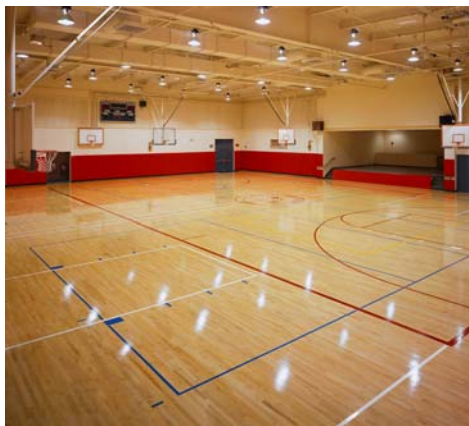




Dacorum Sport and
Recreation Study

Indoor Facilities Executive Summary



March 2006

Introduction

The Dacorum Sport and Recreation Study consists of separate reports covering indoor facilities and outdoor sport and recreation facilities. It was carried out by Knight, Kavanagh & Page.

The purpose of the Indoor Facilities study is to provide technical support to inform the preparation of the Development Plan Documents as required under the new planning regulations. Its findings will contribute to the revision of current planning policies in the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 where appropriate. The study comprises an Assessment Report and a Strategy and Action Plan.

The main aims were as follows:

- To carry out an audit of existing facilities
- To consider the distribution of and interrelationship between all built facilities
- To consult clubs and governing bodies regarding their needs
- To identify the need for improved or additional facilities.

The study includes leisure centres, community centres, village and church halls, and schools.

There is a degree of overlap with the Social and Community Facilities Study in terms of community centres and other halls.

Assessment Report

Main Findings

Leisure Centres

Most of the Borough is well served by leisure centres, though outlying settlements such as Markyate, Flamstead and Long Marston are outside the catchment areas. The relatively small populations in these villages do not justify provision of new facilities.

There is demand for martial arts in the Berkhamsted area, and provision at Tring does not meet the specification for competitive badminton. Refurbishment of existing facilities is the main issue.

Secondary Schools

Secondary schools were visited. The majority of secondary sites have limited indoor provision, mainly of 1960s build. Despite this, community use does take place, and there is scope for extending this, especially at Berkhamsted Collegiate School. Several are considering new provision.

Primary Schools

All primary and junior schools were sent questionnaires and a response rate of 56% was achieved. Generally there is good provision of multi-use sports space. Eight schools' facilities are available for regular community use; six have facilities that could be used by the community, and five have insufficient facilities to adequately deliver the sports curriculum.

Sport by Sport

Basketball – demand identified for a double basketball venue for junior matches (11 hours each Saturday)

Netball – Competitive netball is played outdoors. Clubs identified need for some additional time, but this is a programming issue.

Badminton – No additional demand identified, but lack of young people feeding into competitive clubs.

Gymnastics – There are two main gymnastics clubs operating in Dacorum: Sapphire Gymnastics Club (Hemel Sports Centre) and Berkhamsted Gymnastics Club (based at Ashlyns School). The former requires space for beginners lessons/sessions, and the latter needs to double the available floorspace to accommodate the current waiting list.

Table Tennis – The sport can be accommodated in a variety of facilities, but provision and storage of equipment is an issue.

Martial Arts – Leisure centres are currently under pressure to provide space, and are even using meeting rooms.

Fencing – More time required to develop a junior section.

Swimming

The distribution of pools is similar to Leisure Centres, meaning that the same areas are outside the catchment. The Hertfordshire Sports Partnership Swimming Development Officer believes Dacorum is “well off” in terms of water space per head of population. The majority of clubs report demand for additional water time, but this does not equate to enough demand for a new pool.

Fitness Facilities

There is a good spread of fitness provision across the Borough provided by both the public and private sectors. More significant parts of the rural areas are outside the catchment, again mainly to the north of the Borough, but also including Bovingdon and Chipperfield to the south of Hemel Hempstead. The population does not equate to enough demand to require new provision, but fitness provision could be investigated at community facilities.

Squash

In 2000, the Squash Rackets Association identified a national oversupply of courts. As an illustration of this trend, some squash courts at Berkhamsted Sports Centre have been converted to other more popular uses. There is no requirement for any additional facilities.

Indoor Tennis

The Lawn Tennis Association strongly supports the provision of additional courts in Dacorum. Two courts are currently being built at Berkhamsted Racquets Club, but there will still be a deficiency.

Indoor Bowls

Since the closure of the indoor bowls facility at Leisure World, provision is based on community centres. The nearest facilities are at north Watford and Redbourn Sports Centre.

Extreme Sports

There has been a dramatic increase in the popularity of these activities, and they are being accommodated in indoor facilities, e.g. climbing walls, snowboarding, skateboarding. Hemel Ski Centre has submitted an application to enclose the existing slopes, creating an indoor snow centre.

Community Centres

The only deficiency of provision is in Berkhamsted where there are currently no community centres (although other buildings meet this function to some extent). Although there may be close to an over supply in Hemel Hempstead, the centres are operating at close to peak time capacity and are well used. There are isolated reports of additional demand, e.g. at Leverstock Green.

Village and Church Halls

These halls are important to residential neighbourhoods and rural areas. Although not primarily for use as sports facilities, they are utilised for activities such as badminton, table tennis, martial arts and keep fit classes. There is a good spread of village hall type community provision across the whole Borough, and no need for additional provision.

Strategy and Action Plan

Given the good level of provision in Dacorum, the majority of recommendation relate to the refurbishment and management of existing facilities. No new facilities are required, except for the community centre in Berkhamsted.

Extensions are suggested for gymnastics at Hemel Hempstead Sports Centre, and new indoor facilities at Kings Langley School, the Cavendish School and Ashlyns School.