby)
- Harrow Drive Playing Fields, Aintree (Sefton East)
- Ferryside Lane Playing Fields, Crossens Recreation Ground, Devonshire Road Recreation Ground, Meols Park, Rookery Sports Club (see below) and Russell Road Recreation Ground (Southport)
- Deansgate Playing Fields, Formby.

2.23 Also, there is a site-specific recommendation for a new (replacement) clubhouse for additional poor quality ancillary facilities, for Crosby Stuart FC, at Brook Vale Playing Fields, Bootle & Netherton (on the edge of Crosby). The club are understood to be investigating provision of a new (preplacement pavilion) at Brook Vale Playing Fields. This would be subject to club and any available external grant funding but not to funding from s106 monies.

2.24 The 2024 Local Football Facility Plan looks at ancillary facilities in the context of site options for the possible development of new 3G pitches. Only one of these sites/recommendations has reached the planning application stage. Planning permission for a new (replacement) sports pavilion which included four changing rooms, spectator facilities and lounge facilities for Rookery Sports Club was granted in April 2024<sup>7</sup>. It is understood that this was funded by the Club; no 's106 monies' were used. This application is referred to in the 2023 Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy.

2.25 Planning permission was granted in May 2025 for 89 dwellings, supported living accommodation and also a new sport pavilion for the retained pitches at West Lane, Formby<sup>8</sup>. PPOSS site specific recommendations make no mention of ancillary facilities. The same is true of the Merchant Taylors School Playing Fields, Spinney Crescent, Crosby. Here, planning permission for a new (replacement) sports/changing pavilion at Merchant Taylors School Playing Fields, Spinney Crescent, Crosby, was granted in June 2022<sup>9</sup>. While the school uses the site for a range of sports including football, cricket and rugby, the only community use is for rugby and so this is discussed in more detail in section 4 below.

## Supply/Demand Balance

2.26 Table 2.8 below shows an updated supply /demand assessment balance, and compares this to the 2021 season supply/demand balance set out in the 2023 PPOSS. The 2025 assessments are based on information supplied by the Football Foundation and Football Association. Firstly the changes in team numbers for each age group and male/female teams (set out on Table 2.2 above) were considered. Secondly, the Football Foundation's summary table of pitch quality measured in recent PitchPower reports was compared to sites' pitch quality assessment in the PPOSS. These updated pitch quality assessments are not available for all pitches, and were carried out between 2023 and 2025. However, they are the best available data, including for a number of hub sites and 'central' league sites including Litherland Sports Park and Netherton Activity Centre in Netherton; LCRFA, Buckley Hill Playing Fields and Hightown Junior League site, Hightown, all in Crosby, and various public recreation grounds in Formby, Sefton East and Southport. The 'direction of travel' of changes in pitch quality for each pitch size, for each settlement area, was noted. This was compared to the changes in team numbers. The subsequent assessment, shown in Table 2.8, is based on a judgement of the impacts of changes in demand (team numbers) and supply (pitch quality and therefore pitch capacity) compared to the supply/demand balance in the PPOSS.

---

<sup>7</sup> See documents and Decision Notice relating to DC/2023/01645

<sup>8</sup> See documents and Decision Notice relating to DC/2023/01277

<sup>9</sup> See documents and Decision Notice relating to DC/2021/02231. Subsequent permissions for variation or discharge of condition include DC/2022/01929.

<b>Table 2.8 Football Grass Pitch supply / demand balance</b> (capacity shortfalls and surpluses are shown in 'match equivalent sessions' below)					
Settlement area	Pitch type	2021 (PPOSS)		2025 (FF & FA data)	
		Current supply/ demand balance	Future supply/ demand balance	Current supply/ demand balance	Future supply/ demand balance
<b>Bootle &amp; Netherton</b>	Adult	Shortfall of 7	Shortfall of 7	Increased shortfall	Increased shortfall
	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 4	Shortfall of 8.5	Increased shortfall	Increased shortfall
	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 5.5	Shortfall of 5.5	Reduced Shortfall	Reduced shortfall
	Mini 7v7	At capacity	At capacity	Around capacity	Around capacity
	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 2	Increased spare capacity	Increased spare capacity
<b>Crosby</b>	Adult	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall of 1.5	Increased shortfall	Increased shortfall
	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall	Increased shortfall
	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall of 2	Shortfall	Shortfall
	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 8	Spare capacity of 8	Spare capacity	Spare capacity
	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity	Spare capacity	Spare capacity
<b>Formby</b>	Adult	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall	Shortfall
	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 5	Shortfall of 6.5	Increased shortfall	Increased shortfall
	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 6.5	Shortfall of 6.5	Reduced Shortfall	Reduced Shortfall
	Mini 7v7	At capacity	At capacity	Spare capacity	Spare capacity
	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity	Spare capacity	Spare capacity
<b>Sefton East</b>	Adult	Spare capacity of 0.5	Spare capacity of 0.5	Around capacity	Around capacity
	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1.5	Increased shortfall	Increased shortfall
	Youth 9v9	At capacity	At capacity	Shortfall	Shortfall
	Mini 7v7	At capacity	At capacity	Shortfall	Shortfall
	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity	Shortfall	Shortfall
<b>Southport</b>	Adult	Shortfall of 1	Shortfall of 1	Spare capacity	Spare capacity
	Youth 11v11	At capacity	Shortfall of 1.5	Shortfall	Increased shortfall
	Youth 9v9	Spare capacity of 1.5	Spare capacity of 1.5	Shortfall	Shortfall
	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 1	Spare capacity of 1	Increased spare capacity	Increased spare capacity
	Mini 5v5	At capacity	At capacity	Spare capacity	Spare capacity
<b>Sefton as a whole</b>	Adult	Shortfall of 11	Shortfall of 11	Increased shortfall	Increased shortfall
	Youth 11v11	Shortfall of 10	Shortfall of 20	Increased shortfall	Increased shortfall
	Youth 9v9	Shortfall of 12.5	Shortfall of 12.5	Increased shortfall	Increased shortfall
	Mini 7v7	Spare capacity of 9	Spare capacity of 9	Increased spare capacity	Increased spare capacity
	Mini 5v5	Spare capacity of 2	Spare capacity of 2	Increased spare capacity	Increased spare capacity

2.27 While the supply and demand balance in Sefton is complicated due to teams migrating both inwards (from Liverpool, Knowsley and West Lancashire) and outwards (to 3G pitch hub sites in Liverpool) to play or train at league central venues, the above analysis has identified some supply and demand balance trends.

2.28 A key trend shown by Table 2.8 is that there is increased spare capacity or new spare capacity of 5v5 and 7v7 mini pitches in every settlement area except Sefton East, and for Sefton as a whole. This is due more to reductions in the number of teams than to increased quality and capacity of pitches, and may be related to the age structure of Sefton’s population, as set out in Part 7 of the PPOSS. In Sefton East there are no known changes in pitch quality and capacity, but an increase in the number of teams from 4 to 9.

2.29 Other key issues are the increased shortfall in adult and 11v11 youth pitches in Bootle & Netherton and Crosby. This is particularly marked in Bootle & Netherton, due to the doubling of adult team numbers (from 45 to 99) and reductions in pitch quality and capacity. In Sefton East team numbers rose slightly; considered to remove spare capacity. Southport is considered to have spare capacity in adult pitches due to a small reduction in team numbers and improved pitch quality and capacity.

**Overview of progress in implementing sport-specific recommendations for football grass pitches**

2.30 Table 2.9 below provides an overview update of progress on implementation of sport - specific recommendations for football grass pitches, bringing together information reported elsewhere in this chapter.

<b>Table 2.9 Overview update of progress on implementation of sport -specific recommendations – football grass pitches</b>			
		<b>Progress</b>	
<b>Sport-specific recommendation</b>		<b>R-A-G</b>	<b>Comment</b>
F1	Protect existing quantity of pitch sites until all demand is being met (unless replacement provision meets Sport England requirements and is agreed upon and provided).		Sites have been protected from loss due to development.
F2	Where pitches are overplayed and assessed as poor or standard quality, prioritise investment and review maintenance regimes to ensure they are of an appropriate standard to sustain use and improve quality (within available resources)		Assessment has been on a site-by-site basis, for selected sites. No strategic priorities have been established as yet.
F3	Utilise the Football Foundation’s PitchPower app to assist in the improvement and ongoing maintenance of provision		High take-up of Football Foundation’s PitchPower app / assessment methodology by clubs and across Sefton Council sites.

<b>Table 2.9 Overview update of progress on implementation of sport -specific recommendations – football grass pitches</b>			
		<b>Progress</b>	
<b>Sport-specific recommendation</b>		<b>R-A-G</b>	<b>Comment</b>
F4	Support clubs which maintain their own pitches to access support through the FF Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund, to improve and sustain pitch quality as good.		A number of clubs have accessed Football Foundation and other funding for pitch maintenance improvements for a multi-year period, for example Southport Athletic at Ferryside Lane, Southport. Other clubs are in the process of finalising self-management which will help them access additional pitch maintenance funding, for example Silcock Football Club at Orrell Mount Park, Bootle and Hightown Junior League at Sandbrook Road Recreation Ground, Southport.
F5	Update the Sefton LFFP with new site recommendations for both grass pitch improvements and ancillary development projects, based on findings of the PPOSS		Update of Sefton Local Football Facility Plan published February 2024. This takes on board the relevant PPOSS recommendations.
F6	Explore opportunities to transfer play from overplayed sites and from exported, latent and future demand to alternative sites with spare capacity (or 3G provision).		While little or no progress is understood to have been made to date, it is anticipated that this will change as new 3G pitches become available (see the next section).
F7	Improve ancillary facilities where there is a demand to do so and where it can benefit the wider footballing offer		Progress understood to have been made on only 1 of the 9 sites/ 12 poor quality facilities identified in the PPOSS. Planning permission for a new (replacement) sports pavilion for Rookery Sports Club was granted in April 2024, although the funding situation is less clear. However, regarding other sites, planning permission was granted for a new (replacement) sports/changing pavilion at Merchant Taylors School Playing Fields, Crosby in June 2022. Planning permission was granted in May 2025 for 89 dwellings, supported living accommodation and also a new sport pavilion for the retained pitches at , West Lane, Formby.
F8	Explore opportunities to secure the tenure of clubs on schools which are key sites or secure the club use of alternative sites		While there are few such situations in Sefton, little or no progress is understood to have been made.

<b>Table 2.9 Overview update of progress on implementation of sport -specific recommendations – football grass pitches</b>			
		<b>Progress</b>	
<b>Sport-specific recommendation</b>		<b>R-A-G</b>	<b>Comment</b>
F9	Where appropriate, develop partnerships and/or lease opportunities for clubs who do not own or manage their own site to do so		Crosby Stuart FC manage Brookvale Playing Fields. Silcock FC management of Orrell Mount Park, Bootle is due to be finalised soon. Hightown Junior League are due to take over management of Sandbrook Road Recreation Ground, Southport.
F10	Monitor the hybrid pitch at Bootle FC as to assess how successful the Sport England pilot model has progressed as an approach to future football provision		Hybrid grass pitch installed in April 2020 at Bootle FC as part of a pilot supported by Sport England. The pitch was designed to support a maximum of 25 hours of demand per week (more than a grass pitch, and so able to meet some community club training needs). It is understood that this hybrid pitch trial is nearing its end and that the Club not proposing retention of the pitch but instead are investigating other pitch options.

Back to [contents](#)

### 3. 3G Artificial Grass Pitches

#### 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) Football Overview

3.1 The need for 3G artificial grass pitches is related to overall number of football teams. The Football Association Training Ratio is that 1 AGP is required for 38 teams (1:38). This is the basis of the 3G pitch requirement set out in the 2023 PPOSS and hence in this Review document. Table 3.1 below shows the change in the number of football teams between 2022 and 2025 (2024/25 season), using the football data supplied by Lancashire and Liverpool County FA set out in the [previous section](#).

3.2 There has been no change in the number of full-sized 3G full-sized pitches in Sefton since 2022. There are still four such 3G pitches, all in the south of the Borough:

- Chesterfield High School (Crosby)
- Litherland Sports Park (Bootle & Netherton)
- LCFA Sefton Sports Ground (Bootle & Netherton, but on the edge of Crosby)
- Marine Travel Arena /Marine FC (Crosby).

3 of the 4 are currently on the FA’s 3G Register and therefore are FA-approved for match play. Litherland Sport Park pitch is not. As set out below, there is a recent permission for a 3G pitch in Maghull, and a current planning application for a 3G pitch in Southport.

Analysis area	Number of Teams		Requirement of AGPs <sup>10</sup>		Number AGPs Available		Shortfall of AGPs	
	2022	2025	2022	2025	2022	2025	2022	2025
Bootle	214	248	5.5	6.5	2	2	4	4.5
Crosby	164	194	4	5	2	2	2	3
Formby	132	90	3.5	2.5	0	0	3.5	2.5
Sefton East	33	107	1	3	0	0	1	3
Southport	100	139	2.5	3.5	0	0	2.5	3.5
<b>Total (Sefton as a whole)</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16.5</b>

3.3 Table 3.1 assesses number of teams, supply of 3G pitches and the shortfall in 3G pitches between 2022 and 2025, based on the Football Association Training Ratio of 1 AGP for each 38 teams (1:38). Table 3.1 shows the shortfalls in, and need for additional, full-sized 3G pitches in each settlement area and for Sefton as a whole. The shortfall has increased in each area except Formby, and for Sefton as a whole.

3.3 The 2023 Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy also referred to 35 small-size 3G pitches across nine sites. It can be assumed that use of some of these pitches by clubs for team practice, if not match play, will reduce the effective demand for 3G pitches somewhat. The 2024 Local

<sup>10</sup> Rounded (significant Tables) to the nearest 0.5.

Football Facility Plan refers to an increase: 39 small size 3G pitches across ten sites, used primarily football, all of which are floodlit and available for community use. This includes six small-sided 3G FTP centres currently in Sefton:

- Active Soccer Sports Centre (Maghull) - 3 x 5v5 FTPs
- Dunes Leisure Centre (Southport) – 4 x 5v5 3G FTPs
- Formby Activity Centre Ltd – 4 x 5v5 3G FTPs
- Goals (Liverpool North) (Bootle & Netherton) – 9 x 5v5 3G FTPs
- LCFA Sefton Sports Ground (Bootle & Netherton, but on the edge of Crosby) – 5 x 5v5 3G FTPs. These pitches have expired in terms of the FA’s 3G Register and are therefore not FA-approved for match play.
- Netherton Activity Centre – 4 x 5v5 and 2 x 7v7 3G FTPs. Built in 2011 and have exceeded their respective recommended surface lifespans.

3.4 The Local Football Facility Plan states that there are a number of small-sided teams and leisure/competitive leagues with organised and competitive activities based at these and other sites, notably at Liverpool LCFA Sefton, Stanley High School (Southport), Formby Activity Centre Ltd, Greenbank High School (Southport), Active Soccer Sports Centre and Goals (Liverpool North).

3.5 A hybrid grass pitch was installed in April 2020 at Bootle FC as part of a pilot supported by Sport England. The pitch was designed to support a maximum of 25 hours of demand per week; capacity beyond that of a grass pitch and so able to meet a training need from some community clubs. It is understood that this hybrid pitch trial is nearing its end and that the Club not proposing retention of the pitch. Instead, they, together with the Football Foundation, are investigating other pitch options including a 3G stadia pitch.

### **3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) Other Sport Overview**

3.6 All four of the existing 11v11 3G pitches are used solely for football. The 11v11 3G pitch recently permitted at Maghull High School and that which is the subject of a current planning application at Birkdale High School are also solely for football<sup>11</sup>.

3.7 The above analysis and Table 3.1 above indicate a need for 16.5 additional 3G pitches.

3.8 While Birkdale High School (Southport) have explored the feasibility to develop a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch onsite in consultation with potential partner Southport RUFC, the Club are not able to sustain or meet the regular and level of use requirements to justify costs of additional WR compliancy, so the proposed 3G pitch at this site would be solely for football. A planning applications for a 3G pitch was submitted in March 2025. St Michael's C of E High School (Crosby) has ambitions to develop a 3G pitch on its site on a not-fit -for-purpose redgra facility. Other schools have also been discussion with the Football Foundation. An interim update is set out in Table 3.2 below.

3.9 Table 3.2 compares the sites put forward as potential sites for additional 3G pitches in the 2023 PPOSS and in the 2024 Local Football Facility Plan, and provides a comment on progress where this is known. Analysis of Table 3.2 indicates that there are still some challenges in securing

---

<sup>11</sup> See planning DC/2025/00694, granted 19<sup>th</sup> September 2025, and planning application DC/2025/00354

3G pitches in Formby and Southport especially. Note that the PPOSS does not offer unequivocal ‘in principle’ support for 3G pitches at any of these sites, nor as yet as the Council identified their priority sites for 3G pitches. It is clear that each of these sites will require a full feasibility to be undertaken to determine if they are suitable in meeting known need. Such full feasibility assessments would need to include a range of matters including site characteristics, sports, financial, planning and other issues<sup>12</sup>. This should be done in consultation with Liverpool FA, Lancashire FA, RFU and the Football Foundation as well as Sport England and other relevant National Governing Bodies.

<b>Table 3.2 Progress update for potential 3G pitch sites in the 2023 PPOSS and in the 2024 Local Football Facility Plan</b>		
<b>2023 PPOSS</b>	<b>2024 LFFP</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Bootle &amp; Netherton</b>		
Litherland Sports Park (pitch 2)	-	Concerns about distance of proposed plans from building.
LCFA Sefton (pitch 2)	LCFA Sefton (pitch 2)	Still to identify funding
Netherton Activity Centre	Netherton Activity Centre	Council to confirm their intentions. Likely funding available.
Savio Salesian College (St John Bosco)	-	Likely [s77] funding identified. School redevelopment planning permission <sup>13</sup> but no application yet for a 3G pitch.
Stuart Road Playing Fields	-	
		Hybrid pitch trial at Bootle FC unsuccessful. An application is on-going and the Football Foundation working with the Club to identify funding for a 3G pitch to replace the hybrid surface. [No planning application for a 3G pitch yet submitted]
-	Bootle & Netherton generally (pitch 1)	-
-	Bootle & Netherton generally (pitch 2)	-
<b>Crosby</b>		
Holy Family High School	-	Potential funding identified. May be site-specific constraints / issues. [No planning application submitted yet].
St Michael's C of E High School	-	-
Sacred Heart Catholic Academy	-	Potential funding identified, but likely site-specific constraints / issues. [No planning application submitted yet].
-	Crosby area (pitch 1)	-
-	Crosby area (pitch 2)	-
<b>Formby</b>		

<sup>12</sup> Sefton Council as Local Planning Authority would also encourage the submission of request for pre-application advice, for which a fee is charged - see <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/get-advice-on-development-proposals-before-making-an-application/>

<sup>13</sup> See planning permission DC/2024/00751, granted 11 November 2024.

<b>Table 3.2 Progress update for potential 3G pitch sites in the 2023 PPOSS and in the 2024 Local Football Facility Plan</b>		
<b>2023 PPOSS</b>	<b>2024 LFFP</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Deansgate Lane Playing Fields	-	-
Formby High School	Formby High School	School to set out their intentions. Still to identify funding. [No planning application submitted yet].
Range High School		School at early stage of considering 3G options.
-	Formby area (pitch 1)	-
-	Formby area (pitch 2)	-
-	Formby area (pitch 3)	-
<b>Sefton East</b>		
Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School, Aintree	-	-
Maghull High School	Maghull High School	Funding in place, including £709,000 grant award from Football Foundation towards a new 91 x 55 m 3G pitch. Planning permission was granted for a 3G pitch in September 2025 <sup>14</sup> .
<i>Sandy Lane Playing Field, Lydiate (Small-sided)</i>	-	-
Maricourt Catholic High School, Maghull	-	-
<b>Southport</b>		
Birkdale High School		No longer seeking World Rugby Compliant pitch. Funding for football 3G pitch being investigated. [Planning application for 3G pitch submitted March 2025 <sup>15</sup> ].
Christ the King High School	-	Feasibility and funding issues. [No planning application submitted yet].
Ferryside Lane (pitch 1)	-	-
Ferryside Lane (pitch 2)	-	-
Meols Cop High School	-	Feasibility and funding issues. [No planning application submitted yet].
Stanley High School	-	On-going, funding and site-specific issues to be investigated. Existing management for small-sided 3G for community use. Site issues to be confirmed. [No planning application for a 3G pitch submitted]
-	Southport area (pitch 1)	-
-	Southport area (pitch 2)	-
-	Southport area (pitch 3)	-

<sup>14</sup> Planning permission DC/2025/00694, granted 19<sup>th</sup> September 2025

<sup>15</sup> Planning application DC/2025/00354 for (in summary), a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with associated works / development) is still to be determined.

**Overview of progress in implementing sport-specific recommendations for 3G pitches**

3.10 Table 3.3 below provides an overview update of progress on implementation of sport - specific recommendations for 3G pitches (mostly for football) bringing together information reported elsewhere in this chapter.

<b>Table 3.3 Overview update of progress on implementation of sport -specific recommendations – 3G pitches</b>			
		<b>Progress</b>	
	<b>Sport-specific recommendation</b>	<b>R-A-G</b>	<b>Comment</b>
G1	Protect the current stock of 3G pitches of all sizes		Sites have been protected from loss due to development.
G2	Carry out further exploratory, feasibility and other work to identify suitable or priority locations for new 3G pitches to cater primarily for football training demand and other sports as applicable		Football Foundation have made progress on a range of potential 3G pitch sites. Sefton Council yet to carry out detailed assessments for sites in its ownership or more generally. Planning permission for a new 3G pitch in Maghull was granted in September 2025, and there is a current application for a 3G pitch in Southport.
G3	Update Sefton LFFP (regarding 3G pitches) based on findings of the PPOSS		Updated Local Football Facility Plan published (online) February 2024
G4 / H1	Protect the current stock of community used sand based/hockey suitable AGPs		Sites have been protected from loss due to development.
G5	Ensure that any new 3G pitches have community use agreements in place		All recent planning permissions for 3G pitches have been subject to planning conditions requiring community use agreements.
G6	Encourage more match play demand to transfer to 3G pitches. This will have value at overplayed sites, such as those used for central venue league play		While little or no progress is understood to have been made to date, it is anticipated that this will change as new 3G pitches become available.
G7 / R3	Explore opportunities with Southport RFC and Firwood Waterloo RFC and providers of existing or new 3G pitches, where appropriate, to secure World Rugby (WR) compliant 3G provision		A proposed 3G pitch at Birkdale High will not be WR compliant, as the School and Southport RUFC are not able to sustain or meet the regular and level of use requirements to justify the additional WR compliancy costs. However, WR compliant 3G provision for Southport RFC and Firwood Waterloo RFC is still a priority.
G8	Explore with the Bootle League and Hightown League the transition of more match play on to 3G pitches as they are built		While little or no progress is understood to have been made to date, it is anticipated that this will change as new 3G pitches become available. Even

<b>Table 3.3 Overview update of progress on implementation of sport -specific recommendations – 3G pitches</b>			
		<b>Progress</b>	
	<b>Sport-specific recommendation</b>	<b>R-A-G</b>	<b>Comment</b>
			smaller-sized pitches can meet demand for, say, 9 v 9 pitches form Hightown Junior League.
G9	Ensure that all other full size and larger small size pitches remain on the FA Register are re-tested every three years to sustain certification		Most 3G pitches are on the FA Register, the exceptions being the full size pitch at Litherland Sports Park and the 5 x 5v5 3G FTPs and LCFA Sefton Sports Ground.
G10	Work to ensure the certification of full size 3G pitches at Litherland Sports Park and Chesterfield High School to ensure suitability for match play		The 3G pitch at Chesterfield High School is on the FA Register. The 3G pitch at Litherland Sports Park is not.
G11	Encourage all current and future providers have in place a sinking fund to ensure long-term sustainability		Progress unknown.

Back to [contents](#)

## 4. Cricket

### Cricket Demand Overview

4.1 The number of Cricket clubs in Sefton is unchanged: teams are spread across thirteen Cricket Clubs (CCs) across Sefton, with seven clubs in Southport:

- Firwood Bootle CC (Bootle & Netherton)
- Hightown St Mary’s CC and the Northern CC (Crosby) \*
- Formby CC (Formby)
- Maghull CC and Maghull Moss side CC (Sefton East)
- Ainsdale CC, Bedford Park CC, Churchtown CC, Fleetwood Hesketh CC, New Victoria CC, Southport and Birkdale CC, Southport Trinity CC (Southport).

Information supplied by Lancashire Cricket Club<sup>16</sup> indicates there are still 14 grass pitches at club sites, plus 6 at schools.

4.2 Table 4.1 below shows cricket demand, in terms of number of male and female teams by age group in 2021 and 2024. For 2021 this is based on information in the PPOSS and for 2024 on data from Lancashire Cricket Foundation’s 2025 Play / cricket teams fixtures and their other information.

Age Group	Bootle		Crosby		Formby		Sefton East		Southport		Sefton as a whole	
	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024
Senior men	3	4	14*	9	3	4	3	5	16	17	39	39
Senior Women	1	2	3	5	1	1	1	2	3	3	9	13
Softball Women	0	1	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	3	1	9
Juniors	3	7	11	13	5	9	3	5	16	25	38	59
- boys		4		8								
- girls		3		5								
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>28*</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>120</b>

(\*) Note that Lancashire Cricket Foundation consider that the 14 men’s teams in Crosby in 2021 is likely to be an over-estimate

4.3 Table 4.1 shows that the number of teams in each club/area has increased, substantively in most cases. Overall in Sefton, there were 87 teams in 2021 and 120 in 2024, including women’s softball teams. The number of men’s teams has remained stable, although the actual number may have increased, as Lancashire Cricket Foundation consider that the 14 men’s teams recorded for Crosby in 2021 is likely to be an over-estimate. Participation in women’s and girls’ cricket has also increased substantively, in all likelihood linked to Lancashire Cricket Foundation initiatives for women’s cricket. The number of senior women’s teams (hardball) has increased from 9 to 13 between 2021 and 2024, the number of women’s softball teams ha increased by a much greater

<sup>16</sup> From the 2025 Sefton Cricket area profile from 4Global / National Programmes dashboard

amount. The PPOSS recorded only one club (Maghull Cricket Club) with a women’s softball team playing in a league. In 2024 at least 5 clubs had women’s softball teams; 9 teams in total.

4.4 Regarding young people’s participation, the PPOSS cricket recommendations for supported England and Wales Cricket Board initiatives for junior cricket such as All Stars and Dynamos. The PPOSS stated that 8 clubs offered both All Stars (ages 5-8) and Dynamo (ages 8-11) sessions and since 2019- 2021 Chance to Shine sessions had been held at 47 primary and 4 secondary schools (this included much of the period with Covid restrictions). 4 clubs (Ainsdale, Maghull, Fleetwood Hesketh and Southport & Birkdale Cricket Clubs) aspired to increase the number of junior teams. The 2025 Sefton Cricket Profile indicated 6 All Stars centres and 4 Dynamo centres, an overall slight increase, in line with PPOSS recommendations. Chance to Shine sessions were held at 10 primary schools annually in 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2025; school participation was reduced due a longer-term vacancy in the Cricket Development Officer post, which has now been filled.

4.5 Table 4.1 indicates substantive growth in the number of junior teams in each of the 5 settlement areas, that is, most clubs, between 2021 and 2024, indicating success of the junior cricket initiatives referred to above. This bodes well for the future of cricket in Sefton as there is a larger pool of younger players to move into senior team over time. Participation in girls’ cricket has also increased substantively and a number of clubs have dedicated girls’ teams.

### Cricket Supply Overview

4.6 Table 4.2 below shows supply of community use cricket sites and squares, and that this supply has not changed. There are also a number of schools pitches and sites not available for community use. Southport and Birkdale Cricket Club Ground is a (Lancashire) county outground, mainly hosting county age group games, making it a crucial venue for nurturing young talent and providing facilities for higher-level cricket.

4.7 In total, in 2021 there were 18 grass cricket square across 14 sites available for community use, 2 more squares not available for community use and one disused site (in Sefton East). There were 10 stand-alone non-turf pitches across 9 community use sites. Three community-use sites had Non-Turf wickets accompanying natural turf cricket squares (the Hightown Club, Maghull Cricket Club and Fleetwood Hesketh Sports Club).

Age Group	Supply of community-use cricket squares and wickets by type										Sefton as a whole	
	Bootle		Crosby		Formby		Sefton East		Southport		2021	2024
	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024		
Squares	2	2	7	7	1	1	2	2	6	6	18	18
<b>Sites</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>

4.8 Information supplied by Lancashire Cricket Foundation<sup>17</sup> indicates no change in 2024. No school sites have become newly available for community use. The disused pitch at Maghull Homes, Sefton Lane remains out of use. The pitch at Ferryside Lane shown as disused in the

<sup>17</sup> From the 2025 Sefton Cricket area profile from 4Global / National Programmes dashboard, pitch advisor reports and Lancashire Cricket Club information.

PPOSS Assessment Report is not referred to for cricket use in the PPOSS main document. Fleetwood Hesketh Cricket Club in Southport installed a new Non-Turn Pitch in 2023.

### Pitch Quality Overview

4.9 Two of the cricket recommendations in the PPOSS referred to pitch quality. Recommendation C2 was to ‘Improve quality at sites assessed as poor or standard and ensure quality is sustained at sites assessed as good’ and C3 was to ‘Address overplay via quality improvements, an increase in NTPs accompanying grass wickets and increased utilisation of existing NTPs. Good progress has been made in implementing these recommendations, and hence towards improved pitch quality.

4.10 The PPOSS main document indicated (for 2021) 10 good quality community available grass wicket squares, 5 standard quality squares and 1 poor quality square. Information supplied by Lancashire Cricket Foundation<sup>18</sup> for 2024 indicates that square (site) quality is likely to have been maintained or improved at all sites. These changes are reflected in Table 4.3. This is based on 2024 Pitch Reports where available, and assumptions elsewhere; Lancashire Cricket Foundation have not flagged any concerns.

4.11 While the reported quality of most squares remained the same (mostly High quality), the quality of Old Hall Playing Field, managed and used by Maghull Cricket Club, and of Fleetwood Hesketh Sports Club, had improved from Standard to Good, it is assumed in part due to Grass Pitch Improvement Funding. The poor quality squares at Crossens Recreation Ground (Southport) used by New Victoria Cricket Club is now managed by the Club, and it is anticipated that this will lead to quality improvements in future seasons.

Table 4.3 Square quality for community use cricket sites		
Site	2021 Square quality	2024 Square quality
<b>Bootle and Netherton</b>		
Bootle CC	Good	Good (“exemplary”)
Stuart Road Playing Fields	Standard	n/a (assumed Standard)
<b>Crosby</b>		
Hightown [St Mary] Cricket Club	Good	Good
Northern CC	Good	n/a (assumed Good)
	Good	n/a (assumed Good)
	Standard	n/a (assumed Standard)
<b>Formby</b>		
Formby Cricket Club	Good	n/a (assumed Good)
<b>Sefton East</b>		
Maghull Cricket Club	Standard	Good
Moss Side Maghull CC	Standard	n/a (assumed Standard)

<sup>18</sup> From the 2025 Sefton Cricket area profile from 4Global / National Programmes dashboard, pitch advisor reports and Lancashire Cricket Club information.

**Table 4.3 Square quality for community use cricket sites**

Site	2021 Square quality	2024 Square quality
<b>Southport</b>		
Ainsdale Cricket Club	Good	Good
Crossens Rec Ground (New Victoria)	Poor	n/a (likely to improve due to self-management)
Fleetwood Hesketh Sports Club	Standard	Good
Southport and Birkdale Sports Club	Good	Good (“fantastic”)
Rookery Sports Club	Good	Good (“excellent”)
	Good	Good (“excellent”)

4.12 With a new groundsman, Fleetwood Hesketh Sports Club have improved maintenance and made notable improvements and “significant strides” in improving in the quality of the cricket square (site) “over recent years”. Also Fleetwood Hesketh Cricket Club installed a new Non-Turf Pitch and practice cage in 2023 to improve their practice facilities, acting on the intention expressed in the 2023 PPOSS.

4.13 Ainsdale and Hightown Cricket Clubs also intended to improve their practice facilities. Hightown Cricket Club (Crosby) secured planning permission for two improved / replacement practice nets on a non-turf surface<sup>19</sup> in 2022, to help improve / maintain practice quality and capacity and meant that practice could take place away from the match play area. Likewise, the replacement cricket practice netting at Ainsdale CC<sup>20</sup> helped improve practice quality and capacity. It is also assumed that the new perimeter fencing at Formby Cricket<sup>21</sup>, aiming to reduce anti-social behaviour, will have had a positive, or at least neutral, impact on pitch quality. All three of these clubs were assessed in 2021 as having good quality squares, 2 were assessed as good quality in 2024 and Formby Cricket Club is assumed to have retained the good quality of their square.

4.14 It is understood that these improvements were funded by the relevant clubs with external funding as appropriate, for example England and Wales Cricket Board County Grants funding (for example, at Ainsdale Cricket Club) and loans (for example, Hightown CC’s nets). No s106 monies were used.

### Ancillary Facility Quality Overview

4.15 The PPOSS main document identified poor quality ancillary facilities at New Victoria Cricket Club / Crossens Recreation Ground and Rookery Sports Ground (used by Southport Trinity Cricket Club, Bedford Park Cricket Club and Churchtown Cricket Club) due to an arson attack in 2018 (both sites in Southport), and the Northern Club (Crosby). However, no planning applications have been submitted for new/improved ancillary facilities at these sites. Planning permissions granted since 2021 for improvements to ancillary facilities at cricket clubs are as follows:

<sup>19</sup> DC/2022/01674, granted with conditions 4 November 2022

<sup>20</sup> DC/2022/02309, granted with conditions 18 January 2023

<sup>21</sup> DC/2020/01914, granted with conditions 25 March 2021

- A new toilet block<sup>22</sup> at Hightown Cricket Club (Crosby)
- New boundary safety netting/ fencing<sup>23</sup> at Firwood Bootle Cricket Club

4.16 It may be that New Victoria Cricket Club’s recent move to self-managing cricket facilities at Crossens Recreation Ground will give them increased scope to improve the quality of the site’s ancillary facilities.

### Supply/Demand Balance

4.17 As well as pitch supply and quality and team demand, there are other factors which will affect pitch use and supply. Southport & District Cricket League is due to cease in 2026 with the teams due to move to the Liverpool Competition. The current rules of the Liverpool Competition state that no men’s senior cricket can play on Non-Turf Pitches, meaning that only juniors and W&G would be able to utilise these pitches for match play. Lancashire Cricket Foundation are working with the Liverpool Competition remove this restriction for senior men’ teams, to retain effective capacity especially in north Sefton. As a County outground, Southport and Birkdale Cricket Club Ground cannot install a Non-turf Pitch in any case.

4.18 Table 4.4 below combines Tables 4.17, 4.18 and 4.19 of the PPOSS Assessment Report, showing the 2021 supply/demand balance on both Saturdays peak time for men’s cricket), Sundays (peak time for women’s cricket), and mid-week. This takes into account overplay at four sites (Hightown St Mary’s CC, Formby CC, Crossens Recreation Ground/ New Victoria CC and Fleetwood Hesketh CC). Table 4.5 indicates the 2024 supply/demand balance.

4.19 In 2021 and 2024, the Hightown St Mary’s and Formby Cricket Clubs had/have good quality squares. As above, Crossens Recreation Ground was poor quality in 2021 but self-management since then by New Victoria Cricket Club means that quality improvements are more likely, also affecting capacity, Likewise, the quality of Fleetwood Hesketh CC square is now good quality, and the Non-Turf Pitch installed on the site in 2023 also increases the site’s capacity. In Sefton East, the pitch used by Maghull Cricket Club improved from standard quality in 2021 to good quality in 2024, increasing capacity. Therefore, capacity overall has be maintained or improved due to pitch improvements on a number of sites across Sefton.

Table 4.4 Supply/demand balance: Demand (match equivalent sessions) cricket 2021															
	Actual Spare Capacity			Overplay			Current total			Future Demand			Total		
	Sat	Sun	Mid	Sat	Sun	Mid	Sat	Sun	Mid	Sat	Sun	Mid	Sat	Sun	Mid
Bootle & Netherton	12	37	12	-	-	-	12	37	12	-	-	-	12	37	12
Crosby	-	25	121	24	24	24	-24	1	97	-	-	-	-24	1	97
Formby	-	-	-	17	17	17	-17	-17	-17	-	-	-	-17	-17	-17
Sefton East	-	21	12	-	-	1	0	21	12	-	-	-	0	21	12
Southport	-	11	32	41	41	41	-41	-30	-9	-	-	-	-41	-30	-9
	<b>12</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>-70</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>95</b>	-	-	-	<b>-70</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>95</b>

<sup>22</sup> DC/2023/00767, granted with conditions 6 July 2023.

<sup>23</sup> DC/2021/00960, approved 4 May 2021, discharge of condition 4 of planning permission DC/2020/00636 allowed on appeal on 10th February 2021

4.20 Table 4.1 above shows the changes in teams between 2021 and 2024; compared to the 2021 supply/demand shortfalls in Table 4.4. Table 4.5 below provides an overview update of this supply/demand balance, discussed in more detail below.

<b>Table 4.5 Supply/demand balance: Demand (match equivalent sessions) cricket overview 2024</b>															
	Actual Spare Capacity			Overplay			Current total			Future Demand			Total		
	Sat	Sun	Mid	Sat	Sun	Mid	Sat	Sun	Mid	Sat	Sun	Mid	Sat	Sun	Mid
Bootle & Netherton	√	√	√	-	-	-				-	-	-			
Crosby	-	√	√	~	√	√				-	-	-			
Formby	-	-	-	√	√	√				-	-	-			
Sefton East	-	√	√	-	-					-	-	-			
Southport	-	√	√	√	√					-	-	-			
<b>Total</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>					-	-	-			

4.21 Looking at the changes over the period 2021-2024, it is considered that the increase in number of teams in Bootle and Netherton can be accommodated within the existing supply. The significant reduction in senior men’s teams in Crosby (from up to 14 to 9) has significantly reduced if not removed the shortfall in on Saturday peak times (men’s cricket) in Crosby, offsetting the increase in softball and junior teams. In Formby the extra senior men’s team and new softball women’s team, and many more junior teams, will have retained if not increased the broad shortfall in both Saturday (men’s cricket), Sunday (women’s cricket) peak times and mid-week. The situation is reflected in Table 4.5 above. For Sefton East there have been increases in Senior Men’s, Women’s and Softball teams, as well as junior teams, and so there may now be an equilibrium or shortfall in pitches at Saturday peak times, with sufficient capacity on Sundays and mid-week.

4.22 For Southport the overall number of teams has increased from 35 to 48, most of notably junior teams (from 5 to 16 junior teams) for whom the peak match time is not specified. The number of men’s teams increased from 16 in 2021 to 17 in 2024. Improved quality and capacity at Fleetwood Hesketh Cricket Club and potentially at Ainsdale and New Victoria Cricket Clubs’ grounds is likely to have reduced the Saturday peak time (men’s matches) shortfall, and indeed the Sunday peak time (women’s matches) shortfall. That is, while there is still overplay at Saturday and Sunday peak times in Southport, it is considered that the overall shortfalls have reduced and so the detailed supply/demand picture has improved even though the overview position has not changed significantly. It is considered that with local pitch improvements, the midweek supply/demand balance has moved from a distinct shortfall closer to equilibrium. This is also indicated in Table 4.5 above.

4.23 Overall, the most notable significant changes in the supply/demand balance between 2021 and 2024 are a potential move from overplay in Crosby to at or around capacity, due to the apparent decline in number of senior men’s teams in Crosby and reductions in overplay levels in Southport.

**Overview of progress in implementing sport-specific recommendations for cricket**

4.24 Table 4.6 below provides an overview update of progress on implementation of sport - specific recommendations for cricket, bringing together information reported elsewhere in this chapter.

<b>Table 4.6 Overview update of progress on implementation of sport -specific recommendations – cricket</b>			
		<b>Progress</b>	
<b>Sport-specific recommendation</b>		<b>R-A-G</b>	<b>Comment</b>
C1	Protect existing quantity of cricket squares		Sites have been protected from loss due to development.
C2	Improve quality at sites assessed as poor or standard and ensure quality is sustained at sites assessed as good		Pitch quality at Maghull and Fleetwood Hesketh Cricket Clubs has improved from Standard to Good; the other four standard quality cricket squares are assumed to be unchanged. New Victoria CC’s self-management of their poor quality square on Crossens Road Recreation Ground is likely to lead to quality improvements over time. 2024 assessments showed that all Good quality squares remain as Good quality; the same is assumed to be the case for sites not assessed. New practice nets permitted at Ainsdale and Hightown CCs, a new NTP at Fleetwood Hesketh CC, and new perimeter fencing permitted at Formby CC to reduce anti-social behaviour. Lancashire Cricket Foundation working with the Liverpool Competition to allow NTPs to be used for Senior Men’s match play, especially important as Southport & District league ceases to exist in 2026 and more Sefton teams move into this league.
C3	Address overplay via quality improvements, an increase in NTPs accompanying grass wickets and increased utilisation of existing NTPs		
C4	Explore opportunities for improved security of tenure for clubs without ownership or a long-term lease arrangement		New Victoria CC now self- manage their pitch on Crossens Road Recreation Ground. It is assumed that this gives greater security of tenure.
C5	Improve the changing facilities at sites where clubs have identified a need to do so		No planning applications have been submitted for any of the sites with identified poor quality ancillary facilities, although planning permission was granted in 2021 for a new toilet block at Hightown Cricket Club and in 2021 for new boundary safety netting at Firwood Bootle Cricket Club.
C6	Consider options to increase and improve the stock of suitable practice facilities where clubs have raised this as an issue		As for C2 and C3, new practice nets permitted at Ainsdale and Hightown Cricket Clubs and new perimeter fencing permitted at Formby Cricket Club (improving security).

<b>Table 4.6 Overview update of progress on implementation of sport -specific recommendations – cricket</b>		
		<b>Progress</b>
<b>Sport-specific recommendation</b>	<b>R-A-G</b>	<b>Comment</b>
C7	Continue to support ECB initiatives for junior cricket such as All Stars and Dynamos and ensure unaffiliated demand and recreational cricket is provided for	Clubs continuing to support these initiatives, with increases in numbers of junior teams. Cricket Development Officer now in place again to continue cricket development in schools.
C8	Continue to support LCF initiatives for women’s cricket	Participation in women’s and girls’ cricket appears to have increased. In 2021 only one club had a women’s softball team playing in a league; in 2024 at least 5 clubs had women’s softball teams. A number of clubs have dedicated girls’ teams.

Back to [contents](#)

## 5. Rugby Union

### Rugby Demand Overview

5.1 There remain three rugby clubs in Sefton; Firwood Waterloo Rugby Club, Crosby St Marys Rugby Club (both in Crosby) and Southport Rugby Club. Each supports a number of men's, women's and junior/ mini teams. As shown in Table 5.1 below, the number of teams has not changed between 2022 and 2024.

Age Group	Bootle		Crosby		Formby		Sefton East		Southport		Sefton as a whole	
	2022	2024	2022	2024	2022	2024	2022	2024	2022	2024	2022	2024
Senior Men (19-45)	-	-	4	4	-	-	-	-	4	4	8	8
Senior Women (19-45)	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	2
Junior Boys (13-18)	-	-	6	6	-	-	-	-	6	6	12	12
Junior Girls (13-18)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2
Mini rugby mixed (7-12)	-	-	12	12	-	-	-	-	7	7	19	19
<b>Total</b>	-	-	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	-	-	-	-	<b>20</b>	20	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>

### Rugby Supply Overview

5.2 Table 5.2 shows pitch supply in 2022 and 2024, and indicates no significant changes. In 2022 there were 14 rugby union pitches available for community use: eleven senior and two junior pitches. Other pitches are located at school or Ministry of Defence sites. While each of Sefton's three rugby clubs is based at a club-owned ground, Firwood Waterloo Rugby Club also plays at Litherland Sports Park (Bootle & Netherton) and Merchant Taylors School Playing Fields at Spinney Crescent, Blundellsands (Crosby). Southport Rugby Club also plays at Birkdale high School and Waterloo Road Recreation Ground.

5.3 The PPOSS indicated that five pitches on four sites were overplayed; the single pitches at Litherland Sports Park, Firwood Waterloo Rugby Club, Southport Rugby Club and the two pitches at Waterloo Road Recreation Ground (Southport). All of these were standard or poor quality in 2022 (although as below, pitch quality improvements are expected in future and this should increase capacity and reduce overplay).

**Table 5.2 Supply - Number of pitches by rugby union type**

	Bootle		Crosby		Formby		Sefton East		Southport		Sefton as a whole	
Age	2022	2024	2022	2024	2022	2024	2022	2024	2022	2024	2022	2024
Senior	1	1	6	6	-	-	-	-	4	4	11	11
Junior	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	-	-	-	-	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>

5.4 The PPOSS noted that the aspiration to secure a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch at Birkdale High School (Southport), in consultation with potential partner Southport RUFC. The feasibility of this has been explored and the Club are not able to sustain or meet the regular and level of use requirements to justify costs of additional WR compliancy, so any 3G pitch at this site would be solely for football.

**Pitch Quality Overview**

5.5 In 2022 there were six good quality pitches available for community use – the 4 senior and 2 junior pitches at Merchant Taylors School Playing Fields, Spinney Crescent. 3 senior pitches were standard quality; those at Litherland Sports Park, Waterloo Rugby Club and Southport Rugby Club. The other community use rugby pitches were standard quality.

5.6 Since then, the Rugby Football Union have confirmed that both Firwood Waterloo Rugby Club and Southport Rugby Club have been successful in gaining funding as part of the grass pitch maintenance fund to improve the maintenance of pitches; Waterloo Rugby Club and two pitches at across the Southport Rugby Club/ Waterloo Road Recreation Ground sites respectively. The Rugby Football Union would not expect to see these improvements impact on pitch capacity at present, although this is likely to occur in the future.

**Ancillary Facility Quality Overview**

5.7 Planning permission for a new (replacement) sports/changing pavilion at Merchant Taylors School Playing Fields, Spinney Crescent, Crosby, was granted in June 2022<sup>24</sup>. The site is used for sports including cricket, football and rugby, by Merchant Taylors’ School, Waterloo Rugby Football Union club and an archery club. While the proposal did not meet the Rugby Union National Governing Body requirements for changing facilities, Waterloo Rugby Club supported the proposal. It is understood that that this was funded by the school.

**Supply/Demand Balance**

5.7 Table 5.3 below combines Tables 5.17 and 5.18 of the PPOSS Assessment Report, showing the following supply/demand balance on both Saturday afternoons (peak time for senior men’s rugby) and Sunday mornings (peak time for mini, junior and senior women’s rugby).

<sup>24</sup> See documents and Decision Notice relating to DC/2021/02231. Subsequent permissions for variation or discharge of condition include DC/2022/01929.

Table 5.3 Demand (match equivalent sessions) senior rugby 2022 and 2024										
	Actual Spare Capacity		Overplay		Current total		Future Demand		Future Total	
	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun
Bootle & Netherton	-		3		-3	-3			-3	-3
Crosby	-		3		-3	-3			-3	-3
Formby	-		-		-	-			-	-
Sefton East	-		-		-	-			-	-
Southport	-		6.25		-6.25	-6.25			-6.25	-6.25
	-				-12.26	-12.26			-12.26	-12.26

5.8 Table 5.3 above shows overplay in all three areas with community use rugby pitches, for peak times for men’s rugby (Saturday afternoons) and mini, junior and senior women’s rugby (Sunday mornings). That is, demand exceeds theoretical supply. The Rugby Football Union have confirmed that the picture has not changed since then, and so Table 5.3 also applies for 2024. This is partly because pitch maintenance improvements for three sites referred to in paragraph 5.5 above have not yet impacted on pitch quality, and no 3G WR compliant pitch is in place as yet.

**Overview of progress in implementing sport-specific recommendations for rugby**

5.9 Table 5.4 below provides an overview update of progress on implementation of sport - specific recommendations for rugby, bringing together information reported elsewhere in this chapter.

Table 5.45 Overview update of progress on implementation of sport -specific recommendations – rugby union			
Sport-specific recommendation		Progress	
		R-A-G	Comment
R1	Protect the existing quantity of rugby union pitches in Sefton to continue to accommodate for community and curricular demand		Sites have been protected from loss due to development.
R2	Improve pitch quality at sites aligned with Southport RUFC and Firwood Waterloo RFC		Rugby Football Union have confirmed that Firwood Waterloo RFC (1 pitch) and Southport RFC (2 including Waterloo Rd Rec) have been awarded grass pitch maintenance funding, although will be a delay in these improvements impacting on pitch capacity.
R3/ G7	Explore opportunities with Southport RFC and Firwood Waterloo RFC and providers of existing or new 3G pitches, where appropriate, to secure World Rugby (WR) compliant 3G provision		A proposed 3G pitch at Birkdale High will not be WR compliant, as the School and Southport RUFC are not able to sustain or meet the regular and level of use requirements to justify the additional WR compliancy costs. However, WR compliant

Table 5.45 Overview update of progress on implementation of sport -specific recommendations – rugby union		
Sport-specific recommendation	R-A-G	Progress
		Comment
		3G provision for Southport RFC and Firwood Waterloo RFC is still a priority.
R4	Improve the ancillary facilities at sites where clubs have identified a need to do so	Planning permission for a new (replacement) sports/changing pavilion at Merchant Taylors School Playing Fields, Spinney Crescent, Crosby granted in June 2022. Site is used for school sports and by Waterloo RFC who supported the proposal even though it did not meet Rugby Football Union design guidance.
R5	Provide additional sports lighting where possible at sites with specific needs for this	No known progress.
R6	Retain supply of rugby pitches at school sites for curricular and extra-curricular(community/club) use and formalise existing community/club use	Sites retained. Progress in formalising club access arrangements is unknown.
R7	Make sure provision at Merchant Taylors Playing Field, Spinney Crescent can continue to be accessed by Firwood Waterloo RFC for its mixed age grade and junior demand	It is understood that access has be retained although progress in formalising club access arrangements is unknown.
R8	Explore opportunities for clubs who do not manage their own sites to do so	Sefton Council and Southport RFC have reached agreement about funding accessed by the club to improve pitch quality on Waterloo Road Recreation Ground.

Back to [contents](#)

## 6. Hockey

### Hockey Demand Overview

6.1 There remain three community-based hockey clubs in Sefton: Northern Hockey Club (based at The Northern Club, Crosby), Formby Hockey Club (based at Formby Sports & Social Club, Formby) and Southport Hockey Club (based at Greenbank High School, Southport). In 2022, together the clubs supported 9 senior men's teams, 8 senior women's teams, 7 junior teams and (Formby Hocket Club) 2 veteran's (over 60s) teams, as shown in Table 6.1 below. As there were no and still are no Hockey Clubs or sites in Bootle & Netherton and Sefton East, these settlement areas are not included in Table 6.1.

6.2 England Hockey have provided updated information in relation to 2024/25 affiliation numbers. This is reflected in Figure 6.1 which shows a small reduction in the overall number of senior teams. This is due to fewer veterans and women's teams at Formby Hockey Club, although their membership numbers have increased. Southport Hockey Club have moved from 3 to 2 senior men's teams, but now have a Veterans (vets) team. Formby Hockey Club from 4 to 3 senior women's teams. There were also reductions in the number of senior members at the Northern Club in Crosby (down 47 to 147, although this did not affect the number of senior teams) and Southport Hockey Club (down 28 players to 157). By contrast membership at Formby Hockey Club increased (20 new players, to 361 in total, although as above there is one less female team).

6.3 England Hockey had no junior team information from the clubs for 2023/24, but do have information on under 16 membership. The Northern Club in Crosby had 76 U16 players. Formby Hockey Club had 205 U16 players. Southport Hockey Club had 68 U16 players. However, England Hockey's Club Development Managers are working closely with the clubs to increase participation, and this is ongoing.

Age Group	Crosby		Formby		Southport		Sefton as a whole	
	2022	2024	2022	2024	2022	2024	2022	2024
Senior Men	2	2	4	4	3	2	9	8
Senior Women	2	2	4	3	2	2	8	7
Other (Vets)	0	0	2	0	0	1	2	1
<b>Sub-total (seniors)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>
Juniors	4	n/a	2	n/a	1	n/a	7	n/a
<b>Total teams</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>n/a</b>

6.4 This updated information from England Hockey shows that the Clubs' aspirations, in terms of traditional 11 a-side games, as set out in the PPOSS have not been realised. Southport Hockey Club hoped to generate future demand for a fourth senior men's team and a second junior side. Instead, they now have only two senior men's teams, although the additional Veterans team may in effect replace the 'lost' third senior men' team. Northern Hockey Club in Crosby aimed to focus on increasing junior members in allow dedicated boys' and girls' teams aged U10 and U12 rather than a mixed side for each age group, and may be working towards this. Formby Hockey Club's focus was on retaining existing players, whereas in fact they have increased the number of players whilst losing one women's team, and have the greatest number of under 16 junior players.

### Hockey AGP Supply Overview

6.5 As shown in Table 6.2 below there remain three full-sized, sand-based Artificial Grass Pitches in Sefton, used by the three respective Hockey Clubs for training and any matches, that is, having community use. There is one such pitch at each of The Northern Club (Crosby), Formby Sports & Social Club (Formby) and Greenbank High School (Southport). The PPOSS main document also identified three small-sided Artificial Grass Pitches suitable for hockey use at Sacred Heart High School (Crosby), and Ashworth Hospital North and Melling Primary School in Sefton East. None of these was available for community use in 2022 and so these are not included in Table 6.2.

Crosby		Formby		Southport		Sefton as a whole	
2022	2024	2022	2024	2022	2024	2022	2024
1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3

### Pitch Quality Overview and Ancillary Facility Overview

6.6 All three hockey pitches were assessed as good quality in 2022. Greenbank High School Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) was re-surfaced in 2019, Formby Hockey Club’s AGP in 2020 and while The Northern Club’s AGP was re-surfaced in 2015 and the PPOSS indicated that it is reputedly well-maintained and fit for purpose for match and training purposes. All three hockey clubs indicated to England Hockey in 2024-25 that they have no pitch or ancillary facility issues and no future plans. Given the decline in senior teams. Therefore, there are considered to be no significant changes to pitch quality or to ancillary facilities.

### Supply/Demand Balance

6.7 Sefton’s men’s and women’s hockey teams play matches on Saturdays; this is peak time for competitive play. The PPOSS indicated sufficient current and future supply of hockey pitches (base date 2022), if additional access to the Greenbank High School pitch is sought (in effect, reducing football use of the pitch). Formby Hockey Club was assessed at being at capacity. With no 2023/24 information available for junior teams, but a decline in the number of women’s and veterans’ teams, it is not clear if this situation has improved and overall capacity has increased, although it is assumed that it has not worsened. There was assessed spare capacity at The Northern Club, however. In terms of the 2024-25 information supplied by England Hockey, it is considered that there have been no significant changes.

### Overview of progress in implementing sport-specific recommendations for hockey

6.8 Table 6.3 below provides an overview update of progress on implementation of sport - specific recommendations for hockey, bringing together information reported elsewhere in this chapter.

<b>Table 6.3 Overview update of progress on implementation of sport -specific recommendations – hockey</b>			
		<b>Progress</b>	
<b>Sport-specific recommendation</b>		<b>R-A-G</b>	<b>Comment</b>
H1 / G4	Protect all community use sand-based AGPs for continued hockey use		Sites have been protected from loss due to development.
H2	Look to preserve current good quality of full size AGPs through thorough appropriate maintenance regimes at all three sites		Sites have been protected from loss due to development.
H3	Look to increase and formalise AGP pitch access at Greenbank High School for Southport HC to better service the Club for training and match play demand		It understood that no action has been taken as yet.
H4	Encourage all hockey suitable AGP providers to have a sinking fund in place for their eventual refurbishment		It understood that no action has been taken as yet.

Back to [contents](#)

## 7. Tennis

### Tennis Demand Overview

7.1 The PPOSS identified 14 Lawn Tennis Association registered tennis clubs in Sefton: 4 clubs in Crosby, 2 clubs in Formby, 1 club in Sefton East and 7 clubs in Southport, reflected by Table 7.1 below. There are no tennis clubs in Bootle & Netherton. There has been no change in the number or overall distribution of tennis clubs in Sefton. All of these clubs except one are based at Club sites. Maghull Tennis Club uses Maghull Town Council courts.

7.2 Table 7.1 below shows tennis club membership information in 2021 and 2024 (Based on Lawn Tennis Association data). Senior membership at most clubs grew between 2021 and 2022, although mostly remained below the aspirations recorded in the PPOSS. In 2021 the biggest club was Formby Village Lawn Tennis Club with 250 members (150 seniors), the smallest Waterloo Lawn Tennis Club (Crosby) with 45 members (all seniors) and Carlton Lawn Tennis Club (Southport) with 46 members (40 seniors). Formby Lawn Tennis Club had the highest number of senior members (230). Contrary to the national position, Sefton’s tennis clubs were not aware of any unmet or latent demand for tennis.

	Crosby		Formby		Sefton East		Southport		Sefton total	
	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024
Senior	269*	317	380	662	*	28	762	846	1411	1853
Juniors	147*	174	180	136	*	20	244	327	571	657
<b>Total</b>	<b>416*</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>1006</b>	<b>1173</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>2510</b>

(\* ) 2021 membership numbers from Hightown Tennis Club (Crosby) and Maghull Tennis Club (Sefton East) were unknown.

7.3 The PPOSS indicated that most of these tennis clubs aspired to increase their senior and junior membership in the future, typically by between 30 and 50 senior members and by 20 junior members. Overall tennis club membership has increased between 2021 and 2024, by over 25%, even though in most cases individual club growth aspirations were not met. In 2024 the biggest club was still Formby Village Lawn Tennis Club with 502 members (429 seniors), up from 250 members (150 seniors). The smallest club in 2024 was being Hightown Lawn Tennis Club (Crosby) with 37 members (35 seniors).

7.4 For Formby Village Tennis Club, senior membership rose from 150 in 2021 not to 200 (the aspiration), but to 429 senior members by 2024. This significant rise in senior members is understood to be linked to provision of a padel court, as well as retention of the existing tennis courts. For Birkdale Lawn Tennis Club, senior membership rose from 120 in 2021 not to 170 (the aspiration), but to 180 senior members by 2024. For Southport Argyle, senior membership was 143 in 2021 and 203 in 2024, compared to an aspiration of 173.

7.5 While junior membership fell slightly in a number of clubs, junior numbers increased between 2021 and 2024 in Blundellsands and Waterloo Lawn Tennis Clubs in Crosby, and Carlton, Hillside, North Meols and Southbank Lawn Tennis Clubs. Junior membership at Sphinx Tennis Club in Southport rose from 20 in 2021 to 71 in 2024.

7.6 The PPOSS also recommended increasing opportunities for year-round recreational tennis on courts in parks to meet local demand, through Lawn Tennis Association initiatives such as ClubSpark. However, promotion or activation levels of community use of courts has remained low, for example with low numbers of court bookings using the ClubSpark booking platform. No schools’ activity, Tennis for Free weekly sessions or Local Tennis Leagues have taken place in recent years, contributing to any decline in park tennis court use and quality.

### Tennis Supply Overview

7.7 The PPOSS documents identified 170 tennis courts in Sefton across 38 sites in 2021; with 104 tennis courts available for community use at 22 sites (65 courts on 13 tennis club sites; the rest being mainly courts on parks sites and one school site). Courts with no community use were on school sites. Southport contains the highest number of community-use courts (over 40, mostly on tennis club sites), Crosby has 35, around two thirds on club sites, Formby has 15 courts, two thirds on club sites and Sefton East has more than 10 parks courts. Bootle & Netherton has the fewest community-use courts (5, on school and parks sites). Table 7.2 shows the number of tennis courts across Sefton in 2021 and 2024.

Table 7.2 Supply - Number of publicly available tennis courts												
	Bootle		Crosby		Formby		Sefton East		Southport		Sefton as a whole	
Age Group	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024	2021	2024
<b>Total</b>	5	5	35	35	15	15	12	12	37	37	104	104

7.8 The number of tennis courts available for community use remains unchanged. It is understood that no tennis clubs have as yet sought new agreements which would bring school or park courts into club use. Recreational use of parks sites, based on Lawn Tennis Association initiatives has remained stable or declined.

### Tennis Court Quality Overview

7.9 In 2021 almost all of the tennis club sites and courts were good quality, including those of Maghull Lane Tennis Club provided by Maghull Town Council. The only exception was Waterloo Lawn Tennis Club (standard quality). This reflects past investment by the clubs. The majority of club courts are sports lit. In 2021 many parks courts were standard quality, as were the courts at Litherland High School.

7.10 There are understood to have been no significant changes in court quality at tennis clubs. The existing good quality courts have been sustained. In 2020/21 there was past progress on improving the quality of some parks courts and/or access to them through Lawn Tennis Association initiative; these improvements have not been maintained and in some cases park court quality has declined.

### **Ancillary Facility Quality overview**

7.11 The PPOSS Assessment Report indicated that in 2021 most clubs saw their changing facilities, car parking and facilities as a whole as adequate or good, and this situation is understood to remain. Only Southbank Lawn Tennis Club (Southport) felt car parking to be poor. The Lawn Tennis Association considers that good quality ancillary facilities such as toilets, changing rooms and cafes encourage players to visit community available provision and stay for extended periods of time, which can then also provide a source of income to those clubs. Parks courts tend to have little or no ancillary provision.

7.12 In 2021 Hillside Lawn Tennis Club undertook a major refurbishment to its existing clubhouse. While Sphynx Lawn Tennis Club also expressed an ambition to refurbish its clubhouse, the planning permission it received in 2023 was for reconfiguration of the existing courts, upgraded sports lighting and fencing<sup>25</sup>. North Meols Lawn Tennis Club received planning permission for sports lighting upgrades, including to more courts<sup>26</sup> in 2022. All of these tennis clubs are in Southport. It is understood club/ external (not s106 monies) funding was used.

### **Supply/Demand Balance Overview**

7.13 The PPOSS identified potential current and future capacity issues at Formby Village Lawn Tennis Club and potential future capacity issues at Formby Lawn Tennis Club and Birkdale Lawn Tennis Club (Southport). All of these clubs have good quality courts with sports lighting, limiting the scope to improve on-site capacity. The PPOSS recommended that opportunities be explored to provide additional court space on or next to existing sites, or at nearby school sites (including those not in 2021 available for community use). No planning applications for new courts (other than padel courts) have been received, and it is understood that to date no new agreements have been reached with schools.

### **Padel tennis**

7.14 As set out in the 2023 PPOSS, padel is one of the fastest growing sports in Great Britain, with significant investment in the sport since the Lawn Tennis Association became the national governing body in 2020. Padel is played on an enclosed court that is around a third of a size of a tennis court, in a doubles format and can be played in groups of mixed ages and abilities. The rules are broadly the same as tennis, although with under-arm serving and the walls being used as part of the game with the ball allowed to bounce off them.

7.15 The Lawn Tennis Association launched an updated LTA Padel Strategy 2024-2029 in September 2024<sup>27</sup>. Its vision and mission align to the tennis strategy and the focus is on growing the infrastructure, increasing and diversifying the coaching workforce and building on the performance pathway as well as increasing visibility and driving participation. There are currently

---

<sup>25</sup> See DC/2022/01719, for replacement/additional floodlighting, reconfiguration of existing tennis courts including new fencing. Granted with conditions 10 March 2023.

<sup>26</sup> See DC/2021/02954, for upgraded sports lighting and new lighting for 3 courts. Granted with conditions 6 October 2022.

<sup>27</sup> See [LTA announces new padel strategy | LTA](#)

over 550 padel courts in GB of which 60% are indoor (Oct 24). The Lawn Tennis Association have recently established a methodology for strategic planning for padel tennis, based on population, demand (20% of this population), converts to padel (8%) and assuming 200 players per court. On this basis the Lawn Tennis Association estimates demand is for 25 padel courts in Sefton.

7.16 In 2021 Sefton had no padel courts. The PPOSS Tennis recommendation T7 is to “*Support padel tennis and other opportunities to increase participation in club tennis*” to provide an alternate, faster paced version of the sport and help retain and grow club memberships. There have been a number of planning applications and permissions for padel tennis courts in Sefton since the 2023 PPOSS was published, not all at club sites:

- Southport Argyle Lawn Tennis Club – a 2021 planning application for one padel court was not determined<sup>28</sup>
- Formby Village Lawn Tennis Club - planning permission granted in March 2024 for one padel court<sup>29</sup>
- Formby Village Lawn Tennis Club - planning permission granted in April 2025 for two further padel courts<sup>30</sup>
- Formby Lawn Tennis Club – planning permission granted on appeal in November 2024 for one padel court (originally refused on noise grounds)<sup>31</sup>
- Park Hotel, Netherton - a 2024 planning application proposing a 7 court padel tennis facility alongside a hotel extension in Netherton is yet to be determined<sup>32</sup>. The padel courts would be for use of hotel customers and the general public, proposed to be designed to competition standards and as a hub for training and competitions
- Victoria Park, Southport, a recent planning application for 3 padel courts with canopies plus 2. uncovered padel courts, conversion of a changing room, café and associated works is still to be determined.

7.17 That is, 4 padel courts have planning permission in Formby, and at least three are understood to be in use. Permission is being sought for 7 padel courts in Bootle & Netherton. This compares to the Lawn Tennis Associations’ figure for demand for 25 padel courts. As set out above, Formby Village Lawn Tennis Club credits its significant rise in senior memberships to this padel provision.

### **Overview of progress in implementing sport-specific recommendations for tennis**

7.18 Table 7.3 below provides an overview update of progress on implementation of sport - specific recommendations for tennis, bringing together information reported elsewhere in this chapter.

---

<sup>28</sup> See DC/2020/02018, declined to determine 8 February 2024.

<sup>29</sup> See planning permission DC/2023/01055, granted with conditions 14 March 2024 (quote is from the submitted Planning Statement)

<sup>30</sup> See planning permission DC/2024/02021, granted with conditions 10 April 2025

<sup>31</sup> See planning permission DC/2021/01383, permission refused 11 Oct 2023, appeal allowed 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

<sup>32</sup> See planning application DC/2024/02025, still to be determined.

<b>Table 7.3 Overview update of progress on implementation of sport -specific recommendations – tennis</b>			
		<b>Progress</b>	
<b>Sport-specific recommendation</b>		<b>R-A-G</b>	<b>Comment</b>
T1	Protect the existing quantity of tennis courts		Sites have been protected from loss due to development.
T2	Improve court quality at sites assessed as poor or standard quality and sustain court quality at sites assessed as good quality at sites in use by clubs or that are (or could be) well used for recreational demand		It is understood that good and standard quality club sites have been sustained. The generally poor quality of park courts has not improved and may have declined.
T3	Explore opportunities to install additional sports lighting at club-based venues, particularly at sites operating above the capacity guidance		Sphynx LTC (Southport) was granted planning permission in 2023 for reconfiguration of the existing courts, upgraded sports lighting and fencing. North Meols LTC (Southport) received planning permission for lighting upgrades, including to more courts in 2022. Neither club is operating at above the capacity guidance.
T4	Explore opportunities to improve ancillary facilities at sites where clubs have identified a need to do so		Hillside LTC (Southport) refurbished its clubhouse in 2021.
T5	Explore opportunities to provide additional on-site or off-site court space for clubs operating above LTA capacity guidance		It is not clear what steps clubs have taken to explore opportunities.
T6	Explore opportunities for club or community use of school sites with higher levels of provision		It is not clear what steps clubs have taken to explore opportunities.
T7	Support padel tennis and other opportunities to increase participation in club tennis		Planning permission for a padel court next to Formby Village LTC was granted in March 2024 and an appeal decision is awaited regarding a padel court at Formby LTC. It should be noted that padel courts raise a number of planning issues, notably in relation to noise.
T8	Increase opportunities for year-round recreational tennis on courts in parks to meet local demand including via utilisation of technology provided by the LTA		Park courts in Sefton are not generally maintained to a standard to be used by the public. Promotion or activation levels of community use of courts is low, hence there are low numbers of court bookings using the ClubSpark booking platform. No schools activity, Tennis for Free weekly sessions or Local Tennis Leagues have taken place in recent years, contributing to any decline in park tennis court use and quality.

Back to [contents](#)

## 8. Bowls

### Bowls Demand Overview

8.1 The PPOSS indicates that in 2021 there were 39 bowling clubs in Sefton. St Monica's Bowls Club disbanded in 2024, vacating the green in Derby Park, Bootle. Other than this loss of one club, there are no known changes to the number of bowling clubs in Sefton.

8.2 Indications are that club membership levels have not grown between 2021 and 2025; remaining broadly the same or declining. The image of bowls as a sport for older people tends to limit membership: few clubs are understood to have junior members or have success in recruiting juniors.

8.3 The Bowls Development Alliance appointed a community development officer for the North West in 2025, who has been active in Sefton. The Community Development Officer has an on-going programme of club-based community development initiatives in Southport, Bootle and other parts of Sefton, working with clubs to increase bowls participation and club memberships. A number of clubs run recruiting sessions, including new bowlers sessions and beginners bowling lessons (such as Hesketh Arms Bowling Club).

8.4 The PPOSS identified twelve clubs which under BCGBA guidance 'may need additional resource to ensure that' they meet their current and/or future required level of demand. This included:

- 1 club in Bootle & Netherton (an area where there is a supply of 5 disused greens)
- 2 clubs in Crosby (an area where there are 6 disused greens)
- 4 clubs in Formby (an area where there are no disused greens)
- 1 club in Sefton East (an area where there are no disused greens)
- 4 clubs in Southport (an area where there are 3 disused greens).

8.5 It is not clear what such 'additional resource' might entail. Only one recent planning application has been received in relation to a bowling club, for ancillary facilities in relation to Walnut Tree Public House bowling green in Bootle & Netherton. This was not the club (Netherton Bowls Club) in the area identified as needing 'additional resource'. As above, there are a number of disused greens across the borough but realistically a club may not wish to use greens across two sites especially if they are not geographically close together and may be poor quality.

### Bowls Supply Overview

8.6 As set out in Table 8.1, there were 40 bowling greens available for community use and 13 disused greens in 2021, With St Monica's Bowls Club ceasing to use the Derby Park Green in 2024, this site has now been categorised as 'disused', even though a long-term picture has not yet emerged. Thus for 2025, Table 8.1 indicates 39 bowling greens available for community use, across 33 sites, and 14 disused greens across nine sites.

Table 8.1 Supply - Number of bowling greens												
	Bootle		Crosby		Formby		Sefton East		Southport		Sefton as a whole	
	2021	2025	2021	2025	2021	2025	2021	2025	2021	2025	2021	2025
In use	5	4	7	7	6	6	7	7	15	15	40	39
Disused	4	5	6	6	0	0	0	0	3	3	13	14

### Bowling green quality overview

8.7 In 2021 the vast majority (29) of Sefton’s bowling greens were of good quality, with 10 being of standard quality. Only one, used by Hightown Bowls Club (Crosby) was assessed as being poor quality, with the club noting their desire for quality improvements to the bowling green and a toilets upgrade. Formby Village Bowls Club and Hesketh Arms Bowls Club (Southport) wised to install a new sprinkler system & replacement sports lighting and a new sprinkler system, respectively. No planning applications have been submitted. There are indications of a net increase in green quality by 2025 for a number of clubs, for example for Hesketh Arms Bowls Club, Fleetwood Hesketh Bowls Club and Victoria Park Bowls Club, although one of the greens at Botanic Bowls Club has declined in quality from good to standard (the other remaining good).

### Ancillary Facility Quality Overview

8.8 In 2021 Brooklands Bowls Club (Crosby) referred to the need for toilets upgrades, and Formby Park Bowls Club, Kensington Bowls Club (Sefton East) and Ainsdale Bowls Club (Southport) referred to the need for improved paths around their greens. It is not known whether these upgrades have taken place. Planning permission was granted in 2023 for a new café, bar, seating/viewing area and store for the bowling green at Walnut Tree Public House bowling green in Bootle & Netherton<sup>33</sup>. It is assumed that this was mostly financed by private funding. Other than this there have been no known changes to the quality of ancillary facilities at Sefton’s bowling greens.

### Supply/Demand Balance

8.9 Notwithstanding the 2024 cessation of use of the Derby Park, Bootle bowling green by the former St Monica’s Bowls Club, there are no known significant changes in the supply/demand balance for bowling greens.

### Overview of progress in implementing sport-specific recommendations for bowls

8.10 Table 8.2 below provides an overview update of progress on implementation of sport - specific recommendations for bowls, bringing together information reported elsewhere in this chapter.

<sup>33</sup> See DC/2022/02231, granted permission with conditions on 31 January 2023.

<b>Table 8.2 Overview update of progress on implementation of sport -specific recommendations – bowls</b>			
		<b>Progress</b>	
<b>Sport-specific recommendation</b>		<b>R-A-G</b>	<b>Comment</b>
B1	Protect the existing quantity of bowling greens which are currently in use		Sites have been protected from loss due to development.
B2	Retain a supply of disused bowling green sites to act as a strategic growth supply for an ageing population or to meet other future needs		Disused bowling green sites have been retained.
B3	Improve the quality of greens assessed as poor or standard quality and sustain the quality of greens assessed as good quality		Indications are that the quality of greens assessed as good quality and standard quality has been sustained or enhanced.
B4	Explore opportunities to improve ancillary facilities at sites where clubs have identified a need to do so		It is not clear whether the relevant clubs have explored opportunities to improve ancillary facilities. Improvements have been made at a different site, Walnut Tree PH in Bootle.
B5	Explore opportunities to support clubs which have plans to increase membership so that their growth can be maximised and accommodated		The recent Bowls Development Alliance initiative with local clubs and elsewhere to increase community participation in bowls is welcomed.

Back to [contents](#)

## 9. Other

### Disused / unused sites

9.1 Table 9.1 overleaf lists unused pitch or non-pitch sports sites referred to in the PPOSS. Other than the bowling green in Derby Park, Bootle, there are no newly unused sites. The table shows a summary of site-specific recommendations made about each site in the main PPOSS document, and also provides an update where relevant. Few sites have updates which relate directly to loss of pitch, tennis courts or bowling greens, or to new or compensatory provision.

9.2 The main issue of note is that for Chaffers Fields, Crosby, planning permission was granted in February 2023 to Marsh Lane Harriers, for a clubhouse adjacent to the existing running track. The site is considered to be in active athletics use; rather than the historic athletics and playing field use. Planning permission was granted in 2024 for housing development on the footprint of the former Bootle High School, on a development site which excluded the former school playing field area. Planning permission was refused in 2022 (and dismissed on appeal) for housing and other development on the former St Mary’s School Site in Bootle & Netherton, despite the fact that the site is allocated for housing development in the 2017 Sefton Local Plan and the Bootle Area Action Plan due to be adopted January 2026.

<b>Table 9.1 Unused sites - update</b>		
<b>Site name and former sports use</b>	<b>PPOSS recommendation (summary)</b>	<b>Update</b>
<b>Bootle &amp; Netherton</b>		
<b>Former Bootle High School playing field</b>  Football pitch(es)	Site should be protected from development unless adequately re-provided elsewhere in accordance with Sport England and National Planning Policy Framework policy and 2017 Sefton Local Plan policy NH5, as there is potential need for playing field land to accommodate more pitches to meet identified football pitch shortfalls.	Planning permission DC/2023/01911 granted on 12 June 2024 for 53 new homes on the footprint of the former school building (not the playing fields, which remain vacant / disused).
<b>Former Daleacre School, Daleacre Drive</b>  Football pitch(es)	Site is allocated for housing development in the 2017 Sefton Local Plan, subject to a compensatory provision via a contribution towards the provision of a new 3G pitch(es) at Litherland Sports Park.	None
<b>Former St Ambrose Barlow High School</b>  Football pitch(es)	Site should be protected from development unless adequately re-provided elsewhere in accordance with Sport England and National Planning Policy Framework policy and 2017 Sefton Local Plan policy NH5, as there is potential need for playing field land to accommodate more pitches to meet identified football pitch shortfalls.	None
<b>Former St Raymond’s School playing field</b>  Football pitch(es)	Site is allocated for housing development in the 2017 Sefton Local Plan, subject to a compensatory provision via a contribution towards the provision of a new 3G pitch(es) at Litherland Sports Park.	None

<b>Table 9.1 Unused sites - update</b>		
<b>Site name and former sports use</b>	<b>PPOSS recommendation (summary)</b>	<b>Update</b>
<b>Former St Mary's Primary School playing fields</b>  Football pitch(es)	Site is allocated for housing development in the 2017 Sefton Local Plan, subject to compensatory provision via a contribution towards the provision of a new 3G pitch(es) at Litherland Sports Park. Bootle Area Action Plan is due to be adopted by the Council in January 2026. This removes the requirement for compensatory provision of a pitch, instead seeking commuted sums for environmental improvements.	DC/2020/00705 planning permission refused February 2021 for mixed use scheme including housing, community, sports and tourism-related uses and supporting infrastructure. Appeal dismissed 13 September 2022.
<b>Derby Park, Bootle</b>  Bowling green	Newly disused bowling green as club formerly in occupation cased to use it.	Potential site to act as a strategic growth supply for an ageing population or to meet other future bowls needs.
<b>Hatton Hill Park, Litherland</b>  Bowling green	Disused bowling green. Potential site to act as a strategic growth supply for an ageing population or to meet other future bowls needs.	None
<b>Killen Green Park</b>  Bowling green	Disused bowling green. Potential site to act as a strategic growth supply for an ageing population or to meet other future bowls needs.	None
<b>Lathom Road, Bootle</b>  Bowling green	Disused bowling green. Potential site to act as a strategic growth supply for an ageing population or to meet other future bowls needs.	None
<b>Orrell Mount Park</b>  Bowling green	Disused bowling green. Potential site to act as a strategic growth supply for an ageing population or to meet other future bowls needs.	None
<b>Crosby</b>		
<b>Chaffers Fields, Glenwylin Road</b>  Running track, possible pitches	The site has disused football pitches and formerly a disused athletics track, however this was track was brought back into use by Marsh Lane Harriers in 2020 and now has sports lighting as well as a fully functioning track.	Planning permission DC/2022/01466 granted 1 February 2023 to Marsh Lane Harriers, for the erection of a single storey clubhouse adjacent to the existing running track; site in active athletics use.
<b>Potters Barn Park</b>  Bowling green	Two disused bowling greens. One green to act as a strategic growth supply for an ageing population or to meet other future bowls needs.	None
<b>Victoria Park</b>  Bowling greens	Four disused bowling greens. One green to act as a strategic growth supply for an ageing population or to meet other future bowls needs.	None
<b>Sefton East</b>		

<b>Table 9.1 Unused sites - update</b>		
<b>Site name and former sports use</b>	<b>PPOSS recommendation (summary)</b>	<b>Update</b>
<b>Parkhaven Trust, Maghull</b> Cricket pitch	Site of one former full-size cricket pitch. Within one of two Parkhaven Trust (dementia and other residential and daycare) sites.	None
<b>Southport</b>		
<b>Former Ainsdale Hope School</b> Football pitch(es)	Site is allocated for housing development in the 2017 Sefton Local Plan, subject to a compensatory provision via a contribution towards the provision of a new 3G pitch(es) at Meols Park or adjacent sites.	None
<b>Bedford Park</b> Bowling green	Disused bowling green. Potential site to act as a strategic growth supply for an ageing population or to meet other future bowls needs	None
<b>Salisbury Park</b> Bowling greens	Two disused bowling greens. Potential site to act as a strategic growth supply for an ageing population or to meet other future bowls needs	None

### Housing Growth Scenarios

9.3 The 2023 Sefton PPOSS does not include a range of housing scenarios, as on-going population growth had been anticipated to be low overall, based on housing need and population figures in the 2017 Local Plan period and past structure of Sefton’s population and rates of change. As set out in Part 7 of the PPOSS, between 2011 and 2021<sup>34</sup> the percentage increase in children aged under 15 years was 0.3% compared to 5.0% nationally, and there were large decreases in the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups in Sefton by 16% and 15% respectively. There was an increase of 13.5% in people aged 65 years and over but a decrease of 1.3% in people aged 15 to 64 years in Sefton. That is, the biggest increase in Sefton’s population between 2011 and 2021 has been in age groups considered less likely to participate in pitch sports.

9.4 Under the regime set out in the December 2023 National Planning Policy Framework, there was nothing to suggest this trend would change in coming years. However, the December 2024 National Planning Policy Framework<sup>35</sup> and the Government’s changes to housing requirements in Sefton and nationally, mean that Sefton Council’s annual housing target moves from 578 homes each year to 1,368 each year<sup>36</sup> (an annual increase of 718). The likely timeframe and impact of this on the total population of Sefton and its age structure has not yet been assessed; this assessment is likely to be complex and will take some time to carry out. Such a population assessment would then need to be assessed against playing pitch, tennis and bowls supply and demand. Therefore, no meaningful updates can be made to this section of the Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy at this time.

Back to [contents](#)

<sup>34</sup> Based on 2021 census data

<sup>35</sup> See December 2024 [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

<sup>36</sup> See [lhn-outcome-of-the-new-method.ods](#)

## Strategic recommendations

### 10. Progress on Strategic Recommendations

10.1 Table 10.1 below provides an overview of progress on implementation of strategic recommendations. It draws mainly on the assessments of sport-specific recommendations and progress set out in earlier chapters. This shows that, overall, good or reasonable progress has been made for most strategic recommendations.

		Progress	
Strategic recommendation	R-A-G	Comment	
1	To <b>protect</b> the existing supply of outdoor sport facilities and ancillary facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs.		
1a	With reference to the PPOSS, protect outdoor sport facilities through the planning process.		Sites have been protected through the planning process from loss due to development.
1b	Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.		An increased number of sites are now (or are about to be) self-managed by clubs.
1c	Maximise community use of education facilities where needed.		Existing community / club use of education sites has been retained, though it is understood that little progress has been made on formalising arrangements or extending such use to additional education facilities.
2	To support the <b>enhancement</b> outdoor sport facilities and ancillary facilities within available resources through improving quality and management of sites.		
2d	Maintain quality and seek improvements where necessary.		In the main, the quality of good and standard quality sites is understood to have been retained, and some improvements across the range of sites have been made or have received funding. These include funding for improved maintenance of a number of football pitches, three rugby pitches across two clubs and a cricket pitch. Some of these sites are newly self-managed. Quality improvements, including practice facilities, have also been made to cricket and tennis club sites, a school site (ancillary facilities) and to one bowls site (ancillary facilities).
2e	Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites.		While there is a tiered approach to management of sites, to date the improvement of sites has tended to be led by club or Council initiatives and available opportunities.

<b>Table 10.1 Overview update of progress on implementation of strategic recommendations</b>			
		<b>Progress</b>	
<b>Strategic recommendation</b>	<b>R-A-G</b>	<b>Comment</b>	
2f	Encourage and enhance participation in outdoor sports.		Overall participation in outdoor sports has been encouraged and enhanced. Notably successes include football, which has seen increases in the number of girls' and women's teams, although some decline in the number of men's teams (admittedly from a high base), Also, in tennis for example, there is now padel court provision in Sefton, and increasing interest in additional provision for padel tennis.
2g	Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding.		It is understood that clubs and leagues are accessing a range of funding; including from the Football Foundation, Rugby Football League and from individual clubs, for example in football, cricket and tennis.
2h	Secure developer contributions where appropriate to enhance provision.		Since 2023 there have been few opportunities for to secure new developer contributions, mainly due to the relative absence of planning applications for housing or other development on pitches, tennis courts or bowling greens.
3	To support the provision of <b>new outdoor sport facilities</b> , within available resources, where there is current or future demand to do so.		
3h	Rectify quantitative shortfalls through improvements to the current stock.		As above, funding to sustain and enhance maintenance has been secured on a number of sites, including football, rugby and cricket pitches. Other quality improvements, including practice facilities, have also been made to cricket and tennis club sites, a school site (ancillary facilities) and to one bowls site (ancillary facilities). Over time, it is hoped that quantitative shortfalls will be reduced by these and other maintenance on additional sites.
3i	Explore opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.		Opportunities to add to the overall stock have focussed on 3G pitches, where the Football Foundation is taking a lead role in exploring opportunities, notably on education sites. New provision of one padel tennis court has also been secured, in effect a new outdoor sports site.

Back to [contents](#)

## Overview

### **11. Results, conclusions and next steps**

11.1 This is Annual Monitoring Review (PPOSS AMR) of the 2023 Sefton Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy has been prepared by a Steering Group and in line with Sport England guidance. The Review has been led by Sefton Council. The National Governing Bodies have provided updated demand and supply information for their sports and in the most part have also commented on drafts of the PPOSS AMR and have participated in two Steering Group meetings in January and June 2025. Sport England have also participated in the Review process.

#### **Football**

11.2 Football remains by far the dominant sport in Sefton. There has been overall growth in the number of football teams between 2022 and 2025 in all age and male/female categories except for mini-soccer which is played in mixed teams. The greatest rate of increase in the number of teams has been in Sefton East, with a substantive drop in the overall number of football teams in Formby, except for Youth Boys and Youth Girls (aged 12-17) teams. Sefton's largest (mainly male) local leagues (2024/25 season) include Craven Minor League, Hightown Junior League, Bootle & Netherton Junior League, Sefton Junior Football League, Southport & District League and She Inspires League. There is significant cross boundary migration in Sefton due to teams migrating both inwards (from Liverpool, Knowsley and West Lancashire) and outwards (to 3G pitch hub sites in Liverpool) to play or train at league central venues.

11.3 The overall site supply situation has not changed significantly, although pitch supply and the configuration of pitches on each site may change annually (the balance between different pitch size/ age groups) and there is a need for 'site rotation' for Council sites in some leagues. Where it has been assessed, pitch quality and playing capacity on some sites is known to have changed, effectively affecting the supply/demand balance. In many cases the pitch quality has increased, due in part to grants from the Football Foundation's Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund (GPMF) or Machinery & Equipment grants. In some other cases pitch quality has declined

11.4 In terms of the overall supply/demand balance, a key trend is increased spare capacity or new spare capacity of 5v5 and 7v7 mini pitches in every settlement area except Sefton East, and for Sefton as a whole. This is due more to reductions in the number of teams than to increased quality and capacity of pitches, and may be related to the age structure of Sefton's population, as set out in Part 7 of the PPOSS. In Sefton East there are no known changes in pitch quality and capacity, but an increase in the number of teams from 4 to 9. Other key issues are the increased shortfall in adult and 11v11 youth pitches in Bootle & Netherton and Crosby. This is particularly marked in Bootle & Netherton, due to the doubling of adult team numbers (from 45 to 99) and reductions in pitch quality and capacity. In Sefton East team numbers rose slightly; considered to remove spare capacity. Southport is considered to have spare capacity in adult pitches due to a small reduction in team numbers and improved pitch quality and capacity.

11.5 The R-A-G assessment of progress on the PPOSS recommendations for football indicates a mix of success and lack of progress. Progress on protecting sites, use of the Football Foundation's PitchPower app and on a number of pitch quality improvements has been greatest.

### **3G Pitches**

11.6 There are still four 3G pitches in Sefton, all in the south of the Borough and all used solely for football. The number of football teams in Sefton has increased, and so the 3G pitch shortfall has increased in each area except Formby (where teams numbers have declined) and for Sefton as a whole, from 13 to 16.5 full sized 3G pitches. Discussions regarding provision of additional 3G pitches between the Football Foundation and other key stakeholders have been progressing well on a number of sites. Planning permission was granted for a 3G pitch at Maghull High School in September 2025, and a planning application for a 3G pitch at Birkdale High School is still to be determined. The R-A-G assessment of progress on implementing the PPOSS's 3G pitch recommendations again indicates a mix of success and lack of progress.

### **Cricket**

11.7 There are still 14 grass pitches at 13 club sites, plus 6 on school sites. The number of cricket teams in each club/area has increased, from 87 teams in 2021 to 120 in 2024 for Sefton as a whole. The number of men's teams has remained relatively stable. Participation in junior, women's and girls' cricket has increased substantively. Southport and Birkdale Cricket Club Ground is a County outground.

11.8 Progress has been made in improving cricket pitch quality on a number of sites, likely due in part due to Grass Pitch Improvement Funding, club self- management of Council-owned sites, new groundsman and new practice facilities. Some clubs have also improved ancillary facilities.

11.9 Indications are that the cricket supply/demand balance picture across Sefton has improved somewhat. However, as well as pitch supply and quality and team demand, there are other factors which will affect cricket pitch use and supply. Southport & District Cricket League is due to cease in 2026 with the teams due to move to the Liverpool Competition. The current rules of the Liverpool Competition state that no men's senior cricket can play on Non-Turf Pitches, meaning that only juniors and W&G would be able to utilise these pitches for match play. Lancashire Cricket Foundation are working with the Liverpool Competition remove this restriction for senior men' teams, to retain effective capacity especially in north Sefton. The R-A-G assessment indicates that good or limited progress has been made on implementing each of the cricket recommendations in the PPOSS.

### **Rugby Union** *(there are no rugby league activities or proposals in Sefton)*

11.10 There remain three rugby union clubs in Sefton. Each supports a number of men's, women's and junior/ mini teams. The number of teams has not changed between 2022 and 2024. There have been no significant changes in pitch supply between 2022 and 2024, with 14 rugby union pitches available for community use on club and other sites. A potential World Rugby compliant 3G pitch at Birkdale High School (Southport), in consultation with potential partner Southport RUFC has not proved feasible. In terms of pitch quality, two clubs have gained funding to improve the maintenance of pitches, although the Rugby Football Union would not expect to see these improvements impact on pitch capacity at present, although this is likely to occur in the future. Planning permission was granted in 2022 for a new (replacement) sports/changing pavilion on a school site also used by a rugby club. The Rugby Football Union have confirmed that the supply/demand balance picture has not changed between 2022 and 2024. The R-A-G assessment of progress on implementing the PPOSS's rugby recommendations again indicates a mix of success and lack of progress.

## **Hockey**

11.11 There are still three community-based hockey clubs in Sefton, each playing on a good quality, sand-based Artificial Grass Pitch. However, there has been a small reduction in the overall number of senior teams from 2022 to 2024. No information is available for junior teams in 2024, although each club has high numbers of under 16 members, from 68 to 205 such members. All three hockey clubs indicated to England Hockey in 2024-25 that they have no pitch or ancillary facility issues and no future plans. There are considered to be no significant changes to pitch quality or to ancillary facilities. Therefore it is considered that there have been no significant changes in the supply/demand balance for hockey pitches and playing slots between 2022 and 2024. The R-A-G assessment indicates that good or limited progress has been made on implementing each of the hockey recommendations in the PPOSS.

## **Tennis**

11.12 There has been no change in the number or overall distribution of registered tennis clubs (14) in Sefton, all except one are still based at Club sites. There has been no change in the number or distribution of courts available for lawn tennis (104 publicly available courts). Senior membership at most clubs grew between 2021 and 2022, although mostly remained below the aspirations recorded in the PPOSS. The significant rise in senior members at Formby Village Lawn Tennis Club is understood to be linked to provision of a padel court, as well as retention of the existing lawn tennis courts. Junior membership fell slightly in a number of clubs but rose in others. Contrary to the national position, Sefton's tennis clubs were not aware of any unmet or latent demand for tennis. There are understood to have been no significant changes in court quality at tennis clubs; all except one of the tennis club sites and courts are good quality and are mainly sports lit. However, past progress on improving the quality of or access to some parks' courts have not been maintained and in some cases park court quality has declined.

11.13 In terms of the supply / demand balance, the PPOSS identified potential current and future capacity issues at three tennis clubs. All of these clubs have good quality courts with sports lighting, limiting the scope to improve on-site capacity. The PPOSS recommended that opportunities be explored to provide additional court space on or next to existing sites, or at nearby school sites (including those not in 2021 available for community use). No planning applications for new courts (other than padel courts) have been received, and it is understood that to date no new agreements have been reached with schools.

11.14 The Lawn Tennis Association has identified the need for 25 padel courts in Sefton. To date there are 4 permitted/in use and 12 more which are the subject of current planning applications.

11.15 Therefore, while the R-A-G assessment indicates that good or limited progress has been made on implementing some of tennis recommendations in the PPOSS, little or no progress has been made for others.

## **Bowls**

11.16 In 2021 there were 40 bowling greens available for community use and 13 disused greens in Sefton. With a club ceasing to exist and hence use a green in a Bootle park there are now 39 bowling greens available for community use, across 33 sites, and 14 disused greens across nine sites, and understood to be 38 bowling clubs in Sefton. Club memberships are understood to be generally static or declining, although a number of clubs take active steps to recruit new members, including beginners. The Bowls Development Alliance has recently appointed a community

development officer for the North West, who is taking forward community participation initiatives in Sefton..

11.17 There are indications of a net increase in green quality by 2025 for a number of clubs, with the vast majority of greens understood to be of good quality. It is not known whether aspirations for improvements to greens or ancillary facilities have been achieved. Notwithstanding the 2024 cessation of use of one parks bowling green by a former club, there are no known significant changes in the supply/demand balance for bowling greens. The R-A-G assessment of progress on implementing bowls recommendations again indicates a mix of success and lack of progress.

### **Overall sports-based assessment**

11.18 It is considered that the supply-demand balance for a number of sports covered by the PPOSS is largely unchanged. The main exception is perhaps for football and 3G pitches, and for padel, although one court is operation and potentially a number of others are in the pipeline.

### **Other**

11.19 Other than the bowling green in Derby Park, Bootle, there are no newly unused or disused pitch, tennis or bowls sites. It is considered that the Chaffers Fields, Crosby formerly dis-used football pitches and athletics site is now in active athletics use, with recent club investment.

11.20 The 2023 Sefton PPOSS does not include a range of housing scenarios, as on-going population growth had been anticipated to be low overall. The December 2024 National Planning Policy Framework and the Government's changes to housing requirements in Sefton and nationally, mean that Sefton Council's annual housing target moves from 578 homes each year to 1,368 each year (an annual increase of 718). The likely timeframe and impact of this on the total population of Sefton and its age structure has not yet been assessed; this assessment is likely to be complex and will take some time to carry out. Such a population assessment would then need to be assessed against playing pitch, tennis and bowls supply and demand. Therefore, no meaningful updates can be made to this section of the Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy at this time.

### **Strategic issues**

11.21 The Red- Amber-Green (RAG) assessment and update of progress on implementing the PPOSS's strategic recommendations indicates that overall, good or reasonable progress has been made for most strategic recommendations. Challenges remain, notably in increasing community use of school sites and on 3G (football) pitch provision, often due funding challenges linked to site-specific factors such as the presence of peat on site (especially in Southport) or Sport England objections to replacement of a grass pitch by a 3G pitch.

### **Conclusions and next steps**

11.22 As above, overall it is considered that the supply-demand balance for a number of sports covered by the PPOSS is largely unchanged. Progress has been made in implementing many sport-specific and strategic recommendations.

11.23 Currently there is no need for an entirely new Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy to be prepared. Therefore, the next steps are for Steering Group partners, working with local clubs and leagues and other relevant partners, to continue to implement the 2023 Sefton Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy. Further progress will be subject to future annual review.