



# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY UPDATED ASSESSMENT REPORT

**JULY 2019**

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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## ABBREVIATIONS

3G	Third Generation (artificial turf)
AGP	Artificial Grass Pitch
BC	Blackpool Council
CFA	County Football Association
ECB	England and Wales Cricket Board
EH	England Hockey
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FF	Football Foundation
FE	Further Education
FIT	Fields in Trust
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
HE	Higher Education
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page
LFA	Lancashire County Football Association
LCF	Lancashire Cricket Foundation
NGB	National Governing Body
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
RFL	Rugby Football League
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RUFC	Rugby union football club
S106	Section 106
SE	Sport England
TGR	Team generation rate
WR	World Rugby

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## PART 1: INTRODUCTION

This is an update to the Assessment Report (originally completed in 2016) of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) for Blackpool, prepared by Knight Kavanagh and Page (KKP) and commissioned by Blackpool Council.

It is important that there is regular monitoring and review against the actions identified in the original Strategy. As a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years of the PPS being signed off, Sport England and NGBs will consider it to be out of date. If the PPS is used as a 'live' document and kept up to date, its lifespan can be extended.

A combination of desk-based research as well as high level consultation with the Council, Sport England and National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) was carried out in order to update the supply and demand data (which reflects the 2018 season), whilst validating and adding new context to reflect key changes since the initial data was recorded. Where consultation is referred to in relation to other stakeholders, this applies to the consultation that took place across 2015/16 for the original study.

The report presents a supply and demand analysis of playing pitch facilities in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance: An approach to developing and delivering a playing pitch strategy. The guidance details a stepped approach to developing a PPS, separated into five distinct sections:

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

Stages A to C are covered in this report, with Stage D covered in the strategy document and Stage E ongoing.

### **Stage A: Tailoring the approach**

In order to meet the corporate priority of "encouraging participation in sport, physical activity and the arts, to promote physical and mental wellbeing", the assessment has the following aims:

- ◀ To inform the emerging planning policy within the Local Plan, particularly Part Two: Site Allocations & Development Management Policies;
- ◀ To inform the Council's future sports and health strategies and investment plans;
- ◀ Ensure the most efficient management and maintenance of sports facility provision in response to identified pressures
- ◀ To provide adequate planning guidance to assess development proposals affecting sport and leisure facilities;
- ◀ To inform land use decisions in respect of future use of existing sport and leisure facilities.
- ◀ Provide the basis for ongoing monitoring and review of the use, distribution, function, quality, and accessibility of outdoor sport, physical activity facility provision, and playing pitches.

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## ***Management arrangements***

A strong and effective steering group will lead and drive a PPS forward during its development and also to ensure the delivery of its recommendations and actions. The membership of the group is balanced and representative of the different parties and key drivers behind the work and the providers and users of playing pitches in the study area. High Level Officer representation from the Council has been confirmed and to chair the steering group and will provide the high level officer link with elected members .

Further to this, the Steering Group is and has been responsible for the direction of the PPS from a strategic perspective and for supporting, checking and challenging the work of the project team. The Steering Group is made up of representatives from Sport England and NGBs.

## ***Scope of the project***

The Assessment Report provides detail in respect of what exists in Blackpool, its condition, distribution and overall quality. It also considers the demand for facilities based on population distribution and planned growth. The full list of pitch sports facilities covered is set out below:

- ◀ Football pitches
- ◀ Cricket pitches
- ◀ Rugby league pitches
- ◀ Rugby union pitches
- ◀ Artificial grass pitches (AGPs)

## ***The extent of the study area***

Blackpool is a popular UK seaside resort and town of Lancashire in the North West coastal region, which is on the Irish Sea, between the Ribble and Wyre estuaries and located approximately 17 miles northwest of Preston.

The study area will not be broken down into analysis areas, instead it will comprise of the whole of the Blackpool Council administrative area as a Borough wide approach.

Blackpool study area is bordered by Wyre to the Northeast and Fylde to the Southeast. The wider 'travel to play' area includes Thornton, Lytham St Annes and Poulton-le-Fylde, though the popularity of the town as a seaside resort means that a significant level of short term imported demand for casual sporting provision comes from further afield.

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Figure 1.1: Study Area



## What makes the study area different?

### *Nature of pitch sports*

Football is the most popular sport in Blackpool and one of the key drivers for the FA is to increase access to 3G pitches, one of the key investment streams within the National Football Facility Strategy (NFFS). There are currently three full size 3G pitches in Blackpool, a recent increase from one as part of a programme of investment led by the Council and supported by partnership investment from the Football Foundation, seeing new 3G pitches developed at Unity Academy and Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park). Council managed football pitches account for a significant proportion of the provision used by local teams and the relatively small number of sites means that most are used by both junior and adult teams each week. Most adult teams play on Sundays as part of the Blackpool and Fylde Sunday Alliance (BFSL), many of which are singular team clubs and rely heavily on the availability of municipal provision.

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Cricket is also a popular sport within Blackpool and both resident clubs have a significant number of teams. Blackpool CC is the largest club and has an especially strong junior section, playing at its home ground situated within Stanley Park and at Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground. The Club has close links to Lancashire County Cricket Club and often hosts senior men's and women's fixtures as well as County Pathway and Development Squad activity.

Rugby league is a growing sport in Blackpool and there are two clubs which have continually developed in recent years. Blackpool Stanley ARLFC particularly is an established club and leases a facility with clubhouse and changing provision which it plans to improve.

The Borough previously accommodated both men's and women's hockey though there is now no community club hockey in Blackpool since the women's section of Blackpool HC folded. The men's teams have also assimilated into Fylde HC, in part due to the club infrastructure in place and the high quality facilities developed in 2017 at Fylde Sports & Education Centre in nearby Wesham (Fylde).

There is relatively less demand for rugby union in Blackpool which is reflected by the presence of just one club. Blackpool RFC has just one senior men's team although the Club has successfully increased participation over the last two years, now having an established and regular senior men's team and a newly established junior group. There is strong competition for rugby union players in the area with large clubs in Fylde RFC (Fylde) and Preston Grasshoppers RFC (Preston).

## ***Higher and Further Education***

Blackpool and The Fylde College has undertaken significant investment into large scale upgrade of facilities across its three campuses in Blackpool. This includes its Bispham Campus where a 3G pitch was built in early 2015, available for use by students and for hire to the local community. Similarly, a new full size 3G pitch was recently developed at Unity Academy supported by funding from the Football Foundation and is now open for use by community clubs and groups.

## **Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision**

It is essential that a PPS is based on the best and most accurate and up-to-date information available about the supply of and demand for playing pitches. This section provides detail about how this information has been gathered in Blackpool.

### ***Gather supply information and views – an audit of playing pitches***

PPS guidance uses the following definitions of a playing pitch and playing field. These definitions are set out by the Government in the 2015 'Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order'.<sup>1</sup>

- ◀ ***Playing pitch*** – a delineated area of 0.2ha or more which is used for association football, rugby, cricket, hockey, lacrosse, rounders, baseball, softball, American football, Australian football, Gaelic football, shinty, hurling, polo or cycle polo.
- ◀ ***Playing field*** – the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)>Facilities and Planning> Planning Applications

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It should be noted that the reference to five years within the Order is purely in relation to whether Sport England should be consulted in a statutory capacity. The fact that a playing field may not have been marked out for pitch sport in the last five years does not mean that it is no longer a playing field. That remains its lawful planning use whether marked out or not.

Although the statutory definition of a playing field is the whole of a site with at least one pitch of 0.2ha or more, this PPS takes into account smaller sized pitches that contribute to the supply side, such as mini 5v5 football pitches. This PPS counts individual grass pitches (as a delineated area) as the basic unit of supply. The definition of a playing pitch also includes artificial grass pitches (AGPs).

As far as possible the Assessment Report aims to capture all of the pitches within Blackpool; however, there may be instances, for example on school sites, where access was not possible and has led to omissions within the report. Where pitches have not been recorded within the report they remain as pitches and for planning purposes continue to be so. Furthermore, exclusions of a pitch does not mean that it is not required from a supply and demand point of view.

## *Quantity*

All playing pitches are included irrespective of ownership, management and use. Playing pitch sites were initially identified using Sport England's Active Places Power web based database. The Council and NGBs supported the process by checking and updating this initial data. This was also verified against club information supplied by local leagues. For each site the following detail is recorded in the project database. (It is supplied as an electronic file):

- ◀ Site name, address (including postcode) and location
- ◀ Ownership and management type
- ◀ Security of tenure
- ◀ Total number, type and quality of pitches

## *Accessibility*

Not all pitches offer the same level of access to the community. The ownership and accessibility of playing pitches also influences their actual availability for community use. Each site is assigned a level of community use as follows:

- ◀ **Community use** - pitches in public, voluntary, private or commercial ownership or management (including education sites) recorded as being available for hire and currently in use by teams playing in community leagues.
- ◀ **Available but unused** - pitches that are available for hire but are not currently used by teams which play in community leagues; this most often applies to school sites but can also apply to sites which are expensive to hire.
- ◀ **No community use** - pitches which as a matter of policy or practice are not available for hire or used by teams playing in community leagues. This should include professional club pitches along with some semi-professional club pitches, where play is restricted to the first or second team.

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- ◀ **Disused** – sites that are not being used at all by any users and are not available for community hire either. Once these sites are disused for five or more years they will then be categorised as ‘lapsed sites’.
- ◀ **Lapsed** - last known use was as a playing field more than five years ago. These fall outside of Sport England’s statutory remit but still have to be assessed using the criteria in paragraph 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Sport England would nonetheless challenge a proposed loss of playing pitches/playing field which fails to meet such criteria. It should be emphasised that the lawful planning use of a lapsed site is still that of a playing field.

In addition, there should be a good degree of certainty that the pitch will be available to the community for at least the following three years. A judgement is made based on the information gathered and a record of secured or unsecured community use put against each site. NB: This refers to pitches in community use and not lapsed/disused sites.

Table 1.1: Disused/lapsed sites

Site name	Sport(s)	Status	Comments
Former Bispham High School	Multi (grass)	Lapsed	<p>Bispham High School was closed in 2014. It was deemed surplus to educational requirements following the merger, by the Local Authority, of 2 former secondary schools Collegiate High and Bispham High. The newly formed merged school was then located at the former Collegiate High School site on Blackpool Rd leaving Bispham High School site vacant. The school was demolished late 2016 early 2017.</p> <p>In 2018 the Council was awarded Land Release Funding (LRF) of £1,050,000 to bring the site forward, along with adjacent land, for housing development to boost supply in Blackpool. The LRF is a cross-government initiative between the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and One Public Estate (OPE) which is delivered in partnership by the Local Government Association. The aim is to assist in building stronger communities bringing forward council owned land for new homes.</p> <p>An outline application was submitted in 2019 on the former Bispham High Site and surrounding land to accommodate up to 176 properties with the retention of 1.6 hectares of existing playing field in the northwest part of the site which lies outside the former school boundary. Whilst the school playing field will be lost no community sport activity or teams will be displaced. A commitment has been made by the Council in relation to the loss of playing field to development of £200,000 towards upgrading the AGP pitch at Stanley Park to 3G.</p> <p>The school site is included in a proposed allocation within the Local Plan Part 2 (H3) for residential development of over 170 new homes</p>

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Site name	Sport(s)	Status	Comments
Land at Grange Park, Chepstow Road, Dinmore Avenue & Bathurst Avenue	Multi (grass)	Lapsed	<p>Proposed local plan allocation H7 part of which includes a former school site and playing field land next to Grange Park Health Centre which previously served as the school playing field.</p> <p>The former Grange Park Primary School was replaced by the new Boundary Park Primary School development in 2003. The school was built on the existing playing pitches with the former Grange Park Primary School to be demolished once the children had transferred to the new school and a playing field to be instated on the former school building site. However due to fire damage at Devonshire Rd. Primary in August 2003 the former Grange Park School was used to accommodate the Devonshire Rd Primary children. Subsequent to the children moving back to Devonshire Rd., Grange Park was used as an educational referral centre until the school was eventually demolished in 2013. The site was then identified as open space, outside the school boundary. As part of the Grange Park re-development Blackpool Council and Boundary Primary School have recently agreed an area adjacent to the north west corner of the school, part of the former Presbytery site (demolished 2013), for a new informal play area</p> <p>In 2018 the site at Grange Park became part of part of a wider social housing regeneration initiative<sup>2</sup> which includes land at Chepstow Road, Dinmore Avenue and Bathurst Avenue to provide new homes which meet the needs of the Blackpool housing market and supports improved quality of life for residents of Grange Park. This initiative is a project within the Council Homes Investment Programme (CHIP) (Jan 2020) and funding is secured. The development will support new housing as well as a children's enhanced play area and design proposals are currently being drafted to meet the community's requirements. No formal playing pitches have been marked out on the area in the last 18 years and no current community sport activity or sport teams will be displaced.</p>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Housing/New-housing-developments/Grange-Park-development.aspx>

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Site name	Sport(s)	Status	Comments
Mereside	Football	Disused	Mereside is located in South Blackpool north of Clifton Rd. It comprises two distinct areas of open space adjacent to one another. The open space can accommodate up to five adult football pitches (3 pitches on the western side and 2 on the eastern side). The space was last regularly used for playing football in 2014. There is little demand for use and the site has no onsite changing or toilet facilities. The Council attempted to bring back into use in 2018 for summer training however wet weather and drainage issues prevented use. Reportedly subject to anti-social behaviour. Area presently maintained as public open space.

Furthermore, there are some sites where playing pitches are no longer marked, however, the sites as a whole remain operational as they are either protected or serve a wider function such as a public park and therefore are not likely to be considered for potential development.

*Table 1.2: Unmarked playing fields in Blackpool*

Site name	Sport(s)	Comments
Moor Park Extension	Football	Previously six youth 11v11 pitches, of which three were overmarked by three mini 7v7 pitches and the remaining three youth 11v11 pitches were overmarked by three youth 9v9 pitches. Now only two youth 11v11 pitches are marked with no overmarking taking place.
Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground	Football	In years previous marked with two adult football pitches onto the cricket outfield but now solely used for cricket with the football goalposts withdrawn in 2016
Stanley Park	Football	Stanley Park is currently accommodates playing pitches (refer Table 2.9) however it has the capacity to accommodate more pitches. For example two 11v11 pitches or three 9v9 or six 7v7 or eight 5v5 or a combination of different pitch sizes as required.
Claremont Park	Football	Claremont Park is currently accommodating playing pitches (refer to Table 2.9). Capacity exists to provide additional pitch markings for two 5v5 mini pitches.
Whiteholme Recreation Ground (Gala Field)	Football	Whiteholme RC is currently accommodating playing pitches (see Table 2.9) Capacity exists to provide additional pitch markings for two 5v5 mini pitches.

In addition to the above, there are a number of existing sites containing pitches which are presently marked but unused. These are listed within the relevant sport section.

Any sites omitted from the PSS having been overlooked, whether used, disused or lapsed, are subject to the same conditions as those detailed herein. Any such site is not to be considered as not required or surplus as part of the planning process.

Sites in Blackpool can be protected for community use through Community Right to Bid as Assets of Community Value (ACV) through meeting definition of Section 88 of the Localism

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Act<sup>3</sup>. Blackpool Football Club (Bloomfield Road) is one such asset protected as an ACV. No playing field sites in Blackpool are protected for sporting use as part of the Fields in Trust (FiT) King George V Playing Fields programme.

## *Quality*

The capacity of pitches to regularly provide for competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by their quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of a pitch affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of a sport. In extreme circumstances, it can result in a pitch being unable to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off peak times.

It is not just the quality of the pitch itself that has an effect on its capacity but also the quality, standard and range of ancillary facilities. The quality of both the pitch and ancillary facilities will determine whether a pitch is able to contribute to meeting demand from various groups and for different levels and types of play.

The quality of all pitches identified in the audit and the ancillary facilities supporting them are assessed regardless of ownership, management or availability. Along with capturing any details specific to the individual pitches and sites, a quality rating is recorded within the audit for each pitch. These ratings are used to help estimate the capacity of each pitch to accommodate competitive and other play within the supply and demand assessment.

In addition to undertaking non-technical assessments across 2015 and 2016 (using the templates provided within the guidance and as determined by NGBs), partners and local stakeholders were also consulted on the quality and in some instances the quality rating was adjusted to reflect this. Where quality is known to have changed since the non-technical assessments, or where maintenance regimes have significantly altered, quality ratings have again been adjusted.

## ***Gather demand information and views***

Presenting an accurate picture of current demand for playing pitches (i.e. recording how and when pitches are used) is important when undertaking a supply and demand assessment. Demand for playing pitches in Blackpool tends to fall within the following categories:

- ◀ Organised competitive play
- ◀ Organised training
- ◀ Informal play

In addition, unmet and displaced demand for provision is also identified on a sport-by-sport basis. Unmet demand is defined as the number of additional teams that could be fielded if access to a sufficient number of pitches (and ancillary facilities) was available; displaced demand refers to teams that are generated from residents of the area but due to any number of factors do not currently play within the area.

A variety of consultation methods were used to collate demand information in 2015 and 2016 about leagues, clubs, county associations and national/regional governing bodies of sport, with face-to-face consultation carried out with key stakeholders from each sport. This allowed for the collection of detailed demand information and an exploration of key issues to be interrogated and more accurately assessed.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/section/88/enacted>

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For data analysis purposes, an online survey (converted to postal if required) was utilised. This was sent to all clubs not covered by face-to-face consultation. Local sports development officers, county associations and regional governing body officers advised which of the clubs to include in the face-to-face consultation. Sport England was also included within the consultation process prior to the project commencing. Issues identified by clubs returning questionnaires were followed up by telephone or face-to-face interviews.

## *Future demand*

Alongside current demand, it is important for a PPS to assess whether the future demand for playing pitches can be met. Using population projections, and proposed housing growth (if available), an estimate can be made of the likely future demand for playing pitches.

## *Population growth*

The Blackpool Local Plan 2012-2027 will guide planning matters for the Borough, replacing the previous Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016. The Part One: Core Strategy (adopted January 2016) sets out the Council's strategic planning policies i.e. where new development (including housing, employment, retail and leisure) should be located to meet Blackpool's future needs to 2027. The Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Document allocates sites for development, safeguarding or protecting and sets out a suite of development management policies to guide appropriate development. It is currently under preparation with an Informal Draft Sites and DM Policies Paper consulted on earlier this year.

The current resident population in Blackpool is 139,870<sup>4</sup>. By 2027 (to reflect the Core Strategy period) the Borough's population is projected to total 137,091<sup>5</sup> according to ONS data.

Team generation rates are used to provide an indication of how many people it may take to generate a team (by gender and age group), in order to help estimate the change in demand for pitch sports that may arise from any population change in the study area.

Future demand for pitches is calculated by adding the percentage increases, to the ONS population increases. This figure is then applied to the TGRs and is presented on a sport by sport basis within the relevant sections of this report.

Other information sources that were used to help identify future demand include:

- ◀ Recent trends in the participation in playing pitch sports.
- ◀ The nature of the current and likely future population and their propensity to participate in pitch sports.
- ◀ Feedback from pitch sports clubs on their plans to develop additional teams.
- ◀ Any local and NGB specific sports development targets (e.g. increase in participation).

Future demand is an informed estimate made of the likely future demand for pitches in the study area. This is generally based on the most appropriate current and future population projections for the relevant age and gender groupings for each sport. Key trends, local objectives and targets and consultation also inform this figure. Using population growth

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<sup>4</sup>Source: ONS Mid-2017 Population Estimates for Lower Layer Super Output Areas in England and Wales by Single Year of Age and Sex

<sup>5</sup> Source: ONS 2016-based projections 2016-2041. Released: 24 May 2018

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factors, an estimate can be made of the likely future demand for playing pitches in Blackpool.

## **Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views**

Supply and demand information gathered within Stage B (and subsequent update findings) is used to assess the adequacy of playing pitch provision in Blackpool. It focuses on how much use each site could potentially accommodate compared to how much use is currently taking place.

### ***Understand the situation at individual sites***

Qualitative pitch ratings are linked to a pitch capacity rating derived from NGB guidance and tailored to suit a local area. The quality and use of each pitch is assessed against the recommended pitch capacity to indicate how many match equivalent sessions<sup>6</sup> per week (per season for cricket) a pitch could accommodate.

This is compared to the number of matches actually taking place and categorised as follows, to identify:

Potential spare capacity: Play is below the level the site could sustain.	Green
At capacity: Play is at a level the site can sustain.	Yellow
Overused: Play exceeds the level the site can sustain.	Red

### ***Develop the current picture of provision***

Once capacity is determined on a site-by-site basis, actual spare capacity is calculated on an area-by-area basis via further interrogation of temporal demand. Although this may have been identified, it does not necessarily mean that there is surplus provision. For example, spare capacity may not be available when it is needed or the site may be retained in a 'strategic reserve' to enable pitch rotation to reduce wear and tear.

Capacity ratings assist in the identification of sites for improvement/development, rationalisation, decommissioning and disposal.

### ***Develop the future picture of provision - scenario testing***

Modelling scenarios to assess whether existing provision can cater for unmet, displaced and future demand is made after the capacity analysis. This also includes, for example, removing sites with unsecured community use to demonstrate the impact this would have if these sites were to be decommissioned in the future.

Scenario testing occurs in the updated Strategy report and therefore does not form part of the updated Assessment Report.

### ***Identify the key findings and issues***

By completing the above steps, it is possible to identify several findings and issues relating to the supply, demand and adequacy of playing pitch provision in Blackpool. This report seeks to identify and present the updated key findings and issues prior to updating the Strategy.

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<sup>6</sup> A match equivalent session can be either a match or a training session

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The following sections summarise the local administration of the main grass pitch sports in Blackpool. Each provides a quantitative summary of provision and a map showing the distribution of facilities. It also provides information about the availability of facilities to/for the local community and the governing body of each sport and regional strategic plan (where they exist). Local league details are provided in order to outline the competitive structure for each sport. The findings of club consultation and key issues for each sport are summarised.

The following sections summarise the local administration of the main grass pitch sports in Blackpool. Each provides a quantitative summary of provision and a map showing the distribution of facilities. It also provides information about the availability of facilities to/for the local community and, the governing body of each sport and regional strategic plan (where they exist). Local league details are provided in order to outline the competitive structure for each sport. The findings of club consultation and key issues for each sport are summarised.

## **Section D: Develop the strategy**

By completing Stages A, B and C it is possible to identify several findings and issues relating to the supply, demand and adequacy of playing pitch provision in Blackpool. This report seeks to identify and present the key findings and issues prior to development of the Strategy and Action Plan (Stage D).

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## PART 2: FOOTBALL

### 2.1: Introduction

The organisation primarily responsible for the development of football in Blackpool is Lancashire FA; the local County Football Association (CFA). It is also responsible for the administration, in terms of discipline, rules and regulations, cup competitions and representative matches, development of clubs and facilities, volunteers, referees, coaching courses and delivering national football schemes.

This section of the report focuses on the supply and demand for grass football pitches. Part 6 captures supply and demand for third generation artificial grass pitches (3G pitches) which are the preferred AGP (artificial grass pitch) surface type for football. In future, it is anticipated that there will be a growing demand for the use of 3G pitches for competitive football fixtures, especially to accommodate mini and youth football.

#### ***Local Football Facility Plans (LFFPs)***

To support in delivery of both the current and superseding FA National Games Strategy (NGS), the FA has commissioned a nationwide consultancy project. Over the course of the next two years to spring 2020, a Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) will be produced for every local authority across England. Each plan will be unique to its area as well as being diverse in its representation.

The LFFP is strategically aligned to the National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS); a 10-year plan to change the landscape of football facilities in England. The NFFS represents a major funding commitment from the national funding partners (The FA, Premier League, DCMS, Football Foundation) to inform and direct an estimated one billion pounds of investment into football facilities over the next ten years.

Each LFFP will build upon PPS findings (where present and current) regarding the formal and affiliated game, to also include strategic priorities for investment across small sided football (recreational and informal including indoors). The LFFP will also incorporate consultation with groups outside of formal football, as well as underrepresented communities. This could include those which may be key partners with regards to football for behavioural change and groups which may be key drivers of FA NGS priorities around participation in the likes of women and girls' football, disability football and futsal.

LFFPs will identify key projects to be delivered and act as an investment portfolio for projects that require funding. As such, around 90% of all national football investment through the funding partners will be identified via LFFPs.

It is important to recognise that a LFFP is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential investment - it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. Consequently, it cannot be used in place of a PPS and is not an accepted evidence base for site change of use or disposal. A LFFP will, however, build on available/existing local evidence and strategic plans and may adopt relevant actions from a PPS and/or complement these with additional investment priorities.

The Blackpool LFFP is planned for summer 2019 and it is important that this PPS is updated accordingly through the Stage E process to ensure that it is able to accurately inform the LFFP both in production and future onwards maintenance.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

## Consultation

Consultation was carried out in 2015 with all football clubs playing in Blackpool through either face to face meeting or by online survey, with contact details provided by Lancashire County FA. Consultation represented a 56% club response rate and 90% team response rate. The following clubs and leagues were met with face to face:

- ◀ Bispham JFF FC
- ◀ Blackpool & Fylde Sunday Football Alliance (BFSFA)
- ◀ Blackpool Rangers JFC
- ◀ Blackpool Wren Rovers FC
- ◀ Blackpool Wren Rovers Ladies FC
- ◀ Clifton Rangers JFC
- ◀ Hampton Road Social FC
- ◀ Highfield Social FC
- ◀ Layton Juniors FC
- ◀ Spirit of Youth FC

Renewed consultation with both Lancashire FA and the Football Foundation was undertaken in 2019 to update the data and qualify the current position of previously identified issues pertaining to football in Blackpool.

## 2.2: Supply

The updated audit identifies a total of 77 grass football pitches in Blackpool for the 2018/19 season, all but one of which are reported to be available for community use on some level. The only exception is Bloomfield Road, home to professional club Blackpool FC and subsequently not accessible for regular community use. The total number of pitches marked represents a decrease from what was identified as marked during the 2015/16 season.

There are three FA or FIFA certified 3G pitches on the FA Register on which competitive football matches are sanctioned to be played.

*Table 2.1: Summary of grass pitches available for community use*

Pitch type					Total
Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	
34	9	12	18	3	<b>76</b>

Most pitches in Blackpool are adult size, which is, in part, due to youth 11v11 teams playing on adult pitches. This is not ideal for most youth players and is not in line with the recent FA Youth Review. Adult pitches most used by both adult and youth teams (pitch numbers in brackets) include:

- ◀ Common Edge Road
- ◀ AFC Blackpool
- ◀ Squires Gate FC
- ◀ Boundary Park
- ◀ St Mary's Catholic Academy
- ◀ Whiteholme Recreation Ground
- ◀ Claremont Park

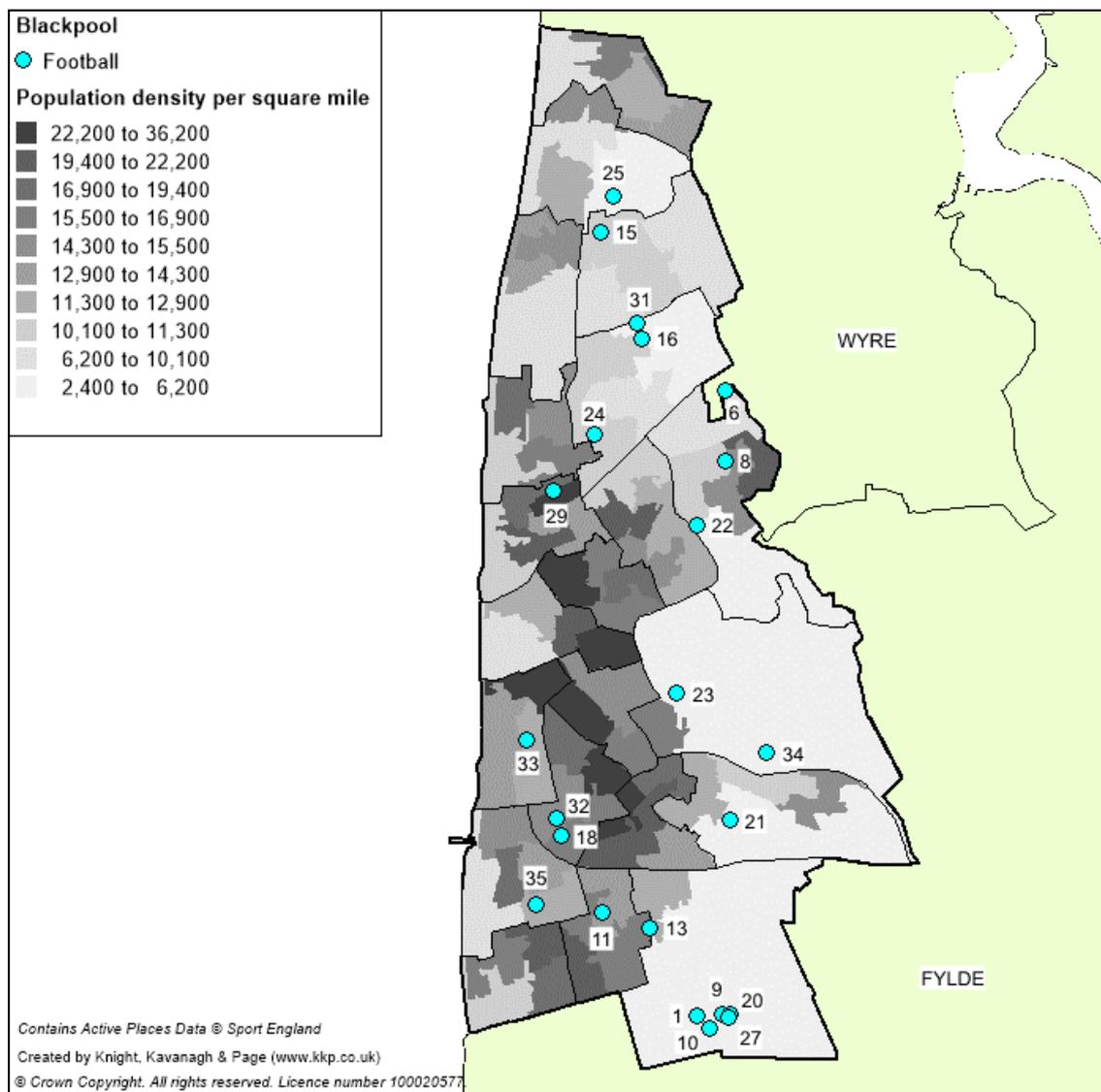
# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

In accordance with the FA Youth Review, U17 and U18 teams can play on adult pitches. The FA's recommended pitch size for adult football is 100x64 metres. Please refer to the table below for more detail:

Table 2.2: FA recommended grass/3G football pitch sizes

Age group	Playing format	Recommended pitch dimensions (metres excluding run offs)	Recommended pitch dimensions (metres including run offs)
Mini-Soccer U7/U8	5v5	37x27	43x33
Mini-Soccer U9/U10	7v7	55x37	61x43
Youth U11/U12	9v9	73x46	79x52
Youth U13/U14	11v11	82x50	88x56
Youth U15/U16	11v11	91x55	97x61
Youth U17/U18	11v11	100x64	106x70
Over 18/Adult	11v11	100x64	106x70

Figure 2.1: Location of football pitches in Blackpool



# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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See Table 2.9 for key to the map.

Aspire Academy has two adult football pitches marked on its playing field neighbouring the school which itself was recently rebuilt. The playing fields are located marginally within neighbouring Fylde Borough and are currently maintained through a contract with Fylde Borough Council grounds maintenance to a basic standard, limited to cutting and line marking. The pitches have no recorded community use based on Lancashire FA affiliation data for Fylde.

## ***Disused/lapsed sites***

There are some disused or lapsed playing field sites which previously accommodated football pitches (detailed fully in Part 1: Introduction and Methodology).

Mereside previously had five football pitches last used in 2014. These were rarely used and there are no onsite changing facilities provided. The site is reported to be subject to anti-social behaviour but has potential for use and improvement, with a new police station recently built nearby potentially acting as a deterrent to alleviate the issue. The site was identified as a temporary location for Foxhall FC youth teams whilst Fishers Field was closed for redevelopment, however, qualitative issues meant that Mereside was not able to be used.

## ***Proposed loss of provision***

Blackpool Council in conjunction with neighbouring Fylde Council has identified land around Blackpool Airport for the further development of the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone. This area includes encompassing three playing field sites (AFC Blackpool, Common Edge Road and South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club), of which, two are proposed for loss, with the retention of South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club and the development of a new sports village towards the South of the site on airport land, releasing land to the north of the cricket club for development.

The outline planning application for phase one of the development was submitted in April 2019 and proposes significant loss of playing field provision, much of which is presently used for football, at both privately managed site AFC Blackpool and Council managed Common Edge Road (including the main show pitch known as Collins Park).

Current proposals show the net loss of the following football provision:

- ◀ **AFC Blackpool** – one adult football pitch (subject to National League System ground grading requirements), clubhouse and changing building.
- ◀ **Common Edge Road** – playing field land sufficient to accommodate approximately nine adult football pitches and up to two junior/mini soccer pitches. Loss of ancillary provision.
- ◀ **Collins Park** - loss of one adult football pitch with floodlighting and accompanying two team changing pavilion.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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It is proposed that the loss of playing pitch provision for football would be mitigated through re-provision of new football pitches and development of two new full size 3G pitches as part of a new sports village towards the south of the new enterprise zone. Present plans show the re-provision of circa six adult football pitches and three junior football pitches on greenbelt land adjacent to Blackpool Airport, with the development of a new sports centre and two new 3G pitches (one a stadium pitch to meet Ground Grading requirements of AFC Blackpool) on a portion of the current Common Edge Road playing field, south of the planned new access road.

South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club has submitted an objection to the outline application, reporting concerns around the exact extent of facilities to be re-provided, future management model and level of access. Sport England also currently objects to this proposal because it does not meet the requirements of paragraph 97 of the NPPF and the Exceptions in Sport England's Playing Fields Policy.

**Appendix 2 to this Assessment Report provides the latest position on the re-provision proposals at Common Edge Rd. updating the information provided above.**

## ***Security of tenure***

Most teams in Blackpool play on Council managed pitches and are therefore considered to have secure tenure as part of the Council's maintained sports and leisure provision offering. Many adult men's teams play within the Blackpool & Fylde Sunday Football Alliance (BFSFA) which books most Council managed pitches on a seasonal basis on behalf of member teams to which it then allocates pitches for Sunday morning matches.

Foxhall JFC is based at Council managed site Fishers Field but due to utilities development work carried out onsite has temporarily been playing at Common Edge Road. The Club is planning to relocate back to Fishers Field ready for the 2019/20 football season, though plans to develop a new pavilion (detailed later in the section) will likely not see new ancillary facilities created and available until the 2020/21 season, thus the Club would only have access to pitches should it choose to use the pitches once ready.

South Shore Youth FC has relocated some use from South Shore Academy as a result of the continued school rebuilding programme which saw the loss of some playing field land. For the 2018/19 season the Club now makes use of both Stanley Primary School and Common Edge Road as well as the South Shore Academy site for younger junior age groups.

There is a Community Use Agreement (CUA) in place at the new Armfield Academy School site (built since the initial 2016 PPS) for community use of the school sports facilities outside of school hours. Football provision onsite includes three youth 11v11 and two youth 9v9 pitches, as well as a sports hall and full size 3G pitch, though without floodlighting. The CUA identifies Blackpool Football Club, AFC Fylde, Foxhall FC, Squires Gate FC, Blackpool Wren Rovers FC and Mechanics FC as being possible local partners. At present, Lancashire FA affiliation data shows no recorded use of the site.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

## ***Pitch quality***

The quality of football pitches across Blackpool were assessed in 2015 via a combination of site visits (using non-technical assessments as determined by the FA) and user consultation to reach and apply an agreed rating as follows:

- ◀ Good
- ◀ Standard
- ◀ Poor

Pitch quality is primarily influenced by the carrying capacity of the site; often pitches are overused and lack the required routine maintenance work necessary to improve drainage and subsequent quality.

It is likely that pitches which receive little to no on-going repair or post-season remedial work will be assessed as poor, therefore limiting the number of games able to take place each week without it having a detrimental effect on quality.

Conversely, well maintained pitches which are tended to regularly are likely to be of a higher standard and capable of taking a number of matches without a significant reduction in surface quality.

The percentage parameters used for the non-technical assessments were as follows: Good (>80%), Standard (50-80%), Poor (<50%). The final quality ratings assigned to the sites also consider the user quality ratings gathered from consultation.

The table below summarises the quality of grass pitches that are available for community use.

*Table 2.3: Summary of football pitch quality (community use pitches)*

Pitch type	Good	Standard	Poor
Adult	1	29	4
Youth 11v11	-	8	1
Youth 9v9	-	11	1
Mini 7v7	-	16	2
Mini 5v5	-	3	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>8</b>

The pitch quality audit shows that the vast majority (85%) of adult pitches available for community use are rated as standard quality and a further 12% are poor quality, with only one adult pitch at Squires Gate FC rated as good (3%). Most youth pitches (90%) are rated as standard quality and the remaining are poor (10%), with no good quality youth pitches. Most mini pitches are rated as standard quality (90%), with 10% poor and none good.

It should be noted that all of the sites that received a 'standard' rating from the non-technical assessments scored between 50% and 57%.

Private sites (e.g. sports clubs) typically offer better quality facilities than Council parks/playing fields and school pitches. In general, such sports clubs tend to have dedicated ground staff or volunteers working on pitches and the fact that they are often secured by fencing prevents unofficial use. Private site hire is often at full cost recovery. The

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

maintenance and use of Council sites tends to be less frequent and unofficial use of these sites can further exacerbate quality issues.

Specific comments relating to the pitch conditions at individual sites can be seen in the table below.

*Table 2.4: Summary of pitch quality comments*

Site	Comments (from 2015 consultation)
Moor Park Extension	The site is open and public access is an issue with motorbikes and dog walkers frequently causing pitch damage. Layton Juniors FC believes the quality of maintenance to be poor and is frustrated by consequent drainage issues across the site which leads games to be postponed or cancelled.
Whiteholme Recreation Ground (Gala Field)	Pitches had £250,000 worth of drainage put in place over ten years ago which brought about an improvement but Bispham JFC believes drainage is slowly getting worse year on year. The pitches are maintained to a basic standard by Blackpool Council and goal areas are said to be problematic across all pitches. The site is openly accessible and pitches have issues with motorbikes and public use.
Common Edge Road	Pitches reportedly drain well but that wind is an issue. Clubs report that maintenance is limited.
Unity Academy	Grass provision is of a poor standard and soil has a high clay content which causes pitch to drain poorly. Maintenance is carried out by Lancashire County Council to a basic standard which consists of grass cutting and lining marking as required.

More recent reports from Clifton Rangers JFC in 2019 suggest that the perceived quality of pitches and maintenance at St Mary's Catholic Academy has declined since 2015 consultation.

One of the main reasons cited by clubs for a decline in pitch quality is related to reports of limited pitch maintenance or a lack of available funds to carry out appropriate maintenance. Other reasons cited for the decline in pitch quality include:

- ⚡ Overmarked pitches
- ⚡ Uneven and hard surfaces
- ⚡ Overplay in bad weather
- ⚡ Casual use
- ⚡ Dog foul/litter
- ⚡ Lack of investment and limited maintenance including infrequent grass cutting
- ⚡ Lack of remedial work i.e. seeding
- ⚡ Adult matches churning up pitches before afternoon youth games

## **FA Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP)**

With quality of grass pitches becoming one of the biggest influences on participation in football, the FA has made it a priority to work towards improving quality of grass pitches across the country. This has resulted in the creation of the FA Pitch Improvement Programme (PIP). As part of the PIP, grass pitches identified as having quality issues undergo a pitch inspection from a member of the Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG). No

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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sites in Blackpool have yet received an assessment as part of the PIP process and the County FA highlights this as a key action for key grass football pitch sites in the Borough.<sup>7</sup>

## ***Overmarked pitches***

Overmarking of pitches is a frequent occurrence in Blackpool, with youth 9v9 pitches often marked into the middle of adult pitches or mini 7v7 pitches marked widthways across each half. Pitches are regularly subject to youth and mini play on Saturday mornings followed by adult and youth play on Sundays. This sustained and intense use over short periods of time can impact on pitch quality and allows little time for the surface to rest and recover. Use of smaller pitches marked within larger pitches typically causes focused and specific wear due to the high traffic on certain overlapping areas such as the middle third of adult pitches.

Overmarking currently (2018/19 season) occurs at the following sites:

- ◀ Boundary Park
- ◀ Common Edge Road
- ◀ South Shore Academy
- ◀ St Mary's Catholic Academy
- ◀ Whiteholme Recreation Ground (Gala Field)
- ◀ St George's Church of England High School

## ***Ancillary facilities***

Changing facilities continue to be an issue at some football sites in 2019. Some of the facilities were described as poor quality by users although all responding clubs stated they had access to changing rooms if required during the 2015 consultation.

The previous changing facilities at Moor Park Extension were demolished and a new facility was built in replacement, funded by Layton Juniors FC.

Boundary Park is used by the Blackpool & Fylde Sunday Football Alliance (BFSFA) which allocates the pitches for matches to constituent teams. There is an official's changing room and three further changing rooms for teams, however, this is not sufficient to service four pitches which are all in use on Sunday mornings by BFSFA teams. The site is also used by junior club, FC Rangers on both Saturdays and Sundays. Boundary Park is reportedly subject to vandalism and car break ins. Cars park along the roadside rather than using the car park.

Changing provision within Blackpool Sports Centre servicing grass and 3G pitches at Stanley Park is of good quality, however because the centre is a commercial facility there is no specific officials changing rooms and officials instead change in the disabled toilet. The centre can be busy when athletics events are being held at the same time, with several sports and centre users sharing spaces to service different functions onsite.

## ***Projects in development***

United Utilities and Blackpool Council have installed a water tank system at Fishers Field, home to Foxhall JFC. The site has been unavailable for use since work began, however has been completed and will be operational again for the 2019/20 season. Foxhall JFC has played at Common Edge Road whilst Fishers Field has been unavailable. The pitches onsite have been reinstated, levelled, seeded and with new drainage installed, funded by

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<sup>7</sup> Site assessments as part of the PIP process have been undertaken February 2020

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

contributions from both United Utilities and the Council. Blackpool Council, United Utilities and Foxhall JFC are currently working with the Football Foundation to develop an application to deliver a new pavilion onsite to replace the changing rooms that have since been demolished and hope to do so by the end of 2019.

Network Rail is to provide a compensation sum towards the levelling and installation of a dedicated drainage system at Claremont Park by 2022.

The Whyndyke Farm development proposed across the Blackpool and Fylde council areas includes around 1,400 new homes to be built alongside new a neighbourhood centre and retail provision. Proposals also include the creation of two new adult football pitches to service the additional demand generated. Dependent on the main users yet to be identified, there may be a need to provide supporting ancillary provision at this site to support formal football use.

## 2.3: Demand

A total of 188 affiliated teams are identified as playing matches on football pitches within Blackpool during the 2018/19 season, a minor reduction from the 200 identified in 2015/16. For 2018/19 they are 31 men's, four women's, 82 youth boys', one youth girls' and 70 mini soccer teams.

*Table 2.5: Summary of competitive teams currently based in Blackpool (2018/19 season)*

Analysis area	Number of teams playing					Total
	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5	
<b>Total</b>	35	48	35	38	32	188

Play on 3G pitches takes place at Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park) and Bispham Sports Centre (Blackpool & The Fylde College). Both of these pitches are FA certified to host competitive match play. Lancashire FA affiliation data shows there is no competitive play at Unity Academy despite being FA Registered to host matches.

Increases in the number of mini teams does not always lead to an increase in adult teams because nationally and locally there has been a trend of 11 v11 adult men's teams decreasing due to players opting to play small sided versions of the game or choosing to drop out of the sport altogether. The way in which people, especially adult men, want to play football is changing. People want to be able to fit it in to their busy lifestyle and the small sided formats and shorter games allow players to do this without giving up their weekends. If this trend continues there is likely to be an increase in demand for 3G pitches.

## Leagues

### Adult leagues

The majority of adult football takes place on Sunday mornings with most teams playing in the BFSA. Teams in this league are generally singular team clubs not linked to a junior club or section, most of which are heavily reliant on the availability of Council pitches. Around three quarters play on Council managed pitches, particularly at Boundary Park and Common Edge Road. The pitches are booked by the League itself at the beginning of the season and are then allocated to teams on a weekly basis, whilst it also has a lease agreement on the pitch at Collins Park which is due to expire in the next year.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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The BFSA has decreased in size over recent seasons from four divisions to three, with the total number of teams having reduced from 53 to 42 in 2014/15 and further to 28 teams across three divisions in 2018/19. This may be due in part to reliance from a large number of teams on availability of Council pitches at peak time, whilst cost of hire may also be a factor. Single team clubs without their own facilities often find revenue generation to be a key challenge and in turn many teams don't train because further midweek hire of a floodlit facility typically comes at additional cost.

The nature of singular teams, pitch hire and revenue generation lead to a relatively high turnover of teams from one season to the next, with some teams folding only for fractions of players to form new teams with different names the following season.

## *Junior leagues*

Most of the junior football takes place within the Poulton & District Primary League (PDPL) which operates on Saturday mornings and services teams from the Blackpool, Fylde, Fleetwood and Wyre areas. The small number of remaining teams play in the Blackpool & District Youth Football League (BDYFL) on Sunday mornings. The BDYFL has just five divisions for Under 7s, Under 11s, Under 13s, Under 14s and Under 18s.

## ***National League System***

The National League System is a series of interconnected leagues for adult men's football clubs in England. It begins below the football league (the National League) and comprises of seven steps, with various leagues at each level and more leagues lower down the pyramid than at the top. The system has a hierarchical format with promotion and relegation between the levels, allowing even the smallest club the theoretical possibility of rising to the top of the system.

Clubs within the step system must adhere to ground requirements set out by the FA. The higher the level of football being played the higher the requirements. Clubs cannot progress into the league above if the ground requirements do not meet the correct specifications. Ground grading assesses grounds from A to H, with 'A' being the requirements for Step 1 clubs.

There are relatively few adult teams which play on Saturday afternoons and those that do generally compete at a comparatively high level within the National League System. Professional team Blackpool FC plays league football in English Football League One (EFL1), whilst there are three clubs in Blackpool that play within the National League System:

*Table 2.6: Summary of teams playing within the football pyramid structure*

<b>Team</b>	<b>League</b>	<b>Level</b>
Squires Gate FC	Hallmark Security League Premier Division	Step 5
AFC Blackpool	Hallmark Security League Division One North	Step 6
Blackpool Wren Rovers FC	West Lancashire Football League Premier Division	Step 7

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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A common issue for clubs entering the pyramid is changing facilities. For Step 7 football (ground grading H), changing rooms must be a minimum size of 18 square metres, exclusive of shower and toilet areas. The general principle for clubs in the football pyramid is that they have to achieve the appropriate grade by March 31<sup>st</sup> of their first season after promotion, which therefore allows a short grace period for facilities to be brought up to standard. This, however, does not apply to clubs being promoted to Step 7 (as they must meet requirements immediately).

All clubs are currently able to meet their league requirements, although improvements may be needed in some instances for clubs to progress. This considered, all non-professional clubs in the football pyramid report a need to improve the quality of the drainage on their respective pitches.

## *Blackpool Football Club*

As aforementioned, Blackpool FC is a professional football club playing in the English Football League (EFL) system. The Club is based in the Revoe area of Blackpool where it plays at its Bloomfield Road stadium. Community partner Blackpool FC Community Trust (BFCCT) is also based at the stadium and is presently undertaking redevelopment of existing indoor space onsite to develop new classroom and office areas.

Blackpool FC men's adult, youth and academy teams all presently train at the Club's Squires Gate training ground, located a short distance over the local authority border in neighbouring Fylde Borough. The Club reports that the facilities onsite are poor quality and not suitable for the requirements of a professional club which plays at a high level within the professional league structure in England.

Consequently, the Club has aspirations to explore opportunities to develop a new site, identifying this as a present key priority and that a central location within Blackpool is of key importance, in order to develop greater engagement with the local community. The Club is currently in discussions with the Council regarding potential opportunities and ideally hopes to find a site of circa 60 acres at which it aspires to develop facilities for both private professional use by its adult and youth teams, as well as facilities which would be accessible to BFCCT for delivery of community programmes and to other community partners and groups for recreational football. Though both organisations aspire to work together to develop a site which can deliver on both professional and community delivery requirements, priority is to develop better quality training facilities within Blackpool for the professional club should a site of the desired size not be available.

## **Women's National League System**

Correspondingly there is a Women's National League System similar to the adult men's which provide structure to the women's game. This ranges from Step 1 to Step 6 with each step requiring differing ground grading requirements.

Women's teams are still required to meet ground requirements set out by the FA but these differ from the men's National League System. Ratings range from grade A to C each with differing minimum requirements. Step 1 and 2 in the Women's National League System is akin to Step 3 and four of the men's National League System, however, not exactly the same. The system is also hierarchical format with promotion and relegation between the levels, allowing even the smallest club the theoretical possibility of rising to the top of the system.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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There are four dedicated women's teams in Blackpool though none play at such a level that they require specific ground requirements. Blackpool FC Girls & Ladies play at the highest level of the teams based in the Borough, at Step 6 of the Women's National League System, however, the team presently plays outside of the Borough at Hassra Sports Ground in Fylde.

## ***Training***

Access to affordable floodlit training facilities is a key issue for most clubs in Blackpool, particularly those with a large number of youth and mini teams. There are three floodlit full size 3G pitches in the Borough. Not only can it be difficult for teams to access sufficient capacity but teams at some clubs are spread across a number of venues where they can manage to find available timeslots, often on small sided 3G pitches at the likes of Playfootball or school sites. There is a sand based AGP at Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park) which is well used by teams for football training but clubs still report demand for greater floodlit 3G pitch provision. Access to AGPs for training is covered further in Part 6: Artificial Grass Pitches.

## ***Walking football***

Walking football<sup>8</sup> is a slower paced version of football, primarily aimed at people over 50 years of age. The rules are adapted so not to permit running, allow very little contact and for example throw-ins are replaced by kick-ins. Walking football forms part of the FA Just Play! Initiative which aims to give the casual participant a chance to just turn up to a venue and play football on a less formal basis, as opposed to the regular commitment of club training and fixtures. The rules of Walking football were formally agreed and launched by the FA in February 2017 and participation across the Country is reported to be growing.

Walking football is generally played on 3G pitches or indoors, whilst matches are permitted to be held on grass pitches though considered less preferable. Walking football may also offer participation opportunities for disabled players, though disability formats of football exist exclusively and are generally played indoors in sports halls.

Walking football sessions in Blackpool are held by AFC Blackpool Senior Seaside and Blackpool FC Community Trust. AFC Blackpool Senior Seaside host walking football sessions at Blackpool Sports Centre on Mondays and Thursday. Blackpool FC Community Trust runs four walking football sessions per week in Blackpool, three at PlayFootball on small sided 3G pitches and one at Unity Academy on the full size 3G pitch.

## ***Unmet and latent demand***

Unmet demand is existing demand that is not getting access to pitches. It is usually expressed, for example, when a team is already training but is unable to access a match pitch, or when a league has a waiting list. No unmet demand was identified in Blackpool.

Latent demand is demand that evidence suggests may be generated from the current population should they have access to more or better provision. No clubs indicated that they felt there was latent demand within the area.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.lancashirefa.com/more/walking-football>

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

## ***Displaced/exported demand***

Displaced or exported demand refers to Blackpool based teams that are currently accessing pitches outside of the local authority for their home fixtures, normally because their pitch requirements cannot be met, which is usually because of pitch supply, in some cases quality issues or stipulated league requirements for access to certain facilities.

According to Lancashire FA affiliation data 2018/19, there are two clubs fielding 19 teams which play matches on venues outside of the local authority area, these are as follows:

*Table 2.7: Summary of displaced match play demand*

<b>Club</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Where displaced?</b>
Blackpool FC	U9-U16	Myerscough College 3G pitch (Wyre)
	Academy	Squires Gate (Fylde)
Blackpool FC Girls & Ladies	Women's 1st	Hassra Sports Ground (Wyre)
	U10-U18	Cottam Hall Playing Fields (Wyre)

In Blackpool most displaced demand derives from Blackpool FC Girls & Ladies teams which all play outside of the Borough. Except for Blackpool FC academy teams at Squires Gate (professional club training ground - Fylde), all demand is exported to Wyre Borough.

Blackpool FC aspire to improve the quality of facilities at its Squires Gate training ground in Fylde and consequently may require access to another site for training temporarily while improvement works are undertaken.

Some teams are imported into Blackpool from neighbouring authorities such as Wyre and Fylde; however, it is considered that a similar number of teams are also exported outside of the Borough to access provision, either out of choice or to attend central venues as arranged by leagues. As such it is unquantifiable to accurately identify figures for either exported or imported demand, meaning that it is considered that these figures are similar and will remain as such for the foreseeable future.

## ***Imported demand***

Imported demand refers to any demand from neighbouring local authorities that accesses facilities within Blackpool due to a lack of available facilities in other local authorities where such team or club is based. Based on 2018/19 affiliation data there is no regularly imported demand into Blackpool.

## ***Future demand***

### *Population increases*

Future demand can be defined in two ways, through participation increases and using population forecasts.

Team generation rates (TGRs) are used below as the basis for calculating the number of teams likely to be generated in the future based on population growth up to 2027 in line with the Blackpool Local Plan.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Table 2.8: Team generation rates

Age group	Current population within age group	Current no. of teams	Team Generation Rate	Future population within age group	Predicted future number of teams (2027)	Additional teams that may be generated from the increased population <sup>9</sup>
Senior Men's (16-45)	24,314	32	1:760	23,944	31	0
Senior Women (16-45)	24,250	3	1:8083	23,164	3	0
Youth Boys (12-15)	3,087	48	1:64	3,338	52	4
Youth Girls (12-15)	2,945	0	0	3,293	0	0
Youth Boys (10-11)	1,510	34	1:44	1,565	35	1
Youth Girls (10-11)	1,477	1	1:1477	1,489	1	0
Mini-Soccer Mixed (8-9)	3,230	38	1:85	3,078	36	0
Mini-Soccer Mixed (6-7)	3,205	32	1:100	3,079	30	0

Team generation rates (TGRs) based on future population indicate that participation is anticipated to increase at the youth boys' age group, amounting to the likely creation of five additional teams. An increase in participants at the junior girls' age group is anticipated but these new players will probably join existing age group squads. Population projections indicate that no new teams are likely to be created at the adult age group.

It is important to note that TGRs are based on population figures and cannot account for specific targeted development work within certain areas or focused towards certain groups, such as NGB initiatives or coaching within schools.

It is important to note that there has been a recent decrease nationally in participation at adult level and that the number of FA affiliated adult teams playing competitive football has dropped. Similarly, there has been a decline in the number of youth players making the transition from youth football to adult leagues.

## SSE Wildcats Centres

SSE Wildcats Centres work with County FA qualified coaches to deliver local weekly sessions, which provide opportunities for girls aged five to 11 to develop fundamental skills and experience football in a safe and fun environment. There are already 200 established centres which delivered the SSE Wildcats pilot in 2017, with a further 800 centres to be in place for 2018. As part of the expansion process, organisations extending beyond affiliated clubs to include other providers or community groups were invited to apply in late 2017 to become one of the new centres.

A total of ten Wildcats centres are currently in operation in Blackpool across locations including, Blackpool Sixth Form, Blackpool Sports Centre and Whiteholme Recreation Ground (Gala Field).

In light of both FA aspirations to double female participation in football through its Game Changer strategy and the establishment and foreseen future effect of the SSE Wildcats programme, it is likely that the growth in affiliated women's and girl teams may exceed that shown through TGRs.

<sup>9</sup> Additional teams generated from TGRs are rounded down to the nearest whole number in order to represent the creation of an entire full team.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

The assumption has been made that 50% of the ten centres will culminate in the creation of a new team at U7 girls age group in the coming year, thus five new mini soccer teams have been accounted for within the future demand analysis in addition to growth forecast by TGRs. Growth in women and girls teams may yet exceed these numbers in future however LFA considers this a reasonable assumption at this time.

## 2.4: Capacity analysis

The capacity for pitches to regularly provide for competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of a pitch affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of playing football. In extreme circumstances, it can result in the inability of the pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times. Pitch quality is often influenced by weather conditions and drainage.

As a guide, The FA has set a standard number of matches that each grass pitch type should be able to accommodate without adversely affecting its current quality (pitch capacity). Taking into consideration the guidelines on capacity the following was concluded in Blackpool:

Adult pitches		Youth pitches		Mini pitches	
Pitch quality	Matches per week	Pitch quality	Matches per week	Pitch quality	Matches per week
Good	3	Good	4	Good	6
Standard	2	Standard	2	Standard	4
Poor	1	Poor	1	Poor	2

Table 2.9 applies the above pitch ratings against the actual level of weekly play recorded to determine a capacity rating as follows:

<b>Potential capacity</b>	Play is below the level the site could sustain
<b>At capacity</b>	Play matches the level the site can sustain
<b>Overused</b>	Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

The level of pitch usage is recorded in match equivalent sessions per week (MES). For football, pitches relate to a typical week within the season and one match per week equates to one match equivalent session per week if it occurs every week or more typically 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week if it occurs every other week (i.e. reflecting home and away fixtures).

### **Informal use**

Where information is known, informal and unofficial use of pitches has been factored into current play. It must be noted, however, that informal use of these sites is not recorded and it is therefore difficult to quantify on a site-by-site basis. Instead, it is recommended that open access sites be protected through an improved maintenance regime and through retaining some spare capacity to protect quality.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## ***Education sites***

For the purposes of capacity analysis only education sites with regular known and recorded community use have been included. All other schools with no recorded community are shown below in Table 2.10. In many cases, where there is no identified community use at present there is little capacity to accommodate further play. Maintenance of school pitches is generally carried out to a basic standard and may not include much beyond grass cutting and line marking. This combined with the significant usage throughout the school week for curricular sport, extracurricular training sessions and fixtures often impacts on surface quality and far exceeds recommended capacity.

Some schools do not allow community use in order to manage poor quality pitches for their own use throughout the week. Schools may also play fixtures on Saturday mornings during the winter because of bad light after school which may limit capacity for community use, particularly in the case of youth and mini pitches as this coincides with the main junior football leagues which operate on Saturday mornings. In Blackpool this is not the case and most school fixtures are played after school during the week until late October when visibility decreases, starting again in February when it improves.

Tenure at school sites is generally considered to be unsecure given the nature of rental unless a formal community use or service level agreement (SLA) exists.

## ***Peak time***

The peak time varies for the different pitch types. Peak time for adult football is Saturday mornings although a considerable amount of demand also exists on Sunday mornings due to the presence of the Blackpool & Fylde Sunday Football Alliance. Peak time for mini soccer and youth 9v9 football is Saturday mornings as almost all teams play within the PDPL. Youth 11v11 peak time is currently Sunday mornings, although considerable demand also takes place on Sunday mornings.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Table 2.9: Football pitch capacity analysis

Site ID	Site name	Availability for community use	Security of tenure <sup>10</sup>	Management	Pitch type	Pitch size	Quality rating	No. of pitches <sup>11</sup>	Current play (in match sessions)	FA recommended site capacity (in match sessions)	Capacity (match equivalent sessions)	Match sessions available in peak period
1	AFC Blackpool	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Adult		Standard	1	4	2	2	-
6	Blackpool Sixth Form College	Yes	<b>Unsecure</b>	Education	Adult		Poor	1	1	1	-	-
8	Boundary Park	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult Youth Mini	9v9 7v7	Standard	4 2 2	8	8	-	-
9	Collins Park	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult		Standard	1	0.5	2	1.5	1
10	Common Edge Road	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult Youth Mini Youth	9v9 7v7 9v9	Standard	8 5 2 1	17.5 4.5	16 2	1.5 2.5	- -
11	Fishers Field	Yes	Secure	Council	Youth	11v11	Standard	3	1.5	6	4.5	2.5
16	Moor Park Extension	Yes	Secure	Council	Youth Youth Mini	11v11 9v9 7v7	Standard	2 <sup>12</sup> 3 2	3.5 1.5 2	4 6 8	0.5 4.5 6	- 1.5 -
18	South Shore Academy	Yes	<b>Unsecure</b>	School	Youth Youth	11v11 9v9	Poor	1 1	2.5	1	1.5	-
20	Squires Gate FC	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Adult		Good	1	4	3	1	-
21	St George's Church of England High School	Yes	<b>Unsecure</b>	School	Adult Youth Mini		Poor	2 1 2	1.5 1 2	2 1 2	0.5 - -	- - -
22	St Mary's Catholic Academy	Yes	<b>Unsecure</b>	School	Adult Youth Mini Mini	9v9 7v7 5v5	Standard	3 3 3 3	6.5 8	6 12	0.5 4	- -
23	Stanley Park	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult Youth Mini		Standard	2 3 2	0 0.5 0.5	4 6 8	4 5.5 7.5	2 3 1.5
25	Whiteholme Recreation Ground	Yes	Secure	Sports Clubs	Adult Youth Mini Youth Mini Mini	9v9 7v7 9v9 7v7 5v5	Standard	5 9v9 x4 7v7 x2 1 6 1	8.5	10 2 24 4	1.5 - 18.5 -	1 - 0.5 -
27	Blackpool Wren Rovers FC	Yes	Secure	Sports Club	Adult		Standard	1	1.5	2	0.5	0.5
29	Claremont Park	Yes	Secure	Council	Adult		Standard	1	1	2	1	0.5
34	Stanley Primary School	Yes	<b>Unsecure</b>	School	Mini Mini	7v7 5v5	Standard	2 1	3 2.5	8 4	5 1.5	0.5 -

<sup>10</sup> Unless local information suggests otherwise it can be assumed that the availability of all pitches in LA and sports club ownership will be secure.

<sup>11</sup> Where pitches are overmarked, recommended capacity is based on the larger pitch size, whilst type and usage of smaller pitch sizes marked within are shown in italics.

<sup>12</sup> The site is large enough to accommodate as many as five adult pitches subject to demand

## BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Table 2.10: Football pitches at education sites (no recorded community use)

Site ID	Site name	Security of tenure <sup>13</sup>	Availability for community use	Management	Pitch type	Pitch size	Quality rating	No. of pitches
13	Highfield Leadership Academy	<b>Unsecure</b>	Yes - unused	Academy	Adult		Poor	1
15	Montgomery High School	<b>Unsecure</b>	Yes - unused	School	Adult		Standard	1
					Youth	9v9		1
21	St George's Church Of England High School	<b>Unsecure</b>	Yes - unused	School	Youth	9v9	Poor	1
					Mini Mini	7v7 5v5		2 5v5 x2
24	Unity Academy Blackpool	Secure	Yes - unused	School	Youth	9v9	Standard	3
31	Moor Park Primary School	<b>Unsecure</b>	Yes – unused	School	Mini	5v5	Standard	1
32	St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy	<b>Unsecure</b>	Yes – unused	School	Mini	7v7	Standard	1
35	Armfield Academy	Secure <sup>14</sup>	Yes – unused	School	Youth	11v11	Standard	3
						9v9		2

<sup>13</sup> Unless local information suggests otherwise it can be assumed that the availability of all pitches in LA, town and parish council and sports club ownership will be secure.

<sup>14</sup> Community Use Agreement in place

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## 2.5: Supply and demand analysis

### ***Spare capacity***

The next step is to ascertain whether or not any identified 'potential capacity' can be deemed 'spare capacity'. There may be situations where, although a site is highlighted as potentially able to accommodate some additional play, this should not be recorded as spare capacity against the site. For example, a site may be managed to regularly operate slightly below full capacity to ensure that it can cater for a number of regular friendly matches and activities that take place but are difficult to quantify on a weekly basis.

Over marked pitches which are used and exhibit potential spare capacity have not been considered available to accommodate further play in order to protect pitch quality, given the nature of repeated and sustained use over a short period of time.

Where there is potential spare capacity exhibited at school sites beyond current community use, this has not been included due to the significant additional use during the week by schools for curricular, extracurricular and competitive sport.

### ***Match equivalent sessions***

Pitches have a limit of how much play they can accommodate over a certain period of time before their quality, and in turn their use, is adversely affected. As the main usage of pitches is likely to be for matches, it is appropriate for the comparable unit to be match equivalent sessions but may for example include training sessions and informal use.

At this stage, match equivalent sessions do not equate to a number of pitches. This is because an analysis area might show three match equivalent sessions of spare capacity, however, this is likely to be spread across a number of sites. Further to this, minimal spare capacity on one site may be required to accommodate strategic reserve and as such retained. If the spare capacity is on one pitch then it might indicate a need to create a different type of pitch to address a deficiency. This will be fully determined and recommendations will be made accordingly within the Strategy and Action Plan.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Table 2.11: Summary of actual spare capacity

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	Potential capacity (MES)	Actual spare capacity (MES)	Comments
9	Collins Park	Adult	1.5	1	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
11	Fishers Field	Youth 11v11	4.5	2.5	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
16	Moor Park Extension	Youth 11v11	0.5	-	Played to capacity at peak time.
		Youth 9v9	4.5	1.5	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
		Mini 7v7	6	-	Played to capacity at peak time.
23	Stanley Park	Adult	4	2	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
		Youth 9v9	5.5	3	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
		Mini 7v7	7.5	1.5	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
24	Unity Academy Blackpool	Youth 9v9	6	3	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
25	Whiteholme Recreation Ground	Adult	1.5	1	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
		Mini 7v7	18.5	0.5	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
27	Blackpool Wren Rovers FC	Adult	0.5	0.5	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
29	Claremont Park	Adult	1	0.5	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
35	Armfield Academy	Youth 11v11	6	3	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
		Youth 9v9	4	2	Available peak time capacity to accommodate further use.
<b>Total</b>			<b>71.5</b>	<b>22</b>	

There is a total of 12 match sessions of actual spare capacity located across pitches at Collins Park, Fishers Field, Moor Park Extension, Stanley Park, Whiteholme Recreation Ground, Blackpool Wren Rovers FC and Claremont Park which are available for community use and currently used.

There are 10 further match equivalent sessions available on pitches at Stanley Park, Unity Academy Blackpool and Armfield Academy which are available for community use but are currently unused. Overall, this means there are 22 match sessions of actual spare capacity available across Blackpool.

Actual spare capacity has been aggregated up by area and by pitch type.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Table 2.12: Actual spare capacity summary

Analysis Area	Actual spare capacity (match equivalent sessions per week)				
	Adult	Youth 11v11	Youth 9v9	Mini 7v7	Mini 5v5
<b>Total</b>	5	5.5	9.5	2	-

A total of 16 sites have been identified as having spare capacity totalling 24.5 match equivalent sessions per week. A total of 2.5 match equivalent sessions have been discounted due to both poor pitch quality and unsecure tenure. All the discounted actual spare capacity is located at school sites. Any actual spare capacity at unsecured sites has been discounted from any totals as the long-term existence of those pitches cannot be relied upon in the future.

## Overplay

Overplay occurs when there is more play accommodated on a site than it is able to sustain (which can often be due to the low carrying capacity of the pitches). Only sites which are overplayed and have current community use have been included in the overplay summary, therefore school sites which do not currently have any community use but may be overplayed due to curriculum use and school fixtures have not been included.

Table 2.13: Overplay on football pitches

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	Pitch size	No. of pitches	Match equivalent sessions per week
1	AFC Blackpool	Adult		1	2
10	Common Edge Road	Adult		8	1.5
		Youth	9v9	1	2.5
18	South Shore Academy	Youth	11v11	1	1.5
20	Squires Gate FC	Adult		1	1
22	St Mary's Catholic Academy	Adult		3	0.5

Common Edge Road is the most overplayed site as it currently accommodates four match equivalent sessions per week above the site's recommended capacity across two pitch types.

Having considered supply and demand, the tables below identify the overall spare capacity for the different pitch types, based on match equivalent sessions. Future demand is based on Team Generation Rates (TGRs) which are driven by population increases as well as club development plans.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Table 2.14: Summary of demand for pitches

Pitch type	Actual spare capacity <sup>15</sup>	Demand (match equivalent sessions per week)				
		Overplay	Unmet demand	Current total	Future demand	Total
Adult	5	5	-	-	-	-
Youth 11v11	5.5	1.5	-	4	2	2
Youth 9v9	9.5	2.5	-	7	0.5	6.5
Mini 7v7	2	-	-	2	-	2
Mini 5v5	-	-	-	-	2.5	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>10.5</b>

The table above shows that in Blackpool there is currently sufficient supply of all pitch formats. However, spare capacity of all pitch formats is minimal and so any slight increase in demand could lead to overplay. This is especially the case for adult pitches where the current stock is played to capacity. Growth of at least five mini soccer teams anticipated as a result of new U7 girls teams created from Wildcats Centres will see a future shortfall at mini 5v5 format.

## 2.6: Conclusions

In conclusion there is sufficient supply of grass football pitch provision to accommodate current football demand in Blackpool. Presently available supply can also sufficiently cater for future demand at all formats based solely on population change forecasts, with the exception of mini 5v5 where there is a requirement for additional capacity to accommodate future demand anticipated through growth in girls' teams driven by Wildcats Centres. Future demand may exceed these forecasts as a result of targeted development work and strategic growth priorities at national level, for example the growth of women and girls football.

<sup>15</sup> In match equivalent sessions per week

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

## Football – grass pitch summary

- ◀ **In conclusion there is sufficient supply of grass football pitch provision to accommodate current football demand in Blackpool.**
- ◀ **However, there is insufficient capacity at mini 5v5 format to accommodate growth in future demand anticipated as a result of new teams created from Wildcats Centre activity, increasing girls' football participation.**
- ◀ The audit identifies a total of 77 grass football pitches in Blackpool of which all but one is reported to be available for community use on some level.
- ◀ There are three FA or FIFA certified 3G pitches on which competitive football matches can be played, located at Blackpool Sports Centre, Bispham Sports Centre and Unity Academy Blackpool.
- ◀ Most pitches (88%) available for community use are rated as standard quality and a further 11% are poor quality, with only one adult pitch at Squires Gate FC rated as good (1%).
- ◀ Overmarking is prominent in Blackpool and takes place on various key sites such as Common Edge Road, Boundary Park and Whiteholme Recreation Ground.
- ◀ Changing facilities at Boundary Park are reported to be poor quality and insufficient to serve all pitches. The site is also highlighted as prone to damage to cars and theft.
- ◀ Changing provision within Blackpool Sports Centre is said to be of good quality, however, there is no dedicated officials changing rooms.
- ◀ No significant concerns regarding security on tenure has been identified.
- ◀ A total of 188 affiliated teams are identified as playing matches on football pitches within Blackpool during the 2018/19 season.
- ◀ Team generation rates indicate the likely creation of an additional five junior boys' teams.
- ◀ There are ten Wildcats Centres in Blackpool, all delivering sessions to increase girls' participation in football. It has been assumed that half of these centres will establish an U7 girls' team in the coming seasons.
- ◀ Future demand may exceed these forecasts as a result of targeted development work and strategic growth priorities at national level, for example the growth of women and girls football.
- ◀ There is a total of 12 match sessions of actual spare capacity located across pitches that are currently in use to some level. There are a further 10 match equivalent sessions of actual spare capacity on unused pitches located at Stanley Park, Unity Academy Blackpool and Armfield Academy.
- ◀ There are 15 pitches overplayed across five sites, by a total of nine match equivalent sessions. The majority of overplay takes place on adult pitches, with only a single youth 11v11 and a single youth 9v9 pitch currently overplayed in the Borough.
- ◀ There is capacity at Stanley Park, Claremont Park, Whiteholme Recreation Ground and Moor Park Extension to mark out additional pitches

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## PART 3: CRICKET

### 3.1: Introduction

Lancashire Cricket Foundation (LCF) serves as the governing and representative body for cricket within Blackpool. Its aim is to promote the game at all levels through partnerships with professional and recreational cricketing clubs, and other appropriate agencies.

The LCF is currently working with the ECB on delivering its five-year plan, Inspiring Generations (2020-2024). Its success will be measured by the number of people who support, play and follow the whole game and is based upon six key areas (grow and nurture the core, inspire through elite teams, make cricket accessible, engage children and young people, transform women's and girls' cricket, support our communities).

#### ***Consultation***

There are two cricket clubs playing in Blackpool; Blackpool CC and South Shore CC, both of which were consulted with in 2015. Renewed consultation with ECB and LCF in 2019 verifies and updates the information relating to these two clubs throughout this section.

### 3.2: Supply

In total, there are three grass cricket squares in Blackpool, each with one grass square at the following sites:

- ◀ Blackpool Cricket Club
- ◀ Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground
- ◀ South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club

All are available for community use and are used by one of the two clubs in the Borough.

The map overleaf shows the location of all cricket squares in Blackpool. For a key to the map see Table 3.1.

#### ***Disused provision***

A natural turf square was previously maintained at St Georges CE High School and was considered available but not used due to a reported lack of demand. Aerial imagery now suggests that the cricket square is no longer prepared by the School.

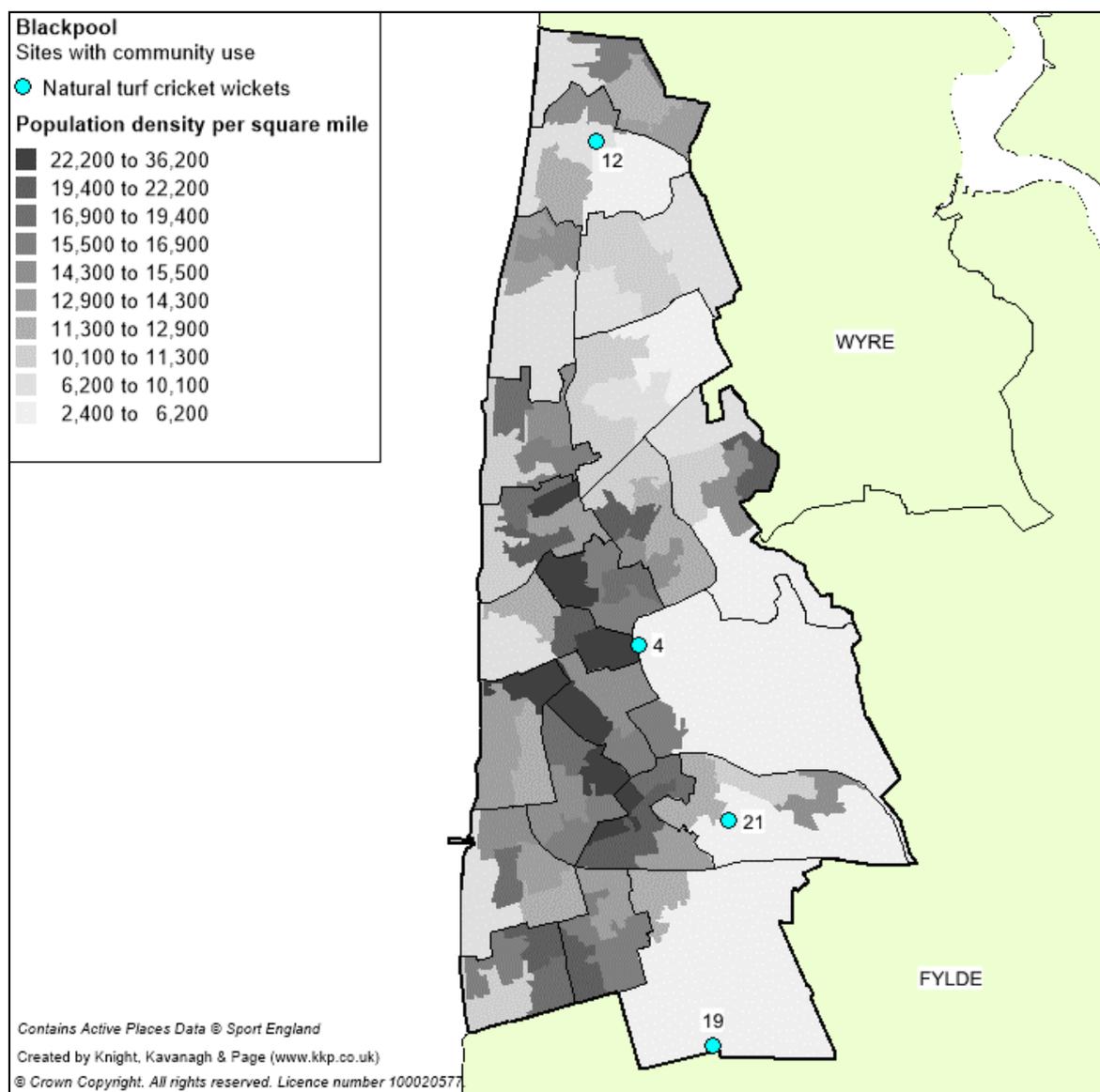
Similarly, information from Sport England's Active Places Power database indicates that Montgomery Academy has some degree of cricket provision, however, this appears to be one single grass wicket marked temporarily throughout the summer for curricular use only, thus is not considered to represent regularly accessible supply

There was previously a cricket square in Stanley Park which was used by teams playing in the Fylde Cricket League. Since this unaffiliated league folded at the end of the 2014 season there has been no subsequent reported demand for its use and so the Council ceased to maintain it as a cricket pitch.

The three disused sites have not been taken into account in the capacity data set out in this Assessment Report.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Figure 3.1: Location of available cricket squares in Blackpool



## Security of tenure

Both cricket clubs in Blackpool have secure tenure of their respective home ground; each is leased from the Council. Blackpool CC has 13 years remaining on its lease agreement. In addition, it is currently in the process of negotiating a lease of the pitch at Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground from the Council which will enable it to proceed with plans to develop existing facilities. South Shore CC also leases its home ground (at South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club) from the Council and has 22 years remaining.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

## ***Pitch quality***

As part of the PPS Guidance, there are three levels to assessing the quality of cricket pitches: good, standard and poor. Maintaining high pitch quality is the most important aspect of cricket; if the wicket is poor, it can affect the quality of the game and can, in some instances, become dangerous.

As a guide, the ECB sets a standard number of matches that each pitch type should be able to accommodate without adversely affecting its current quality (pitch capacity):

Wicket type	Number of match equivalent sessions per season		
	Good quality	Standard quality	Poor quality
Grass wicket	5 per season	4 per season	0 - unusable (unsafe)
Non-turf wicket	60 per season	60 per season	0 - unusable (unsafe)

Through non-technical assessment carried out on cricket squares in Blackpool and club feedback in 2015, two squares are rated as standard quality and one as good, with none rated as poor.

The square at Blackpool Cricket Club is rated as standard quality, supported by the Club through consultation feedback. The Club plays within the northern Premier Cricket League (NPCL) which requires that umpires submit pitch quality reports for each match; therefore, there is a requirement to maintain the square to a high quality in order to meet the demands of the performance standard of match play. The site is also used by representative and LCF pathway squads for matches, including most significantly by Lancashire Cricket Club senior men's team as an out ground for elite level competition matches on a few days per season.

*Table 3.1: Quality of available grass cricket squares in Blackpool*

Site ID	Site name	Square quality	Number of senior wickets	Number of junior only wickets	Number of non-turf wickets
4	Blackpool Cricket Club	Standard	17	4	-
12	Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground	Standard	6	-	-
19	South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club	Good	18	-	1

Blackpool CC reports that although there are three net training bays onsite built in recent years, the square itself still accommodates a considerable proportion of training using a mobile net cage, which despite the continued efforts of a full time groundsman has impacted on wicket quality over time. The quality of the outfield was also highlighted as an issue as it reportedly drains poorly in areas.

Blackpool CC also makes use of a second square at Fleetwood Recreation Ground. The square is rated as standard quality, though the Club seeks to improve the quality and to develop the site as a full second club ground having now taken on management of the pavilion building onsite via long-term lease. The outfield was overmarked with two adult football pitches in years previous (last evident circa 2016) but is now solely used for cricket, though remains publicly accessible open space.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

The square at South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club is rated as good quality, and outfield drainage is reportedly generally good. The outfield is overmarked by a senior rugby league pitch which is used by Blackpool Scorpions ARLFC.

Maintaining high square quality is the most important aspect of cricket. If the wicket is poor, it can affect the quality of the game and can, in some instances, become dangerous. To obtain a full technical assessment of wicket and squares, the ECB recommends a Performance Quality Standard Assessment (PQS). The PQS looks at a cricket square to ascertain whether the square meets the Performance Quality Standards which are benchmarked by the Institute of Groundsmanship. The report identifies surface issues and suggests options for remediation together with likely costs.

*Table 3.2: Performance Quality Standard (PQS) ratings*

Quality rating	Details
Premier (High)	Where the surface is intended for Premier League play, with those within the top quartile capable of holding minor county and 1st class one day matches. May include some of the better schools and university pitches
Club (Standard)	A Club pitch suitable for league, school and junior cricket
Basic	An acceptable level suitable for recreational cricket and where the surface is designed and maintained within tight financial limitations such as local authorities
Unsuitable	This is where the surface is deemed unfit or unsafe for play

Clubs can contact LCF to arrange for a pitch advisor to complete three different reports (comprehensive/mini/verbal) that vary in cost. A fully comprehensive report includes soil testing and guidance on machinery and corrective procedures, a mini report includes guidance on machinery and corrective procedures and a verbal report is a spoken version of a mini report.

### **Non-turf pitches (NTPs)**

The ECB highlights that NTPs which follow its TS6 guidance on performance standards are suitable for high level, senior play and are considered able to take 60 matches per season although this may include training sessions where on occasions mobile nets may be used as a practice facility.

It should be noted that inclusion of a non-turf wicket for the management of fixtures would alleviate overplay issues, however this would be subject to league rules and minimum pitch specifications (the overall ground size is 115m which can accommodate a nine strip square – see ECB S9 pitch layout). Where possible the addition of a non-turf wicket could be considered for junior cricket (up to U15s) and potentially lower league cricket which will take the burden off remaining wickets due to intensification of use. This option should be considered on a site by site basis.

No competitive senior club cricket was recorded as taking place on NTPs although they may be used for training purposes with the aid of mobile nets or some junior matches.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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There is only one non-turf wicket on a cricket club site, at South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club. It is situated on the edge of the natural turf square and was previously used for training but is no longer used by the Club since a new three bay net training area was built on the site. Future availability for use for training may be restricted by match play, though the Club reports little demand for training use as it has a dedicated off-field net bay training facility.

## ***Ancillary facilities***

The extent of ancillary facilities required differs between times of play; for example, senior teams playing at weekends typically need to access clubhouse and kitchen facilities to provide teas, whereas for junior and short format senior matches played midweek this is often not required and requirement is more for access to suitable changing facilities.

Quality and access to required match day and preparatory facilities in Blackpool is good and both clubs have access to onsite pavilion and changing facilities at their respective home grounds.

There are four changing rooms available at Blackpool Cricket Club although one is also to accommodate members using the squash facilities. The Club is of the opinion that they are too small but do conform to League (NPCL) requirements. It would reportedly like to improve the quality of pavilion facilities and has contacted both the Council and LCF regarding the potential to do so.

Pavilion facilities at Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground (Blackpool CC's secondary ground) were previously condemned by the Council, however, they are now on a long-term lease to the Club and it has invested in improving the condition so that facilities are again fit for purpose.

## ***Future developments***

Blackpool Council in conjunction with neighbouring Fylde Council has identified land around Blackpool Airport for the further development of the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone. This area includes encompassing three playing field sites (AFC Blackpool, Common Edge Road and South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club), of which, two are proposed for loss, with the retention of South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club and the development of a new sports village towards the South of the site on airport land, releasing land to the north of the cricket club for development.

The outline planning application for phase one of the development was submitted in April 2019 and proposes some impact on the extent of cricket provision available at South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club, including minor relocation of the square slightly to the north of its current position and development of an eastern gateway access road which would cut through the existing three bay net training facility, as well as development of a new cricket pavilion.

This proposed development would prejudice cricket provision onsite and thus poses a threat to cricket participation by South Shore CC at South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club. If current proposals go ahead then there would be a loss of cricket provision which would need to be re-provided. Any such impact on provision would need to evidence ability to meet the requirements of paragraph 97 of the NPPF and the Exceptions in Sport England's Playing Fields Policy.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Appendix 2 to this Assessment Report provides the latest position on the re-provision proposals at Common Edge Rd. updating the information provided above. The proposals no longer impacts the existing cricket wicket and outfield.

### 3.3: Demand

There are two cricket clubs which in total account for 10 senior and 10 junior teams playing competitive matches on pitches within Blackpool.

T20 competition teams are included within the team count with both clubs operating T20 teams playing in the Palace Shield T20 competition.

Table 3.3: Team demand at cricket clubs in Blackpool

Club	Number of competitive teams			
	Senior men	Senior women	Junior	Total
Blackpool CC	6	2	8	16
South Shore CC	4	-	2	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>

Women and girls cricket are a national priority for the ECB and LCF locally. Women's & Girls cricket is a priority for Blackpool CC which has gone from running Women's Softball events to now having two women's teams and a junior section which includes girls, with plans to run specific junior girls teams in future. Women's softball cricket is detailed later in this section.

It is also important to note that both St Annes CC and Lytham CC, both located in relatively close proximity to Blackpool in neighbouring Fylde Borough, have already put an emphasis on the increased participation of women and girls within their clubs. St Annes CC fields two women's teams, whilst Lytham CC fields a junior girl's team and is running softball cricket teams for women as the Club builds its women and girls section. It is anticipated by ECB and LCF that the Blackpool & Fylde region should expect to have three clubs running women and girls' teams at appropriate age groups during the 2020-2024 period.

South Shore CC is particularly keen to expand its junior section and is focusing on creating links and partnerships with local schools in order to increase junior demand at the Club.

#### ***Last man stands (LMS)***

Last Man Stands (LMS) is a short format of cricket operated on a franchise basis but affiliated to the ECB, where matches are typically played midweek on NTPs. There is no LMS league in Blackpool, the LMS Lancashire region leagues based in Preston, Wyre, Lancaster, Fylde and Chorley.

#### ***Participation trends***

The National Player Survey (NPS) conducted over the past three years by the ECB reveals that the nature of participation in traditional league cricket is currently suffering a decline, although this is being offset by a rapid increase in non-traditional formats (such as LMS and T20 competitions), which are shorter, quicker formats of the game and are referenced elsewhere in this section.

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## ***Temporal demand***

Senior cricket in Blackpool is typically played on Saturday afternoons, with little demand for midweek matches beyond twenty over cup competitions. Senior cricket teams play in either the Northern Premier Cricket League (NPCL) or Palace Shield Cricket League (PSCL) which also operates Sunday divisions.

The youth league structure in Blackpool tends to be club based matches which are played midweek. Therefore, there is usually no conflict with access to squares and any midweek matches are usually played on different nights. All junior cricket takes place as part of the PSCL which operates a junior section with leagues at various age groups, whilst there is also an ECB U19s competition which Blackpool CC has a team in.

## ***Imported and exported demand***

Blackpool CC has on occasions exported demand to play at Bank Lane Recreation Ground in neighbouring Fylde to accommodate fixtures when more than two senior teams are scheduled to play a home fixture on the same afternoon. This is an irregular occurrence and the ad hoc use of this pitch is not frequent, especially given that the Club states it is expensive to hire and now has use of ground and pavilion facilities at Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground.

## ***Future demand***

Team generation rates (TGRs) are used as the basis for calculating the number of teams likely to be generated in the future based solely on population change.

*Table 3.4: Team generation rates (applied Borough wide)*

Age group	Current population within age group	Current no. of teams	Team generation rate	Future population within age group (2027)	Predicted future number of teams	Additional teams that may be generated from the increased population
Senior Men's (18-55)	33,498	10	3350	30,410	9.1	0
Senior Women's (18-55)	33,277	2	16639	29,552	1.8	0
Junior Boys (7-18)	9,447	10	945	9,766	10.3	0
Junior Girls (7-18)	9,073	0	0	9,538	0	0

The table above shows that population change in Blackpool is not anticipated to result in growth of additional weekend format senior cricket teams. However, this must be considered alongside local activity to drive participation in women's cricket and whilst this table does not predict new teams for women's hardball cricket, it must be acknowledged that the growth of women's softball cricket may see more women progress into playing hardball cricket.

Similarly, whilst the table forecasts some level of participation growth at junior level not sufficient to represent a whole new team, the significant drive to target increased junior participation through the All Stars Cricket programme is likely to see junior engagement and participation in hardball cricket increase beyond the current levels in Blackpool with both Blackpool Cricket Club and South Shore Cricket Club involved with the All Stars Cricket programme which commenced nationally in 2017. The impact of this programme will be considered in the review to be undertaken in 2021.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## *All Stars Cricket*

In partnership with the ECB and Chance to Shine cricket, clubs in Blackpool can register to become an ECB All Stars Cricket Centre. Once registered, a club can deliver the programme which aims to introduce cricket to children aged from five to eight. Subsequently, this may lead to increased interest and demand for junior cricket at clubs.

The programme seeks to achieve the following aims:

- ◀ Increase cricket activity for five to eight year olds in the school and club environment
- ◀ Develop consistency of message in both settings to aid transition
- ◀ Improve generic movement skills for children, using cricket as the vehicle
- ◀ Make it easier for new volunteers to support and deliver in the club environment
- ◀ Use fun small sided games to enthuse new children and volunteers to follow and play the game

Both cricket clubs in Blackpool have run All Stars Cricket centres and will again in 2019, with sessions held on the outfielders at their respective home grounds. Subsequently both are likely to experience significant interest and growth in junior participation.

## *Chance to Shine Schools Programme*

Chance to Shine is a national charity which aims to educate young people and teach them vital life skills through cricket. Since 2005 the Charity's school programme has helped combat the decline of participation in cricket, especially in state schools. In Blackpool it works in partnership with the LCF and local clubs to engage both girls and boys to play and learn through engagement. This is achieved through but not limited by teacher training, club/school partnership and curricular/extracurricular coaching.

Both clubs are part of the LCF Chance to Shine Strategy which sees LCF community coaches currently deliver sessions in schools within both Blackpool and neighbouring authorities within an accessible travel area, helping to both develop core skills and generate interest in cricket whilst linking to local clubs. Sessions are currently being delivered at St Mary's Catholic Academy linking to Blackpool CC and at LSA Technology and Performing Arts College in Fylde, linking to South Shore CC located less than three miles away.

## *Softball cricket*

Softball cricket is an ECB initiative aimed at women and girls to increase participation in cricket as a sport. The aim of softball cricket sections are enjoyment and participation; without pads, a hardball, a heavy bat and limited rules. Sessions follow a festival format with each session running for a maximum of two and half hours, shorter than traditional formats.

Each match consists of two teams of six to eight people, with everyone having an opportunity to bat and bowl. Each team bats once, with a pair of batters facing two or three overs. Batters are dismissed in traditional ways, but bowling can be either overarm or underarm, depending on the bowler's preference. Each batting team starts with a score of 200 runs, with runs added to this total by running between the wickets or by hitting the ball to a boundary. Two runs are added to the total for each wide ball; whilst five runs are removed when a batter is out.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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The highest score at the conclusion of play wins. Playing equipment is supplied by festival organisers, with all participants provided with a t-shirt for taking part.

LCF reports that both Blackpool CC and South Shore CC will be participating in women's softball festivals in 2019, with Blackpool CC to host a festival event. This activity is held on the outfield areas at their respective main home grounds.

## *Lancashire County Cricket*

Blackpool CC is also regularly used by Lancashire County Cricket Club and serves as a County out ground where elite level fixtures can be played in order to take them around the County to a wider audience. In 2019 the site hosted three T20 games for the men's Second and Women's (Lancashire Thunder) teams. The site is also used on occasion for County age group matches for both the junior boys (nine teams) and girls (four teams).

Whilst this has caused little recent impact and use is occasional, it should be noted the potential for longer format four day matches to postpone or displace the likes of junior matches and training from the main site.

### **3.4: Capacity analysis**

Capacity analysis for cricket is measured on a seasonal rather than a weekly basis. This is due to playability (as only one match is generally played per pitch per day at weekends or weekday evening) and because wickets are rotated throughout the season to reduce wear and tear and to allow for repair.

The capacity of a square to accommodate matches is driven by the number and quality of wickets. This section of the report presents the current pitch stock available for cricket and illustrates the number of competitive matches per season per square. Capacity is considered to be five match equivalent sessions per wicket per season for good quality pitches and four for standard quality pitches. For poor quality squares, no capacity is considered to exist as such provision is not safe for play.

To help calculate square capacity, the ECB suggests that a good quality natural turf wicket should be able to take five matches per season per grass wicket (adults). This information is used to allocate capacity ratings as follows:

<b>Potential capacity</b>	Play is below the level the site could sustain
<b>At capacity</b>	Play matches the level the site can sustain
<b>Overused</b>	Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

Please note that non-turf wickets have been discounted from the table overleaf. No non-turf wickets are recorded as accommodating more than 60 matches per season; therefore, all non-turf wickets are considered to have spare capacity. This translates to actual spare capacity for junior cricket as peak time is midweek, whereby non-turf wickets are more commonly used and matches can be played on a variety of days.

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Table 3.5: Natural turf cricket square capacity

Site ID	Site name	Management	Club users	Quality rating <sup>16</sup>	Number of pitches	Wicket type	Number of grass wickets	Match equivalent sessions per season		
								Actual play	Capacity	Capacity balance
4	Blackpool Cricket Club	Sports Club	Blackpool CC Lancashire CC Lancashire Age Group Pathway	Standard	1	Senior	17	65 <sup>17</sup>	68	3
						Junior only	4	9	16	7
12	Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground	Sports Club	Blackpool CC	Standard	1	Senior	6	20	24	4
19	South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club	Sports Club	South Shore CC	Good	1	Senior	18 <sup>18</sup>	31	90	59

<sup>16</sup> As derived from the non-technical site assessments and club feedback

<sup>17</sup> Of which an assumed six match equivalent sessions per season has been attributed to Lancashire Cricket Club and County Junior team use

<sup>18</sup> Square also has a non-turf wicket which can be used to accommodate a proportion of play, particularly junior matches

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## 3.5: Supply and demand analysis

### *Spare capacity*

The next step is to ascertain whether or not any identified 'potential capacity' can be deemed 'actual spare capacity' by which it is available at peak time. There may be situations where, although a site is highlighted as potentially able to accommodate some additional play, this should not be recorded as spare capacity against the site. For example, a site may be managed to regularly operate slightly below full capacity to ensure that it can cater for a number of regular training sessions, or to protect the quality of the site.

In order to fully establish actual spare capacity, the peak period needs to be established. An analysis of match play identifies that peak time demand for grass cricket squares for senior cricket is Saturday (with six teams playing).

All three available sites show sufficient potential capacity over the season to accommodate further demand. However, in practice both are used to capacity on Saturday afternoons and have no availability. Opportunities should be maximised at these sites to utilise capacity at non-peak times such as Sundays and midweek, to grow junior and women's participation.

Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground does not exhibit peak time availability on Saturday afternoon to accommodate another senior men's team. Capacity could instead be used for junior or women's cricket, though the ancillary facilities at Blackpool Cricket Club make that site better equipped to support this activity, a key ECB focus and growth area.

*Table 3.6: Actual square capacity of grass cricket squares at senior peak time*

Site ID	Site name	Number of squares	Match equivalent sessions			Comment
			Capacity rating (per season)	Saturday availability (per day)	Sunday availability (per day)	
4	Blackpool Cricket Club	1	3	-	-	Used by two teams – no peak time capacity for additional play
12	Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground	1	4	-	1	Used by two teams – no peak time capacity but some limited capacity on Sunday for additional play
19	South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club	1	59	-	-	Used by two teams – no peak time capacity for additional play
<b>Total</b>			<b>66</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	

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The only site with availability to potentially accommodate more senior cricket on Sundays is Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground, with capacity of 4 match equivalent sessions per season.

The table below explores total available spare capacity over the season, considered against total overplay and future demand identified and quantified through consultation and TGRs.

*Table 3.7: Capacity of grass cricket squares in Blackpool*

Play type	Match equivalent sessions per season)				
	Total spare capacity	Overplay	Current total	Future demand	Future total
Senior (Saturday PM)	-	-	-	-	-
Senior (Sunday PM)	4	-	4	-	4

Junior teams generally play midweek across a variety of days; consequently, spare capacity is considered to exist for junior matches both now and in the future and should be judged on a site by site basis where clubs have particular aspirations to increase the number of junior teams.

Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground is not presently used for junior cricket but if not used for further adult play, could accommodate some further junior use. This would help Blackpool CC to continue to be able to accommodate County fixtures and also allow for more time to access the square throughout the week for preparation and repair maintenance work amidst junior fixtures. Together this is more likely to help facilitate improvements to be made to pitch quality which is difficult to manage as a direct result of the high level of use onsite. However, Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground does not have the accompanying hospitality and social facilities available at Blackpool Cricket Club which may be an influencing factor in how and when the Club chooses to use it.

### 3.6: Conclusions

Overall there is sufficient supply of cricket pitches to cater for current demand from clubs within Blackpool at peak time for both senior and junior play. However, peak time for senior league cricket is played on Saturday afternoons when none of three available sites have spare capacity. This means that in order to accommodate any increases in future peak demand there would be a need to access at least one further natural turf cricket square on Saturdays, which is not available within the Borough; or for men's teams to play Sunday cricket as women's teams already do. Some limited capacity does exist at Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground on a Sunday where the club's women's cricket is currently played.

Focus for cricket facilities in Blackpool should be to drive growth of junior and women and girls' cricket at the two established clubs and to ensure that ancillary provision and the wider club environment at both main clubs sites is able to support both increased footfall from juniors and parents and the requirements for growth in female participation.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## Cricket summary

- ◀ Overall there is sufficient capacity within Blackpool to accommodate current and future demand for senior and junior match play on existing squares.
- ◀ Focus for cricket facilities in Blackpool should be to ensure that ancillary provision and the wider club environment at both Blackpool Cricket Club and South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club is able to support both increased footfall from juniors and parents and the requirements for growth in female participation.
- ◀ Furthermore, future consideration must be given to temporal demand and programming of cricket clubs sites in order to be able to sufficiently support All Stars Cricket, women's softball, training and square maintenance amongst match commitments.
- ◀ In total, there are three grass cricket squares in Blackpool all of which are available for community use.
- ◀ There is one available non-turf pitch which is on the main square at South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club, however, is now little used as the Club has dedicated net training provision elsewhere onsite.
- ◀ Squares at Blackpool Cricket Club and Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground are rated as standard quality, whilst South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club is assessed as good quality.
- ◀ Blackpool CC supports this standard quality rating stating that the quality of the square has declined in recent years due to limited investment in remedial and maintenance work.
- ◀ There is some infrequent exported demand from Blackpool CC which uses a cricket pitch in Fylde on occasions, though this is only a contingency measure should there be three home fixtures that day.
- ◀ Blackpool CC has taken on long-term lease of the pavilion building at Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground and has invested in improving the facilities so that they are now fit for purpose and able to be used again.
- ◀ Based solely on population change, change in demand is not sufficient to create any whole new cricket teams. However, targeted development programmes for junior and women and girls' cricket is likely to see increases in participation at these age formats, contrary to population forecasts based on the current dynamics of cricket in the Borough.
- ◀ There is no peak time availability to accommodate additional play on Saturday afternoons for senior league matches in Blackpool. Limited match sessions are however available on Sunday afternoons at Fleetwood Road Recreation Ground which already accommodates senior women's cricket, therefore additional men's senior teams would need to either play on Sunday afternoons if appropriate, or seek additional cricket pitch provision not presently available in the Borough.
- ◀ Junior matches are able to be played across a number days throughout the week and all sites have capacity across the season to accommodate additional use of at least one junior team if not more.
- ◀ No cricket sites in Blackpool are considered to be overplayed.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## PART 4: RUGBY UNION

### 4.1: Introduction

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) is the national governing body responsible for grassroots and elite rugby in England. The RFU is split into six areas across the country with a workforce team that covers development, coaching, governance and competitions.

Lancashire RFU administers the sport across Blackpool with a County Development Manager and a team of community rugby coaches that deliver core programmes in schools and clubs. The variety of programmes, which include 15-a-side, 10-a-side, 7-a-side, Tag and the O2 Touch programme, all aiming to increase and retain participation within the game. In order to sustain and increase participation in the game, facilities need to be appropriate, affordable and accessible. The rugby union playing season operates from September to May.

### Consultation

Face to face consultation was carried out in 2015 with Blackpool RUFC, the only rugby union club in Blackpool. Renewed consultation with the RFU was undertaken in 2019 to update the data and qualify the current position of previously identified issues pertaining to rugby union in Blackpool.

### 4.2 Supply

There is one rugby union pitch in Blackpool at Blackpool RUFC (Fleetwood Road). The pitch is available for community use and is the home site of Blackpool RUFC. The site is within a wider playing field which accommodates a number of other sports including cricket (pitch and pavilion) and archery (clubhouse and shooting on the playing fields).

There are a further three pitches reported to be available at school sites, but with no recorded community use, likely due to limited club demand in the Borough. The pitch at Unity Academy Blackpool is well used by the school which is part of the All Schools Programme run by the RFU, linking to Fleetwood RFC (Wyre) as the chosen partner club. The pitch at Highfield Leadership Academy acts as a dual use pitch and is also used for football, with the school changing the goalposts and line markings when required dependent on which sport is to be played that particular term.

At present there are no World Rugby (WR) compliant 3G pitches within Blackpool, consequently none of the existing 3G pitches are sanctioned to safely accommodate rugby union contact practice or activity, including match play.

Arnold School previously had rugby union pitch provision until the School closed in 2013, now the site is the recently opened Armfield Academy which has natural and artificial grass pitch provision, but not marked for rugby union rather football.

Please note that the audit only identifies dedicated, line marked pitches. For the purposes of this report, being available for community use refers to pitches in public, voluntary, private or commercial ownership or management (including education sites) that are recorded as being available for use/hire by teams/clubs.

For rugby union pitch dimension sizes please refer to RFU 'Grass Pitches for Rugby' at:

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[http://www.rfu.com/managingrugby/clubdevelopment/facilitiesandequipment/~/\\_media/files/2009/facilitiesandequipment/facilities%20guidance%20note%202.ashx](http://www.rfu.com/managingrugby/clubdevelopment/facilitiesandequipment/~/_media/files/2009/facilitiesandequipment/facilities%20guidance%20note%202.ashx)

## **Security of tenure**

Blackpool RUFC previously leased the site at Fleetwood Road, however, the term of the previous agreement expired in 2014 and the Club now pays an annual rolling fee to the Council for use of the site each season. It is keen to renew a long-term lease with Blackpool Council so it can apply for funding to help secure its future and begin to improve the facilities onsite. The RFU is also keen for the Club to secure long-term tenure so that it might be able to support it with resolving outstanding financial issues and future development of facilities and participation. The Club reported that negotiations with Blackpool Council are slow due to a preference for all sports clubs on site (others include Blackpool Bowmen Archery, Tee Time Golf and Blackpool Cricket Club third team) under an umbrella lease.

Blackpool RFC operates with some financial difficulty and currently has around 25 to 30 members (including social members) thus potential for revenue generation is limited. The Club struggles financially which impacts on its ability to maintain the pitch and ancillary facilities.

## **Pitch quality**

The criteria for assessing rugby pitch quality looks at two key elements; the maintenance programme and the level of drainage on each pitch. An overall quality based on both drainage and maintenance can then be generated.

The agreed rating for each pitch type also represents actions required to improve pitch quality. A breakdown of actions required based on the ratings can be seen below:

*Table 4.1: Definition of maintenance categories*

Category	Definition
M0	Action is significant improvements to maintenance programme
M1	Action is minor improvements to maintenance programme
M2	Action is no improvements to maintenance programme

*Table 4.2: Definition of drainage categories*

Category	Definition
D0	Action is pipe drainage system is needed on pitch
D1	Action is pipe drainage is needed on pitch
D2	Action is slit drainage is needed on pitch
D3	No action is needed on pitch drainage

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Table 4.3: Quality ratings based on maintenance and drainage scores

		Maintenance		
		Poor (M0)	Adequate (M1)	Good (M2)
Drainage	Natural Inadequate (D0)	Poor	Poor	Standard
	Natural Adequate (D1)	Poor	Standard	Good
	Pipe Drained (D2)	Standard	Standard	Good
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	Standard	Good	Good

The senior pitch at Blackpool RUFC is rated as poor (M0/D1) quality. The pitch is maintained by a small group of club volunteers with limited grounds maintenance equipment, consequently the pitch suffers from overgrown grass and worn areas. Drainage is natural but adequate with the Club rarely having to postpone fixtures due to adverse weather conditions. RFU reports that the pitch is significantly poor quality.

The dual use pitch at Highfield Leadership Academy is also rated as poor quality. It drains naturally and is maintained to a basic standard with little remedial work beyond grass cutting and line marking as and when required.

The pitch at St Mary's Catholic College has a pipe drainage system in place which was installed approximately seven years ago. Pitches are maintained by a private company which cuts and lines the pitches as required with some sand dressing when necessary.

Table 4.4: Summary of rugby union pitch quality in Blackpool

Site ID	Site name	Management	Availability for community use	Quality rating <sup>19</sup>	
5	Blackpool RUFC	Sports club	Yes	M0/ D1	Poor
13	Highfield Leadership Academy	Academy	Yes - unused	M0/ D1	Poor
22	St Mary's Catholic College	School	Yes - unused	M0/ D2	Poor
24	Unity Academy Blackpool	School	Yes - unused	M0/ D1	Poor

## Ancillary facilities

The ancillary facilities at Blackpool RUFC are rated as poor quality. The RFU has acknowledged the poor quality of the changing facilities at the Club and that this impacts on the quality of experience for current and potential members, subsequently impacting on player retention. The building has had limited improvements since it was built and is currently maintained by a small group of club volunteers, however further support from is needed to bring the facility to an average or suitable standard.

### 4.3: Demand

Blackpool RUFC is the only rugby union club in the Borough and regularly fields just one senior men's team which plays league fixtures on Saturday afternoons. The Club has strengthened over the past two seasons having had so few members circa 2017 that the Club almost folded, however is now able to consistently field a senior men's team every week and is occasionally able to field a second senior men's team should there be enough players available to do so that week.

<sup>19</sup> As derived from non-technical site assessment

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The Club has some emerging junior activity at U11 age and some occasional friendly matches are played.

## **Training**

Blackpool RUFC reports that all training takes place on the dedicated floodlit area behind the clubhouse rather than the senior pitch itself which is not floodlit. Senior training is every Tuesday and Thursday evening for a total of approximately three hours per week. All training takes place onsite and there is no use of offsite facilities elsewhere. RFU reports that there is a lack of floodlit provision in the Borough able to support rugby union activity

## **Informal access**

As Blackpool RUFC is located within a publicly accessible playing field (Fleetwood Road), the Club reports that pitches are often subject to dog walkers and local children using the rugby posts for informal football. The amount of dog fouling on the pitches can be a concern, but the Club does not believe that the issue is excessive beyond what occurs at most other publicly accessible sites.

## **Future demand**

Team generation rates (TGRs) are used as the basis for calculating the number of teams likely to be generated in the future based solely on population change.

*Table 4.5: Team generation rates (applied Borough wide)*

Age group	Current population within age group	Current no. of teams	Team generation rate	Future population within age group (2027)	Predicted future number of teams	Additional teams that may be generated from the increased population
Senior Men (19-45)	21,998	1	21998	21,444	1	0
Senior Women (19-45)	21,906	0	0	20,671	0	0
Junior Boys (13-18)	4,583	0	0	5,010	0	0
Junior Girls (13-18)	4,487	0	0	4,995	0	0
Mini rugby mixed (7-12)	9,450	1	9450	9,297	1	0

The table above shows that exclusively based on population change in Blackpool, no new rugby union teams are anticipated to be created. This, however, does not take into consideration targeted development work in the area such as a club drive to increase junior recruitment or links to schools for example.

The Club aspires to develop its recently established junior section which at present is fledgling with a group of U11 juniors. It plans to continue to develop junior participation and to increase the number of juniors and teams over coming years.

At present the RFU are currently running three initiatives within Blackpool in partnership with Fleetwood RFC (Wyre) to increase membership levels. There is currently the All Schools Programme which is working with Montgomery High School, Unity Academy and Highfield Leadership Academy. There is also the Targeted Broadening Reaches

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Programme at Blackpool and the Fylde College and the Primary Schools Tag Rugby Programme linked with Blackpool Council sports development.

## 4.4: Capacity analysis

The capacity for pitches to regularly accommodate competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality, and therefore the capacity, of a pitch affect the playing experience and people's enjoyment of playing rugby. In extreme circumstances, it can result in the inability of the pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times. To enable an accurate supply and demand assessment of rugby pitches, the following assumptions are applied to site by site analysis:

All sites that are used for competitive rugby matches (regardless of whether this is secured community use) are included on the supply side.

All competitive play is on senior sized pitches (except for where mini pitches are provided).

From U13 upwards, teams play 15v15 and use a full pitch. Where mini pitches are not provided, mini (U7-12) teams play on half of a senior pitch i.e. two teams per senior pitch.

For senior and youth teams, the current level of play per week is set at 0.5 for each match played based on all teams operating on a traditional home and away basis (assumes half of matches will be played away). For mini teams, play per week is set at 0.25 for each match played across half of one senior pitch, based on all teams operating on a traditional home and away basis.

All male adult club league rugby takes place on a Saturday afternoon. U13-18 rugby generally takes place on a Sunday morning. Training that takes place on club pitches is reflected by the addition of team equivalents. Team equivalents have been calculated on the basis that 30 players (two teams) train on the pitch for 90 minutes (team equivalent of one) per night.

As a guide, the RFU has set a standard number of matches that each pitch should be able to accommodate. Capacity is based upon a basic assessment of the drainage system and maintenance programme ascertained through a combination of the quality assessment and the club survey as follows:

*Table 5.17: Pitch capacity (matches per week) based on quality assessments*

		Maintenance		
		Poor (M0)	Adequate (M1)	Good (M2)
Drainage	Natural Inadequate (D0)	0.5	1.5	2
	Natural Adequate or Pipe Drained (D1)	1.5	2	3
	Pipe Drained (D2)	1.75	2.5	3.25
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	2	3	3.5

This guide should only be used as a very general measure of potential pitch capacity and does not account for specific circumstances at time of use and assumes average rainfall and an appropriate end of season rest and renovation programme. The figures are based upon a pipe drained system at 5m centres that has been installed in the last eight years and a slit drained system at 1m centres completed in the last five years.

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## *The peak period*

In order to fully establish actual spare capacity, the peak period needs to be established. Peak time for senior rugby union matches is Saturday afternoons and is considered such within the subsequent analysis, although in Blackpool juniors play on the senior pitch on Sunday mornings.

*Table 5.18: Supply and demand balance of rugby union pitches in use*

Site ID	Site name	Pitch type	Quality rating	Floodlit	Match equivalent sessions (per week)		
					Usage	Pitch capacity	Capacity balance
5	Blackpool RUFC (Fleetwood Road)	Senior	M0/D1 (Poor)	No	1	1.5	0.5

## 4.5: Supply and demand analysis

### *Spare capacity*

The next step is to ascertain whether or not any identified 'potential capacity' can be deemed 'actual capacity'. There may be situations where, although a site is highlighted as potentially able to accommodate some additional play, this should not be recorded as spare capacity against the site. For example, a site may be managed to regularly operate slightly below full capacity to ensure that it can cater for a number of regular friendly matches and activities that take place but are difficult to quantify on a weekly basis.

The pitch at Blackpool RUFC is used by one senior team (0.5 match equivalent sessions per week) and one junior U11 team (0.5 match equivalent sessions per week – half pitch but almost every week rather than fortnightly), totalling use of one match equivalent session per week.

Subsequently, the pitch has potential spare capacity of 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week. There is both sufficient capacity and availability of 0.5 match equivalent sessions at peak time to accommodate a second men's senior team on Saturday afternoons should the current ad hoc play be established as regular team activity.

Until this time, there is capacity for additional junior use of the senior pitch on Sunday mornings, however, there is insufficient capacity to accommodate both and should growth in both senior and junior teams occur in the future, there would be a need to increase pitch capacity through qualitative improvements and/or make greater use of the standalone training area or residual playing field land beside the senior pitch.

Mini and junior rugby generally takes place on Sunday mornings and though there are no teams in Blackpool at present, there is one match session available at this time to accommodate any junior teams which may or may not be created in future. If Blackpool RUFC does operate a junior U16 side in the future, there is capacity for that to be accommodated onsite as no play occurs on the pitch on a Sunday.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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However, critically Blackpool RUFC does not have security of tenure for future use of the site and whilst there is no foreseen threat to loss of access given that the site is owned and managed by the Council, this capacity cannot be confidently accounted for rugby union until the Club is able to secure tenure at Fleetwood Road. Whilst the site is not deemed to be unsecure, the Club's long-term presence is unless secured through formal agreement.

## **Conclusions**

There is sufficient supply of rugby union pitches to accommodate both current and anticipated future demand for rugby union in Blackpool.

Key consideration for rugby union in Blackpool should be to support the Club in managing historical financial issues and making it sustainable, whilst seeking to secure formal long-term use of the site. This, in turn, should enable the Club the comfort to explore opportunities to invest in the improvement of facilities, notably the poor quality ancillary provision. The Club is growing participation and in order to continue to grow junior rugby particularly there is a need to improve changing and toilet provision and pitch quality to enable accommodation of future growth onsite.

The RFU states that improvement of pitch quality at Blackpool RUFC and increased access to suitable floodlit provision for rugby union activity should be medium to longer term aims, with priority focus to be on ensuring the club is able to operate sustainably, overcome financial challenges and to secure long-term tenure onsite through pursuing leasehold with the Council.

### **Rugby union summary**

- ◀ **There is sufficient supply of rugby union pitches to accommodate both current and anticipated future demand for rugby union in Blackpool.**
- ◀ **Key consideration for rugby union in Blackpool should be to support in making the Club sustainable, whilst seeking to secure formal long-term use of the site to help facilitate investment into the improvement of facilities, notably poor quality ancillary provision.**
- ◀ There is just one available grass rugby union pitch in Blackpool at Blackpool RUFC.
- ◀ There are no World Rugby certified 3G pitches for contact rugby union activity.
- ◀ The pitch at Blackpool RUFC is rated as poor quality. It is maintained by a small group of club volunteers with limited equipment, consequently the pitch suffers from overgrown grass and worn areas.
- ◀ Changing and ancillary facilities at Blackpool RUFC are poor quality and in need of improvement.
- ◀ The Club operates with some financial difficulty and potential for revenue generation is limited, impacting on the ability to maintain the pitch and its ancillary facilities to the required standard.
- ◀ The previous lease agreement with the Council expired in 2014 and the Club now rents via annual rolling agreement. The RFU is keen for the Club to secure long-term tenure of the site so that it might be able to support with resolving financial issues and future development of facilities and participation.
- ◀ Blackpool RUFC is the only club in the Borough and regularly fields one senior men's team. The Club has a junior age group at U11 which plays friendly matches and trains onsite.
- ◀ The Club has grown participation over the last two years, particularly at senior level and from almost folding is now able to field a senior men's team consistently each week. It has also since established a junior section.
- ◀ Team generation rates based solely on population change do not anticipate the creation of any whole new rugby union teams in Blackpool to 2027. However, this does not take into account targeted activity by either the Club or RFU in the Blackpool area.
- ◀ Peak time for senior rugby union matches in Blackpool is Saturday afternoon.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

## PART 5: ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES (AGP) FOR HOCKEY

### 5.1: Introduction

Hockey in England is governed by England Hockey (EH) and is administered locally by the Lancashire Hockey Association.

Competitive league hockey matches and training can only be played on sand filled, sand dressed or water based artificial grass pitches (AGPs). Although competitive, adult and junior club training cannot take place on third generation turf pitches (3G), 40mm pitches may be suitable for introductory level hockey, such as school curriculum low level hockey. EH's Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy details suitability of surface type for varying levels of hockey, as shown below.

*Table 5.1: England Hockey guidelines on artificial surface types suitable for hockey*

Category	Surface	Playing Level	
		Essential	Desirable
1	Water surface approved within the FIH Global/National Parameters	International hockey (training and matches).	Domestic National Premier League competition; Higher levels of player pathway (performance centres and upwards).
2	Sand dressed surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	Domestic National Premier League competition; Higher levels of player pathway (academy centres and upwards).	All adult and junior league hockey; Intermediate or advanced school hockey; EH competitions for clubs and schools.
3	Sand filled surfaces within the FIH National Parameter	All adult and junior club training and league hockey; EH competitions for clubs and schools; Intermediate or advanced school hockey.	Lower level hockey (introductory level).
4	All 3G surfaces	No hockey.	Lower level hockey (introductory level) when no category 1-3 surface is available.

For senior teams, a full-size pitch for competitive matches must measure at least 91.4 x 55 metres excluding surrounding run off areas, which must be a minimum of two metres at the sides and three metres at the ends. EH's preference is for four-metre side and five-metre end run offs, with a preferred overall area of 101.4 x 63 metres, though a minimum overall area of 97.4 x 59 metres is accepted.

It is considered that a hockey pitch can accommodate a maximum of four matches on one day (peak time) provided the pitch has floodlighting. Training is generally midweek for senior activity and requires access to a pitch and floodlights, whereas many junior teams train on a Sunday as well as during midweek.

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## **Club consultation**

Blackpool Hockey Club was the only community hockey club based within the Borough and operated as independent men's and ladies' sections under one overarching club name. Consultation with England Hockey confirms that since the initial PPS (2016), the ladies' section has disbanded whilst what was the men's section has now amalgamated to become part of Fylde Hockey Club.

## **5.2: Supply**

There is one full size artificial grass pitch (AGP) in the Borough suitable for competitive hockey located at Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park). The sand dressed surface is available for community use, co-ordinated by the nearby sports centre building.

*Table 5.2: Provision of hockey suitable AGPs in Blackpool*

Site ID	Site name	Surface type	Floodlighting?	Quality rating	Year built (refurbished)
7	Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park)	Sand dressed	Yes	Standard	1989 (2008)

There was previously a sand filled AGP at Arnold School which became disused when the site closed in late 2013. The school merged with King Edward VII and Queen Mary School (KEQMS) in Lytham (Fylde) with the new school now based in Fylde at Clifton Drive South. The closed Arnold School site was acquired in 2016 by Fylde Coast Academy Trust (FCAT) which has since developed a new all-through school on the site named Armfield Academy, opened in September 2018. The footprint of the previous AGP now accommodates a 3G pitch.

## **Quality**

The carpet of a 3G pitch is considered to have a surface life of approximately 10 years with assumed maintenance of the required standard, though its lifespan can be prolonged in some cases where maintenance is of particularly high quality and rigor.

The sand based AGP at Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park) is rated as standard quality. It was resurfaced in 2008 and consequently has now exceeded the recommended lifespan. Therefore consideration will need to be given to future carpet replacement in the coming years in order to maintain the surface to a sufficient quality.

## **5.3 Availability and usage**

Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) applies an overall peak period for AGPs of 34 hours a week (Monday to Thursday 17:00-21:00; Friday 17:00-19:00; Saturday and Sunday 09:00-17:00).

The AGP is available for community use and managed by Blackpool Sports Centre. It is available for hire with the maximum 34 hours available during the peak period and is also available for use throughout the day at a discounted rate.

Since there is now no longer community club hockey activity in the Borough, the AGP is now predominantly used for football team training or recreational football and participation.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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The Borough hosts the annual Blackpool Hockey Festival over the Easter bank holiday weekend in April which spans four days and is well attended by clubs from across the country. The weekend tournament has a festival atmosphere and the evening social events are very popular. Whilst there were previously two AGPs for hockey, since one was converted to 3G the facilities at Stanley Park used for the festival extend to one full size grass hockey pitch (marked specifically for the occasion) and two 7 a-side sand-dressed pitches marked widthways over the retained AGP. The tournament is of wider significance in that it generates tourism to the area.

## **5.4: Demand**

There were five senior teams playing hockey as part of Blackpool HC before it folded, consisting of three senior men's and two ladies' teams. Whilst the ladies section disbanded completely, the men's section has since been absorbed within Fylde HC which plays at the recently developed Fylde Sports & Education Centre, eight miles from Stanley Park in Wesham in neighbouring Fylde authority.

### ***Future demand***

Given there are no hockey clubs based in Blackpool, it is anticipated that there will be no future demand for club hockey matches or activity in Blackpool given there is no club from which to drive participation, demand or growth. This is unless a club is created in future, though this is presently unforeseen.

Any increases in future participation are likely to result in new players becoming part of existing squads/teams based in the likes of neighbouring Wyre or particularly Fylde, where there is a high quality hockey offer at Fylde Sports & Education Centre used by Fylde HC.

### ***School use***

There is limited hockey played in school due to the absence of hockey suitable surfaces at most school sites and the costly nature of travel to access such facilities elsewhere. Hockey is played on the multi-use games area (MUGA) at South Shore Academy and at Unity Academy on the small size sand based AGP. Highfield Leadership Academy and St Mary's Catholic Academy each state that they do not play hockey. Blackpool Sports Centre pitch booking records show that the full size AGP is not used for school hockey.

## **5.5: Supply and demand analysis**

There is no current demand for community club hockey in Blackpool since the only resident club in the Borough folded in 2017/18 season. Consequently, the only demand for community hockey comes from the Blackpool Hockey Festival which is an annual event held over one weekend. The historic festival marked its 68<sup>th</sup> instalment in 2019 and is attended by approximately 600 participants over the Easter weekend and beyond hockey, brings a degree of economic benefit to Blackpool as a social event

Notwithstanding this one-off event, there is no known consistent and regular demand from within the Borough for hockey suitable AGP provision for either club matches, training or social play.

Only schools may access the pitch for hockey however this is not known to be regular and many schools do not play hockey as they do not have suitable AGP provision onsite to do so

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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regularly, whilst most are unlikely to travel to access the AGP at Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park).

## 5.6 Conclusion

In light of the decline of hockey activity within the Borough, there is presently no regular demand for formal hockey and thus no requirement for full size hockey suitable AGP provision in the Borough for a formal sport perspective.

Through consultation, England Hockey states that there is no longer a requirement for a full size hockey suitable AGP in Blackpool for formal hockey.

One hockey suitable AGP exists at Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park), however, the relocation of hockey participation demand from Blackpool to facilities and a club based in Fylde means the pitch is now unused for community hockey and instead is heavily used for football.

Furthermore, given there is limited justification to retain the AGP as a hockey suitable surface and that it now primarily serves as a football facility, consideration should be given to potential conversion to 3G to provide a better quality surface for its majority user group which is football team training.

### Hockey summary

- ◀ **There is no regular demand for hockey and thus no requirement for full size hockey suitable AGP provision in the Borough.**
- ◀ **The AGP at Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park) is now predominantly and significantly used for football. Consideration should be given to the potential to convert the pitch to 3G to further develop Stanley Park as a football hub given there is no longer regular demand for its use for hockey.**
- ◀ There is one two AGP suitable for competitive hockey within Blackpool located within Stanley Park and operated by Blackpool Sports Centre.
- ◀ The pitch is sand dressed and rated as standard quality. The surfaces is now 11 years old following resurfacing in 2008 and has thus exceeded the ten year recommended lifespan.
- ◀ There was a sand filled AGP at Arnold School which became disused since the closure of the site in late 2013. New school Armfield Academy developed onsite opened in September 2018, with the previous AGP footprint now accommodating a 3G pitch.
- ◀ Blackpool Hockey Club was the only community hockey club based within the Borough. Consultation with England Hockey confirms that the ladies section has disbanded whilst what was the men's section has now amalgamated to become part of Fylde Hockey Club.
- ◀ Consequently, the only demand for community hockey comes from the Blackpool Hockey Festival which is an occasional event held over one weekend per year. Notwithstanding this one-off event, there is no known regular demand from within the Borough for hockey suitable AGP provision for either matches, training or social play.
- ◀ Given there are no established hockey clubs based in Blackpool, it is anticipated that there will be no future demand for club hockey matches or activity in Blackpool given there is no club from which to drive participation, demand or growth.

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## PART 6: THIRD GENERATION ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES (3G AGP)

### 6.1 Introduction

There are several surface types that fall into the category of artificial grass pitch (AGP). The three main groups are rubber crumb (also known as third generation turf or 3G), sand based (filled or dressed) and water based.

*Table 6.1: AGP type and sport suitability*

Surface	Category	Comments
Rubber crumb	Long Pile 3G (60mm with shock pad)	Rugby surface – must comply with World Rugby type 22 and/or RFL Community Standard, requires a minimum of 60mm pile.
Rubber crumb	Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)	Preferred football surface. Suitable for non-contact rugby union/league practice or play.
Rubber crumb	Short Pile 3G (40mm)	Acceptable surface for some competitive football.
Sand	Sand Filled	Competitive hockey and football training.
Sand	Sand Dressed	Preferred hockey surface and suitable for football training.
Water	Water based	Preferred hockey surface and suitable for football training if irrigated.

England Hockey's Artificial Grass Playing Surface Policy (June 2016) advises that 3G pitches should not be used for hockey matches or training and that they can only be used for lower level hockey (introductory level) when no sand-based or water-based AGPs are available.

Competitive football can take place on 3G surfaces that have been FA or FIFA certified and a growing number of 3G pitches are now used for competitive match play at mini soccer and youth level. The recommended FA dimensions for a full sized 3G pitch are 100x64 metres with additional run off areas of three metres required on each side. Minimum playing area dimensions to meet performance standard criteria for competitive football are 90x45 metres (or 100x64 metres for FIFA sanctioned international matches), with additional run off areas of three metres required on each side. FIFA 3G pitch certification is required to host competitive adult match play at Step 3 and below, whilst for teams playing at Steps 1 or 2 pitches are required to have FIFA Pro standard certification, further information on which is included later in the section. Football training can take place on sand and water based surfaces but is not the preferred option.

World Rugby produced the 'Performance Specification for Artificial Grass Pitches for Rugby', more commonly known as 'Regulation 22' that provides the necessary technical detail to produce pitch systems that are appropriate for rugby. The artificial surface standards identified in Regulation 22 allows matches to be played on surfaces that meet the standard. Full contact activity, including tackling, rucking, mauling and lineouts can take place. All full sized World Rugby compliant 3G pitches feature on the RFU register, including expiry dates of certification<sup>20</sup>. Upon registration, World Rugby compliancy is valid for two years before renewal and retesting is required.

<sup>20</sup><http://www.englishrugby.com/governance/club-support/facilities-kit-and-equipment/artificial-surfaces/artificial-grass-pitches>

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Competitive rugby league play and contact practice is permitted to take place on 3G pitches which are deemed by the RFL to meet its Performance Standard for Synthetic Turf Pitches. Pitches fall under two categories; community club pitches which require retesting every two years and elite stadia pitches which require an annual retest. Much of the criteria within the RFL performance standard test also forms part of the World Rugby test, consequently World Rugby certified 3G pitches are considered by the RFL to be able to meet rugby league requirements and are deemed suitable for rugby league use subject to passing an additional exclusive RFL performance standard test.

Many test contractors are able to offer reduced rates through efficiency savings to carry out multiple performance tests in the same session, therefore providers seeking 3G pitch compliancy for a number of sports would be recommended to consider this opportunity.

## 6.2 Supply

For the purposes of this PPS, full size 3G pitches are defined as those which meet FA minimum dimension criteria for adult football (90x45 metres). It should be noted that within other external documentation, The FA typically refers to 3G pitches as '3G Football Turf Pitches' (FTPs).

Table 6.2 details the current (2019) supply of full size 3G pitches identified in Blackpool. There are four full sized 3G pitches, three of which, are fully floodlit and available for community use. The pitch at Armfield Academy was developed in 2019 but does not have floodlighting, which limits its capacity for evening use midweek.

The spread of full size 3G pitches is fairly evenly distributed across the Borough, with Bispham Sports Centre (Blackpool & The Fylde College) located in the north and the two other full size pitches situated within the central area of the Borough. Armfield Academy is in the South Shore Area; however, the lack of floodlighting means there is a deficiency of floodlit provision even though a 3G surface exists. Common Edge and Mereside areas (in the South) have significant demand for affiliated football, including for floodlit facilities for team training.

All three floodlit 3G pitches are on the FA register, meaning all are sanctioned to accommodate competitive football match play as well as training. Armfield Academy is not FA registered and should not be used for match play until it has been. The lack of floodlighting means that community use opportunities should be maximised at weekends when daylight hours allow, however, football demand at weekends is for match play rather than team training.

No 3G pitches feature on the RFU register<sup>21</sup> of World Rugby compliant 3G pitches thus none are sanctioned to safely be used for contact rugby activity or match play.

There is no World Rugby certified pitch within Blackpool suitable for competitive play or full contact rugby training. The 3G pitch at Bispham Sports Centre is less than 12 months old and is eligible for FA testing at no required cost subject to submission of the relevant approval papers. Outside of this initial 12 month period or without submission of the required documents would incur a cost for official testing through an FA approved provider.

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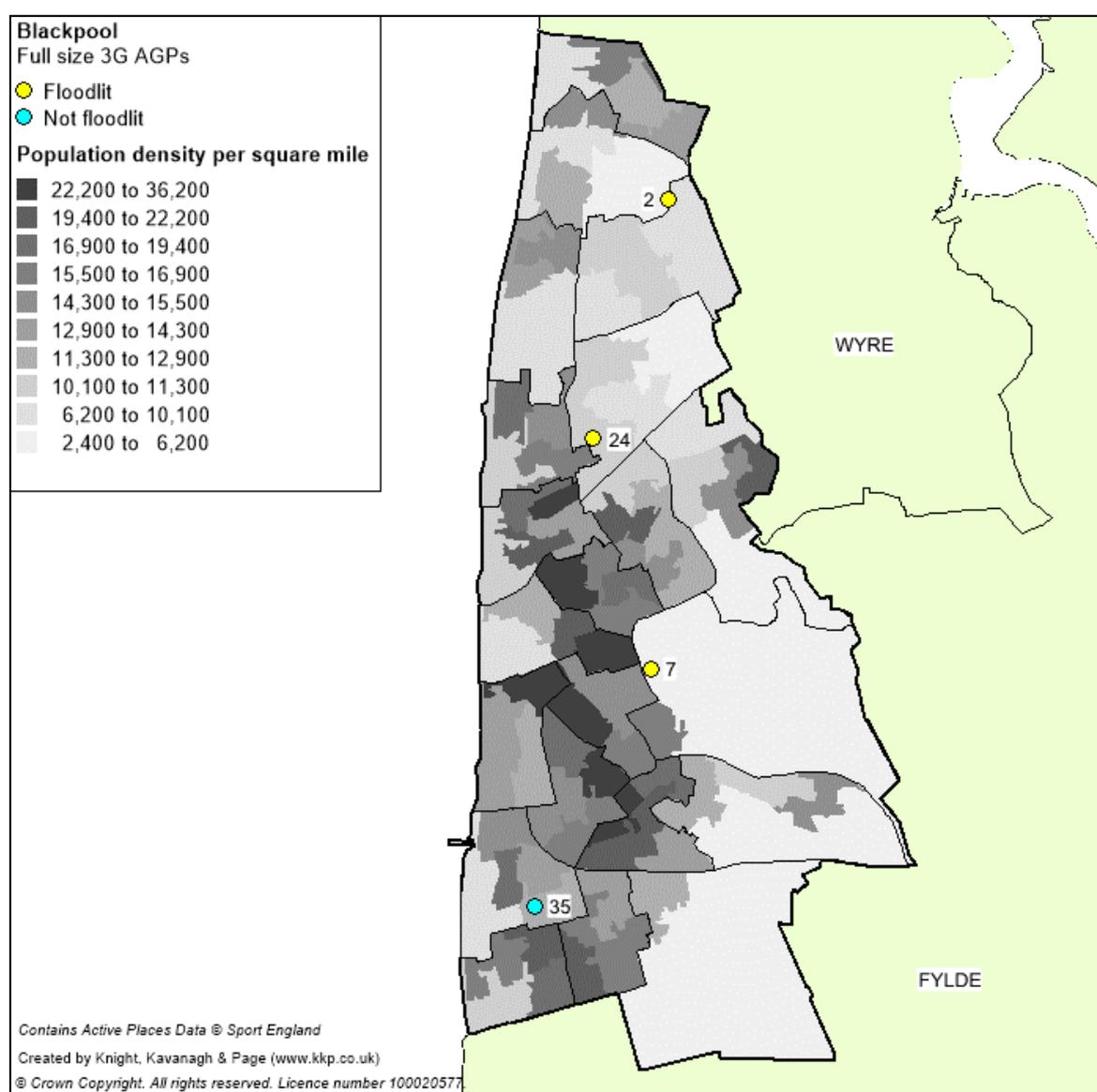
<sup>21</sup><http://www.englandrugby.com/governance/club-support/facilities-kit-and-equipment/artificial-surfaces/artificial-grass-pitches>

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Table 6.2: Summary of full size 3G pitches within Blackpool

Site ID	Site name	Ownership/management	Number of pitches	Floodlighting	Certification
2	Bispham Sports Centre (Blackpool & The Fylde College)	College	1	Yes	FA
7	Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park)	Council	1	Yes	FA
24	Unity Academy Blackpool	Academy	1	Yes	FA
35	Armfield Academy	Academy	1	No	-

Figure 6.1: Location of full size 3G pitches in Blackpool



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## ***Future plans for provision***

Though full size 3G pitches are considered those which meet FA minimum pitch dimensions, it is recommended that any new 3G pitches built in future should meet FA recommended pitch dimensions so to ensure suitability for all formats of football and maximise opportunities for use.

*Table 6.3: FA recommended 3G pitch sizes*

Age group	Playing format	Recommended pitch dimensions (metres excluding run offs)	Recommended pitch dimensions (metres including run offs)
Mini-Soccer U7/U8	5v5	37x27	43x33
Mini-Soccer U9/U10	7v7	55x37	61x43
Youth U11/U12	9v9	73x46	79x52
Youth U13/U14	11v11	82x50	88x56
Youth U15/U16	11v11	91x55	97x61
Youth U17/U18	11v11	100x64	106x70
Over 18/Adult	11v11	100x64	106x70

## ***Common Edge Road***

As part of the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone proposal (see Part 2: Football) it is proposed that loss of playing pitch provision for football at AFC Blackpool, Collins Park and Common Edge Road would be mitigated through re-provision of new football pitches and development of two new full size 3G pitches as part of a new sports village towards the south of the new enterprise zone. Present plans show the re-provision of circa six adult football pitches and three junior football pitches on greenbelt land adjacent to Blackpool Airport, with the development of a new sports centre and two new 3G pitches (one a stadium pitch to meet Ground Grading requirements of AFC Blackpool) on a portion of the current Common Edge Road playing field, south of the planned new access road.

**Appendix 2 to this Assessment Report provides the latest position on the re-provision proposals at Common Edge Rd. updating the information provided above.**

## ***Conversion to 3G surfaces***

Since the introduction of 3G pitches and given their popularity for football, providers have seen this as a way to replace a worn sand or water based carpet and generate increased revenue from hiring out a 3G pitch to football and rugby clubs and commercial football providers. This has often come at the expense of hockey, with players now travelling further distances to gain access to a suitable pitch and many teams consequently displaced from their preferred local authority.

Due to its potential to impact on hockey, it is appropriate to ensure that sufficient sand based AGPs are retained for the playing development of hockey. To that end, a change of surface may require planning permission and the applicants will need to show that there is sufficient provision available for hockey in the locality. Advice from Sport England and EH should also be sought prior to any planning application being submitted.

It should also be noted that, if the surface type is changed, it could require the existing floodlighting to be changed and in some instances noise attenuation measures may need to be put in place. Conversion to a 3G surface will likely require a size increase; along with floodlighting improvements, the addition of a shock pad, fencing and noise attenuation.

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A 3G surface is limited in the range of sport that can be played or taught on it. Providers proposing a conversion should take advice from the appropriate sports' governing bodies or refer to Sport England guidance: <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/artificial-sports-surfaces/>

Given that there is no longer a community hockey club in Blackpool and thus no community demand evidenced for formal hockey use, the Council has a desire to explore the potential conversion of the existing AGP at Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park) to 3G to create a dual 3G pitch hub site. This would be particularly strategically significant for football in the Borough, with opportunity for use by affiliated clubs and community football programmes and groups.

## **Future demand**

Population increases anticipated within the Borough are expected to generate additional demand for sports facilities, particularly 3G pitches which are used by a number of different sports for both matches and training. The PPS findings should be used to guide the development of any new sporting provision which may include the creation of additional pitches, new ancillary facilities or new sites to best accommodate both the newly generated demand and current requirements. Increases in population as a result of proposed housing growth and the subsequent equivalent demand generated for playing pitch provision are explored through scenario testing in the Stage D Strategy & Action Plan document.

It is key to note that the capacity a new 3G pitch creates is not considered double that of a grass pitch in land use terms. This is the case for sports provision set out in BB103 Guidelines for Mainstream Schools which exclusively applies to school sites and refers to the number of pupils a 3G can accommodate and is a separate issue to the land use issue which looks at the physical area of a pitch not its capacity.

Future strategic planning should consider key areas in which 3G pitches can best meet demand for a number of sports where possible and appropriate and should in turn consider the optimal surface type for any potential new development in conjunction with NGBs as part of a joined-up approach.

## **6.3 Quality**

All four full size 3G pitches in Blackpool are rated as good quality. Three have been developed within the past two years since the previous PPS.

The carpet of a 3G pitch is considered to have a surface life of approximately 10 years with assumed maintenance of the required standard, though its lifespan can be prolonged in some cases where maintenance is of particularly high quality and rigor.

*Table 6.4: Summary of full size 3G pitch quality*

Site ID	Site name	Year built (refurbished)	Floodlit	Quality
2	Bispham Sports Centre (Blackpool & The Fylde College)	2000 (2014)	Yes	Good

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Site ID	Site name	Year built (refurbished)	Floodlit	Quality
7	Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park)	1989 (2008 & 2018 <sup>22</sup> )	Yes	Good
24	Unity Academy Blackpool	2019	Yes	Good
35	Armfield Academy	2018	No	Good

## *Performance standard testing for football*

In order for competitive matches to be played on 3G pitches, the pitch should be FA or FIFA tested and approved and added to the FA pitch register, which can be found at: <http://3g.thefa.me.uk/?countyfa=Lancashire>.

Pitches can also undergo FIFA testing to become a FIFA Quality pitch (previously FIFA One Star) or a FIFA Quality Pro pitch (previously FIFA Two Star), with pitches commonly constructed, installed and tested in situ to achieve either accreditation. This comes after FIFA announced changes to 3G performance in October 2015 following consultation with member associations and licenced laboratories. The changes are part of FIFA's continued ambition to drive up performance standard in the industry and the implications are that all 3G pitches built through the FA framework will be constructed to meet the new performance criteria.

The changes from FIFA One Star to FIFA Quality will have minimal impact on the current hours of use guidelines, which suggest that One Star pitches place more emphasis on the product's ability to sustain acceptable performance and can typically be used for 60-85 hours per week with a lifespan of 20,000 cycles. In contrast, pitches built to FIFA Quality Pro performance standards are unlikely to provide the hours of use that some FIFA Two Star products have guaranteed in the past (previously 30-40 hours per week with a lifespan of 5,000 cycles). Typically, a FIFA Quality Pro pitch will be able to accommodate only 20-30 hours per week with appropriate maintenance due to strict performance measurements.

Clubs playing in the football pyramid on 3G pitches meeting FIFA One Star or Two Star guidelines will still be required to certify their pitches annually, however, if any pitch replacement takes place the Club will need to meet the new FIFA performance criteria of FIFA Quality or Quality Pro. To stay on the FA register, pitches below the national league pyramid require FA testing every three years.

## **Management**

The pitch at Bispham Sports Centre is managed by Blackpool & The Fylde College which operates community use and lettings. Similarly, the pitches at both Armfield Academy and Unity Academy are both also managed and let by the Academies in-house.

The pitch at Stanley Park is managed by the Council as part of Blackpool Sports Centre, one of its three main sports centres as part of its leisure offer.

## **Availability**

The following table summarises the availability of full size 3G pitches for community use in Blackpool. In addition, it records the availability of provision within the peak period.

<sup>22</sup> Converted from sand based surface to 3G in 2018

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Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) applies an overall peak period for AGPs of 34 hours a week (Monday to Thursday 17:00-21:00; Friday 17:00-19:00; Saturday and Sunday 09:00-17:00).

*Table 6.5: Summary of AGP availability and usage*

Site ID	Site name	Floodlighting	Quality <sup>23</sup>	Total number of hours available for community use during peak period
2	Bispham Sports Centre (Blackpool & The Fylde College)	Yes	Good	Weekday: 18hrs Weekend: 16hrs Total: 34hrs
7	Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park)	Yes	Good	Weekday: 18hrs Weekend: 16hrs Total: 34hrs
24	Unity Academy Blackpool	Yes	Good	Weekday: 18hrs Weekend: 16hrs Total: 34hrs
35	Armfield Academy	No	Good	Weekday: 0hrs <sup>24</sup> Weekend: 16hrs Total: 16hrs

In the main, availability of provision in the peak period is generally good. Three of the four pitches are located at education sites and community use is operated in-house by sports centre or school staff.

The only restrictions on availability are due to a lack of floodlighting at Armfield Academy, therefore the pitch is effectively inaccessible during the midweek evenings between October to March which is the peak season for demand for football team training. The Academy does however let the pitch out and a Community Usage Agreement (CUA) is in place which secures access for local clubs. This acknowledged, the pitch is not accessible for floodlit training through the week, yet is not FA registered to allow its use for match play at weekend, therefore its only real role at present can extend to weekend training for which there is little to no evidence of.

## **Local demand**

### *Football*

3G pitches are well used for football training in the evenings whilst a number of clubs continue to train on the sand based AGP at Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park), potentially due to accessing desirable timeslots or retaining already booked timeslots despite not being the preferred surface for football, or it may potentially be viewed as more affordable.

Lancashire FA affiliation data (2018/19) shows that fewer teams in Blackpool play matches on 3G pitches. Whilst Unity Academy and Bispham Sports Centre (Blackpool & The Fylde College) are well used for team training, no clubs are recorded as regularly playing matches on 3G each week. These pitches instead appear to serve a contingency role at present, accommodating matches when grass pitches are not usable. The 3G pitch at

<sup>23</sup> Quality is assessed via a combination of non-technical assessments carried out by KKP but also take account of user views and opinions.

<sup>24</sup> Whilst the pitch is purportedly available for hire, lack of floodlighting means it is not usable in the evenings through autumn and winter – peak season for demand.

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Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park) is regularly used for matches each Sunday by the Blackpool & Fylde Sunday Football Alliance (BFSFA) which uses the pitch as one of the three venues it allocates to teams centrally, along with grass pitches at Boundary Park and Common Edge Road.

A number of teams train on small sided pitches, such as at Playfootball which is a key venue for team training in the Borough. There are seven small sided 3G cages used by clubs.

Access to affordable 3G pitches is a priority for the FA as all of the multi team junior clubs have various teams strewn across various venues in Blackpool and neighbouring authorities. Many of the 3G pitches both full size and small sided operate commercial small sided football leagues which limit availability makes access for club training. For example, Playfootball runs leagues across every night of the week with the exception of Saturday when many players play club football in the afternoon, whilst Score Football also runs a number of small sided leagues throughout the week at Bispham Sports Centre (Blackpool & The Fylde College).

## *Rugby union*

There are currently no World Rugby compliant 3G pitches located in Blackpool, meaning only grass pitches can safely accommodate competitive play, whilst there is relatively minimal demand for rugby union training. Non-contact or skills training can take place on existing non-compliant 3G pitches.

## *Rugby league*

Rugby league is played on grass pitches in Blackpool. Rugby league clubs are likely to seek use of 3G pitches particularly throughout the winter pre-season period and into the early stages of the season through February, March and April until daylight hours mean a lesser need for requirement to floodlit provision. There are no RFL Community Standard registered 3G pitches in the Borough. Like rugby union, non-contact or skills training can take place on existing non-compliant 3G pitches.

## ***Imported/exported demand***

Displaced or exported demand refers to Blackpool based teams that are currently accessing pitches outside of the local authority for home fixtures, normally because their pitch requirements cannot be met. This is usually because of pitch supply, in some cases quality issues or stipulated league requirements for access to certain facilities. In the same manner, imported demand refers to that displaced from other local authorities into Blackpool based on the same reasoning.

Some of the larger clubs with several junior teams use a large number of training venues as programming and existing bookings make it difficult for all teams to train at the same site. Some clubs use 3G pitches or AGPs in neighbouring authorities, such as:

- ◀ Fuse Football (Wyre)
- ◀ Thornton Sports Centre (YMCA) (Wyre)
- ◀ Millfield Science & Performing Arts College (Wyre)
- ◀ Cardinal Allen Catholic High School (Fleetwood)
- ◀ Fleetwood High School (Fleetwood)

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## ***Key trends and changes in demand for pitches***

### *Football*

Demand from football for 3G pitches has increased in recent years due to demand from clubs for training but also due to a growing acceptance by local leagues of use for competitive matches, where play on 3G pitches is now included within the FA Standard Code of Rule. This considered, the general condition of local authority pitches and increasingly limited budget for regular and adequate maintenance may lead more teams to consider 3G pitches as a possible alternative should it be financially viable.

A number of leagues around the country now use 3G pitches as central venues where all play takes place. Mini soccer leagues especially are increasingly adopting this approach either for whole seasons or a number of months throughout the winter because they can continually offer a high quality playing experience, in many cases beyond that of grass pitches which are generally of comparatively poorer quality. It also allows leagues to continue to run throughout the winter, largely unaffected by poor weather which has disrupted the football season over recent years, causing it to run into summer and clash more often with summer sports. This trend is likely to increase in the future and more mini soccer, flexi and vets' leagues could be played exclusively on 3G pitches.

### *Rugby union*

Given the inclement weather often experienced throughout the winter months of the rugby union season, more clubs are becoming increasingly receptive towards training on artificial pitches. Clubs traditionally train on match pitches where floodlights are in place or one pitch designated for all training in particular, unless there is a separate floodlight grass training area. It often results in deterioration in pitch quality coupled with decreasing maintenance budgets.

The recent RFU strategy on investment in 3G pitches both at club and community based sites is indicative of the growing acceptance of 3G pitches amongst clubs nationally. Nationally clubs identify the use of 3G pitches for training as a method of protecting the match pitches and providing a high quality surface for full contact practice. Competitive play continues to take place on grass pitches for the most part, with ad hoc use of 3G pitches for fixtures in the case of unsuitable pitches due to waterlogging or frost.

### *Rugby league*

Since rugby league switched from the winter to summer season in March 2012, the majority of teams have moved towards playing in summer. The improved weather and longer daylight hours throughout the summer mean that clubs tend to train on grass pitches or areas in order to reduce additional costs of hiring facilities because they require less access to floodlighting. This often leads to overuse of match pitches by clubs which consistently train on them, especially those which have several teams and train twice a week.

Use of 3G pitches for rugby league typically extends to pre-season or early season training when weather is often still poor and floodlights are required. It is likely that nationally demand for 3G pitches for training will increase in future but that teams will continue to prefer grass training provision during most months of the season when weather is forgiving. Rugby league is still played throughout the winter in schools, colleges and universities where 3G pitches are used often for both training and matches where certified.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## 6.4 Supply and demand analysis

### *The FA model*

#### *FA training scenario*

The FA considers high quality third generation artificial grass pitches as an essential tool in promoting coach and player development. The FA can support intensive use and as such are great assets for both playing and training. Primarily such facilities have been installed for community use and training, however, are increasingly used for competition which The FA wholly supports.

The FA's long-term ambition is to provide every affiliated team in England the opportunity to train once per week on floodlit 3G surface, together with priority access for every Charter Standard Community Club through a partnership agreement. The FA standard is calculated by using the latest Sport England research "AGPs State of the Nation March 2012" assuming that 51% of AGP usage is by sports clubs when factoring in the number of training slots available per pitch at peak times. It is estimated that one full size 3G AGP can service 38 teams.

Table 6.6 considers the number of full size 3G pitches required rounded down to the nearest whole number.

The model assumes that all pitches are fully available for club use at peak time when in practice a number of pitches operate commercial small sided leagues which reduce capacity available. It also projects all football teams as training on full size 3G pitches when in practice a proportion of football training demand should be retained on sand based AGPs in order to maintain financial and commercial sustainability of these pitches.

#### *Analysis findings*

It is considered that there are 188<sup>25</sup> teams which require access to train once per week on floodlit 3G surfaces (2018/19 season). When applied across the Borough this equates to the need for 4.94 full size 3G pitches to service this level of training demand. On the basis that small sided 3G pitches at Playfootball (Blackpool) and the sand based AGP at Blackpool Sports Centre (Stanley Park) play a role in servicing a proportion of this overall training demand, it is considered there is a requirement for five full size 3G pitches across the Borough to sufficiently accommodate all current demand.

There are presently three full size 3G pitches in Blackpool, not accounting for Armfield Academy which is not able to offer capacity for team training without floodlighting, thus a shortfall of two full size 3G pitches exists.

This could be reduced to one by installation of floodlighting at the aforementioned site which would allow for use of this good quality facility developed within the last year. However, it is reported that this is not feasibly achievable due to planning constraints.

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<sup>25</sup> Not including 15 affiliated disability teams which require suitably varied and specific facilities for training, often indoors as disability is small sided format.

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Table 6.6: Current demand for 3G pitches in Blackpool for affiliated football team training (38 teams per pitch)

Current number of teams	Current requirement <sup>26</sup>	Current number of available full size 3G pitches	Current shortfall	Future number of teams (2027) <sup>27</sup>	Future requirement
188	4.94 - 5	3 <sup>28</sup>	2	193	5.07 - 5

Team generation rates to 2027 forecast the creation of five whole new teams, increasing the total number of teams to 193. In light of rise in future demand for football, the current requirement of five full size 3G pitches can also meet future demand.

### Small sided 3G pitches

There are eight small sided pitches which also help to accommodate affiliated training demand, particularly for example from mini teams. Most of these are located at Playfootball (Blackpool) in the east of the Borough on the border with Wyre and can be seen in the table below:

Table 6.7: Small sided 3G pitches in Blackpool

Site ID	Site name	Surface type	Floodlights	Quality	Quantity	Size
17	Playfootball (Blackpool)	Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)	Yes	Standard	7	31x22
18	South Shore Academy	Medium Pile 3G (55-60mm)	No	Good	1	36x26

The small sided 3G pitch at South Shore Academy was developed in 2018 as part a rebuild of the school which saw a loss of a portion of the school playing field to accommodate the new buildings.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, current supply of full size 3G pitches is not sufficient in order to service affiliated football team training demand in Blackpool. Based on current demand, there is a shortfall of two full size 3G pitches with floodlighting and full availability in the peak period.

There is however an existing facility at Armfield Academy which has committed to community access as part of a CUA, however is not able to be accessed by local clubs in the evenings due to a lack of floodlighting. It is reported that this is not feasibly achievable due to planning constraints and consequently the pitch cannot be considered part of the available provision within the analysis, though may be able to provide some capacity for use such as in the summer months when daylight allows for evening use.

At present there is little recorded use of 3G pitches for football match play and a key focus should be to increase the level of match play taking place on 3G pitches in keeping the FA's present strategic direction in this regard.

<sup>26</sup> Figures have been rounded down where there is existing small size 3G pitches or full size sand based pitches which can accommodate football training.

<sup>27</sup> Based on increased demand forecasted from team generation rates

<sup>28</sup> Not including Armfield Academy which is not floodlit

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## 3G pitches summary

- ◀ **There is insufficient supply of full size 3G pitches to meet current and anticipated future demand based on the FA training model for football.**
- ◀ **There is a present and future shortfall of two full size 3G pitches with floodlighting, however, installation of floodlighting at Armfield Academy would reduce this to one pitch.**
- ◀ There are four full size 3G pitches in Blackpool. Three are fully floodlit however Armfield Academy is not floodlit.
- ◀ All three floodlit full size 3G pitches are FA registered to accommodate match play as well as training.
- ◀ None of the existing 3G pitches are RFU registered as World Rugby compliant for contact rugby union practice or match play.
- ◀ Three of the four pitches were recently developed within the last two years. Blackpool Sports and Unity Academy were both supported by partnership funding through the Football Foundation.
- ◀ All four full size 3G pitches are rated as good quality.
- ◀ Many single team football clubs within Blackpool do not train throughout the week as hire of artificial floodlit pitches may be considered to be too costly or there is no desire to train.
- ◀ Most football clubs use a variety of sites for team training, particularly those with a large number of teams. Some train on small sized AGPs such as Playfootball which supports full size 3G provision for training.
- ◀ Some 3G pitches also host commercial small sided football leagues which limit availability and accessibility at some times for team training.
- ◀ The FA training model estimates that there is a need for five full size 3G pitches to service football training needs in the Borough.
- ◀ There are geographical gaps in provision in the south area where there is a full size pitch at Armfield Academy but lack of lighting means there remains a gap in floodlit provision.
- ◀ The Council is currently exploring the potential to create new full size floodlit 3G pitch provision at Common Edge Road to further the site as a multi-sport hub and a key venue for football especially.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## PART 7: RUGBY LEAGUE

### 7.1 Introduction

The Rugby Football League (RFL) is the governing body for rugby league in Britain and Ireland. It administers the England national rugby league team, the Challenge Cup, Super League and the Championships which form the professional and semi-professional structure of the game in the UK. The RFL also administers the amateur and junior game across the country in association with the British Amateur Rugby League Association (BARLA).

### Consultation

There are two rugby league clubs in Blackpool; Blackpool Stanley ARLFC and Blackpool Scorpions ARLFC. A third club, Blackpool Sea Eagles ARLFC was identified within the 2016 PPS but has since folded. Face to face consultation was carried out with all three clubs in 2015, with data and context updated in 2019 through consultation with the RFL.

### 7.2 Supply

There are three rugby league pitches in Blackpool with recorded community use at Common Edge Road, South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club and Kingscote Park. There is also a pitch at St George's Catholic Academy which is available but is only used by the School. All pitches are of senior size and there are no primary size pitches.

There was previously a senior rugby league pitch at Stanley Park which was used by Blackpool Stanley ARLFC. The Club has since relocated to play at Kingscote Park because the site offered the opportunity for it to have its own clubhouse and changing facilities. The pitch at Stanley Park was retained in reserve for a season whilst the Club adjusted to its new ground but the pitch has since been converted to football given there was no regular rugby league demand for its use.

### *Pitch quality*

A non-technical site assessment was carried out at each of the three sites in order to assess the pitches as one of three categories, 'good', 'standard' or 'poor'. Carrying capacity of a pitch is dependent upon the quality of a pitch which is outlined below:

Category	Recommended capacity
Good	3 matches per week
Standard	2 matches per week
Poor	1 match per week

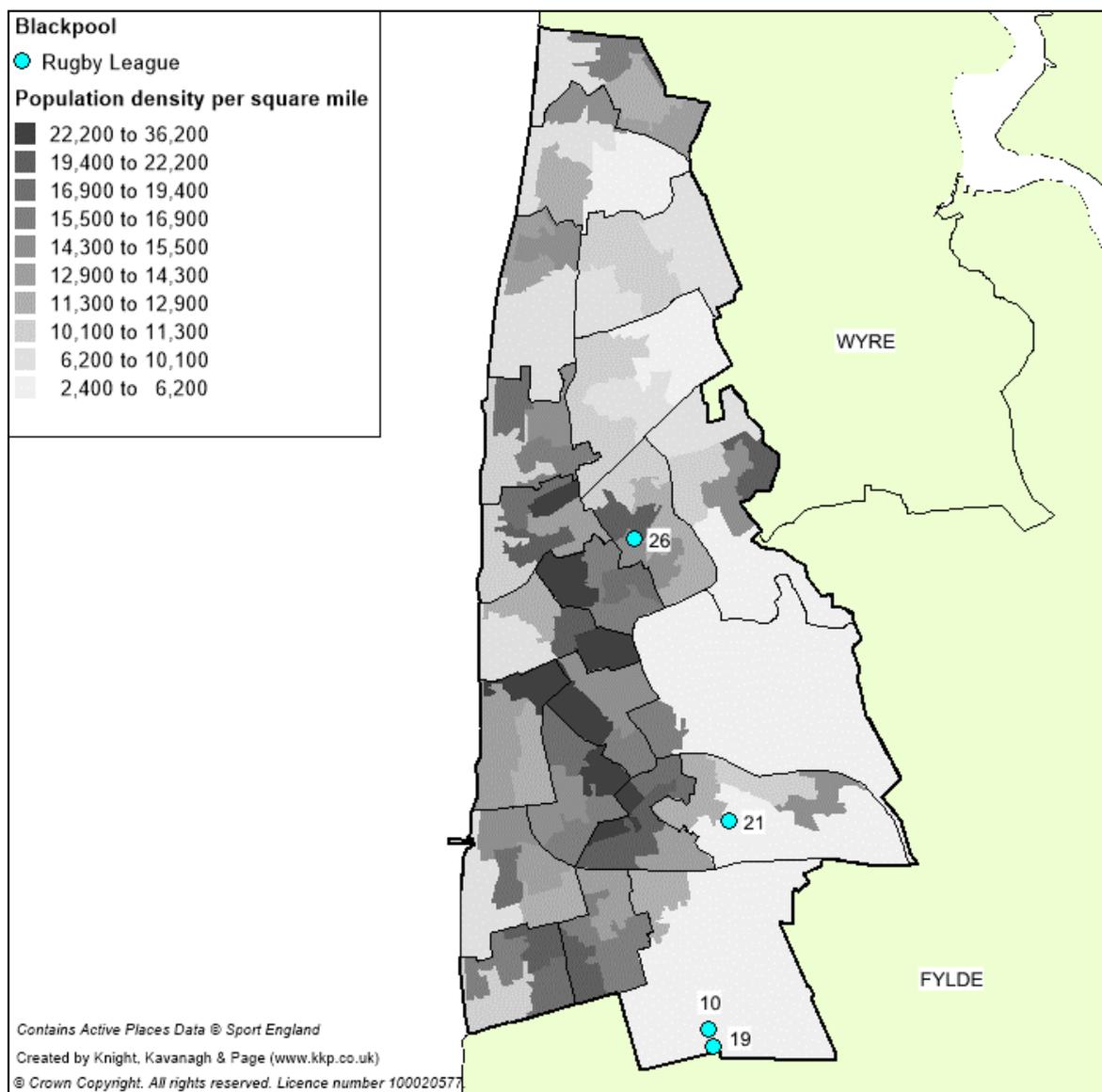
All three rugby league pitches in Blackpool were assessed as standard quality in 2015; therefore, each has a recommended capacity of two matches per week. No significant quality issues were raised through consultation with the RFL.

The pitch at South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club is marked onto the outfield of the cricket pitch which is also used for senior cricket on Saturday afternoons. It is maintained primarily as a cricket outfield which subsequently influences its condition as a rugby league pitch, for example, the grass is cut shorter than would otherwise be advised for a good quality rugby league pitch. Some weekends this can lead to fixture clashes, with the cricket teams getting priority use as the main tenants. Blackpool Scorpions ARLFC consequently

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make use of the rugby league pitch at adjacent Common Edge Road as and when required as an overspill facility.

Figure 7.1: Location of rugby league pitches in Blackpool



## Security of tenure

Blackpool Stanley ARLFC is considered to have secure tenure at Kingscote Park as it leases the site from Blackpool Council, including the pitch and changing pavilion.

Blackpool Scorpions ARLFC is also considered to have secure tenure of the two pitches it uses. It has use of South Shore Cricket, Squash and & Rugby Club as a constituent sports section within the main sports association, albeit there are occasions where fixture clashes result in priority for cricket fixtures. This is in part due to the presence of the rugby league pitch at Common Edge Road which the Club is considered to have secure use of through rental from the Council. This considered, both pitches may be implicated by the proposed Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone (detailed later in the section).

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## ***Future developments***

Blackpool Stanley ARLFC has aspiration to rotate the senior pitch at Kingscote Park to create enough space for a second pitch of the same size. The Club also plans to extend the clubhouse building to create a second pair of changing rooms which would be able to service this new pitch.

Blackpool Council in conjunction with Fylde Council has identified land around Blackpool Airport for the further development of the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone. This area includes encompassing three playing field sites (AFC Blackpool, Common Edge Road and South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club), of which two are proposed for loss, with the retention of South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club and the development of a new sports village towards the South of the site on airport land, releasing land to the north of the cricket club for development.

As part of the development, the rugby league pitch located at Common Edge Road is proposed for loss, whilst the pitch on the cricket outfield at South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club may also be implicated by need to reconfigure the cricket pitch to accommodate a new access road. Plans are for new sports pitches to be re-provided as part of the new leisure development at the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone, which proposes re-provision of the rugby pitch to be lost at Common Edge Road as a dedicated rugby pitch. This would eliminate seasonal sporting clash issues with cricket.

South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club has submitted an objection to the outline application, reporting concerns around the exact extent of facilities to be re-provided, future management model and level of access. Sport England also presently objects to this proposal because it does not meet the requirements of paragraph 97 of the NPPF and the Exceptions to Sport England's Playing Fields Policy.

**Appendix 2 to this Assessment Report provides the latest position on the re-provision proposals at Common Edge Rd. updating the information provided above.**

## **7.3: Demand**

There are two rugby league clubs in Blackpool which field a total of two senior men's teams. There are no women's, girls or boys' teams.

Blackpool Stanley ARLFC plays all home fixtures at Kingscote Park having relocated from Stanley Park in years previous. The Club fields one senior men's team but has previously fielded boys' primary teams playing in the North West Counties Junior League and continues to run a primary school age development session training on Sunday mornings at Kingscote Park.

Blackpool Scorpions ARLFC plays all home fixtures at South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club where the pitch is marked onto the cricket outfield. The Club has one senior men's team playing in the North West Men's League.

## ***Training***

Rugby league teams typically train on match pitches since the sport switched to being played in the summer season rather than winter. Daylight generally allows for use later into the evenings with little need for floodlighting, whilst clubs often see it as an opportunity to save on the cost of otherwise hiring a separate facility. This is the case at Blackpool Stanley

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ARLFC where the senior men's team trains once and the junior development group trains once each week on the match pitch.

Blackpool Scorpions ARLFC trains twice through the week on a floodlit grass training area behind the cricket club. There is no midweek use of the pitch for training because it is generally unavailable due to junior cricket fixtures played in the evenings.

## **Future demand**

Team generation rates (TGRs) are used as the basis for calculating the number of teams likely to be generated in the future based solely on population change.

*Table 7.1: Team generation rates (applied Borough wide)*

Age group	Current population within age group	Current no. of teams	Team generation rate	Future population within age group (2027)	Predicted future number of teams	Additional teams that may be generated from the increased population
Senior Men (19-45)	21,998	2	1:10,999	21,444	1.9	0
Senior Women (19-45)	21,906	0	0	20,671	0	0
Junior Boys (12-18)	5,403	0	0	5,836	0	0
Junior Girls (12-18)	5,289	0	0	5,779	0	0

The table above shows that exclusively based on population change in Blackpool, no new rugby league teams are anticipated to be created. This however does not take into consideration targeted development work in the area such as a club drive to increase junior recruitment or links to schools for example.

Blackpool Stanley ARLFC has seen a decline at junior age in that it no longer has a competitive league team. The Club previously indicated that it struggles with retaining volunteers and coaches for junior teams for match days and training, making the development of new sides difficult.

## **7.4: Capacity analysis**

The capacity for pitches to regularly provide for competitive play, training and other activity over a season is most often determined by quality. As a minimum, the quality and therefore the capacity of a pitch affects the playing experience and people's enjoyment of playing. In extreme circumstances, it can result in the inability of the pitch to cater for all or certain types of play during peak and off-peak times.

As a guide, The RFL has set a standard number of matches that each grass pitch type should be able to accommodate without adversely affecting its current quality (pitch capacity). Taking into consideration the guidelines on capacity the following was concluded in Blackpool:

Pitch quality	Match equivalent sessions (MES) per week
Good	3
Standard	2
Poor	1

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Table 7.3 applies the above pitch ratings against the actual level of weekly play recorded to determine a capacity rating as follows:

<b>Potential capacity</b>	Play is below the level the site could sustain
<b>At capacity</b>	Play matches the level the site can sustain
<b>Overused</b>	Play exceeds the level the site can sustain

The next step is to ascertain whether or not any identified 'potential capacity' can be deemed 'actual capacity'. There may be situations where, although a site is highlighted as potentially able to accommodate some additional play, this should not be recorded as spare capacity against the site. For example, a site may be managed to regularly operate slightly below full capacity to ensure that it can cater for a number of regular friendly matches and activities that take place but are difficult to quantify on a weekly basis.

For senior and youth teams, the current level of play per week is set at 0.5 match equivalent sessions (MES) per week for each match played based on all teams operating on a traditional home and away basis (assumes half of matches will be played away). For mini teams, play per week is set at 0.25 MES per week for each match played across half of one senior pitch, based on all teams operating on a traditional home and away basis.

Table 7.3: Currently used rugby league pitch provision within Blackpool and level of use

Site ID	Site name	Security of tenure	Pitch type	Floodlit	Quality rating	Match equivalent sessions per week		
						Current use	Site capacity	Capacity balance
10	Common Edge Road	Secure	Senior	No	Standard	0.5	2	1.5
19	South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club	Secure	Senior	No	Standard	0.5	2	1.5
26	Kingscote Park	Secure	Senior	No	Standard	1.5	2	0.5

## 7.5: Supply and demand analysis

### *Actual spare capacity*

It is important to ascertain whether or not any identified 'potential capacity' can be deemed 'spare capacity', whereby further match sessions are available at peak time. Peak time for senior play is Saturday afternoons, however; peak time demand for pitches is actually Sunday mornings when junior teams play.

All three rugby league pitches in Blackpool were assessed as standard quality; therefore, each has the recommended capacity to accommodate two match equivalent sessions per week.

South Shore Cricket Club displays potential spare capacity amounting to 1.5 match equivalent sessions per week, however; this is not considered to be available at senior peak time as the pitch is shared with cricket teams. Therefore, spare capacity is only deemed to be available at junior peak time (Sunday morning) or during the week.

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The pitch at Common Edge Road is not used consistently every week but use of 0.5 match equivalent sessions per week has been accounted for to denote the requirement for it by Blackpool Scorpions ARLFC. The nature of use is inconsistent and varies on an ad hoc basis but the pitch plays an important role as a secondary venue and its neighbouring location makes it a well-placed contingency site. The pitch has spare capacity of 1.5 match equivalent sessions per week with the pitch being available at both senior (Saturday afternoon) and junior (Sunday morning) peak times.

The pitch at Kingscote Park is currently used for 1.5 match equivalent sessions per week through training and match demand from Blackpool Stanley ARLFC. The pitch has 0.5 match sessions available at both senior and junior peak times.

### **Conclusion**

There is sufficient rugby league pitch provision to accommodate current and future demand for rugby league in Blackpool. However, should the pitches at Common Edge Road and South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club be lost as part of the proposed Blackpool Area Enterprise Zone development, there is a need to appropriately replace the rugby league provision to ensure there is no impact on demand.

#### **Rugby league summary**

- ◀ **There is sufficient rugby league pitch provision to accommodate current and future demand for rugby league in Blackpool.**
- ◀ **Should the pitches at Common Edge Road and South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club be lost as part of the proposed Blackpool Area Enterprise Zone development, there is a need to appropriately relocate this rugby league demand to suitable provision to ensure there is no impact on demand.**
- ◀ There are three rugby league pitches in use within Blackpool at Kingscote Park, South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club and Common Edge Road.
- ◀ Future developments as part of the proposed Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone may impact on playing field provision, including the proposed loss of rugby pitches at Common Edge Road and potentially South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club. Current plans show the re-provision of at least one rugby league pitch to the south of the site.
- ◀ All pitches are assessed as standard quality and can subsequently accommodate two match equivalent sessions per week.
- ◀ The pitch at South Shore Cricket Club is marked onto the outfield of the cricket pitch. This sometimes results in a fixture clash with cricket matches, leading Blackpool Scorpions ARLFC to make use of the pitch at Common Edge Road as a contingency when required.
- ◀ There are two rugby league clubs in Blackpool; Blackpool Stanley ARLFC and Blackpool Scorpions ARLFC, which each field a single senior men's team. There are no women's, girls or boys' teams.
- ◀ All three pitches have both potential spare capacity and availability to accommodate additional play at both senior and junior peak times, with the exception of at South Shore Cricket, Squash & Rugby Club where this is considered to be no senior peak time availability due to the need to retain availability for the pitch area to be used for cricket fixtures.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## APPENDIX 1: SPORTING CONTEXT

The following section outlines a series of national, regional and local policies pertaining to the study and which will have an important influence on the Strategy.

### National context

The provision of high quality and accessible community outdoor sports facilities at a local level is a key requirement for achieving the targets set out by the Government and Sport England. It is vital that this strategy is cognisant of and works towards these targets in addition to local priorities and plans.

### ***Department of Media Culture and Sport Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation (2015)***

The Government published its strategy for sport in December 2015. This strategy confirms the recognition and understanding that sport makes a positive difference through broader means and that it will help the sector to deliver five simple but fundamental outcomes: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development. In order to measure its success in producing outputs which accord with these aims it has also adopted a series of 23 performance indicators under nine key headings, as follows:

- ◀ More people taking part in sport and physical activity.
- ◀ More people volunteering in sport.
- ◀ More people experiencing live sport.
- ◀ Maximising international sporting success.
- ◀ Maximising domestic sporting success.
- ◀ Maximising domestic sporting success.
- ◀ A more productive sport sector.
- ◀ A more financially and organisationally sustainable sport sector.
- ◀ A more responsible sport sector.

### ***Sport England: Towards an Active Nation (2016-2021)***

Sport England has recently released its new five year strategy 'Towards an Active Nation'. The aim is to target the 28% of people who do less than 30 minutes of exercise each week and will focus on the least active groups; typically women, the disabled and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Sport England will invest up to £30m on a plan to increase the number of volunteers in grassroots sport. Emphasis will be on working with a larger range of partners with less money being directed towards National Governing Bodies.

The Strategy will help deliver against the five health, social and economic outcomes set out in the Government's Sporting Future strategy.

- ◀ Physical Wellbeing
- ◀ Mental Wellbeing
- ◀ Individual Development
- ◀ Social & Community Development
- ◀ Economic Development

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## ***National Planning Policy Framework***

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out planning policies for England. It details how these changes are expected to be applied to the planning system. It also provides a framework for local people and their councils to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities.

The NPPF states the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It identifies that the planning system needs to focus on three themes of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is a key aspect for any plan-making and decision-taking processes. In relation to plan-making the NPPF sets out that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs.

The 'promoting healthy communities' theme identifies that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficiencies or surpluses in local areas should also be identified. This information should be used to inform what provision is required in an area.

As a prerequisite the NPPF states existing open space, sports and recreation buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

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

In order for planning policies to be 'sound' local authorities are required to carry out a robust assessment of need for open space, sport and recreation facilities.

## ***The FA National Football Facilities Strategy (2018-28)***

The Football Association's (FA) National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS) provides a strategic framework that sets out key priorities and targets for the national game (i.e., football) over a ten-year period. The Strategy is presently in draft and is due for publication in 2018.

The Strategy sets out shared aims and objectives it aims to deliver on in conjunction with The Premier League, Sport England and the Government, to be delivered with support of the Football Foundation.

These stakeholders have clearly identified the aspirations for football to contribute directly to nationally important social and health priorities. Alongside this, the strategy is clear that traditional, affiliated football remains an important priority and a core component of the game, whilst recognising and supporting the more informal environments used for the community and recreational game.

Its vision is: *"Within 10 years we aim to deliver great football facilities, wherever they are needed"*

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£1.3 billion has been spent by football and Government since 2000 to enhance existing football facilities and build new ones. However, more is needed if football and Government's shared objectives for participation, individual well-being and community cohesion are to be achieved. Nationally, direct investment will be increased – initially to £69 million per annum from football and Government (a 15% increase on recent years).

The NFFS investment priorities can be broadly grouped into six areas, recognising the need to grow the game, support existing players and better understand the different football environments:

- ◀ **Improve 20,000 Natural Turf pitches**, with a focus on addressing drop off due to a poor playing experience;
- ◀ **Deliver 1,000 3G AGP 'equivalents'** (mix of full size and small sided provision, including MUGAs - small sided facilities are likely to have a key role in smaller / rural communities and encouraging multi-sport offers), enhancing the quality of playing experience and supporting a sustainable approach to grass roots provision;
- ◀ **Deliver 1,000 changing pavilions/clubhouses**, linked to multi-pitch or hub sites, supporting growth (particularly in women and girls football), sustainability and providing a facility infrastructure to underpin investment in coaching, officials and football development;  
**Support access to flexible indoor spaces**, including equipment and court markings, to support growth in futsal, walking football and to support the education and skills outcomes, exploiting opportunities for football to positively impact on personal and social outcomes for young people in particular;
- ◀ **Refurbish existing stock to maintain current provision**, recognising the need to address historic under-investment and issues with refurbishment of existing facilities;
- ◀ **Support testing of technology and innovation**, building on customer insight to deliver hubs for innovation, testing and development of the game.

## *Local Football Facility Plans*

To support in delivery of the NFFS, The FA has commissioned a national project. Over the next two years to 2020, a Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) will be produced for every local authority across England. Each plan will be unique to its area as well as being diverse in its representation, including currently underrepresented communities.

Identifying strategic priorities for football facilities across the formal, recreational and informal game, LFFPs will establish a ten-year vision for football facilities that aims to transform the playing pitch stock in a sustainable way. They will identify key projects to be delivered and act as an investment portfolio for projects that require funding. As such, around 90% of all will be identified via LFFPs. LFFPs will guide the allocation of 90% of national football investment (The FA, Premier League and DCMS) and forge stronger partnerships with local stakeholders to develop key sites. This, together with local match-funding will deliver over one billion pounds of investment into football facilities over the next 10-years.

It is important to recognise that a LFFP is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential investment - it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. Therefore, it cannot be used as a replacement for a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and it will not be accepted as an evidence base for site change of use or disposal.

A LFFP will; however, build on available/existing local evidence and strategic plans and may adopt relevant actions from a PPS and/or complement these with additional investment priorities.

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## ***The FA: National Game Strategy (2018-2021)***

The FA launched its new National Game Strategy in July 2018 which aims to inspire a life-long journey in football for all. To achieve this, the strategy will focus on five key aspects of the game:

- ◀ A high quality introduction to football
- ◀ Developing clubs and leagues
- ◀ Embrace all formats of football and engage all participants
- ◀ Recruit, develop and support the workforce
- ◀ Develop sustainable facilities

Through these five pillars, The FA's objectives are to:

- ◀ Increase the number of male affiliated and recreational players by 10%.
- ◀ Double the number of female affiliated and recreational players via a growth of 75%.
- ◀ Increase the number of disability affiliated and recreational players by 30%.
- ◀ Ensure affiliated Futsal is available across the country in order to increase the number of Futsal affiliated and recreational players.

The sustainable football facilities should provide support to an agreed portfolio of priority projects that meet National Football Facility Strategy (NFFS) investment priorities.

## ***England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) Inspiring Generations (2020-2024)***

The England and Wales Cricket Board unveiled a new strategic plan in 2019. The strategic plan aims to connect communities and improve lives by inspiring people to discover and share their passion for cricket

The plan sets out six important priorities and activities, these are:

- ◀ ***Grow and nurture the core***
  - ◀ Create an infrastructure investment fund for First Class County Clubs (FCCs)
  - ◀ Introduce a new Community Investment Funding for FCCs and County Cricket Boards (CCBs)
  - ◀ Invest in club facilities
  - ◀ Develop the role of National Counties Cricket
  - ◀ Further invest in County Competitions
- ◀ ***Inspire through elite teams***
  - ◀ Increase investment in the county talent pathway
  - ◀ Incentivise the counties to develop England Players
  - ◀ Drive the performance system through technology and innovation
  - ◀ Create heroes and connect them with a new generation of fans
- ◀ ***Make cricket accessible***
  - ◀ Broaden crickets appeal through the New Competition
  - ◀ Create a new digital community for cricket
  - ◀ Install non-traditional playing facilities in urban areas
  - ◀ Continue to deliver South Asian Action Plans
  - ◀ Launch a new participation product, linked to the New Competition

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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- ◀ **Engage children and young people**
  - ◀ Double cricket participation in primary schools
  - ◀ Deliver a compelling and coordinated recreational playing offer from age five upwards
  - ◀ Develop our safeguarding to promote safe spaces for children and young people
  
- ◀ **Transform women's and girls' cricket**
  - ◀ Grow the base through participation and facilities investment
  - ◀ Launch centres of excellence and a new elite domestic structure
  - ◀ Invest in girls' county age group cricket
  - ◀ Deliver a girls' secondary school programme
  
- ◀ **Support our communities**
  - ◀ Double the number of volunteers in the game
  - ◀ Create a game-wide approach to Trust and Foundations through the cricket network
  - ◀ Develop a new wave of officials and community coaches
  - ◀ Increase participation in disability cricket

## ***The Rugby Football Union Strategic Plan (2017-2021)***

The RFU has released its new strategic vision for rugby in England. The strategy is based on four main elements which are; Protect, Engage, Grow and Win. It covers all elements of rugby union ranging from elite rugby to grassroots, although the general relevancy to the PPS is centred around growing the game.

The RFU exists to promote and develop rugby union in England and ensure the long-term sustainability of clubs by growing player numbers and retaining them across all age groups. Responding to wider market influences, work will continue on developing new ways to take part in all forms of the game, without comprising the sports traditions. This will ensure a lasting legacy from elite success by attracting new players and encouraging current male and female adult players to play.

The four key aims to ensure long term sustainability are to:

- ◀ Improve player transition from age grade to adult 15-a-side rugby
- ◀ Expand places to play through Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs)
- ◀ Engage new communities in rugby
- ◀ Create a community 7's offering

## ***The Rugby Football League Facility Strategy***

The RFL's Facilities Strategy was published in 2011. The following themes have been prioritised:

- ◀ Clean, Dry, Safe & Playable
- ◀ Sustainable clubs
- ◀ Environmental Sustainability
- ◀ Geographical Spread
- ◀ Non-club Facilities

The RFL Facilities Trust website [www.rflfacilitiestrust.co.uk](http://www.rflfacilitiestrust.co.uk) provides further information on:

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- ◀ The RFL Community Facility Strategy
- ◀ Clean, Dry, Safe and Playable Programme
- ◀ Pitch Size Guidance
- ◀ The RFL Performance Standard for Artificial Grass Pitches
- ◀ Club guidance on the Annual Preparation and Maintenance of the Rugby League Pitch

Further to the 2011 Strategy detail on the following specific programmes of particular relevance to pitches and facility planning are listed below and can be found via the trust link (see above):

- ◀ The RFL Pitch Improvement Programme 2013 – 2017
- ◀ Clean, Dry and Safe programmes 2013 - 2017

## ***Rugby League World Cup 'Inspired by 2021' Legacy Programme***

The Rugby League World Cup 2021 will develop a £10 million legacy programme with funds driven into local clubs and community projects. The government investment, delivered by Sport England, is part of RLWC 2021's ambitious plan to grow the sport and make it more visible, engaging and welcoming to current and potential participants.

The funding will be split into large transformational community projects, such as changing room improvements and new artificial grass pitches with the remaining funding used for smaller scale initiatives such as supplying new kit and equipment to promote club and community development. The investment will focus on the following four key areas:

- ◀ Creating welcoming environments
- ◀ Encouraging participation growth
- ◀ Building community engagement
- ◀ Cultivating further investment

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## ***England Hockey (EH) - A Nation Where Hockey Matters 2013***

The vision is for England to be a 'Nation Where Hockey Matters'.

We know that delivering success on the international stage stimulates the nation's pride in their hockey team and, with the right events in place, we will attract interest from spectators, sponsors and broadcasters alike. The visibility that comes from our success and our occasions will inspire young people and adults to follow in the footsteps of their heroes and, if the right opportunities are there to meet their needs, they will play hockey and enjoy wonderful experiences.

Underpinning all this is the infrastructure which makes our sport function. We know the importance of our volunteers, coaches, officials, clubs and facilities. The more inspirational our people can be, the more progressive we can be and the more befitting our facilities can be, the more we will achieve for our sport. England Hockey will enable this to happen and we are passionate about our role within the sport. We will lead, support, counsel, focus and motivate the Hockey Nation and work tirelessly towards our vision.

As a governing body, we want to have a recognisable presence to participants of the game, be that through club or association website or their communications, or through the work of the many outstanding coaches in our game, so that players understand that their club is part of a wider team working together to a common goal.

The core objectives are as follows:

1. Grow our Participation
2. Deliver International Success
3. Increase our Visibility
4. Enhance our Infrastructure
5. For England Hockey to be proud and respected custodians of the sport

### *Club participation*

Our club market is well structured and clubs are required to affiliate to England Hockey to play in community leagues. As a result only relatively few occasional teams lie outside our affiliation structure. Schools and Universities are the other two areas where significant hockey is played.

Hockey is clearly benefiting from a double Olympic legacy. After Great Britain's women won bronze in front of a home crowd in London in 2012 the numbers of young girls playing the sport doubled and a historic gold in Rio 2016 saw more than 10,000 players promptly joining clubs. These triumphs have inspired the nation to get active and play hockey. Thanks to the outstanding work of the network of clubs across the country, England Hockey has seen unprecedented growth at both ends of the age range. There has been an 80% increase in the number of boys and girls in clubs, as well as a 54% increase in players over the age of 46.

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Hockey clubs have reaped the rewards of the improved profile of the sport, focussing on a link with schools to provide excellent opportunities for young players. Programmes such as Quick sticks – a small-sided version of hockey for 7-11 year olds – in Primary Schools have been hugely successful in allowing new players to take part in the sport from an early age. The growth in the sport since the eve of London 2012 has been seen across the country, examples being a 110% increase in under 16s club participation in London, and a 111% growth in the North West in the same age bracket.

## ***England Hockey Strategy***

England Hockey's Facilities Strategy can be found [here](#).

**Vision:** For every hockey club in England to have appropriate and sustainable facilities that provide excellent experiences for players.

**Mission:** More, Better, Happier Players with access to appropriate and sustainable facilities

The 3 main objectives of the facilities strategy are:

### **1. PROTECT: To conserve the existing hockey provision**

- There are currently over 800 pitches that are used by hockey clubs (club, school, universities) across the country. It is important to retain the current provision where appropriate to ensure that hockey is maintained across the country.

### **2. IMPROVE: To improve the existing facilities stock (physically and administratively)**

- The current facilities stock is ageing and there needs to be strategic investment into refurbishing the pitches and ancillary facilities. England Hockey works to provide more support for clubs to obtain better agreements with facilities providers & education around owning an asset.

### **3. DEVELOP: To strategically build new hockey facilities where there is an identified need and ability to deliver and maintain. This might include consolidating hockey provision in a local area where appropriate.**

England Hockey has identified key areas across the country where there is a lack of suitable hockey provision and there is a need for additional pitches, suitable for hockey. There is an identified demand for multi pitches in the right places to consolidate hockey and allow clubs to have all of their provision catered for at one site.

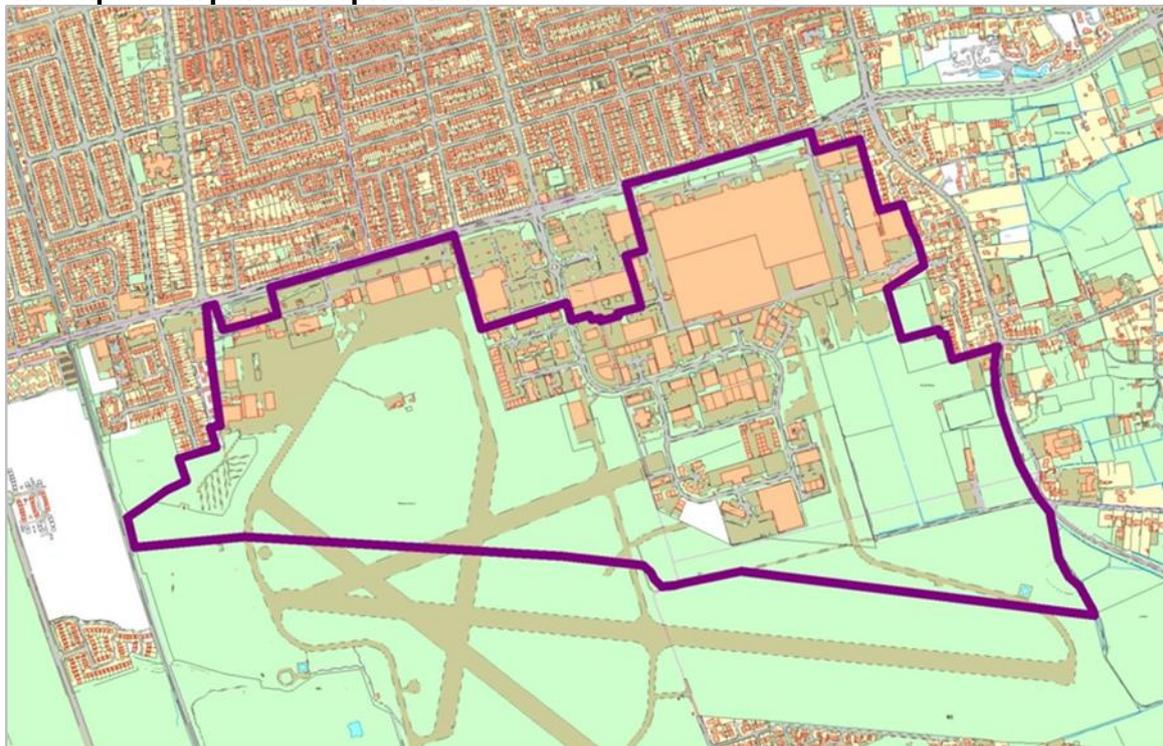
# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## APPENDIX 2: Overview of the current provision and the proposed re-provision of sporting facilities at Common Edge Road (December 2020)

Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone was approved in November 2015 and the site became operable in April 2016. The site covers 144 hectares of which around 62 hectares lie within Blackpool Borough and 82 hectares in Fylde (refer to map below). The site incorporates the existing Category III airport buildings and surrounding business and employment lands, areas of open space and sports playing fields.

### Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone



The sporting facilities within the EZ boundary include playing pitches at Common Edge Road, Collins Park and South Shore Cricket, Rugby League and Squash Club ground and facilities. The AFC Blackpool ground is not included in the EZ boundary and is not subject to the re-development proposals at the EZ. However the AFC Blackpool youth training pitch is located at Common edge Road and is affected by the proposals.

To support the implementation of the EZ an initial masterplan was developed in 2017 which can be viewed on the Blackpool Enterprise Zone website at the following link: <https://blackpoolez.com/> Overtime the proposals in the Masterplan have evolved responding to commercial and economic requirements and ongoing engagement with the Blackpool Leisure Services and the sporting bodies and clubs involved. The Masterplan is currently being updated.

The Council is committed to re-provide enhanced sporting facilities at Common Edge Road and this requirement is embedded in emerging Blackpool Local Plan Part 2 – Policy DM8.

The proposed Enterprise Zone re-provision proposals for the playing fields and facilities is set out below:

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

## Summary of Current Provision and Future Re-Provision of Pitches at Blackpool Enterprise Zone

Site	Criteria	Current Pitch Provision	Re-Provision of pitches as part of the EZ Masterplan		
Collins Park and Common Edge Rd.*	Functional grass pitch area sqm.	99,600sqm	100,100sqm <sup>29</sup>		
	FOOTBALL				
	Grass Pitch Type	Pitch provision below includes accommodating temporary relocation of 15 teams from Foxhall JFC due to United Utilities work at home ground)		Pitch provision is illustrative can be remarked depending on specific yearly requirements	
		Adult/Youth 11v11	9	Adult/Youth full size 11v11	7
		Youth 9v9	1	Youth 9v9	3
			5 overmarked on adult pitches		
		Minis 7v7	2 over marked on adult pitches	Minis 7v7	3
	Minis 5v5			4	
	Total number of Grass Pitches	10 (excludes overmarking)		17	
	Standard of Grass Pitch Quality	All pitches assessed as <b>Standard</b> Quality		All pitches to be <b>Good</b> Quality	
	Total Match Equivalent Sessions (MES)	Current MES – 22.5 FA recommended - 20		75	
	<b>3G Pitch</b>	None		1 FF/FA standard 3G floodlit pitch. (Floodlighting is subject to planning and airport approval).	
	Criteria	Current Pitch Provision	Re-Provision of pitches as part of the EZ Masterplan		
Total Hours 3G available per week	N/A		34 hrs.		

<sup>29</sup> Included as part of Planning Application 20/0810 approved May 2020

# BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Site	Criteria	Current Pitch Provision		Re-Provision of pitches as part of the EZ Masterplan
Continued  Collins Park and Common Edge Rd.*	<b>RUGBY LEAGUE</b>			
	Grass Pitch Type	Adult	1	1 dedicated adult pitch (RLF certified) re-orientated on N-S axis. Floodlighting on western and southern boundary (subject to planning and airport approval)
	Standard of Grass Pitch Quality	Pitch assessed as Standard		Pitch to be re-provided to 'Good' Standard with improved drainage and playing surface
	Grass Training Area	4600m2 with 4 floodlights		4600m2 training area located to west of re-orientated rugby pitch dedicated to Blackpool Scorpions. Floodlighting to be provided subject to planning and airport approval.  2 containers to be provided on training area for storage of rugby equipment.
South Shore Cricket, Squash and Rugby League Cub	Grass Pitch Type	Pitch located on southern outfield of cricket playing field appears to be below minimum size in relation to RLF guidance of 104m by 59m (includes in-goal and run-offs) Current pitch size 91.5m by 60m.	1	Grass rugby league pitch on southern cricket outfield to remain. Pitch to be slightly re-positioned to accommodate new footpath and cycleway on southern boundary beyond cricket outfield. Provision of floodlighting on southern boundary subject to planning and airport approval.
	<b>CRICKET</b>			
	The cricket wicket, the boundary of the existing outfield and the location of the cricket training nets are not affected by the EZ proposals			

Planning permission was granted in May 2020 (planning reference 20/0108) for a grass platform to accommodate an enhanced pitch provision to replace the existing pitches at Common Edge Rd. and Collins Park. The work to install the new pitches commenced June 2020 and was completed in October 2020. The grass platform is now establishing.

## BLACKPOOL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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In addition to the above, a 3G pitch FA certified is to be developed at the Common Edge Rd site funded through the EZ which has been agreed with the Football Foundation. The 3G pitch will be funded by the EZ.

New football changing facilities to include changing rooms, first aid room, kitchens, storage and club room. New car and coach parking including 190 car parking spaces is also to be provided. . The changing facilities will receive funding from the Football Foundation.

A3.9 An application (reference 20/0564) for the 3G pitch, provision of a grass rugby pitch and training area and car and coach parking was submitted in September 2020

For Rugby League the pitch marked on the cricket outfield at South Shore Cricket, Squash and Rugby Club remains. Replacing the existing rugby league pitch at Common Edge Rd. is a dedicated enhanced re-orientated grass pitch, with floodlighting to the eastern and southern boundaries, the latter subject to airport and planning approvals. The current training area to the north and west of the clubhouse (some 4600m<sup>2</sup>) is to be relocated west of the re-orientated rugby pitch and will be a dedicated area for the rugby league club. It has been agreed that two containers are to be provided on the training area for storage of rugby equipment. The dedicated use of the training and grass pitch will be secured through a licence with the rugby league club.

In relation to South Shore cricket ground, the Cricket Pavilion and Social Club is to remain in its current location. The wicket square – existing cricket wicket and existing outfield boundary is not affected and remains intact. The cricket nets also remain in their current location north of the clubhouse. The club will have use of the new car and coach parking to be located west of the clubhouse.

South Shore Cricket and Squash Club has security of use through a long term lease which runs to 2032. The Council is currently negotiating to extend the lease to 25 years. Discussions are ongoing with Blackpool Scorpions RLFC and South Shore Cricket Club along with the NGBs for both sports to ensure satisfactory proposals are agreed and implemented.