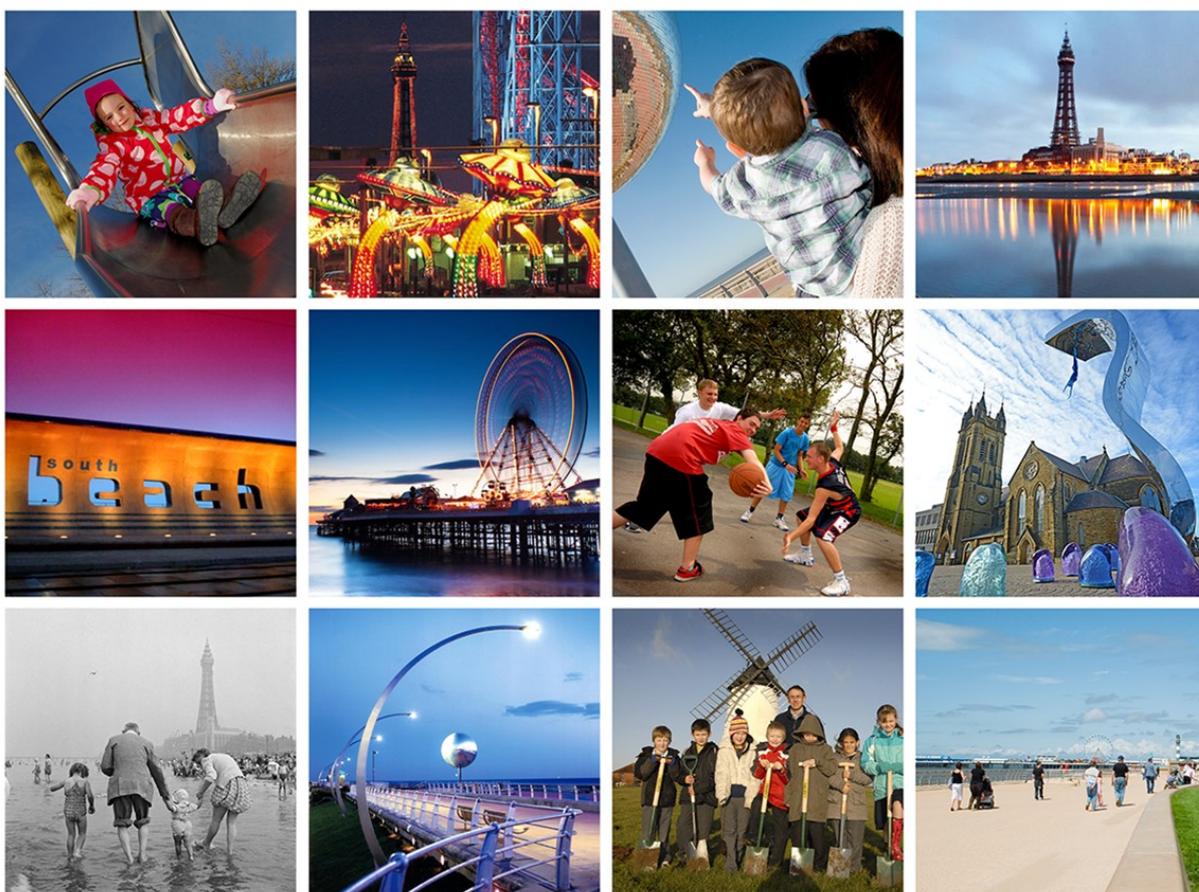


# Blackpool Local Plan Part 2 Evidence Base

## Indoor Sports Facilities Review

December 2020

Blackpool Council





## Contents

1	Introduction.....	5
2	Planning Policy Framework.....	7
3	Physical Activity Participation in Blackpool .....	10
4	Blackpool’s Indoor Facilities.....	11
	Swimming Pools.....	11
	Health & Fitness Centres.....	12
	Ice Rinks .....	13
	Indoor Bowls .....	14
	Indoor Tennis Centres.....	15
	Sports Halls .....	15
	Squash Courts .....	16
5	Conclusion .....	18



# 1 Introduction

1.1 As part of developing the Local Plan for Blackpool, there is a need to ensure that there is an adequate provision of facilities to support the vision and proposals set out in the Plan throughout the plan period to 2027.

1.2 This review has been prepared to assess the current provision of formal indoor sports facilities to inform the Local Plan Part 2. It will complement other strategies related to outdoor and indoor recreation and sports facilities. These include:

- Green Infrastructure Strategy (2019), which is a ten year strategy to invest in Blackpool’s Green and Blue Infrastructure.
- Open Space Assessment (2019) which reviews facilities such as parks, natural/semi natural greenspace and allotments;
- The emerging Playing Pitch Strategy Update, which reviews outdoor sports pitches such as football, cricket and hockey pitches.
- Blackpool Retail, Hotel and Commercial Leisure Assessment (2018), which includes a review of some indoor commercial leisure facilities such as ice rinks and gyms.
- Blackpool Active Lives Strategy

1.3 The population of Blackpool Borough is estimated to be around 140,000 and according to the most recent population projections is anticipated to decrease over the plan period (see Table 1). This decrease in population will be taken into account when indoor sports provision is calculated over the Plan period.

Table 1: Blackpool’s predicted population change

Local authority	Region	Mid-2016 population	Mid-2026 population	Population change over 10 years	Percentage change
Blackpool	North West	140,000	137,300	-2,700	-1.9

Source: Office for National Statistics

1.4 This Indoor Sports Facilities Review will assess:

- Sports Halls
- Swimming Pools
- Health & Fitness Suites
- Ice Rinks
- Indoor Bowls
- Indoor Tennis Centres
- Squash Courts
- Village Halls

1.5 A desk top review has been undertaken of indoor sports provision within the borough. The Sport England Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) has been used to assess the likely demand for certain facilities. The SFC is a planning tool which helps to estimate the demand for key community sports facilities that is created by a given population.

1.6 In undertaking this Indoor Sports Facilities Review, facilities that are available in adjoining boroughs that are likely to be accessible to Blackpool residents have also been taken into account.

## 2 Planning Policy Framework

### National Planning Policy

2.1 Paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) recognises that *‘Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which.....*

*c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling’.*

2.2 Paragraph 96 states that *‘Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate’.*

2.3 Paragraph 97 sets out that *‘Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:*

*a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*

*b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*

*c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.’*

2.4 National Planning Practice Guidance further states that Authorities and developers may refer to Sport England’s guidance on how to assess the need for sports and recreation facilities.

## **Local Planning Policy**

### **Blackpool Local Plan 2012-2027 - Part 1: Core Strategy**

#### **CS6: Green Infrastructure**

2.5 In terms of existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, policy CS6 states that these will be protected unless the requirements of paragraph 74 of NPPF (2012) are met.

#### **CS15: Health and Education**

2.6 This policy states that development will be supported that encourages healthy lifestyles and addresses the Council's health priorities. This includes co-located, more integrated health and education facilities, increasing community access and participation, and reducing the need to travel.

### **Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies**

2.7 The Local Plan Part 2 allocates sites for development, safeguarding or protecting and sets out a suite of development management policies to guide appropriate development. These development management policies will replace the current 'saved policies' in the Blackpool Local Plan (2006) once Part 2 is adopted. The relevant emerging policy is:

#### **Policy DM36: Community Facilities**

##### **Existing community facilities**

1. Proposals that would lead to the loss of a community facility through demolition or change of use will only be supported where:
  - a. the existing facility would be relocated or replaced in a location to serve the same community, or;
  - b. the applicant can demonstrate that there is no longer a need for the facility in its current use or as an alternative community use.
2. Proposals that would lead to the reduction in size of a community facility will only be supported where there would be an overall benefit to the facility and the community and would ensure viability in the long term.

### **New community facilities**

3. The Council will promote sites and encourage opportunities for new community facilities on appropriate sites, in areas where there is an identified shortfall of provision. Proposals for new local community facilities should be located on sites accessible by sustainable modes of travel.

### 3 Physical Activity Participation in Blackpool

3.1 The Blackpool Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) pulls together all the information that is available on the health and wellbeing of the people of Blackpool, the quality and accessibility of services, evidence about what works and the views and experience of the public.

3.2 While Blackpool has significantly worse levels of physical activity than the national average, the town is similar to national trends in the demographics of physical activity participation; younger people are more active than their older counterparts, men are more active than women, white adult populations are more active than non-white adults, and activity levels are lower in those who have a limiting illness or disability.

3.3 Local data also indicates that there is a very strong correlation between participation and social class. Within Blackpool, people in the lower socio-economic groups are more inactive (31%) than those in the higher socio-economic groups (24%). Conversely physical activity levels increase in more affluent groups (61%) compared to 53% in more deprived communities.

3.4 Information from Public Health England estimates that in Blackpool:

- Significantly fewer adults are achieving the recommended amount of physical activity per week compared to the national average
- Significantly more adults are classed as inactive, that is, doing less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week
- A lower proportion of Blackpool adults use outdoor space for exercise or health reasons; 13.4% compared to 17.1% nationally<sup>7</sup>

## 4 Blackpool's Indoor Facilities

### Swimming Pools

4.1 Within Blackpool Borough there are many indoor swimming pools. The main pools are identified in the table below:

Location
Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre (public facility)
Palatine - 8 lane competition swimming pool with a moveable floor (public facility)
Bannatyne Health Club (private facility)
DW Sports Fitness (private facility)
Reform Health Club (private facility)
DeVere Village (private facility)
Sandcastle Water Park (public facility)
Spindles Health and Fitness (private facility)

4.2 There is also a number of Blackpool hotels have swimming pools available for the public to use. There are further indoor swimming facilities within the adjoining boroughs which Blackpool residents are able to use, such as Poulton YMCA and Fleetwood YMCA in Wyre and St Annes YMCA.

4.3 The Sport England Sports Facility Calculator identifies that Blackpool requires 6.73 pools.

4.4 Taking into account the above existing provision, there is currently no requirement to identify further provision for swimming pools within the borough in the Local Plan as demand is met by the borough's existing pools and the pools of neighbouring authorities. This situation will need to be kept under review during the Local Plan period to ensure suitable levels of provision are maintained.

4.5 Even though no requirement for additional pools has been identified at this stage, it may be necessary to support or upgrade existing facilities during the plan period.



**Palatine Swimming Pool**

## **Health & Fitness Centres**

4.6 Gyms and fitness suites have grown in popularity in recent years. In 2018, Blackpool Council commissioned WYG to carry out a Retail, Hotel and Commercial Leisure Assessment which included an assessment of the current provision and future need for health and fitness.

4.7 The Sport England Active Places Power site identifies the following facilities within Blackpool Borough:

<b>Health and Fitness Facility</b>
Bannatyne Health Club, Rigby Road
Blackpool Sports Centre, West Park Drive
Brunswick Gym and Health Club, Bethesda Road
DW Sports Fitness, Vicarage Lane
Gym IT, Waterloo Road
Helio Fitness, Newton Drive
Blackpool Gym & Spa, Grand Hotel, North Promenade
Moor Park Health & Leisure Centre, Moor Park Avenue
Palatine Leisure Centre, St Annes Road
PlayFootball, Garstang Road
Reform Health Club, Milbourne Road

South Shore Cricket Squash & Rugby Club, Common Edge Road
Spindles Health and Leisure, Norbreck Castle Hotel, Queens Promenade
The Club and Spa, Imperial Hotel, Queens Promenade
The Gym, Talbot Road
Village Hotel, East Park Drive

4.8 In addition to the above there are a number of smaller facilities:

- Sargent Fitness, Amy Johnson Way
- Bulldogz Gym, Bristol Avenue
- Tuff Training, Sycamore Ind Est
- Bodymasters Gym, Selbourne Road

4.9 There are also facilities in Wyre and Fylde close to the Blackpool borough boundary that are popular with Blackpool Residents including YMCA Thornton Fitness Centre.

4.10 From the audit undertaken by WYG of available facilities, it appears that provision is appropriately distributed throughout the Borough and, as such, Blackpool appears to be relatively well provided for in terms of indoor health and fitness facilities. There is currently no requirement to identify further provision for public or private health and fitness suites within the Local Plan as demand is being met by both public and private sector providers.

4.11 Any new proposals for health and fitness provision should be considered positively, provided that they are in accordance with the provisions of the development plan and national planning policy, with a town centre first approach where suitable sites are available.

4.12 Even though no requirement for further public or private health and fitness suites has been identified at this stage, it may be necessary to support or upgrade existing facilities during the plan period.

### **Ice Rinks**

4.13 There is one ice rink within the borough – The Ice Arena at Blackpool Pleasure Beach.

4.14 Commercial leisure facilities, such as multiplex cinemas, ten pin bowling centres, family entertainment centres and ice rinks, draw the main part of their trade from residents living within a radius of up to 20 minutes travel time. Major leisure facilities such as ice rinks require a large catchment population.

4.15 As Blackpool residents currently have access to an ice rink facility in the borough, it is unlikely to be commercially viable to develop any further facilities within the borough. This has been proven by the recent failures of two additional ice rinks on the Fylde Coast at Moor Park Industrial Estate, Blackpool (Fylde Coast Ice Arena) and in Cleveleys (Sub Zero Ice Arena).

### **Indoor Bowls**

4.16 There are no indoor bowls facilities within the borough. Blackpool Indoor Bowls Centre at Newton Hall Holiday Park is located just outside the borough in Fylde which is also home the Blackpool Indoor Bowling Club.



**Blackpool Indoor Bowls Centre**

4.17 The Sport England Sport's Facility Calculator suggests that there may be a future need for a facility (1.72 of a facility) based on the population figure.

4.18 The Council used to own and operate an Indoor Bowling Centre close to the Town Centre. However it was demonstrate and there were significant viability issues with the continued operation of the Centre and the site was redeveloped as part of a much wider regeneration scheme. The popularity of bowls of has further declined since this time.

4.19 There are ten public outdoor bowls facilities available within the borough. There is one indoor ten-pin bowling centre.

4.20 From the evidence gathered, there is no evident demand for the Local Plan to make provision for indoor bowls facilities. However, this situation will need to be kept under review during the Local Plan period to ensure that, if necessary, suitable provision is made.

4.21 Even though no requirement for indoor bowls has been identified at this stage, there may be a future need to provide facilities which could house the sport.

## Indoor Tennis Centres

4.22 South Shore Lawn Tennis is an indoor and outdoor tennis facility with one indoor court. It is the only indoor tennis facility in the Borough.



### South Shore Lawn Tennis Club

4.23 The Active Places Power data from Sport England suggests that the regional average for indoor tennis provision is 0.02 courts per thousand population. From reviewing the amount of courts within the borough itself there are 0.007 courts per 1000 population. However there are a 31 outdoor tennis courts across the Borough (Source: Sport England Active Places Power).

4.24 From the evidence gathered, there is currently sufficient indoor tennis facilities available for Blackpool residents when taking into account the current outdoor provision. There is no requirement for the Local Plan to provide for further facilities, however, this situation will need to be kept under review during the Local Plan period to ensure that suitable provision is maintained.

4.25 Even though no requirement for further indoor tennis courts has been identified at this stage, it may be necessary to support or upgrade existing public facilities during the plan period.

## Sports Halls

4.31 Within the Borough there are nineteen sports halls according to the Sport England Active Places Power website. Sports halls can be used for a variety of activities including:

- Badminton

- Basketball
- Football
- Table tennis
- Netball
- Dodgeball
- Martial Arts
- Exercise classes

4.32 The Sport England Sports Facility Calculator suggests that for Blackpool’s population, 10 sports halls are required comprising 38 courts.

4.33 The Borough already has nineteen sports hall; therefore there is no requirement for the Local Plan to provide for further facilities. Given this substantial over provision, the supply of sports halls will be kept under review as there may be circumstances where it is necessary to support change of use requests to ensure facilities remain economically viable whilst continuing to support public demand.

4.34 Even though no requirement for further sports halls has been identified, it may be necessary to support or upgrade existing public facilities during the plan period.

### Squash Courts

4.35 England Squash & Racketball (ESR) is the National Governing Body for squash and racquetball at national and regional level. Both games are played on squash courts.

4.36 Squash has over the past 30 years seen a considerable decline in participation, with the result that many courts have been either demolished, abandoned or converted into alternative facilities, such as spin studios, soft play centre or fitness suites. It is estimated that, in England, 4,500 courts remain.

4.37 There are nine squash courts in the borough identified below:

Squash Facility	No. of courts
Blackpool Cricket Club	2
South Shore Cricket, Squash and Rugby Club	4
DeVere Village (private facility)	3

4.38 Within Wyre, there are four newly refurbished courts available at Thornton YMCA Health and Fitness Centre. Within Fylde there are also 2 courts at the St Annes Squash and Tennis Club, one court at the Dalmeny Hotel and one court at the Inn on the Prom all in St Annes.

4.39 As a result there are 17 readily accessible squash courts to the residents of Blackpool. Therefore, there is:

- 1 squash court per 8076 people within the borough of Blackpool

4.40 From the evidence gathered, there are currently sufficient squash courts available for residents and there is no requirement for the Local Plan to provide for further facilities. However, this situation will need to be kept under review during the Local Plan period to ensure that suitable provision is maintained.

4.41 Even though no requirement for further squash courts has been identified at this stage, it may be necessary to support or upgrade existing public facilities during the plan period.



**Squash Court at Blackpool Cricket Club**

## **5 Conclusion**

5.1 Based on the population projections for the plan period up to 2027, the current indoor sports facilities within the Borough, taking into account the facilities available in adjacent local authority areas is such that there is no current need to allocate land for further provision for indoor sports facilities in the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2. However, this position will be kept under review and where deficiencies arise or facilities require support, planning contributions or other action to secure direct provision would be considered to ensure appropriate levels and quality of provision are maintained.