

# **Luton Borough Council Feasibility Report**

## **Aims & Objectives**

From the attached report, the aims and objectives of Bedfordshire FA working in partnership with Luton Borough Council is to achieve the following:

### **Short Term (by September 2023):**

1. Football pitches improved to meet 'Good' Performance Quality Standard.
2. Improvement of changing facilities at council sites to include improved quality and maintenance of changing rooms, showers and toilets along with the external appearance.
3. To develop hub sites in co-operation with local clubs to provide shared use grounds. This includes specific sites for mini soccer teams (5v5 & 7v7), 9v9/Junior teams and 11v11 teams. This is to encourage the development of tea bars/refreshments along with improved signage to provide a sense of ownership to those teams as well as the local community.
4. To replace non-compliant goalposts on all football hub sites.
5. Toilets to be made accessible at all sites where changing rooms are available. At grounds where there are no facilities on-site, efforts are to be made to make toilets available.
6. To provide Step 7 facilities on at least 2 existing sites.

### **Medium Term (by September 2025):**

1. Continual maintenance and improvements of the facilities mentioned in the Short Term.
2. To identify potential sites for further investment.

### **Long Term (by September 2027)**

1. To deliver a 3G stadia pitch that meets ground grading requirements at Step 5 and Step 6.

## **Introduction:**

A working group has been set up by Bedfordshire FA Council Members in order to look at improving the quality of facility provision in the Luton area. This involved the Football Development Manager who is responsible for overseeing facility development in Bedfordshire as well as the Chief Executive Officer.

Football has been known to provide huge benefits to individuals' physical and mental well-being and the significance of health and well-being is high on the agenda within Luton's wider strategy for sport and physical activity. An important focus area is to achieve more people being physically active and encouraging regular participants to continue maintaining their participation. The importance of the environment can't be underestimated as it often plays a vital role in attracting and keeping people involved especially if it is perceived as an activity that provides value for money. Improved facilities and especially improved grass pitch quality score highly on annual grassroots football surveys.

The FA have set targets for Bedfordshire FA to support the improvement of 67 grass pitch sites in 2021 to a 'good' standard as measured by the Performance Quality Standard criteria (PQS). This is endorsed by The FA and published by the Grounds Management Association with the support of expert Regional Pitch Advisor's.

The working group set about to answer questions that would formulate the best approach to improve the general facilities available to football clubs. The most efficient way of doing this may be to enhance sites that have the most potential for investment and are currently used by local football clubs as evidenced in the Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP).

Luton Borough Council (LBC) do not currently have an in date Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) to reference priority investments for the current period, however the emphasis had previously highlighted a Step 5 stadia pitch as the main priority.

In the absence of an updated PPS, LBC have agreed to incorporate the findings from this review and would look to get it endorsed by their members. This is significant especially if the focus and priorities have changed where resources will need to be diverted. The LFFP was supported by LBC, Active Luton and football clubs in Luton. The report was produced in August 2019 but does not replace the need for a PPS in each Local Authority. However, it does serve as a 10-year portfolio to evidence and target priority areas for football where investment should be focused.

The report was put together by Bedfordshire FA and identifies support from local partners that include but are not limited to:

- Luton Borough Council
- Active Luton
- Team Beds and Luton Active Partnership

- Luton Town Community Trust
- Football Foundation
- Sport England

## **Executive Summary:**

The report clearly highlights that football is still a popular sport in the Luton area. There are clubs who have the appetite and desire to work with LBC to improve the pitches they hire with aspirations to lease and/or manage facilities to aid their growth. There are good examples of where clubs have managed sites in Luton to the benefit of the local community but there will be limitations for clubs who want single-club sites.

There are several clubs that are Luton based but play outside of Luton and this provides a small insight as to why facilities are under-used and in declining use. The quantity versus quality perspective also helps to shine a light as to why the LBC pitches are under-used. Typically, the clubs with a greater number of teams tend to look outside of Luton for better quality pitches and to secure a site for the sole use of their club. Hence some clubs have sought individual arrangements with educational sites or sports centres.

The report also highlights further rationale for hub-sites aimed at specific formats of football in Luton. If the existing sites could be strategically and geographically reviewed to concentrate on fewer but better quality pitches then it serves to make sure that each site could have more games played on each pitch. The hub-sites would help to promote club growth and development whilst leaving pitch stock capacity available to entice Luton clubs back into the area to hire the facilities.

Investment is required to bring the facilities up to a standard where participation levels can grow and encourage people to return to play football in Luton. There is a high priority need to work with LBC in order to achieve the following improvements for the users of its facilities:

- Improving grass pitch quality through increased maintenance procedures and replacing non-compliant goalposts on the sites.
- Collaboration with partners/stakeholders to provide access to toilets for spectators and players at youth games without additional costs.
- Improving access to existing toilets and changing rooms for adult pitch hire.
- Creating hub sites to focus on providing better quality pitches for all formats of the game (5v5, 7v7, 9v9 and 11v11) and encouraging Luton based teams to return to the area to hire facilities.

- Provide appropriate facilities to enable Men's teams to progress from Regional Feeder Leagues (Step 7) and above into the National League System (Step 5 & 6 specifically).
- Provide appropriate facilities to enable Women's teams to progress from youth football into adult football at Tier 6 and 7 as well as those with aspirations of playing between Tiers 3 and 5.

## **School Facilities:**

Opportunities exist for local football clubs to be attached to schools to provide links into the community and several schools are used by Luton based clubs for pitch hire. Whilst not exhaustive, Challney High School for Girls and Cardinal Newman Catholic Schools are used but access to changing rooms and toilets are vital across the grassroots game especially when they are on or are adjacent to pitches that are used e.g. Bishopsote Recreational Ground.

Midweek winter training is provided in part through 3G pitches located at several educational establishments (Appendix 3). These include Football Foundation supported sites at Lealands High School, Lea Manor Recreation Centre, Denbigh High School and Ashcroft High School.

On Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February, the Department of Education announced that £10m of funding will be made available to schools in order to access sports facilities outside school hours:

[https://www.sportengland.org/news/new-funding-help-schools-open-their-sports-facilities?utm\\_campaign=LFTP%20040221&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=CMA\\_SPORT%20ENGLAND&utm\\_content=](https://www.sportengland.org/news/new-funding-help-schools-open-their-sports-facilities?utm_campaign=LFTP%20040221&utm_medium=email&utm_source=CMA_SPORT%20ENGLAND&utm_content=)

The funding will be distributed by Sport England through its Active Partnerships. In Bedfordshire's case, Team Beds & Luton will work with local schools to identify those most in need.

## **Girls' and Women's Football:**

Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of where the girls' and women's teams from Luton play. Lancaster Avenue Recreational Ground is used primarily for girls' football teams in Luton and Luton Town Ladies play most of their youth games on the site. It is interesting to note that Luton Allstars and Luton Celtic Youth find pitches outside of Luton to play their fixtures.

The FA Women's Super League (Tier 1) and The FA Women's Championship (Tier 2) are the top two divisions in the women's game. Underneath these two divisions, Tiers 3 and 4 are known as The FA Women's National League. Tiers 5 and 6 are known as The FA Women's Pyramid. Tier 7 has been included within this report because it is relevant to local county leagues despite sitting outside of the Women's pyramid.

Ground grading requirements for Tiers 3 and 4 can be found here on Pages 63 and 66 respectively: <http://www.thefa.com/-/media/thefacom-new/files/womens/2019-20/fa-wnl-handbook-rules-2019-20.ashx>

Table 1 is a summary of the clubs in Luton that are currently playing across Tiers 1 to 7 in the women's pathway structure.

The highest tier of the Women's Football pyramid is currently occupied by Luton Town Ladies (Tier 5) in LBC. They have played their home games at Stockwood Park (Athletics Track), The Brache (Luton Town's 1<sup>st</sup> Team Training Ground and Crawley Green Men's 1<sup>st</sup> Team (Step 5) and Kingsway Recreation Ground.

**Table 1: Luton based women's clubs in Tiers 1-7**

<b>TIER</b>	<b>COMPETITION</b>	<b>CLUBS</b>	<b>GRADING CATEGORY</b>
<b>1</b>	The FA Women's Super League	N/A	Grade A
<b>2</b>	The FA Women's Championship	N/A	Grade B
<b>3</b>	FA Women's National League Premier	N/A	Grade C
<b>4</b>	FA Women's National League Division One	N/A	Grade D
<b>5</b>	Women's Regional Leagues – Premier Divisions	Luton Town Ladies	Grade E
<b>6</b>	Women's Regional Leagues – First Divisions	N/A	Respective League Membership Rules to be viewed
<b>7</b>	County Women's Leagues	N/A	Respective League Membership Rules to be viewed

Table 2 provides a summary of the ground grading requirements that local teams need to meet in order to play at Tiers 5 and 6.

These tiers are progressions for adult teams entering open-age football in county leagues at Tier 7 with aspirations of promotion to The FA Women's pyramid.

**Table 2: Ground Grading Requirements Summary**

<b>Grade Category</b>	<b>E (Tier 5)</b>	<b>Tier 6 (Promotion from County Women's League Tier 7)</b>
Security required	1-year tenure agreement	1-year tenure agreement
Club House	Yes	Yes or minimum 5 min walk from ground
Car Parking	Yes	Yes
Pitch Perimeter Barrier	Permanent barrier or roped off	Minimum Respect barrier along one touchline (spectator side)
Playing Area	100m x 64m	Minimum 90m x 45m
Technical Area – trainers' boxes	Yes – 8 Seats	Marked out or coned area opposite to spectators
Floodlighting	Preferred	Preferred
Public Address System	N/A	N/A
Entrances – turnstiles (minimum)	N/A	N/A
Covered Accommodation	N/A	N/A
Dressing Rooms Players	Separate dressing rooms and adequate washing facilities with safe walking distance of 64m maximum	Separate dressing rooms & adequate washing facilities with safe walking distance of 64m maximum
Dressing Rooms – match officials	Separate dressing room	Separate dressing room

### **3G Provision:**

Luton does not have an up-to-date PPS, however demand for 3G pitches has been calculated using the FA 3G demand modelling. The demand for recreational football is higher than that for affiliated clubs and teams. Taking account of the facilities listed in Appendix 3 (excluding the 3G pitch at The Brache) there is a shortfall of one full sized 3G (or equivalent) relative to assessed demand.

Four of the five full sized 3G pitches are evenly distributed across the local area and available for community use. The Brache is Luton Town's training facility and is not available for community use. They are all on the FA 3G pitch Register (meaning they are quality checked and can be used for football match play for insurance purposes). However, the majority of both full and small-sided 3G pitches are located at educational sites which has limitations on daytime access for the community.

The LFFP consultation with clubs revealed common issues with high pricing and the access issues mentioned above. Several clubs suggest that they cannot afford the hire price of certain 3G sites - a factor which restricts their ability to meet both training and match-play demand on non-Football Foundation funded sites.

### **Luton Town FC and Luton Town Community Trust:**

Luton Town FC are the only professional club affiliated in Bedfordshire. The First team are members of the Championship League and they play their home games at Kenilworth Road but have plans approved to move to a new stadium at Power Court in the future. The first team and U18s train at the Brache (next to Venue 360). The site has grass pitches and a 3G training pitch that Crawley Green First team use as their First team pitch. Ely Way had previously been used by the first team and U18s for training but this is now mainly used by the Luton Town Community Trust as their office base where they deliver community initiatives across Luton.

The Academy utilise The Brache when they can for training in most recent seasons, however the youth teams have previously trained at Stockwood Park Academy 3G

pitch and have alternated fixtures between Ely Way and St Christopher School in Letchworth dependent on availability.

### Men's Football (National League System):

The team currently playing in the highest level of the Men's National League System within LBC is Crawley Green FC (Step 5). They currently play their home games at The Brache (Luton Town's 1<sup>st</sup> Team Training Ground 3G Pitch).

Table 3 below is a summary of the number of clubs in Luton that are currently playing in the National League System including the Regional Feeder Leagues:

**Table 3: Luton Borough Council based men's clubs at Steps 3-7**

STEP	COMPETITION	CLUBS	GRADING CATEGORY
3	Southern League Premier Division	N/A	Grade C
4	Southern League Central Division One	N/A	Grade D
5	Spartan South Midlands Football League (Premier Division)	Crawley Green First	Grade E
6	Spartan South Midlands Football League (First Division)	N/A	Grade F
7	Bedfordshire County Football League (Premier Division) & Spartan South Midlands Football League (Second Division)	Crawley Green Reserves 61FC	Grade G

**Table 4: Bedford Borough Council based men's clubs at Steps 3-7**

STEP	COMPETITION	CLUBS	GRADING CATEGORY
3	Southern League Premier Division	N/A	Grade C
4	Southern League Central Division One	Bedford Town Kempston Rovers	Grade D
5	Spartan South Midlands Football League (Premier Division)	N/A	Grade E
6	Spartan South Midlands Football League (First Division)	Bedford FC	Grade F
7	Bedfordshire County Football League (Premier Division) & Spartan South Midlands Football League (Second Division)	Elstow Abbey First AFC Oakley First Marston Shelton Rovers First Queens Park Crescents First Stevington First	Grade G

		Bedford Albion First Riseley Sports First AFC Kempston Town & Bedford College Wilstead First	
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**Table 5: Central Bedfordshire Council based men's clubs at steps 3-7**

STEP	COMPETITION	CLUBS	GRADING CATEGORY
3	Southern League Premier Division	Biggleswade Town	Grade C
4	Southern League Central Division One	AFC Dunstable Barton Rovers Biggleswade FC	Grade D
5	Spartan South Midlands Football League (Premier Division)	Arlesey Town Biggleswade United Dunstable Town Leighton Town Potton United	Grade E
6	Spartan South Midlands Football League (First Division)	Langford Shefford Town & Campton Stotfold Amphill Town	Grade F
7	Bedfordshire County Football League (Premier Division) & Spartan South Midlands Football League (Second Division)	Totternhoe FC Flitwick Town First Biggleswade United U23 Shefford Town & Campton Reserves Biggleswade FC Reserves Caldecote First Cranfield United First	Grade G

**Table 6: Ground Grading Requirements Summary**

Grade Category	F (Step 5)	G (Step 6)	H (Step 7 to Step 6 Promotion Requirements)	Regional Feeder League Entry Requirements (Step 7)
Security required	1-year tenure agreement	1-year tenure agreement	N/A	N/A
Club House	Yes	Yes	Yes	Desirable not compulsory
Car Parking	Yes – Adequate on-site	Yes - Adequate on-site	Yes- Adequate on-site	Yes- Adequate on-site
Pitch Perimeter Barrier	Yes	Yes	Yes	Permanent barrier or roped off
Playing Area	100m x 64m	100m x 64m	100m x 64m	Min 90m x 45m
Technical Area – trainers' boxes	Yes – 8 Seats	Yes – 8 Seats	Yes – 8 Seats	Yes – Portable is adequate
Floodlighting	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Public Address System	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
Entrances – turnstiles (minimum)	1 turnstile	1 turnstile	1 turnstile	N/A
Covered Accommodation	100	50	50	N/A
Seated Accommodation	100	50	N/A	N/A
Spectator Toilets	Yes- 2 urinals and 1 WC for Male & 2 WC's for Female	Yes – minimum 2 WC's	Yes– minimum 2 WC's	Yes – provision to be made
Dressing Rooms- Players	12 sq/m in existing 18sq/m in New Builds 3 shower heads	12 sq/m in existing 18sq/m in New Builds 3 shower heads	12 sq/m in existing 18sq/m in New Builds 3 shower heads	12 sq/m in existing 18sq/m in New Builds 3 shower heads
Dressing Rooms- match officials	4 sq/m in existing 6 sq/m in New Builds 1 shower head	4 sq/m in existing 6 sq/m in New Builds 1 shower head	4 sq/m in existing 6 sq/m in New Builds 1 shower head	4 sq/m in existing 6 sq/m in New Builds 1 shower head

The full ground grading requirements and criteria can be found in full here:

<https://www.thefa.com/get-involved/player/ground-grading>

## **Regional Feeder League (Step 7) Club Sites:**

There are currently only two teams that play in Regional Feeder Leagues:

- Crawley Green Reserves (Bedfordshire County Football League – Premier Division)
- 61 FC (Spartan South Midlands Football League - Second Division)

Appendix 6 shows a breakdown of sites that are used by league allocation. This may indicate where ground share arrangements are made for clubs who are currently within 1 or 2 promotions away from reaching the Bedfordshire County Premier Division (Step 7):

### Division One

- Stopsley United (Lea Manor Recreation Centre)
- Pines (Luton) First (Markyate Recreational Ground)
- Sporting Lewsey Park First (Lewsey Park)

### Division Two

- Sundon Park Rangers First (Lewsey Park)
- CS Rovers First (Lea Manor Recreation Centre)
- Crawley Green U23 (Crawley Green Recreational Ground)

### Division Three

- St Johns (Luton) First (Stockwood Park)
- FC Polonia (Luton) First (Moore Crescent, Houghton Regis)
- Luton Allstars (Kingsbury Park, Dunstable)
- Luton Leagrave AFC First (Leagrave Park)
- Sundon Park Rangers Development (Lewsey Park)

Potential exists for shared hub sites to be provided for Step 7 clubs. Whilst clubs would always prefer a site exclusively for them, it is accepted that a shared policy for such facilities would exist. However, there is a pressing need for investment into the appropriate sites in Luton to be able to meet the criteria in Table 6 to allow the clubs to play at the level in the first place regardless of whether they are promoted to it.

## **Youth Football (Mixed & Boys):**

Youth leagues and teams are allocated pitches for their fixtures on LBC sites and this detail can be seen in Appendix 6. It is evident that clubs with a greater number of teams are trying to find suitable venues that can house their teams. This has resulted in clubs playing outside of Luton and/or hiring non local authority sites.

Luton Celtic Youth have 13 teams that play outside of Luton at Queensbury School in Dunstable and Sacred Heart also base their 7 teams outside of Luton at Offley Sports and Social Club. Luton Allstars have 5 teams use Bishopscote Recreational Ground in addition to other sites across Luton. Previously Foxdell Recreation Ground was used by Luton Allstars for training and matches but again an arrangement may be able to exist with the Foxdell Junior school should hub-sites emerge.

Think Sport Thunder base their 12 teams at Cardinal Newman Catholic School. St Josephs Youth also play fixtures at Cardinal Newman Catholic School and Lea Manor Recreation Ground for their 8 teams.

Raynham Way Recreation Ground is used by Stopsley United for some of their teams whilst the majority use Lothair/Stopsley. Bells Close hasn't been used for football in recent seasons, however this is worth re-visiting as a hub site for mini soccer football given changing room availability. Similarly, Alder Crescent – Solway Road had previously been used and again this venue would be worth assessing if hub-sites are progressed with in Luton.

Most clubs of these size yearn for a 'home' base that can accommodate a sole use club and the positive club feeling and belonging it creates. This is an additional driving force behind looking for a site that can be accessible to all its teams as well as providing better quality playing surfaces.

The above team data could mean an additional 20 pitches a week could be used by Luton based clubs if they returned to LBC sites.

## **Sunday Adult Football:**

The North Home Counties Sunday League currently have 16 teams playing in their competition from the Luton area.

Four of the teams use Stockwood Park, 2 teams use Lewsey Park, 2 teams use Leagrave Park, 2 teams use Crawley Green Recreational Ground, 2 teams use Luton 6<sup>th</sup> Form College, 2 teams use Kingsway Recreation Ground with 1 team each using Newgrounds Playing Fields (Dunstable) and Queensbury Academy (Dunstable). A full breakdown of the teams can be found in Appendix 4.

The Leighton & District Sunday Football League also contain 13 teams from Luton that play in their competition.

Two of the teams use Stockwood Park, 2 teams use Leagrave Park, 2 teams use Icknield Way Recreational Ground with 1 team each using Lewsey Park, Luton 6<sup>th</sup>

Form College, Offley Sports & Social Club, Blundell Road Recreation Ground, Crawley Green Recreational Ground, Barnfield South Academy and Lea Manor Recreation Centre. A full breakdown of the teams can be found in Appendix 5.

### **Step 5 & 6 Club Sites (3G Stadia):**

There is a potential for a shared hub site that will provide for Step 5 and Step 6 clubs in Luton. The following identified locations were assessed as part of a feasibility study that was carried out and completed by The Sports Consultancy in 2018:

1. Stockwood Park (Golf Centre)
2. Lothair Recreation Ground/Stopsley Park
3. Lewsey Park Recreation Ground
4. Ely Way

They were commissioned to carry out the work on behalf of LBC whilst the funding was secured by Active Partnership, Team Beds & Luton.

As and when partnership funding becomes available from developments such as Kent Athletic FC or the New Century Park in the form of s106 contributions, a consultant would need to be employed by LBC to move the project forward. The consultant would be able to include their consultancy fees within the Football Foundation application as part of the total project cost. Part of their work would be to liaise with the local clubs interested in hiring the 3G pitch for midweek winter training.

Luton Town Ladies have previously played their 1<sup>st</sup> team games at Stockwood Park Athletics Track and their development team also play fixtures there. The location may prove to be attractive to host a Step 5/6 stadia given the infrastructure already in place. With further investment into car parking and updated ancillary facilities, further feasibility of the overall site may be appropriate.

Men's clubs that play at Step 5/6 level would be consulted because it would provide a facility for those clubs that require a pitch with such requirements as well as future-proofing any new clubs that get promoted in the future. Such a facility would be available to be used by two Saturday and two Sunday women's teams hence providing better value for money and appropriate facilities to enable Luton clubs to progress. It could also ensure that progression to Step 4 is accommodated in the future by phasing the elements that would be required should any Step 5 clubs get promoted.

### **Toilet Availability:**

The biggest issue and complaint amongst girls' teams and spectators is the lack of toilet facilities. This is both in relation to them being available on site but not opened and/or simply not being available on other sites due to demolition/dilapidated state or no infrastructure on the site.

Toilet blocks are usually included within changing rooms/pavilions and this is part of the issue. There is also concern that costs to open facilities for any teams other than adult football users may incur an extra cost that is passed on to the user.

Creative ways need to be found so that costs are not passed on to the users given the pitch fees in relation to the quality provided. It might be that providing porta loos on sites with no infrastructure, a sweeping rota is put in place by clubs that use certain sites before a cleaner carries out their routine or select sites are focused on so that fewer sites are provided but they have everything that is required to make them fully functioning for users.

It is not acceptable from a public health, safeguarding and welfare perspective that people are using other parts of open space or educational settings as a public toilet. Regardless of whether they aren't provided or not opened, it is one of the most critical areas to address.

This must be reviewed and toilets should be made available at the very least for youth teams that pay to play their games on weekends. Different ways may need to be looked at in order to achieve this e.g. porta loos on sites used for football but without ancillary facilities or access to school and leisure facilities by way of agreement.

## **Changing Rooms:**

Pavilions at Lothair Road, Chaul End and Foxdell Recreation were demolished but games only take place at Lothair Road out of the three sites. The need to provide accessible changing rooms and toilets to cater for football teams in LBC is still a high priority for users. Appendix 1.1 shows the football sites with changing rooms.

Crawley Green Sports & Social Club required improvements to be undertaken to repair their clubhouse roof and a successful grant was awarded in September 2020 to help get the work carried out. This is an example along with Kingsway Recreation Ground and most recently Blundell Road where pavilions have been the responsibility of the clubs to manage.

Priority sites that have been identified can look to attract small grants from the Football Foundation especially if renovations, upgrades and extensions have been included within the Local Football Facility Plan. Local Authorities are eligible to act as an applicant to receive these grants and would require at least 21 years security of tenure to make a bid submission.

Although investment into 'off the field' elements are not a high priority for Football Foundation, individual site needs and priorities as highlighted in such reports will increase the likelihood of investment. Specifically identified sites that will be used by many teams to facilitate affiliated football will provide excellent football outcomes in terms of participation and the experience when playing football.

Collaboration between LBC, football leagues, clubs and sites that are managed and operated by Active Luton may well enhance access arrangements in relation to

changing rooms and toilets across the sites where applicable. Venues such as Inspire Sports Village, Lea Manor Recreation Ground, Stockwood Athletics Track and Lewsey Sports Park could prove beneficial to allowing spectators and players to use the toilets especially at sites where changing rooms aren't in situ or predominantly host mini soccer games. This will also help boost secondary income as a result of hot and cold food and drink sales.

Clubs like to be able to have a base that feels like their 'home' when they play. A high-quality offer can exist where venues are used by several clubs, however each club and the local community is likely to feel a sense of ownership and belonging if the facilities can be fully used.

Clear signage displayed at the site would serve as a warm welcome and the opportunity for hospitality to be offered to visiting teams will enhance the atmosphere and offer that can be provided. Opportunities to provide a joined up approach to utilise other services is likely to be a positive move that can prevent a fragmented experience. If these are maximised across Luton then it may also help to rationalise amenities on certain sites, especially where facilities are disconnected. By working together and with greater promotion, the less likely people are to work in isolation and not enhance their overall offer.

Other examples to overcome some of the issues with accessibility to changing rooms and toilets are in the form of multi-sport collaboration. The pitches near the former Luton Regional Sports Centre could be used for football during the traditional winter season because three cricket pavilions are already in place. The main football pitches closest to Inspire Sports Village no longer have changing rooms after they were demolished and so this could help provide further enhancement for a Step 7 option for example.

### **Kitchen Facilities:**

The ability for clubs to provide hospitality to their opponents whilst making crucial secondary income through using kitchen serveries to sell hot and cold food and drink will help the long-term sustainability of the clubs. Where these facilities exist and clubs' express interest to use them, LBC could ensure the option is available for clubs to share on dual-sites on certain days.

### **Grass Pitch Quality and Goalposts:**

In 2017-18 season, the Grounds Management Association assigned Regional Pitch Advisor's to support grounds staff and volunteers to help improve pitch quality across the East region.

LBC had assessments of most of the football and cricket sites as part of the support provided within the last 3 years. There are many dual sites that are used for football in the winter and cricket in the summer, therefore an opportunity exists for investment into specific sites that will enhance pitch quality for both sports.

Football Foundation do encourage local authorities to apply for funding towards the replacement of non-compliant goalposts or for the purchase of new goalposts. The offer of 75% funding towards a pair of goalposts is a specific drive to encourage the replacement without cost being a prohibitive factor. As part of the 75% funding, a maximum grant amount applies towards the following goalposts:

- £900 per set of 5v5 and 7v7 goalposts\*
- £1200 per set of 9v9 and 11v11 goalposts\*
- £600 per set of futsal goalposts\*

\*If more expensive goalposts are chosen, it will require the applicant to pay the difference above and beyond the maximum grant per set of goalposts above.

Theoretically and in a worst-case example, every single 11v11 and 9v9 goalpost (£49,200 total cost based on the most expensive goalpost grant above) could be replaced on the current LBC sites as listed in Appendix 1 if 25% (£12,300) of the cost is provided by LBC to meet the £36,900 grant from the Football Foundation.

Based on the most expensive 11v11 goalposts the grants would cover, a phased approach over a 2-3 year period could result in £21,600 of goalpost investment from the Football Foundation so long as the 25% (£7200) was match funded by LBC.

Ultimately the replacement of non-compliant goalposts could be achieved across all formats of the game mentioned in Appendix 1 with a strategic approach to the sites that are most in need and most used. This is also further evidence to suggest a rationalisation approach to hub-sites for 11v11, Junior, 9v9, 7v7 and 5v5 football pitches is looked at in greater detail.

The findings for football had shown that pitch quality was poor across the sites and 3 areas (Lewsey, Lothair and Crawley Green) that were assessed, required extra maintenance and replacement of non-compliant goalposts.

Until such time that a PPS is carried out, it can be assumed that goalpost conditions will be the same as the pitch conditions as outlined in the Local Football Facility Plan. Therefore, a strong justification exists to replace goalposts across the sites. This will be a priority that could be rationed with specific hub sites that cater for the various formats of football played in Luton.

In August 2018, Crawley Green Sports & Social Club took on the advice and purchased portable goalposts for one of the 11v11 pitches that hosts Crawley Green Reserves. Sundon Park Rangers FC, Think Sport Thunder FC and St Joseph's Youth FC were also successful in securing new goalposts most recently in 2020.

In March 2020, Crawley Green Youth took on the advice for improved pitch quality by applying for a grant to increase the maintenance on the site. The club have committed to a 10-year service level agreement as part of the Enhanced Grass Pitch Maintenance Fund. The club will be funded on a sliding scale for the number of pitches they have requested support to improve. The club receive 100% funding in Years 1 and 2, 66% in Years 3 and 4 and 33% in Years 5 and 6. The emphasis is on

the club making the site maintenance sustainable over the 10-year period of the conditions and beyond. Contributions must be made from Year 3 onwards as the funding is reduced. Only 9 clubs across Bedfordshire applied and all were successful with this grant to improve pitch quality.

In the one-year period since funding was awarded, the pitches on the Crawley Green site have improved from 'poor' to 'basic' on the pitch quality standard despite the disruption caused by the covid-19 pandemic. This is one level below the 'good' standard that The FA expect such investment to achieve by the end of the funding cycle.

Most recently, Stopsley United have approached LBC to look at investing some of their club funds to provide extra maintenance procedures on the pitches at Lothair/Stopsley to improve the quality.

## **Funding Opportunities/Future Investment:**

Team Beds & Luton provide support on funding bids, projects and applications.

Funding and grants relevant to wider applications where multi-sport or wider community benefit will be evident, can be found here:

<https://www.teambedsandluton.co.uk/funding-finder>

Sport England can also be useful in providing some additional partnership funding so long as it doesn't involve sole football use. This is largely because Sport England provide funding through the Football Foundation.

Nonetheless, projects involving football, cricket and Gaelic football may benefit from such funds especially where a focus on physical activity and well-being is at the forefront of the project. Information on the current fund available can be found here:

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/our-funds>

## **Summary:**

The report covers a wide range of areas in relation to facilities in Luton. Access to existing toilets and changing rooms are crucial. Solutions need to be found to improve access to toilets for youth teams (male and female) and spectators on a match day without incurring additional costs is a priority.

For adult football club hirers in the borough, access to the changing facilities are paramount to ensure that league rules are met. The individual club requirements are likely to be best and efficiently achieved through specific hub sites.

The hub sites would need to have a specific focus on pitch quality improvement and accessibility in the three areas of local football below:

- Youth Football including 5v5, 7v7, 9v9 and 11v11 (Mixed, Boys & Girls)
- Adult (Male & Female)
- National League System (Male & Female)

For clubs that want to maintain their Step 7 football status and aspire to progress in the future, specific Step 7 sites are required to provide access to appropriate changing rooms/pavilions for ground grading requirements.

A Step 5/6 stadia (3G or grass surface) is likely to be a longer-term ambition. This is partly due to the nature of funding required and the source where most of the partnership funding is likely to be released from.

A 3G surface is preferred for economic reasons as it means that a Step 5/6 men's team and Tier 3-7 women's team could ground share on alternate days of the weekend without additional pressure on the grass and risk of postponements.

Step 7 teams with aspirations of progressing to Step 6 football could ground share on a Saturday afternoon in the same way that women's teams who want to progress from Tier 7 upwards on a Sunday can do so whilst yielding 4 teams who have the opportunity to do so in the one stadium. The delivery of this project will also provide additional opportunities and greater capacity in the long-term.

Floodlit pitch hire between Monday and Friday evenings will be for local teams to hire out for training purposes and will satisfy the current deficit of one full-size pitch as detailed in the LFFP.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

The following sites are currently made available (20-21 season) by Luton Borough Council for affiliated football teams to hire:

Outdoor Football Pitch Breakdown  
As at: 16/02/2021

SITES & WARDS	CHANGING AND TOILETS	FOOTBALL PITCHES				
		ADULT/ SENIOR	JUNIOR	9V9	MINI 7V7	MINI 5V5
BLUNDELL SAINTS	YES <i>Managed by Luton United FC</i>	1	1	1 Portable posts	1	
CRAWLEY GREEN PUTTERIDGE	YES <i>Managed by Crawley Green Sports &amp; Social Club</i>	2	1		2	1
FOXDELL DALLOW <small>NO FOOTBALL AT SITE SEASON 2020/21</small>	NO				-2	-1
ICKNIELD LIMBURY	YES	3		1 Fixed Posts		
KINGSWAY DALLOW	YES <i>Managed by 61FC</i>	1				
LANCASTER ICKNIELD	YES <i>Managed by Luton Town Ladies FC</i>	1		1 Portable post	1	1
LEAGRAVE SUNDON	YES	6	1		1	
LEA MANOR BRAMINGHAM	NO	1 Also marked for school use.		2		
LEWSEY LEWSEY	YES	4	1			1
LOTHAIR ROAD STOPSLEY	NO		2	4 1x Fixed 3x Portable	1	1
LUTON REGIONAL STOPSLEY	NO		1	1	2	1
RAYNHAM WAY WIGMORE	NO				1	1
STOCKWOOD FARLEY	YES	5				

Total Number per pitch type/size	24	7	10	9	6
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## Appendix 1.1

The following sites are used for football and contain changing rooms:

<b>Address of Pavilion</b>	<b>Number of Team Changing Rooms</b>	<b>Number of Match Official Changing Rooms</b>
Leagrave - Sundon Park Road, Luton, LU3 3AA	4	1
Stockwood - Farley Hill Road, Luton, LU1 5NU	6	1
Icknield - Icknield Way, Luton, LU3 2JS	5	1
Lancaster- Lancaster Avenue, Luton, LU2 7AD	2	0
Blundell - Blundell Road, Luton, LU3 1SG	2	0
Kingsway - Beverley Road, Luton, LU4 8EU	2	1
Lewsey - Pastures Way, Luton, LU4 0PF	8	1
Crawley Green -Crawley Green Road, Luton, LU2 9AG	6	2

## **Appendix 2**

Breakdown of venues where existing girls and women's teams play in Luton:

**Luton Town Ladies Development/Reserves-** Stockwood Park Academy,  
Rotheram Avenue, Luton, LU1 5PP

**Luton Celtic Youth U18's-** Stockwood Park Athletics Centre, Farley Hill, Luton, LU1  
4BH

**Luton Allstars Lionesses U16's-** Lewsey Park, Pastures Way, Luton, LU4 0PF

**Luton Town Ladies U16's-** Lancaster Avenue Recreation Ground (11v11)  
Lancaster Avenue, Luton, LU2 7AD

**Luton Allstars Lionesses U16's-** Luton Road Recreation Ground, Luton Road,  
Dunstable, LU5 4LW

**Luton Town Ladies U8-** Lancaster Avenue Recreation Ground (5v5). Lancaster  
Avenue, Luton, LU2 7AD

**Luton Town Ladies U9-** Lancaster Avenue Recreation Ground (5v5), Lancaster  
Avenue, Luton, LU2 7AD

**Luton Celtic Youth U10 Hatters-** Queensbury Academy (7v7), Langdale Road,  
Dunstable, LU6 3BU

**Luton Celtic Youth U10 Rebels-** Queensbury Academy (7v7), Langdale Road,  
Dunstable, LU6 3BU

**Luton Town Ladies U11-** Lancaster Avenue Recreation Ground (7v7), Lancaster  
Avenue, Luton, LU2 7AD

**Stopsley United Youth U11 Pink Sox-** Raynham Way Recreation Ground (7v7),  
Raynham Way, Luton, LU2 9SH

**Luton Town Ladies U12-** Lancaster Avenue Recreation Ground (9v9), Lancaster  
Avenue, Luton, LU2 7AD

**Luton Allstars U13-** Newton Recreation Ground (9v9 #1), Skimpot Road,  
Dunstable, LU5 4JU

**Luton Celtic Youth U13 Clovers** -Queensbury Academy (9v9), Langdale Road,  
Dunstable, LU6 3BU

**Luton Celtic Youth U13 Thistles-** Queensbury Academy (9v9), Langdale Road,  
Dunstable, LU6 3BU

**Luton Town Ladies U14** -Lancaster Avenue Recreation Ground (11v11 J),  
Lancaster Avenue, Luton, LU2 7AD

**Wildcat Centres for 5-11-year-old girls**

Trishan Patel Coaching - Icknield Primary School, LU3 2JB

Venue 360 - Venue 360, LU1 3JH

Crawley Green Youth FC - Ashcroft High School, LU2 9AG

Luton United FC - River Bank Primary School, LU3 1ES

Luton Allstars FC - Lea Manor Recreation Centre, LU3 3TL

Luton Celtic Youth - Queensbury Academy, LU6 3BU

Think Sport Thunder – PlayFootball Luton, St. Thomas's Road, Luton, LU2 7UX

### **Appendix 3**

Existing full-sized (11 v 11) 3G pitches in Luton are located at:

- Ashcroft High School
- Chalk Hills Academy
- Stockwood Park Academy
- Lea Manor Recreation Centre
- Luton Town (The Brache)

There are also currently five small-sided 3G pitches in Luton:

- Lealands High School (one 60x40)
- Denbigh High School (one 60x40)
- PlayFootball.Net (four 5v5 and one 60x40)
- Beech Hill Primary (one 5v5)
- Chaul End Community Centre and The Dallow Centre are not official sized pitches, however the small 3G pitches are reportedly used heavily for structured recreational football.

## Appendix 4

Breakdown of Luton clubs playing in the North Home Counties Sunday Football League according to venue:

<b>Team</b>	<b>Home Pitch</b>
AC Cadoza First	Lewsey Park
Club Lewsey Development	Lewsey Park
Luton Old Boys First	Leagrave Park (Sundon Park)
Globe (Luton) First	Stockwood Park
Brim & Crown (Luton) First	Kingsway Recreation Ground
Wheelwright Arms (Luton) First	Newgrounds Playing Fields (Dunstable)
Luton Celtic First	Stockwood Park
St Josephs Reserves	Luton Sixth Form College
Solano First	Stockwood Park
Crawley Green (Sunday) Reserves	Crawley Green Recreational Ground
Crawley Green (Sunday) 'A'	Crawley Green Recreational Ground
CP Hatters First	Leagrave Park (Sundon Park)
Flint United First	Kingsway Recreation Ground
Luton Celtic Youth Adults	Queensbury Academy (Dunstable)
Luton Athletic First	Luton Sixth Form College
Tunisian Community First	Stockwood Park

## **Appendix 5**

Breakdown of Luton clubs playing in the Leighton & District Sunday Football League according to venue:

<b>Team</b>	<b>Home Pitch</b>
St Josephs First	Luton Sixth Form College
Club Lewsey First	Lewsey Park
Crawley Green (Sunday) First	Crawley Green Recreational Ground
Broadwalk United First	Leagrave Park (Sundon Park)
Ebony First	Stockwood Park
Brim & Crown Athletic First	Kingsway Recreation Ground
Real Luton First	Icknield Way Recreational Ground
Stopsley United Sunday	Lea Manor Recreation Centre
M Towler Services United First	Barnfield South Academy
Luton Phoenix First	Stockwood Park
Sacred Heart Youth Lions	Offley Sports & Social Club
Luton United Adult	Blundell Road Recreation Ground
Hatters United First	Icknield Way Recreational Ground

## **Appendix 6**

Please see a separate attachment titled **Fixtures List 2020-2021 (003)pdf**. This was provided by Luton Borough Council that shows a breakdown of the league(s) and team(s) that are allocated Luton Borough Council pitches for the 20-21 season.