



THURROCK COUNCIL

ACTIVE PLACE STRATEGY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Integrity, Innovation, Inspiration

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INTRODUCTION

Thurrock Council in its preparation of a new Local Plan for Thurrock commissioned a suite of studies to provide an up to date evidence base and to help inform future decision-making processes. The Local Plan, once adopted, will replace the currently adopted 'Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development' (Core Strategy) and will become the statutory planning document for Thurrock. The new Local Plan will identify where future development in Thurrock will be located and set out the policies which will be used to assess future planning applications. It will also identify specific sites for development for a wide range of uses, including open spaces, indoor and outdoor sports facilities.

Each study is intended to help inform and guide decision making processes relevant to that element and should help inform the requirements for such forms of provision with regard to future housing and population growth.

The documents developed include the following:

- ◀ Open Space and Play areas study
- ◀ Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy
- ◀ Playing Pitch (and outdoor sport) Strategy
- ◀ Active Travel Strategy

The key focus for the documents is that the initial three studies (open spaces, indoor sports facilities and playing pitch strategies) provide the planning related evidence base across Thurrock and identify a clear strategy to develop improved facilities for residents. The Active Travel Strategy seeks to ensure that Thurrock is connected in such a way that residents can be active in their daily lives and to ensure that local communities are connected with key physical activity and cultural destinations.

In delivering each of the studies KKP has followed the relevant national guidance and methodology which ensures that Thurrock has a robust evidence base which informs future planning policy and wider investment decisions.

The documents have been developed within the context of the Council's Corporate Plan vision and objectives: *'Thurrock: a place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish'*.

- ◀ Create a great place for learning and opportunity
- ◀ Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity
- ◀ Build pride, responsibility and respect
- ◀ Improve health and well-being
- ◀ Promote and protect our clean and green environment

A key consideration for the Council, its partners and stakeholders is to deliver on its vision for health and wellbeing: *'Add years to life and life to years'*. Improved infrastructure is required to enable residents to be physically active and to enable partners to achieve the following five goals:

- ◀ Opportunity for all
- ◀ Healthier environments
- ◀ Healthier for longer
- ◀ Quality care centred around the person
- ◀ Better emotional health and wellbeing

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Collaborative approach

Although Thurrock Council has taken the lead in developing the above strategic documents as part of its Local Plan evidence base, it is recognised that it alone is not responsible for delivering all of the recommendations and actions. The Council requires a collaborative approach with its national, regional and local stakeholders to deliver the key recommendations and health and wellbeing outcomes that the documents identify.

The strategies do not apportion direct responsibility for specific recommendations and actions to single organisations. In some instances these will be Council led but supported by external stakeholders, whereas in others they will be led by local clubs and organisations in partnership with their respective national governing bodies of sport and where the Council has no specific role to play.

A key aspect of the combined Active Place Strategy is to guide infrastructure developers in understanding the wider needs and opportunities across Thurrock when developing new housing and infrastructure projects. This seeks to ensure that as much as possible, a holistic approach to delivering health and wellbeing outcomes is achieved from new development in the Borough.

National strategic context

Revised National Planning Policy Framework 2018

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out planning policies for England. It details how these changes are expected to be applied to the planning system. It also provides a framework for local people and their councils to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities.

It states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It identifies the need to focus on three themes of economic, social, environmentally sustainable development.

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 states that local plans should meet objectively assessed needs. It is clear about sport's role delivering sustainable communities through promoting health and well-being. Sport England, working within the provisions of the NPPF, wishes to see local planning policy protect, enhance and provide for sports facilities based on robust and up-to-date assessments of need, as well as helping to realise the wider benefits that participation in sport can bring.

The *promoting healthy communities* theme identifies that planning policies should be based on robust, up-to-date assessment of need for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific needs, quantitative/qualitative deficiencies and surpluses should be identified and used to inform provision requirements in an area.

Sporting Future: A new strategy for an active nation

The Government published its strategy for sport in December 2015. This strategy confirms the recognition and understanding that sport makes a positive difference through broader means and that it will help the sector to deliver five simple but fundamental outcomes: physical health, mental health, individual development, social and community development

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and economic development. In order to measure its success in producing outputs which accord with these aims it has also adopted a series of 23 performance indicators under nine key headings, as follows:

- ◀ More people taking part in sport and physical activity.
- ◀ More people volunteering in sport.
- ◀ More people experiencing live sport.
- ◀ Maximising international sporting success.
- ◀ Maximising domestic sporting success.
- ◀ Maximising the impact of Major Events.
- ◀ A more productive sport sector.
- ◀ A more financially and organisationally sustainable sport sector.
- ◀ A more responsible sport sector.

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Sport England: Towards an Active Nation

Sport England's response to the Government's strategy was to develop Towards an Active Nation. Sport England has identified 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

It is clear that increasing participation in sport and physical activity and the health and wellbeing benefits that this delivers is the key driver for Thurrock Council and its partners. This is particularly important in the context of getting the inactive to become active and ensuring that interventions are targeted at under-represented groups.

Sport England is in the process of reviewing its Active Nation Strategy (2016-2021). It is undertaking an extensive consultation process to understand stakeholder views and to gain input into the strategy development. Initial engagement on the strategy indicates that a key focus will be to build on existing principles and to ensure that movement and physical activity in all their forms are key to future delivery.

The big issues that consultees suggest Sport England should play a role in are:

- ◀ Tackling inequalities – for a long time, it's been evident that the way sport and activity experiences are designed and delivered typically meets the needs of some people more than others. Partners are clear that some people need more support to get active and stay active than others, and that it will take a determined and co-ordinated effort to tackle inequalities in sport and physical activity.
- ◀ Climate emergency – partners have told us that this represents some tangible threats, as well as opportunities to be part of the solution.
- ◀ Connecting with health and wellbeing – a sense of unlocked potential, especially around social prescribing into sport and activity.
- ◀ Digital and data – concern that sport and leisure has fallen behind other sectors in terms of the digital experience and needs to catch up.
- ◀ Workforce – how we can sustain, grow, develop and diversify the professional workforce and volunteers.
- ◀ Active environments – creating the spaces and places for people to be more active and planning to make it more joined-up for people.
- ◀ Diminishing local resources and capacity – fears about ongoing reductions in local government spending on activity, sport and leisure. A sense that places are losing capacity and capability to make strategic long-term decisions.
- ◀ School experiences – often the first and most equal opportunities that children and young people have access to - which shape their relationship with movement for the rest of their lives – are felt to be low priority for many schools.

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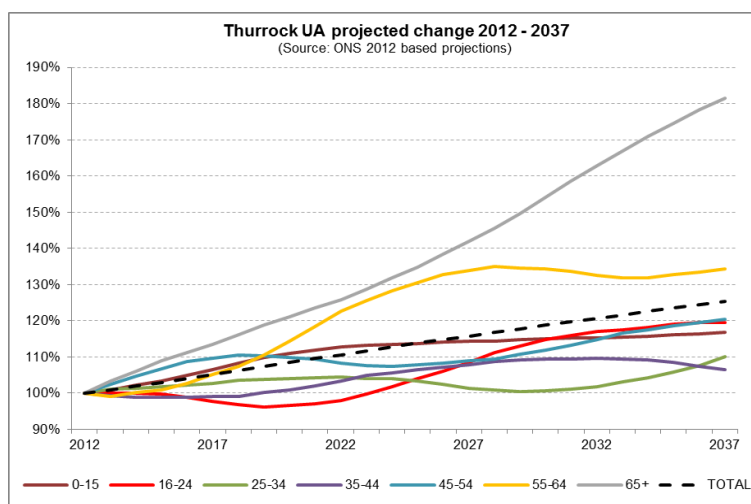
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About Thurrock

Demographics and socio-economics

Thurrock has a population of 168,428 (2016 estimate) which is anticipated to increase by 22.9% (30,000) to 2037. The current population is younger than the East Region average; however, it is the change to the population profile in the future that is a key consideration.

Figure 1: Projected population change to 2037



Thurrock's changing population will have implications for the Council and partners in delivery of physical activity opportunities and health and wellbeing programmes. The key changes include 38% more 55-64 year olds, 55% more 65+ year olds and 27% more 16-24 year olds.

Thurrock's ethnic composition closely reflects that of England, with circa 14% of the population belonging to BME groups.

In addition to this, the Tilbury and South Ockendon areas are popular with traditional travelling and show communities.

Life expectancy in Thurrock is similar to the national figure (males 79.3 compared to 79.6 for England and females 82.6 compared to 83.2¹). However, for those living in the most deprived areas of the Authority, life expectancy is 9.3 years lower for men and 7.4 years lower for women, whilst 6,590 children live in absolute poverty. Source: PHE Thurrock Health Profile August 2019

Adult and child rates for the overweight or obese are above national and regional levels. The adult obesity rate is c.8% above the national average. In common with other areas, obesity rates increase significantly between the ages of 4 and 11. In Thurrock, 10.8% are obese in their Reception Year at school and 11.8% are overweight. By Year 6 this rises to one quarter (25.6%) obese and 13.9 overweight.

Sport England's Active People Survey consistently demonstrates that adults from higher socio-economic groups are more likely to take part in sport than the converse. Currently the most popular sports in Thurrock are walking (for leisure), structured programme classes, athletics, fitness and cycling. Athletics and fitness are the only activities which perform better than national averages (and this is only slight). Walking for leisure, for example, is significantly below that of regional and national averages.

There is a strong relationship between physical inactivity and health and wellbeing challenges in Thurrock. Thurrock has high numbers of residents with long term conditions

¹ Office of National Statistics: Life Expectancy at Birth by local areas in the United Kingdom, 2013.

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which could be prevented or managed more effectively by physical activity interventions. Therefore, it is important for residents to be able to access high quality local places and environments to play sport and be physically active and have a positive experience which will increase the likelihood that they participate regularly.

Housing and infrastructure

The Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan that will set out the amount and spatial distribution of new development across the Borough. The Council's approach to growth is that it should be community-driven, infrastructure-led and make a key contribution to high quality place making. The need to plan for future housing and economic provision due to population growth and the impact of wider socio-economic and environmental factors means that Thurrock will change considerably over the next 20-30 years. Having an up-to-date Development Plan is a key component in ensuring that the borough grows in a sustainable way with the necessary supporting infrastructure in place.

Following a successful bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for support, the Council were chosen as one of two Local Authorities to pilot the potential use of Design Charrettes as a means helping local communities influence the future planning and development of their area and to ensure the delivery of better standards of design and quality of place. Funded by MHCLG, the Princes Foundation was commissioned to assist the Council in facilitating a stakeholder engagement process and masterplan visioning exercise for Aveley to explore how any new growth could potentially act as the catalyst for the regeneration of the village centre and its surrounding communities.

Following the Aveley Design Charrette, the Council is now set to roll out a series of Design Charrettes across the Borough. The outcome of the Charrettes process will include a vision and set of principles for each location that will guide the future development of the area and, in doing so, help inform the preparation of more formal place-making planning policy documents, including the Local Plan and any associated Inset Plans, Master Plans or Development Frameworks.

This process will also help identify the necessary infrastructure improvements (including leisure facilities) required to support the delivery of the place-making strategy, and by involving key stakeholders and the community in the planning and design of their community, the charrettes approach can help to build confidence and collective enthusiasm for the vision and its delivery and implementation. It should be noted that the Council sees facilities brought about largely by the private sector as part of new development proposals via the Local Plan.

It is also important to recognise that strategic growth takes time but if done properly and in a considered way, it can bring about significant benefits to local communities. This strategy will help inform and shape the future of the borough in terms of the built environment and also improve lifestyle choices, helping to reduce obesity and associated health issues in the borough.

APPROACH

Open space study

Methodology

The methodology used in the open space assessment is based on that originally set out in Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) Companion Guide; Assessing Needs and Opportunities published in September 2002. Whilst PPG17 has been replaced by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), it is still recognised as best practice providing a sound methodology.

This study is intended to assist in the Council in preparing a new 'Local Plan'. Given the potential scale of growth, and the implications this may have on existing provision, it is important for the Council to have clarity about existing levels of open space and what types of provision should be delivered via the strategic growth proposed (whether through onsite or offsite contributions).

All open space sites (including provision for children and young people) have been identified, mapped and assessed to evaluate their value and quality. Only sites publicly accessible are included (i.e. private sites or land, which people cannot access, are not included). Each site is classified based on its primary open space purpose, so that each type of space is counted only once. The audit, and the report, utilise the following typologies in accordance with best practice:

1. Parks and gardens
2. Natural and semi-natural greenspace
3. Amenity greenspace
4. Provision for children and young people
5. Allotments
6. Cemeteries/churchyards
7. Civic space

The provision of formal outdoor sports is contained within the associated PPS. The amount and quality of such provision is not included in the total figures for open space (as a different methodology is prescribed).

Consultation

The results of the consultation undertaken as part of the previous open space review in 2016 are utilised. An on-line and paper survey was conducted as a key element of the assessment. The survey ran for a 9 week period and was publicised through the Council website, in public buildings and through contacts of the project's steering group. It invited members of the public to:

'Tell us about the open spaces that you visit and outdoor recreational facilities you use in Thurrock; what you think of their quality and accessibility, how often you use them and what improvements could be made'.

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The survey secured the views of 207 respondents, with a general interest in the provision of open spaces in Thurrock. In addition to the survey, face-to-face meetings were undertaken with key council officers and community groups (e.g. Friends of groups, community forums) as well as external stakeholders to help inform opinions towards open space provision. This ensures a robust approach to the assessment of need in the area.

Playing pitch strategy

Sport England's guidance details a stepped approach to developing a PPS. These steps were followed throughout the process and are separated into five distinct stages:

- ◀ Stage A: Prepare and tailor the approach
- ◀ Stage B: Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision
- ◀ Stage C: Assess the supply and demand information and views
- ◀ Stage D: Develop the strategy
- ◀ Stage E: Deliver the strategy and keep it robust and up to date

The following outdoor sports facilities were included within the PPS:

- ◀ Football pitches
- ◀ Hockey pitches
- ◀ Bowling greens
- ◀ Cricket squares
- ◀ Tennis courts
- ◀ Netball courts
- ◀ Rugby union pitches
- ◀ Third generation turf (3G)
- ◀ Athletics tracks

NB. Golf was not included within the scope of the study. Four courses in Thurrock are privately operated with the only public course being Belhus.

The quality of provision was determined via a combination of non-technical assessments (determined by NGBs) and consultation with stakeholders. This not only relates to the pitch itself but also to the ancillary facilities.

In addition, a variety of consultation methods were used to collate demand information about leagues, clubs, county associations and national/regional governing bodies of sport. Response rates exceeded Sport England's guidance and ensures that Thurrock has a robust evidence base:

Sport	Total number	Number responding	Response rate	Methods of consultation
Football clubs	69	41	59%	Face to face, Online Survey
Football teams	262	214	82%	
Cricket clubs	4	4	100%	Face to face
Rugby union clubs	4	4	100%	Online survey
Hockey clubs	1	1	100%	Telephone consultation
Tennis clubs	2	2	100%	Online survey
Bowls clubs	12	8	67%	Online survey, postal survey
Athletics clubs	1	1	100%	Telephone consultation
Colleges	1	1	100%	Face to face
Secondary schools	11	11	100%	Face to face
Primary schools	39	22	56%	Online survey

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Indoor and built sports facilities

Sport England's ANOG guidance (Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide for Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities) details a stepped approach to developing this study. These steps were followed throughout the process and are separated into four distinct stages:

- ◀ Stage A - Prepare and tailor the approach
- ◀ Stage B - Gather information and views on the supply of and demand for provision
- ◀ Stage C - Assessment, bringing the information together
- ◀ Stage D - Application of the assessment and development of the Strategy

The following indoor and built sports facilities were included within the study:

- ◀ Sports halls
- ◀ Squash courts
- ◀ Gymnastics
- ◀ Ice sports
- ◀ Swimming pools
- ◀ Indoor bowls
- ◀ Sports arenas (Athletics)
- ◀ Community halls
- ◀ Health and fitness
- ◀ Indoor tennis
- ◀ Cycling

The approach to delivering the study included an assessment of the following key elements:

- ◀ Quantity of individual sports facilities across Thurrock.
- ◀ Quality assessment of each facility and activity area.
- ◀ Accessibility of each facility to the local community (e.g. how far they need to travel).
- ◀ Availability of facilities for community use.

In addition to the above KKP also undertook face to face consultation with a range of local and regional stakeholders including health partners, operators, NGBs, clubs and a wide range of Council officers. Sport England was a key partner in the delivery of all elements of the study and contributed significantly to the overall scrutiny of the approach.

Active Travel

An Active Travel Strategy is a strategic document focusing on the supply and use of an active travel network, in specific relation to walking and cycling. The active travel network refers to a system of on-road and off-road cycle routes, footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic. The Active Travel Strategy can therefore also act as a bridge linking the Active Places documents together in order to help provide a strategic and connected network of appropriate leisure and recreational facilities across Thurrock.

It is widely recognised that walking and cycling are beneficial in terms of our physical and mental health. Therefore, encouraging more journeys through active travel (e.g. commutes to work, school etc) will help to improve health, quality of life and the environment. It will also benefit economically, helping to support local economies and reduce public expenditure surrounding issues of poor health.

It will also ensure the Council is well placed to maximise any opportunities for funding in relation to active travel as funding opportunities are often with short notice. It will therefore help to identify clear priorities for the future ensuring the Council can capitalise on any forthcoming opportunities.

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In 2017 the Government published its first Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, which sets out the Government’s ambition to make walking and cycling the natural choices for shorter journeys or as part of longer journeys.

The Department for Transport offers guidance on the recommended approach to be taken when planning for cycling and walking as part of its technical guidance for local authorities set out in its *Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans* (LCWIP). A range of tools and supporting guidance is provided to ensure robust plans and schemes are in place. The LCWIP recommends a six-step process as set out in the table below.

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Process

Step	Name	Description
1	Determining Scope	Establish the geographical extent of the LCWIP, and arrangements for governing and preparing the plan.
2	Gathering Information	Identify existing patterns of walking and cycling and potential new journeys. Review existing conditions and identify barriers to cycling and walking. Review related transport and land use policies and programmes
3	Network Planning for Cycling	Identify origin and destination points and cycle flows. Convert flows into a network of routes and determine the type of improvements required
4	Network Planning for Walking	Identify key trip generators, core walking zones and routes, audit existing provision and determine the type of improvements required
5	Prioritising Improvements	Prioritise improvements to develop a phased programme for future investment
6	Integration & Application	Integrate outputs into local planning and transport policies, strategies, and delivery plans

The focus for Thurrock is on active travel to growth areas and key ‘destinations’. This is undertaken in context of the links to key destinations, anticipated growth areas and ability to increase walking and cycling to develop a set of priorities for active travel.

A number of nationally recognised methods and tools are used to do this including:

- ◀ Mesh density
- ◀ Propensity to Cycle Toolkit
- ◀ Key destinations/ trip generators

Active travel is relatively new and Thurrock is somewhat ahead of the curve in this respect, but in considering this approach specific reference is made to the Active Design principles which Sport England has identified. Therefore, it is not sufficient just to have destinations connected, those connections need to be of high quality and well designed to ensure that residents feel safe and secure using them throughout the full year.

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KEY FINDINGS

Open space study

There is a total of over 1,387 hectares of open space in Thurrock. The largest contributors to provision are natural and semi-natural greenspace (1,064 hectares) and amenity greenspace (194 hectares); accounting for 77% and 14% respectively.

Open space typology	Number of sites	Total amount (hectares) ²	Hectares per 1,000 population
Allotments	26	29	0.17
Amenity greenspace	104	194	1.13
Cemeteries/churchyards	11	20	n/a
Civic space	5	3	n/a
Natural & semi-natural greenspace	38	1,064	2.23
Park and gardens	24	68	0.40
Provision for children & young people	96	8	0.05
TOTAL	304	1,387	-

For open spaces, provision standards are established and used to determine deficiencies and surpluses. These are set in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.

Of assessed open space sites, the quality of over half of provision (56%) rates above the thresholds set for quality. However, 44% of sites are of a lower quality which is significant and slightly higher than in comparison to other similar studies undertaken by KKP.

It is understandable for amenity greenspace to have fewer sites scoring above the quality threshold due to the wider range and forms of provision of this type, often with no features, poor appearance or maintenance.

However, Thurrock also has significantly mixed results for play and parks and gardens which are more relevant to local residents. In most instances this is due to the low quality maintenance, general appearance, poor pathways and a lack of ancillary facilities. In relation to play facilities over 40% of facilities in some analysis areas are below the threshold for quality which tends to reflect the poorer condition or limited range of equipment available at a site

However, the majority of all open spaces (91%) are assessed as being above the threshold for value. This reflects the importance of open space provision and its role offering social, environmental and health benefits.

The public consultation reinforced these findings with key deterrents to using open spaces being the standard of the facility, personal safety, toilets and car parking and lack of information. Furthermore, the key site characteristics most important to respondents of a good quality site were maintenance and cleanliness.

² Rounded to the nearest whole number

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In summary, 26% of respondents are very satisfied with the amount of space for local parks yet only 12% are very satisfied with the quality of that space. Similarly, only 7% of people are very dissatisfied with the amount and availability of outdoor networks but 15% are very dissatisfied with the quality of them.

Therefore, Thurrock has a key challenge in relation to the amount and quality of open space across the area and the application of the provision standards identifies that there are deficiencies and shortfalls in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility. In some cases, owing to the limited value the open space will provide, there will clearly be merit in exploring options for development. However, the key focus for the Council is to maintain current open space standards wherever possible and on improving existing open space for more multi-purpose outcomes.

Playing pitch strategy

The key findings from the assessment of playing pitches across Thurrock is summarised as follows:

Football

- ◀ There is a total of 143 football pitches across 47 sites, 113 pitches available, at some level, for community use across 33 sites.
- ◀ Of the pitches available for community use, 10 are assessed as good quality, 52 as standard quality and 51 as poor quality.
- ◀ Basic maintenance regimes are a key factor for pitches assessed as poor or standard quality, particularly at council and school sites.
- ◀ The overall assessment of changing facilities rated 32% as good quality, 32% as standard quality and 36% as poor quality.
- ◀ The demolition of the changing facilities at Blackshots Recreation Ground is a significant problem as it means the site can no longer be used for adult matches.
- ◀ A total of 262 teams consisting of 67 men's, four women's, 106 youth boys', 13 youth girls' and 72 mini teams are recognised as playing within Thurrock across 69 clubs.
- ◀ Security of tenure is a key issue for many clubs
- ◀ Current shortfalls are evident across the majority pitch types, except for mini 5v5 pitches, and are particularly significant for adult pitches (32.5 match sessions).
- ◀ Future demand results in a shortfall of mini 5v5 pitches and increased shortfalls of all other pitch types.

3G pitches

- ◀ There are three full size 3G pitches (at Aveley Football Club, St Clere's School and Lakeside Sports Ground) within Thurrock, all of which are available to the community, floodlit and approved for competitive matches.
- ◀ In addition, there are four smaller sized 3G pitches, with a pitch at Harris Academy Riverside particularly important given its larger size.
- ◀ All full size 3G pitches are rated as good quality as all three have been provided or refurbished fairly recently.
- ◀ All of the 3G pitches are used at or close to capacity, not only for affiliated activity but also for recreational football and small-sided commercial leagues.
- ◀ For football, there is a current shortfall of four full size 3G pitches and a future shortfall of five.

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- ◀ In addition, given the shortfalls identified on grass rugby pitches, evidence suggests that World Rugby compliant provision would be of benefit.

Cricket

- ◀ There are 11 grass wicket squares in Thurrock, all of which are available for community use.
- ◀ There are non-turf pitches (NTPs) accompanying grass wicket squares at four sites and five standalone NTPs.
- ◀ There are disused or lapsed wickets at Blackshots Recreation Ground, June Ridgewell Ground, Pegasus Club, Billet Recreation Ground, Orsett Heath, Impulse Leisure (Belhus Park), Daisyfield and Thurrock Rugby Club.
- ◀ The audit of cricket pitches found three squares to be good quality, six to be standard quality and two to be poor quality.
- ◀ Changing facility issues are highlighted at North Stifford Recreation Ground, Corringham Recreation Ground and Orsett Cricket Club.
- ◀ In total, there are four clubs in Thurrock generating 24 senior men's, one senior women's, 21 junior boys' and four junior girls' teams.
- ◀ There is a substantial current shortfall of grass wicket squares for senior cricket amounting to 105 match sessions and 159 match sessions when accounting for future demand.
- ◀ The picture is similar when analysing junior demand, with a current overall shortfall amounting to 115 match sessions and a future shortfall amounting to 127 match sessions.

Rugby union

- ◀ There are eight sites containing a total of 16 senior, one junior and two mini rugby union pitches, with 12 senior and both mini pitches are available for community use.
- ◀ Of the pitches available to the community, there are 12 pitches assessed as standard quality and two assessed as poor quality; no pitches are assessed as good quality.
- ◀ The Council pitches servicing Thurrock RUFC are at risk due to the proposed development of Orsett Heath Academy; these pitches require protection or replacement on an equivalent/improved basis as part of any mitigation proposals.
- ◀ In addition, latest consultation proposals for the Lower Thames Crossing may have at least a temporary impact on two of the club-owned pitches at the site; Sport England and the RFU want to resist any impact on the pitches, or, if this cannot be achieved, secure appropriate mitigation.
- ◀ The clubhouse facilities at Thames Rugby Club are assessed as poor quality
- ◀ Four rugby union clubs play within Thurrock, consisting of 10 senior men's, four senior women's, 11 junior boys', three junior girls' and 11 (mixed) mini teams.
- ◀ There is an overall shortfall of pitches amounting to six match sessions currently and 12 match sessions when accounting for future demand.

Hockey

- ◀ There are three full size (sand based/dressed) AGPs in Thurrock (at the Gateway Academy, Harris Academy Chafford Hundred and Palmers College, all of which are fully available to the community and floodlit).
- ◀ Only Palmers College is used for hockey, by Thurrock HC (the only club playing in Thurrock).

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- ◀ Thurrock HC expresses demand to have its own clubhouse at Palmers College or access to a more suitable space; a draft lease agreement is in place for the Club to redevelop and occupy existing hall space within the School.
- ◀ Neither Palmers College nor Harris Academy Chafford Hundred have been resurfaced since they were first provided in 2002 and 2005 respectively, with quality issues prominent.
- ◀ Both current and future demand can be met on the current stock of pitches, providing quality improvements take place at Palmers College.

Tennis

- ◀ There are 39 tennis courts identified in Thurrock located across 16 sites, with 33 courts categorised as being community available across 14 sites.
- ◀ Of provision that is currently available for community use, 12 courts are assessed as good quality, seven are rated as standard and 14 are rated as poor.
- ◀ All courts have a macadam surface, although Thurrock TC is looking to resurface its courts to an artificial surface within the next five years.
- ◀ The courts servicing Thurrock TC are not floodlit, which limits participation at the Club.
- ◀ Storm Fitness TC is the only other club in Thurrock; it uses Palmers College and has demand for dedicated clubhouse space.
- ◀ Both current and future demand can be met on the current stock of courts.

Bowls

- ◀ There are 10 flat green bowling greens in Thurrock provided across eight sites.
- ◀ In addition, there are disused greens at the Billet Recreation Ground and Aveyley Sports & Social Club, as well as a lapsed green at Pegasus Club following its decommission in 2014.
- ◀ Concerns have also been raised over the future of the green at The Springhouse as all other elements of the site are unusable.
- ◀ Of the 10 bowling greens, eight are assessed as good quality and two are assessed as standard quality.
- ◀ Corringham Recreation Ground is adjudged to have poor quality ancillary facilities due to a dated clubhouse.
- ◀ There are 12 clubs using bowling greens in Thurrock; where membership is known, there are 268 senior male, 138 senior female and two junior members.
- ◀ Both current and future demand can be met on the current stock of greens.

Athletics

- ◀ There is one track in Thurrock, located at Thurrock Athletics Stadium.
- ◀ There is one athletics club, Thurrock Harriers Athletics Club, which has just over 200 members.
- ◀ The Club assesses its facility as good quality overall, but states that the track is coming to the end of its lifespan.
- ◀ There is one Run Together Group, with Chafford Hundred Running Group gathering three nights a week.
- ◀ A Park Run event is held every Saturday at Pyramid Centre.
- ◀ Both current and future demand can be met on the existing supply of provision.

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ACTIVE PLACE STRATEGY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Netball

- ◀ There are 42 netball courts in Thurrock across 15 sites, of which 35 courts are available for community use across 13 sites.
- ◀ Only 14 courts are serviced by floodlighting, which limits availability during winter months for those that are not.
- ◀ Of the courts, two are assessed as good quality, 25 are assessed as standard quality and 15 are assessed as poor quality; all have a macadam surface.
- ◀ The South Essex Thurrock Netball Association accesses the courts at Hassenbrook Academy as a central venue for all of its league matches; the Association caters for 80 senior teams and 54 junior teams.
- ◀ Back to Netball sessions are also delivered at Hassenbrook Academy, making it a key venue for netball in the region.
- ◀ Both current and future demand can be met on the current stock of courts.

The existing position for all sports is either demand is being met or there is a shortfall, whereas the future position shows the exacerbation of current shortfalls and the creation of some shortfalls where demand is currently being met. Where demand is being met, this does not equate to a surplus of provision, with any spare capacity instead considered as a solution to overcoming shortfalls. As such, there is a clear need to protect all existing outdoor sports provision, including pitches/sites that are no longer in use, until all demand is met, or there is a requirement to replace provision to an equal or better quantity and quality before it is lost.

For the most part, shortfalls can be alleviated by better utilising current provision, such as through improving quality, installing additional floodlighting, improving ancillary facilities and enabling access to existing unused provision, such as at unavailable school sites or at disused sites.

Notwithstanding the above, where there are significant shortfalls e.g. for football and cricket, additional provision may be required, such as in the example of 3G pitches. With resources to improve the quality of grass pitches being limited, an increase in 3G provision could also help reduce grass pitch shortfalls through the transfer of play, which in turn can aid pitch quality improvements.

Indoor and built sports facilities

Strategic decision making and long-term investment in indoor facilities for sport and recreation throughout Thurrock has been limited for a number of years. External influences such as the recession, cancellation of the Building Schools for the Future programme, the disbandment of the Gateway Development Corporation and budget restrictions have impacted upon internal priorities for Council investment. The result is dated and aging community sports facilities that residents accept and 'make do' with. This has also resulted in Thurrock having a modest sports club infrastructure and performing below the national and regional averages within all aspects of sports participation. As such, there is a need to transform the existing leisure portfolio and create inspiring, modern and fit for purpose venues that can stimulate participation.

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ACTIVE PLACE STRATEGY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

School sports facilities play a key role in providing venues in which Thurrock's residents can participate in indoor sports. The education sector supplies the full sports hall stock for the area. Since 2016, there has been investment in new schools which has seen an improvement in the quality of sports halls with three out of 12 sports halls requiring investment to bring them up to an acceptable standard for both school and community use (down from six).

Given the location of sports halls, none are available during the school day, which is when the increasing older population would wish to access facilities. Additional sports hall provision will be required to accommodate the 20% increase in population and the opportunity exists to develop some of this supply through the provision of new secondary schools or through new stand-alone sports facilities. Two facilities (William Edward School and South Ockendon Academy) have 'community use agreements' (aligned to funding); therefore, continued access to (other) schools for community use is a risk that will need to be addressed.

The analysis identifies that the projected increase in demand from population growth in Thurrock will result in a shortfall in supply of sports halls to meet demand in 2037 so there is a need to increase supply.

Thurrock's swimming provision is insufficient to meet current and future demand with existing pools fully programmed and operating at capacity during peak periods. The age of the Thurrock swimming pool stock is a major concern and, unless addressed, will impact on the viability, sustainability and net cost of operating these facilities.

Thurrock is in urgent need of new swimming pool provision to replace the existing stock and to meet the needs of a growing population. Without investment in new facilities there is a danger that Thurrock could be left with no public pools, as the existing pool buildings are already beyond their anticipated life expectancy and are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain and keep open.

In order to accommodate the increased demand for swimming pools generated by the projected increase in population, it is anticipated that Thurrock will require additional pool water space to accommodate this. Ideally this should be delivered by replacing existing pools with larger provision prior to identifying additional provision in the area.

Analysis indicated that Purfleet, Tilbury and East Tilbury are very poorly resourced with regards to sport and physical activity facilities. All three areas have potential opportunities to address this as a result of either housing growth or the development of integrated healthy living centres.

Thurrock also has a number of specialist sports facilities and a small selection of strong clubs that contribute to the overall network of provision in the area. The main challenge for clubs is gaining access to facilities at the right price and the general poor quality of those facilities. There will be a need to protect and enhance these resources in order that they continue to thrive.

Thurrock has a limited commercial health and fitness sector (e.g. with swimming pools and equivalent sports hall space), which means that there is an important role on the public sector to provide access to facilities. There are two other key facilities in the borough that do provide limited capacity for residents in the area.

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Within any new sports facility developments the Council will also need to design in financial viability through the development of high quality health and fitness provision and other key income generating activities in order to offset the cost of operating facilities such as swimming pools and sports halls.

Emerging opportunities

In relation to its indoor provision, Thurrock has a number of emerging opportunities from which to facilitate the development of new and improved sport and physical activity facilities.

New housing developments: Thurrock is a strategic housing growth area and its objectively assessed need sets out that it is expected to deliver c.30,000 new homes to 2037. However, there is significant competition for land within the area, primarily from distribution centres and warehousing. Therefore, it is anticipated that the Council will have limited options to deliver these homes unless it seeks to expand the urban area into the green belt.

As part of any such urban extensions and the linked increases in population, there will be an expectation placed upon the development industry to provide necessary supporting infrastructure as part of any development proposal and there would also be the scope to use planning gain funding (i.e. Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy) to develop additional and improved sport and physical activity facilities. The scale of the increase in population will determine the demand for facilities. This process presents an opportunity to address current deficiencies in facility size and quality.

New schools: Alongside new housing growth and increased population comes the requirement to deliver new schools, especially secondary schools. The research findings have identified that there is considerable community use of the majority of schools in Thurrock. Therefore, the opportunity exists to design new schools in such a way that community use is easily delivered or alternatively to expand the offering and develop community sport and leisure facilities alongside school sports facilities.

Integrated medical centres: Thurrock's Health and Well-Being Strategy (2016-2021), identifies the need to develop four integrated medical centres in the key areas of Tilbury, Purfleet, Corringham and Grays. The relationship between poor quality health and physical inactivity is clear and the development of these facilities presents a clear opportunity to integrate physical activity alongside health facilities. This approach also reflects the wider aspirations of strategic funding agencies such as Sport England.

Wider service integration: Thurrock Council continues to face the same financial challenges as most other local authorities throughout the UK and will be seeking to minimise the number of buildings that it owns and manages. There is, thus, an opportunity to integrate or co-locate services within a single venue. Services such as libraries, community police offices and community contact centres have successfully been integrated into/with leisure facilities throughout the country.

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ACTIVE PLACE STRATEGY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Active Travel

The Active Travel Strategy utilises a variety of techniques.

Mesh density

In a properly joined-up cycle network, cyclists should not have to travel more than 400 metres to get to a parallel route of similar quality. This attribute of a cycle network is known as 'mesh density'. It describes whether the grid of cycle routes is tighter (with more route choice) or looser (less extensive)³.

There are some noticeable areas with higher population densities which do not meet the recommendation. The two significant 'gap' areas are Purfleet/West Thurrock and South Ockendon. Potential gaps are also noted to Stanford-le-Hope, East Tilbury, Aveley and Chadwell St Mary. These gaps can be considered as strategic priorities.

Propensity to Cycle Toolkit

The national Propensity to Cycle Toolkit (PCT) is used to identify desire lines of commuter cycle flows. The PCT is a Department for Transport funded project designed to show the flow of cycle users. It is also important to note that the PCT data is only based on the commuting results of the census. It does not take into consideration other trip generators such as leisure or schools. Consequently, it is possible that other routes may exist outside of those highlighted.

It also allows various potential future scenarios to be explored. It enables comparison between current known cycling patterns to scenarios such as the Government's draft Cycling Delivery Plan target (to double cycling in a decade), Gender Equality (if the same amount of women were to cycle as men) and the more ambitious 'Go Dutch' scenario (whereby Dutch cycling levels are reached in England). Consequently, changes in driver numbers, CO² emissions and deaths per year can be estimated to demonstrate the impact such target scenarios could produce.

The desire lines identified through the scenario modelling demonstrate that noticeable changes can be experienced as a result of increased cycling. Both the Government Target and Go Dutch scenarios represent significant changes if they were to be met.

The following desire lines/routes are identified as offering the greatest impact due to being highlighted against multiple scenarios.

³ London Cycling Design Standards

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ACTIVE PLACE STRATEGY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Desire lines highlighted from scenario modelling

Line ID	Start/end areas	Identified as part of scenario modelling		
		Government target	Gender equality	Go Dutch
2	South Ockendon - Purfleet	✓		✓
5	Aveley – Purfleet	✓	✓	✓
6	Stifford Clays – Grays		✓	
9	Purfleet/West Thurrock – Grays	✓		✓
12	Purfleet – Stifford Clays	✓	✓	✓
13	Purfleet – Grays/Little Thurrock	✓		✓
14	Purfleet - Tilbury	✓	✓	✓

Key destination/trip generators

A focus of the work is on the linkages between key destinations and how individuals may journey to such places via active travel methods. For the purposes of the Active Travel Strategy, key destinations are considered to be:

- ◀ Strategic leisure, sports and open spaces (as identified in Active Place Strategies)
- ◀ Retail centres, key workplaces and transport hubs
- ◀ Education facilities (e.g. colleges and secondary schools)
- ◀ Community hubs

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Open space study

A number of recommendations are provided that seek to address the shortfalls and deficiencies identified as part of the study. These are:

Recommendation 1

<i>Explore low quality sites and their potential for enhancement or development</i>

The policy approach to these sites should be to enhance their quality to the applied standards (i.e. high quality) where possible. This is especially the case if the site is deemed to be of high value to the local community. Therefore, they should initially be protected, if they are not already so, in order for their quality to be improved. Where the site is not deemed to be of high value to the local community and does not serve any beneficial purpose as open space (in line with the other recommendations), such sites should also be considered for development.

The policy and implications summary of the quality and value matrix set out in the Standards Paper identifies those sites that should be given consideration for enhancement if possible. Priority sites should be those highlighted as helping or with the potential to serve gaps in provision

Recommendation 2

<i>Sites helping or with the potential to serve areas identified as having gaps in catchment mapping should be recognised through opportunities for enhancement</i>

These sites currently help to meet the identified catchment gaps for other open space typologies. Often this is related to parks, amenity greenspace and natural and semi-natural greenspace. The Council should explore the potential/possibility to adapt these sites through formalisation and/or greater provision of features linked to other types of open space. This is to provide a stronger secondary role as well as opportunities associated with other open space types. This may also help to minimise the need for creation of new provision to address any gaps in catchment mapping.

Such sites should be viewed as being key forms of open space provision. It is important that the Council looks to maintain sites of this classification to as high a standard as possible.

Recommendation 3

<i>Ensure low quality/value sites helping to serve potential gaps in accessibility catchments are prioritised for enhancement</i>

The approach to these sites should be to enhance their quality/value to the applied standards (i.e. high quality and/or value). It should be considered whether the site may be of benefit being recognised and changed to a different type of open space (See Recommendation 4).

Recommendation 4

<i>Sites in areas with sufficient provision of open space may be able to meet the need for other types of open space or could potentially be considered surplus</i>

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ACTIVE PLACE STRATEGY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If no improvements can be made to sites identified as lower quality and value, then a change of primary typology should be considered (i.e. a change of role).

If no shortfall in other open space types is noted, or it is not feasible to change the primary typology of the site, then the site may be redundant/ 'surplus to requirements'.

Recommendation 5

Keeping data, report and supporting evidence base up to date in order to reflect changes over time

The Open Space Standards and Assessment Report are a snapshot in time. Whilst significant changes are not as common for open space provision, inevitably over time changes in provision occurs through creation of new provision, loss of provision and/or alterations to site boundaries and management. Population change and housing growth are also another consideration to review when undertaking any form of update as this may impact on quantity provision levels and standards.

Playing pitch strategy

The following overarching, strategic recommendations have been identified from the PPS analysis. These are based on Sport England's key themes of protect, enhance and provide:

OBJECTIVE 1

To **promote** and **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sports facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs

Recommendations:

- ◀ Ensure, through the use of the PPS, that playing fields and pitches are protected through the implementation of local planning policy.
- ◀ Secure tenure and access to sites for high quality, development minded clubs, through a range of solutions and partnership agreements.
- ◀ Maximise community use of education facilities where there is a need to do so.

OBJECTIVE 2

To **enhance** outdoor sports facilities and accompanying ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

Recommendations:

- ◀ Improve quality
- ◀ Adopt a tiered approach (hierarchy of provision) to the management and improvement of sites.
- ◀ Work in partnership with stakeholders to secure funding
- ◀ Secure developer contributions.

OBJECTIVE 3

To **provide** new outdoor sports facilities where there is current or future demand to do so

Recommendations:

- ◀ Identify opportunities to add to the overall stock to accommodate both current and future demand.
- ◀ Rectify quantitative shortfalls through the current stock.

Linked to the strategic recommendations, the following recommendations are made for each sport:

Football

- ◀ Protect existing quantity of pitches, including pitches/sites that are no longer in use (unless replacement provision of equivalent or better replacement provision in terms of quantity and quality is agreed upon and provided).
- ◀ Where pitches are overplayed and/or assessed as poor quality, prioritise investment and review maintenance regimes to ensure it is of an appropriate standard to sustain use and improve quality.
- ◀ Use the LFFP as a guide to further determine suitable sites for grass pitch investment.
- ◀ Following discussions with Essex FA and the Council, consider the feasibility of bringing Blackshots Recreation Ground back into use to act as a hub site for football in the Borough.
- ◀ Transfer play from sites which remain overplayed to alternative sites with spare capacity, sites which are not currently available for community use, or to 3G provision.
- ◀ Work to accommodate future demand as well as expressed exported, unmet and latent demand at sites which are not operating at capacity or at sites not currently available for community use that could be moving forward.
- ◀ Secure tenure for clubs using unsecure school sites through community use agreements.
- ◀ For unsecure, non-education sites, seek to gain access and ensure appropriate mitigation should the provision fall out of permanent use.
- ◀ Work to bring disused sites back into use or, if this is not possible, ensure appropriate mitigation should the provision fall out of permanent use via the creation of hub sites.
- ◀ Ensure all teams are playing on the correct pitch sizes and explore reconfiguration of pitches to better accommodate youth 11v11 demand, where possible.
- ◀ Improve ancillary facilities where there is a demand to do so and where it can benefit the wider footballing offer, using the LFFP as a guide.
- ◀ Consider rationalisation of low value sites if contributions can go towards creating larger, better quality multi-pitch sites (providing there is no net loss of playing pitch space).
- ◀ Ensure that any large housing developments are provided for and assess the need for new pitch provision through master planning on an individual basis.
- ◀ Where a development is of a size to justify on-site football provision, focus on the creation of multi-pitch sites that reduce existing shortfalls, with accompanying clubhouse provision included given that single pitch sites without appropriate ancillary facilities can be unsustainable.

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- ◀ Where a development is not of a size to justify on-site football provision, consider using contributions to improve existing sites within the locality, using the PPS as a guide to inform suitable sites.
- ◀ If required, explore ground sharing possibilities across Thurrock and the wider South Essex region that can provide a more sustainable long-term future for the senior club network, particularly in the case of clubs that currently wish to relocate.

3G pitches

- ◀ Protect current stock of 3G pitches.
- ◀ Ensure the pitch at Lakeside Sports Ground is appropriately mitigated if it is lost as a result of development.
- ◀ Using the LFFP as a guide, develop additional 3G pitches to alleviate identified football training shortfalls.
- ◀ Consider an addition to the LFFP project list based on increased demand in the West Analysis Area and also consider amends to the list given new aspirations held by Tilbury FC and at Thurrock Football Club.
- ◀ Support creation of additional 3G pitches above and beyond football training shortfalls if it can satisfy rugby demand as well as football demand; or explore creation of 3G pitches that are both football and rugby appropriate when alleviating shortfalls.
- ◀ Ensure South Essex sub-regional needs are considered when developing new 3G pitches to reduce deficiencies across all the local authorities via a partnership approach; for example, a potential new 3G pitch in the new Dunton Hills settlement bordering Thurrock could cater for some of the Borough's demand.
- ◀ Carry out consultation with EH when deciding upon the location of new 3G pitches to ensure the sustainability of existing sand based AGPs.
- ◀ Ensure that any new 3G pitches are constructed to meet FA/RFU recommended dimensions and quality performance standards to meet performance testing criteria.
- ◀ Ensure all 3G providers have a sinking fund in place for long-term sustainability.
- ◀ Encourage more match play demand to transfer to 3G pitches, where possible.
- ◀ Ensure that any new 3G pitches have community use agreements in place.
- ◀ Where a housing development is of a size to justify on-site football provision, consider the potential for 3G provision on multi-pitch sites and as a minimum requirement, design new sites so that they could accommodate 3G provision at a later date, if required.

Cricket

- ◀ Protect existing quantity of cricket squares, including squares/sites that are no longer in use.
- ◀ Following discussions with the ECB and the Council, consider the feasibility of bringing squares at Blackshots Recreation Ground back into use to reduce shortfalls as part of master-planning for the site. This will require a square/s being reinstated, ancillary provision being re-provided and security being improved.
- ◀ Support the Council to provide a new cricket square at Hall Road in Aveley if, following consultation with the ECB, there is a need for additional provision to meet local demand.
- ◀ Work with clubs and groundsmen to review quality issues on squares assessed as poor and standard to ensure appropriate quality is achieved and to alleviate overplay.
- ◀ Improve communication between clubs and the Council to determine best practice in relation to maintenance and to develop playing opportunities in the right areas that will target the right audience.
- ◀ Work to eradicate overplay at sites assessed as good quality via the transfer of demand to NTPs.

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- ◀ Ensure future demand can be accommodated either outside of the peak period or via access to alternative (and potentially new) provision.
- ◀ Improve ancillary provision and outdoor practice facilities where it is required.
- ◀ In line with the Indoor Sports & Leisure Strategy, improve the stock of indoor cricket provision and ensure continued, protected access to the facility at Harris Ockendon Academy.
- ◀ Explore potential sites for non-traditional cricket offerings and seek to develop cricket within communities that more commonly play informal formats of the game.
- ◀ Support the growth of cricket through programmes such as All Stars and Dynamo's as well as via women's and girls' softball cricket.
- ◀ Ensure tenure remains secure for all clubs and seek community use agreements for clubs that use education sites.
- ◀ Ensure that any large housing developments are provided for and assess the need for new pitch provision through master planning on an individual basis.
- ◀ Where a development is of a size to justify on-site cricket provision, ensure that any proposals for new squares will attract adequate demand.
- ◀ Where a development is not of a size to justify on-site cricket provision, or if sufficient demand cannot be attracted, consider using contributions to improve existing sites within the locality.

Rugby union

- ◀ Protect existing quantity of rugby union pitches, including pitches/sites that are no longer in use.
- ◀ Improve quality of pitches, prioritising those at sites with identified overplay.
- ◀ Ensure any loss of pitches at Thurrock Rugby Club is appropriately mitigated in accordance with NPPF; the Club requires continued provision of five senior pitches (with two floodlit), or a full size World Rugby compliant AGP and three senior pitches (providing that the 3G pitch is also accessible for all midweek rugby demand).
- ◀ Ensure a strategic approach is taken regarding the developments affecting Thurrock Rugby Club (i.e. Orsett Heath Academy and Lower Thames Crossing) rather than the impacts being considered in isolation.
- ◀ Support Pegasus Palmerians RUFC in its proposed transfer to Palmers College (Storm Fitness) and ensure the level and quality of provision is sufficient to meet its needs.
- ◀ Secure tenure for the Pegasus Palmerians RUFC via a community use agreement at St Clere's School or Palmers College if the Club is to move sites.
- ◀ Explore installation of permanent floodlighting to service Thames, Stanford-le-Hope and Pegasus Palmerians rugby clubs.
- ◀ Improve quality of ancillary provision where it is required i.e. at Thames Rugby Club.
- ◀ Ensure ancillary facilities for Thurrock RUFC provided at Orsett Heath Academy are made available to the Club, with a secure agreement in place for access.
- ◀ Seek to increase the length of Thames RUFC's lease to improve its security of tenure and to assist with any future funding bids.
- ◀ Retain supply of rugby pitches at all school sites for curricular and extra-curricular purposes and encourage secure community availability should demand exist in the future.
- ◀ Ensure that any large housing developments are provided for and assess the need for new pitch provision through master planning on an individual basis.
- ◀ Where a development is of a size to justify on-site rugby provision, ensure that any proposals for new pitches will attract adequate demand.

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- ◀ Where a development is not of a size to justify on-site rugby provision, or if sufficient demand cannot be attracted, consider using contributions to improve existing sites within the locality.

Hockey

- ◀ Retain the AGP at Palmers College (Storm Fitness) as hockey suitable and resurface the pitch as soon as possible.
- ◀ Consider creation of a business plan for the pitch (and wider site) and ensure a sinking fund is in place for long-term sustainability.
- ◀ Seek to provide Thurrock HC with better quality and more appropriate ancillary facilities i.e. changing rooms and social space.
- ◀ Explore if there is a need for pitches at Harris Academy Chafford Hundred and The Gateway Academy to satisfy hockey-based demand in neighbouring local authorities.
- ◀ Should the provision at Harris Academy Chafford Hundred and The Gateway Academy continue to not be needed for hockey purposes, consider for potential 3G conversion (via agreement with EH).

Tennis

- ◀ Protect courts used for competitive play and sustain quality through appropriate maintenance regimes.
- ◀ Support Thurrock TC to ensure it can continue to accommodate its demand and further explore access to St Clere's School.
- ◀ Provide Storm Fitness TC with better quality clubhouse facilities in order to drive an increase in demand.
- ◀ Improve court quality and potentially quantity at non-club sites assessed as poor and standard quality to increase informal demand, focusing on strategic provision.
- ◀ Seek to improve wider tennis offering at sites through improved ancillary provision.
- ◀ Utilise technology to better manage community tennis bookings.

Bowls

- ◀ Improve green quality at sites assessed as poor or standard quality and sustain quality at sites assessed as good.
- ◀ To aid quality improvements and sustainability, support clubs with self-management.
- ◀ Seek to improve ancillary facility quality where it is necessary.
- ◀ Support users of the greens at Blackshots Recreation Ground to ensure demand continues to be met, given high levels of membership.
- ◀ Mitigate any permanent loss of greens at disused and lapsed sites through equivalent/better replacement provision or through appropriate enhancements to other facilities.
- ◀ Support clubs with plans to increase membership so that growth can be maximised.

Athletics

- ◀ Protect Thurrock Athletics Stadium and consider providing new, improved facility within the wider development of Blackshots Recreation Ground.
- ◀ If retained in its current form, explore funding options to resurface the track to ensure long-term sustainability.
- ◀ Support running groups, events and England Athletics initiatives such as Park Run and pursue increased participation.

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ACTIVE PLACE STRATEGY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ◀ Look to provide recreational athletics facilities in new developments through circular running routes, ensuring new parks can accommodate Park Run type events or connecting to/enhancing existing running routes.

Netball

- ◀ Improve court quality at Hassenbrook Academy given the importance of the site and the level of netball usage received.
- ◀ Explore improving court quality at school sites where sufficient demand exists for curricular and extra-curricular activity.
- ◀ Support and look to develop England Netball initiatives such as Back to Netball and Walking Netball.

Indoor and built sports facilities

The following vision and strategic recommendations have been identified for Thurrock's indoor and built sports facilities:

To create a network of high quality, accessible and sustainable sport and leisure facilities, which offer inclusive services for all; enabling the inactive to become active and more residents to fulfil their potential by participating in sport and physical activity, thus improving their long-term health and well-being.

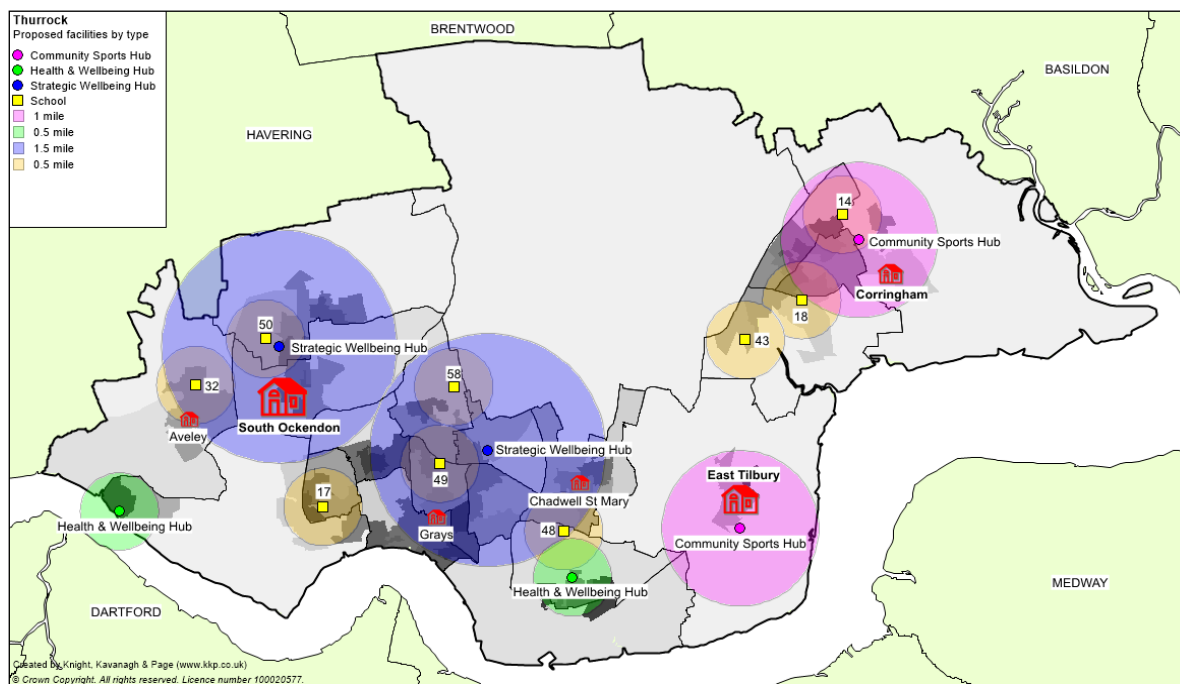
The following strategic recommendations have been identified to deliver the above vision over the period 2020 – 2037. They provide strategic direction for Thurrock Council, its partners and stakeholders which provide facilities and opportunities for residents to pursue sport and recreation as a means to engage in physical activity.

- ◀ **Strategic recommendation 1:** *To develop a fit for purpose network of better quality (indoor and outdoor) facilities in strategic locations in order to meet the sport and physical activity needs of existing communities and new residents in Thurrock; maximising opportunities in respect of:*
 - ◀ *Potential sports facility development as part of Thurrock's investment in new school stock.*
 - ◀ *The development of sport and physical activity facilities aligned to planned integrated medical centres.*
 - ◀ *Engagement with other services and where possible the creation of multi-agency hubs via the co-location of services*

This objective builds on a range of strategic drivers such as the need for Thurrock's existing sports facilities to be replaced, the substantial growth in population, the need for facilities to contribute to addressing health inequalities, new schools and integrated medical centres and major areas of housing growth.

THURROCK COUNCIL ACTIVE PLACE STRATEGY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The visual presentation of the new indoor facility network is detailed below.



The key infrastructure projects required in order to deliver a network of facilities which are fit for the future can be summarised as follows:

*Aligned to the development of a new integrated medical centre in **Tilbury**, investigate the option to deliver a community health and fitness facility.*

Tilbury will see development of the first integrated medical centre. The Council and health partners have an opportunity to develop a community health and fitness facility aligned to the hub within a key area of deprivation. This facility could fill an identified local gap in provision. Ideally this should be a smaller scale development consisting of the following, but with a shared reception and entrance point for the integrated medical centre:

- ◀ 50 to 60 station fitness suite
- ◀ Group fitness studio
- ◀ Changing rooms

*Aligned to the anticipated housing growth in **East Tilbury** and the likely requirement for a new primary school, investigate the potential to develop a community sport and wellbeing hub aligned to the new school development.*

It is anticipated that a significant number of new homes will be developed in East Tilbury – sufficient to justify an additional secondary school. This could incorporate additional community use facilities available not only at evenings and weekends, but also during the school day. It is proposed that adding the following be considered (to complement the school’s requirement to develop a 4 court sports hall and drama facility):

- ◀ 40 to 50 station fitness suite
- ◀ Group fitness studio

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- ◀ Changing rooms
- ◀ Floodlit full size 3G pitch (dependent on the outcome of the PPS and needs of the school)

*In line with the potential requirement for a significant number of new homes in **South Ockendon**, investigate the potential to develop a strategically significant community sport and wellbeing hub to serve the Aveley and South Ockendon community.*

The South Ockendon area, which is currently served by Ockendon Academy and Belhus Park Golf and Country Club, is likely to see a requirement for a significant number of new homes and probably require a new school. The Ockendon Academy 6-court sports hall is primarily geared to provision for cricket so a sports hall facility is needed to serve the wider sporting needs of this significantly growing community.

The Council should commit to investigating the opportunity for Leisure to work with health and other partners to create a new facility on an appropriate site. Ideally, from both community servicing and viability perspectives consideration should be given to this including the following mix of school and community facilities:

- ◀ 8 lane 25-metre swimming pool
- ◀ Teaching pool (with a moveable floor)
- ◀ 100 – 120 station fitness suite.
- ◀ 2 x group fitness studios
- ◀ 1 x full-sized floodlit 3G football turf pitch
- ◀ 2 x meeting rooms
- ◀ Tennis/netball court area.
- ◀ Ancillary facilities for school and community
- ◀ Explore the possibility of developing a gymnastics centre as part of the facility mix.

If the location is appropriate, consideration should also be given to the inclusion of other civic services, such as library within this new development.

If and when this is developed, the Council should rationalise the swimming and fitness facilities at Belhus Park Golf and Country Club. The decision on the future of Ockendon Academy swimming pool will need to be determined by the location of the new facility.

*Replace **Blackshots** Leisure Centre with a strategically significant community sport and wellbeing hub (Blackshots Sports Village) investigating how a replacement facility should be located and operate in the context of the existing park facilities.*

Blackshots Leisure Centre is beyond its anticipated life span and needs to be replaced. There is an opportunity to develop a larger scale, strategically important sports facility to serve the needs of the Grays community and, concurrently, consider development of the wider adjacent park. Orsett Heath Academy is due to open in 2022 on the same site. In addition, an interim academy is being built adjacent to Thurrock Rugby Football Club, also on King George's Field.

This combination of options provides a 'window of opportunity' for a full master planning exercise; taking account of education, leisure, physical activity, wellbeing and cultural needs. It should encompass consideration of a new indoor facility, refurbishment of the athletics stadium, outdoor pitches and general access to the park facilities. It should consider formal and informal sport and physical activity opportunity within any feasibility and master planning.

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The Council also needs to consider potential replacement of the Civic Hall, whether this can be included within the proposed facility mix, or if it needs to have a wider town centre regeneration role. A point to note is that there are clear examples of where the combined programming of sport and arts within a single main indoor sports hall space can impact negatively on participation and user experience (e.g. Sands Centre, Carlisle).

The key challenge is, thus, the juxtaposition of sports facilities and the management of the overall site for the benefit of local residents. Consideration should, therefore, be given to the following facility mix:

- ◀ 8 lane 25-metre swimming pool as a minimum
- ◀ Teaching pool (with a moveable floor)
- ◀ 150 – 200 station fitness suite.
- ◀ 2 x group fitness studios
- ◀ Dedicated spin studio
- ◀ 8 court sports hall
- ◀ 1 or 2 x floodlit 3G pitches
- ◀ Grass pitches
- ◀ 2 x meeting rooms
- ◀ Athletics track
- ◀ Outdoor changing facilities
- ◀ Children's play facilities and skatepark
- ◀ Walking and running routes around the park.
- ◀ (Civic hall functions).
- ◀ Explore the possibility of developing a gymnastics centre as part of the facility mix.

Replacement of Blackshots Leisure Centre and the master planning of the recreation ground should be Thurrock's priority project and the catalyst for other developments to follow. It has the potential to combine provision for indoor and outdoor sports facilities plus informal physical activity, open space and play, making it a significant and highly contemporary strategic facility.

*Aligned to any potential housing growth in **Corringham**, investigate the potential of developing a community sport and wellbeing hub aligned to any new school development that might be required to support growth.*

Corringham is another location in the Borough that could accommodate new homes. It is relatively close to Basildon Sporting Village, although (at six kilometres away) this is perceived to be too distant to fully serve the town. The Corringham area still needs a community sports facility, but potentially not one as large as those proposed for the larger population centres of Grays and South Ockendon

It is possible, depending on the scale of development, that a new school and health facilities would be required and there is an opportunity to develop a strategically important community sport and wellbeing hub, potentially on a school site.

The Council should, thus, commit to investigating the opportunity for Education, Health and Leisure to work together to create a new facility on an appropriate site with the following facility mix:

- ◀ 6 lane 25-metre swimming pool
- ◀ Teaching pool (with a moveable floor)

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- ◀ 150 station fitness suite.
- ◀ 2 x group fitness studios
- ◀ 4-6 court sports hall
- ◀ 1 x floodlit 3G pitch (dependent on the outcome of the PPS)
- ◀ 2 x meeting rooms
- ◀ Tennis/netball court area.
- ◀ Ancillary facilities for school and community
- ◀ Integrated medical centre.
- ◀ Explore the possibility of developing a gymnastics centre as part of the facility mix.

If the location is appropriate, consideration should be given to including other civic services, such as a library. A new facility (if and when developed) could replace Corringham Leisure Centre.

*Aligned to the development of a new integrated medical centre in **Purfleet**, investigate the opportunity to deliver a community health and fitness facility.*

There is a (medium term) aspiration to develop an integrated medical centre in Purfleet. The Council and health partners have an opportunity to develop a community health and fitness facility aligned to the hub to strategically align health and physical activity - in a key area of deprivation. This facility will fill an identified provision gap.

The focus will be wider development of physical activity opportunity directly aligned to specific local health improvement ambitions, specific interventions for targeted groups and for improved links and transition between health and community programmes. It would enable the operator and health partners to target employers in the area to deliver workplace health improvement initiatives; a key focus for targeting specific types of employee who might be a higher health risk. This should be a smaller scale development consisting of the following, but within a shared reception and entrance point for the integrated medical centre:

- ◀ 50 to 60 station fitness suite
- ◀ Group fitness studio
- ◀ Changing rooms

Work with the local gymnastics clubs to develop appropriate opportunities for a permanently set out gymnastics facility for the area.

The Thurrock Gymnastic Academy (TGA) aspires to develop a permanently laid out gymnastics facility in the area. TGA has in excess of 660 members with a waiting list of c.500 and is in real need of a dedicated facility, either standalone or part of a larger leisure facility.

British Gymnastics (BG) is keen to work to support the club and to work in partnership with the Council to tackle the current situation. Development of a new facility will need to proceed hand in glove with work to increase the available qualified coach workforce and volunteer base to underpin existing provision and enable future expansion.

The BG strategy for increasing participation in the sport has seen a drive to develop more permanently set out gymnastics facilities at industrial units. However, it is also worth noting that this has the potential to conflict with local planning policy in relation to the protection of higher tier industrial units for employment use. It is, therefore, not as simple as identifying

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potential industrial units, as the demand for these types of facilities is outstripping supply in Thurrock.

Within the above context there is a need for the Council to consider how it could work with the NGB and club to identify facilities where equipment could be permanently set out, thus enabling the TGA to meet unmet demand and grow opportunity in the sport. It is conceivable that development of a permanent gymnastics facility could be aligned to one of the new sports/leisure facilities in the area or one of the academies; however, this will require input from key partners including the club and BG.

Strategic recommendation 2: To work with colleagues in Education to ensure that any new schools or improvements to sports facilities in existing schools are accompanied by a community use agreement.

William Edwards, Ockendon Academy and Harris Riverside Academy have clear community use agreements. William Edwards has received funding from Badminton England, whilst Ockendon Academy has received funding from the ECB. These agreements will require the schools to be available for community use and the delivery of badminton and cricket development opportunities and club sessions throughout the full year.

It is expected that St Clere's School will have such an agreement with its new 4-court sports hall but no other schools have such agreements and their availability cannot be guaranteed. They are, therefore, more susceptible to being altered based on the needs of the school or the personal perspective of the headteacher or school governors. There is, as a consequence, a need for Leisure and Education to work in partnership to get as many schools as possible to sign up to a comprehensive, binding and effective community use agreement and work with them to achieve maximum possible availability and use.

Strategic recommendation 3: To work with selected schools to increase their availability for community use.

In general, those schools that provide community access to their facilities do so for between 30 to 40 hours per week. This presents a reasonably good level of access to school sports facilities and includes weekend as well as weekday evening access. Schools are extensively used throughout these hours by a range of sports clubs and activity groups.

Two specific schools (Gateway Academy and St Clere's) have been identified as having significant capacity to provide additional community use; although this may have changed following the development of a new 4-court sports hall at St Clere's. Newer schools also need to be targeted to ensure their availability to the community and the capacity at a number of older schools also needs to be fully utilised.

Strategic recommendation 4: Use the development of new facilities as a catalyst for requiring the Council's leisure management contractor to have a wider focus on health inequalities.

The development of new facilities in Thurrock, either as replacements or additional facilities, presents the opportunity for the Council to review its current leisure management arrangements. The Council created the trust in 2000 and awarded it a 30-year buildings lease to manage its facilities. However, in the intervening 20 years, local government has changed dramatically with significant cuts in public service funding and the expansion of responsibility to deliver health and wellbeing services for communities.

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There will be a need for the leisure operator to develop wider relationships and networks beyond the walls of its facilities in order that it is fully engaged with the appropriate partners and communities. This will also require it and the Council to develop a business model which recognises that high income generating activity should cross subsidise other physical activity interventions with targeted groups which enable the Council and its partners to address health inequalities.

Strategic recommendation 5: To plan additional new provision to accommodate continued increases in population beyond the life of this current strategy.

The above recommendations regarding sports halls and swimming pools are only sufficient to accommodate the resident population of Thurrock through until 2037, linked to the Local Plan. Therefore, the Council needs to consider its longer-term planning beyond the life of this strategy and the Local Plan period. This is specifically in relation to swimming pools where there will be a need to plan for the provision of smaller scale community pools beyond this date.

Active Travel

The strategic vision for active travel in Thurrock is:

To create a high quality, accessible and sustainable network which positively contributes to the economy and quality of environment, enabling the inactive to become active and more people to realise their potential by participating in walking and cycling activity, thus improving their long-term health and well-being.

The following goals are identified to work towards the strategic vision:

- ◀ Improve environments
- ◀ Enable people to be healthier for longer
- ◀ Opportunity for all

To achieve the vision and goals a series of priorities are identified. The priorities are based on their suitability, links to growth areas and key destinations as well as the potential to increase levels of active travel.

Priorities are categorised into two types:

- ◀ **Physical** - improvement and connection of routes
- ◀ **Addressing mental barriers** - measures to tackle the common mental barriers.

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Physical priorities

Priority 1: West / East Connections

Analysis of desire lines from the Propensity to Cycle Toolkit (PCT) identifies that many start and end of journeys run west / east across the Borough. This can predominantly be attributed to the number of destination and trip generators able to be accessed via travelling in these directions. Promoting greater levels of active travel along these directions of travel would also help to challenge the busy road networks (i.e. London Road and Arterial Road) as well as associated congestion and air quality levels.

The scenario modelling also highlights that a number of these desire lines/routes can offer the greatest impact in terms of change in driver numbers, CO² levels and deaths per year. Furthermore, mesh density analysis highlights a significant gap in the Purfleet/West Thurrock area, which is a key contributor to the west/east directions of travel.

Priority 2: South Ockendon

Analysis of desire lines from the PCT identifies that several start and end of journeys run to and from South Ockendon.

The scenario modelling also highlights that a key desire line/route can offer the greatest impact in terms of change in driver numbers, CO² levels and deaths per year. Furthermore, mesh density analysis highlights a significant gap in South Ockendon.

Priority 3: Purfleet – Aveley

Analysis of desire lines from the PCT identifies that several start and end of journeys run to and from Purfleet. Many of these desire lines and routes are covered as part of Priority 1: West / East Connections. This priority is specific to the north / south connection between Purfleet and Aveley (with the connection able to further link to South Ockendon).

The scenario modelling highlights that key desire lines/routes can offer the greatest impact in terms of change in driver numbers, CO² levels and deaths per year. Furthermore, mesh density analysis highlights a significant gap in the Purfleet/West Thurrock area, which is also a key contributor to Priority 1: West / East Connections.

Priority 4: Stanford-le-Hope

Analysis of desire lines from the PCT identifies that a noticeable start and end journey runs between Stanford-le-Hope and Corringham.

The scenario modelling highlights the desire line/route has the ability to offer some impact in terms of change in driver numbers, CO² levels and deaths per year. However, the area has a number of other key trip generators outside of the PCT data. Furthermore, mesh density analysis highlights a gap in the Stanford-le-Hope area.

Priority 5: Chadwell St Mary

Analysis of desire lines from the PCT identifies a start and end journey running between Chadwell St Mary and Tilbury.

It may therefore offer some impact in terms of change in driver numbers, CO² levels and deaths per year; as evidenced from the scenario modelling. The area also has a number of other key trip generators outside of the PCT data. Furthermore, mesh density analysis highlights a gap in the Chadwell St Mary area.

Priority 6: Blackshots

Analysis of desire lines from the PCT identifies a number of start and end journeys running to and from the Blackshots area.

Routes may therefore offer some impact in terms of change in driver numbers, CO² levels and deaths per year; as evidenced from the scenario modelling. The area also has a number of other key trip generators outside of the PCT data.

Priority 7: Coastal route

Analysis of desire lines from the PCT identifies a number of key start and end journeys running along sections of the coastal network.

The scenario modelling also highlights that these desire lines/routes have the ability to offer the greatest impact in terms of change in driver numbers, CO² levels and deaths per year. The area also has a number of other key trip generators outside of the PCT data.

Addressing mental barriers

In addition to the physical improvements to the network, it is important to challenge the mental barriers facing active travel. Initiatives and programmes should follow the three core principles of tackling mental barriers and look to:

- ◀ Promote
- ◀ Educate
- ◀ Incentivise participation and awareness.

The approach to tackling mental barriers facing active travel needs to be multifaceted and delivered strategically and locally. Active travel improvements and initiatives will need to be undertaken in partnership with a variety of Local Authority departments and external partners (e.g. England Health, Transport for London, local groups) and should help to inform other strategic documents and programmes.

A number of design principles, best practice examples and initiatives are given as methods to tackle the mental barriers of active travel. Other best practices and initiatives may exist which can contribute to challenging the mental barriers of active travel; consequently, a flexible approach will also be needed.

Several initiatives challenging the mental barriers of active travel already exist locally. The majority of these intend to promote and encourage more active travel participation. These cost-effective and fun ways of learning about active travel including bike and walking safety should be regarded as practical solutions for reaching out to people of different ages, abilities and backgrounds. A summary of some of the more prominent and successful initiatives already in place and/or planned across Thurrock are set out in the Active Travel Strategy.