KNIGHT, KAVANAGH & PAGE

LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

INDOOR & BUILT SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY DRAFT REPORT

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QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

This is the Luton Indoor and Built Strategy for the period 2022 – 2031. Recommendations are drawn from the Needs Assessment Report 2022, researched and prepared during Autumn 2021 by specialist sport and leisure consultancy, Knight Kavanagh and Page (KKP). The Assessment Report and Strategy have been prepared in accordance with Sport England's ANOG (Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guidance - for Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities) and in consultation with LBC (Luton Borough Council), Active Luton, Be Active, Sport England, national governing bodies of sport (NGBs), local sports clubs and key stakeholders.

1.1 Purpose

The overall aim of the indoor sports strategy is for LBC to make informed decisions to ensure that sports and physical activity facilities with an appropriate combination of amenities are located in the right places to ensure that the maximum number of local people take part in regular, meaningful physical activity. LBC has an aspiration and need to consider its facilities planning, particularly in the context of the changing economic landscape (post Covid-19 pandemic), supporting a diverse community and its demographic profile (e.g., the rise in the number and proportion of older population) in the area.

The focus of this Strategy is to provide clear direction to all partners so that together they can plan and develop the more modern, efficient and sustainable range of community-based leisure, physical activity and sport facilities that Luton's residents require.

It provides a concise, robust, comprehensive and up-to-date evidence base in line with Luton's current Local Plan and sets out a strategic, action plan-based approach to the enhancement of existing, and creation of new, sporting provision.

This will ensure that residents have the option to be physically active and healthier, and where appropriate develop their physical, sporting, health and wellbeing ambitions within their local community. This report is one component of a wider suite of strategies, which also includes the Authority's Playing Pitch Strategy.

1.2 National strategic context

Sporting Future: A new strategy for an active nation (December 2015)

The Government's strategy for sport confirms its recognition and understanding that sport makes a positive difference and states its intention that the sector will deliver five simple but fundamental outcomes: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development and economic development.

Sport England: Uniting the Movement 2021

Sport and physical activity have a key role to play in improving the physical and mental health of the nation, supporting the economy, reconnecting communities and rebuilding a stronger society for all following the global pandemic. Reflecting this, Sport England has recently released its latest strategy, 'Uniting the Movement', its 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity. This sets out the ambition to tackle the inequalities that it states are long seen in sport and physical activity making the point that 'providing opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind,

and helping to remove the barriers to activity, has never been more important'. The three key Strategy objectives are:

1	2	3
Advocating for movement, sport and physical activity	Joining forces on five big issues	Creating the catalysts for change

The specific impact of the Strategy will be captured via funded programmes, interventions made, and partnerships forged. For each specific area of action, key performance indicators will be developed to help evidence the overall progress being made by all those involved in supporting sport and physical activity.

Sport England: Towards an Active Nation (2016)

In Sport England's strategic response to the Government it states that it will invest in:

- Tackling inactivity.
- Children and young people.
- Volunteering – a dual benefit.
- Taking sport and activity into the mass market
- Supporting sport's core market.
- Local delivery.
- Facilities.

Increasing participation in sport and physical activity and the health and wellbeing benefits delivered are key drivers for Sport England. It (and partners) places particular emphasis on getting the inactive active and targeting interventions at under-represented groups.

Sport England's planning aim

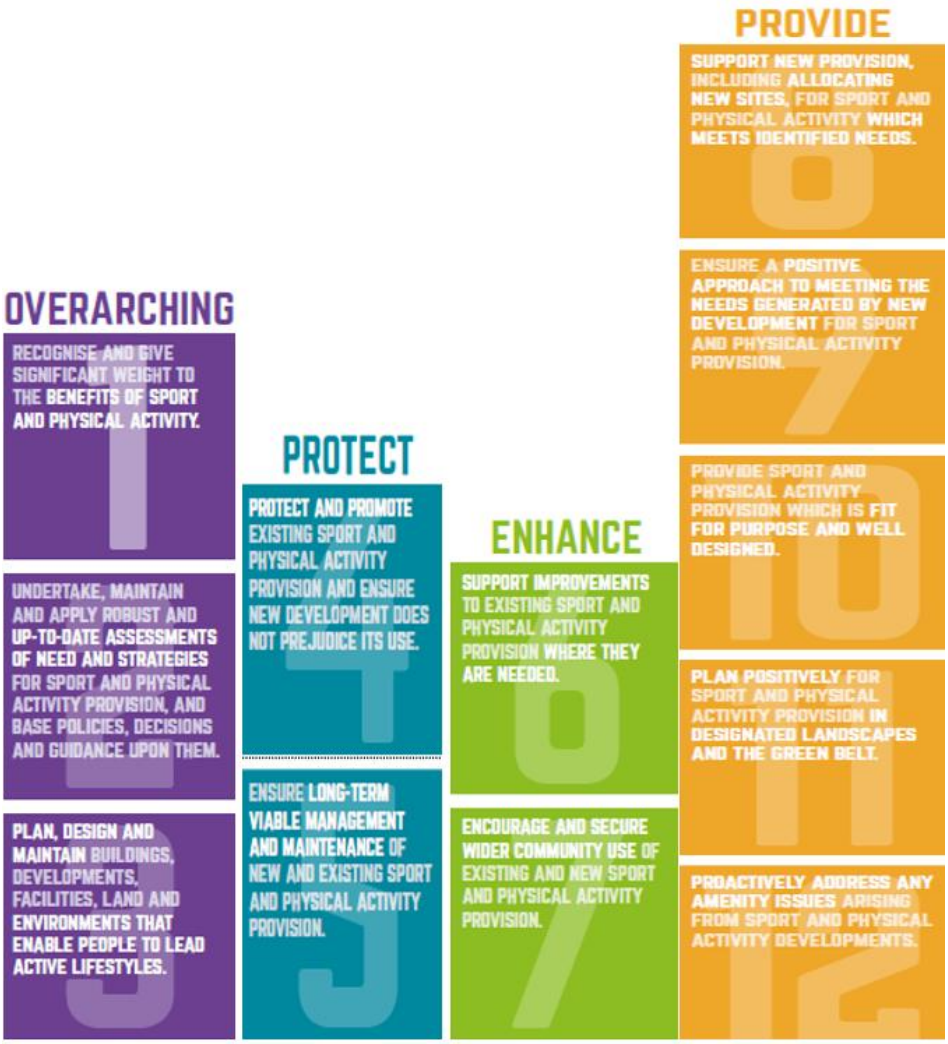
Sport England's aim in working with the planning system is to help provide active environments that maximise opportunities for sport and physical activity for all, enabling the already active to be more so and the inactive to become active. This is supported by the planning objectives of Protect, Enhance, Provide:

Table 1.1: Sport England Planning objectives

Protect	Enhance	Provide
To protect the right opportunities in the right places.	To enhance opportunities through better use of existing provision	To provide new opportunities to meet the needs of current and future generations.
Existing provision should be protected unless an assessment has demonstrated there is an excess of the provision and the specific buildings or land are surplus to requirements; or the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the former or current use.	The use of existing provision should be optimised, for example, through quality, access and management improvements supported by appropriate ancillary facilities.	Appropriate new provision that meets needs and encourages people to play sport and be physically active should be provided by adapting existing places and through new development.

It is supported by 12 planning-for-sport principles. They are geared to helping the planning system contribute to sustainable development by fulfilling the key role the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights that it must play - in creating strong, vibrant and healthy communities.

Figure 1.2: Sport England's 12 Planning Principles



Applying them will ensure that the planning system plans positively to enable and support healthy lifestyles, delivers community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs, and provides opportunities for all to experience the benefits that taking part in sport and physical activity brings.

These principles are applicable to all areas of the planning system at all levels, for example strategic, local authority and neighbourhood planning levels. As such they are of relevance to all involved in, or looking to engage with, the planning system.

As part of the design process, Sport England also provides advice through its Active Design guidance. The guidance aims to encourage activity in everyday lives through active design. Active Design is a combination of a series of principles that promote activity, health and stronger communities through the way we design and build our towns and cities. These principles include ensuring facilities are well connected by cycling and walking routes along with co-locating services in the same building, with the aim of reducing the need to travel as far to access facilities.

This guidance is currently being updated, and the government is currently seeking comments.

PART 2: LOCAL AREA CONTEXT

2.1 Local strategic context

Luton is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of its residents and understands the relationship between physical activity and health and wellbeing. It underpins this commitment in its Corporate and Local plans. It also recognises the importance of working in partnership with other agencies to deliver opportunities especially due to cultural challenges encountered across the Borough.

Luton 2040: A place to thrive

Luton's Corporate Plan sets out the vision for the first five years of the Authority's journey towards 2040. Its vision is to ensure that *'Luton will be a healthy, fair and sustainable town, where everyone can thrive and no-one has to live in poverty*'. The Council identifies five key priorities and how they can relate to sport and physical activity.

- Building an inclusive economy that delivers inward investment to support the growth of businesses, jobs and incomes. The council has a key role to play in this priority as one of the largest employers in the town, supporting jobs, skills and investment, as well as having a clear stake in the town centre.
- Improving population wellbeing through a preventative approach to reduce health inequalities to help everyone in Luton reach their full potential. LBC is currently preparing its sport and physical activity strategy which aims to take a whole system approach to tackling physical inactivity and linked outcomes such as improving mental health, reducing levels of obesity and the prevalence of non-communicable diseases.
- Make Luton a child-friendly town, where children and young people grow up feeling happy, healthy and secure.
  LBCs emerging physical activity & sport, playing pitch and sports facility strategies will articulate the role that improved facilities, and accessible opportunities to participate in popular activities such as cricket and football can play in improving the lives of young people across the Borough.
- Tackling the climate emergency and becoming a net zero town. The sport and physical activity sector can contribute in this regard, by ensuring that its publicly operated buildings are energy efficient with effective heating systems and building improvements.
- Create a strong and empowered communities supporting fairness, equality and local pride. The sport and physical activity sector can contribute by ensuring that sports facilities (including those that are new and enhanced) are proactively made available and accessible to those residents residing in areas of high socio- economic and health related deprivation.

Health is also at the forefront of this strategy, and to address the issues identified in the document, such as reducing inequalities, providing more opportunities for young people and increasing life expectancy, Luton is committed to *'working with key partners to provide high quality leisure facilities and programmes to suit all demographics'*.

Reducing health inequalities in Luton: A Marmot Town

The Institute of Health Equity is working with specific local authorities to implement suitable approaches to reduce health inequalities through an approach in line with the principles established by Sir Michael Marmot in his report regarding health inequalities which was

produced in 2010 and reviewed in the light of the Pandemic (2020). A 'Marmot place' is an area which has a significant commitment to tackle health inequalities through action on the social determinants of health, social and economic conditions. This is followed up through strong and effective plans and policies to achieve these reductions in health inequalities. The Marmot approach can be applied to towns, cities or even regions.

Luton is the one of the first to become a 'Marmot Town' in the country and joins a growing number of 'Marmot Places', which include cities and regions, that are working with the Institute to reduce health inequalities.

Luton's Population Wellbeing Strategy 2023 to 2028

The vision for Luton's Population Wellbeing strategy is to 'improve population wellbeing and tackle health inequalities to enable everyone to have a good quality of life and reach their full potential.*'* It identifies three priority areas of focus:

- Improving population wellbeing and tackling health inequalities to enable everyone to have a good quality of life and reach their full potential.
- Becoming a child friendly town, where our children grow up happy, healthy and secure, with a voice that matters and the opportunities they need to thrive.
- Supporting a strong and empowered community, built on fairness, local pride and a powerful voice.

Leisure facilities will play a key role in achieving these objectives, with the strategy setting out the priority of working with the Local Authority '*to ensure health and wellbeing facilities are appealing and maintained to a high standard'.*

Be Active

Be Active is one of 43 Active Partnerships operating within England. It is tasked with the strategic development of sport and physical activity within the three local authorities of Central Bedfordshire, Bedford and Luton.

Its vision is to create "A healthier and happier Bedfordshire." Its mission is ". to work in partnership to support, develop and promote opportunities for people to be active for life."

Be Active recently published their new strategy, 'Moving Forwards Together,' which will raise the profile of physical activity as a tool to improve lives, create inclusive, safe opportunities and build community resilience across Bedfordshire and Luton.

Active Luton

Active Luton is a community wellbeing trust. Its mission is '*to make a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of its community, inspiring, motivating and offering opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to take action to improve their life chances'*. It runs facilities and provides a wide range of high-quality programmes and activities through a partnership approach, all of which enable local people to:

- Participate in physical activity.
- Improve their health and wellbeing.
- Enhance their education and skills.

- Create career opportunities.

The indoor leisure facilities that the Trust manages are:

- Inspire: Luton Sports Village.
- Lea Manor Recreation Centre.
- Lewsey Sports Park & Pool.
- Hightown Community Centre.

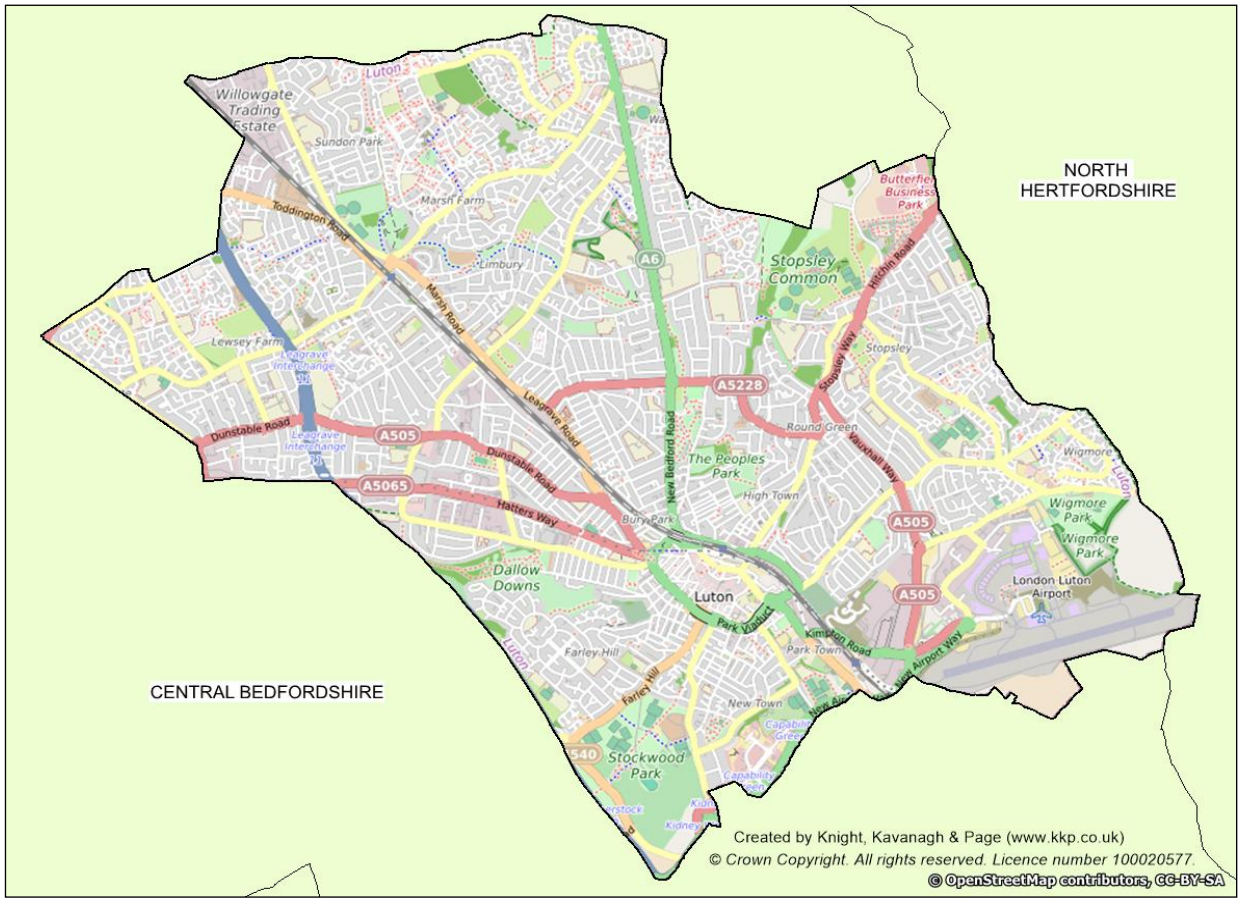
Summary of local policy

There is a demonstrated commitment from LBC and partners to ensure that residents and visitors to Luton are able to access high quality leisure facilities to address the challenging levels of health and social inequalities in the borough. As well as ensuring that there is a good quality leisure infrastructure, there is a desire and understanding to work in partnership, across various departments within the Council, the Active Partnership and with other organisations and key individuals to achieve the Council's corporate aims to support its young, culturally diverse range of communities.

2.2 About Luton

Luton is a densely populated borough, located 34 miles north of London. The transport network includes the East Coast Mainline and the M1 plus several arterial routes linking it to key towns in neighboring authorities. These include the A505 to Hitchin in North Hertfordshire (east), the A6 north to Bedford and the A505 west to Dunstable. It also boasts its own airport; a major local employer.

Figure 2.1 Luton - main roads and rail lines



Population and distribution *(Data source: 2021 Mid-Year Estimate, ONS):* The population of Luton is 225,300 (112,900 men and 112,400 women). Population density is greatest in and around the town centre – which is centrally located within the authority as a whole.

Ethnicity (Data source: 2021 census of population, ONS): Luton is one of four authorities outside of London with the majority of the population being from ethnic minority groups, with 54.8% of the population being non-white. White British make up 31.8 per cent of the population of Luton compared with 74.4 per cent nationally. The next largest population group (by self-classification) is Asian, at 37% this is much higher than the national equivalent (9.3%).

Deprivation *(Data source: 2019 indices of deprivation, DCLG):* Deprivation levels in Luton are higher than those of the UK. Almost half of the population (45.2%) lives in areas covered by the country's three most deprived cohorts (compared to a national average of c.30%). Conversely, 10.2% live in the three least deprived groupings in the country, this compares to a 'norm' of c.30%. Areas of higher deprivation and health deprivation are generally focused to the west of the Authority.

Health data *(Data sources: ONS births and deaths, NCMP[1] and NOO[2]):* In keeping with patterns seen alongside high levels of health deprivation, life expectancy in Luton is lower than

1 *National Child Measurement Program*
2 *National Obesity Observatory*

the national figure; the male rate is currently 78.1 compared to 79.4 for England, and the female rate is 82.8 compared to 83.1 nationally.

Weight and obesity - Adult and child obesity rates in Luton are above regional averages.

	Adult obesity rates	Child obesity rates
Luton	66.2%	42.5%
East of England	63.9%	34.2%
England	63.8%	36.6%

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (based on Sport England Active Lives Data) 2021/22 - the percentage of Luton's population considered to be inactive is 32.1%. This is above regional (21.4%) and national (22.3%) averages. It has significantly fewer active people (56.4%) than the national (67.3%) and regional (68%) averages.

Population projections

Strategic planning: Change over 10 years (2021 to 2031[3])

The most recent population projections indicate an increase of 2.9% in Luton's population (6,573) over the 10 years from 2021 to 2031. Several key points for Luton are outlined below:

- As illustrated in the population, age and gender composition earlier, Luton currently has a noticeably younger demographic compared to the region. By 2031, whilst young people aged 0-15 will still be the largest population cohort there is projected to be a decline in population across all age brackets from 0-44yrs.
- There will be a continuous increase in the number of persons aged 65+ and a need to consider varying sports offers for this age group. While the age group represented 11.7% of Luton's population in 2021 it is projected to account for 14.5% of the total by 2031.

2.3: Luton's key housing sites

Luton's Housing Strategy 2022-2027 calculates that the Authority requires at least 900 new homes by 2027 of which 350 must be affordable. Several key housing sites are either currently under construction or have planning permission. Those scheduled to have 500 dwellings or more include:

- Power Court (new stadium site) – outline permission for 1.200 homes.
- Hayward Tyler, Kimpton Road – outline planning application for 1,000 homes.
- Strawberry Star scheme, Kimpton Road –planning permission for up to 900 homes.
- Redrow Eaton Green Heights –520 homes.

Summary of the demographic profile

Luton's overall population profile currently contains a large proportion of younger people (0-44) Overall population is predicted to increase slightly overall over the period to 2031, with the 65 years+ age cohort seeing the largest rise and a corresponding fall in the younger cohort. Luton

[3] *Office for National Statistics 2016-based population projections (data released May 2018)*

also has a large culturally diverse population with strong south Asian and Caribbean communities so, in parallel to the age bracket profiling. It is important therefore for strategic work to consider this level of ethnic diversity and also the likely changes in population make up over the long term.

2.4 Planning policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF)

This sets out planning policies for England detailing how they are expected to be applied to the planning system. It provides a framework to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities. The stated purpose of the planning system is to contribute to achievement of sustainable development (paragraphs 7-9). It establishes 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.

Paragraph 96 asserts that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for health and well-being and that planning policies should be based on robust, up-to-date assessments of need for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific need and quantitative and qualitative deficiencies and surpluses in local areas should also be evaluated and this information used to inform what provision is required in an area. As a prerequisite paragraph 97 of the NPPF states that existing open space, sports and recreation sites, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- An assessment has been undertaken, which has clearly shown the site to be surplus to requirements; or
- 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
- The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

It is, essential that Luton as the local planning authority, retains oversight of all potential facility developments. This includes policies and potential supplementary planning documents setting out the approach to securing sport and recreational facilities through new housing development. It includes the Council's approach to ensuring that community use of new facilities is agreed at the outset to ensure that they contribute to its wider sport and physical activity aspirations and those of its partners. This is pivotal to ongoing strategy delivery.

National Planning Practice Guidance (MHCLG)

This is a web-based resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place. It was launched in March 2014 and adds further context to the NPPF. It is intended that the two documents should be read together. When considering how local planning authorities and developers assess the needs for sports and recreation facilities the guidance states that authorities and developers may refer to Sport England guidance.

PART 3: NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

3.1 General findings

The principal opportunity/challenge for Luton is to ensure that it gets to the point where all its stock of facilities are high quality and accessible. There is a need to balance the requirements of the core market of people already taking part in sport and physical activity, whilst ensuring that the growth of existing or new activities meets the needs of a diverse population.

While some elements of the local facility stock (such as Inspire Luton Sports Village, have clearly benefitted from recent investment made and/or orchestrated by the Authority and are fit for purpose, others (including Lewsey Sports Park and Lea Manor Recreational Centre) are not in an appropriate condition to meet current demand. Both are strategically important, as they serve communities from high IMD areas/culturally diverse communities. Lea Manor's strategic significance is enhanced by the fact that it delivers the majority of Luton's school swimming lesson programme. Plans to upgrade Lewsey Sports Park using funds from a Levelling Up Fund bid were rejected and therefore other investment will need to be seeked.

The accessibility analysis highlighted the need to work with other community organisations to ensure that their facilities are available to the community. Whilst the majority of the population (99%) live within a mile of a community available sports hall and health and fitness facility, there are concerns about access, particularly pay and play access, to swimming pools. 35.7%, of Luton's population lives within one mile of a swimming pool of which 28.2% live in areas of higher deprivation.

Because the three pay and play sites are located in the north and the east of the Authority, central and southern areas are without a pay and play venue. Although Denbigh High School is not a pay and play site, it does offer swimming lessons via privately run organisations, mainly for the surrounding community which is predominantly of south Asian background. Although this site is currently closed, the School does anticipate it reopening in 2023. It is therefore important to support it with the planned maintenance, to ensure this is community available within the planned timeframe.

3.2: What do we know about facilities and activities in Luton

Sports halls

Taking sports halls of all sizes into account, there are 38 sites providing 88 badminton courts in the Borough. Those with two or fewer courts are limited as to the range and scale of recreational and sporting activity they provide; there are 18 sites with 3+ badminton courts.

Of the 3+ badminton court halls, the largest (Luton Sports Village) has 8-courts, Luton Six Form College has six courts and the remainder (apart from Lealands High School, Hightown Community Sport & Arts Centre and MEA Sports Centre) all have four. Four facilities are rated as good quality (Queen Elizabeth School, Challney High School for Girls, Putteridge High School, Chiltern Academy and MEA Sports Centre), five are above average quality (The Stockwood Park Academy, Venue 360, Lealands High School, Luton Sixth Form College, Inspire: Luton Sports Village), and the remainder are rated below average quality, including Lea Manor Recreation Centre and Hightown Community Centre.

All halls offer some form of community access; three offer daytime availability:

- Luton Sports Village.
- MEA Sports Centre.
- Venue 360.

A full list of all community available halls, including school sites is listed below along with the number of community available hours and the main sports played at each site.

Table 3.1: List of community available halls including hours available and main activities played

Community use hours		KKP Ref	Site	Total courts	Main sports played
1-40	**34.5**	70	Stopsley High School	4	Cricket, 5-a-side.
	34.0	75	Stockwood Park Academy	4	Cricket, gymnastics.
	33.0	4	Queen Elizabeth School	4 / 1	Netball, cricket, basketball
	36.0	13	Cardinal Newman RC	4 / 2	Indoor junior hockey, badminton
	31.0	15	Challney High School; Boys	1 / 4	Cricket, 5-a-side, basketball, fitness, martial arts.
	31.0	16	Challney High School; Girls	4	Netball, cricket,
	26.5	83	Chiltern Academy	4	Cricket.
	22.0	57	Putteridge High School	4	Cricket, indoor football.
40+	**41.0**	23	Denbigh High School	4 / 1	Badminton and archery
	71.5	29	Hightown Community Sport & Arts Centre	3	Badminton, table-tennis, Irish dancing
	98.0	34	Inspire: Luton Sports Village	8	Cricket, 5-a-side, badminton, martial arts.
	48.0 **58.0**	37 37	Lea Manor Recreation Centre	4 / 1	Cricket, 5-a-side, basketball, fitness, martial arts.
	39.0	40	Lealands High School	3	Badminton, martial arts, fitness
	52.0	48	Luton Sixth Form College	6	Cricket, basketball, netball, 5-a-side
	46.0	72	The Chalk Hills Academy	4	Cricket, martial arts.
	103.0	77	Venue 360	4	Badminton, archery.
	104.0	82	MEA Sports Centre	3	Cricket, Badminton

As illustrated above, the most common sport being delivered in Luton's sports halls is indoor cricket. Due to the strong local south Asian and Caribbean communities, all forms of cricket are very popular throughout the year. Cricket East, the ECB Regional Board for Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire, has capitalised on this, and deliver a range of indoor cricket session in the borough, from structured indoor leagues through to several social engagement programmes such as Wicketz, Chance to Shine, Hot Shot Cricket, disability cricket and Table Cricket.

Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) and the KKP audit acknowledge that there is some spare capacity across all sites within Luton. With certain sites still adjusting to being fully

open following the Pandemic at the time of writing this report, these will need to be supported so that utilisation levels can return to pre pandemic levels, akin to those modelled in the FPM.

The two key Active Luton sites (Lea Manor and Hightown) should also be prioritised for an upgrade, which should consist of new floor surfaces and improvements in decor. The four schools identified as below average quality should be supported to enable the upgrade of their halls.

Swimming pools

There are seven operational swimming pools on nine sites in Luton, three available on a pay and play basis. These are Inspire: Luton Sports Village (50m x 8), Lea Manor Rec. Centre (5 x 25m), and Lewsey Park Pool (5 x 25m). Two schools also have pools although Denbigh High School's pool is currently closed.

Figure 3.1: All pools of 160m2+ by quality on IMD with 1-mile catchments

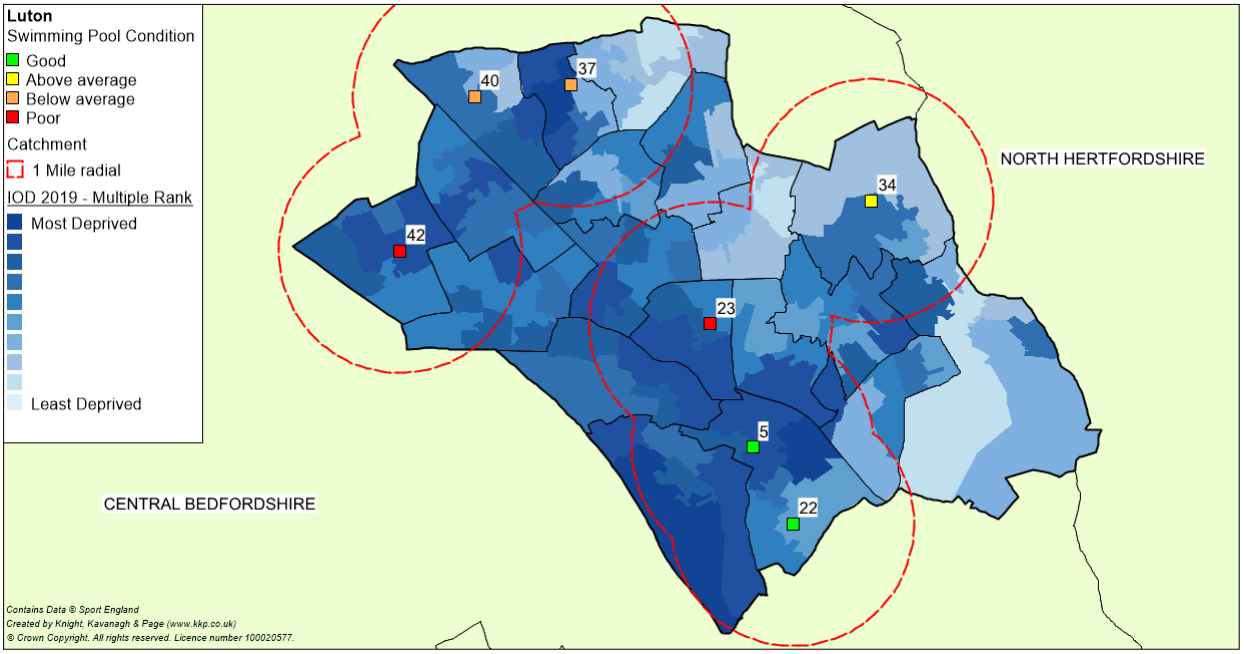


Table 3.1: Quality of swimming pools (160m2) in Luton

Map ID	Site name	Lanes x length (m)	Condition	
			Pool	Changing
5	Bannatyne Health Club	1 x 20m	Good	Not assessed
22	David Lloyd Club	3 x 20m	Good	Not assessed
23	Denbigh High School*	4 x 22m	Poor	Below average
34	Inspire: Luton Sports Village	8 x 50m	Above average	Good
34	Inspire: Luton Sports Village	5 x 20m	Above average	Good
37	Lea Manor Rec. Centre	5 x 25m	Below average	Below average
40	Lealands High School	4 x 20m	Below average	Above average
42	Lewsey Park Pool	5 x 25m	Poor	Above average

Quality is mixed. Pools at Inspire Luton Sports Village and the private gym sites are good or above average quality. Pools at the remaining sites are of either poor or below average quality. Although 77.8% of the population lives within a one mile walk of a swimming pool (86.8% of those in areas of higher deprivation), only 35.7% of the Authority's population reside within a mile of a pay and play site. Denbigh High School is currently shut and, when open, did not offer pay and play access, it does (did), however, serve the Authority's key central area for swimming lessons. This area has high numbers of people from culturally diverse communities, and the site being closed has affected pool access for residents within this local area.

FPM modelled analysis, along with KKP audit findings both emphasise the key role of Luton Sports Village, and its large amount of water space in serving the needs of the Borough. Pools at Lea Manor and Lewsey Park meanwhile have limited available capacity. The FPM shows relatively low levels of overall unmet demand in the Borough which, combined with the low level of anticipated population growth, suggests that the current pool supply is sufficient for the period of this strategy.

Focus should be placed on addressing pool quality issues at existing sites. In this regard LBC has completed a funding application for the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) for financial support to redevelop Lewsey Sports Park. However, unfortunately, this was unsuccessful and further external funding opportunities will need to be explored in the future.

The short-term challenge is firstly, to support Denbigh High School to ensure that its pool opens as soon as possible, and that the facility supports the nearby community.

In the longer-term Lealands High School, and Lea Manor both require significant investment to improve quality - including new pool tanks and refurbished pool surrounds.

Health and fitness suites

There are 12 health and fitness suites in Luton with 1,146 stations. Three are of good quality. six are above average quality and three are below average. There are seven gyms located nearby in neighbouring authorities, two of which have 100+ stations.

Both Inspire: Luton Sports Village and Lewsey Sports Park contain fitness equipment which is Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) accredited, ensuring all fitness facilities. This means that equipment is accessible to all users, allowing disabled and non-disabled people to train together. At Lea Manor Recreation Centre there are accessible and adaptable facilities supported via a Level 3 accredited Exercise and Disability instructor.

All main population areas have access to health and fitness facilities; just under 90% of the population lives within one mile of a gym. Most residents (including 95% of those who reside in areas of higher deprivation) live within one mile of a health and fitness facility.

There are four publicly accessible pay and play health and fitness facilities with 20+ stations in Luton while eight require a membership to access. Active Luton runs an exercise referral programme at all its sites including Luton Sports Village and Lewsey Sports Park.

Based on current UK penetration rates, there is a current undersupply of stations in Luton of c.350 stations. The proposed new development at Lewsey Sports Park will address some of this, however, more granular analysis is required to understand where the shortfalls currently are.

Gymnastics

Luton has two dedicated gymnastics venues accommodating two key clubs; Salto Gymnastics Club and Luton Gymnastics Club. Both own their own facility. The Salto venue is rated as good, however, no site assessment was undertaken at Luton Gymnastics Club. At the time of the report, Salto reported having some capacity issues as a result of a reduced pool of coaching staff.

Indoor bowls

The one indoor bowls centre in the Authority is Luton Indoor Bowls Club. There are six venues within a 30-minute drive of the Authority. Luton Indoor Bowls Club is rated as being of above average quality and the whole of Luton's population live within a 30 minutes' drive of an indoor bowls facility.

EIBA confirms that there is no requirement for an additional purpose-built indoor bowls facilities in Luton now or in the future. Should the proposal to redevelop the adjacent social club result in a reduction in size of the indoor bowls centre (from eight to six rinks) be approved, it is important to ensure the bowls club benefits fully from this development, particularly in terms of social space.

Indoor tennis

There is one indoor tennis provision in the Authority (Venue 360) plus 10 facilities within a 30 minute drive of Luton. Venue 360 runs on a registered membership basis. There are four facilities within the 30-minute drive time catchment available on a pay and play basis.

The LTA considers indoor tennis supply in Luton and the surrounding neighbouring authorities to be sufficient to accommodate demand from Luton's residents.

Squash

Two sites have squash courts in Luton: Lewsey Sports Park and Venue 360. Lewsey currently accommodates the successful, well-run Luton and Dunstable Squash Club which provides recreational and competitive opportunities for residents of Luton and further afield. It is the sole pay and play site in the Authority.

There are plans to redevelop Lewsey Sports Centre. As part of this, the Local Authority will retain squash provision at the centre.

Boxing

Boxing is a growing sport in Luton, with large numbers currently competing at grass roots level and several competing for European titles. There are five boxing clubs currently operating in the Borough, including Hockwell, Luton Shamrock and Luton Boys. Most own the facility they train/compete in, however, the majority are in antiquated industrial units or ex council buildings which require investment. Consultation with Hockwell Boxing club has identified a requirement for new changing provision, toilets and an upgrade of equipment in the gym. Consultation also indicates that clubs would like to see competitive boxing return to Lewsey Sports Park. Boxing ceased at the site when Lewsey Amateur boxing club disbanded.

In order to support the increasing demand for boxing locally, and competitive activity, there is a requirement for a package of facility improvements which should be determined and delivered in partnership with England Boxing.

Summary

This audit, along with the FPM, identified that there is a current surplus in both sports halls and swimming pools. Even though population is expected to increase, it is anticipated that this increase will be able to be accommodated in current provision, therefore there is no long-term requirement for additional supply. There is, however, a current shortage of fitness provision.

Whilst there are no capacity issues with regard to swimming pools and sports halls, there are concerns about the quality and accessibility of certain sites including Lewsey Park and Lea Manor. To address this, the Local Authority will need to explore opportunities for external investment to upgrade Lewsey Sports Park. The plan is to merge the current three buildings into one, to improve facilities for swimming, gym, squash and community development.

Lea Manor Recreational Centre's pool and sports hall are of below average quality and both need to be upgraded. Key requirements include a new sports hall floor, a new pool tank and pool surrounds. This facility plays an important role within its local community. Not only does it support the students of Lea Manor High School it also delivers a substantial proportion of the Authority's school swimming programme and supports a number of swimming clubs.

Several school sites also have poor quality facilities, including the pool at Lealands and sports halls at Chalk Hills Academy and Challney High School for Boys. These establishments will require support to ensure that funds can be secured to upgrade these venues.

Whilst there is sufficient water space within the Authority, there is a concern with regard to the accessibility of pay and play pools, particularly for those living in high IMD areas. Only 35.7% of Luton's population resides within one mile of a pay and play site. Of these, 28.2% live in areas of higher deprivation.

Although not a pay and play facility, when open the pool at Denbigh High School did offer a range of swimming opportunities, particularly for the local community which has a diverse ethnic profile. It is, thus, important that the Authority works with the School, not only to ensure the pool is opened to the community, but to ensure that its programming reflects local need and supports the whole local community.

PART 4: VISION AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS ACTION PLAN

This is Luton's vision for sport and leisure provision for the period 2022-2031. It builds upon the conclusions identified in the Built Facilities Needs Assessment Report. It confirms that the Authority's sports halls, swimming pools and health and fitness suites are generally well positioned to meet the needs of the population.

LBC intends to take a whole systems approach to the delivery of this facility strategy. This means working with and through its key system partners such as those in; public health, sport development (e.g., National Governing Bodies, voluntary and community sector partners), and housing associations, in the delivery of new and improved facilities for physical activity and sport. It will also involve the Council working internally in a cross-departmental fashion (i.e. leisure, planning, health,) in order to identify physical activities contribution to wider social outcomes and ensure joined up delivery.

Luton currently has a surplus of both pool and sports hall capacity. Although it is expected that population will rise slightly over the next ten years, it is calculated that current facility stock should be able to accommodate this rise, therefore there is no requirement for additional facilities. The challenge, however, is to ensure that facility quality reflects the needs of the modern consumer.

With the exception of Inspire Luton Sports Village, Luton Council's sports facility stock is of below average quality. The Authority intends to explore opportunities for external investment to upgrade Lewsey Park. The remaining LBC facilities also require significant investment.

School facilities also play a key role, particularly Lealands and Denbigh High School. Both swimming pools at these sites are rated below average and require investment to ensure that they service and support their respective communities and the clubs which use them.

The proposed headline aim is, thus that LBC will:

Create and maintain high quality, sustainable sport and leisure facilities which meet community need, help increase participation and tackle health and age-related issues providing accessible, inclusive activities for Luton's residents as part of an active lifestyle

4.2 Key strategic drivers

Provide

Continue the process of identifying a suitable site for a new Indoor Urban Cricket Centre

Cricket is very popular in the Authority. There is a need for a dedicated indoor facility to support this sport. LBC, in partnership with the ECB, Cricket East and Northants Steelbacks, have already identified several potential sites, and is working with all partners to identify a site to develop in line with the ECB Urban Cricket Centre concept.

This is referenced further in the PPOSS.

Address the shortfall in Health and fitness provision

There is a current shortfall in Health and fitness provision of c.350 stations in Luton, however, this will reduce slightly once the new JD gym opens shortly. While some residents will use provision in neighbouring authorities, gaps will still exist within Luton. Further granular analysis across the Authority is required to identify where these gaps are, following this, the Council should work with private operators to target areas where shortfalls exist.

Enhance

Continue the process of exploring redeveloping the Lewsey Sports Park site

The Council has applied three times for the Levelling Up Fund (£20m) to support in replacing three existing facilities at Lewsey Sports Park with a new leisure offer. An initial feasibility study plus stakeholder consultation has been undertaken. The plan is to merge the three existing buildings into one, to create a facility which supports swimming, fitness, squash and community development.

To date, the Council has had three LUF bids rejected and will need to seek external funding from another source, as it does not have the required capital funding to upgrade this facility currently.

Redevelop/upgrade Lea Manor Recreational Centre & Hightown Community Arts Centre

Both these sites are strategically important to their local community and need to be upgraded. Lea Manor serves as the hub for school swimming lessons, and Hightown supports a range of sports hall activities including several Asian badminton leagues.

Lea Manor Recreational Centre: is located in the north of the Authority, has a 4-court sports hall, swimming pool and fitness provision. A dual use agreement with the adjacent secondary school is in place for the sports hall. This site requires the following:

- Upgrade of swimming provision including a new tank, pool surrounds and changing village.
- Refurbishment of the sports hall - to include a new floor and improved lighting.
- Where feasible, re-design of internal communal areas to open up the Centre, making it more attractive to users.

Hightown Arts and Community Centre: is subject to a dual use agreement with the nearby primary school and is available on weekday evenings and at weekends. It is an important facility serving many community groups, including several indoor cricket sessions and Asian badminton leagues. The 3-court hall will require a full refurbishment in the short term, which will include a new surface and improved decor.

Support Denbigh High School to re-open its swimming facility

This pool (4 lane x 22m) has been closed since 2020. Prior to closure, it was heavily used during evening/weekend periods and was important in serving a community with a highly diverse ethnic profile. As the accessibility analysis illustrates, the pool serves the central area of the Luton authority, particularly those who do not have access to their own transport.

The school is exploring opportunities to repair the facility although the financial costing is unclear at the time of writing this document. A number of works are required including replacing broken floor tiles in the pool, new pipework and improvements to the changing rooms. It is not clear when this facility will reopen.

LBC needs to work closely with the school to support it through the process of upgrading the facility and to ensure that programming and pricing reflects the needs of the local community.

Work with schools/operators to improve the standard of below average condition community available sports halls and maintain the quality of above average venues

Sports halls throughout the Authority are an important resource supporting the health and wellbeing agenda. The Council, in partnership with schools with other key agencies (such as the respective academy trusts) should undertake a more detailed facility condition audit to identify where targeted investment should be focused to improve these facilities to ensure they are sustainable at a requisite level of quality, in the medium to long term.

The checklist of elements to address will almost certainly include new or resurfaced and line marked floors, better (and more energy efficient i.e. LED) lighting, improved fittings and upgraded plant equipment. The sports halls which need to be a particular focus for this process are those located at:

- Cardinal Newman Catholic School (Luton)
- Challney High School for Boys
- Denbigh High School
- The Chalk Hills Academy

Having ascertained need, a priority order of site improvements should be set out related to the scale of work required at sites and/or the level of demand, particular from sports for which sports hall quality is a primary determinant – such as badminton, netball and basketball.

This process needs to be accompanied by site operational management logistics and core business planning assessment of the potential for Active Luton (and/or individual clubs and leagues in specific sports) to play some role in the programming and core operational management of school-based sports halls.

Work with England Boxing to develop a package of facility improvement to support further growth of the sport in Luton

Boxing is a well-established sport in the Town, with several athletes currently competing for European titles. Although the sport is popular, consultation indicates that the facilities supporting local clubs are not of a suitable standard. Clubs are either using old industrial units, warehouses or former authority owned buildings, the majority of which require significant modernisation. The majority of club own their own facilities.

It is recommended that the Authority undertakes a review of club facilities alongside England Boxing and works with the clubs to identify options for modernisation. One option could be to re-instate the boxing ring at Lewsey Sports Park to support several clubs with a training/competition venue.

4.3 Indoor and built facilities strategy action plan

Taking into account the needs assessments related to specific facilities and sports, the demographic make-up, current vision of the Council and associated organisations, plus Sport England's Planning for Sport guidance which encourages *Protection*, *Enhancement* and *Provision* of new facilities, actions in respect of each of Luton's key facilities are identified below. This action plan is based on a 3-5 year timeframe.

4.3.1: Management and programming

Strategic objective	Recommendation	Act	Timescale	Responsibility	Importance
Major facility investment **Protect/Enhance** **Provide**	See site by site recommendations below	Actions identified on a site-by-site basis.	Short	LBC	High
Maintain/increase community use of education facilities (sport halls) **Enhance**	Market and promote the availability of the current stock of sports halls to a wider cross-section of community clubs and groups.	Continue to work with schools which offer good levels of community use to ensure complementary programming across the Authority. Develop a site-by-site engagement action plan for schools with more limited community use. This work should also take into account the issue of cost as a barrier to access, and whether an amended pricing structure, or funding support could help to attract inactive sections of the community.	Medium	Schools, LBC	High
The health and fitness offer remains inclusive for all. **Enhance**	Ensure all residents, especially those from areas of higher deprivation and those with religious sensitivities can access facilities.	Although the offer is generally good in the Authority, it will be important to evaluate usage to ensure that all activities are as inclusive as possible. With a large percentage of people living in high IMD areas along with above average BAME population, activities need to reach out to all and help to address price and cultural barriers.	Ongoing	LBC, other key agencies	High
Planning **Protect/Enhance** **Provide**	Recognise the importance of this study – act upon recommendations made.	To adopt the Strategy as an evidence base document supporting the Local Plan and development management decisions.	Medium	Planning & Leisure Team	High

Strategic objective	Recommendation	Act	Timescale	Responsibility	Importance
Monitor and review	Keep this Strategy relevant and up to date.	Complete a light touch annual strategy review. Deliver a full progress review within 5 years of adoption.	Medium	LBC	High

4.3.1: Facility specific actions

Facility	Manage-ment	Overview	Action	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)
Lewsey Sports Park	LBC	Lewsey Sports Park presently comprises three separate facilities; a swimming pool, a community centre and a sports centre (with studio space, squash courts, fitness provision and a boxing ring). Although some minor investment has been made to the site, which includes upgrade to the swimming pool changing provision, the overall quality of all the facilities is below average. The Authority has completed a LUF application with a view to replace the existing facility. Unfortunately, this was unsuccessful and the local authority will need to explore other external investment opportunities.	LBC to explore external investment opportunities. Should a new facility be developed, LBC should install appropriate energy efficient plant and equipment in line with the Councils carbon reduction targets.	LBC	Short	High

Facility	Manage-ment	Overview	Action	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)
Lea Manor Recreational Centre	LBC	This is a dual use facility linked with Lea Manor School. The sports hall, swimming pool and fitness suite are all rated as below average. It is a key site as it accommodates all school swimming lessons for the Authority.	It requires a significant upgrade, which would include new pool tank and surrounds, sports hall upgrade plus refurbished fitness provision. Refurbishment of the communal areas is also required. The facility is currently heated via a gas boiler. The Authority should consider upgrading this to a more sustainable source, such as a biomass boiler as part of the Authority' s carbon neutral agenda.	LBC	Short	High
Inspire Luton Sports Village	LBC	The flagship leisure centre for the Authority - it comprises an 8-lane 50m pool, a 8-court sports hall plus large fitness provision. Although 10 years old, it is rated as being of above average quality.	It is important that the Authority maintains this venue at this level to ensure ongoing provision quality. The facility is currently heated through a gas boiler. The Authority should consider upgrading this to a more sustainable source, such as a biomass boiler as part of the Authority' s carbon neutral agenda.	LBC	Medium	High
Hightown Community Sports & Arts Centre	LBC	Dual use community sports centre, shared with the nearby St Matthews and Windmill Hill Primary Schools. It has a 3-court sports hall (rated below average) and a community studio. It is in a highly populated culturally diverse community, and heavily used for badminton leagues along with community indoor cricket sessions.	The sports hall will require a new floor to support current and future community use.	LBC	Medium	Medium

Facility	Manage-ment	Overview	Action	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)
Queen Elizabeth School	Academy Trust	Newly refurbished, the school has a good quality 4-court sports hall plus a dance studio. It hosts indoor cricket, netball and basketball.	Support the school to maintain sports hall quality and work with it school to increase utilisation.	Academy Trust/LBC	Medium	Medium
Cardinal Newman Catholic School (Luton)	School/ Diocese	It has 4-court, 2-court and 1-court halls available to hire. The main hall hosts indoor hockey and badminton. All facilities are rated below average. The School reports the hall to have 30% used capacity.	Support the school with possible funding opportunities to upgrade the facility and also work it to increase utilisation.	School/ Diocese/ LBC	Medium	High
Challney High School for Boys	Academy Trust/Com munity Hire	Its sports facilities re-opened in December 2021, following the Pandemic. It has a below average 4-court sports hall. Prior to the Pandemic, it hosted; Indoor cricket, 5-a-side, basketball, fitness and martial arts.	Support school with possible funding opportunities to upgrade the facility and work with it to increase usage following Pandemic-based closure. .	School/ Academy Trust/LBC	Short	High
Challney High School for Girls	Academy Trust/Com munity Hire	Like the boys school, the sports hall (rated good quality) has only just reopened for community use following the pandemic. It hosts a netball and indoor cricket.	Support the school to secure possible funding options to upgrade the facility and work with it to increase post-Pandemic utilisation.	School/ Academy Trust/LBC	Medium	Medium
Denbigh High School	Academy Trust/Com munity Hire	It has a 4-court sparts hall and 4 x 22m pool. The hall is community available but the pool has been closed since 2020. Located centrally within the Borough and surrounded by a population containing a diverse ethnic profile. When open, the pool played a key role encouraging swimming participation as it can be partitioned from the rest of the site. The School anticipates the pool reopening after full refurbishment, including retiling the pool tank.	The School has allocated £250,000 to address pool refurbishment issues and is scheduled to reopen in 2023. LBC needs to work with the Academy Trust to ensure that timescales are met, and that pool's programming, once opened, supports the local community.	School/ Academy Trust/LBC	Short	High

Facility	Manage-ment	Overview	Action	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)
Lealands High School	School/ LBC	A strategic community facility with a 20m x 4-lane swimming pool, 3-court sports hall and a dance studio. The sport hall is rated above average and accommodates martial arts and fitness classes. The swimming pool is of below average quality but plays a key role in community swimming, with several clubs using it plus swim schools.	Develop a working group with school management to source funds to upgrade the swimming pool. A new tank and improved surrounds will be required in the short term to ensure this facility continues to support the local community.	LBC/School management	Short	High
Luton Sixth Form College	Sixth Form College	It has an above average 6-court sports hall which accommodates indoor cricket, netball, basketball and 5-a-side football. The site is popular, with consultation stating the hall has a 80% used capacity percentage.	Maintain quality and work with the school to increase utilisation.	Sixth Form College/ LBC	Medium	Medium
Putteridge High School	Academy Trust/Com munity Hire	A brand new 4-court sports hall created as part of a school refurbishment. The School will be hiring this out from September 2022.	Liaise with school management to promote use of the facility when it opens and ensure price is attractive.	Academy Trust/LBC	Medium	Medium
Stopsley High School	School/LBC	Above average 4-court sports hall which supports indoor cricket and 5-a-side football. Hall is underused, with 60% spare capacity.	Support the schools to maintain sports hall quality and improve community use levels.	School/LBC	Medium	Medium
The Chalk Hills Academy	School/ Academy Trust	It has a below average 4-court hall which supports indoor cricket and martial arts. The School reports having limited capacity with the hall used every evening for community activity.	Support the school with possible funding opportunities to upgrade the facility.	Academy Trust/LBC	Short	High
The Stockwood Park Academy	School/Aca demy Trust	This is the second base for Luton Gymnastics, which the Club uses four weekday evenings to support its club offer. The school has a 4-court rated as below average quality.	Support the school with possible funding opportunities to upgrade the facility.	Academy Trust/LBC	Short	High

Facility	Manage-ment	Overview	Action	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)
Venue 360	Venue 360 charitable trust	The former Vauxhall Leisure Centre site is now managed by a charity. It comprises a 4-court hall, 2 x squash courts, health and fitness provision plus an outdoor sports offer. All indoor provision is rated above average.	Support the charity should it have any facility improvement/expansion requirements moving forward	Venue 360 charitable trust	Medium	Low
MEA Sports Centre	Masjid-E-Ali Mosque	Recently opened facility owned and managed by a nearby mosque. Site consists of 3-court hall which also has 6 indoor cricket lanes. It is anticipated that this hall will play a significant role supporting development of indoor cricket in the north of the Authority.	Priority is to support the management of the facility with its programming to ensure that the site is maximised to support the local community. Key will be to develop partnerships with Cricket East.	Masjid-E-Ali Mosque/ LBC/	Short	Medium
Salto Gymnastics Club	Salto Gymnastics Club	Dedicated gymnastics facility rated good quality. The Club owns its own building, and it looking at expanding to a second venue, mainly to address its growing waiting list.	Work with British Gymnastics and the Club to identify suitable locations for a second site and to identify potential funding (either through CIL or S106) to support this.	The Club, BG, LBC	Medium	Medium
Luton Gymnastics Club	Unknown	The audit was unable to review the facility, however, it is understood that the Club uses a dedicated gymnastics facility in the Hightown area of the Authority.	Engage with the Club to identify what key challenges the Club has, and how these (if any) can be resolved.	n/a	n/a	n/a
Luton Indoor Bowls Club	Luton Indoor Bowls Club	It has 8 rinks and is rated above average quality. The building is owned by the Cooperative Society. There are plans for the adjacent Cooperative Social Club to be knocked down and merged with the bowls club to accommodate residential dwellings on the site. If approved, the bowls facility will be reduced to six rinks, however, it will gain improved bar and social facilities.	Should the proposed development at the social club be approved, it will be important to ensure that the Bowls Club venue benefits. This could result in improved social space.	LBC, Luton Bowls Club, Cooperative Society, EIBA	Medium	Medium

Facility	Manage-ment	Overview	Action	Lead agency	Timescale (S/M/L)	Priority (H/M/L)
Boxing Clubs	Various	There are currently five boxing clubs operating in the Authority, across a number of venues, including warehouses and former Council buildings. Consultation indicates majority are in a poor condition and require modernisation.	The Authority should undertake a more detailed consultation to establish the facility needs of all clubs and identify possible options to support the sport in the Borough, in partnership with England Boxing. One could be to reinstate the boxing facility at Lewsey Sports Park.	LBC/Boxing clubs England Boxing	Short	Medium
Other commercial fitness gyms	Commercial	There is a number of commercially operated facilities in the area.	Continue to monitor use and assess the extent to which these facilities complement each other and other activity in the borough. Ensure that facility developments complement and do not compete with LBC owned/managed venues.	LBC	Long	Low

PART 5: MONITORING AND REVIEW

This Strategy identifies the investment and actions required to deliver and maintain a high-quality built facilities infrastructure for Luton for the period up until 2031.

It is important that the Strategy is (and is treated as) a live document and is used in a practical manner to prioritise investment, develop key work programmes and partnerships, guide planning gain investment and ensure that built sports facilities are a vital component contributing to the quality of life of Luton's residents.

Strategy production is just the start of the process and there is a requirement for all partners to engage in ongoing dialogue and review in order to ensure that a considered perspective and approach is maintained throughout its life.

It is important for Luton to adopt a 3-5 year action plan based around the Strategy and for its delivery to be monitored and reviewed preferably annually. It is recommended that an annual report be produced to assess progress being made on delivery of Indoor and Built Facilities Strategy recommendations.

The process should not only review progress against the action plan but identify actual/ potential changes in supply and demand. The basis for this is that the Strategy is as much about how facilities are used as it is about ensuring that local infrastructure is of a good quality.

In particular the review should include:

- Review of annual progress on recommendations made in the 3-5 year action plan; taking account of any changes required to the priority of each action (e.g. the relevance of some may increase/decrease following implementation of others).
- Learning and sharing lessons absorbed throughout the period.
- Taking account of other new facilities which come on stream in or adjacent to (or which will impact residents of) the Authority.
- Review of specific changes in the use of key sites (e.g., sport specific specialisms, changes in number of community available hours, opening times etc.).
- Any specific changes in demand at particular facilities and/or from clubs in the area (e.g., reduction or increase in club numbers, reaction to new housing growth etc.).
- Considering new sports/activities and/or formats of traditional sports that may emerge.
- Any other new or emerging issues and opportunities.

The outcome of the review will be to develop a new annual and medium-term action plan for indoor and built sports facilities in and across the Luton authority area.