

WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL: PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

STAGE B WINTER SPORT SUMMARY

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QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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INTRODUCTION

This summary report identifies the information for the Watford Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) Stage B (Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision) which seeks to identify all supply (including quantity/quality of provision) and demand information identified to date.

It presents non-technical audit scores, on a sport by sport basis, based on inspections of provision, which were undertaken by KKP in November 2019. It also highlights key issues identified by clubs, based on consultation with KKP.

Football grass pitches

Supply

The non-technical audit of grass football pitches in Watford identified a total of 53 football pitches across 12 unique sites.

Quality

The quality of football pitches across the District have been assessed 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 primarily influences the carrying capacity of a site; often pitches lack the drainage and maintenance necessary to sustain levels of use. Pitches that receive little to no ongoing repair or post-season remedial work are likely to be assessed as poor, therefore limiting the number of games they are able to accommodate each week without it having a detrimental effect on quality.

Conversely, well maintained pitches that 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 take into account the user quality ratings gathered from consultation.

The non-technical assessment of grass football pitches in Watford identifies that there are seven good, 41 standard and five poor quality pitches in Watford.

Table 1.1: Summary of grass football pitch quality

Site	Quality rating	Pitch type
Cassiobury Park	Standard	2 x Adult
Garston Park	Standard	1 x Adult
Everett Rovers FC	Standard	1 x Adult

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Site	Quality rating	Pitch type
	Poor	1 x Youth 11v11
	Poor	2 x Youth 9v9
	Standard	3 x Mini 7v7
	Standard	3 x Mini 5v5
Sun Postal Sports and Social Club	Good	3 x Adult
	Good	1 x Youth 11v11
	Good	1 x Youth 9v9
	Good	1 x Mini 7v7
	Good	1 x Mini 5v5
West Herts Sports Club	Standard	1 x Adult
	Standard	1 x Youth 9v9
	Standard	1 x Mini 7v7
Woodside Playing Field	Standard	5 x Adult
	Standard	1 x Youth 11v11
	Standard	1 x Mini 7v7
	Standard	1 x Mini 5v5
Watford Town Cricket Club	Standard	1 x Adult
	Standard	2 x Youth 9v9
	Standard	1 x Mini 7v7
Callowland Recreation Ground	Standard	1 x Adult
	Standard	2 x Mini 7v7
Harebreaks Recreation Ground	Standard	1 x Adult
	Standard	1 x Mini 7v7
	Standard	1 x Mini 5v5
Stanborough Park	Poor	1 x Adult
	Poor	1 x Youth 9v9
King George V Playing Fields	Standard	4 x Adult
	Standard	1 x Youth 11v11
Westfield Academy	Standard	1 x Adult
	Standard	1 x Youth 11v11
	Standard	1 x Youth 9v9
	Standard	1 x Mini 7v7
	Standard	1 x Mini 5v5

Key issues emerging from consultation

- West Herts FC highlight that the ancillary offering at West Herts Sports Club is largely outdated and is in need of refurbishment to future proof it for the next generation of sporting users at the site. The facility was built in the 1960s and whilst it has had some level of refurbishment, is still largely in need of major work to ensure it remains fit for purpose in the coming years. The sports club aspires sell a small parcel of land it owns to a private developer to create 23 apartments on Cassio Road. This land is allocated as open space in the Watford Local Plan and has previously accommodated a small health unit which closed several years ago. The Club has outline plans to use the capital receipt of the sale of the land to reinvest back into the onsite ancillary offer.

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- ◀ Sun Postal Sports FC highlight that there are common issues with anti-social behaviour at Garston Park which often results in vandalism to the exterior of the changing rooms.
- ◀ The Club also highlight that the pitch at Garston Park has a significant dip in it, which results in it draining poorly.
- ◀ Ripstone FC highlight that the ancillary offer at King George V Playing Fields is poor.
- ◀ Several pitches at Woodside Playing Fields are on a significant slope which at times of adverse weather, impacts on the quality of pitches towards the lower end of the site (near to the Leisure Centre).
- ◀ Watford Sunday League & Watford Youth Sports FC highlight that the quality of the existing ancillary provision at Woodside Playing Fields is poor and on the most part, not fit for purpose. The lack of social facilities for parents, players and spectators was noted by Watford Youth Sports FC.
- ◀ The non-technical audit of football changing facilities found poor quality provision at the following sites:
 - ◀ Stanborough Park
 - ◀ King George V Playing Field
 - ◀ Harebreaks Recreation Ground
 - ◀ Woodside Playing Fields

The current response rate from football clubs is currently 38%. KKP are currently working to increase this through telephone chasing unresponsive clubs.

Football 3G pitches

Supply

There is a total of two full 3G pitches in Watford. Of these, one is full size, and one is youth 9v9 size.

Quality

The non-technical assessment of 3G pitches in Watford identifies that the full size pitch, based at Westfield Academy is good quality, with the smaller pitch located at the Meriden Community Centre standard quality.

Table 1.2:

Site	Quality rating	Pitch type	Pitch size	Floodlit?
Westfield Academy	Good	Medium Pile 3G	Full (100m x 60m)	Yes
Meriden Community Centre	Standard	Medium Pile 3G	Half (60m x 40m)	Yes

Consultation findings:

- ◀ Three consultees identify aspirations to develop 3G FTP provision on their site. These are:
 - ◀ Francis Combe Academy
 - ◀ Westfield Academy (a secondary 3G FTP)
 - ◀ Sun Postal Sports and Social Club

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Rugby union

Supply

In total, there are 23 rugby union pitches in Watford, as a breakdown this consists of 11 senior pitches and 12 mini pitches.

Pitch quality

The methodology 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 1.3: 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 1.4: 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

Table 1.5: 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 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 that has been installed in the last five years.

All rugby pitches at Fullerians RUFC are assessed as good quality, with all pitches being well maintained to a rigorously high standard. In contrast, pitches located at Watford RFC are poor quality. It is noted that one pitch at the site (Knutsford Playing Fields) did receive investment from Watford Borough Council and the RFU to improve existing drainage issues and this has largely been successful with the pitch achieving a D1 classification.

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All remaining pitches are for rugby union are standard quality and are linked to Watford Grammar School for Boys.

Table 1.6: Summary of rugby union pitch quality

Site	Quality rating	Quality score	Pitch size	Floodlit?
Fullerians RUFC	M2 / D1	Good	1 x Senior	Yes
	M2 / D1	Good	4 x Senior	No
	M2 / D1	Good	7 x Mini/Midi	No
Knutsford Playing Fields (Watford RFC)	M0 / D1	Poor	1 x Senior	No
	M0 / D0	Poor	1 x Senior	No
Watford Grammar School for Boys	M1 / D1	Standard	1 x Senior	No
	M1 / D1	Standard	1 x Mini/Midi	No
Watford Grammar School for Boys (New Field)	M1 / D1	Standard	3 x Senior	No
	M1 / D1	Standard	4 x Mini/Midi	No

Key issues emerging from consultation

- ▶ Pitches at Knutsford Playing Field (Watford RFC) are poor quality. The pitches receive a basic maintenance regime which falls below the M1 requirement for standard scoring. Watford RFC reports specific drainage issues on its secondary senior pitch and a corner of its main pitch.
- ▶ Watford RFC accesses a small floodlit training area to undertake all the club's midweek training demand. This is inadequate due to its small size and its quality. At times during winter, the training area becomes unusable due to adverse weather conditions and high levels of concentrated demand causing the area to churn up and cause midweek training cancellations.
- ▶ The ancillary offering at Watford RFC is good, although car parking is limited at peak times. The Club note that it may struggle to adequately accommodate both its boys' junior section and its girls and ladies' teams at peak times in the future, if it continues to grow in these areas.
- ▶ Fullerians RFC highlight that it has a requirement for additional floodlighting on its site to better accommodate its midweek training demand. At present, its floodlit training pitch is used four nights a week for training and deteriorates in quality throughout the winter months due to concentrated demand.

Current response rate for rugby union – 100%

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Hockey

Supply

There is a total of three hockey suitable AGPs located in Watford. Two are full size AGPs and one is half size.

Quality

Depending on use, it is considered that the carpet of an AGP usually lasts for approximately ten years and it is the age of the surface, combined with maintenance levels, which most commonly affects quality. It is therefore recommended that sinking funds be put into place by providers to enable long-term sustainability, on-going repairs and future refurbishment beyond this period.

Of the full size pitches, one is good quality having been resurfaced in 2018. This is located at Watford Grammar Schools for Boys (New Field) and is the home venue for West Herts Hockey Club. The remaining full size pitch is located at Watford Leisure Centre (Woodside) and is standard quality. The pitch is passed its recommended surface lifespan, but the non-technical audit found evidence of good maintenance levels.

The small sided pitch is located at Watford Grammar School for Boys and was built in 2019

Table 1.7: Summary of AGP quality

Site	Quality rating	Pitch Type	Pitch size	Floodlit
Watford Grammar School For boys	Good	Sand Dressed	Half (60m x 40m)	Yes
Watford Grammar School for Boys (New Field)	Good	Sand Dressed	Full (100m x 60m)	Yes
Watford Leisure Centre - Woodside	Standard	Sand Filled	Full (100m x 60m)	Yes

Key issues emerging from consultation

- ◀ West Herts Hockey Club is the sole hockey club in Watford. It is based at Watford Grammar School for Boys (New Field) and has a long term lease of the facilities.
- ◀ The ancillary offering is good, with suitable carparking, changing and social space.
- ◀ The Club use a secondary pitch at St Michaels School (Three Rivers) as an overspill facility. This exported demand into Three Rivers is not seen as a problem for the Club.
- ◀ Over Christmas, Watford Grammar School use the AGP for school matches which reduces the availability for matches at the site. This therefore increases the need for pitch access at St Michaels School.

Current response rate for hockey – 100%

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Netball

There are no dedicated netball clubs in Watford. Watford Premier Netball Club is based at Thomas Parmiter Sports Centre (Three Rivers). The Club compete in the Watford Netball League, which is also played at Thomas Parmiter Sport Centre.

Watford Premier Netball Club is considered to absorb all demand for formalised netball within the Borough.

Supply

There are ten identified outdoor netball courts in Watford, all of which are located at education sites.

Quality

Table 1.7: Summary of netball court quality

Site	Quality rating	Pitch type	No. of courts	Floodlit?
Watford Grammar School for Girls	Standard	Macadam	3	No
Francis Combe Academy	Standard	Macadam	3	Yes
Westfield Academy	Standard	Macadam	4	No

Hurling

- ◀ Glen Rovers is the sole Gaelic Football Club based in Watford. The Club moved into its current home at Radlett Road Playing Fields in 2017. The ancillary facilities are good, with suitable car parking, toilets and changing rooms available to members.
- ◀ The site has one senior pitch which is standard quality.
- ◀ The Club was unresponsive to consultation attempts.

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NEXT STEPS

The Watford Assessment Report is due to be submitted to the steering group by Friday 20th December.

The report will focus on reporting the findings of the extensive research, consultation, site assessment, data analysis and GIS mapping work to deliver:

- ◀ An analysis of qualitative site visits.
- ◀ A summary of consultation with a variety of stakeholders, including officers, governing bodies, league secretaries, clubs and schools.
- ◀ Supply and demand analysis using the new methodology in accordance with Sport England's Guidance 'Developing a Playing Pitch Strategy'.

Each sport by sport section will provide a quantitative summary of provision and a map showing the distribution of facilities. It will also provide information about the availability of facilities for the local community, and the details of governing body regional strategic plans (where they exist).

It is important to note that the Assessment Report will not, at this stage, incorporate site-specific recommendations (in relation to meeting deficiencies and dealing with surpluses). Once the facts outlined (including site information, number of teams etc.) have been agreed by the steering group, a strategy and action plan will be developed.

A subsequent steering group will be arranged in mid-January/early February (TBC) to discuss the Assessment Report and to outline key steps into producing the PPS Strategy & Action Plan for Watford.

