



**CONTINUUM**  
SPORT & LEISURE LTD

East Hampshire District Council  
Playing Pitch Strategy 2024 Appendix D  
Assessment of Need Report Rugby

## Appendix D: Rugby - Assessment of Needs (Stages B and C)

The findings of the assessment for needs for rugby facilities in East Hampshire are summarised in this appendix to the Playing Pitch Strategy. Site visits to the home grounds used by clubs in East Hampshire have been made and club officials/site managers have been consulted regarding floodlit training provision and use. Consultation with Rugby League suggests there is no current activity in the East Hampshire, with the nearest affiliated Rugby League club being US Portsmouth Seahawks, approximately 20-30 minutes away. There is also unaffiliated provision in Southampton (Solent Spitfires), at a similar distance.

Since the last assessment of Rugby Union in 2018, there has been a change in the total supply of rugby pitches available for community use. There has been a loss of one pitch at the MOD Garrison in Bordon as Oakmoor School has since been built on the site. The pitch is due to be reprovided but is yet to be marked as a pitch.

The 2018 Playing Pitch Strategy recommended improving the quality of the pitches at Anstey Park. Whilst improvements have been made in this area by increased pitch maintenance, the club report that pitches are frequently unplayable due to waterlogging. The pitches at Penns Place have remained at a high quality, as reported in 2018, with an additional floodlit pitch reducing heavy training loads.

A facility audit compiled from the research, consultation and site visits was reviewed by the RFU Facility Development Team and is included in this report (Figure 3.1).

### 1. Rugby Pitch Supply (Step 2)

There are two rugby clubs in East Hampshire based on playing field sites with rugby pitches – Alton RFC and Petersfield RFC.

#### Distribution of Rugby Sites

Figure 1.1 shows the distribution of grass rugby pitches in East Hampshire. Three of the 4 rugby sites are located in Petersfield Town (Penns Place, Churcher's College (Penns Place), and Churcher's College (Ramshill), which is on the border between East Hampshire and Chichester. The facilities here are in close proximity to Petersfield RFC. Anstey Park is located in Alton, in the north of the district. The facilities here service the remaining rugby club in East Hampshire, Alton RFC.

#### 1.1 Rugby Pitches in East Hampshire

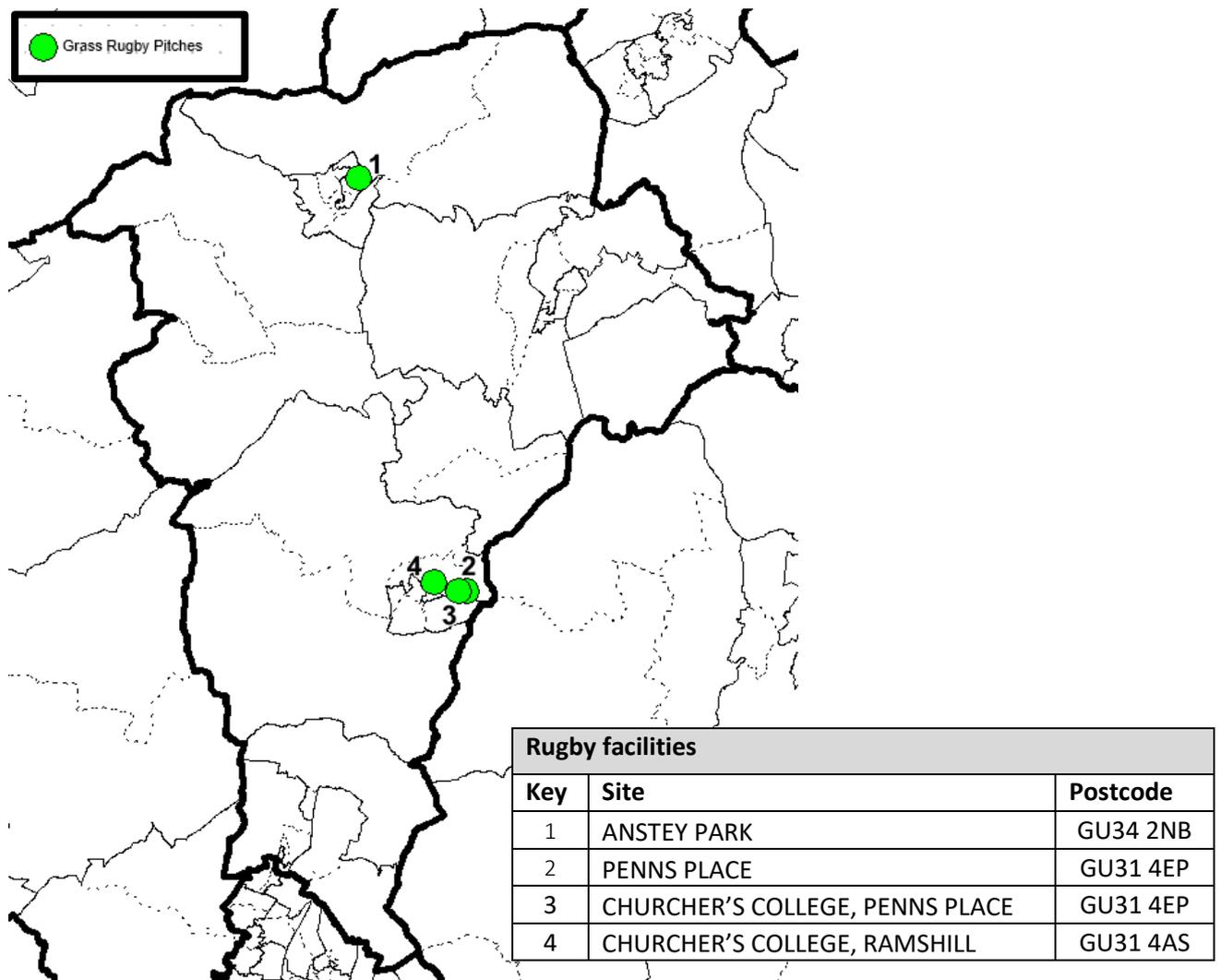
In the 2023/24 season, East Hampshire had a total of 13 adult size grass rugby pitches marked out with posts in situ available for community use. It should be noted that whilst available for community use the pitches at both Churcher's College sites only receive use by Petersfield RFC when required. There are additional pitches at Amery Hill School (1), Ditcham Park School (1), Eggars School (1), and The Petersfield School (1), but these are not currently available for regular community use. Amery Hill School and Eggars School are both open to allowing community use however the pitches are not currently available to the community and the pitch at Eggars School has significant slope.

The district has no AGP pitches in the area which are World Rugby compliant and 3 of the natural turf pitches at Penns Place are fully floodlit to match play standard. There is also floodlit grassed training area at Anstey Park. Details on individual sites can be found in figure 1.3.

## 1.2 Ownership and Security of Access

Alton RFC are the sole users of the rugby pitches at Anstey Park and use the site for home matches and training. The club have a lease with Alton Town Council until 2028 (with an extension option in place) for the use of the pitches and clubhouse. Petersfield RFC own their clubhouse building at Penns Place and have a 30 year lease on the land. The club would like to secure an asset transfer and have been discussing this with the Town Council. Petersfield RFC occasionally use the rugby pitches at both Churcher’s College sites when needed.

**Figure 1.1 – East Hampshire Rugby facilities**



## 1.3 Pitch Quality – Maintenance and Drainage

The responsibility of pitch maintenance is mixed across sites in East Hampshire with the town councils maintaining the council owned sites such as Anstey Park and Penns Place, and Churcher’s College maintaining their own facilities. As shown in figure 1.2 the maintenance of grass pitches is all adequate.

**Figure 1.2– Pitch Maintenance and Drainage Ratings from Site Visits and Club Consultation**

Number of pitches		Maintenance			
		Poor (M0)	Adequate (M1)	Good (M2)	Total
Drainage	Natural Inadequate (D0)		2		2
	Natural Adequate (D1)		13*		13
	Pipe Drained (D2)				
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)				
	<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>		<b>15</b>

\*includes 2 junior pitches at Churcher's College (Ramshill)

#### 1.4 Park Pitches

The pitches at both Anstey Park and Penns Place are open to the public and receive recreational use from walkers, joggers, and dog walkers. There was some evidence of use by dog walkers on both sites during visits.

#### 1.5 At Risk Sites

None of the rugby pitches in the district are at risk, however there are plans to develop the offering at Taro Leisure Centre, which should consider any potential impact on the availability of pitches. Alton RFC's lease at Anstey Park is due to expire in 2028, however the relationship between the club and Alton Town Council is good and therefore not considered at risk. Despite this, the club and town council should endeavour to begin talks regarding renewal.

#### 1.6 Proposed New Supply

Discussions have been held between Petersfield RFC, Petersfield Town FC, and Petersfield Town Council to develop 2 new rugby pitches by opening up a parcel of land behind the current rugby pitches. This would create 2 additional rugby pitches and allow the transfer of one non-floodlit rugby pitch to football for the use of Petersfield Town FC. This would create a net gain of 1 rugby pitch, and 1 football pitch at Penns Place.

Oakmoor School are developing a new full-sized rugby pitch as part of their ongoing playing pitch developments. These pitches are estimated to be in use for the 2024/25 season. These facilities may be beneficial for training purposes for both clubs, however the school is located over 10 miles from both clubs, making it unlikely that either club will consistently use the new pitch.

#### 1.7 Ancillary Facilities

Alton RFC currently pay for and manage 1 of the 2 pavilions at Anstey Park but have aspirations to manage both pavilions in the near future. The long-term aspirations of the club are to build one large clubhouse in place of the 2 separate pavilions in order to create a 'site of sporting excellence' with classrooms, gym, and bar area. The main pavilion has 8 changing rooms, garage, and club room and the club rate the facilities as 4/5, noting that the changing rooms could be bigger.

Petersfield RFC's clubhouse is large, offering a café area, function room, bar, gym, physiotherapy facilities, and 6 changing rooms. 4 of the changing rooms are smaller, with the club reporting a need to extend these facilities. Each changing room has integrated showers, but no toilets and lacks privacy making them unsuitable for women's, girl's and youth rugby. They would like to extend the clubhouse to improve changing and social space. The club have also noted that parking provisions are insufficient for large events such as rugby festivals.

#### 1.8 Rugby Supply in Neighbouring Boroughs

The following rugby clubs have home grounds within reach of residents in East Hampshire:

- Farnham RFC – To the Northeast, Waverley
- Haslemere Community RFC – To the East, Waverley
- Alresford RFC – To the West, Winchester
- Havant RFC – To the South, Havant

It is expected that some of these clubs have members from East Hampshire. Havant RFC is likely to attract some players from the Southern sides of the district and Alresford RFC is to the West of East Hampshire where there is limited rugby provision.

Figure 1.3: The Situation at Individual Sites

Site	Pitch	Rating	Ancillary facilities	Security of access	Pitch capacity	Estimated use 22/23	Supply / Demand Balance	RAG
<b>Anstey Park / Diggers Field (Alton RFC)</b>	P1 - (In front of Rugby Club building)	M1/D1	Clubhouse and pavilion on site. Main pavilion has 8 changing rooms, garage, and a club room. Plan has plans to extend clubhouse to provide extra storage and social facilities. Club rate changing facilities 4/5 stating some could be bigger	Lease with Alton TC until 2028, with an extension option in place.	2	Matches = 3 (men's 1st, men's 2nd, and women's 1st)	-1	
	P2 - (in front of pavilion)	M1/D1			2	Matches = 3 (Vets, U18, U17)	-1	
	P3 - Far right front	M1/D0			1.5	Matches = 4 (U16, U15x2, U14)	-2.5	
	P4 - Far right back	M1/D0			1.5	Matches = 3.5 (U13, U14 girls, U16 girls, 1x minis)	-2	
	P5 - Diggers Field	M1/D1			2	Matches = 3 (6x minis)	-1	
	Floodlit Grassed training area - no markings	Severe overuse limits quality			N/A	Training = Used 5 days a week with up to 3 teams a night. Training area is severely overused and often requires the club to train elsewhere.	N/A	
<b>Penns Place (Petersfield RFC)</b>	P1 - Full-size Main pitch Floodlit	M1/D1	Large clubhouse, with café area, function room, bar, small gym and physio area. 6 changing rooms, 2 large, 4 smaller, each CR has showers but no toilets, these are in a separate area. Club rate facilities 4/5 stating a need to extend the changing rooms	Club owns building and has 30 year lease on land, trying to secure an asset transfer.	2	Matches = 2.5 (men's x 3, vets x1, 1 youth team rotated) Training = 2 men's Total 4.5	-2.5	
	P2 - Floodlit (next to main)	M1/D1			2	Matches = 1 (2 x Juniors) Training = 5 Juniors Total = 6	-4	
	P3 - Floodlit (far corner)	M1/D1			2	Matches = 1.5 (3 x girls) Training = 3 girls, 1 juniors Total 5.5	-3.5	
	P4 - Behind leisure Centre (not Floodlit)	M1/D1			2	Matches = 3 (4 Juniors, 3 mini) Total 3	-1	
	Grass mini's training / match area (Behind clubhouse)	N/A			N/A	Minis 6-9 training / matches	N/A	N/A

Site	Pitch	Rating	Ancillary facilities	Security of access	Pitch capacity	Estimated use 22/23	Supply / Demand Balance	RAG
<b>Churcher's College (Penns Place)</b>	P1 – Full-size	M1/D1	No permanent facilities on site, with no use of leisure centre facilities. The school hire portable toilets.	Education site - unsure of any CUA	2	Matches = 2	0	
	P2 – Full-size	M1/D1			2	Matches = 2	0	
<b>Churcher's College (Ramshill)</b>	P1 - Full-size	M1/D1	Hirers have access to school changing facilities and toilets.	Education site - unsure of any CUA	2	Matches = 2	0	
	P2 - Full-size	M1/D1			2	Matches = 2	0	
	P3 - Junior	M1/D1			2	Matches = 2	0	
	P4- Junior	M1/D1			2	Matches = 2	0	

## 2. Rugby Pitch Demand (Step 3)

Findings relating to rugby pitch demand in East Hampshire are summarised below.

### 2.1 Clubs and Teams

Alton RFC have two regular men's Saturday league teams, one Vets team and 1 ladies' team and a full junior section offering both youth boys age grade rugby and mixed mini rugby. Petersfield RFC have 3 men's teams, 2 who play regularly in the Hampshire Counties Saturday league, a 3<sup>rd</sup> XV, a veteran team, and a Junior section from U7-U18 including three girls' specific teams.

Figure 2.1: Table of senior rugby club information

Ruby Clubs (players)	2023/24 League(S)	Youth Teams (squads) (players)	Home Ground	Training Ground
Alton RFC 1 <sup>st</sup> XV (30)	Counties 1 Hampshire	Under 7 (1) (25)	Anstey Park	Anstey Park
Alton RFC 2 <sup>nd</sup> XV (30)	Counties 5 Hampshire North	Under 8 (1) (30)	Anstey Park	Anstey Park
Alton RFC Vets (18)	Friendlies	Under 9 (1) (30)	Anstey Park	Anstey Park
Alton RFC Ladies (20)	Friendlies and Tournaments	Under 10 (1) (25)	Anstey Park	Anstey Park
		Under 11 (1) (30)		
		Under 12 (2) (35)		
		Under 13 (1) (25)		
		Under 14 (2) (33)		
		Under 15 (2) (45)		
		Under 16 (2) (33)		
		Under 18 (1) (30)		
Petersfield RFC 1 <sup>st</sup> XV (28)	Counties 1 Hampshire	Under 7 (1) (80)	Penns Place	Penns Place
Petersfield RFC 2 <sup>nd</sup> XV (28)	Counties 4 Hampshire	Under 8 (1) (29)	Penns Place	Penns Place
Petersfield RFC 3 <sup>rd</sup> XV (29)	Unknown	Under 9 (1) (28)	Penns Place	Penns Place
Petersfield RFC Vets (40)	Friendlies	Under 10 (1) (31)	Penns Place	Penns Place
		Under 11 (1) (34)		
		Under 12 (2) (59)		
		Under 13 (1) (28)		
		Under 14 (2) (44)		
		Under 15 (1) (-)		
		Under 16 (2) (46)		
		Under 18 (1) (36)		

### 2.2 Active Lives Survey

*Adults:* The most recently published findings of the national Active Lives Adult Survey<sup>1</sup> showed that self-reported regular participation (i.e., taken part at least twice in the last 28 days) in rugby in England by adults (aged 16+) increased from at 0.3% between November 2020 – 2021 to 0.4% in November 2021-2022.

If rugby participation in the district were at the national average (i.e., 0.4%), this would indicate around 403 adults (aged 18+) living in the area play rugby out of an 18+ adult population of approximately 100,781.

With approximately 8 senior teams based in East Hampshire, the adult rugby club playing memberships in the district is roughly 280 players (assuming an average squad size of 35 players per team). Assuming that adult rugby participation in East Hampshire is in line with the national average of 0.4%, this suggests that over a third of adults (40%) play rugby at clubs outside of the area (displaced demand) or

<sup>1</sup> Active Lives Adult Survey Nov 2021/22, Sport England, (April 2023)

participate in informal, social game formats such as Touch Rugby at clubs and parks within East Hampshire and outside the district.

### **2.3 Imported and Displaced Demand**

There is no imported demand for match or training sessions from rugby clubs outside of the district. Alton RFC note that they occasionally train at RAF Odiham and Lord Wandsworth College when the training area of Anstey Park is unplayable due to heavy rain or overuse. Both of these sites are based in Hook, north of East Hampshire.

### 3. The Situation at Individual Sites for Rugby (Step 4)

The pitches were assessed during October of the 2023/24 season. These assessments were reviewed in discussion with the RFU and ratings for each agreed as a basis for comparison of the amount of play each site could accommodate (it's carrying capacity) against the amount of play that takes place.

Carrying capacity is a measure of the number of match equivalent sessions per season for community use each pitch can take without adversely affecting its quality and use. The following pitch carrying capacities according to each quality rating was used to be consistent with the approach adopted in similar assessments across the country:

**Figure 3.1: Rugby Pitch Carrying Capacity**

Match Equivalent Sessions a week		Maintenance		
		Poor (M0)	Adequate (M1)	Good (M2)
Drainage	Natural Inadequate (D0)	0.5	1.5	2
	Natural Adequate (D1)	1.5	2	3
	Pipe Drained (D2)	1.75	2.5	3.25
	Pipe and Slit Drained (D3)	2	3	3.5

1. *Pitch supply* (including the quality ratings) and conclusions reached as to the amount of play a site can accommodate (i.e., its carrying capacity for community use):
2. *The amount of play that takes place at each site* (i.e., the expressed demand) adjusted to reflect any casual or education use in addition to club use for matches and training:
3. *The comparison* (shown as a RAG rating) as to whether, for each pitch type it contains, a site is:
  - o **RED** - Being overplayed (current use exceeds the carrying capacity)
  - o **AMBER** - Being played to the level the site can sustain (current use matches the carrying capacity), or
  - o **GREEN** - Potentially able to accommodate some additional play (current use falls below the carrying capacity)

There are 2 sites, Anstey Park and Penns Place, highlighted from the site audit spreadsheet as **RED** rated sites where the majority of the available natural turf rugby pitches are overplayed.

Both Churcher's College facilities are rated as **AMBER** indicating that the majority of the available natural turf pitches are played at (or very close to) their playing capacity.

There were no sites rated as **GREEN** indicating that their natural turf pitch has spare carrying capacity.

## 4. The Current and Future Picture of Provision for Rugby (Step 5)

### 4.1 Current

Overall, the rugby pitches in East Hampshire are currently overused or at capacity for the amount of demand for training and matches, with 9/15 community pitches being used in excess of their carrying capacity. The location of facilities is concentrated in Petersfield (East of the district), with 10/15 pitches located in the town. Although facilities are no more than a 15-minute drive from residents in the south and 20 minutes from the west, some players may travel outside of the district to clubs such as Havant RFC and Alresford RFC.

### 4.2 Future

**Planned/expected growth** – Both Alton RFC and Petersfield RFC have reported a similar number of players over the last 3 years, with Petersfield RFC aspiring to develop their girls' teams, leading into the creation of a women's team. As such, Petersfield RFC are exploring options to expand their changing facilities to create a better environment for women's and girl's rugby.

**Potential effect of population change** – To estimate the potential impact of population growth over the strategy period to 2040 on the need for rugby pitch capacity in the peak period, Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator (PPC) has been used to determine the likely increase in teams due to population growth. Figure 4.1 shows that team generation rates for the area predicts.

**Figure 4.1: Team generation rates.**

Age Group	Current Pop in Age group	Current no of teams	Team Gen. Rate	Increase Pop in age group	Predicted future no of teams	No of home matches per wk*
Men (19-45yrs)	1397.64	7	2246	1133.36	0.50	<b>0.25</b>
Women (19-45yrs)	1504.84	2	8465	1220.81	0.14	<b>0.07</b>
Boys (13-18yrs)	416.43	12	390	337.56	0.86	<b>0.43</b>
Girls (13-18yrs)	408.61	4	1149	331.48	0.29	<b>0.15</b>
Mixed (7-12yrs)	801.48	14	644	650.03	1.01	<b>0.50</b>
					2.80	<b>1.40</b>

\* Number of teams multiplied by 0.5 to calculate home matches for each age group except mixed where once halved is it quartered to reflect amount of play possible on an adult pitch.

To meet rugby demand from 8,958 additional residents (as currently forecasted) and assuming current levels of rugby demand by age group for matches and training in peak period, the PPC indicates that the equivalent capacity of +1.03 additional full size turf pitches is needed to accommodate the forecasted addition of +2.80 generated teams (including juniors and mixed minis). Pitches will require sufficient floodlighting to accommodate an additional 2 match equivalent training sessions a week by generated teams.

There is also likely to be an increased demand for women and girls' rugby as England will host the 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup. This may result in increased team generation rates as more women and girls begin participating, which should be considered when planning future provisions.

## 5. Key Findings and Issues for Rugby (Step 6)

<b>The main characteristics of the <u>current</u> supply of and demand for provision</b>
<p>Since the last assessment of needs for rugby union in 2018, there has been a change in the total supply of rugby pitches available for community use. There has been a loss of one pitch at the MOD Garrison in Bordon due to the development of Oakmoor School. The pitch is due to be reprovided but is yet to be marked as a pitch.</p> <p>There are two clubs based in East Hampshire, Alton RFC and Petersfield RFC, with 3 and 4 adult male teams respectively. Alton RFC also have a women’s team. Both clubs have full junior and mini’s sections offering age grade rugby.</p>
<b>Is there enough accessible and secured community use provision to meet <u>current</u> demand?</b>
<p>Overall, the rugby pitches in East Hampshire are overused and cannot maintain the current demand for training or matches. Clubs in the area manage the quality of their pitches through careful operational management and are often required to cancel training and matches to protect the pitches.</p> <p>Alton RFC’s lease at Anstey Park is due to expire in 2028 with an extension option in place. It will be important to ensure the club has long term security on the site. Petersfield RFC own their clubhouse and have a 30 year lease on the use of pitches.</p> <p>The plans to develop additional non-floodlit pitches at Penns Place will help to satisfy the demand for match provisions at the site, however does not alleviate the high training demand for current floodlit pitches. If the newly developed pitches have similar drainage and maintenance quality as the other pitches on site (M1D1), these will not be sufficient in reducing the use of the floodlit pitches to their capacity. The demand for training is at, or greater than, each of the floodlit pitch’s carrying capacity.</p>
<b>Is the provision that is accessible of sufficient quality and appropriately maintained?</b>
<p>The drainage of rugby pitches across East Hampshire is mostly classified as ‘Natural Adequate, with two pitches being inadequate. The maintenance of pitches is adequate, improvements to the maintenance of pitches would increase the playing capacity of pitches but this is likely to be difficult due to the pressures on council and club budgets. The pitches at Alton RFC have improved in quality recently due to increased maintenance but are still rated 3/5 by the club.</p> <p>A capital scheme to develop engineered drainage may be a solution to increasing the capacity of rugby pitches in East Hampshire. Developing pipe drainage at adequately maintained pitches increases their capacity by 0.5 MES, whilst developing pipe &amp; slit drainage increases MES capacity by 1.</p> <p>There is a need for improvements to the ancillary changing facilities in the area, both clubs, Alton RFC and Petersfield RFC, have ambitions to improve their facilities to better accommodate women and girls’ rugby and create better facilities for current players. Discussions have taken place with Alton Town Council and Alton RFC regarding the expansions of the ancillary facilities.</p>

**What are the main characteristics of the future supply and demand for provision?**

To meet rugby demand from the projected population growth of 8,958 additional residents (as currently forecasted) and assuming levels of rugby demand for matches and training remain at current levels, the equivalent capacity of +1.03 additional natural turf pitches will be required in the district.

Petersfield RFC anticipate an increase of girls/women’s rugby participation over the coming years as they look to develop their youth provision and offer a women’s team in the future. It is also anticipated that women’s and girls’ participation will increase as England are set to host the Women’s Rugby World Cup in 2025 creating additional demand for matches and training provision.

**Is there enough accessible and secured community use provision to meet future demand?**

There is currently not sufficient provision for rugby to meet future demand. Improvement to the maintenance at all pitches would increase the number of match equivalent sessions in the district, but this is likely to be difficult due to the pressures on council and club budgets and would still not bring the pitches within their carrying capacity due to amount of training demand. Additional capacity could also be accommodated by exploring regular community access to the pitches at Eggars School, Ditcham Park School, Amery Hill School and Oakmoor School, with both Amery Hill School and Eggars School expressing an interest in providing community use.

The current capacity deficit in East Hampshire is 18 MES with additional demand for training sessions. To accommodate this on natural turf pitches (assuming good natural drainage and adequate maintenance) would require 9.5 natural turf pitches, if it is assumed that the maintenance of all pitches can be improved, the deficit is reduced to 3 MES, requiring 2 new pitches plus 1 for future demand. An alternative method of increasing MES capacity is to develop engineered drainage systems such as pipe or pipe & slit drainage. Assuming all pitches in the area have pipe drainage installed, the MES demand is reduced to 9.5, and if all pitches have pipe & slit drainage installed, the demand falls to 2 MES.

Due to the level of training demand, there is a need for a 3G rugby compliant pitch in the area. The ideal location would be on one of the two club sites. Discussions have been held with both town councils regarding the development of WR compliant 3G pitches. There is potential for Petersfield RFC to share a 3G pitch with Petersfield Town FC as part of a wider sports hub development at Penns Place.

Petersfield RFC are in the process of developing 2 new non-floodlit pitches at Penns Place, with one of the current non-floodlit pitches being transferred to Petersfield Town FC following the development. This will significantly increase the match provisions at the site but will not help in alleviating the significant training demand on the current floodlit pitches.

Due to the overuse of the training area at Anstey Park, it is recommended that a feasibility study is undertaken to assess the potential of developing floodlights on one of the pitches at the site. This would help alleviate overuse concerns of the designated training area, however it would increase the load on one of the pitches, which are all currently used above capacity. To offset the additional use, engineered draining solutions could be considered.