

**AN INDOOR SPORTS AND RECREATION
FACILITIES ASSESSMENT
FOR SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL**



A FINAL REPORT

BY

PMP

JANUARY 2009

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SECTION ONE
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction and background

- 1.1 Sevenoaks District Council (the Council) appointed PMP to undertake an Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Needs Assessment Audit.
- 1.2 The main focus of the study was to:
 - identify local needs through assessment
 - audit all public and private existing open space, sport and recreational facilities within the District
 - set local provision standards
 - apply local provisions standards
 - produce options for the strategy and policies.
- 1.3 The study is undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the latest Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002).
- 1.4 This report sets out the findings of the indoor sports and recreation elements of this study. The findings of the open spaces study will be produced as a separate report.
- 1.5 The key aims of indoor sports and recreation assessment were to answer the following questions:
 - what key indoor sports facilities are currently available to the community?
 - where are they located throughout the District?
 - what is the demand for the use of these facilities by local people?
 - what do local people think about the quality of provision?
 - where are the gaps in provision?
 - what is the best way forward for investment and delivering improvements?
- 1.6 This report sets out:
 - a review of the current supply and demand for sports and recreation facilities in the district
 - demand modelling to assess the current and projected over/under supply of facilities using PMP's in house modelling techniques based on Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM)
 - conclusions and recommendations.

SECTION TWO
ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Assessment methodology

Facility audit

- 2.1 The primary task of this assessment was to carry out a comprehensive audit of existing sport and recreation provision within the District. The core indoor facilities that PMP audited include:
- sports halls
 - swimming pools
 - health and fitness
 - indoor bowls
 - indoor tennis
 - squash courts.
- 2.2 In addition to these indoor facilities, modelling was undertaken for synthetic turf pitches. All other outdoor facilities will be reviewed in the main report.
- 2.3 The audit was carried out by using the Active Places database, and information gathered through public consultation. The audit has included the accessibility, type, size and number of facilities at each site.
- 2.4 A detailed explanation of the modelling processes and the parameters used for each facility type can be found in Appendix C.

Demand modelling

- 2.5 Demand modelling for sports halls, swimming pools and health & fitness was carried out using PMP's *Mapping the Future*TM (MtF) model. MtF models indicate the level of surplus or undersupply of facilities. The full set of parameters and assumptions relating to the models are set out in detail in Appendix C.
- 2.6 For the purposes of this report, the terms private, public, club and dual use are defined as follows:
- public – public leisure centres with unrestricted public access
 - private – venues where there is no pay and play access for the general public and membership is required
 - dual use – leisure facilities that only allow formal public access during out of school hours and holidays
 - club use – facilities that can only be hired out as a whole, to clubs and associations, usually on a block booking system. Such facilities do not provide staff or any other support and are therefore not included in the model.

Consulting with the public

- 2.7 A variety of consultation exercises were carried out during this assessment of provision. 5000 household surveys were sent to random addresses across the district. 721 surveys were returned, yielding a statistically valid response rate of 14%.
- 2.8 Drop in sessions were held at various locations in the Sevenoaks District, and an email address was set up to enable members of the public to express their opinions at their leisure.
- 2.9 Sports Club Surveys were sent to clubs throughout the District.
- 2.10 Consultation was also undertaken with Council Officers, Members, town and parish councils and external agencies.
- 2.11 An analysis of the consultation results are provided in Section 3.

SECTION THREE
REVIEW OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Review of supply and demand

Demand for facilities

- 3.1 Current demand has been assessed through desk research and a review of documents, demographic analysis and an analysis of consultation findings.

Demographic analysis

- 3.2 When analysing the need and demand for sports facilities it is important to assess the size and composition of the local leisure market and the impact it will have upon facility usage. An analysis of the population in the district, using information from the 2001 census is shown in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1 Demographic review

<i>Demographic indicator</i>	<i>Analysis</i>
<i>Population</i>	The resident population according to the 2001 Census was 109,305. The proportion of males to females is 48% to 52%. Population projected to increase to 112,005 by 2026.
<i>Age structure</i>	According to the 2001 Census, 20% of the resident population is under 16 years of age (compared to 20% for England and Wales), 57% is between 16 and 59 (compared to 59% in England and Wales) and 23% is aged 60 and over (compared to 21% in England and Wales).
<i>Ethnic background</i>	98% of the population is classified as White British compared to a national average (England and Wales) of 90.9%. 0.6% of the population is classified as Asian (compared to the national average of 4.6%) and 0.2% is classified as black (compared to an England and Wales average of 2.3%).
<i>Economic activity</i>	The proportion of residents in full time employment is 44% compared to 39% in England and Wales. 1.7% of the local population is unemployed compared to 1.5% in England and Wales. 13% of the population is retired compared to 9.9% of the population of England and Wales.
<i>Mobility</i>	15% of Sevenoaks households do not own a car, which is less than the average for England and Wales of 26.8%.
<i>Health</i>	The percentage of people who stated they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limited daily activities or work was 14%, which is below the average for England and Wales (17%).

Sport and leisure potential profile

- 3.3 A sport and leisure profile for the district has been calculated using data from our in-house geo-demographic software, Mapping the Future™. These figures provide an indication of the propensity of residents within the district to take part in specific sports.
- 3.4 A detailed report on the propensity of residents within the district to participate in sporting activities is provided in Appendix B. Examples of participation in some of the most popular sports and leisure activities are:
- health and fitness and swimming are 0.2% higher than the national average
 - tennis is 2.3% higher than the national average.

Findings from public consultation

- 3.5 Public consultation was carried out through a household survey, drop-in sessions and questionnaire surveys to all sports clubs in the district. Members of the public were also given the opportunity to share their opinions through a dedicated email address.
- 3.6 Members of the public were asked about the quantity of provision of different facilities:

Percentage of responses					
Facilities	More than enough	About right	Nearly enough	Not enough	Don't know
Swimming pool	9%	55%	9%	17%	10%
Sports hall	6%	48%	8%	13%	25%
Squash courts	6%	38%	7%	10%	40%
Health and fitness	7%	46%	9%	11%	26%
Indoor bowls	6%	33%	4%	7%	50%
Indoor tennis	3%	23%	5%	18%	50%
Studios for dance & exercise	5%	35%	8%	12%	41%
Village hall	6%	51%	9%	8%	27%
School hall	6%	47%	7%	5%	34%
Community hall	5%	38%	7%	12%	38%

- 3.7 The high percentage of respondents who 'don't know', regarding indoor tennis and indoor bowls could suggest that there is a low demand for these types of facility. These results suggest that the public perception is that there are enough swimming pools, sports halls and village halls.

SECTION 3 – REVIEW OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND

- 3.8 Respondents were asked how long they expected to travel to each type of indoor facility and by what mode of transport:

	Walk		Cycle		Bus		Car	
	Time (mins)	Baseline	Time (mins)	Baseline	Time (mins)	Baseline	Time (mins)	Baseline
Swimming pool	15	132	20	16	30	33	15	308
Sports hall	15	125	15	19	20	23	15	243
Squash courts	15	110	20	14	20	21	15	228
Health & fitness	15	132	20	14	20	20	15	233
Indoor bowls	20	84	20	10	30	29	20	222
Indoor tennis	15	89	20	11	20	23	15	219
Studios	15	95	15	9	20	23	15	210
Village hall	10	280	15	11	20	6	10	125
School hall	10	249	15	8	15	8	10	121
Community hall	10	228	20	8	15	11	15	137

- 3.9 The majority of respondents would choose to travel by car and would expect to travel for 15 minutes. Respondents would walk to community centres and village halls and would expect to travel for up to 10 minutes.
- 3.10 21% respondents indicated they use swimming pools outside the district less than once a month. The majority of respondents do not use any facilities outside the district.
- 3.11 The main issues raised from the drop-in sessions were that facilities are not accessible by public transport, which limits the large retired population. Facilities are also perceived as too expensive and swimming pools are not open for long enough in the evenings. It should be noted that the cost of facilities in Sevenoaks is not considered to be significantly different than adjoining local authorities and that all Sencio Leisure Centres are open until 10pm on weekdays.

Sports club surveys

- 3.12 Surveys were sent by PMP to all sports clubs across the District, from which 66 surveys were successfully completed and returned. The results account for the following types of sports clubs:

- cricket
- martial arts
- walking
- rugby
- badminton
- football
- netball
- athletics
- bowls
- cycling
- swimming
- tennis.

- 3.13 The following sections outline the key points which have arisen from this programme of consultation for indoor sports clubs only, split into the three key themes of quantity, quality and accessibility.

Quantity

- there was a good response from indoor sports clubs as well, including Martial arts, swimming, indoor bowls and badminton clubs.
- 44% of indoor sports clubs believe that the overall provision of leisure facilities in Sevenoaks is good, and a further 6% rated it as very good. 25% of clubs said the overall provision was average, and only 6% stated it was very poor.
- 69% of indoor sports clubs believe that the existing leisure facilities meet their current needs, as opposed to 11% who stated they did not.
- when asked what type of leisure facilities they would like to see more of, indoor sports clubs indicated youth facilities (31%), Multi-use games areas (19%) and Health and Fitness gyms (19%) as their main priorities.

Quality

- 3.14 Clubs were asked to rate their current facilities against several quality criteria.

- 37% of indoor sports clubs stated that the range of their facilities was very good, with a further 12.5% rating it as good. Another 12.5% however stated their facilities had a very poor range.
- the majority of clubs rated their changing facilities as either good or very good (56%), while 18% said those were either poor or very poor.
- 62% of clubs were satisfied with the appearance of their facilities as well as the helpfulness of the staff.
- overall, 31% believed their facilities to be very good, 25% good, another 25% average, 6% very poor. 13% did not respond.

Accessibility

- the majority of indoor sports clubs believe that the location of their facilities is very good (56%). However 12.5% said it was very poor.
- as for outdoor sports clubs, accessibility by public transport rated poorly, with 36% saying it is poor or very poor. A further 31% rated it as average, with 25% rating it as good.
- again, car parking rated favourably with 56% saying it is either good or very good.

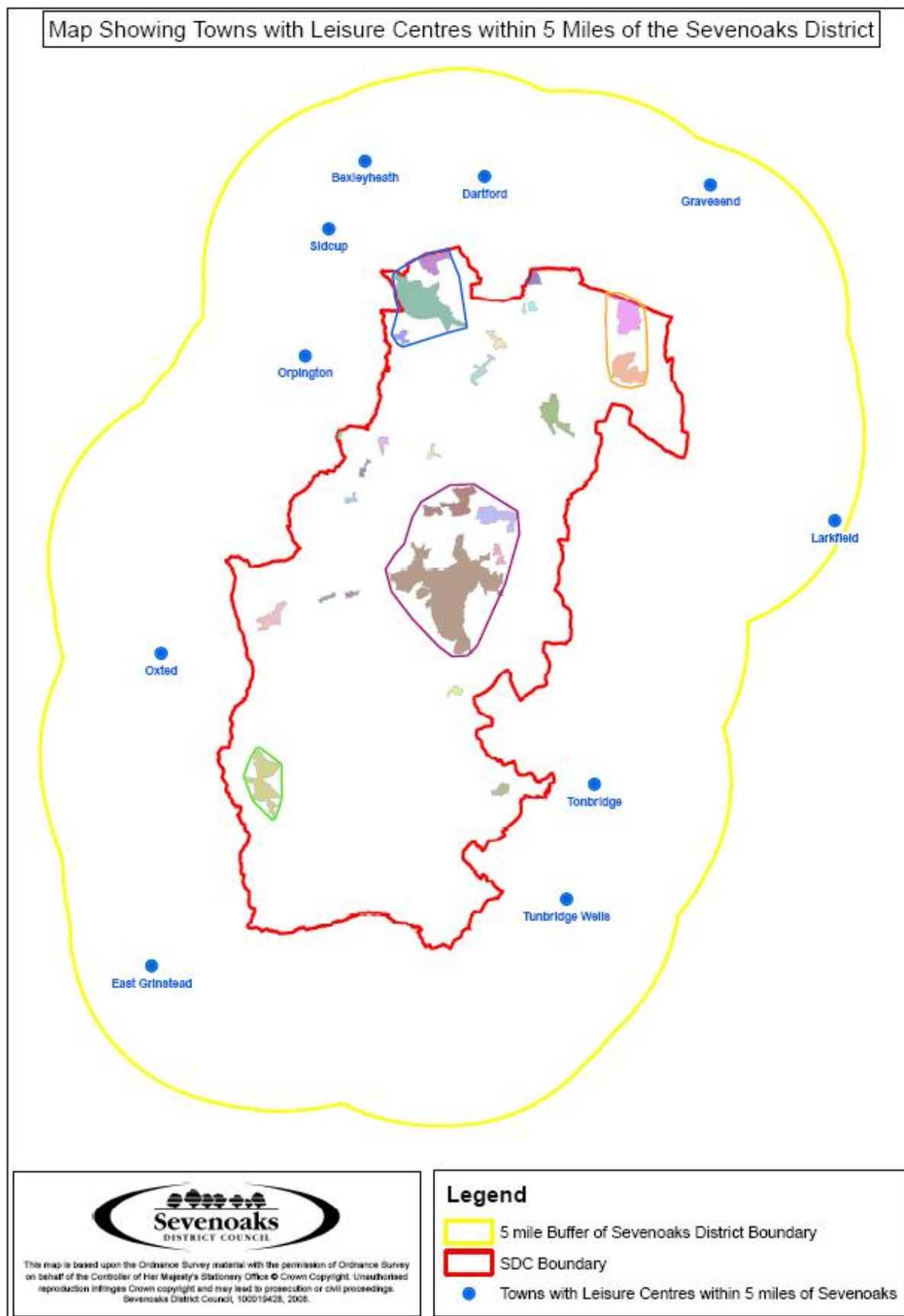
- 3.15 Respondents to the household survey indicated they would like to see more swimming pools, health and fitness gyms and indoor tennis facilities. The results of the consultation with town and parish councils concurs with the household survey and suggests that there is an undersupply of pools in the northern part of the District. The modelling, however, reveals a different picture. More detail on the modelling is set out in section 4.

SECTION FOUR
ANALYSIS OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Analysis of supply and demand

- 4.1 We have carried out a comparative analysis to establish the adequacy of current facility provision in meeting identified local demand. The process has involved three stages:
- preparation of a full audit of current facilities within the district to establish the level of supply
 - plotting of all facilities using our in-house geo-demographic mapping package 'Mapping the Future™' (MtF) to illustrate the geographical spread of facilities across the District
 - use of approved demand modelling techniques based on national sporting participation parameters used within Sport England's facilities planning model (FPM), to calculate whether the level of current supply adequately meets demand or whether there is under or over provision.
- 4.2 PMP's supply and demand model is based around the following premise:
- there are X number of people in the catchment area who would be willing to use a particular type of sports facility (based on total population and propensity to participate in that sport)
 - at the same time, there are Y units of the relevant sports facilities (e.g. swimming pool water area, health and fitness stations, etc) in the catchment area
 - the relationship between X and Y indicates the surplus or shortfall in terms of *number of units*.
- 4.3 Supply and demand analysis has been completed for swimming pools, health and fitness, sports halls and synthetic turf pitches. Outlined below are our findings and the implications for the District of Sevenoaks.
- 4.4 There are four public leisure centres in Sevenoaks, which are managed by Sencio Community Leisure Trust in partnership with the Council. They are:
- Edenbridge Leisure Centre
 - Sevenoaks Leisure Centre
 - Wildernesse Sports Centre
 - White Oak Leisure Centre.
- 4.5 In addition, there are a number of public leisure centres in towns within a short distance of Sevenoaks District, such as Bexleyheath, Dartford, Sidcup, Gravesend, Orpington, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, Larkfield, Oxted and East Grinstead (see map 4.1)

Map 4.1 Major towns with leisure centres within five miles of Sevenoaks District



Swimming pools

- 4.6 The demand for swimming can be determined by applying sports participation rates (by age and gender) to the population profile within the study area. The propensity to participate in swimming in the District is slightly higher than the national average, with 23.2% of the population expressing an interest in swimming, compared to 23% nationally.
- 4.7 The ‘at one time capacity’ (capacity in any peak session) can be used to establish the level of supply needed to cater for the demand. This is based on Sport England parameters including peak hours, proportion of visits during peak times, average visit duration and pool area. This approach ensures that supply is sufficient to cater for the maximum demand at any point in time.
- 4.8 The key assumptions used in the swimming pools demand model area:
- proportion of visits during peak times is 63%
 - average duration of visits is 64 minutes
 - at one time capacity = 6m² per person
 - capacity of 212m² (one pool unit) = 35 people
 - one pool unit = average four lane 25 metre pool.

On this basis, using 2001 Census information, demand levels equate to a total of 1077m² of pool space within the district. The demand model calculates, using projected population statistics, that in 2026 this demand will increase to 1106m².

- 4.9 The profile of existing swimming pool provision within the district is illustrated in Map 4.2 below. There are 13 facilities within the identified catchment area. A detailed audit of facilities is shown in Appendix A.

Table 4.1 Swimming pool facilities in the District of Sevenoaks

Facility	Facility details	Access type	Included in supply and demand model
White Oak Leisure Centre	33m and 13m indoor pools	Public	✓
Furness School	18 metre indoor pool	Club	✗
Brands Hatch Place	12 metre indoor pool	Private	✗
Otium Leisure Club (Brands Hatch)	16 metre indoor pool	Private	✗
The Sennocke Centre/ Sevenoaks School	25 metre indoor pool	Club	✗
Sevenoaks Leisure Centre	25 metre indoor pool	Public	✓
The New School at West Heath	20 metre indoor pool	Club	✗

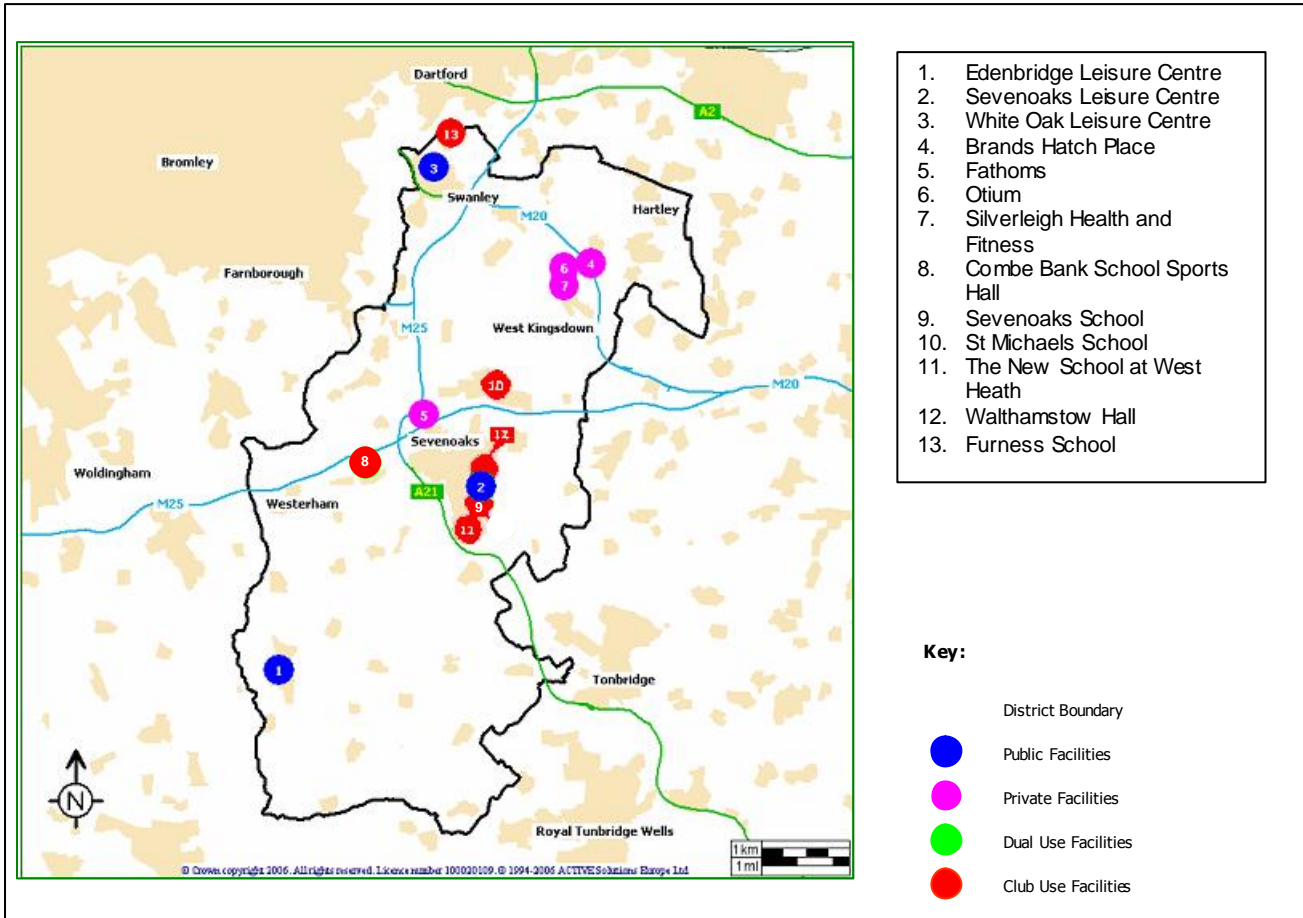
SECTION 4 – ANALYSIS OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Facility	Facility details	Access type	Included in supply and demand model
Fathoms Leisure Centre	15 metre indoor pool	Private	✘
Walthamstow Hall	25 metre indoor pool	Club	✘
St Michaels School	25 metre indoor pool	Club	✘
Combe Bank School	25 metre indoor pool	Club	✘
Silverleigh Nudist Spa and Nudist Club	10 metre indoor pool	Private	✘
Edenbridge Leisure Centre	25 metre indoor pool	Public	✔

- 4.10 Three swimming pools are included in the modelling (five are private use and four are club use and are therefore not included, based on Sport England recommendations), which results in a current existing supply of 1141 m².

Scenarios	Demand	Supply	Oversupply/Shortfall
Existing	1077 m ²	1141 m ²	Oversupply of 64 m ²
2026 most likely	1106 m ²	1141 m ²	Oversupply of 35 m ²

Map 4.2 Swimming pools in Sevenoaks District



Sports halls

4.11 The level of demand for sports hall facilities can be determined by applying accepted sports participation rate standards (by age and gender) and peak usage parameters to the catchment population. The number of total visits during peak times is used to calculate the size of a sports hall (in badminton court units) needed to serve this demand at any one time.

4.12 The key assumptions are as follows:

- 60% visits during peak time
- average visit duration = 1 hour
- normal peak periods = 40.5 hours per week
- at one time capacity = 5 people per badminton court.

On this basis, using Census 2001 information, demand levels equate to a total of 30 badminton courts within the district. The demand model calculates, using projected population statistics, that in 2026 this demand will increase to 31 badminton courts.

SECTION 4 – ANALYSIS OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND

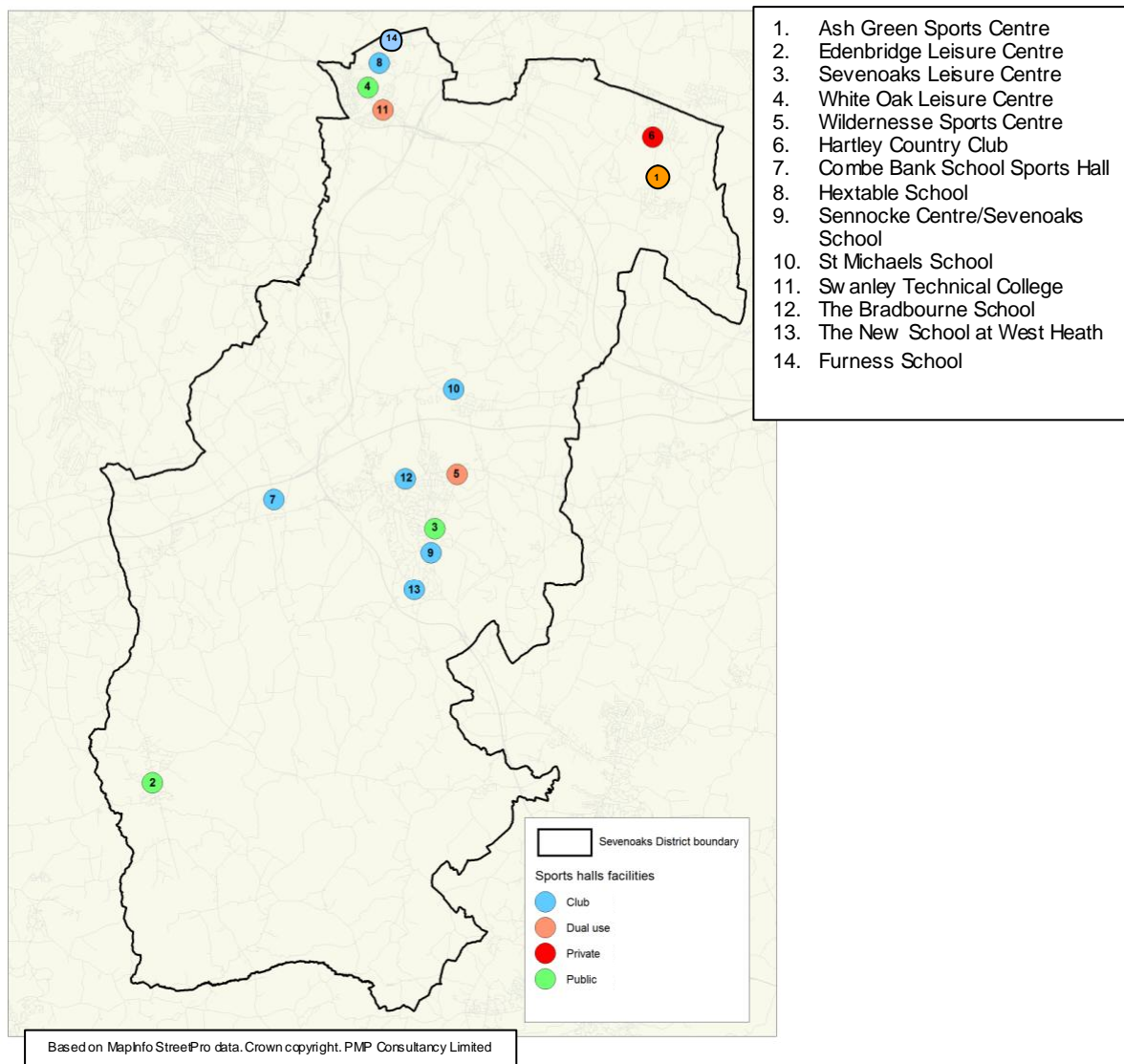
- 4.13 The profile of existing sports hall provision within the district is illustrated in Map 4.3 overleaf. There are 14 facilities containing sports halls within the identified catchment area. A detailed audit of facilities is shown in Appendix A.

Table 4.2 Sports halls in Sevenoaks District

Facility	Facility details	Access type	Included in supply and demand model
White Oak Leisure Centre	6 courts	Public	✓
Hextable School	1 court	Club	✗
Furness School	1 court	Club	✗
Swanley Technology College	4 courts	Dual use	✓
Hartley Country Club	1 court	Private	✗
Ash Green Sports Centre	2 courts	Dual use	✗
The Sennocke Centre/Sevenoaks School	8 courts	Club	✗
Sevenoaks Leisure Centre	4 courts	Public	✓
The New School at West Heath	4 courts	Club	✗
The Bradbourne School	3 courts	Club	✗
Wilderness Sports Centre	4 courts	Dual use	✓
St Michaels School	4 courts	Club	✗
Combe Bank School	4 courts	Club	✗
Edenbridge Leisure Centre	4 courts	Public	✓

- 4.14 Facility size and accessibility for public use are key factors taken into consideration when assessing the current level of supply. Of the 14 facilities, nine have been excluded from the demand modelling analysis in line with Sport England recommendations, as they are only accessible for club or private use or are too small for the modelling (three courts or fewer).
- 4.15 Five sports halls are included in the model and when applying the modelling assumptions regarding accessibility for dual-use sites (the capacity for dual-use sites is reduced by 25% to reflect the balance of school access and public access), the result is an existing supply level of 20 badminton courts.

Map 4.3 Sports halls in Sevenoaks District



4.16 The results of the model under different scenarios are illustrated in Table 4.3 below.

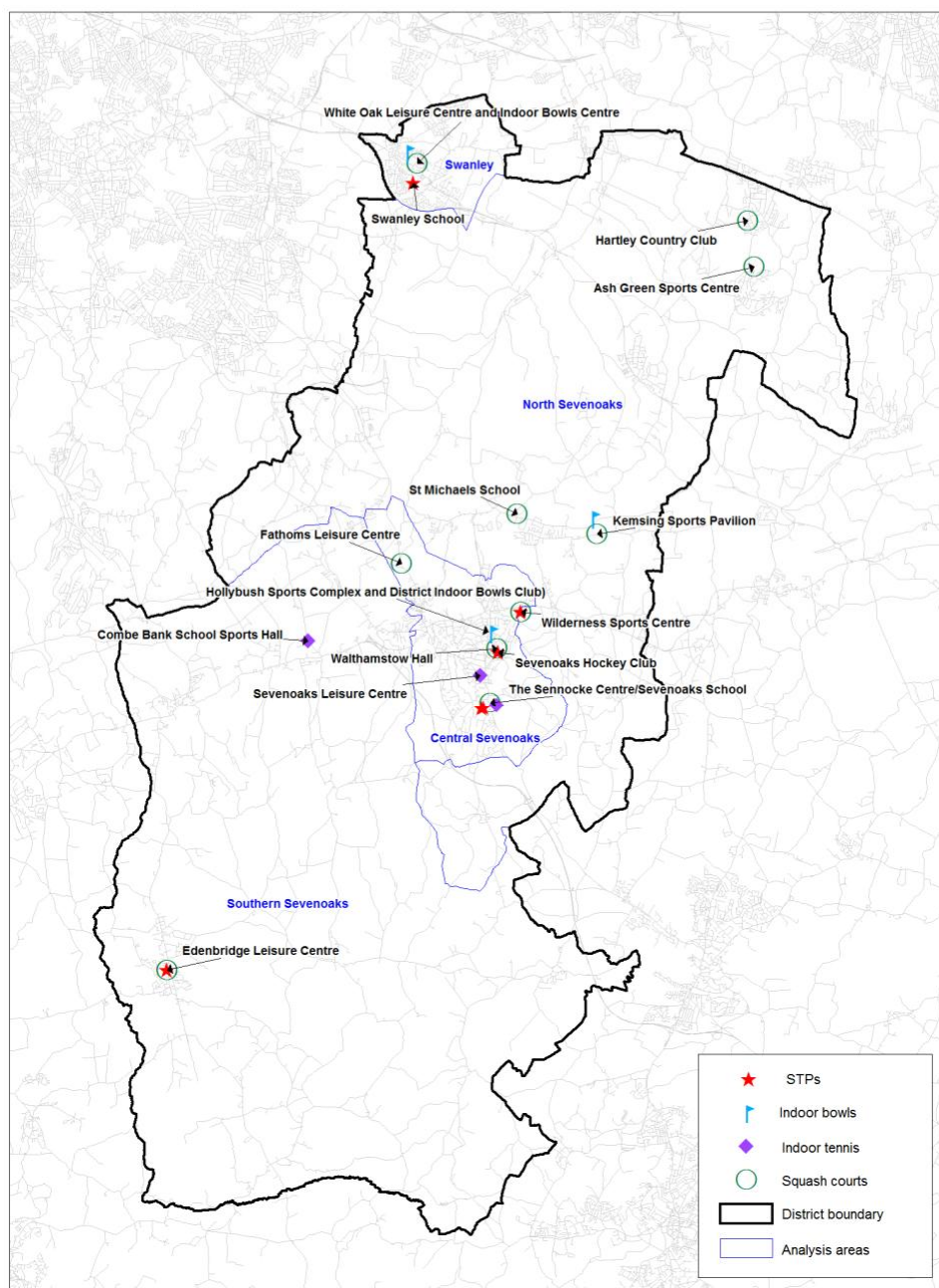
Table 4.3 Supply and demand modeling scenarios for sports halls

Scenarios	Demand	Supply	Oversupply/Shortfall
Existing	30 badminton courts	20 badminton courts	Undersupply of 10 badminton courts
2026 most likely	31 badminton courts	20 badminton courts	Undersupply of 11 badminton courts

Other sports

4.17 Other sports audited included Synthetic Turf Pitches (STPs), indoor bowls, indoor tennis and squash. Map 4.4 below shows the spread of these facilities across the district.

Map 4.4 Indoor tennis, bowls, squash and STPs in Sevenoaks District



Indoor facilities

Based on MapInfo Streetpro data. Crown Copyright. PMP Ltd



Synthetic turf pitches (STPs)

- 4.18 There are six STPs in the District although the two at the Sennocke Centre are not accessible to the public. For modelling purposes, four STPs have been included, which equates to an oversupply of 2.2 STPs. In 2026 there will be a demand for two STPs, which equates to an oversupply of two STPs. Westerham Parish Council have suggested that Westerham Football Club has a need for an STP. Similarly Leigh Parish Council have suggested that the area would benefit from a STP.

Table 4.4 STPs in Sevenoaks District

Facility	Facility details	Access type	Included in supply and demand model
Edenbridge Leisure Centre	1 sand based floodlit STP	Public	✓
Sennocke Centre/Sevenoaks School	2 sand based STPs	Club	✗
Hollybush Lane, Sevenoaks	1 sand based floodlit STP	Public	✓
Swanley School	1 sand based floodlit STP	Dual use	✓
Wildemesse Sports Centre	1 sand based floodlit STP	Public	✓

Indoor bowls

- 4.19 There are currently two facilities with accommodation for indoor bowls, Sevenoaks and District Indoor Bowls Club and White Oak Indoor Bowls Club, which provide a total of 16 rinks. The current demand for bowling rinks in Sevenoaks is 7.13, suggesting a current oversupply of 8.87 rinks. The demand for bowling rinks in 2026 is predicted to rise to 7.5. However, the consultation suggests that provision is at the right level.

Indoor tennis

- 4.20 There is one indoor tennis facility at Sevenoaks School, which provides 3 tennis courts however they are not available to the general public.
- 4.21 There is currently no modelling available for indoor tennis provision, however it is possible to gauge the District's provision against surrounding areas. Table 4.5, below, provides a comparison of indoor tennis provision in Sevenoaks against nearby local authorities.

Table 4.5 Indoor tennis provision

Local authority	Number of indoor courts	Population	Courts per 1,000 population
Sevenoaks	3	109,356	0.027
Tonbridge & Malling	5	107,626	0.046
Dartford	6	85,850	0.069
Gravesham	2	95,578	0.021
Tunbridge Wells	4	104,016	0.038

- 4.22 Sevenoaks has a low number of courts compared to neighbouring authorities and the lack of access to the courts at Sevenoaks School means that the reality is worse. Much of the provision in adjoining local authorities is provided by private operators.

Squash

- 4.23 There are 10 facilities with squash courts in the district, four are private or club use, five are public and one is dual-use. This equates to eight public squash courts, nine private/club squash courts and three dual use squash courts.
- 4.24 Although there is no Sport England modelling to quantify the oversupply or undersupply of squash courts in the District, it is recognised that there is a decreasing public interest in squash throughout the country. Sport England reported a decline in participation in squash between 1996 and 2002 (Participation in Sport in Great Britain). This decline has been mirrored in Sevenoaks at some centres and courts have been used for other activities, where appropriate.

SECTION FIVE
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions and recommendations

- 5.1 The audit of indoor sports facility provision highlighted a current undersupply of sports halls but an oversupply of synthetic turf pitches and swimming pools.
- 5.2 Although there is currently a small undersupply of sports halls, there is not a pressing need for new sports hall provision. This is because there are large rural areas of the District where formal sports hall provision would be inappropriate. In these areas there are many village and community halls that provide a sporting function to local persons, particularly for activities such as short mat bowls, table tennis and badminton. In addition, there are still a number of schools with sports halls that are not used by the public that could be opened prior to any new provision.
- 5.3 Due to the small oversupply of swimming water in the area it is not recommended that any additional provision be considered, unless a clear business case can be proven for such a facility. The public consultation, which showed that 55% of respondents considered existing levels of provision to be ‘about right’, supports this recommendation.
- 5.4 According to the modelling results, it should be possible to accommodate all existing and future for STPs on existing facilities. However, some sport clubs considered there was a need for additional provision. There is also a national trend towards increasing use of STPs for football, with the latest ‘third generation’ surface. We recommend that usage levels at the existing facilities are reviewed as part of a District-wide playing pitch strategy .
- 5.5 As there is only one venue for indoor tennis courts in the District, it should be a long-term priority for the Council to increase the number of facilities available. Because of planning permission restrictions, it is not possible to increase public use of the Sennocke Centre. The main alternative solution is to encourage private sector provision.
- 5.6 Due to the decline in squash provision, re-allocation of squash courts where they are under-utilised is recommended and this has already occurred at some leisure centres in the district. It is recognised, however, that squash is thriving at the Wildernesse Sports Centre and its growth, where possible, should be encouraged.
- 5.7 From an accessibility viewpoint it is recognised that there are rural areas, particularly in the South of the District, without major sporting facilities nearby. However there are major facilities within the urban areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Orpington.
- 5.8 As it is recognised that there are no major deficiencies of sports facilities in the area (with the exception of indoor tennis) and as such it is recommended that any future monies are directed towards sports development schemes rather than new provision. This would build upon the successful work already being undertaken by Sencio Leisure.

ISF01	Seek to secure indoor tennis through private sector provision.
ISF02	In areas where squash participation has declined, alternative uses for the courts should be encouraged.
ISF03	Consider future Section 106 monies being directed towards sports development schemes rather than new facilities.

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VILLAGE HALLS