

# Alsager Sports Needs Assessment (SNA)

## Final Report

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## Introduction

This report summarises the findings of the assessment of needs for indoor sports facilities and outdoor sports pitches in Alsager. This Sports Needs Assessment (SNA) is presented to provide the basis for partner agreement and moving forward with the planning application for the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) site.

The SNA summarises and updates all previous reports as appropriate and focuses on the issues raised at various meetings with Sport England and the workshop session held with all partners on December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

It outlines the evidence collated relating to playing pitches and indoor sports facilities and uses this to set out the facilities required at the MMU site to meet local need. It also demonstrates how the proposals meet Sport England Planning policy. Appendix one sets out an outline business plan to illustrate how the proposals can be delivered sustainably.

The SNA is not a planning application; the findings of the SNA will be used as the basis for the final planning application alongside other supporting information.

## Planning Policy Context

### **The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the clear link between sport and health. Directly referencing open space and sport, paragraph 73 of the NPPF states:

*'Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessment should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.'*

Furthermore Paragraph 74 states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- *an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements;*
- *the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- *the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.*

National planning policy is further supported by Sport England's policy on the loss of playing fields as set out in 'A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England'(2010). Sport England is a statutory consultee for any planning application that affects playing fields and the policy is an interpretation of how national planning policy is implemented. Sport England's policy states that that Sport England would oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of or prejudice the use of all or part of a playing field – or land last used as a playing field in an adopted or draft deposit local plan, unless, in the judgement of Sport England, one of the specific circumstances applies.

The policy states Sport England will not object to the loss of playing fields where one or more of the following exception criteria are met:

- **E1** – A carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport
- **E2** - The proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields, and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use
- **E3** - The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins), a reduction in the size of the playing areas of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting / ancillary facilities on the site
- **E4** – The playing field or playing fields, which would be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quantity and or equivalent or better quality, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development
- **E5** - The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing field.

Sport England has published two new methodologies for how NPPF compliant *needs assessment* work should be undertaken:

- The Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide (ANOG)
- The Playing Pitch Strategy methodology (PPS)

Essentially these form the new ‘*how to do*’ needs assessments for indoor and outdoor sport in England and represent sports response to paras 73 and 74 of the NPPF. Whilst they are mainly aimed at local authorities they provide a guide for all organizations with plans to develop their sports facilities.

Therefore in line with the NPPF and Sport England Playing Fields policy, this report sets out a sport and leisure needs assessment for Alsager<sup>1</sup> and the surrounding area based on Sport England methodologies and illustrates how the proposals meet NPPF and PPS policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Alsager was agreed at the scoping stage with Sport England as a sensible catchment on which to base the analysis. The Council PPS has slightly extended the boundaries and this update has been picked up in the updated PPS analysis to ensure the SNA is consistent with the Council's PPS

## Indoor Sport Facilities – ANOG Analysis

In terms of the sports facilities at the current Alsager site, these have included in the past:

- 6 senior grass football pitches (one floodlit for training purposes)
- 2 senior grass rugby pitches
- 1 full-size floodlit sand based Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP)
- Cricket square
- 8 tarmacadam tennis courts (5 netball courts)
- 4-court sports hall, plus 2 x performance studios, 18 station fitness suite, old school gym and ancillary provision
- Swimming pool

The indoor facilities are now closed. The pool finally closed in 2010 and the sports hall in 2012. Both facilities were provided for MMU students. Alongside the students, as part of the rationalisation programme, MMU sports provision has now moved from Alsager to Crewe. In 2010 a new 8-court sports hall, 50 station fitness suite and three quarter size 3G AGP was developed at the Crewe campus, alongside new exercise and sports science provision. Cheshire East Council (CEC) is also developing a new 8-lane swimming pool, with 17m training pool in Crewe. All developments will have significant community sporting impact and help to offset the losses at Alsager. Partnerships for outdoor sport are also now in place across Crewe (detailed in the PPS section), again bringing significant investment into community sport. Despite this investment MMU remain committed to providing an appropriate sporting legacy for Alsager.

Initial closure of the MMU pool did put pressure on Alsager Leisure Centre and neighbouring pools in terms of accommodating swimming; however usage has now been accommodated elsewhere, demonstrating the capacity in the catchment area. In terms of the MMU sports hall this had limited usage, when it was last open, which comprised<sup>2</sup> - Mondays 8pm to 9pm for Triton Hockey Club and Tuesdays 6.30pm to 8pm for AFC Football Club. Because the sports hall was primarily for student academic and recreational use there was not a high level promotion of the facilities however access to the sports hall was never restricted and when the site was in *fully operational* only two or three clubs ever regularly used the hall.

In setting out the summary of indoor needs it should be stressed that discussions with CEC and Sport England in relation to previous needs assessment work have accepted the arguments for the loss of the swimming pool and sports hall. This was not an area of concern flagged up at consultation meetings or the partner workshop. The summary set out below is therefore presented largely for completeness.

### Summary of Indoor Needs

In line with the NPPF it is therefore necessary to illustrate that the key indoor facilities – swimming pool and sports hall are surplus to requirements, can be lost in sports planning terms and do not need to be *re-provided* as part of the development of the MMU site.

Using the ANOG methodology the SNA concludes there are no identifiable deficiencies in indoor sports hall provision in line with paragraph 73 of the NPPF, the current MMU hall had limited community sporting value in terms of needs and use and is surplus to requirements in line with paragraph 74 of the NPPF. It does not need to be *protected* as there is sufficient

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<sup>2</sup> Booking records supplied by MMU when the facility was last open

*quantity, quality, access and availability* to sports hall provision in the Alsager and wider catchment to meet needs.

There is *theoretical* over provision of sports halls in the Alsager and wider catchment according to Sport England Facilities Planning Model (FPM) analysis. Utilising the Sport England Sports Facility Calculator (SFC)<sup>3</sup> for the current Alsager population suggests the need for 3.28 courts, rising to 3.95 when the implication of population growth is built in<sup>4</sup>. The Alsager Leisure Centre site is currently a 6 court sports hall which would therefore meet sports hall needs. There is therefore no need for two large sports halls, (10-courts in total i.e. 6 at ALC and 4 at MMU), in close proximity to meet current and future sports hall needs in Alsager.

Alsager therefore has sufficient sports hall provision at the Alsager Leisure Centre (ALC) site to meet current and future needs based on population and predicted growth. There was little or no community *pay and play* use of the MMU sports hall previously. The capacity of both MMU (when it was open) and ALC is low i.e. they are not full. In terms of ALC the Council feel to accommodate additional use is a matter of programming and not a provision issue. The Council therefore feel there is still capacity at the sports hall at ALC even with the closure of MMU. Clubs, who previously used the MMU site, have been largely re-located to a combination of other sites including at ALC and the new MMU 8-court hall at Crewe.

As the MMU sports hall is opposite ALC, its continued closure does not and would not pose any accessibility issues.

ALC does though require investment, in quality terms the facility is aging. Enhancement and investment at ALC would present a more sustainable long-term solution in terms of sports hall provision in Alsager, rather than *protecting (re-opening) or re-providing* a sports hall at the MMU site, which would result in over-provision and an unsustainable position. There would be a duplication of facilities and two investment and maintenance liabilities. The Council and the Leisure Trust supports this position.

There are no identifiable deficiencies in swimming pool provision in line with paragraph 73 of the NPPF, the current MMU pool has no sporting value in terms of needs and use and is surplus to requirements in line with paragraph 74 of the NPPF.

Analysis in Alsager utilising the Sports Facility Calculator (SFC) suggests the need for 2.39 lanes of a pool, rising to 2.88 when the implication of various population growth scenarios are built in (as above). The Alsager Leisure Centre site is currently a 6-lane pool, which would therefore meet swimming pool needs. In terms of the standard in the CEC Local Infra-structure Plan (LIP) of providing 13m<sup>2</sup> water per thousand population, this would equate to a need for 191.49m<sup>2</sup> for the future population of Alsager. The current pool provides significantly more water space than this.

Development of the new Crewe Pool (being promoted by CEC) and investment in provision at ALC would more than meet the swimming needs of both Crewe and Alsager<sup>5</sup>. Initial closure of the MMU pool did put pressure on ALC but users have now been accommodated elsewhere. It is accepted locally by all partners that the pool is not sustainable. Enhancements at ALC and the potential new provision in Crewe would meet swimming provision needs in Alsager and the wider catchment going forward. This is supported by the FPM analysis, which was set out in detail in the earlier needs assessment work.

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<sup>3</sup> Cheshire East Local Development Framework LIP: Baseline Report 2011 Chapter 14 Culture and Leisure recommends the use of Sport England tools to assess supply and demand

<sup>4</sup> Based on potential future growth in town to 14,730

<sup>5</sup> It is accepted that swimming pools have larger catchment areas

The two large indoor sports facilities in the town of Alsager provided by ALC and the former indoor provision at the MMU site therefore represent over-provision for the town of Alsager, as illustrated by the analysis above and highlighted in the table below. The indoor provision at MMU was provided in large part for the student population, now that has gone the level of provision is in excess of local population needs both now and with growth factored in. The effect of population and household growth will also have a negligible impact on this as illustrated.

The level of provision provided by ALC in terms of sports hall and swimming pools is sufficient to meet current and future needs. There are quality issues at the site and potential to increase capacity and adjust programming to accommodate club needs better in the sports hall but in terms of indoor space it is not a *provision* but more a *management* issue. The development of the new pool in Crewe alongside investment in ALC will meet both Crewe and Alsager's wider catchment area swimming needs going forward.

The table overleaf summarises the needs assessment for sports halls and swimming pools and the recommended policy priority for Alsager.

**Table 1 – ANOG Summary Table**

	Sports Hall Provision	Swimming Pool Provision
<b>Quantity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is theoretical over provision of sports halls in the Alsager and wider catchment (see detailed analysis)</li> <li>Utilising the Sport England Sports Facility Calculator (SFC) for the current Alsager population suggests the need for 3.28 courts, rising to 3.95 when the implication of population growth is built in. The Alsager Leisure Centre site is currently a 6 court sports hall which would therefore meet sports hall needs</li> <li>There is therefore no need for two large sports halls, (10-courts in total), in close proximity to meet current and future sports hall needs in Alsager</li> <li>The current operators at ALC confirm there is sufficient quantity of provision</li> <li>Sporting make-up of catchment does not reflect a 'sports hall profile' more elderly population, which requires smaller flexible activity space, this will be provided as part of the investment at ALC to mitigate indoor loss, an element may also be built into the clubhouse design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis in Alsager utilising the Sports Facility Calculator (SFC) suggests the need for 2.39 lanes of a pool, rising to 2.88 when the implication of various population growth scenarios are built in</li> <li>The Alsager Leisure Centre site is currently a 6-lane pool, which would therefore meet swimming pool needs</li> <li>In terms of the standard in the CEC Local Infra-structure Plan (LIP) of providing 13m<sup>2</sup> water per thousand population, this would equate to a need for 191.49m<sup>2</sup> for the future population of Alsager. The current pool provides significantly more water space than this</li> </ul>
<b>Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ALC site is 6-courts and therefore provides a more flexible configuration than the MMU site. It meets the needs of most sports hall sports</li> <li>The current ALC site is now over 30-years old and some enhancement is required, which forms part of the recommended way forward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The pool has been closed now for approaching 3-years and is de-commissioned</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MMU sports hall is directly opposite the ALC site. Its closure will not present a barrier in terms of physical location to users who can just as easily access ALC</li> <li>There is also significant new sports hall provision in Crewe (8-court hall), which is accessible in a 15-minute drivetime, this is used by basketball and netball clubs who previously used MMU</li> <li>Local 'walk to' and wider 'drive to' catchments are therefore adequately accommodated in terms of sports hall provision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MMU swimming pool is directly opposite the ALC site. Its closure will not present a barrier in terms of physical location to users who can just as easily access ALC</li> <li>There is also significant new swimming pool provision planned in the wider catchment, which will be accessible in a 15-minute drivetime</li> <li>Local 'walk to' and wider 'drive to' catchments are therefore adequately accommodated in terms of swimming pool provision</li> </ul>
<b>Availability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MMU when open was not used as a community sports hall as students dominated usage. There was little community use</li> <li>ALC has capacity to accommodate more use. The theoretical model suggests it is operating at only 50% capacity, consultation with the management team confirms there is availability in the sports hall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When operating the pool was available however previous clubs and user groups have now been accommodated elsewhere</li> </ul>

Sports Hall Provision	Swimming Pool Provision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pricing at ALC in line with local norms and is not a barrier to availability</li> </ul>	

In developing the SNA, consultation with the CEC, the Trust, clubs and governing bodies does not suggest any strategic priority for the sports hall or swimming pool on the MMU site.

In terms of general health and fitness provision there does however appear to be scope to increase provision for the town based on the supply and demand analysis, particularly owing to the loss of the health suite at MMU and the flexible studio spaces. It would appear sensible for this to form part of any redevelopment of ALC, to further develop the indoor hub concept and help lift the quality of ALC. The replacement of a facility at this site would address the shortfall left by the loss of MMU (20 stations) and studio space and would also increase the quality and attractiveness at ALC and limit the reliance on commercial centres to fulfil a community function.

Given all the evidence and the existing levels of supply a sensible strategy moving forward for tennis in Alsager would appear to be to invest in the enhancement of current provision across the town, which is significant, as opposed to protecting facilities at MMU. Cheshire East and Alsager is not a priority area for the Lawn Tennis Association whose future strategy focuses on urban areas. There is good provision across the town at Alsager Tennis Club. The Council's own green space strategy also notes the priority on Alsager Bowling and Recreation Club. Future investment in the school / Leisure Centre courts may be a future priority for the school. In terms of need, enhancing these courts as opposed to protecting the MMU courts or providing new provision would appear the sensible way forward for Alsager as a whole. This would also have the added benefit of providing upgraded facilities for netball, which link into the indoor space at ALC.

### **Meeting NPPF Policy**

To meet the indoor sport needs in Alsager enhancing the current ALC site presents the sensible way forward in line with the evidence and needs and the Council's strategy of developing key indoor hub sites. ALC is the key indoor site for the town of Alsager. The town cannot sustain two.

Alsager does not need the duplication of indoor provision at both ALC and MMU, therefore the indoor provision at MMU is surplus to requirements in line with NPPF para 74 and does not need to be *protected or re-provided*, other than the fitness suite and studio space.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the needs assessment and previous discussions with the Council and Sport England investment will be provided to enhance Alsager Leisure Centre focusing on addressing the identified deficiency in health and fitness provision and studio space. The Council has aspirations to increase the health and fitness provision from 32 stations to 64 stations through the conversion of a squash court and development of extra studio space.

## Outdoor Sports Facilities – PPS Analysis

This section evaluates the requirement for playing fields in the Alsager area in the context of the current and potential demand and is the key area of clarification sought by Sport England. All the data used in the analysis (other than where stated differently) uses the Council's data, collated as part of their PPS

The analysis considers:

- Current and future needs for playing pitches within Alsager
- The adequacy of existing provision to meet current and future needs
- Way forward in terms of pitch requirements at the MMU site.

### Methodology

The basis for decision making in relation to playing fields is typically a local authority playing pitch strategy (PPS). Cheshire East Council are in the process of producing their PPS and a fully adopted document is therefore not available. In line with planning policy where the Council do not have approved strategies and policies Developers / applicants are encouraged to develop their own needs assessment work to make the case, hence the SNA.

This assessment therefore uses the Sport England Playing Pitch Methodology (*set out in Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance, An Approach to developing and Delivering A Playing Pitch Strategy, Sport England 2013*) to determine the current and projected future demand for playing fields in Alsager.

Where data is available from the playing pitch assessment that is currently underway, this information has been supplied by Cheshire East Council and used to form the basis of the evaluation. The data used in the SNA is therefore compatible and reflects the PPS data and will ultimately reflect the PPS findings. For further consistency with the Councils emerging Playing Pitch Strategy, this assessment considers supply and demand in the ward of Alsager, as well as the adjacent ward of Odd Rode.<sup>6</sup>

### History of Site Usage - University Playing Pitch Needs

MMU Football, rugby and hockey teams have historically been based at the MMU site in Alsager. Reflecting the move of the university to Crewe, these teams have all relocated from this site and the playing fields in Alsager are no longer required for university sport. Teams have been relocated as follows:

- **Hockey** – now play at the Crewe Vagrants Hockey Club having developed a partnership with the club. This partnership included relaying the synthetic pitch, which was significant investment from MMU. University teams play at the site outside of peak hockey times and there is no impact on the overall capacity of the facility.
- **Rugby** – the rugby teams have also relocated to the Crewe Vagrants site linking with Crewe and Nantwich RUFC. There are no residual rugby requirements in Alsager. Crewe and Nantwich RUFC currently use the two pitches on the Crewe Vagrants site (which are now also used by the university teams) as well as pitches at Nantwich High School. While capacity at the site is currently constrained, permission and funding for

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<sup>6</sup> Previous analysis only considered Alsager

the creation of four new pitches at a nearby site in Wynbunbury Road has recently been secured. These new facilities will mitigate the impact of the additional teams from MMU and secure the long term future of the rugby club. These facilities are to be open by 2015 and MMU have funded drainage and irrigation work to ensure that quality is maintained and that additional demand created by the university teams can be accommodated without a negative impact on the site.

- **Football** – the MMU football teams have moved to Sandbach United FC and have developed a partnership with the club. This includes running a BTEC course and footballing academy. The university teams use facilities outside of peak time hours and therefore do not impact upon the ability of community teams to use facilities during peak hours although they do add weekly wear and tear. The university are also using in the Cumberland Arena in Crewe. Future investment in football facilities in Crewe has yet to be finalised, but current discussions focus around improvement of facilities at the Cumberland Arena.

All university teams have therefore been successfully relocated through a combination of upgrades and new facility provision and there are no further requirements for university related teams to access outdoor sports facilities in Alsager.

The MMU pitches which remain will therefore be for the use solely of the Alsager community, which is a significant added benefit from the previous dual-usage.

The remaining demand for sports facilities in Alsager is therefore from the community. The analysis therefore outlines the current demand and summarises the adequacy of supply to meet demand, providing an overview of the facilities required.

## Demand

Appendix B summarises all of the teams based in Alsager. This includes teams that are associated with Alsager based clubs, but travel outside of the town to play, whether voluntarily (for example to play in a league that is run from a central venue) or by requirement (for example due to a lack of facilities in Alsager). The team data is the Councils data from the PPS, except the figures for AFC Alsager, which have been updated since the PPS return<sup>7</sup>.

It indicates that:

- There are a total of 30 teams based in the town
- There are six adult teams. Five of these currently require pitches in Alsager – this equates to 2.5 match equivalents per week. The remaining team (Scholar Green FC) travel outside to Clough Hall in Stoke. Alsager Arms FC folded this year, in September 2014
- There are 10 youth teams (aged U13 – U16) based in Alsager and demand therefore equates to 5 match equivalents per week. Of these, 6 (3 match equivalents) currently travel outside of the town to play. Most of these teams are based at AFC Alsager and they travel outside the town due to a perceived lack of appropriate facilities within it
- There are 6 teams playing 9v9 football, all within the South Cheshire Youth League – three of these currently travel outside of the town to play. Demand therefore equates

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<sup>7</sup> The AFC Alsager return for the PPS was out of date and reflected the position on 2012-13

to a total of 3 match equivalents (1.5 of which are currently accommodated within the town)

- There are 5 teams playing 7v7 (2.5 match equivalents) and 3 playing 5v5 football (1.5 match equivalents). All of these teams play in the Crewe Alex Soccer Centre League which is a central venue league. These teams therefore travel outside of the town to play.

Appendix B indicates that with the exception of 3 adult teams, all competitive play takes place on a Sunday morning, and this is dictated by the league structures in the area. This means that there is a high peak time demand and that almost all play in the town needs to be accommodated within the same time period.

Dominating a small number of single teams, there are two large football clubs with multiple teams – Alsager Town FC (first team play at Step 5 of the National League Pyramid) who have senior teams as well as older youth teams and AFC Alsager, who focus primarily on junior teams, although have senior teams to support the transition between junior and senior football. AFC Alsager has grown significantly in recent years from its creation in 2007 and is now one of only 21 Community Charter Standard Clubs in Cheshire.

AFC Alsager indicate that while some teams within the club travel outside the club to participate in central venue leagues (and would continue to do so if additional pitches were provided within Alsager) some teams are currently displaced – travelling outside of Alsager due to a lack of capacity within the town. The club are currently playing within the South Cheshire league, but are likely to change leagues next season (2015 – 2016). They will still require home and away pitches in their new league. The club have confirmed that the South Cheshire League is not a central venue league and that they require pitches in Alsager.

### **Other Demand**

In addition to the formal teams, AFC Alsager also operate a crèche for young players 4 and upwards and have 50 players attending on a Saturday morning. The club also run tournaments and are building links with local primary schools and the high school, offering a football programme. In addition, linking with club aspirations to provide a high standard of coaching, a coach education programme takes place every Thursday. All of these activities require the use of appropriate facilities.

### **Training**

All of the 30 teams based within Alsager currently train at least once per week and the mini teams based at AFC Alsager (5v5 and 7v7) train twice. While some training activity takes place on a Saturday morning (mini squads) the majority is midweek (predominantly Monday / Tuesday and Wednesday), there are also development squads which train three times.

Training activity currently takes place primarily on sand based pitches at MMU and Alsager Leisure Centre as there are no 3G pitches available within the immediate vicinity and with the exception of Woodlands Stadium (which is used by Alsager Town on occasion for training) there are no floodlit grass pitches. Some teams do however travel to use 3G pitches in Crewe and Sandbach for training and must do so midweek, as they are unable to access suitable floodlit pitches in Alsager. Cheshire FA indicate that sand based facilities are no longer considered appropriate for club training and that all football activity should take place on grass and / or 3G pitches meeting with FA design criteria.

## Supply

Table 2 summarises the existing football pitches in Alsager and the level of community use that is available at each site. This information is extracted directly from information collated by Cheshire East Council as part of the preparation of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). This represents the most up to date information available at the time of preparation of this report.

Quality ratings have also been assigned to each pitch. These are based on Non Technical Assessments carried out across Cheshire East as a whole and grade the pitches in the context of all pitches within the local authority area. The assessment of sites as good, standard or poor therefore rates pitches relative to other provision within the Cheshire East Council area. This information has been supplied by Cheshire East Council and is still subject to change, but again represents the most up to date information available and has been used for consistency with the emerging PPS.

It should be noted that concerns have been raised by both the FA and AFC Alsager with regards the results of the quality assessments, specifically with regards pitches at Milton Park and Wood Park. The club indicate that these pitches are considered to be of poor quality and unsuitable for league play. The impact of this will be taken into account when evaluating pitch requirements for the MMU site.

**Table 2 - Football Pitch Sites in Alsager**

Site name	Adult Pitches	Youth Pitches (11v11)	9v9 Pitches	7v7 Pitches	5 v 5 Pitches	Level of Community Use	Quality Assessment	Notes
Alsager Academy / Alsager LC	1	1				Available and Used	Standard	
Cedar Avenue			1			Available and Used	Standard	
MMU	3					Available and Used	2 x standard, 1 x good	Club and FA consider facility to be poor and unusable
Cranberry Academy					2	Available and Used	Good	School Pitch Site – usage is archery and other outdoor sports
Milton Park		1				Available and Used	Standard	Club and FA consider facility to be poor and unusable
Pikemere School				1		Available and Used	Standard	
Scholar Green Primary School				1		Available and Used	Good	
Wood Park Stadium (The Town Ground)	1					Available and Used	Good	Club and FA consider facility to be poor and unusable
Alsager Highfields Community				1		Available but unused	Standard	

Site name	Adult Pitches	Youth Pitches (11v11)	9v9 Pitches	7v7 Pitches	5 v 5 Pitches	Level of Community Use	Quality Assessment	Notes
Primary School								
Portland Drive	1					Available but unused	Standard	
Wood Park		2				Available but unused	Standard	
Excalibur Primary School				1		Not available	Standard	
Rode Heath Primary School				1		Not available	Standard	

Table 2 indicates that there are 18 football pitches in total. Three of these pitches are currently situated at the MMU site and there is scope to mark out more pitches. Nine of the pitches are located at school sites and all but two are available to the community. With the exception of pitches at Alsager Academy (two), all others are at primary schools and are therefore 7v7 or 5 v 5 pitches.

The quality of pitches is directly linked to the amount of games that can be sustained on the site per week. FA guidance relating quality to capacity (*included in the Sport England document, Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance, An Approach to Developing and Delivering a Playing Pitch Strategy*) is summarised in Table 3 for reference purposes.

**Table 3 – Site Capacity Ratings**

Pitch Quality Rating	Adult Football	Youth Football	Mini Soccer
Good	3	4	6
Standard	2	2	4
Poor	1	1	2

Table 4 uses the site capacity (Tables 2 and 3) and the demand for pitches (Appendix B) and summarises the current use of each pitch. It indicates whether the site is at capacity or overplayed. Pitches at school sites have been assumed to sustain one match equivalent per week per pitch of school use as well as any community activity that is hosted.

It considers both:

- Use of pitches across the week and the amount of spare capacity available
- Spare capacity of pitches available at peak time.

It should be noted that Table 4 illustrates only the current use of pitches in Alsager – it does not include teams that would like to play in Alsager but are not currently doing so (displaced demand). The Sport England methodology highlights the importance of considering displaced demand and where this is generated by a lack of pitches (i.e. teams forced to travel) emphasises that these teams should be considered within the overall requirements for the local area.

**Table 4 – Current Use of Pitches in Alsager**

Site Name	Users	Pitch Type	NTA Rating	Ancillary Facilities	Site Capacity	Community Match Equivalents	Education / Training Use (Match Equivalents)	Total Use (Match Equivalents)	Capacity Available	Peak Time Availability	Notes
<b>Alsager Academy (Alsager LC)</b>	Bank Corner FC	Adult 11v11	Standard	Yes	2	0.5	1	1.5	0.5	0.5	
<b>Portland Drive</b>	n/a	Adult 11v11	Standard	No	2	0	0	0	2	1	
<b>Wood Park Stadium (Also Known As The Town Ground)</b>	Alsager Town	Adult 11v11	Good	Yes	3	1	1	2	0	0	Semi professional club at Tier 5 in pyramid. Reserved for club matches but also accommodates some training activity. Listed as no additional capacity as site is dedicated for semi professional team.
<b>MMU</b>	AFC Alsager		1 x good, 2 x standard	Yes	7	1	0	1	6	2.5	
<b>Alsager Highfields Community Primary School</b>	n/a	Mini (U7s-U8s) 5v5	Standard	No	4	0	2	2	2	1	
<b>Cranberry Academy</b>	Archer y	Mini (U7s-U8s) 5v5	Good	No	12	6	4	4	2	2	

Site Name	Users	Pitch Type	NTA Rating	Ancillary Facilities	Site Capacity	Community Match Equivalents	Education / Training Use (Match Equivalents)	Total Use (Match Equivalents)	Capacity Available	Peak Time Availability	Notes
<b>Pikemere School</b>	Non football uses	Mini (U9-U10) 7v7	Standard	No	4	0	2	2	2	1	
<b>Scholar Green Primary School</b>	n/a	Mini (U9-U10) 7v7	Good	No	6	0	2	2	4	1	
<b>Cedar Avenue</b>	AFC Alsager	Youth (U11-U12) 9v9	Standard	No	2	1.5	0	1.5	0.5	0.5 (if matches are played consecutively)	
<b>Alsager Academy (Alsager LC)</b>	AFC Alsager	Youth (U13-U16) 11v11	Standard	Yes	2	1	1	2	0	0	
<b>Milton Park</b>	n/a	Youth (U13-U16) 11v11	Standard	No	2	0	0	0	2	1	Club indicate that this site is of poor quality and unsuitable for league play
<b>Wood Park</b>	Alsager Town	Youth (U13-U16) 11v11	Standard	No	4	1	0	1	3	1	Note only one pitch currently appears to be marked out

Table 4 therefore indicates that in theory, there is spare capacity at most pitch sites across the town. With the exception of school sites offering 7v7 and 5 v 5 pitches, this is however relatively limited. In more detail, and taking figures at face value only (and excluding displaced teams), capacity analysis based on the current play indicates that:

- There is spare capacity for 8.5 adult games per week. Adult play is now split between Saturday PM and Sunday AM and because of this demand is more evenly spread and at peak time, there is scope to accommodate an additional 4 matches. This however assumes that three pitches are available at MMU Alsager. If these are excluded, there is capacity for just one additional match, and teams currently playing at MMU Alsager would need to be relocated.
- For junior teams (U13 – U16), there are sufficient pitches, with spare capacity for 5 matches during the week, and 2 at peak time
- Similarly, there is spare capacity on 9v9 pitches. 0.5 additional matches could be accommodated during the week and similar could be accommodated at peak time, but only if games were played consecutively (ie. kick off times staggered).
- There is no 7v7 or 5v5 competitive football taking place within the town, as all matches are played at central venues. Spare capacity therefore equates to 10 matches during the week, or 5 at peak time. All of this spare capacity is at small primary school venues.

There are two public facilities that are not used at all – at Portland Drive, Scholar Green and Milton Park, Alsager. Scholar Green Football team currently travel out to Stoke on Trent (Clough Hall Park) to play. Milton Park is also not used as although the site was invested in within the last couple of years, the club believe that it has since returned to its previous condition and is considered unsuitable for play.

The initial theoretical calculation of overall pitch capacity however disguises several issues. In order to consider the adequacy of pitch provision in Alsager in more detail therefore, and to take into account the displaced demand that is evident, the current supply and demand is evaluated by pitch type in the section that follows. Consideration is also given to the impact of quality issues raised in relation to specific sites, as well as the role that the MMU site currently plays in pitch provision.

### **Adult Football Pitches**

Table 5 uses the information provided in Table 4 to summarise the demand for and supply of adult football pitches across Alsager. Table 5 includes two scenarios – one including the pitches at MMU, and one excluding these sites and relocating the teams that are currently based at this facility.

The stadium pitch belonging to Alsager Town accommodates the club's first team (a pyramid club) and reserve team and meets these needs. It does not offer a community resource for any additional teams and therefore cannot be considered suitable for any further play. This is reflected in the calculations undertaken.

**Table 5 – Supply and Demand for Adult Football Pitches**

Scenario	Demand across the week (Match Equivalents)	Demand at Peak Time (Match Equivalents)	Displaced Demand	Current Capacity (Match Equivalents)	Spare Capacity (Match Equivalents)	Available capacity at peak time (Match Equivalents)
<b>Including MMU pitches</b>	3	1.5	0.5 – Scholar Green	14	8.5 (note Alsager Town considered to have no additional spare capacity due to nature of site)	4
<b>Excluding MMU pitches</b>	3	1.5	0.5 – Scholar Green	7	2.5 ((note Alsager Town considered to have no additional spare capacity due to nature of site)	0.5

When evaluating the information presented in Tables 4 and 5 and considering other issues that are apparent in relation to adult football in the town, it can therefore be concluded that:

- There is enough capacity within the existing pitch stock to accommodate adult football. The spare capacity is situated at Portland Drive (1 match equivalent at peak time – site is not used) and Alsager Leisure Centre (0.5 match equivalents at peak time).
- The loss of pitches at the MMU site would see one match equivalent per week relocated, and overall spare capacity would then reduce to just 0.5 match equivalents at peak time, meaning that there is little scope for growth.
- The small amount of spare capacity at Alsager Leisure Centre, equivalent to 0.5 match equivalents per week at peak time would mean that 1 additional team could be housed at this site. The remaining team currently playing at MMU would however need to travel to Portland Drive. While the pitch at Portland Drive is located within the Alsager analysis area, the site is located outside of the town in Scholar Green (Scholar Green FC currently travel into Stoke to play). The site has no changing accommodation and therefore does not meet with league regulations – it is therefore not currently suitable to accommodate any of the identified teams. If teams cannot be accommodated at this site, and no adult pitches were provided at MMU, there would therefore be a theoretical shortfall of 0.5 match equivalents.

**To accommodate current demand for competitive adult football, there is therefore a requirement for a minimum of 0.5 match equivalents (1 pitch) on the MMU site.**

As AFC Alsager play on a Saturday afternoon, two further teams (one match equivalent) can be accommodated on a Sunday morning. There is only one adult team at AFC Alsager.

If all demand (excluding Alsager Town who have their own facilities) was to be accommodated at the MMU site, there would be a requirement for one pitch to meet current demand.

## Youth Football Pitches

11v11

- Table 6 uses the information provided previously to summarise the demand for and supply of 11 v 11 youth football pitches across Alsager. It considers both the current scenario and also provides an overview of the impact of accommodating the displaced demand within the town. All of the facilities available for youth football are single pitch sites with the exception of Wood Park (2 pitches). Club teams are therefore dispersed across multiple sites

**Table 6 – Supply and Demand for Youth Football Pitches**

Scenario	Demand across the week (Match Equivalents)	Demand at Peak Time (Match Equivalents)	Current Capacity	Spare Capacity across the week (Match equivalents)	Spare Capacity at peak time (Match Equivalents)
Current	3	3	8 match equivalents total	5 match equivalents	2 match equivalent.
Including Displaced Demand	5.5	5.5	8 match equivalents	2.5	-0.5 (insufficient provision).

The analysis therefore indicates that for youth football:

- Theoretically, there is spare capacity for additional play when excluding the displaced demand, with 1 match equivalent available at peak time.
- The pitches at Wood Park are used by Alsager Town Teams and there is a small amount of capacity for additional play. One of the pitches is not currently used however the other pitch is at capacity at peak time. There is therefore scope to accommodate an additional match on this site at peak time on the existing unused pitch
- The pitch at Milton Park however is also available however it receives no current use. AFC Alsager indicates that this is due to its unsuitability (poor drainage and surface) which is not acceptable for league play. Having been improved relatively recently, the pitch has deteriorated again quickly and is now not used. If this pitch is excluded from consideration, spare capacity reduces to 1 match equivalent at peak time.
- Displaced demand is all generated by AFC Alsager and there are 5 teams in total aged between 13 and 16 requiring 11 v 11 pitches. This equates to an additional 2.5 matches per week. These cannot be accommodated (shortfall of 0.5 match equivalents at peak time or 1.5 match equivalents if excluding Milton Park) within the existing infrastructure.

**To accommodate current demand for competitive youth football, there is therefore a requirement for 0.5 – 1.5 match equivalents (1 pitch if matches are played consecutively) on the MMU site.**

**If all youth teams not playing at Alsager Town (who have their own facility) were to be accommodated on the MMU site, this need would rise to 3.5 match equivalents per week (2 pitches if played consecutively or if the Alsager Leisure Centre pitch was also used). Housing all teams on the one site is preferable, as it fosters sustainable club development and a club environment.**

The focus of play on a Sunday morning means that it should be possible to play up to 2 games per pitch on a Sunday morning as the pitches will not be used for matches at any other time in the week. There is also a degree of interchangeability with adult pitches, as pitch dimensions for U16 / adult teams are very similar.

### **9v9**

There is just one 9v9 pitch in the town currently. This is located at Cedar Avenue and is used by three teams (1.5 match equivalents). There are therefore theoretically 0.5 match equivalents available. Play can already only be accommodated by staggering kick off times and it may be possible to add one more team on this site continuing in the same manner.

There are however a further 3 teams (1.5 match equivalents) currently travelling outside the town. The club has indicated that all of these teams wish to have home grounds in Alsager. This additional play cannot be accommodated within the existing infrastructure.

**There is therefore insufficient capacity for 9v9 competitive football in Alsager Town and a requirement for at least 1 additional match equivalent per week to be hosted on the MMU site (1 pitch).**

**If all teams playing 9v9 football are to be accommodated on one site, there is a requirement for 2 pitches.**

The focus of play on a Sunday morning means that it should be possible to play up to 2 games per pitch on a Sunday morning as the pitches will not be used for matches at any other time in the week.

### **7v7 and 5 v 5**

Table 6 reveals that there is capacity for 16 5v5 matches and 22 7v7 matches. All of this capacity is however located at single pitch school sites that do not offer ancillary facilities. Taking into account the education and other use of facilities (archery), spare capacity equates to four 5v5 matches and six 7v7 matches. At peak time, this reduces to 3 5v5 matches and 2 7v7 matches (although more could be accommodated if played consecutively).

There is no existing use of these pitches for competitive play and this therefore accounts to spare capacity. There is however no requirement for 7v7 or 5 v 5 pitches to accommodate current pitch need due to the participation of teams in a central venue league.

### **Projecting Future Demand**

While analysis to date has provided an indication of the current position, it is essential that any assessment takes into account future need in order to ensure that adequate facilities are provided. Population growth and changes to the population profile are likely to impact upon participation and it is important that this (as well as housing growth) is taken into account. Participation increases will also impact on the amount of pitches required and this will be returned to later.

### **Impact of Population Growth**

The 2011 census provides a picture of the current resident population within the Alsager area (using ward profiles). The *local background* paper on population forecasts across Cheshire East (Cheshire East Council March 2014) models several different scenarios relating to potential population growth, including considering solely natural change (i.e. excluding potential housing developments) and the sub-national population projections (2011 base). While models of natural change suggest that there will be only a very small increase across

Cheshire East as a whole (2500) and that there will be a small decline in Alsager ward (400 people – source Cheshire East Population Projections Forecasts Background Paper March 2014 Table A4.3), the ONS figures indicate that increases may be as much as 41,100 people across Cheshire East. No detail is provided as to how this may be spread across the borough, although the age population profile of the borough is recorded. There is therefore a wide range of potential scenarios of population growth and uncertainty as to the likely picture.

To ensure that population growth is taken into account, the sub national population projections (which currently predict the highest levels of growth in the borough) can be used. Projections assume that past recent trends in fertility, mortality and migration will continue into the future but do not always include local information on births and deaths and do not take account of expectations of future house building i.e. they are policy neutral. As these figures are only available across Cheshire East as a whole, it has been assumed that the same proportion of residents of Cheshire East will be based in Alsager in 2030 as currently are (5.4%) and that the growth of 41,100 will be spread equally across the area.

This methodology would see total growth in the population of the area equating to 2,230 people. It should however be noted that the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan submission document (which does not yet represent policy but is the most up to date picture of the potential spatial strategy for the area) indicates that up to 1,600 new dwellings may be provided up to 2030. Based on an average occupancy level of 2.5 people, this would equate to population growth in the town of circa 4,000, which would include any potential development on the MMU site. As the subnational population projections do not take into account housing growth, this increase in population could occur in addition to the 2,230 projected. Total increase could therefore equate to a maximum of 6,030. In reality, it is likely to focus up to a maximum of 4,000 due to the impact of the proposed new dwellings (and the understanding that natural change will see the population remain static). To ensure both scenarios are considered, the implications of both the medium and high growth scenario will however be calculated.

It should also be noted that ONS figures indicate that there is an ageing population and that this trend is more apparent in Cheshire East than it is nationally. In general terms, analysis of the profile of participants in pitch sports indicates that most players are aged between 6 and 45 (55 for cricket). This trend will therefore have a potential impact on levels of participation.

The impact of population growth is calculated using Team Generation Rates (TGRs) – they use existing levels of participation to indicate how many people in a specified age group are required to generate one team. They are derived by dividing the appropriate population age band by the number of teams playing within that area in that age band. Table 6 summarises the Team Generation Rates that have been calculated for Alsager. These are based upon the figures from the 2011 census for the Alsager area.

**Table 7 - Team Generation Rates in Alsager (Football)**

Age Group	TGR Alsager
5v5 mixed	1:120 * development squad likely to generate increase in numbers. Not counted as formal team
7v7 mixed	1:80
9v9 male	1:37
Youth Male	1:47
Adult Male	1:513

Table 8 uses the above figures to project the impact of population increases.

**Table 8 - Impact of Potential Future Population Increases on Demand for Pitches**

Scenario	Current	Future (Likely Scenario)	Future Maximum Growth Scenario
5v5 mixed	3	3	4
7v7 mixed	5	6	7
9v9 male	6	7	8
Youth Male	10	12	13
Adult Male	6	7	8

Using the above figures, it can therefore be concluded that the projected population increase alone would create up to:

- 1 additional 5 v 5 and 2 additional 7v7 team (1.5 match equivalent)
- 2 additional 9 v 9 teams (1 match equivalent)
- 3 additional youth male teams (1.5 match equivalents)
- 2 adult male teams (1 match equivalent)

Table 9 therefore summarises the impact of population growth and the impact that this has on the need for pitches in the area, as well as the adequacy of provision to accommodate this demand. This assumes that the population growth is equivalent to the highest possible growth scenario.

**Table 9 – Pitch Provision to meet current and projected future demand**

Football Pitch Type	Current Position (all pitches)	Impact of Population Growth	Total Requirement to meet current need and impact of projected population growth (taking into account all sites)	Impact of accommodating all play at MMU site.
<b>Adult Football</b>	Requirement for one pitch to meet demand (0.5 – 1 match equivalents).	1 additional match equivalent per week generated	Requirement to meet 2 match equivalents – 1 pitch.	Potential requirement to meet 2 match equivalents per week. 2 pitches may be required to accommodate future demand depending upon spread of play. There is however capacity at Alsager Leisure Centre (part of hub site). Assumes Alsager Town to remain at their own venue.
<b>Youth Football</b>	Current shortage of pitches (1, 5 excluding Milton Gardens).	Additional 1.5 match equivalents per week generated	Overall shortage of 2 - 3 match equivalents per week, all to be accommodated at peak time. 2 pitches required.	Capacity for 3.5 match equivalents required per week if all teams are accommodated on MMU site, plus additional 1.5 equivalents arising from population growth. Three pitches needed in total. Teams associated with Alsager Town to remain at own site.
<b>9v9 Football</b>	Shortage of 1	Additional match	One pitch (if play is	3 match equivalents

Football Pitch Type	Current Position (all pitches)	Impact of Population Growth	Total Requirement to meet current need and impact of projected population growth (taking into account all sites)	Pitch	Impact of accommodating all play at MMU site.
	match equivalent per week (1 pitch)	equivalent per week generated therefore overall shortage, 2 match equivalents per week	consecutive – ie 2 matches per morning).		required to meet current demand, plus additional match equivalent through growth. Two pitches required if all teams are to be accommodated on MMU site.
<b>7v7 Football</b>	No pitches required in Alsager for competitive matches	Additional match equivalents have impact for training only	Additional match equivalents have impact for training only		n/a
<b>5v5 Football</b>	No pitches required in Alsager for competitive matches	Additional match equivalents have impact for training only	Additional match equivalents have impact for training only		n/a

### Club Development Aspirations

In addition to growth in participation achieved through increases in the population, both AFC Alsager and Alsager Town FC have significant development aspirations.

Alsager Town FC highlight that they are actively looking to increase their junior section and that more pitches is the key barrier to doing this. There is however a small amount of spare capacity at the Wood Park site to enable growth at the club and the club are also looking at relocation. In terms of their interest in the MMU site they have confirmed they would largely be interested in it for mid-week training opportunities on any suitable surface, which may be provided.

As a Charter Standard Community Club, AFC Alsager has a detailed club development plan in place, the key elements of which are set out below.

Stretching from season 2013 – 2014, the club are seeking an increase from 19 teams through to 24 teams in year 5. With a total of 22 in Year 2, they are already ahead of this target and believe that an increase up to 30 teams (8 teams) is possible within a short period of time and that longer term, the club may grow to up to 40 teams. In addition to activity within the current scope of the club (mini soccer up to adult open age teams, all for males), the club are:

- Seeking to run a disability football squad
- Looking to promote girls football – the club have recently piloted girls football at Alsager Academy and circa 50 girls attended
- Starting walking football over Christmas 2014.

While not necessarily impacting upon the regular demand for playing fields, the club are also running summer soccer camps and inter school and interclub tournaments. They also have aspirations to become a multi sport club, offering other sports in addition to football.

It is always difficult to determine exactly where the growth will occur within the club and therefore what additional implications there will be on grass pitches requirements. Growth in

the mini soccer age groups (up to U10) would have no impact on pitch requirements in Alsager due to the use of a central venue. If growth occurred in age groups requiring a 9v9 pitch, an additional pitch would be required (in addition to those highlighted in Table 9). There is capacity for growth in other age groups within the requirements, set out below.

### **Training Needs**

Calculations to date exclude requirements for training, this is however an important part of the new PPS methodology. There are 30 teams all training at least once per week and some teams training twice. There is also a requirement to accommodate the crèche and development squads and to provide space for coach development to take place.

Currently, training takes place on the MMU and Alsager Leisure Centre sand based pitches and on the grass pitches at the MMU site. Training requirements are not factored into the grass pitch requirements outlined to date and indeed with most pitches scheduled to accommodate 2 games per week, there would be limited capacity for additional training use.

Additional grass pitches with floodlights would therefore be required for midweek training sessions and extra small sized pitches would be needed to accommodate the small sided teams that play competitive fixtures in Crewe and Nantwich. This has not been factored into the recommendations for pitch provision.

Proposals for the reconfiguration of sporting provision in Alsager include the retention and improvement of a sand based AGP (see later) and such a facility is currently used for football training. Sand based AGPs do not however meet with FA requirements for either training or matches and this means that use of sand based pitches is not a long term solution for the football clubs in the town and in policy terms cannot be factored in.

The inclusion of a 3G pitch that is listed on the FA register (i.e. meets with quality parameters – 55-60mm long pile 3G) will provide a facility that can be used for both training and matches solely for football. The replacement of one of the youth 11v11 pitches (meaning two are required) with the 3G surface would offer the additional capacity and flexibility that is required to accommodate club growth and would also enable football training activity to take place within Alsager. In addition to midweek training activity, the 3G pitch would support the grass pitch stock in accommodating additional weekend activity by:

- Supporting the mini soccer training and crèche on a Saturday morning
- Functioning as a youth pitch on a Sunday morning for league matches (depending on seasonal club requirements - this type of facility is more able to accommodate several matches consecutively than a grass pitch)
- Offering additional capacity for further matches on a Saturday afternoon and Sunday afternoon
- Providing training opportunities for Alsager Town FC and other clubs
- Providing opportunities for wider football development

The 3G pitch will therefore future proof the site for the growth of football and provide opportunities for training. A 3G pitch would also fit with FA strategic planning priorities<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Chris Smith FA Regional Facilities Manager has identified the need for 5 additional 3G pitches across CEC. The FA policy is also to seek to move the game away from grass in the long-term and onto 3G provision

## Football Pitch - Summary

To meet current and baseline future demand for competitive fixtures only, the following pitches are therefore required at the MMU site as a minimum.

Pitch Type	Justification
<b>1 senior football pitch</b>	Meet demand for 1 current match equivalent (Sat PM / Sun AM) Meet additional demand generated from population growth 1 match equivalent
<b>2 youth football pitches</b>	Linking with 3G AGP, which will also function as youth pitch; Meet current demand for 3.5 match equivalents per week (all at peak time, but matches played consecutively) Linking with 3G, meet demand for additional 1.5 match equivalent arising from population growth Capacity for additional 1 match equivalents from further club development (2 teams)
<b>Two 9 v 9 pitches</b>	Meet existing demand for 3 match equivalents per week Meet future demand for additional 1 match equivalent per week (2 teams)
<b>3G AGP</b>	Meet current / future demand for 1.5 match equivalents (junior) Offer Spare capacity for at least 0.5 match equivalents at peak time (Sun AM) Offer spare capacity for adult football (Sat PM) Offer spare capacity for junior / 9v9 girls football – Sun PM
<b>Capacity to accommodate club growth</b>	Additional capacity not required to meet current or projected future demand, but to future proof the site in case of further club growth.  The site should be future proofed by ensuring that there is scope for the development of an additional 3G AGP in future years (by ensuring that one of the pitches provided has sufficient space at the perimeter to be replaced by an AGP, linking with FA policy to increase the proportion of junior / youth play that takes place on AGPs.

This proposed layout assumes that competitive mini soccer continues to take place off site, but that team's train midweek and on a Saturday morning. The layout assumes that play can take place consecutively at peak time for both youth football and 9 v 9 matches (i.e. two matches per morning, two matches across the week.

It takes into account the additional demand likely to be created in the maximum population growth scenario (3 youth, 2 9v9 and 2 adult teams, as well as additional mini soccer teams that do not impact on grass pitch requirements) as well as further opportunities for development.

Excluding the matches that are to be accommodated on the proposed 3G, the proposed layout at MMU offers spare capacity for 7 additional teams on grass pitches (assuming that all AFC Alsager teams are based at the site, and that teams from Alsager Town remain at their own site – the latest position). The proposed 3G offers further capacity and flexibility for an additional match at peak time, as well as the scope for matches on a Saturday and Sunday afternoon (particularly important if the club is to start to develop girls football), or for use by other local teams.

To ensure that club growth is not restricted by pitch provision, it is suggested that space to provide an additional AGP is retained. This will not be required immediately, but may be needed in future years to add additional capacity to the site.

The potential spread of competitive play across the pitches is set out below in Table 10. This demonstrates how the clubs needs can be delivered on the proposed pitches. It indicates that the proposed levels of pitch supply are more than sufficient to meet current demand, with a requirement to play games consecutively only arising as population and participation increases. Pitch allocation is indicative only.

**Table 10 – Pitch Allocation**

Pitch	Sat AM	Sat PM	Sun AM	Sun PM	Spare Capacity at MMU site (peak time)	Role of other sites	Comment
<b>Adult 1</b>	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AFC Alsager (0.5 match equivalents)</li> <li>Spare capacity – 0.5 match equivalent (Future growth)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FC Alsager CC (0.5 match equivalents)</li> <li>Spare capacity – 0.5 match equivalent (Future Growth)</li> </ul>	n/a	0.5	<p>Alsager Leisure Centre to be used (1 pitch) – current use 0.5 match equivalents at peak time (Bank Corner currently play there). Spare capacity 0.5 match equivalents</p> <p>Activity associated with Alsager Town on own sites</p>	Recommended provision just sufficient to meet projected future need including Alsager LC.
<b>Youth 1</b>	n/a	n/a	<p>AFC Alsager U14x3 (0.5 match equivalents)</p> <p>Future - capacity to accommodate another match by playing consecutive matches</p>		2 match equivalents (4 teams)	<p>Capacity also available for these teams at Alsager Leisure Centre (1 pitch) – 2 match equivalents at peak time.</p> <p>Spare capacity also available at Milton Gardens if demand increased</p>	Some youth matches taking place on AGP.
<b>Youth 2</b>	n/a	n/a	<p>AFC Alsager U16 (0.5 match equivalents)</p> <p>Capacity to accommodate another 1.5 match equivalents playing consecutively</p>				
<b>9v9 1</b>	n/a	n/a	<p>AFC Alsager (U12 x3) (1.5 match equivalents)</p> <p>0.5 match equivalent spare capacity (accommodate future growth)</p>		1 match equivalent (2 teams)	Capacity also available at Cedar Avenue – 2 match equivalents at peak time if demand increased above level anticipated	
<b>9v9 2</b>			AFC Alsager U11 (1.5 match equivalents). Capacity to accommodate additional 0.5 matches consecutively to meet future growth				
<b>AGP</b>	AFC Alsager mini training, Mini football matches if	Capacity for additional adult play	AFC Alsager U13 x 3 (1.5 match equivalents)		0.5 match equivalents (minimum)		Capacity for other matches (at least another 0.5 match equivalents) on AGP. Scope for further play on

Pitch	Sat AM	Sat PM	Sun AM	Sun PM	Spare Capacity at MMU site (peak time)	Role of other sites	Comment
	teams choose not to play in central venue league  Additional mini teams training						Sunday PM – for example if girls teams were developed

Added to this, there is additional spare capacity at Milton Gardens and Cedar Avenue, as well as at Alsager Leisure Centre, providing opportunities for additional growth.

The 3G pitch will not only facilitate match play but will also be of vital importance in the provision of effective training facilities, not only for AFC Alsager but Alsager Town and other clubs, alongside providing football development opportunities.

The proposed use of the 3G outside of competitive fixtures is set out below in Table 11. This is indicative only and provides an overview of potential use based on the two large clubs. It is anticipated that the facility will be available for use outside of the proposed club training and will be used by other local teams and for football development.

**Table 11 – AGP usage**

Day	Hours
<b>Monday</b>	AFC Alsager 3 teams x 1/3 pitch – 1hr 30 mins (Mini soccer teams) 2 teams x ½ pitch – 1 hr 30 mins (U10 / U11) Community hire, other training and football development
<b>Tuesday</b>	3 teams x 1/3 pitch – 1hr (U9 teams) 3 teams x 1/3 pitch – 1hr (U10 / U11 teams) Senior team x 1hr 30 Alsager Town FC 2 hrs training
<b>Wednesday</b>	3 teams x 1/3 pitch – 1hr 30 mins (youth teams) 3 teams x 1/3 pitch – 1hr 30 mins (youth teams) 2 teams x 1/2 pitch – 1hr 30 mins (youth teams) Community hire, other training and football development
<b>Thursday</b>	1 team – 1hr 30 mins (youth) Alsager Town FC (2 hours) Coach education
<b>Friday</b>	1 team – 1hr 30 mins (youth team) Community hire, other training and football development
<b>Saturday</b>	Crèche – 3 hours 9 5v5 and 7v 7 teams training Competitive use (other teams) FA use
<b>Sunday</b>	Competitive use (youth football) – 4 x junior male fixtures. Potential use for female football Sunday PM as club grows and other matchplay

While the recommended pitch provision offers opportunity for growth, with an ability to sustain a further 7 teams at the MMU site, as well as the presence of several satellite sites including Cedar Avenue and Milton Park, it is recommended that a degree of flexibility is afforded to the pitch layout, if demand grows exponentially. If this scenario does arise, the replacement of a grass pitch with an additional 3G facility would add further capacity. This

will be driven by the success of club growth predictions and the traction of the FA policy to move the game from grass to 3G.

## Cricket

### Supply

Alsager Cricket Club is the only cricket club in the local area. They have their own cricket ground and have historically used overspill facilities at Alsager School and the MMU campus as well as their own site. The ground includes 4 artificial nets and 1 artificial wicket as well as one grass square (12 strips). The facility at Alsager School is an artificial wicket only (no grass square).

### Demand

The club runs the following teams:

- 4 adult male
- 6 junior male (1 x U9, 1 x U11, 2 x U13, 1 x U15 and 1 x U17).

### Adequacy of Demand

Measurement of the adequacy of provision for cricket is different than for other natural grass pitch sports in that it should focus on wickets and play is measured over the duration of a season, rather than across a week or at peak time. ECB guidelines indicate that a good quality wicket should be able to accommodate up to 5 senior matches per season or 7 junior matches. There are 12 wickets and a non turf wicket (used by the U9 team) at the Alsager CC site.

It is usual for a pitch to accommodate only one fixture per day. Demand from Alsager Cricket Club is set out in Table 12. It is based upon the 2014 season and reflects feedback provided by the club, which indicates that circa 80 home games are played at the ground per season.

**Table 12- Demand at Alsager Cricket Club**

Teams	League / Age Group	Day of Play	Approx Home Matches per Season
1 <sup>st</sup> Team	North Staffs and South Cheshire	Saturday	14
2 <sup>nd</sup> Adult	North Staffs and South Cheshire	Saturday	12
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Stone and District	Sunday	10
U17	Kidsgrove (Sunday)	Sunday	8
U13	South Moorlands	Sunday / Midweek	7
U15	South Moorlands	Sunday / Midweek	7
u13	Kidsgrove	Sunday	8
U11	South Moorlands	Midweek	7
U9	South Moorlands	Midweek	7
20 – 20	20 – 20	Midweek	3
Over 40's	Cheshire County	Midweek	8
TOTAL		2 Saturday, remainder Sunday / midweek with particular pressures on Sunday.	80

All matches take place on the grass square except for the U9 team, who use the non turf wicket. There are therefore:

- 47 adult matches – 9 wickets required over season
- 35 junior matches – 5 wickets required over season.

Based on the provision of 12 strips at Alsager Cricket Club, this means that the existing wickets are overplayed. This is reflected in the historic use of the pitch at MMU as well as the synthetic wicket at Alsager School. This considers match play only and assumes that no training takes place on the grass square.

Pressures on capacity are generally related to the high numbers of junior teams and midweek adult teams, rather than senior male teams playing in the Saturday leagues. This means that a lower standard of provision is required than a full cricket facility. It should however be noted that the club is at capacity on a Saturday and that there is no scope to create an additional adult team to play at this time without additional pitch supply.

### **Club Consultation**

The Alsager Sports Association Needs Assessment highlights the cricket clubs aspirations for additional facilities. It indicates that the club believe that they have a requirement for an additional all weather pitch, as well as 2 – 3 grass strips. This is in particular required to sustain the current activity of the junior section as well as to support club growth. These needs were also confirmed by Cheshire Cricket Board. The Cheshire Cricket Board indicates that based on their figures, and reflecting the findings of the calculations undertaken, each strip is overused by circa 20%.

There has been concern expressed about this need and the clubs plans however recent consultation with the Chairman of the club in the development of this report reveals that this situation remains. While they accommodate most games at their home ground, they do have limited capacity and would look to use a second ground for some junior matches as well as ad hoc use on a Sunday. This use may grow as the population increases and additional teams are generated.

### **Projecting Future Demand**

As with football, it is possible to use Team Generation Rates (TGRs) to identify likely levels of future participation and consider the impact on pitch requirements. Table 13 summarises the Team Generation Rates that have been calculated for cricket in Alsager.

**Table 13 - Team Generation Rates in Alsager (Cricket)**

Age Group	TGR Alsager
Junior Male	1:160
Adult Male	1:888
Junior Female	n/a
Senior Female	n/a

Table 14 uses the above figures to project the impact of population increases.

**Table 14 - Impact of Potential Future Population Increases on Demand for Pitches**

Scenario	Current	Future Projections) (ONS	Future Projections (ONS + Additional Housing Growth
Junior Cricket	6	7	8
Senior Cricket	5	6	7

It can therefore be concluded that the projected population increase alone would create additional teams which would create the need for additional strips. No further teams can play on a Saturday within the current pitch infrastructure at Alsager CC however until the point that additional teams are created, it is likely that any additional pitch required would be used irregularly as an overspill facility only.

## **Hockey**

### **Demand**

As set out in the development plan Triton Hockey Club are one of the leading hockey clubs in Cheshire the Club currently runs 6 senior teams playing on a Saturday afternoon, 4 men's teams and 2 Ladies' teams. The men's teams play in the Northwest Hockey League and Ladies in the Cheshire Women's Hockey League. In terms of junior membership there were 94 boys and girls in membership as at the end of October. The Club has an under 13s Beavers mixed and an under 15s Badgers boys' team plus a girls' junior team. The boy's teams play alternate home and away games; therefore one of the teams is at home each weekend. There are 27 scheduled fixtures for both in the 2014/15 season. The girls generally play on a Sunday and 8 home fixtures were played last season.

The club predicts that this membership level will increase as the season progresses.

Senior training is for 2 hours on a Monday evening, which takes place at Alsager Leisure Centre in 2014/15. Previously senior training was a Wednesday night at the former MMU campus but was switched to Alsager Leisure Centre as access couldn't be guaranteed for the whole season by the MMU. Junior training sessions last for 2½ hours and run from first Saturday in September until 2nd or 3rd Saturday in May. Alongside this club activity there are single system programmes, plus various other training and skill sessions hosted in Alsager.

### **Supply**

There are currently two sand based pitches in Alsager. One at ALC and one at MMU, although access to the current MMU pitch is restricted and there is very little if any use, as a consequence all hockey use is now focussed at the ALC pitch. Both pitches are not 'fit for purpose' for hockey. According to the club, the current facilities at Alsager Leisure Centre are wholly inadequate and do not meet EHB guidelines. The pitch surface at ALC is breaking up in places and is at the end of its operational lifespan. Despite investment by the Council the ancillary facilities at ALC in terms of changing, storage, social facilities etc remain inadequate and not 'fit for purpose'. The club would like to see hockey form a key part of the new MMU hub development, with access to the changing and clubhouse provision.

In sports development terms it is clearly sensible for hockey to form part of the MMU development and have access to the clubhouse and support facilities that cannot be provided at the MMU site. The location of hockey and football at MMU also provides the vision

of the outdoor multi-sport hub sought by the town. Sport England also support multi sport locations to enhance synergies and maximise the use and sustainability of facilities.

### Supply and Demand

Initial consultation with the club and England Hockey suggested there was a need to retain two-sand based pitches for hockey in Alsager going forward to meet hockey development needs.<sup>9</sup> In terms of data analysis (fpm and Sport England facility calculator) the need for two AGP pitches for hockey in Alsager is difficult to justify in terms of supply and demand. Particularly two sand based pitches as there are 7 full-size AGPs recorded in the old Congleton local authority area (reasonable catchment of Alsager), of which only one is 3G at Sandbach Community Football Centre. There are therefore a significant number of sand based pitches in a reasonable catchment of Alsager. It is recognised that this analysis does not account for the quality of this provision or how full these pitches are, many are old and well used.

The above analysis sets out a 'theoretical' position. Usage analysis from ALC indicates that in March 2014 there was only 36.5% occupancy of the ALC pitch and in May 2014 only 14.44%, with hockey use forming around Friday training and Saturday and Sunday fixtures. Clearly there are quality issues which restrict the current pitch use (football are generally training on 3G pitches elsewhere) but what is evident is that hockey would not appear to have the need or capacity to deliver on two-sand based pitches.

Taking all this on board it is necessary to understand the position in programming terms to understand this it is necessary to evaluate capacity at peak times. England Hockey guidance suggests that no AGP should be considered able to sustain more than 4 games on any one day.

Table 16 provides a summary of current demand from the hockey club. It indicates that with 6 senior teams playing home and away on alternative weeks, one AGP provides sufficient capacity (on the assumption that the club have full access on a Saturday) to accommodate existing matches and also for the further growth of the club (up to 2 adult teams and several junior teams, representing a potential increase of at least 25% in terms of number of teams). This analysis is supported by England Hockey. All training needs will be met in mid-week.

**Table 15 – AGP hockey needs**

Day of Play	Number of Teams	Match Equivalents per day	Capacity of AGP per day	Spare Capacity (Match equivalents)
Saturday	6	3	4	1
Sunday	3	1.5	4	2.5

### Summary of AGP Pitch Needs

Based on the analysis it is now largely accepted that hockey do not require two-sand based pitches going forward but one high quality full-size floodlit sand dressed pitch focussing on hockey use. This is now accepted but what is equally clear is that hockey needs a high quality 'fit for purpose' sand dressed facility with access to changing and ancillary provision on the same site to encourage development and growth. This pitch is the preferred surface for competitive hockey and is also suitable for football training (England Hockey are happy to see this to help sustainability) so also delivers some flexibility.<sup>10</sup>

What is required therefore is one high quality fit for purpose sand dressed surface with access to changing and ancillary provision. Neither site in Alsager currently or in the case of ALC has

<sup>9</sup> Consultation with Julie Longden, England Hockey and ASRA Needs Assessment and consultation

<sup>10</sup> Selecting the Right Artificial Surface – Sport England and NGBS

the future potential to deliver this for hockey. A key part of any SNA is meeting the needs of sport, through consultation with clubs and NGBs, in this case Triton and England Hockey.

The needs assessment, supply and demand analysis and consultation with clubs demonstrates that there is also a strong requirement for 3G training facilities for football, as well as space to accommodate match play and that training needs place significant demand and wear and tear on the grass pitches. Based on the PPS analysis and the need to accommodate training and matchplay and in-line with FA policy, in addition there is a need for a full-size floodlit long pile (55-60mm) 3G surface for football. This is less flexible and is not suitable for hockey, the FA do not permit other uses than football on sanctioned match pitches. There could be potential for an additional 3G in future to address growth and FA policy priorities.

The two AGPs match the current provision in Alsager however where there are currently two sand based pitches the future need is for one new 3G pitch and one 'fit for purpose' sand dressed pitch for hockey.

Through analysis and consultation with the Council, Trust, clubs and NGBs there would appear to be general agreement in terms of the above scale of provision and the desire, particularly from the sports to have both new AGP pitches located on the MMU site to form a multi-sport hub and support club development and sustainability.

In this context the future of the school pitch will have to be considered moving forward but it is likely that this will be focussed on purely school / curriculum use. The school want to have a 40 mm pile 3G pitch for curriculum use. It is not the intention to open it up for community use, indeed the surface is not supported either by EH or the FA. Therefore it will have no real value in meeting the needs for these sports and therefore the pitch has little or no impact in terms of supply and demand.

### **Summary of Pitch Needs**

Application of the PPS methodology for Alsager sets out the pitch needs in the area for both football, cricket and hockey. It reveals that to meet with projected current and future demand to 2030, the following pitches should be provided:

- One full-size adult grass football pitch – 100m x 64m, *excluding run off*
- Two grass youth football pitches (one 82m x 50m and one 91 x 55m to ensure range of age groups are catered for). *Both sizes exclude run off*
- Two 9 v 9 grass pitches - 73m x 46m, *excluding run off*
- An artificial cricket strip and / or a small grass square and pitch as an overspill facility for Alsager CC
- A long pile (55mm-60mm) full-size floodlit 3g pitch for football
- A sand dressed full-size floodlit artificial grass pitch for hockey

The above figures assume that the training takes place on the 3G pitch as set out in the outline programme, which illustrates the indicative use of this facility.

The pitch layout should be sufficiently flexible that an additional 3G pitch can be provided should demand at AFC Alsager increase further. This can be delivered by ensuring that the space allocated for the provision of one of the proposed grass pitches is sufficient to accommodate an additional 3G pitch. In addition to this, there remain several satellite sites which offer further capacity in the town for junior and 9v9 teams. These can accommodate further club growth.

## Playing Field Requirements

This assessment therefore clearly outlines and justifies the playing pitches that are required to meet both current and projected demand and it is essential that sufficient space is retained to accommodate this. The pitch needs set out provide flexibility to meet current and future needs based on the application of the Playing Pitch methodology and discussions with clubs and the FA and represent an appropriate legacy for the site reflecting wider aspirations for an outdoor hub for Alsager. A degree of flexibility should be maintained, as participation is ever changing and the facilities provided will need to be able to adapt to both growth and changing requirements. The needs set out accommodate this *strategic reserve*.

Given this identified need there is therefore a requirement to retain sufficient playing fields at the MMU campus to deliver the amount of playing fields required to meet future demand.

The facilities required to do this, based upon the justification within this assessment are as follows:

- Grass pitch provision for football (5 grass pitches) and cricket (retention / development of):
  - 1 full-size adult grass football pitch
  - 4 junior grass football pitches (2 x 11 v 11 youth pitches and two 9 v 9)
  - An artificial cricket strip and / or a small grass square and pitch
- Provision of a 3G AGP for football needs (55-60mm pile) and a sand dressed pitch for hockey. Both facilities will be provided at the MMU site
- Changing (to support the pitch numbers and usage) and ancillary multi-sport clubhouse facility, in line with NGB specifications
- Car Parking for 90 spaces and in line with NGB specifications
- Flexible configuration to enable the creation of an additional 3G pitch (over an existing grass pitch) in the longer term.

## Meeting Playing Pitch Policy

This sports needs assessment sets out the requirements for pitch provision in Alsager and having been completed in line with the Sport England Guidance for the Production of Playing Pitch Strategies (Sport England 2013), represents a comprehensive and robust assessment of need in line with Paragraphs 73 and 74 of the NPPF. Paragraph 74 of the NPPF indicates that:

*'Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless;*

- *An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
- *The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- *The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.'*

The proposals for the development of the sports hub at the MMU site are also compliant with Sport England policy as follows.

#### **E4 - Replacement of Sand Based AGP**

Sport England Playing Fields policy E4, states that development is acceptable where:

*'E4 - Lost playing fields would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development.'*

Proposals for the new sports hub at the MMU site will see the relocation of the existing sand based facility. In line with E4, this facility will be replaced by a new sand dressed AGP, which will have a significantly improved surface with greater community access.

The facility will cater primarily for hockey (including Triton Hockey Club) and is appropriately located to ensure clear access to the changing accommodation, providing hockey with a 'fit for purpose' facility. The facility will be managed as part of the overall management of the sports hub.

The relocation of the existing AGP field is therefore compliant with Sport England Policy E4.

#### **E5 – Creation of a 3G AGP**

In addition to the replacement of the existing sand based facility, the sports needs assessment demonstrates the need for the creation of a 3G playing pitch.

Sport England Policy E5 indicates that loss of playing fields is acceptable when:

*'The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields'*

The creation of this 3G (55mm-60mm) pitch will result in the loss of the equivalent of 0.74 hectares of playing field area (100m x 64m, including run off, the dimensions will be 112m x 76m). If the 3G pitch was not provided, another youth grass pitch would be included in its place and teams would continue to travel outside of Alsager for training purposes. The pitch will be floodlit to ensure evening activity can take place and the location of the facility on site has been designed by an agronomist. It is in line with FA policy to move more matchplay to grass and the identified shortfall of 5 pitches across Cheshire East.

The provision of a 3G pitch is the preferred option for both the football club and the FA and will be constructed to FA specifications (and will undergo appropriate testing) to ensure it is included on the FA register and can therefore accommodate both training and match play. Up to 4 football matches will be accommodated at peak time, and the pitch will also be floodlit, providing a venue for training for football clubs in the Alsager area (including both AFC Alsager and Alsager Town) and will be open for full community use. The pitch will also be used for coach education training by both the club and it is anticipated, the Cheshire FA.

The inclusion of the 3G pitch within the MMU sports hub therefore adds significant additional capacity to the site and represents a sustainable and flexible solution to accommodate football demand. The playing surface has been selected as the main activity will be football and alternative facilities will also be provided on site. Tables 10 and 11 in this needs assessment provide an indication of role that the AGP will have in football in Alsager.

The loss of grass playing field to accommodate the 3G pitch can be justified and is therefore compliant with Sport England Policy E5.

## **E2 – Changing Rooms and Parking**

To support the required AGP and grass pitches, appropriate changing accommodation and parking will also be required. These are ancillary facilities and maximise the use of the playing fields and AGPs and help foster club growth and development.

Sport England Policy E1 indicates that development on existing playing fields is acceptable where:

*'The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field or fields, and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use'.*

The masterplan outlines the proposed location of the changing accommodation and car parking, which will be designed in line with NGB specifications and is located directly adjacent to the sports hub. This will ensure direct access to the facilities for the clubs.

The changing room design takes into account that peak time for hockey is Saturday afternoon, while the majority of youth and junior football will be played on Sunday morning. Adult football will be split between the two time slots.

The proposed pavilion therefore includes sufficient changing rooms to ensure that all users of AGPs and senior pitches can access facilities, as well as providing additional changing space for youth and 9v9 teams. The kick off times for these matches will be staggered to maximise the use of the changing facilities.

The incorporation of changing accommodation and parking within the site is therefore compliant with Sport England Exception Policy E2.

## **E1 – Loss of an area of existing playing fields**

The assessment undertaken sets out the amount of pitches and sports facilities that are required to meet current and projected future demand. It indicates that if all training and all competitive fixtures are to be accommodated in Alsager, there is a need for:

- One full-size adult grass football pitch – 100m x 64m, *excluding run off*
- Two grass youth football pitches (one 82m x 50m and one 91 x 55m to ensure range of age groups are catered for). *Both sizes exclude run off*
- Two 9 v 9 grass pitches - 73m x 46m, *excluding run off*
- An artificial cricket strip and / or a grass square and pitch as an overspill facility for Alsager CC
- A long pile (55mm-600mm) full-size floodlit 3G pitch for football
- A sand dressed full-size floodlit artificial grass pitch for hockey
- Flexible configuration to enable the provision of a further 3G pitch (to replace a grass pitch) longer term.

It demonstrates that the replacement sand based AGP and new 3G AGP are compliant with Sport England policies E4 and E5 respectively, while the changing accommodation and parking required meet policy exception E2. The remaining playing fields will also meet with policy E4, as they will provide facilities that are equivalent or better quality than those that exist and will offer substantially improved access for local residents.

The detailed planning application for the entire redevelopment of the MMU site shows the proposed layout for the pitches, as well as the associated ancillary facilities and parking and the area required to provide an appropriate pitch layout (based upon the above pitch

requirements) as well as ancillary facilities can then be calculated based upon the pitch layout.

The application drawings show that the playing pitches (and ancillary provision) required to provide the two AGPs and the grass pitches needed to meet football and cricket can be accommodated by providing 6.59 hectares of playing fields. *Please note this figure is subject to final confirmation as masterplan will need to be updated following agreement of requirements based upon this assessment of need. Pitch layouts will be designed in line with NGB guidance for both size and run off.*

This means that 6.59 hectares of land in total are required to meet current and projected future sports needs in Alsager.

This is made up as follows:

0.60 hectares – replacement sand AGP (compliant with Sport England Exception E4)  
0.70 hectares (excluding run off) – new 3G AGP (compliant with Sport England Exception E5)  
2.50 hectares – grass pitches  
Remainder – surrounds and ancillary facilities.

This layout has been derived from a detailed analysis of the ground conditions by an agronomy specialist and meets with all of Sport England and NGB guidance in terms of pitch and ancillary provision. It includes spare space to ensure that a further AGP can be provided to accommodate additional growth that may arise in future years.

The playing field area on the existing site amounts to 11.04 hectares (excluding the existing AGP, which will be replaced by a new AGP). This means that not all land currently designated as playing fields is required to meet future needs. This is set out in Table 17 below.

**Table 17 – Playing Pitch Requirements**

<b>Current Playing Field Size</b>	<b>11.14 ha</b> (existing grass pitches use 3.97 hectares of this playing field).
<b>Required Playing Field Size</b>	<b>TOTAL – 6.59.</b> This includes; 0.60 ha – replacement sand based AGP 0.70 hectares – 3G AGP
<b>Difference (Excess Playing Field)</b>	<b>4.55 ha</b>

As not all playing field area is required to lay out the required number of pitches, this assessment therefore indicates that not all playing field area is required to meet current and projected future need. There is therefore an excess of provision and the remaining playing field can be considered clearly surplus to requirements.

A net loss of playing fields in quantitative terms is justifiable as the proposed facility mix takes into account the future demand including the impact of population and household growth, as well as the need to accommodate teams that are currently displaced. This will free up capacity in areas currently hosting teams from Alsager, specifically Nantwich, Crewe and Sandbach as well as promote club development in Alsager Town, through the location of all teams in the area on one site. There is no requirement to provide for further playing field land to meet current or proposed future need. It should also be noted that the proposed new provision is significantly greater than the land that has recently been used as playing pitches, given the previous University sports use, now re-provided at Crewe.

Proposals will provide better quality facilities than those that exist already, with high quality grass pitches, ancillary facilities and two artificial grass pitches (one resurfaced). All facilities will meet with NGB specifications, ensuring that they are fit for purpose.

Added to this, the site will offer full community access (unfettered by University use) and management arrangements will be better and focussed and dedicated specifically to the community groups and clubs. Access to this site was formerly very restricted and primarily catered for student use only. The remaining playing fields are therefore compliant with E4.

Management arrangements are currently being discussed (outline business plan set out in Appendix A) and will be in place prior to the commencement of development, in line with E4.

## Conclusion

This sports needs assessment demonstrates that the pitches required to meet current and projected future demand in Alsager as follows;

- One full-size adult grass football pitch – 100m x 64m, *excluding run off*
- Two grass youth football pitches (one 82m x 50m and one 91 x 55m to ensure range of age groups are catered for). *Both sizes exclude run off*
- Two 9 v 9 grass pitches - 73m x 46m, *excluding run off*
- An artificial cricket strip and / or a small grass square and pitch as an overspill facility for Alsager CC
- A long pile (55mm-600mm) full-size floodlit 3G pitch for football
- A sand dressed full-size floodlit artificial grass pitch for hockey
- Flexible configuration to enable the provision of an additional 3G AGP (to replace a further grass pitch) longer term.

Sport England set out a series of circumstances, policies E1-E5 in which they will not object to the loss of playing fields. As previously set out, the proposed sporting hub at the MMU site is compliant with Sport England Policies in that:

- The existing sand based AGP will be replaced in line with policy E4
- A new 3G AGP will be provided in compliance with E5
- The changing rooms and ancillary facilities meet with E2
- The proposed loss of the remaining playing fields is compliant with E1. This is clearly justifiable as evidence suggests that this additional space is not required to meet current or projected future needs and is therefore surplus to requirements. The required pitch layout and ancillary facilities can be accommodated in the remaining playing field area of the site
- Facilities provided will be of the same or higher quality and with significantly enhanced access arrangements and are therefore compliant with E4.

## Recommendations

Based on the SNA analysis the following action is therefore recommended:

### 1. Partners to agree the facility mix set out for the MMU site and justified by analysis namely:

- Grass pitch provision for football (5 grass pitches) and cricket (retention / development of):
  - 1 full-size adult grass football pitch
  - 4 junior grass football pitches (*as specified above*)
  - An artificial cricket strip and / or a small grass square and pitch
- Provision of a 3G AGP for football needs (55-60mm pile) and a sand dressed pitch for hockey.

- Flexible configuration to enable the creation of an additional grass 3G pitch longer term on MMU site
- Changing (to support the pitch numbers and usage and meet with NGB specifications) and including suitable referee, first aid, storage space and a kitchen and meeting room for training purposes. The latter of which could also be used as a multi use area and ancillary multi-sport clubhouse facility,
- Car Parking for 90 spaces
- Investment at ALC to include fitness provision and studio space

**2. Sport England confirms they are happy for the planning application to be progressed and developed on this basis and they will not object.**

**3. The final specification for the indoor enhancements at ALC are finalised and agreed.**

**4. Developers finalise masterplans and supporting information, including the business plan and internal designs based on the above agreements.**

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# Appendix A – Business Plan

## Introduction

At the completion of the development the MMU site will be given to the Council by the Developer as a freehold transfer. The Council have no interest in the long-term management of the site and will seek to find an operator to undertake the day to day management.

The Council's current leisure stock is managed by a newly established Leisure Trust – everybody. Discussions have been held between the Council and the Trust and the Trust have expressed a keen interest to manage the site. everybody currently manage the facilities at Alsager Leisure Centre, so managing the outdoor provision on the MMU site would enable a co-ordinated approach to management plus economies of scale over the two sites. This would create and integrated hub and not two sites operating independently.

The FA policy is to see football move increasingly from grass pitches to 3G and for the sport to become asset owning in its own right. A number of pilots are taking place up and down the country under the 'Parklife' banner to demonstrate how football can deliver its own hub sites on a revenue neutral basis. In this context the FA in partnership with the key clubs (football and hockey) would be interested in exploring the future management and ownership of the MMU site. These discussions have not advanced at this stage.

In each option clubs would be identified as key users in any agreements with time and usage protected.

In terms of the future management of the MMU site there are therefore two options:

- Management via the Council through its new Leisure Trust on an integrated basis with ALC
- Management as a separate entity by the clubs through the establishment of a local Trust based around user key groups

Both options have advantages and disadvantages as set out in the table below.

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Council Trust</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust are keen and want to deliver</li> <li>• Pitch bookings and maintenance could be easily accommodated as an extension to the ALC contract</li> <li>• Council Trust have the infrastructure and expertise already in place to deliver</li> <li>• Would ensure a strategic management approach across Alsager alongside the operation of ALC</li> <li>• Likely to require limited additional revenue support as all staffing, marketing, booking etc can be accommodated into the current ALC structures</li> <li>• Low risk option</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not provide the community / club 'ownership' and legacy desired by some local partners</li> <li>• Would be missed opportunity to deliver exciting community hub in line with FA policy</li> <li>• Part of wider Trust may not give sufficient Alsager focus</li> <li>• Risk of long term public sector dependence</li> </ul>
<b>Club Trust</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides clubs and users with ownership and control</li> <li>• Could be an exciting new</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standalone facilities and single entity could struggle in terms of sustainability</li> </ul>

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
	model for Cheshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Likely to require external revenue support (certainly in the early years)</li> <li>Higher risk option</li> </ul>

The Trust discussions are more advanced and they have developed a business plan for how they would manage the facilities on an integrated basis with ALC. The business plan has been put together on the basis of the options set out in the SNA. Further detailed work will be required on the business plan, at present these represent indicative figures and demonstrate the option is sustainable.

Income	
3g Pitches (x one)	63,000
Sand-filled pitch (x one)	10,000
Snr Grass Pitches (1)	6,750
Youth Pitches (3)	7,200
9 v 9 (1)	2,400
Cricket	1,000
Clubhouse Hire	12,000
Improved fitness facilities at Alsager Leisure Centre	61,920
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>164,270</b>
Expenditure	
Staffing	54,556
Pitch Maintenance	30,920
Lighting	12,000
Clubhouse Costs	6,000
Admin. Insurance etc	3,000
Sinking Fund	40,000
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>146,476</b>
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>17,794</b>

Key assumptions are as follows:

- Sinking fund @ 3.2% of capital per annum in line with SE guidelines
- Maintenance includes floodlight maintenance. Sinking fund for pitch, lights and cricket
- Only AGP pitches are floodlit. £6k represents manufacturer recommendations
- Pitch hire reflect CEC current fees and charges
- Maintenance includes equipment purchase. The cost reflects ballpark quote received by ANSA of £19,500 (plus equipment)
- Staffing allows for groundsman and leisure assistant / caretaker

The Trust managing the site presents a sustainable way forward. They already have the infrastructure in place. There will be minimal additional requirements for staffing, marketing, bookings etc as most if not all of this activity can be accommodated into the current ALC staff structures. Maintenance and utilities costs will present the bulk of the expenditure, which

will be met by income from charges / rentals to the key anchor clubs and wider community lettings, plus the additional income from the developments at ALC, health and fitness etc.

There is however a desire in some quarters for a potential club / community focussed model, to reduce long-term reliance on the public sector. In parallel with the planning application process it is therefore recommended that management discussions continue and detailed work is undertaken involving relevant partners, to explore the options and develop a sustainable model for the management of the outdoor sports hub. These will be developed in detail prior to the commencement of development if this is decided as the way to go.

## Appendix B – Alsager Based Teams

Note with the exception of AFC Alsager (where information has been updated due to rapid growth of club), all data taken directly from that provided by Cheshire East Council for the PPS.

The teams that require a home ground and the league arrangements (central venue or not) have been confirmed with the club.

Comment	Team Name	Pitch Type Required	League	Time Pitch is Required	Current Venue	Match Equivalents	Training Sessions Per Week
Do not require home pitch in Alsager	AFC Alsager Red Star (u8)	5v5	Soccer Centre League	Sun AM	Soccer Centre	0.5	2
Do not require home pitch in Alsager	AFC Alsager Tigers (U8)	5v5	Soccer Centre League	Sun AM	Soccer Centre	0.5	2
Do not require home pitch in Alsager	AFC Alsager All stars (u8)	5v5	Soccer Centre League	Sun AM	Soccer Centre	0.5	2
Do not require home pitch in Alsager	AFC Alsager Pumas (U9)	7v7	Soccer Centre League	Sun AM	Soccer Centre	0.5	2
Do not require home pitch in Alsager	AFC Alsager Lightning Bolt (U9)	7v7	Soccer Centre League	Sun AM	Soccer Centre	0.5	2
Do not require home pitch in Alsager	AFC Alsager Dynamos (U10)	7v7	Soccer Centre League	Sun AM	Soccer Centre	0.5	2
Do not require home pitch in Alsager	AFC Alsager Silver Bullets (U10)	7v7	Soccer Centre League	Sun AM	Soccer Centre	0.5	2
Do not require home pitch in Alsager	AFC Alsager U10b Smith	7v7	Soccer Centre League	Sun AM	Soccer Centre	0.5	2
	AFC Alsager Arrows (U11)	9v9	South Cheshire Youth League	Sun AM	Alsager – Cedar Avenue	0.5	1
	AFC Alsager Aces (U11)	9v9	South Cheshire Youth League	Sun AM	Alsager – Cedar Avenue	0.5	1
	AFC Alsager U12b Cox	9v9	South Cheshire Youth League	Sun AM	Alsager – Cedar Avenue	0.5	1
Displaced	AFC Alsager Jaguars (U12)	9v9	South Cheshire Youth League	Sun AM	Nantwich	0.5	1
Displaced	AFC Alsager Diamonds (U12)	9v9	South Cheshire Youth League	Sun AM	Nantwich	0.5	1

Comment	Team Name	Pitch Type Required	League	Time Pitch is Required	Current Venue	Match Equivalents	Training Sessions Per Week
Displaced	AFC Alsager Storm (U11)	9v9	South Cheshire Youth League	Sun AM	Sandbach	0.5	1
	Development Squads	n/a	No league play	Sat	MMU		3
	AFC Alsager Saturday Morning Club	n/a	No league play	Sun AM		0.5	
	Bank Corner FC	Senior Football	Crewe Football League		Alsager Leisure Centre	0.5	0
Displaced	Scholar Green FC	Senior Football	Coors Sunday Football League	Sun AM	Clough Hall Park	0.5	0
	AFC Alsager Saturday Team	Senior Football	Staffordshire County Senior League	Sat PM	MMU	0.5	1
	Alsager Town FC 1st	Senior Football	North West Counties Football League	Sat PM	Woodlands Stadium	0.5	1
	Alsager Town FC Reserves	Senior Football	Staffordshire County Senior League	Sat PM	Woodlands Stadium	0.5	1
	Alsager CC FC	Senior Football			MMU	0.5	0
	AFC Alsager Cougars (U13)	Youth	Potteries Junior Youth League	Sun AM	Alsager Leisure Centre	0.5	1
	AFC Alsager Dynamos (U14)	Youth	Potteries Junior Youth League	Sun AM	Alsager Leisure Centre	0.5	1
Displaced	AFC Alsager Gunners (U13)	Youth	South Cheshire Youth League	Sun AM	Nantwich	0.5	1
Displaced	AFC Alsager Barcelona (U13)	Youth	South Cheshire Youth League	Sun AM	Nantwich/Crewe	0.5	1
Displaced	AFC Alsager Firebirds (U14)	Youth	South Cheshire Youth League	Sun AM	Nantwich/Crewe	0.5	1
Displaced	AFC Alsager Gunners (U14)	Youth	South Cheshire Youth League	Sun AM	Nantwich/Crewe	0.5	1
Displaced	AFC Alsager (U16)	Youth	South Cheshire Youth League	Sun AM	Nantwich/Crewe	0.5	1

Comment	Team Name	Pitch Type Required	League	Time Pitch is Required	Current Venue	Match Equivalents	Training Sessions Per Week
	Alsager Town FC U16	Youth	Potteries Junior Youth League	Sun AM	Wood Park	0.5	1
	Alsager Town FC U15	Youth	Potteries Junior Youth League	Sun AM	Wood Park	0.5	1
	Alsager Town FC U16	Youth	South Cheshire Youth League	Sun AM	Sandbach	0.5	1