



**WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY  
STAGE A REPORT: PREPARE AND TAILOR THE APPROACH  
AUGUST 2019**

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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# WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

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## Introduction

A Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) for Watford Borough Council will provide the necessary robustness and direction to inform decisions affecting the provision of outdoor sports facilities.

The Council is developing a new Local Plan which will provide the planning framework for the Borough up until 2036. The PPS will form a key element of the evidence base to support local policy and the Local Plan as a whole, ensuring that it is compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

## Objectives

To achieve the strategic vision, the PPS seeks to deliver the following objectives:

- ◀ To provide a documented assessment of current and future needs for outdoor sports facilities within the identified study area focusing on the assessment of quantity and quality issues in relation to supply and demand (deficits and surpluses) equation.
- ◀ To identify all valuable sites/facilities (inclusive of disused and lapsed provision) to ensure they can be protected and improved for the long-term benefit of sport.
- ◀ To promote a sustainable approach to the provision of outdoor sports facilities and management of sports clubs.
- ◀ To produce a strategy to ensure that there are enough facilities in the right place to meet current and projected demand.
- ◀ To ensure that all clubs have access to facilities of appropriate quality to meet current needs and long-term aspirations.
- ◀ To plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, including the identification of school facilities which could be utilised to address identified deficits in provision.
- ◀ To take account of outdoor sport facilities provided in neighbouring local authorities that presently service the sporting and recreational needs of Watford residents (and vice versa), taking into consideration other local authority PPS findings.
- ◀ To ensure provision can meet future demand derived from housing growth and to guide the level of increased provision required (via utilisation of Sport England's New Development Calculator); scenarios will be run based on numerous housing growth equations.

## Vision

Based on the discussions from the initial meeting with the Council, KKP has drafted a vision to provide a clear focus with desired outcomes for the Watford Playing Pitch Strategy:

*"To create accessible, high quality and sustainable sport and leisure facilities, which offer inclusive outdoor services for all, enabling the inactive to become active, increase participation levels and help improve the health and well-being of all of our residents."*

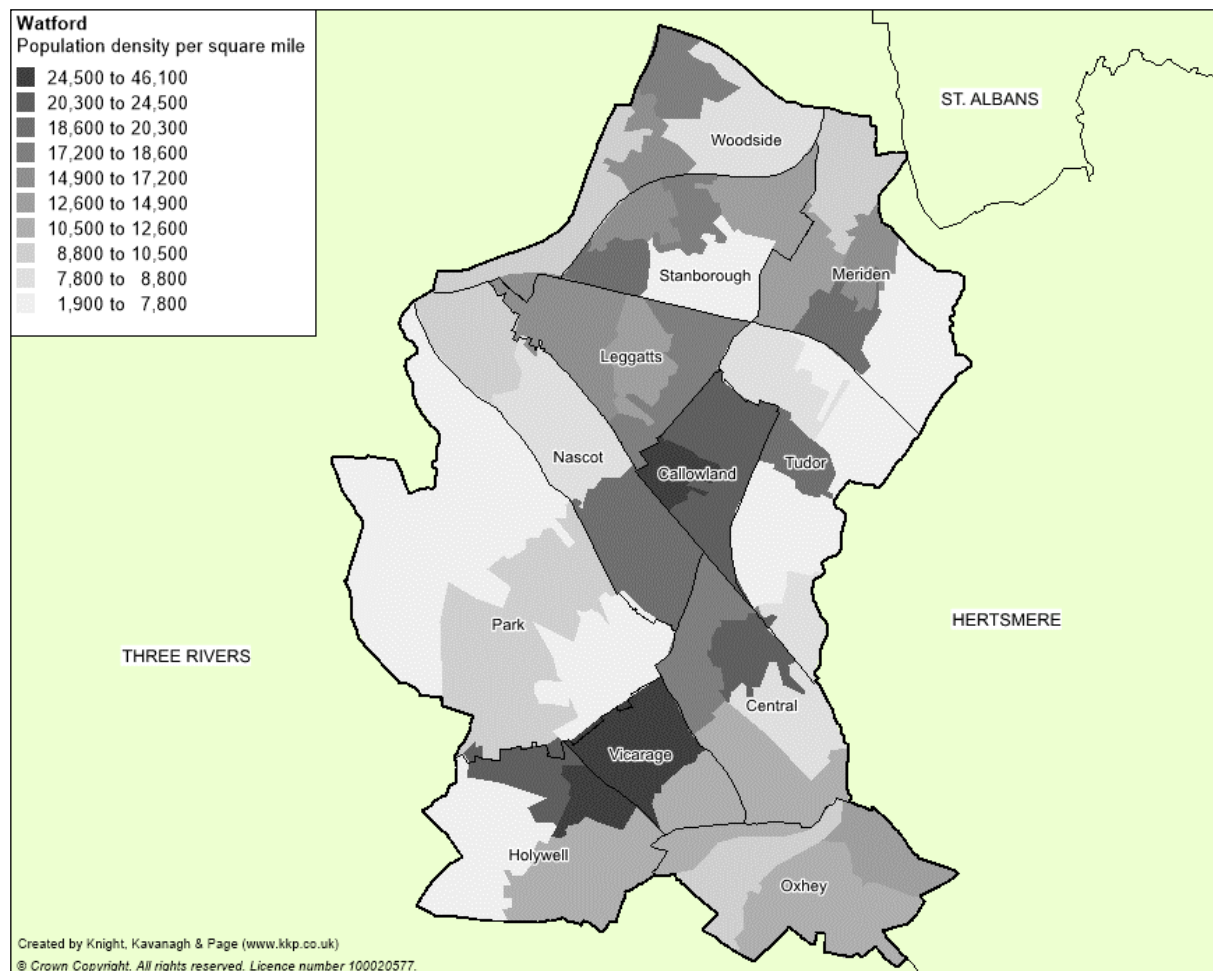
## Study area

The study area will comprise the whole of the Council's administrative area. In addition, cross-boundary issues will also be explored to determine the level of imported and exported demand from neighbouring authorities such as Three Rivers and Hertsmere.

It is considered that there is not a requirement to use sub areas within Watford given the relatively small geographical distance across the authority.

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Figure 1: Watford ward breakdown



## Scope

The scope of the PPS will focus geographically on all local provision, regardless of ownership and management arrangements. Provision included within the project is as follows:

- ◆ Football pitches (including 3G pitches)
- ◆ Cricket pitches
- ◆ Rugby union pitches (including 3G pitches)
- ◆ Rugby league pitches
- ◆ Hockey pitches (sand/water based AGPs)
- ◆ Tennis courts
- ◆ Netball courts
- ◆ Bowling greens
- ◆ Athletics tracks
- ◆ Croquet
- ◆ Hurling

Please note that, although included in the scope, no rugby league provision is presently considered to exist in Watford. If no current or future demand is identified, it will not be included within reports that are produced.

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Pitch sports (i.e. football, rugby union, rugby league, hockey and cricket) will be assessed using the guidance set out in Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance: An approach to developing and delivering a playing pitch strategy. In addition, any other grass sport pitches identified during the project will also be included. This includes hurling, which is identified as being a key sport within Watford.

Non-pitch sports (e.g. bowls, croquet and tennis) will be assessed using Sport England's Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance (2014). This requires a different methodology to assess supply and demand to that used for pitch sports.

With regards to each sport, the PPS will specifically consider the number of pitches/facilities and will take into account the size, quality, location, accessibility and capacity of the provision as well as accompanying ancillary facilities such as changing accommodation, toilets and car parking.

### **Local Plan**

Watford Borough Council's Local Plan consists of the following documents:

- ◀ Core Strategy 2006-2031 (Adopted 2013)
- ◀ Remaining policies of Watford District Plan 2000 (adopted 2003)

The Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan. The new Local Plan will set out the vision and objectives for the Borough. It will reconsider housing and employment need and propose ways of meeting that need more fully. It will allocate sites for housing, employment and other forms of development and will set out development management policies for the Borough.

The Council's aim is to publish the Local Plan in May 2020. Timescales for the stages of production of the Local Plan are set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS). The timetable is expected to be as follows:

- ◀ Issues and Options - Sept – Oct 2018
- ◀ First Draft Local Plan (Preferred Options) – September/October 2019
- ◀ Publication the Local Plan (Final Draft Local Plan) – May 2020
- ◀ Submission – Sept 2020
- ◀ Adoption – May 2021

### **South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan (JSP)**

Watford Borough Council, together with Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans and Three Rivers councils have also begun work on a Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) for the wider South West Hertfordshire area.

The JSP is intended to set the longer-term strategic framework and shared priorities within which future local plans will be prepared. A key aim will be to ensure that infrastructure such as transport, schools, health and utilities are properly co-ordinated and delivered alongside the need for new homes and jobs.

The councils are working towards preparing the JSP by aligning expectations for the JSP initially within a Statement of Common Ground, which is expected to be published in Summer 2019.

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### National context

Concern at national government level over the loss of playing fields prompted the development of localised playing pitch assessments and strategies which identify current and future requirements for playing fields. Developing a strategic approach to the analysis of playing pitch supply and demand is necessary to:

- ◀ Protect provision against development pressures in, and around, urban areas.
- ◀ Identify supply and demand issues in relation to predicated population changes.
- ◀ Address 'demand' pressures created as a result of specific sports development pressures e.g. growth of mini soccer and wider use of artificial grass pitches.
- ◀ Address budget pressures and public-sector cuts.

One of the core planning principles of the NPPF is to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs. Section 8 of the NPPF deals specifically with the topic of healthy communities; Paragraph 96 discusses the importance of access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation that can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

Paragraphs 97 and 98 discuss assessments and the protection of "existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields". Paragraph 99 and 100 also promote the identification of important green spaces by local communities and the protection of these facilities. Such spaces may include playing fields.

### *FA Local Football Facility Plans*

To support in delivery of the National Football Facilities Strategy, The FA has commissioned a national project. Over the next year 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.

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. The PPS will however provide this evidence base and one of the drivers for the PPS is for it to run alongside production of the LFFP in order to provide robust detail regarding quality and supply and demand to develop a well-informed plan. The Watford LFFP is planned to begin in September aligned to the creation of the Watford PPS. Consultation with football clubs in Watford will be undertaken in parallel of both projects thus avoiding potential duplication and consultation fatigue.

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## Sporting context

In addition to the Council and Sport England key drivers set out above, the main pitch sport National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) have sport specific key drivers, as set out overleaf.

Table 1: Summary of NGB key drivers

NGB	Key drivers
The Football Association (FA) / Football Foundation (FF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Working towards the launch of the National Football Facilities Strategy (2019-29) which identifies six areas of investment priorities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Improve 20,000 natural turf pitches.</li> <li>◀ Deliver 1,000 3G AGP 'equivalents' (mix of full size and small sided provision, including MUGAs).</li> <li>◀ Deliver 1,000 changing pavilions/clubhouses.</li> <li>◀ Support access to flexible indoor spaces.</li> <li>◀ Refurbish existing stock to maintain current provision.</li> <li>◀ Support testing of technology and innovation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>◀ Working towards delivery of the FA: National Game Strategy (2018-2021) which has the following objects:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Increase the number of male affiliated and recreational players by 10%.</li> <li>◀ Double the number of female affiliated and recreational players via a growth of 75%.</li> <li>◀ Increase the number of disability affiliated and recreational players by 30%.</li> <li>◀ Ensure affiliated Futsal is available across the country in order to increase the number of Futsal affiliated and recreational players.</li> </ul> </li> <li>◀ Production of LFFPs over the next two years to 2020 for every local authority; the Watford plan will be produced in Autumn 2019.</li> </ul>
England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Working towards ECB's Inspiring Generations Strategy (2020-2024).</li> <li>◀ Improve the quality of cricket pitches to achieve a greater capacity.</li> <li>◀ Ensure there is access to education sites to accommodate cricket.</li> <li>◀ Ensure there is enough provision for predicted growth.</li> <li>◀ Enhancing opportunities for informal cricket.</li> <li>◀ Ensure sustainable assets which may be appropriate for community asset transfer.</li> </ul>
England Hockey (EH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Working towards EH: A Nation Where Hockey Matters and the England Hockey Facilities Strategy.</li> <li>◀ Ensure there is access to good quality artificial grass pitches (AGPs) and ancillary facilities both now and in the future.</li> <li>◀ Ensure there is enough provision (including accessibility) for predicted growth to support priority clubs.</li> <li>◀ Ensure access to school sites is maintained and secured through the appropriate community use agreements.</li> <li>◀ Ensure any new hockey provision supports localised hockey demand and any hockey development programmes.</li> </ul>

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NGB	Key drivers
Rugby Football Union (RFU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Working towards the Rugby Football Union National Facilities Strategy (2017-2021).               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ To support clubs to protect themselves against risks to sustainability in facilities and finance.</li> <li>◀ To make the game as safe and enjoyable as possible.</li> <li>◀ To improve player transition from age grade to adult 15-a-side rugby; sustainable pitches and clubhouses.</li> <li>◀ To expand places to play through AGPs.</li> <li>◀ To engage new communities in rugby.</li> <li>◀ To create a community Rugby Sevens offering.</li> <li>◀ To tell rugby's story to inspire more people to play the game.</li> <li>◀ To maximise rugby development values.</li> <li>◀ Putting sustainable success at the heart of the professional game.</li> </ul> </li> <li>◀ Key performance indicators:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ 10% increase in the number of active male 15-a-side teams.</li> <li>◀ 20% increase in the number of 15-a-side matches.</li> <li>◀ 10% increase in the number of active players.</li> <li>◀ 800 more female teams</li> <li>◀ 8000 more matches.</li> </ul> </li> <li>◀ RFU scenarios:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Impact of an improvement or reduction in the maintenance programme applied to pitches.</li> <li>◀ Impact of pitch drainage installation.</li> <li>◀ Impact of additional floodlighting.</li> <li>◀ Impact of access to nearby venues with appropriate pitches and capacity.</li> <li>◀ Impact of additional pitches if delivered.</li> <li>◀ Impact of World Rugby Regulation 22 3G pitches.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ The Mission of the British Tennis Strategic Plan 2015-2018 is to 'Get more people playing tennis more often'.</li> <li>◀ It is anticipated the refreshed strategy will be published in 2019. The new vision for Tennis in Britain will be 'Tennis Opened Up' with a headline vision 'to Grow Tennis by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable'.</li> <li>◀ The LTA is working to improve accessibility to tennis courts in order to help deliver its strategy and is keen to encourage parks and clubs to make use of technology solutions, which includes online court bookings and fob access.</li> </ul>
Bowls England Strategic Plan	<p>Although the Plan is currently being updated (2014-2017), this version remains the most up to date available. Bowls England will provide strong leadership and work with its stakeholders to support the development of the sport of bowls in England for this and future generations. The overall vision of Bowls England is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Promote the sport of outdoor flat green bowls.</li> <li>◀ Recruit new participants to the sport of outdoor flat green bowls.</li> <li>◀ Retain current and future participants within the sport of flat green bowls.</li> </ul>



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NGB	Key drivers
England Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ Accelerate the participation growth.</li> <li>◀ Increase the level of long-term participant retention through targeted programmes.</li> <li>◀ Build a sustainable performance pathway built on the principles of purposeful practice and appropriate athlete-coach contact time.</li> <li>◀ Develop sustainable revenue streams.</li> <li>◀ Establish high standards of leadership and governance.</li> </ul>
England Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◀ To grow and sustain participation levels in the sport.</li> <li>◀ To improve the experiences of every participant in the sport.</li> <li>◀ To improve performance levels and grow the next generation of senior athletic champions.</li> </ul>

Please note that the national governing bodies for both hurling or croquet do not have specific national context and therefore this has not been included within the table above.

## The approach to developing the Strategy

The Playing Pitch Model consists of a 13-step approach to develop a PPS, as follows:

- ◀ **Section A: Preparation**
  - ◀ Step 1: Clarify why the PPS is being developed
  - ◀ Step 2: Set up the management arrangements
  - ◀ Step 3: Tailor the approach
- ◀ **Section B: Information Gathering**
  - ◀ Step 4: Develop an audit of playing pitches
  - ◀ Step 5: Develop a picture of demand
- ◀ **Section C: Assessment**
  - ◀ Step 6: Understand how each site is being used
  - ◀ Step 7: Develop the current picture of provision
  - ◀ Step 8: Carry out scenario testing
- ◀ **Section D: Key Findings & Issues**
  - ◀ Step 9: Identify key findings & issues
  - ◀ Step 10: Check and challenge key findings & issues
- ◀ **Section E: Strategy Development & Implementation**
  - ◀ Step 11: Develop conclusions & recommendations
  - ◀ Step 12: Develop an action & implementation plan
  - ◀ Step 13: Adopt, monitor and review the PPS

The Stage A PPS Guidance checklist has been appended to this brief; the checklist provides details of how this PPS has been tailored and progress to date.

## Management and delivery

The Project Team will comprise a small number of people including Vicky Hughes, Phil Dodshon and Paul Rabbits from the Council and Claire Fallon and Paul Hughes from KKP. This team will be responsible for the day to day development of the PPS and ensuring tasks are completed in line with the agreed project plan.

A wider Steering Group should lead and drive the Strategy forward during its development and also ensure the delivery of its recommendations and actions. Membership of the steering group should be balanced and representative of the different parties and key drivers behind the Strategy. It should comprise of the Council, Sport England and the relevant NGBs.



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Discussions and sign off will be required by the Steering Group at the following key stages:

- ◀ Initial preparation
- ◀ Information gathering update (stage B)
- ◀ Assessment Report (stage C)
- ◀ Strategy development
- ◀ Strategy sign off and implementation (stage D)

The Steering Group will be involved in the following:

- ◀ Identifying who should be consulted in regards to supply and demand information
- ◀ Helping to achieve club survey response rates
- ◀ Establishing the approach to collecting quality data and agreeing quality ratings
- ◀ Checking and challenging key findings within the Assessment Report
- ◀ Defining the scenarios that need to be tested
- ◀ Checking and challenging recommendations and actions within the Strategy

It is important that there is regular annual monitoring and review against the actions identified in the Strategy once it is completed. This monitoring should be led by the local authority and supported by the Steering Group. Understanding and learning lessons from how the PPS has been applied should also form a key component of monitoring its delivery. This should form an on-going role of the Steering Group.

### **Project plan**

An eight-month project plan has been developed to cover Stages A-D, with Stage E set to continue into March 2020 and beyond once the PPS is complete.

In accordance with NGB guidelines, summer sport site assessments will take place in August 2019, whereas winter sport site assessments will take place in November 2019. On this basis, it is also proposed that the Assessment Report is split into two stages, with summer sports assessment report sections produced in November 2019 and winter sports assessment report sections produced in December 2019 before they are combined to make one report. The Strategy will be drafted in early February 2020.

Please see overleaf for the project plan in full.

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## PROJECT PLAN

Project Plan		July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	
		Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	
<b>Stage A - Prepare and tailor the approach (Step 1)</b>										
<b>Initial steering group meeting</b>										
Agree the nature and extent of support from relevant parties										
Identify all drivers, agree the study area and draft the vision and objectives										
Agree and establish the management arrangements (steering group and project team)										
<b>Stage B - Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision (Steps 2 &amp; 3)</b>										
Supply	Identify sources of information including a list of supply consultees (e.g. pitch) Gather currently available information (quantity and quality)									
	<b>Undertake quality assessments (non-technical)</b>									
	Further research on supply as required (eg club surveys, NGB's).									
Demand	Develop a list of demand consultees Gather currently available information (e.g. LA, NGB and league information). Gather other demand information and views - consultation, population growth, sports development etc)									
	<b>Undertake quality assessments (non-technical)</b>									
	Further research on supply as required (eg club surveys, NGB's).									
<b>Stage B sign off (dataset sign off)</b>										
<b>Stage C - Assess the supply and demand information and views (Steps 4, 5 &amp; 6)</b>										
Understand the situation at individual sites (capacity analysis)										
Develop the current picture of provision										
Develop the future picture of provision										
<b>Provide Draft Assessment Report (Identify Key Findings and Issues)</b>										
Steering group meeting										
Seek comments on the draft assessment from the steering group										
Finalise the draft Assessment Report										
<b>Stage D - Develop the strategy (Steps 7 &amp; 8)</b>										
Carry out scenario testing										
Develop the recommendations and action plan										
<b>Provide Draft Strategy &amp; Action Plan</b>										
Seek comments on the draft strategy from the steering group										
Finalise the draft strategy										

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## TAILORING THE APPROACH

Watford Borough is in south west Hertfordshire within the M25 and to the north west of London. There are 97,000 people living within its 8.2 sq. miles. It has a predominantly urban/ suburban character and is largely surrounded by Green Belt. Due in part to its excellent connectivity and proximity to London, Watford is experiencing very significant growth pressures. Its neighbours are Three Rivers, Hertsmere and St Albans which collectively form the South West Herts group (as earlier detailed).

The Borough has a rich sporting history and is currently home to Premier League football club, Watford FC. The Club plays competitive fixtures in its dedicated stadia site on Vicarage Road which has a 22,220 person capacity. Aligned to Watford FC is its charity arm; Watford FC Community Sports and Education Trust. The charitable organisation delivers a range of health, education, engagement, football and sporting activities within the area.




















Further to Watford FC, there is a highly vibrant football landscape within the Borough featuring clubs competing in the English non-league football pyramid, Sunday league and various mini and junior youth leagues. In terms of affiliated participation, football is the most prominent sport in Watford.

Despite football being the most prominent sport, there are still well established sporting clubs in Watford which play a significant role in meeting sporting demand for Watford residents. These include (but are not limited to); West Herts Hockey Club, Watford Town Cricket Club, Fullerians Rugby Union Club and West Herts & Watford Tennis Club.

Watford is also home to Glen Rovers Hurling and Football Club. Gaelic sport is uncommon in Hertfordshire and therefore a GAA club, with a dedicated ground is highly valuable to the local sporting landscape.

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## APPENDIX ONE: STAGE A CHECKLIST

<b>Stage A Checklist: Prepare and tailor the approach</b>	Tick 	
	Yes	Requires attention
<b>Step 1: Prepare and tailor the approach</b>		
1. Is it clear why the PPS is being developed (the drivers) and what it seeks to achieve (the benefits)?		
2. Has the level of support Sport England and each of the main pitch sport NGBs can provide to the particular project been agreed?		
3. Has an initial scoping meeting been held including all relevant parties?		
4. Has a steering group been established to lead the work and is it representative of the drivers behind the work and providers and users of pitches in the area?		
5. Has a partnership approach been developed and has it been confirmed what support, advice and/or resources each party can bring to the work?		
6. Has the study area been defined and agreed by all relevant parties and have any known cross boundary issues been highlighted?		
7. Has high level officer and political support been secured and are such relevant individuals part of the steering group?		
8. Has a vision for pitch provision for the study area been developed alongside specific objectives and is there agreement on how far forward the PPS should look?		
9. Has a strong project team been established which is supported by adequate resources and has the necessary skills to develop the PPS?		
10. Has a realistic project plan been agreed by the steering group and the NGBs which sets out the overall timescale and when elements of the work will be undertaken?		
11. Has some thought been given to how the work will be structured and presented?		
12. Have any features which make the study area different been identified along with the impact they may have on pitch provision and the approach to the PPS?		
13. Has an understanding been developed of how the population participates in sport and what this may mean for pitch provision now and in the future?		
14. Alongside the main pitch sports has the inclusion of other pitch sports been considered and is there agreement on which should be included in the PPS?		
15. Is it clear how the sports to be included are governed in the area, what the league structure is and how this can help with developing the PPS?		
16. Has an indication been provided on the potential nature of any sub areas, do they represent how the sports are played in the study area and will these be reviewed once relevant information is gathered during Stage B?		
17. Has a strong, locally specific, tailored brief been developed which builds in the work undertaken to prepare the approach to developing the PPS?		
18. Have the project brief and project plan been signed off by the steering group?		
19. If external consultancy support is to be procured is this to be done after Stage A is complete but before work on Stage B commences?		KKP developed Stage A