



Dacorum Sport and  
Recreation Study

# Indoor Facilities Strategy and Action Plan



March 2006

A Report by Knight, Kavanagh & Page



# DACORUM SPORT AND RECREATION STUDY: INDOOR FACILITIES STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

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## GLOSSARY

DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh & Page
LAs	Local authorities
LEA	Local education authority
LTS	Learn to Swim
NGBs	National governing bodies of sport
PCT	Primary care trust
SE	Sport England
PPG17	Planning Policy Guidance Note 17

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## PART I. INTRODUCTION

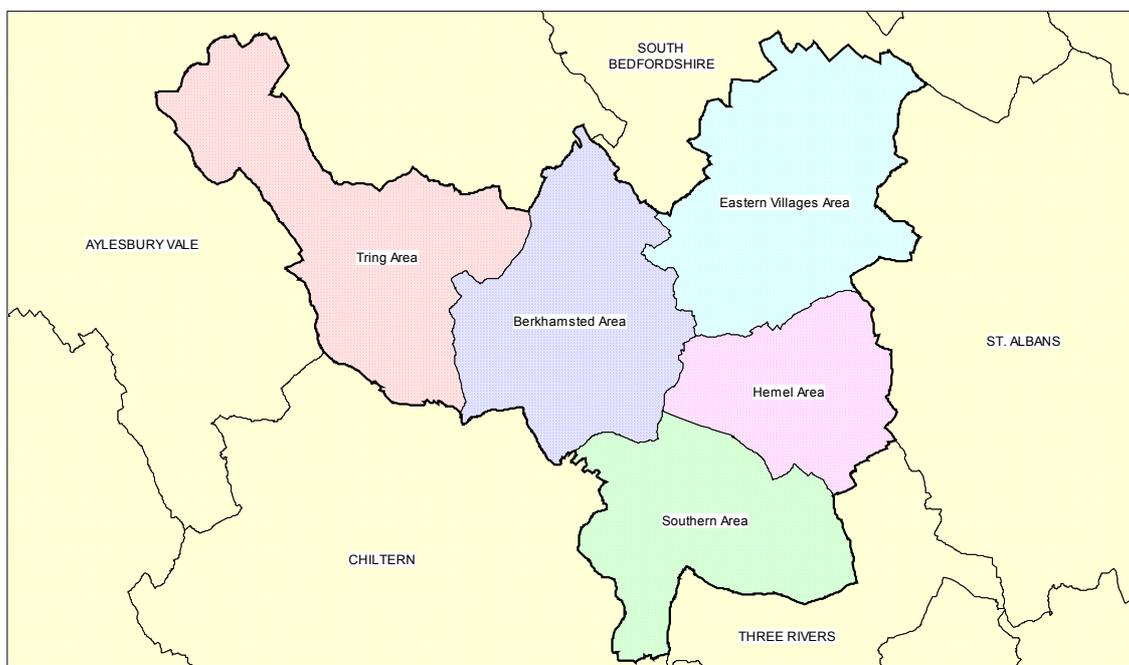
This is the Strategy and Action Plan for indoor facilities in Dacorum. It includes community halls and indoor sports facilities, e.g. sports halls and swimming pools. This Strategy has been developed from research and analysis of the provision and use of indoor facilities for sport and active recreation within Dacorum. It follows the Assessment Report, which considers supply and demand issues.

Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) Planning Department commissioned the study in September 2004. The principal research was carried out by KKP between October 2004 and February 2005.

The Strategy sets out a vision for the next ten years in relation to the provision and improvement of indoor facilities for sport and active recreation. The Action Plan recommends a number of high priority projects for the Borough, which should be worked towards between 2005-2015. It should be recognised that the Strategy and Action Plan is mostly intended to provide a framework for improvement of facilities, since the supply of facilities is broadly sufficient.

Analysis areas:

The analysis areas were defined/chosen to relate to towns and villages and their catchments. These analysis areas were the basis for analysing provision within the Assessment Report that accompanies this strategy document and will provide the basis for the framework for improvements to facilities.



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## **PART 2. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES FROM THE ASSESSMENT REPORT**

### ***Leisure facilities***

- ❑ No current shortfall of sports centres identified, but poor accessibility in the Markyate/Flamstead area.
- ❑ Rolling refurbishment of sport centres required over the next 10 years.
- ❑ Limited, often poor quality school facilities. All LEA schools report some demand for additional sports hall facilities. There is particularly high demand identified at The Cavendish School, Kings Langley School and Ashlyns School.

### ***Sport specific***

- ❑ Latent/current demand identified for netball, badminton, 'extreme sports' and martial arts. This does not necessarily equate to new build requirements, but relates more to programming issues and better use of school sites.
- ❑ Latent demand expressed for 13 hours per week of water time in Dacorum. However, this does not equate to enough demand for a new pool and the majority of this demand could probably be met through readdressing programming at each of the pools and better use of school sites.
- ❑ Demand identified for gymnastics equating to extension of facilities at both Hemel Sports Centre and Ashlyns School.
- ❑ Identified deficiency of indoor tennis courts in Dacorum.
- ❑ Hemel Ski Centre has submitted a planning application to enclose the existing slopes, creating an indoor snow centre.

### ***Community facilities***

- ❑ Identified deficiency of community centre provision in Berkhamsted.
- ❑ Identified need for further support to increase the sustainability of community centres and to encourage them to be self financing. Issues to be addressed regarding volunteers, management structures and making centres more business minded.
- ❑ Identified demand for additional facilities for use by ethnic minority groups. Areas identified as having a lack of such facilities include Bennetts End, Grovehill, Woodhall Farm and Highfield.

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## PART 3. A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR BUILT FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS

### Introduction

The following section provides a framework for Dacorum Borough Council and partners to maintain and improve the indoor sport and recreation facilities within the Borough. It links closely with the Council's key priorities:

- ❑ Committing to excellent services.
- ❑ Promoting civic pride and an active community.
- ❑ Creating a clean, tidy and safe environment.
- ❑ Ensuring a sustainable local economy and jobs.
- ❑ Providing affordable housing and protecting green space.

DBC, through this report, recognises that the development of sport and the linked development of its facilities is fundamental to its vision for the Borough. This Strategy will only make a difference if it is tailored to the requirements of the communities that it is designed to serve. It must, given the Council's pivotal role, recognise and reflect corporate aims and objectives. To this end, it acknowledges key 'cross-cutting' issues such as lifelong learning, health and social inclusion and encourages the pursuit of local priorities within regional and national contexts.

### ***The Strategy supports a number of statutory, corporate and wider objectives:***

- ❑ *Dacorum Community Plan* seeks to reflect key needs, aspirations and priorities for people living, working and visiting the Borough. The Plan identifies the main actions that DBC will take, working together with partner organisations, to make a difference in Dacorum and to meet the community's priorities for action.
- ❑ *DBC corporate priorities* highlight the Council's aims to balance its efforts between delivering good services, safeguarding the well being of all and reducing inequalities of access to services.
  - *Dacorum Local Plan* sets out a development strategy for the plan area and contains all land use policies and proposals needed for the future development of the plan area for the period up to 2011.
- ❑ *Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 'Sport, Open Space and Recreation'* requirement for local planning authorities to carry out robust assessments of need and policies for the protection/provision of new facilities.
- ❑ *The Department of Culture, Media & Sport 'Game Plan' 2002* requirement for a major increase in participation in sport and physical activity and a sustainable improvement in success in international competition.



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- *Saving Lives – Our Healthier Nation* This Government White Paper was published in 1999 with the stated aim of improving the ‘health of the nation’. Targets are set to improve health across the country. This is to be achieved via joint working between health organisations, local authorities and local people. National targets are set to improve services and health by 2010.
  
- *National Framework for Sport* - The Framework for Sport signals a new way of working through partnerships to deliver a shared vision for sport. It sets out a vision for sport in England – *to be the most active and the most successful sporting nation in the world*. It is a vision shared by all of sport. The commitment is to refine and review priorities on a regular basis.
  
- *Sport England* is the national agency driving sports development. Its stated future role is to be the strategic lead for sport in England. The East Regional Plan for Sport has set a target of making England an active nation by 2020 by achieving 70% participation in sport and physical activity which has also been adopted as an objective for Sport England East Region.



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## PART 4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The following aim and objectives have been developed by KKP as a result of the identified key issues within the Assessment Report. They link closely to the Council's corporate objectives by highlighting the aims to balance its efforts between delivering good services, safeguarding the well being of all and reducing inequalities of access to services.

### 4.1 Aim

*'DBC aims to provide, or have assisted in the provision of an appropriate distribution and range of good quality, accessible sport and recreation facilities to provide opportunities for participation in indoor sports by residents from all sections of the community.'*<sup>1</sup>

### 4.2 Strategic objectives

1. To provide good quality sport and recreation facilities.
2. Provide affordable facilities, which are accessible to all sections of the community.
3. New facilities will only be provided or supported if they contribute to the appropriate distribution of facilities.
4. Increase access to indoor sports facilities:
  - ❑ Locate any new facilities near public transport hubs.
  - ❑ Increase public transport links to larger sites, especially at weekends and throughout the summer.
  - ❑ Increase partnerships with local education authority sites i.e. schools.
  - ❑ Further support schools to maximise the availability of community space for both sport and recreation activities.
5. Ensure provision of accessible leisure facilities by:
  - ❑ Maintaining access to good quality sport centres within at least 15 minutes drive (Sport England guidelines) of the settlement areas.
  - ❑ Maintaining access to good quality community facilities within 1-2 km.
6. Develop facilities that function as a catalyst for community participation in a range of activities that contribute to the social life and well being of the community. Improve the quality of life and health of Dacorum residents.
7. Maintain and further develop marketing of sport centres and community facilities to enhance public awareness to all sections of the community.

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<sup>1</sup> The aim was developed and written by KKP for the purpose of this Strategy.

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8. Fully DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant facilities to be achieved by 2007.



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## PART 5. TARGETS

Following on from the strategic objectives, a number of targets have been produced and should be implemented to enable the policy objectives to be delivered effectively. It is recommended that DBC adopt these to enable it to achieve the Strategy's aims and objectives.

### TARGET 1 – *link to objective 1*

To adopt a provision hierarchy, which enables resources to be targeted at sites of strategic importance on a local and district-wide level for the refurbishment and development of new facilities. (Please refer to Part 6 of this report)

### TARGET 2 – *link to objective 1*

To develop a rolling refurbishment of DBC owned sports centres over the next ten years.

### TARGET 3 – *link to objective 8*

Ensure that all new built facilities meet Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) guidelines.

Ensure that existing facilities make reasonable adjustments to meet with DDA legislation by 2007.

Support community centres/village halls, in gaining funding, if required, to upgrade buildings to meet with DDA requirements.

### TARGET 4 – *link to objective 4*

In partnership with Hertfordshire County Council LEA, improve and increase provision of indoor facilities at school sites by 2010.

All new school facilities must commit to at least 25 hours of community use per week for planning permission to be granted.

### TARGET 5 – *link to objectives 4 and 5*

Detailed community use agreement to be written into planning applications for all new sports and leisure facilities, particularly at school sites. This will ensure appropriate community usage of new facilities in line with DBC policies. It should include pricing policy and opening time commitments.

Monitor and update community use agreements of facilities on a yearly basis. Offer guidance and support to facility providers throughout the rest of the year.

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### TARGET 6 – *link to objective 2*

Review the pricing policies of the different facility providers within Dacorum and neighbouring authorities to make informed decisions about affordability of facilities for all sections of the community by the end of 2006.

### TARGET 7 – *link to objectives 1 and 4*

Phase in the use of Service Level Agreements for the management of community centres where appropriate within the next five years.

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## **5.1 Management objectives**

A number of management objectives should be implemented to enable the above targets and strategic objectives to be delivered:

1. Within a phased programme, improve the quality of indoor sports facilities including their ancillary facilities such as car and cycle parking.
2. Use development opportunities and consult with the sporting community, local residents, parish councils and management committees to identify facility need and increase and/or improve the existing in line with the findings of the Assessment Report.
3. Develop a general framework to enable specific management committees and parish councils, where needs have been identified, to implement development proposals.
4. Strive to ensure that where sites may be lost, through development or closure, that facilities of the same or improved standard are provided to meet the continued needs of residents.
5. Work with and assist partner agencies (such as Hertfordshire County Council) to provide usable, accessible and viable community buildings and sport centres.
6. Provide assistance and support to those facilities that have yet to meet DDA requirements and seek to ensure that facilities are accessible to all residents.
7. Strive to ensure that there is a clearly identified community and sporting need for development of new facilities.
8. Ensure that all new or replacement facilities are developed to meet minimum contemporary specifications of length, breadth, lighting, floor space etc. as set out by Sport England.
9. Develop written agreements for provision of new facilities located on school sites to ensure appropriate levels of usage to all sections of the community.

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## PART 6. HIERARCHIES OF PROVISION

In relation to TARGET 1 - a settlement hierarchy has been created to assist with the strategic creation and investment in indoor sports facility provision. It is recommended that this be adopted by DBC.

According to PPG17: In rural areas or where some populations are isolated from the main district centre, there can be significant distances between settlements. At the same time it is rarely possible for every settlement to have its own school, post office, general store, village hall and recreation ground. This gives rise to the concept of 'settlement hierarchy' in which some forms of provision are concentrated in a limited number of 'key settlements' but intended to serve several settlements.

Three different levels of settlements have been created for Dacorum. The largest type of settlement being 'borough-wide facility' and the smallest settlement being 'local facility'. These levels have been determined by KKP based on the analysis areas used in the Assessment Report for mapping as agreed by the steering group and developed following consultation.

### 6.1 Hierarchy of leisure facilities

Since the supply of facilities is broadly sufficient, KKP has provided a framework for improvement and development of facilities. As a minimum, these aspirational standards are what should be in place in Dacorum by 2015.

As it has already been identified that there is no shortfall of sports centres, the majority of provision is already in place, for example KKP would recommend that Hemel Sports Centre is the 'Borough-wide' facility. This is because it services the whole of the Borough and already has the facilities and infrastructure in place to deliver the minimum requirements.

Category	Minimum size and facilities
Borough-wide Facility	At least: 25 metre, 8 lane swimming pool with learner pool. Swimming 'Centre of Excellence' 9 badminton court sports hall with storage. Gymnastics 'Centre of Excellence' Fitness suite: 50 - 100 pieces of equipment (cardio-vascular and resistance). 4 squash courts. Dance studio. Martial arts studio. Ancillary changing facilities including individual and group changing rooms. Cafeteria. Adequate car parking for peak time usage in a safe and secure location adjoining the facility.

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Category	Minimum size and facilities
Area Facility (one per analysis area)	At least 25 metre, 4 lane swimming pool with learner pool. 6 badminton court sports hall with storage. 2 squash courts. Fitness suite: 30 – 50 pieces of equipment (cardio-vascular and resistance). Dance studio. Refreshments via vending machines. Adequate number of car parking spaces in a safe and secure location adjoining the facility.
Local Facility (one per large village or significant neighbourhood)	Hall to accommodate fitness classes and martial arts activities. Fitness provision: 10 - 20 pieces of equipment (cardio-vascular and resistance). Car parking available locally.

### Recommendations:

It is recommended that the following facilities be adopted as per the categories in the hierarchy:

Category	Coverage	Recommended facilities
Borough wide facility	One to service the whole borough.	Hemel Sports Centre.
Area facility	One per analysis area.	Hemel – As above. Berkhamsted – Berkhamsted Sports Centre. Tring – Tring Sports Centre. Eastern – None identified. Southern – Kings Langley School.
Local Facility	One per large village or significant neighbourhood.	To be located at current community centre facilities.

Education facilities, including dual use sites can fit into any category as appropriate as shown above i.e. the inclusion of Kings Langley School and Tring Sports Centre. Where education sites do not appear in the above table, then as curricular demand requires it, provision of school sports facilities is important. As a priority, facilities where there is also proven demand for community use should be supported.

### Summary

The proposed settlement hierarchy aims for a balanced spread of provision against population and accessibility. Provision of these facilities does not necessarily have to take the form of DBC managed/owned facilities.

As indicated earlier and reflected in the hierarchy, there is no shortfall of new sport centre provision. However, as identified earlier, there is a gap in provision in the

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Markyate and Flamstead area. This is also identified as a gap in Eastern analysis area in the hierarchy. The population of Eastern analysis area is not sufficient to justify a new sports facility. However, alternative options should be considered by DBC relating to pricing and transport to encourage use of other sites. More effective use of community based facilities in the area for sporting activity should be examined.

In order to satisfy the hierarchy, there is a requirement for a sports hall at Kings Langley School. This was also identified during consultation as a demand area. There is also a requirement to develop Hemel Sports Centre as a Swimming 'Centre of Excellence'.

At the lower end of the scale (local facility) there are some gaps in provision of fitness equipment. These will contribute to the social life and well being of the community by increase the quality of life and health of Dacorum residents on a more localised basis. Such provision could incorporate a small sports hall and some fitness provision as identified in the hierarchy. It does not necessarily require new build but could be developed as additional provision in current community facilities.

## 6.2 Hierarchy of community facilities

Since the supply of facilities is broadly sufficient, KKP has provided a framework for improvement and development of facilities. As a minimum, these aspirational standards are what should be in place in Dacorum by 2015.

DBC must be cognisant of the provision of non-council facilities in relation to the further development of the hierarchy for community provision. The majority of facilities, although owned by DBC, are managed by community associations and should be encouraged by the Council to achieve the level of provision suggested in the hierarchy.

Classification	Size and facilities	Services
Borough wide facility	<p>Four or more rooms with at least one statutory service on site.</p> <p>Complete DDA compliance.</p> <p>No minimum/maximum size of facility. Should reflect identified demand for such facilities in the area.</p> <p>Should provide community, health, education, sports, cultural and play facilities of a high standard.</p> <p>Complementing other specific services e.g. libraries.</p> <p>Adequate car parking for peak time usage in a safe and secure location adjoining the facility.</p>	<p>Council facilities such as a library and customer service centre.</p> <p>Other external partnerships to provide services such as PCT or Connexions.</p> <p>Community café.</p> <p>Meeting space and community rooms.</p> <p>Children's play area. Crèche.</p> <p>Youth activity space.</p> <p>Outdoor sports provision.</p> <p>Card access to facility and equipment to track/monitor use (people counter).</p>
Borough wide cultural facility	<p>A 'cultural resource centre'</p> <p>A hall, meeting rooms, kitchen, ablution</p>	<p>A large facility which is able to accommodate events and religious functions at short notice and is flexible</p>

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Classification	Size and facilities	Services
	blocks, IT facilities and a small library.	in recognising the needs of its community.
Area facility (one per analysis area)	<p>Minimum three rooms.</p> <p>Smaller scale facilities supporting the local community as appropriate depending on the make up of the neighbourhood and identified demand.</p> <p>Complete DDA compliance.</p> <p>Traditional community centre style facilities.</p> <p>Provides a mixture of residential space and room hire.</p>	<p>Community gym specifically aimed at disadvantaged communities. Exercise on Referral and other 'Health' referral routes.</p> <p>May provide some additional complementary services such as café or crèche.</p> <p>Card access to facility and equipment to track/monitor use. (people counter).</p>
Area cultural facility (one per analysis area)	<p>Minimum one room with kitchen/catering facilities.</p> <p>Smaller scale facilities supporting the local community as appropriate depending on the make up of the neighbourhood and identified demand.</p>	A facility which is able to accommodate events and religious functions at short notice and is flexible in recognising the needs of its community.
Local Facility (one per village or significant neighbourhood)	<p>Generally one meeting space.</p> <p>Very localised facilities, which may be church hall type provision.</p> <p>Usually room hire only.</p>	Generic community space that may be utilised for a number of purposes e.g. art classes, sport and meetings.

### Recommendations:

It is recommended that the following facilities be adopted as per the categories in the hierarchy:

Category	Coverage	Recommended facilities
Borough wide facility	One to service the whole borough.	Gadebridge Community Centre.
Borough wide cultural facility	One to service the whole borough.	Gadebridge Community Centre.
Area facility	One per analysis area.	<p>Hemel – As above.</p> <p>Berkhamsted – None identified.</p> <p>Tring – Tring Community Centre.</p> <p>Eastern – Markyate Village Hall.</p> <p>Southern – Kings Langley Community Centre.</p>

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Category	Coverage	Recommended facilities
Area cultural facility	One per analysis area.	Bennetts End Community Centre. Grovehill Community Centre. Woodhall Farm Community Centre. Highfield Community Centre.
Local Facility	One per large village or significant neighbourhood.	As demand dictates to service the local communities and neighbourhoods. These facilities service distinct communities.

### **Summary**

The only identified gap in provision is for community provision in Berkhamsted. However, it may not be appropriate for this shortfall to be met with a new build. Further investigation should be carried out to identify if current facilities and services in the area could be extended or further developed. Provision does not have to be in the form of DBC managed/owned facilities but may be provided as the result of developing relationships with town and parish councils and privately managed facilities.

Although gaps have been identified through consultation for more cultural facilities to accommodate events and religious functions, it is recommended that investigation should be carried out to identify if current facilities and services in the area could be extended or further developed.

Generally, Dacorum has a good spread of community hall provision and although there is great potential for current facilities to increase sustainability through improvement of services offered as identified in the hierarchy.

Given that the majority of community facilities are non-council managed facilities the hierarchy is provided as a basis for encouragement in terms of the services provided rather than so much emphasis on facilities.

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## PART 7. SITE-SPECIFIC ACTION PLAN 2005-2015

### 7.1 Criteria to justify the inclusion of sites within the action plan

*The following criteria have been used to identify priorities and justify the inclusion of sites within the action plan.*

- ❑ The area is deficient in the development/enhancement of sites.
- ❑ Sites included within the hierarchy.
- ❑ The site has received a relatively high score via the scoring criteria from within the analysis area.
- ❑ Significant demand has been identified for new or improved facilities at the site.
- ❑ The site requires some support to increase awareness of services and facilities available.
- ❑ The site suffers from access problems in terms of safety, poor quality facilities and poor disability provision.

### 7.2 Actions for specific sites

Site	Priority	Recommended actions	Partnerships	Outcomes	Link to Objectives
Hemel Sports Centre	High	To develop as the Borough Swim Centre.	DBC, SS, HASA	Strategic, borough wide coordination of swimming and the 'Learn to Swim' programme. Improved pool programming across DBC and school sites to accommodate additional demand for water time from clubs.	4, 6
		To support Sapphire Gymnastics Club in pursuing funding for extension to the current gymnastics facility.	DBC, SS, SGC, HGA	Meet identified demand for gymnastics. Long term sustainability of the Club and Centre of Excellence.	1, 3



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Site	Priority	Recommended actions	Partnerships	Outcomes	Link to Objectives
Berkhamsted Sports Centre	Medium	Major refurbishment of 'wet' facilities and general refurbishment/redecoration of remaining facility including changing rooms.	DBC, SS	Provision of good quality facilities meeting demand and needs of users.	1, 4, 5
Tring Sports Centre	High	Major refurbishment of 'wet' facilities and general refurbishment/redecoration of remaining facility including changing rooms.	DBC, SS	Provision of good quality facilities meeting demand and needs of users.	1, 4, 5
Kings Langley School	Medium	Changing room refurbishment and disability access to be improved.	KLS, LEA, DBC	Provision of good quality facilities meeting demand and needs of users.  Long term sustainability of Kings Langley Swimming Club.	1, 4, 5
		To support the School in pursuing funding for provision of a 4 badminton court sports hall.	KLS, LEA, DBC	Meet both curricular and community demand identified in the area.  Meet gaps identified with the hierarchy.	1, 4, 5
The Cavendish School	High	Encourage and support the School to seek funding for refurbishment and improved indoor sports facilities.	TCS, LEA, DBC	Provision of good quality facilities to meet curricular, extra curricular and community use at this Sports College.	1, 4
Ashlyns School	Low	To support the School in partnership with Berkhamsted Gymnastics Club in pursuing funding for extension/replacement of current gymnastics facility.	AS, LEA, BGC, DBC	Provision of good quality facilities for curricular and extra curricular use.  Long term sustainability of Berkhamsted Gymnastics Club.	1, 3
Berkhamsted Racquets Club	Medium	Support the Club in provision of two indoor tennis courts.	BRC, LTA, DBC	Provision of good quality facilities meeting demand and needs of users.  Long term sustainability of Berkhamsted Racquets Club.  Meet LTA priorities.	3, 4



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Site	Priority	Recommended actions	Partnerships	Outcomes	Link to Objectives
Community Centre in Berkhamsted	Medium	Further explore the opportunities to meet the identified gap in provision of community centres in Berkhamsted. Explore the opportunities for other community facilities to increase provision to service Berkhamsted.	DBC	Contribution to the social life and well being of the community by increasing the quality of life and health of Dacorum residents on a more localised basis.  Meet gap identified in the hierarchy.	4, 6
Berkhamsted Collegiate School	High	Provide support and guidance to the School in increasing the usage of the new swimming pool.	BCS, DBC, HASA	Increasing access to school sites. Meet demand for water time identified by clubs.	4, 7
Sports facility in Flamstead or Markyate	Low	Explore alternative to pricing and transport issues to encourage use of other sites. More effective use of community based facilities in the area for sporting activity should be examined.	DBC	Providing more accessible facilities.  Improve the well being of the community by increasing the quality of life and health of Dacorum residents on a more localised basis.	4, 6

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Key:

*High priority – one to three years*

*Medium priority – four to six years*

*Low priority – seven to ten years*

## GLOSSARY

DBC – Dacorum Borough Council

SS – Sportspace

HASA – Hertfordshire Amateur Swimming Association

SGC – Sapphire Gymnastics Club

HGA – Hertfordshire Gymnastics Association

KLS – Kings Langley School

LEA – Local education authority

TCS – The Cavendish School

AS – Ashlyns School

BGC – Berkhamsted Gymnastics Club

BRC – Berkhamsted Racquets Club

LTA – Lawn Tennis Association

NSCCA – Northchurch Social Centre Community Association

BCS – Berkhamsted Collegiate School

