

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 working days have passed and the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

That the Capital Business Case for the provision of padel courts at Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex on an invest to save basis, reproduced at Appendix A in the attached report, be approved and that authorisation be given to proceed with the project from the funding allocated in the approved capital programme.

2. Date of decision

30 July 2025

3. Reasons for decision

The provision of padel courts at Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex forms part of the Sports Facilities Strategic Review approved by Executive in November 2024. There is currently no other padel provision in the Borough and the installation of courts at the Complex would extend the range of activities available at the site and offer the opportunity for all residents to participate in a new sport which is widely acknowledged as the fastest growing in Europe.

The Capital Business Case at is based on an allocation for the scheme in the current capital programme of £300,000, within 2025/2026. This is made on an invest to save basis, with an estimated net movement in operating costs for the Complex of £40,000 per annum, as a result of income generation associated with use of the padel courts, thereby contributing to the objectives of the Sports Facilities Strategic Review and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

A comprehensive four-week public consultation process took place in relation to the to the proposal in May and June 2025. The results demonstrate a strong desire amongst respondents for enhancements to the Complex. The evidence from the consultation supports the view that upgrades to the Complex through the provision of padel courts will offer a greater range of sporting opportunity to residents.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The option of doing nothing was rejected as it would remove the ability to generate the additional income, thereby not achieving the objectives of the Sports Facilities Strategic Review by securing a reduction in the net operating costs. The Complex would continue to have a limited winter evening offer and there would remain no padel provision in the Borough for the time being, resulting in a lack of opportunity for residents to participate in a new sport.

There is an option to install temporary "drop-down" courts which will be reviewed further during the design development stages, however, a permanent installation is more favourable. The design stages will be used to consider the optimum configuration of courts and cover options that can be achieved within the available budget allocation.

There is an option to consider building padel courts elsewhere in the Borough. Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex is the preferred location as padel aligns well with the existing offer and the centre is well placed to manage the bookings and maintenance. The location also has good access from rural areas in the north of the Borough and to the town centre.

5. How decision is to be funded

The approved capital programme includes the sum of £300,000 for the provision of padel courts at Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

Not Applicable

Signed 

Date: **30 July 2025**

Name of Decision Taker: **Mayor Tom Wootton**

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published:31July2025.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in:11August2025.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – Report to the Mayor

Date of Report: 30 July 2025

Report by: Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience (including Leisure, Recreation and Culture) and Service Director for Public Realm, Highways and Waste Management

Subject: MOWSBURY PADEL TENNIS PROVISION – BUSINESS CASE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The provision of padel tennis courts at Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex forms part of the Council's Sports Facilities Strategic Review, approved by Executive in November 2024. An allocation of £300,000 for the project in the 2025-35 Capital Programme, on an invest to save basis, was approved by Council in February 2025. This report requests approval of the associated Capital Business Case and provides an update on the delivery of the project.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That the Mayor is invited to consider and, if satisfied, to approve the Capital Business Case (included at Appendix A) for the provision of padel courts at Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex, on an invest to save basis, and to authorise that the project proceeds from the funding allocated in the approved capital programme.**

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The provision of padel courts at Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex forms part of the Sports Facilities Strategic Review approved by Executive in November 2024. There is currently no other padel provision in the Borough and the installation of courts at the Complex would extend the range of activities available at the site and offer the opportunity for all residents to participate in a new sport which is widely acknowledged as the fastest growing in Europe.

- 3.2 The Capital Business Case at **Appendix A** is based on an allocation for the scheme in the current capital programme of £300,000, within 2025/2026. This is made on an invest to save basis, with an estimated net movement in operating costs for the Complex of £40,000 per annum, as a result of income generation associated with use of the padel courts, thereby contributing to the objectives of the Sports Facilities Strategic Review and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 3.3 A comprehensive four-week public consultation process took place in relation to the to the proposal in May and June 2025. The results demonstrate a strong desire amongst respondents for enhancements to the Complex, with 82% stating that a redevelopment would encourage them to use the facility more frequently. The evidence from the consultation supports the view that upgrades to the Complex through the provision of padel courts will offer a greater range of sporting opportunity to residents. A report summarising the findings of the consultation exercise is included at **Appendix B**.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Mowsbury Golf and Squash complex opened in May 1975 and currently offers an 18-hole public golf course, a 13-bay floodlit driving range, three glass-backed squash courts, a practice putting green, changing rooms, bar, function room, and a club lounge. The Complex is operated on behalf of the Council by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) as part of the Leisure Operating Contract. The facilities have reduced usage and associated income during the winter months as a result of daylight availability and weather conditions affecting the golf course opening hours.
- 4.2 There are currently no other padel courts in the Borough, meaning that there are limited opportunities for residents to participate in what is widely acknowledged as the fastest growing sport in Europe.
- 4.3 A four-week public consultation exercise was completed by external industry experts Alliance Leisure and Active Insight in May and June 2025, incorporating both a survey and in person focus groups. The survey was prepared to ensure that all key stakeholders were engaged and the opportunity was circulated to a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations. Further information is set out in the Details section below.
- 4.4 An allocation of £300,000 to deliver the scheme has been made in the capital programme for 2025/2026. The Council are in the process of engaging Alliance Leisure through the UK Leisure Framework to complete RIBA design stages 2 to 4 for the project, following the appointment of a padel supplier to the framework. This process will establish the exact configuration of padel courts that can be delivered on the site within the available budget.

5. DETAILS

- 5.1 The Sports Facilities Strategic Review, approved by Executive in November 2024, included the recommendation to install padel courts in the grounds of Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex. This recognised the lack of existing padel provision in the Borough, the fast-growing nature of the sport and resulting inherent local demand for padel facilities, the benefits of adding year-round activity to the more seasonal elements of the offer available at the Complex, and the potential to reduce the Complex's net operating costs as a result of income generated from padel participation. An allocation of £300,000 was subsequently included in the Capital Programme for 2025-35 to deliver the project, on an invest to save basis based on a net movement in operating costs of £40,000 per annum.
- 5.2 A public consultation exercise regarding potential improvements to Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex was undertaken over a four-week period in May and June 2025. This was to ensure as many users and potential stakeholders as possible were engaged and their views collected, through both an online survey and focus groups sessions, to understand attitudes and perceptions towards the proposed improvements. The focus group sessions were advertised to everyone who completed the survey, who were then invited to register their interest for an online or in person workshop. The consultation was promoted to a wide range of users, groups and individuals, including:
- General public – via BBC mailing lists, social media and partner organisations.
 - Leisure centre users – via the GLL app and email
 - Bedford Borough Schools and educational institutions – via the Bedford Borough School Sports Coordinator
 - Community groups, charities and support groups – via the Council's Communications & Communities team
 - Parish and Town Councils – via the Communications team
 - Local sports and leisure organisations – via the Active Partnership (114 Bedford Borough sports clubs)
 - Media Outlets.
- 5.3 The consultation indicated that there is substantial interest in the proposed new padel courts, with nearly 50% of respondents expressing strong interest in trying padel if there were facilities local to them. The consultation responses indicate a current lack of accessible padel facilities within the local area and that there is significant potential interest in trying padel if it was available at Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex. Of the respondents to the survey, 64% confirmed they currently use the Complex and 82% indicated that improvements to the facility would encourage them to use it more frequently.

- 5.4 This local interest in padel aligns closely with national trends. Awareness of padel has reached 43% of the adult population and over 8 million Britons have expressed a desire to try the sport. This combination of high local interest and national boom in popularity, together with a scarcity of local provision in Bedford Borough, offers a clear market gap and strong opportunity for the provision of padel courts within the Council's leisure estate.
- 5.5 Alliance Leisure are in the process of being engaged by the Council under the UK Leisure Framework to provide pre-construction services for the provision of padel courts at the Mowsbury Complex and will be undertaking design development from RIBA stages 2 to 4 following the appointment of a dedicated padel supplier to the framework. This will involve reviewing the exact location and configuration of the proposed padel courts, within the available capital allocation, which will be subject to planning approvals. It is intended that padel courts are installed within the footprint of the existing car park area, with reconfiguration of this area resulting in no loss to overall parking provision. Any disruption to car parking during construction works will need to be mitigated through careful planning and communication between the design team, contractor and GLL.

6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 6.1 The option of doing nothing was rejected as it would remove the ability to generate the additional associated income, thereby not achieving the objectives of the Sports Facilities Strategic Review by securing a reduction in the net operating costs of the facility. The Complex would continue to have a limited winter evening offer and there would remain no padel provision in the Borough for the time being, resulting in a lack of opportunity for residents to participate in a new sport.
- 6.2 There is an option to install temporary "drop-down" courts which will be reviewed further during the design development stages, however a permanent installation is more favourable. The design stages will be used to consider the optimum configuration of courts and cover options that can be achieved within the available budget allocation.
- 6.3 There is an option to consider building padel courts elsewhere in the Borough. Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex is the preferred location as padel aligns well with the existing offer and the centre is well placed to manage the bookings and maintenance. The location also has good access from rural areas in the north of the Borough and to the town centre.

7. KEY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Issues

There are no direct implications resulting from the recommendations of this report. The installation of padel courts at the Complex will be subject to planning approvals.

7.2 Policy Issues

The scheme supports the Council's Corporate Plan for 2024/5 to 2027/8 through the following priorities and objectives:

- Supporting Individuals and Families – the venue offers a facility that provides opportunities/events for a wide range of groups within the Bedford Borough community. People of all ages and abilities are offered the opportunity to participate in physical activity and benefit from the social and physical benefits of sport.
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing – this priority includes the objective to maximise our sports and leisure facilities, to help residents lead healthy and fulfilling lives. The proposed padel courts will be positive for all ages as a new and popular physical activity option that is available to all. Given the sport's popular appeal, it is likely to increase the diversity of casual users at the Complex.

The scheme directly supports the delivery of the recently adopted Bedford Borough Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-34, approved by Executive on 9 July 2025, and the Sports Facilities Strategic Review, approved by Executive in November 2024.

7.3 Resource Issues

The current approved Capital Programme for 2025-35 includes an allocation of £300,000 in 2025/2026 for the provision of padel courts at Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex.

As noted in the Details section above, the exact configuration of padel courts to be installed will be determined by the consultant design team during the design development stage, within the capital programme allocation. The budget breakdown is provided in the Capital Business Case included at **Appendix A**.

The scheme is projected to deliver a net reduction in operating costs for the Complex of £40,000 per annum, as a result of additional income generated from padel participation. This is based on independent revenue projections carried out as part of the Sports Facilities Strategic Review approved by Executive in November 2024. This would result in an invest to save payback period of 7.5 years.

7.4 Risks

Financial – any risk associated with the level of the capital programme allocation will be managed through the design development stage when the consultant design team will be assessing and advising on the exact configuration of padel courts that can be achieved within the available budget. Any risk associated with the income generation modelling and projected reduction in net operating costs of the Complex is considered low given the alternative revenue scenario planning undertaken to inform the Sports Facilities Strategic Review, the known demand for padel, and the lack of alternative provision in the Borough.

Delivery – installation of padel courts adjacent to the main Complex building will require planning approvals which, in addition to construction timescales, may impact on the ability to fully complete the scheme within 2025/2026. This will be managed through the consultant design team during the design development and procurement stages commencing from August 2025, and subsequently through the capital budget monitoring process as necessary.

Reputational – the centre is a popular golf course and there is some potential for disruption to car parking facilities during the construction phase of the project. This will be mitigated through careful planning and liaising with the design team, contractors and GLL, with alternative arrangements made where necessary and possible. External and customer communications will also be managed accordingly.

7.5 Environmental Implications

Principles of sustainability will be reviewed for the scheme during RIBA design stages 2 to 4, in particular through the engineering technical design and design team building systems information stages (including specialist subcontractor designs), in order to quantify the environmental sustainability approach.

Carbon emissions and energy use. The addition of padel courts adjacent to the main Complex building represents a new structure which will add to energy usage (lighting and heating) depending on the outcome of the design approach and agreed configuration. The service area will work with Alliance Leisure to ensure that specifications for the new structure include a requirement to maximise energy efficiency as relevant and as far as possible.

Use of natural resources. The service will seek to ensure, so far as possible, through the detailed design and procurement process that suppliers identify any use of sustainably sourced and recycled materials. The service will work with the consultant design team to ensure that specifications state that materials used in the construction process come from sustainable sources where relevant and possible.

7.6 Equalities Impact

In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

An Equality Analysis has been undertaken and is included at **Appendix C**. This identified that there are positive benefits for all key characteristics from the addition of padel courts to the Council's leisure portfolio. The sport is accessible and growing with a wide range of audiences. The new courts will offer more opportunities to be active and provide affordable access to a new and internationally popular sport.

There could be some small adverse impact on all members and users of the Complex during the development of the courts due to access restrictions, however this will be mitigated by careful planning of the car parking to minimise disruption.

7.7 Impact on Families

There are no direct implications on families arising from the recommendations of this report. The padel courts will offer a facility that provides opportunities for a wide range of groups within the Bedford Borough community, helping to ensure that people of all ages and abilities are offered the opportunity to participate in physical activity and benefit from the social and physical benefits of sport. The results of the consultation exercise demonstrate that while there is a strong desire to see enhancement of the Complex through the provision of padel courts, maximising this participation will be contingent on a sensitive pricing strategy.

7.8 Community Safety and Resilience

There are no direct impacts on community safety and resilience arising from the recommendations of this report. Positive experiences and opportunities to participate in sport and leisure activity are widely shown to improve community cohesion and support in reducing antisocial behaviour.

7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing

The scheme supports the priority in the Council's Corporate Plan to maximise its sports and leisure facilities, to help residents lead healthy and fulfilling lives. High-quality, affordable and accessible leisure facilities and activity opportunities can positively impact health and wellbeing. Regular physical activity and participation in sport can reduce the risk of major illnesses, improve mental wellbeing, and help residents to manage their existing health conditions. The wider benefits can include reduced loneliness and isolation, increased social cohesion, and a reduced burden on social care and NHS services.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

8.1 The following Councillors, Council units, Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience (including Leisure, Recreation and Culture)
Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director of Environment
Head of Leisure & Culture
Strategic Lead Leisure
Manager for Sports Development & Leisure
Finance
Legal
Manager for Assets & Development
Manager for Building Services & Facilities Management
Leisure Assets Working Group
Greenwich Leisure Limited

8.2 Comments were received from Finance regarding the additional revenue projection modelled in the strategic leisure review. This has been factored into the Risks section above.

9. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

9.1 Ward Councillors were engaged through the consultation process. No adverse comments were received.

10. **CONTACTS AND REFERENCES**

Report Contact Officer:	Ashley Bartlett, Strategic Lead Leisure ashley.bartlett@bedford.gov.uk
Declarations of Interest by the Report Author:	None
File Reference:	Mowsbury Padel Tennis Provision – Business Case
Previous Relevant Minutes:	Executive 20 November 2024 Executive: 9 July 2025
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix A – Capital Business Case Appendix B – Consultation Report Appendix C – Equality Analysis

BUSINESS CASE FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS

All Capital Projects need to complete this business case template for Strategic Asset Group (SAG) to review. No work can commence until the projects receive Executive approval and subsequent sign-off by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance).

Project Title	Mowsbury Complex: Padel Tennis Provision		
Directorate	Environment	Project Sponsor	Paul Pace
Project Manager	Ashley Bartlett	Service area	Leisure and Culture
Anticipated Start Date	July 2025	Anticipated End Date	March 2026
Estimated Capital Costs (and year of estimates)	£300,000 Allocated in capital programme for 2025/2026		
What is the expected life of the project? (or time before further capital expenditure is required)	10 years plus		

Section A – Overview

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION	
What is the project?	<p>The capital business case is for the installation of Padel Tennis Courts at the Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex, in order to enhance the facility's racket sport offer and provide Padel facilities in Bedford Borough.</p> <p>There are currently no other Padel courts in the Borough and public consultation results and other evidence demonstrates there is high demand for such facilities, as Padel is the fastest growing sport in Europe.</p> <p>The scheme was approved as part of the Sport and Leisure Strategy and Sports Facility Strategic Review by Executive in November 2024, and forms an agreed part of the Capital Programme for 2025/2026 (£300,000 allocation - £267,000 after slippage).</p>
Where will the project take place?	<p>Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex, Kimbolton Road, Bedford</p>
What are the expected outcomes?	<p>Installation of courts will provide Padel tennis facilities in the Borough and enhance the racket sport offer at the Complex.</p> <p>Enhanced facilities that ensure retention of existing customers and attract new users.</p>

How will those outcomes be measured?	<p>Improved income generation from enhanced facilities, reducing the net operating costs of the facility.</p> <p>The current criteria (KPIs) for measurement and evaluation of the facility will be continued:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of participation • Usage figures and income • Levels of customer satisfaction.
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2. JUSTIFICATION FOR PROPOSAL

How will this scheme support the Council / Service priorities or compliance with legislation?	<p>The scheme supports the Council's Corporate Plan for 2024/2025 to 2027/2028 through the following priorities and objectives.</p> <p>Supporting Individuals and Families:</p> <p>The venue offers a facility that provides opportunities for a wide range of users and groups within the Bedford Borough community. Users of all ages and abilities can participate in physical activity and benefit from the social and physical benefits of support.</p> <p>Promoting Health and Wellbeing:</p> <p>This priority includes the objective to maximise our sports and leisure facilities, to help residents lead healthy and fulfilling lives.</p> <p>The Golf and Squash Complex is a key hub for participation and offers many different opportunities to enjoy the benefits of participation in physical activity from social to competitive and is for all ages.</p> <p>The scheme directly supports the delivery of the Council's Sport & Leisure Strategy 2024-34 (see Sport and leisure strategies Bedford Borough Council) and forms part of the associated Sports Facility Strategic Review, which was approved by Executive in November 2024 (see Agenda for Executive on Wednesday, 20th November, 2024, 6.30 pm - Bedford Borough Council).</p>
How will this scheme contribute to revenue savings or additional revenue income?	<p>The scheme will enable the achievement of additional revenue income, with a conservative estimate of a net movement in running costs of £40,000 per annum. This will be achieved from new facility provision relating to a sport for which there is significant demand and currently no public facilities in the Borough. Sports Facilities Strategic Review approved by Executive in November 2024 (see Agenda for Executive on Wednesday, 20th November, 2024, 6.30 pm - Bedford Borough Council.)</p>

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS	
What alternative options have been considered and why have they been rejected in favour of this bid?	<p>Do nothing</p> <p>The facility would not be able to generate additional income from Padel tennis participation, thereby not achieving the objectives of the Sports Facilities Strategic Review to reduce the net operating costs.</p> <p>There would be no public Padel provision in the Borough at the current time, with alternative locations for development proving difficult to identify.</p> <p>Alternative options</p> <p>There is an alternative option to install temporary drop-down rather than permanent Padel tennis courts, which will be review further during the next RIBA design stages. The design stages will consider the optimum configuration of courts in order to maximise what can be achieved within the approved £300,000 budget.</p>
What is the effect of not doing this scheme if the funding does not become available?	There would be no public Padel provision in the Borough at the current time. There would be no additional income generated for the Complex from Padel tennis participation, meaning that the objectives of the Sports Facilities Strategic Review regarding reducing the net operating costs of the facility would not be achieved.
4. RESOURCING AND DEPENDENCIES	
What are the internal staffing requirements for the project?	Overall project management from the Strategic Lead for Leisure. Governance provided through regular reporting to and monitoring by the Leisure Assets Working Group.
Will the project have an impact on internal service delivery?	There would be some parking disruption for Complex users during the construction phase. The contractors would work with the operator GLL to minimise disruption.
What are the staffing requirements from other Bedford Borough Council services?	<p>Input from Building Services and Asset Development with monitoring via Leisure Assets Working Group.</p> <p>Support from Procurement with direct award process under the UK Leisure Framework.</p> <p>Support from Finance with monitoring and forecasting capital programme spend.</p>

5. COMMERCIAL CASE

<p>Is a procurement exercise required for the proposal? If so, outline the steps taken at this stage to identify how the project will be delivered.</p>	<p>Alliance Leisure are appointed under the UK Leisure Framework.</p> <p>The work completed to date and onward proposals have been and are to be developed using the UK Leisure Framework (UKLF) and its standard suite of documentation.</p> <p>The UKLF allows for the direct appointment of Alliance Leisure Services (ALS) as Development Partner for scoping, design, refurbishment, construction and the development of leisure centres, theatres, play facilities, recreation facilities, and sports facilities across the UK public sector.</p> <p>The Framework was procured in accordance with Public Contract Regulations by Denbighshire Leisure Limited (DLL), and after an extensive tendering and evaluation process, Alliance Leisure Services (ALS) were appointed as Development Partner on the latest version of the framework, commencing February 2022.</p> <p>Alliance carried out a formal tender process to appoint a contractor to undertake the design stages to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the identified location to the rear of the Complex to accommodate 2/3 Padel court. • Develop comprehensive design and costs. • Appoint specialist consultants to carry out feasibility design and required surveys, as well as the project manager and quantity surveyor functions on the construction phase. • Undertake a selection process from approved specialist Padel court contractors.
<p>What procurement milestones are required to deliver this project for the estimated start date?</p>	<p>RIBA Stage 1 – complete</p> <p>Access Agreement for pre-construction services – August 2025</p> <p>RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design – August 2025</p> <p>RIBA Stage 3 Spatial Design (cost certainty) – September 2025</p> <p>RIBA Stage 4 Technical Design – October 2024</p> <p>Construction commencement – subject to Planning</p>

Section B – Financial Case

FINANCIAL SUMMARY	
1. Invest to Save	
A definition is given in Appendix B	
Is this an 'Invest to Save' bid?	Yes
<i>If yes:</i>	
What is the annual revenue saving?	£40,000
What is the payback period? (years)	7.5 years
Does this meet the requirement of a 6% rate of return?	Yes

2. Capital Costs	
On what basis have capital costs been estimated?	<p>RIBA Stage 1. Project brief and costs reviewed with sector contractors and the Council's leisure operator GLL, and through the appointment of a specialist Padel supplier onto the UK Leisure Framework with Alliance Leisure.</p> <p>RIBA design stages 2 to 4 will establish cost certainty for the exact configuration of Padel courts to be determined, within the capital programme allocation of £300,000.</p>
What are the risks relating to how these may compare with actual costs?	<p>Dialogue with the appointed consultants has provided confidence that construction costs can be managed within the revised approval capital allocation of £300,000.</p> <p>The appointment of a specialist Padel Supplier onto the UK Leisure Framework with Alliance Leisure enables construction efficiencies.</p> <p>RIBA design stages 2 to 4 will establish cost certainty for the exact configuration of Padel courts to be determined, within the capital programme allocation.</p>

Anticipated Gross Costs of the Project						
These will determine how the capital budget is allocated within the financial system						
	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29+ (Please Specify) £000	TOTAL £000
Land works						
Building works		223.2				223.2

Professional Fees*	7.6	49.2				56.8
Vehicles						
Payroll Costs	8.9	11.1				20
Plant / Equipment / Furniture						
IT Hardware						
Software & Licences						
Capital Grant to 3 rd Parties						
Credit Arrangement (leases)						
TOTAL COST	16.5	283.5				300

*Includes capitalised payroll costs for Strategic Lead Leisure

3. Source of funding

List here the funding sources. Evidence should be attached where possible.

Specific Government Grant <i>Specify -</i>						
Developers Contribution **						
Lottery / Heritage						
Other sources (specify)						
EXTERNAL FUNDING						
Direct Revenue Financing						
Capital Receipts						
Borrowing *	16.5	283.5				300
INTERNAL FUNDING						
TOTAL FUNDING	16.5	283.5				300

* Borrowing is the balance of funding required to fund the project

** In the case of non-cash contributions (e.g. land donation), please gross up the figures in the funding table to show a cash equivalent figure (estimate) and provide a brief note in 'Other Comments'.

4. Revenue impact of the project

List here the incremental year-on-year impact on the revenue budget

TYPE OF EXPENDITURE	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28+ (Please Specify)	TOTAL £000
Staffing costs						
Other running costs						
Income / savings				-40*		-40**
Net impact (excl schools)						
Net impact to schools				-40		-40

* Represents additional annual income generation from Padel participation charges. Dialogue with the appointed consultants gives confidence that this level of revenue receipts can be achieved. Covered padel courts can typically generate £10k-£20k income per month given current levels of demand for the sport. Allowing for compliance and maintenance costs of c.£3k per annum per court, administration costs (which will be managed through the existing Complex staffing) and utilities, a net additional income of £40k per annum for two courts is considered conservative.

** Ongoing saving meaning an invest to save payback period of 7.5 years.

5. Total Cost of the Project						
List here the total cost of project (total of boxes above)						
TYPE OF EXPENDITURE	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28+ (Please Specify) £000	TOTAL £000
Capital cost		16.5	283.5			300
Revenue cost / saving				-40		-40
Net impact (excl schools)		16.5	283.5	-40		260*

*Based on annual reduction in net running costs for the Complex from £40k additional income generated from Padel provision, the invest to save payback period is 7.5 years.

6. Key Milestones (Dates)			
Feasibility Study:	July 2025	Other 1 **:	
Business Case/ Appraisal:	Jan 2024	Other 2:	
Detailed Design *:	August – September 2025	Other 3:	
Planning permission:	Tbc subject to RIBA Stage 3 outcome	Other 4:	
Tenders Sent:	October 2025	Other 5:	
Contract Approved:	November 2025	Other 6:	
Project Start:	Tbc November 2025	Other 7:	
Project Complete:	March 2026	Other 8:	
Final Retention Payment:	Tbc	Other 9:	

* If the scheme need to be passed through Design or Engineering Services before approval, enter the date design is to be submitted.

** Please add other key milestones where appropriate




7. Risks	
List the likely risks of the scheme and an indication of the probability and impact of each risk.	
Financial	<p>As noted above, the financial risk is considered low. Dialogue with the appointed consultants has provided confidence that construction costs can be managed within the revised approval capital allocation of £300,000.</p> <p>The appointment of a specialist Padel Supplier onto the UK Leisure Framework with Alliance Leisure enables construction efficiencies.</p>

	<p>RIBA design stages 2 to 4 will establish cost certainty for the exact configuration of Padel courts to be determined, within the capital programme allocation.</p> <p>Risk to achieving £40k saving from additional income mitigated by alternative revenue scenario modelling completed as part of the Sports Facilities Strategic Review, which has informed the figure and incorporated latent demand analysis.</p>
Political	If work is not undertaken it will not be possible to provide at the facility. There are currently no padel courts in the borough with alternative suitable sites proving difficult to identify despite a high demand of interest.
Delivery	The delivery timescale will be subject to feasible options following the conclusion of the RIBA design stages and will be subject to Planning.
Reputational / Other	If the scheme is not completed, it will not be possible to Padel tennis courts will not be made available for public use at the Complex, and the additional identified income will not be generated, thereby not achieving the objective of reducing the net operating costs of the facility.

8. Policy-Led Evaluation

Please refer to the guidance notes in Appendix B and enter your self-assessment in the table below.

		RAG Rating	Self-Score	(Out of maximum)
A	Council Priorities		10	10
B	Statutory Requirements		0	10
C	On-going Revenue Impact		10	10
D	Funding for Capital Scheme		0	10
E	Net Cost		10	10
F	Asset Management Plan		2	5
G	Sustainability		0	5
H	Financial Risks		2	5
I	Other Risks		2	5
	TOTAL		36	70

 = Non-Compliance  = Part-Compliance  = Compliance

9. Other Comments

List any other supporting information not covered elsewhere on this form, including if an Equalities or Environmental Impact Assessment is required and/or has been undertaken.

An Equality Analysis has been undertaken. This identified that there are positive benefits for all key characteristics from the addition of Padel courts to the Council leisure portfolio. The sport is accessible and growing with a wide range of audiences. The new courts will offer more opportunities to be active and provide affordable access to a new and internationally popular sport. There could be some small adverse impact on all members and users of the Golf & Squash Complex during the development of the courts due to access restrictions however this will be mitigated by careful planning of the car parking to minimise disruption.

Section C - Review record

Review record					
Project Manager					
Name	Ashley Bartlett	Reviewed	Yes	Date	24.7.25
Comments	Completed				
Finance					
Name	Rhiain Bevan	Reviewed	Yes	Date	29.7.25
Comments	Comments were received from Finance regarding the additional revenue projections modelled in the strategic leisure review. This has been factored into the Risks section above.				
Head of Service					
Name	Tom Perrett	Reviewed	Yes	Date	24.7.25
Comments	Reviewed				
Service Director					
Name	Paul Pace	Reviewed	Yes	Date	29.7.25
Comments	Reviewed, approved				

Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex: Survey Analysis and Redevelopment Feasibility Report

1. Executive Summary

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of survey data collected to inform Bedford Borough Council's decision regarding the potential redevelopment of the Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex. The findings indicate a strong desire among respondents for enhancements to the facility, with a significant 81.96% stating that redevelopment would encourage them to use the site more, or more frequently. The survey respondent base primarily comprises existing users of Mowsbury and Bedford Borough residents, with a notable skew towards older adults (55+ years) and male participants. These individuals report significantly higher physical activity levels than the national average. While current satisfaction with some existing Mowsbury facilities, such as the 18-hole golf course, is reasonable, there is considerable dissatisfaction concerning the condition and maintenance of the driving range and the overall upkeep of the complex.

There is substantial interest in proposed new facilities. Padel tennis, a sport experiencing rapid national growth, garners considerable enthusiasm, with nearly 50% of respondents expressing strong interest in trying it locally. Similarly, a Trackman driving range is a popular concept, though its appeal is highly contingent on affordable pricing.

Cost emerges as a critical and pervasive theme, identified as a major barrier to current physical activity and a significant concern for the potential pricing of new, advanced facilities. The report concludes that while there is a clear mandate for redevelopment and modernization, its success is contingent upon addressing the existing maintenance deficits, implementing a sensitive pricing strategy, and ensuring that new offerings genuinely meet diverse community needs.

2. Introduction

Purpose of the Analysis

This report has been commissioned to analyse data from two recent surveys concerning the Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex. The primary objective is to furnish Bedford Borough Council with a robust evidence base to inform strategic decision-making regarding the proposed redevelopment of this key leisure asset. The analysis delves into resident and user perspectives on current facilities, gauges potential demand for new offerings such as Padel tennis and a Trackman driving range and identifies key considerations and potential challenges associated with such a project.

Survey Methodology Overview

The findings presented herein are derived from two primary survey datasets. The main survey, focusing on Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex, garnered responses from 456 individuals. While the specific data collection period is not detailed in the provided materials, the data is assumed to be recent and relevant to current conditions. The surveys employed a mix of quantitative questions, allowing for statistical analysis of preferences and usage patterns, and qualitative open-ended questions, which have provided rich, nuanced feedback on user experiences and expectations. This combination of data types allows for a comprehensive understanding of community sentiment.

3. Profile of Survey Respondents & Local Activity Context

Understanding the characteristics of those who participated in the survey is crucial for interpreting the findings accurately and assessing their applicability to the broader Bedford Borough population.

Demographic Makeup of Respondents

The demographic profile of the 456 survey respondents reveals several key characteristics:

- **Age Distribution:** The respondent base shows a significant concentration in older age groups. While no respondents were under 16, those aged 16-24 constituted 4.63%, 25-34 year olds 5.73%, 35-44 year olds 14.32%, and 45-54 year olds 17.62%. The largest segments were those aged 55-64 (29.74%) and 65-74 (21.37%), with individuals aged 75 and over accounting for 6.61%. Cumulatively, adults aged 55 and over represent 57.72% of all respondents.

This demographic skew is an important factor, as the leisure preferences and physical capabilities of older adults may differ from younger populations. Facility design, programming, and marketing for any redevelopment will need to consider whether the primary aim is to cater to this existing older demographic or to attract a wider, younger audience.

- **Gender:** There is a pronounced gender imbalance among respondents, with 71.93% identifying as male and 24.78% as female. A small percentage identified as non-binary (0.22%), preferred not to say (1.75%), or selected 'Other' (1.32%).

This significant overrepresentation of male respondents (nearly three-quarters of the sample) may influence findings related to interest in specific sports or facility preferences, as some activities traditionally see different participation rates by gender. For example, sports like golf have historically had higher male participation, which might partially explain this skew if survey promotion was channelled through existing golf networks. Consequently, interest in activities potentially more popular among women or families might be underrepresented in these findings.

- **Residency and Connection to Mowsbury:** A substantial proportion of respondents are Bedford Borough residents (49.53%). Among those who currently use Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex, a very high 78.08% are local residents, living within 5km (3. miles) of the facility. This underscores the importance of Mowsbury as a local community asset.

Current Physical Activity Levels

The survey collected data on self-reported physical activity levels:

- **Survey Respondents:** Half of the respondents (50%) described themselves as 'Active', with a further 45.81% identifying as 'Fairly Active'. Only a small fraction, 4.19%, considered themselves 'Inactive'.
- **National Comparison:** These figures contrast sharply with national data from the Sport England Active Lives Adult Survey (November 2023-24), which indicates that 63.7% of adults in England are 'Active', 11.2% are 'Fairly Active', and a significantly larger 25.1% are 'Inactive'.

The comparison reveals that the survey respondents are, as a group, overwhelmingly more active (95.81% active or fairly active) than the national population (74.9% active or fairly active). The proportion of inactive individuals in the survey sample is markedly lower than the national figure.

This suggests that the survey predominantly captured the views of individuals already engaged in physical activity and leisure pursuits. While this provides valuable feedback from an engaged user base, it also means that the perspectives of less active or inactive segments of the Bedford Borough community might be underrepresented. Therefore, when considering redevelopment, it is important to question whether the aim is solely to cater further to this already active group or to design facilities and programmes that can attract and engage the wider, potentially less active, local population. The barriers to activity identified by this active group may also differ from those experienced by more sedentary individuals.

Primary Interests in the Survey

Respondents indicated their interest in the survey through several categories:

- 49.53% identified as a Bedford Borough resident.
- 42.74% stated they use Bedford Borough Council leisure sites (operated by GLL).
- A smaller group, 3.66%, use no Bedford Borough Council leisure sites, opting for private gyms, pools, or health clubs.
- Implicitly, given the survey's focus, a large number of respondents are current or potential users of Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex, including members of Mowsbury Golf Club.
- Notably, 39.37% of respondents reported that they do not use any *other* Bedford Borough Council Sports and Leisure Centres. This suggests that for a considerable portion of the sample, Mowsbury may be their primary, or even sole, point of interaction with council-provided leisure facilities.

4. Current Usage and Satisfaction with Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex

Understanding how the Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex is currently utilised and perceived by its users is fundamental to assessing the need and potential focus for redevelopment.

Proportion of Current Users

Among the survey respondents, 291 individuals, or 63.82%, confirmed that they currently use the Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex. This indicates a substantial existing user base within the surveyed population, providing a solid foundation of individuals with direct experience of the facility. The remaining 36.18% (165 respondents) do not currently use the complex.

Usage Patterns of Current Users

The frequency of visits among current users varies:

- Less than once per month: 34.02%
- Less than once per fortnight: 12.71%
- Once a week: 23.37%
- Twice a week: 19.93%
- Three times a week: 7.22%
- More than three times a week: 2.75%

A significant cohort, over half of the current users (53.27% combined), utilise the facility at least once a week, highlighting a core group of regular and committed patrons. However, a notable one-third of users (34.02%) visit less than once per month. This latter group represents an opportunity for increased engagement, and any redevelopment should consider features or improvements that might convert these infrequent visitors into more regular users, alongside retaining and enhancing the experience for the dedicated regulars.

In terms of specific facilities used at Mowsbury, golf-related amenities are predominant:

- 18 Hole Golf Course: 33.1%
- Driving Range: 30.08%
- Putting Green: 22.94%
- Function Room: 7.14%
- Squash Courts: 6.73%

User Satisfaction with Existing Facilities

User satisfaction with the key existing facilities at Mowsbury presents a mixed picture, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: User Satisfaction Ratings for Existing Mowsbury Facilities (%)

Facility	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Very Poor
18 Hole Golf Course	21.34	41.11	30.43	5.53	1.58
Driving Range	8.85	34.23	43.08	11.15	2.69
Putting Green	10.92	37.82	42.44	7.98	0.84
Squash Courts	12.20	45.12	37.80	4.88	0.00
Function Room	14.17	51.67	25.83	7.50	0.83

The **18 Hole Golf Course** receives generally positive ratings, with 62.45% of users rating it as 'Good' or 'Very Good'. However, nearly a third (30.43%) find it merely 'Acceptable', and a combined 7.11% rate it as 'Poor' or 'Very Poor'. This suggests that while many are satisfied, there is considerable room for improvement to elevate the experience for a significant portion of golfers.

The **Driving Range** garners more ambivalent feedback. 'Acceptable' is the most common rating (43.08%), and the combined 'Poor' or 'Very Poor' ratings (13.84%) are notably higher than for the golf course. The 'Very Good' rating is comparatively low at 8.85%. This clearly indicates an area of concern for users.

Squash Courts are viewed relatively positively, with 57.32% rating them 'Good' or 'Very Good'. Nevertheless, a substantial 37.80% deem them 'Acceptable', implying that even this better-rated facility could benefit from enhancements. The Function Room is well-regarded, with a combined 65.84% rating it 'Good' or 'Very Good'.

Key Themes from User Comments on Current Facilities

Qualitative feedback from open-ended survey questions provides crucial context to these satisfaction ratings and reveals deep-seated frustrations among some users.

A dominant theme is the **poor condition and inadequate maintenance of the golf course**. Comments such as "Badly kept facilities," "Regarding Mowsbury the overall poor care taken of the course," and "Golf course is in terrible condition" are indicative of this sentiment. Specific issues highlighted include the state of "bunkers, greens, tees etc," with greens described as "awful (rock solid, unmaintained, no care in hole repositioning)".

The **driving range** also draws criticism, with users mentioning "driving range balls are bad and the mats aren't very good" and, more seriously, that the "driving range netting desperately needs repair or replacement. It is dangerous". Similarly, the **squash courts** are reported to have "roof tiles that aren't repaired" and are "frequently closed due to water leaks".

This consistent qualitative feedback points to a significant undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the fundamental upkeep of Mowsbury's core offerings. This is a critical consideration; the desire for new facilities may, in part, be driven by the perceived inadequacy or deterioration of existing ones. Addressing these foundational maintenance issues appears essential for fostering user trust and ensuring that any investment in new developments is well-received and ultimately

successful. There is a palpable concern that the council might pursue "a new gimmick rather than properly fund and maintain what we already have".

5. Assessment of Proposed Redevelopment and New Facilities

The prospect of redeveloping the Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex has generated considerable interest and opinion among survey respondents.

Overall Redevelopment Sentiment

A compelling 81.96% of respondents indicated that a redevelopment at Mowsbury would encourage them to either use the facilities for the first time or use them more frequently. This strong positive sentiment provides a clear initial mandate for the Council to seriously consider improvements and new investments at the site.

Padel Tennis

Padel tennis, a rapidly growing racquet sport, was a key focus of the survey.

- **Awareness & Experience:** A large majority of respondents (76.43%) have heard of Padel. However, direct playing experience is much lower, with only 20.18% having ever played the sport. For many of those who have played, their experience was gained "Abroad" (e.g., Spain, Portugal, Dubai) or at limited UK locations such as "Milton Keynes," "St Albans," or "London".

This pattern strongly suggests a current lack of accessible Padel facilities within the immediate Bedford area, a point explicitly raised by some respondents who cited "No courts in the Bedford area" as a barrier to playing.

- **Interest Levels:** Despite limited local playing opportunities, there is significant potential interest in trying Padel if it were available at Mowsbury. On a scale of 1 (Not at all interested) to 5 (Very interested), 31.86% of respondents rated their interest as 5/5 ('Very interested'), and a further 17.26% rated it 4/5. Combined, nearly half of all respondents (49.12%) expressed a strong interest.
- **National Padel Context:** The local interest observed in the survey aligns closely with a significant national trend. Data from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) shows that Padel participation in Great Britain surged to over 400,000 players by the end of 2024, a dramatic increase from 129,000 at the end of 2023. Sport England also reports that 51,000 adults play Padel at least twice a month. This growth is supported by rapidly expanding infrastructure, with 893 Padel courts across 300 venues in Britain as of early 2025, up from 187 courts in 2021 according to the UK Padel Report. National awareness of Padel has reached 43% of the adult population (approximately 23 million people), and over 8 million Britons have expressed a desire to try the sport. This confluence of high local interest, a national boom in popularity, and an apparent scarcity of local provision in Bedford presents a clear market gap and a strong opportunity.

- **Motivators and Barriers to Padel Participation (Bedford Survey):**
Understanding what would encourage or prevent residents from trying Padel is crucial for its successful introduction. Table 2 outlines these factors.

Table 2: Motivators and Barriers to Padel Participation (Bedford Survey)

Motivators*	% of Respondents	Barriers**	% of Respondents
Free Trial	23.78	I don't know how to play	26.21
Beginner sessions	20.41	No one to play with	18.45
Playing with friends	17.51	Too expensive	15.86
Affordable equipment hire	15.07	Lack of time	14.56
Coaching/Taster sessions	13.01	I already play another sport	12.78
Family-friendly sessions	7.21	Not interested in racquet sports	6.96

* "Other" qualitative themes for motivators included ability to play with unknown others and sessions for specific groups (older people, autistic people).

**"Other" qualitative themes for barriers included age, injury, court availability, and lack of local facilities.*

The data in Table 2 directly informs strategies for launching Padel. The most cited barrier, "I don't know how to play" (26.21%), can be directly addressed by the leading motivators: "Free Trial" (23.78%) and "Beginner sessions" (20.41%). Cost ("Too expensive" - 15.86%) is also a notable barrier, emphasizing the need for careful pricing.

- **Qualitative Feedback on Prioritizing Padel:** Comments regarding the prioritization of Padel were diverse. Supporters emphasised its potential to "draw so many people to a site," particularly "those who don't or can't normally play racket sports," and its inclusive, family-friendly nature. They see it as a "growing sport" that could "bring great value to the Bedford area" by attracting locals and visitors from further afield due to the current lack of facilities.

Conversely, detractors often reiterated the need to "Get what is there right first," expressing concerns that Padel might be a "fad" or that resources should be directed to fixing existing facilities. A key concern was that Padel courts should not come at the expense of existing, regularly used squash courts: "I would be strongly opposed to replacing any existing squash courts with Padel". This suggests that if Padel is pursued, it should ideally be an *addition* to the current offerings. The "fad" perception can be effectively countered by presenting the strong national growth data.

Trackman Driving Range

The survey also explored interest in a technologically advanced Trackman driving range.

- **Experience & Interest:** A significant proportion of respondents (39.47%) have no prior experience with a Trackman range but "would like to try". 22.59% have used one "occasionally". Interest levels are very high, with 55.56% stating they would be "Very interested" (5/5 on a scale) and an additional 17.22% rating their interest as 4/5 if such a facility were available locally.
- **Motivators and Barriers:** Affordable pricing is the primary motivator (37.04%), followed by online booking (21.54%) and the availability of food and drink nearby (13.96%). Some respondents also mentioned "Learning opportunity and fun".

However, the cost is an overwhelming barrier, with 72.43% of respondents citing "Too expensive" as a reason that might stop them from using a Trackman range. This extreme price sensitivity is a critical factor. Other barriers include accessibility (9.02%) and having no one to go with (8.02%).

Table 3: Motivators and Barriers for Trackman Driving Range Use (Bedford Survey)

Motivators*	% of Respondents	Barriers**	% of Respondents
Affordable pricing	37.04	Too expensive	72.43
Online Booking	21.54	Not accessible enough	9.02
Food and Drink nearby	13.96	No one to go with	8.02
Family-friendly themes	12.90	Not interested in that activity	4.26
Special events/themed nights	7.10	Not suitable for young children	3.76
Group offers/birthday packages	6.51	Other	2.51

* "Other" qualitative themes for motivators included regular practise and local facility.

**"Other" qualitative themes for barriers included poor quality balls and not knowing how it works.*

The data in Table 3 highlights a significant challenge: while interest in Trackman technology is high, its adoption will be heavily dependent on the price point. The fact that nearly three-quarters of respondents identify "Too expensive" as a potential barrier cannot be overstated and must be a central consideration in any financial modelling or pricing strategy.

- **Willingness to Travel:** The majority of respondents are willing to travel a reasonable distance, with 46.35% prepared to travel 10-20 minutes and 34.83%

willing to travel 20-30 minutes for a Trackman driving range.

- **National Golf Context:** National trends in golf show an increase in casual play and the popularity of 9-hole formats. The average age of golfers is also slowly declining. A Trackman range aligns with a modern, data-driven approach to practise and can also offer "golf-tainment" experiences, potentially appealing to both serious golfers and the growing casual market.

However, the survey feedback includes a pertinent comment: "it's not something I would do regularly if it pushed the price up. Just a decent well maintained driving range with usable golf balls, tees and newer mats would be a start". This reinforces the theme of prioritizing basic quality and raises questions about investing in high-tech solutions if fundamental aspects of the existing driving range remain subpar. The high price sensitivity suggests a Trackman range might need to be a premium offering, which could conflict with broader accessibility goals if not carefully balanced with affordable options for standard range use.

6. Broader Community Physical Activity Needs and Perceptions

Beyond the specifics of Mowsbury, the survey provides insights into the wider physical activity landscape in Bedford Borough as perceived by respondents.

Motivations for Exercise

The primary reasons respondents choose to exercise are centred on health and wellbeing:

- Maintain/Improve health: 15.18%
- Improve fitness: 13.16%
- Social interaction: 11.38%
- Improve mental wellbeing: 10.26%
- Manage my weight: 9.93%

Key Barriers to Increased Physical Activity

When asked what stops them from doing more exercise, or what prevents participation in physical activity generally, respondents highlighted several key barriers:

- **Lack of time:** This was the most frequently cited barrier, selected by 25.22% of respondents in one question and 36.45% in a more general question about barriers.
- **Cost:** Financial constraints were the second most significant barrier, identified by 21.78% and 29.91% respectively.
- **Access to facilities:** This was noted by 15.29% and 14.17% of respondents. This can encompass geographical proximity, but also perceived accessibility related to booking systems, opening hours, or the welcoming nature of the

environment.

Qualitative "Other" comments provided further detail, citing factors such as injuries, family commitments (e.g., "Commitment to duties of having a young family"), "badly kept facilities," and the absence of local options for specific desired sports like Padel.

These overarching barriers of time and cost are common in many communities. The emphasis on "access to facilities" and the specific mention of "badly kept facilities" directly link general activity barriers back to the condition of local leisure provision, including Mowsbury.

Any redevelopment strategy must aim to mitigate these by considering flexible operating models, transparent and fair pricing structures, and tangible improvements to the quality and range of available facilities.

Use of Other Bedford Borough Council (BBC) Leisure Centres

A significant 39.37% of survey respondents reported that they do not use any other Bedford Borough Council leisure sites. Among those who do use other council facilities, Robinson Pools and Fitness (18.64%) and Bedford International Athletic Stadium (14.63%) are the most frequently visited.

The observation that a large segment of Mowsbury-surveyed individuals is not engaged with other council leisure offerings is noteworthy. It could imply that Mowsbury serves a distinct clientele with specific interests (e.g., golf, squash) not catered for elsewhere, or that Mowsbury is geographically more convenient for them.

Alternatively, it might suggest that other BBC sites are not meeting their needs or are less appealing. This highlights the importance of Mowsbury as potentially the sole council leisure touchpoint for a considerable number of these users.

Understanding this dynamic could inform whether Mowsbury's redevelopment should aim for greater multi-functionality to capture wider interest or specialize further in its core offerings.

Perception of Activity Opportunities in Bedford Borough

Respondents' views on the adequacy of physical activity opportunities in Bedford Borough were somewhat divided:

- 59.38% felt there are enough opportunities in Bedford Borough to be active, while 40.63% disagreed.
- 62.28% believed the environment in Bedford promotes opportunities to be active, whereas 37.72% did not.

While a majority hold a positive view, the fact that approximately 40% of respondents perceive a lack of opportunities or an unsupportive environment is substantial. This suggests unmet needs or perceived deficiencies in the current

leisure provision within the Borough.

These "No" responses can be seen as a mandate for improvement and expansion of diverse offerings. The redevelopment of Mowsbury presents an opportunity to address some of these perceived gaps for a notable portion of the community, particularly if it introduces new and desired activities.

Community Feedback on Council's Five Strategic Priorities

Respondents were asked for their views on the Council's five strategic priorities for physical activity. The feedback indicates general agreement with the principles but a strong desire for tangible action and outcomes.

- There was a call for less "buzz words" and more clarity on how priorities would be "put into practise" to produce "quality facilities".
- A recurring theme was the prerequisite of "well maintained, functioning and clean facilities".
- Affordability and equitable access for *all* residents, not just specific targeted demographics, were stressed. Some comments expressed resistance to prioritizing "deprived areas" if it was perceived to be at the expense of other areas or if it meant "those who contribute the least...be prioritised". This highlights a tension around approaches to universalism versus targeted support that the Council will need to navigate carefully.
- Support was voiced for better cycle lanes and active travel infrastructure.
- The priority of providing positive experiences for children and young people was well-received, but with the caveat that these must be cost-friendly and accessible.
- Connecting health and wellbeing was supported, though some practical concerns about implementation and data protection were raised.

Overall, there is a "show me, don't just tell me" attitude. The Council's strategic priorities are broadly seen as positive, but their translation into high-quality, equitably accessible, and tangible outcomes is paramount for community buy-in and trust.

Key Missing Elements Identified by Community for Activity

When asked what they feel is missing to enable their community to be more active, respondents provided a wide range of suggestions. Key themes include:

- **Affordability/Lower Costs:** This was a dominant and frequently repeated concern.
- **Better Quality/Maintained Facilities:** Calls for "A Quality leisure centre," "Better sport options," and "Clean and well-maintained swimming pools" echo the Mowsbury-specific complaints and highlight a broader desire for higher standards across the leisure estate.

- **Specific Facilities:** Padel courts were mentioned multiple times, alongside Pickleball, a modern swimming pool or lido, an indoor climbing/bouldering facility, a better driving range, crazy golf, and a bowling alley.
- **Accessibility & Information:** Suggestions included better promotion of existing activities, clearer information about what is available, easier booking systems, improved public transport links to facilities, and safer walking and cycling routes.
- **Family-Friendly & Inclusive Options:** There is a desire for more activities suitable for young families, specific coaching for autistic individuals, and appropriate sessions for seniors.

This "missing elements" list serves as a direct community wishlist. Padel features prominently and aligns with the Mowsbury redevelopment proposals. The persistent call for better quality and maintenance of basic facilities is a strong undercurrent affecting perceptions of all leisure provision.

Affordability remains a cross-cutting issue. The Mowsbury redevelopment can address some of these identified needs (e.g., Padel, improved golf facilities), but not all (e.g., swimming, climbing). This underscores the need for a broader leisure strategy for the Borough, of which Mowsbury is one important component.

7. Comparative Landscape: Local and National Perspectives

To contextualize the Mowsbury survey findings, it is useful to consider the local competitive leisure market and relevant national participation trends.

Local Competitive Context

Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex operates within a local market that includes both private clubs and other council-run leisure facilities.

- **Private Clubs:** Several private clubs were mentioned by survey respondents as places they are members of or use. These include:
 - **Towers Health & Racquets Club:** A high-end facility offering comprehensive amenities including a gym, swimming pool, spa, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, and squash courts. This represents a premium, multi-sport offering in the area.
 - **Pavenham Park Golf Club:** Features an 18-hole golf course, driving range, and clubhouse facilities.
 - **Bedford & County Golf Club:** Offers an 18-hole course, practise facilities, and a clubhouse with dining.
 - **Colmworth Golf Club:** Provides an 18-hole course, driving range, pitch & putt, and accommodation options.
- **Other Council Leisure Sites:** Bedford Borough Council operates several other leisure centres, each with distinct offerings:
 - **John Bunyan Sports & Fitness:** Gym, large sports hall, squash courts, soft play area.
 - **Robinson Pools & Fitness:** Multiple swimming pools (including a 33.3m main pool and diving pool), gym, and fitness studios.
 - **Oasis Beach Pool:** Leisure pool with flumes and water features, aimed at family fun.
 - **Kempston Pool & Fitness:** 25m swimming pool, gym, fitness studio, and health suite.
 - **Bedford International Athletic Stadium:** Running track, sports hall, gym, and pitches for football and rugby.

Mowsbury's current offerings of golf and squash position it within this landscape. Any redevelopment should aim to provide a distinct value proposition, either through unique facilities, superior quality, or better value for money, to effectively compete with private clubs and complement other council-run sites. For instance, if Padel courts were introduced at Mowsbury and were unique to the immediate Bedford area, this would constitute a strong Unique Selling Proposition (USP).

Similarly, a Trackman driving range, if demonstrably superior to other local driving ranges and priced appropriately, could attract users from a wider catchment. The

business case for Mowsbury's redevelopment must clearly articulate its competitive advantages and target market within this established local leisure environment.

National Trends & Alignment

The proposed developments at Mowsbury show strong alignment with several key national trends in sport and physical activity.

- **Golf:** England Golf reports record levels of golf participation, with significant growth in general/casual play (non-competition rounds increasing from 3.9 million to 4.4 million) and 9-hole golf (submitted scores up by 17.89%). The average age of golfers is showing a slight decline, and there is a notable cohort of over 55,000 'iGolfers' – casual golfers who are not members of a club but track their handicaps.
 - **Mowsbury Alignment:** Upgrading the driving range, particularly with Trackman technology, and improving the overall quality and maintenance of the 18-hole course could cater to both dedicated golfers and the expanding casual market. Offering flexible play options, such as attractive 9-hole rates and accessible pay-and-play, could appeal to iGolfers and potentially a younger demographic, helping to diversify Mowsbury's current older user base.
- **Padel Tennis:** As previously noted, Padel is experiencing explosive growth in the UK. Participation has surged to over 400,000 players, the number of courts is rapidly increasing (893+), and public awareness has reached 43% of the population. The sport is recognized for being accessible, highly social, and appealing to all age groups. Nationally, barriers to playing include a lack of courts and difficulties in booking, while the cost of court hire is also a factor. The average off-peak court booking cost is around £7 per person per hour for doubles.
 - **Mowsbury Alignment:** Introducing Padel at Mowsbury would allow Bedford to tap into this national boom, address a clear local scarcity of such facilities, and offer a sport known for its social and accessible nature. Success will depend on effective implementation, including easy booking systems and pricing that reflects local affordability, as highlighted by both national data and the Bedford survey feedback.
- **General Physical Activity:** Nationally, a record 30 million adults in England are physically active every week (meeting Chief Medical Officers' guidelines), representing 63.7% of the adult population. There has been growth in participation in fitness activities, and a recovery in swimming and team sports post-pandemic. National data also shows that men are generally more likely to be active than women, and activity levels tend to decrease with age, with the sharpest decline observed in the 75+ age group. Furthermore, adults with disabilities or from lower socio-economic groups are typically less active.
 - **Mowsbury Alignment:** The redevelopment of Mowsbury offers an important opportunity to contribute to increasing local physical activity levels. By ensuring that facilities are genuinely inclusive and accessible – both physically and financially – the project can help address some of

the inequalities observed in national participation patterns. While the current survey respondents from Mowsbury are already highly active, a key strategic goal for the redevelopment could be to broaden its appeal to less active individuals, women, younger people, and families within the Bedford community.

The proposed enhancements at Mowsbury, particularly the introduction of Padel and the modernization of golf facilities, align well with positive national trends in sports participation. This strengthens the strategic rationale for investment.

However, the challenge lies in effective local execution, encompassing quality of provision, appropriate pricing, and genuine accessibility. A crucial aspect will be bridging the gap between the current highly active, older, predominantly male survey respondent base and the broader community, including those demographics that are nationally less active but whom public leisure services aim to engage.

8. Synthesis of Findings

The comprehensive analysis of the survey data, contextualised with local and national leisure information, reveals several key convergent points crucial for decision-making regarding the Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex.

There is a clear and strong appetite among survey respondents for the redevelopment of the Mowsbury facility. The figure of 81.96% who would be encouraged to use the site more post-redevelopment is a significant indicator of latent demand for improved and expanded offerings. This enthusiasm extends to the proposed new facilities, with substantial interest expressed in both Padel tennis and a Trackman-equipped driving range. These potential additions align well with dynamic national growth trends in these respective sports, suggesting that Mowsbury could capitalize on evolving leisure preferences.

However, this positive outlook is significantly tempered by a critical counterpoint: pervasive and deeply felt dissatisfaction with the current maintenance and condition of existing Mowsbury facilities. Repeated comments regarding the poor state of the golf course, driving range, and even squash courts indicate a foundational issue of upkeep that has eroded user confidence for some. This suggests that investment in new, potentially "headline-grabbing" amenities without a concurrent, demonstrable commitment to elevating the standard of the entire complex could be met with scepticism and may not yield the desired levels of satisfaction or increased usage.

Cost is another major recurring theme that cuts across all aspects of the survey. It is a primary barrier preventing respondents from increasing their current levels of physical activity. It is also the most significant concern associated with the potential use of new, premium facilities like a Trackman driving range, where 72.43% cited "Too expensive" as a deterrent. For Padel, "Too expensive" was also a notable barrier. This price sensitivity within the respondent group, which is already highly active, suggests that affordability will be paramount for broader community engagement.

The profile of the survey respondents themselves – predominantly older, highly active, and male – must be considered when interpreting the findings. While their views are invaluable as current or potential core users, the redevelopment of Mowsbury also presents an opportunity to broaden the facility's appeal to a more diverse demographic, including women, younger people, families, and those who are currently less active, thereby contributing more significantly to the council's wider health and activity objectives.

The proposed developments, particularly Padel and enhanced golf facilities, do align with some of the key "missing elements" identified by the broader community for enabling greater physical activity, such as the desire for new sports like Padel and better quality golf amenities. However, other expressed needs, such as improved swimming facilities or indoor climbing, fall outside the scope of the Mowsbury proposals and would need to be addressed through the council's wider leisure strategy.

In essence, there is a clear opportunity at Mowsbury. The enthusiasm for redevelopment and new sports is evident. However, success is not guaranteed by new construction alone. It hinges on a dual strategy: investing in appealing new offerings that align with modern leisure trends *and* simultaneously and demonstrably improving the quality, maintenance, and operational standards of the entire complex. This must all be underpinned by a pricing structure that acknowledges community sensitivity to cost and strives for accessibility.

9. Alignment with Bedford Borough's Sport and Leisure Strategy

The proposed redevelopment of Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex and the findings from the user surveys align significantly with, and can actively contribute to, Bedford Borough Council's Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034.

Overview of the Strategy

Bedford Borough Council's Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 is designed to foster a healthier, more active community within the Borough. Its core principles are centred on inclusivity, sustainability, and community collaboration. This strategy is intrinsically linked to and guided by the Bedford Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024/5 – 2027/8, which itself prioritizes: Supporting individuals and families, Promoting health and well-being, Stimulating economic growth, and Protecting the Environment.

Furthermore, the leisure strategy is informed by five key priorities that were part of the community consultation: Creating Active Environments; Connecting Communities; Providing Positive Experiences for Children and Young People; Connecting Health and Wellbeing; and Enhancing and Sustaining the Sport and Physical Activity Sector [1 (survey questions Q39-Q43 refer to these priorities),].

Aligning Mowsbury Redevelopment Findings with Strategic Priorities

The findings from the Mowsbury surveys offer valuable insights into how the complex's redevelopment can support these strategic aims:

- **Creating Active Environments & Enhancing Facilities:**
The strong desire among 81.96% of survey respondents for the redevelopment of Mowsbury and the significant interest in new facilities like Padel tennis and a Trackman driving range directly support the strategy's objective of enhancing physical infrastructure to encourage greater physical activity. This aligns with the Corporate Plan's goals of "Promoting Health and Wellbeing" and to "Optimise Council Assets". However, the widespread dissatisfaction with the current maintenance of Mowsbury's existing facilities underscores a critical challenge. For the strategy to succeed in creating truly "Active Environments," a commitment to high-quality, well-maintained, and sustainable facilities is paramount, a sentiment strongly echoed in community feedback on the Council's priorities.
- **Promoting Inclusivity, Supporting Individuals & Families, and Affordability:**
The Mowsbury survey highlighted that cost is a significant barrier to physical activity generally and to the use of potential new, premium facilities specifically. The current respondent base also skews towards older, male individuals. The Sport and Leisure Strategy's emphasis on "inclusivity" and "improving access...across all ages and abilities", alongside the Corporate

Plan's priority of "Supporting Individuals and Families" and ensuring "Affordability", means that the Mowsbury redevelopment presents a vital opportunity. Introducing new, accessible sports like Padel, which respondents noted for its inclusivity, and developing thoughtful pricing strategies will be crucial to broaden the complex's appeal to women, younger people, families, and less active individuals.

- **Connecting Communities:**

Padel tennis is often highlighted for its social nature, and Mowsbury already serves a significant number of local residents, with 78.08% of current users living within 5km. Notably, 39.37% of Mowsbury-surveyed individuals do not use other council leisure sites, positioning Mowsbury as a primary leisure touchpoint for this group. A redeveloped Mowsbury can become an even stronger community hub, fostering social interaction and a sense of belonging, thereby aligning with the "Connecting Communities" priority and the Corporate Plan's aim to "enable people to participate in their community and celebrate our vibrant culture".

- **Providing Positive Experiences for Children and Young People:**

The survey indicated interest in family-friendly Padel sessions, and broader community feedback highlighted a desire for more activities for young people and families. The redevelopment of Mowsbury can directly support this strategic priority by incorporating facilities and programming designed to engage younger residents and encourage early adoption of active lifestyles.

- **Connecting Health and Wellbeing:**

The primary motivations for exercise among survey respondents were health-related (maintaining/improving health, fitness, mental wellbeing). The fact that redevelopment would encourage increased facility use directly contributes to this strategic priority and the overarching Corporate Plan goal of "Promoting Health and Wellbeing". Enhanced and more appealing facilities at Mowsbury are a tangible way to support the community's health aspirations.

- **Enhancing and Sustaining the Sport and Physical Activity Sector & Sustainability:**

The strong community desire for well-maintained, high-quality facilities and the notable interest in environmental upgrades at Mowsbury (68.97% in favour 1) align with the strategic priority of "Enhancing and Sustaining the Sector" and the guiding principle of "sustainability". Investing in Mowsbury to make it a high-quality, durable, and environmentally considerate asset supports the Corporate Plan's aims to "Optimise Council Assets" and "Protecting the Environment".

- **Community Collaboration & Engagement:**

The consultation process for Mowsbury and the broader Sport and Leisure Strategy is an embodiment of "community collaboration". The survey feedback, particularly the call for tangible actions over "buzz words" and the detailed comments on the five strategic priorities 1, provides a clear mandate

for the Council to "Engage, Inform, and Empower all communities" and ensure that the strategy's implementation is responsive and transparent.

By addressing the current shortcomings highlighted by users and capitalizing on the enthusiasm for new, modern facilities, the redevelopment of Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex can be a cornerstone project in achieving the ambitions of Bedford Borough's Sport and Leisure Strategy.

10. Strategic Recommendations

Based on the detailed analysis of survey responses and contextual leisure data, the following strategic recommendations are proposed to guide Bedford Borough Council's decision-making regarding the Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex:

1. Proceed with Redevelopment, with Conditions:

It is recommended to proceed with a carefully planned, potentially phased, redevelopment of the Mowsbury Golf & Squash Complex, given the strong user interest (81.96% encouraged to use more 1). However, this progression should be explicitly conditional upon a clear, adequately funded, and publicly communicated strategy to address the significant deferred maintenance and quality issues affecting existing facilities, particularly the 18-hole golf course, driving range, and squash courts. Addressing these foundational concerns is crucial for rebuilding user trust and ensuring the long-term success of new investments.

2. Prioritize Padel Tennis Development:

Given the high levels of local interest (nearly 50% strongly interested), the strong national growth trajectory of Padel 3, the current lack of local provision identified by respondents, and the sport's accessible and social nature, it is recommended to prioritize the development of Padel courts. These should be considered as an addition to the site's offerings, not as a replacement for existing, well-used facilities such as the squash courts, a concern highlighted in user feedback. To maximize uptake, the launch should incorporate motivators identified in the survey, such as beginner sessions and free trial opportunities, which directly address the primary barrier of "I don't know how to play".

3. Approach Trackman Driving Range Cautiously with a Focus on Affordability:

While there is considerable interest in a Trackman driving range (over 70% rating 4 or 5 out of 5 for interest), the extreme price sensitivity of respondents (72.43% citing "Too expensive" as a barrier) necessitates a cautious approach. A detailed feasibility study focusing on viable pricing models is essential. Consideration should be given to positioning a Trackman facility as a potential premium add-on, but this must be balanced with significant improvements to the basic driving range facilities, ensuring these remain high quality and affordably priced to meet the needs expressed by users for well-maintained fundamental practise areas.

4. Develop a Comprehensive and Accessible Pricing Strategy:

The pervasive concern regarding cost, evident across barriers to general activity and for proposed new facilities, must be proactively addressed. A comprehensive pricing strategy should be developed for the entire Mowsbury complex. This strategy should explore options such as tiered memberships, flexible pay-and-play schemes, off-peak discounts, and family packages to balance revenue generation with the critical need for community accessibility and affordability.

5. Implement and Showcase Enhanced Maintenance and Operational Standards:

A robust, transparent, and consistently implemented maintenance plan for the entire Mowsbury complex is paramount. This is not merely an operational detail but a strategic necessity to rebuild user trust, address widespread dissatisfaction, and ensure that all facilities – both existing and new – are maintained to a high standard that encourages repeat usage and positive word-of-mouth.

6. **Strategically Broaden Appeal and Inclusivity:**
Future marketing, programming, and facility design should consciously aim to attract a wider demographic than the current Mowsbury user base, which skews older and male. Efforts should be made to target women, younger people, families, and individuals who are currently less physically active, aligning with national health and activity goals to reduce inactivity and address participation inequalities.
7. **Maintain Open Community Engagement and Communication:**
The Council should maintain transparent and ongoing communication with Mowsbury users and the wider Bedford community regarding redevelopment plans, timelines, pricing structures, and the rationale behind decisions. Proactively addressing concerns, such as the "fad" perception of Padel (by referencing national growth data) and demonstrating a clear commitment to overall site quality, will be vital for community buy-in.
8. **Explicitly Link Redevelopment to Council's Strategic Priorities:**
The Mowsbury redevelopment project should be explicitly framed and communicated in the context of Bedford Borough Council's five strategic priorities for physical activity. Articulating how the project will deliver tangible outcomes related to creating active environments, connecting communities, supporting health and wellbeing, providing positive experiences for young people, and enhancing the local sport and physical activity sector will strengthen its strategic justification and resonate with community aspirations for meaningful improvements over "buzz words".
9. **Consider Further Targeted Research (Optional but Recommended):**
To ensure that the redevelopment plans have the broadest possible appeal and maximize their impact on overall community activity levels, particularly among currently underrepresented or less active groups, the Council could consider conducting further targeted research. This might involve focus groups or surveys with specific demographics (e.g., families with young children, teenage girls, inactive adults) to gather more nuanced insights into their specific needs, preferences, and barriers to participation.

Equality Analysis Report
(V.11.2023)**Part 1**

Title of activity / budget proposal title and number: Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex – Padel Tennis Provision	Committee meeting (decision maker) and date: Mayor – July 2025
Service area: Environment – Public Realm, Highways and Waste Management – Leisure & Culture	Is this activity: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Change <input type="checkbox"/> Review <i>Refer to section 2 of the Equality Assessment Guidance (EAG)</i>
Lead Officer Name and Title: Tom Perrett – Head of Leisure & Culture	Other Officer name(s) and title(s) supporting in carrying out the Equality Analysis, undertaking any review or actions: Ashley Bartlett – Strategic Leisure projects manager Robert Lindsay – Sports Development Officer Richard Tapley – Manager Sports Development & Leisure
Approved by: (Director) Paul Pace – Service Director for Public Realm, Highways and Waste Management	Date of approval: 30 July 2025

Policy/Procedure/Functions details

Please refer to the Equality Analysis Guidance (EAG)

Mowsbury Golf and Squash complex opened in May 1975 and offers an 18-hole public golf course, a 13-bay floodlit driving range, three glass-backed squash courts, a practice putting green, changing rooms, a bar, a function room, and a club lounge. The complex is one of the eight leisure facilities managed for the council by GLL as part of the leisure contract that started in February 2024.

In 2025 the council engaged external consultants (TA6 and Active Insight) to complete a full public consultation on some proposed centre upgrades to the facility and responses were collected from facility users and non-users.

This report proposes that, following the results of the consultation, Bedford Borough Council proceeds with the recommended upgrade to Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex with the addition of some new Padel tennis courts.

Who is/will be impacted by the activity's aims and outcome?

The addition of a new opportunity to participate in physical activity will benefit all members of the community who wish to access the facility. It will support the health and wellbeing of all residents within the Borough by providing high-quality leisure facilities that encourage and enable people of all ages and abilities to engage in regular physical activity.

Where any disproportionate benefits or disadvantages have been identified, this analysis highlights them and outlines appropriate mitigations to ensure fairness and inclusivity in the outcomes.

1. The activity relates to one or more of the three aims of the Council's Equality Duty.

- *Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation*
- *Advance equality of opportunity*
- *Foster good relations*

Yes



No



2. The activity sets out proposals for significant changes to services, policies etc. and / or significantly affects how services are delivered or presents a high risk to the Council's reputation	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The activity could / does affect one or more of the protected characteristics or other relevant groups <i>(Please refer to the EAG, Section 1 for further information)</i>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The activity could / does affect protected characteristics or other relevant groups differently	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The activity relates to an area where there are known inequalities.	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. One or more protected characteristics or other relevant group could be disadvantaged, adversely affected or are at risk of discrimination as a result of the activity.	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The activity can affect relations between certain protected characteristics and other relevant groups?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If you have ticked YES to one or more of the above questions, then you need to complete an equality analysis. Please continue to complete Part 2 of the form				

Part 2

Evidence, data, information and consultation

What evidence have you used to analyse the effects on equality?	The LTA Padel Strategy 2024-2029 "Padel is already a welcoming sport for many, but there is more we can do to diversify the player population. Particularly so the sport appeals to more women, young people and those with disabilities."
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	<p>The LTA is committed to making padel more accessible to more people by working with the whole padel community. “This means improving the support and engagement we give to local authorities, our member organisations, venues and operators across Britain. It also means using the plans we have in place to support the development of new facilities across the whole country.”</p> <p>The LTA equity, diversity and inclusion plan</p> <p>“Sport England’s strategy, ‘Uniting the Movement,’ is rooted in the ambition to tackle inequalities and create a more inclusive sport and physical activity landscape. The LTA’s evolved vision of ‘Tennis Opened Up’ and its new EDI plan is a powerful example of this approach, providing greater access and a welcoming environment for everyone. We’re excited to support this next chapter, as the LTA continues to break down barriers and bring the benefits of tennis to people from all backgrounds. Viveen Taylor, Sport England Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion”.</p> <p>The LTA have for plans in place for under-represented communities. They already have their She Rallies plan for women and girls, Open for All for disabled people, and Breaking Down Barriers for under-served communities – these are all being refreshed. They will also be publishing plans outlining work to get those from a more diverse ethnic background and from LGBTQ+ communities more involved in all aspects of tennis and padel.</p> <p>Bedford Borough Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2027</p> <p>The evidence and data represented in the strategy has supported the development of the Sport and Leisure Strategy and the local data has highlighted the priority areas. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy explains, “In summary, the health of people in Bedford Borough is not as good as it could be. This is because there are large numbers of people in the Borough that belong to groups or communities that experience health inequalities, and because some of the inequalities in health experienced by these groups and communities are particularly large. These health inequalities have grown over a long time, and to address we need to strengthen the building blocks of health.”</p>
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	<p>Borough Council Physical Activity Vision (2023)</p> <p>The Vision, formally adopted by the Council in 2023, draws upon local and national evidence indicating that cost represents a primary barrier to participation in sport and physical activity. The consultation process undertaken for the Vision development identified several key strategic themes to address the need for increased participation among priority groups within the Borough. The resulting action plan includes provision of low-cost access to leisure opportunities, ensuring leisure centre affordability, enhanced support for older residents, and targeted assistance for individuals with disabilities.</p> <p>Bedford Borough Council Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034</p> <p>The Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 builds on the Physical activity vision and sets out inequalities and challenges and the best way forward to support people with their health and wellbeing through physical activity and sport. There are three final themes Active and Thriving Communities, Improving Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion, and Sustainable Places and a Stronger Sector.</p> <p>Sport England Report</p> <p>January 2024 “The rising cost of living and its impact on Sport and Physical activity” by Sport England. “Specifically, consideration should be given to whether increases in the cost of living are reducing opportunities for people to be active and the extent to which people continue to make changes to their sport and physical activity behaviours.”</p> <p>Sport England Social Value report October 2024</p> <p>Highlights the social value of sport and the impact on long term health conditions. The research shows the total annual social value of sport and physical activity in England for 2022-23. Of the total £107.2 billion – £96.7 billion is attributed to the primary value in annual wellbeing value, and a further £10.5 billion in wider savings to the health and social care system.</p>
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	<p>Local insight</p> <p>Three out of five adults and two in five 11-year-olds living in Bedford Borough are overweight or obese. Excess weight is a major cause of ill health and death locally and disproportionately affects some of our poorest communities. In Bedford 1 in 6 people are living with a disability. The most recent Active Lives data shows that those living with a disability are much less likely to be physically active.</p> <p>National insight</p> <p>Data from Public Health England highlights the number of people nationally with type 2 diabetes and recognises where this is more prevalent in groups with protected characteristics. Diabetes is more common in men (9.6% compared with 7.6% women) and people from south Asian and black ethnic groups are nearly twice as likely to have the disease compared with people from white, mixed or other ethnic groups, (15.2% compared to 8.0%).</p> <p>Active lives survey data</p> <p>The latest active lives survey reveals that 59.1% of the adult population in Bedford Borough is now meeting the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines of at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week. This represents a return to within the national levels compared to previous data, highlighting more continuity in the data from the survey.</p>
<p>What consultation did you carry out with protected equality groups to identify your activity's effect on equality?</p>	<p>A full public consultation was completed between April and May 2025, and 456 responses were received.</p> <p>Public Consultation</p> <p>Delivery</p>

A 4-week public consultation (Friday 9th May – Friday 6th June 2025) was completed by external industry experts (Alliance Leisure and Active Insight). This included a full survey process and in person focus groups. The survey was prepared to ensure that all key stakeholders were engaged, and the opportunity was circulated to as many people as possible.

Key groups engaged and methods of engagement:

- General Public* - Via BBC mailing lists, social media and via partner organisations.
- GLL Leisure centre users – via the app and email
- Bedford Borough Schools and Educational Institutions – via the Bedford Borough School Sports Coordinator.
- Community Groups, Charities, support groups – via BBC Communications & Communities team
- Parish and Town Councils – via BBC communications team
- Local Sports and Leisure Organisations – via the Active Partnership (circa 114 Bedford Borough sports clubs)
- Media Outlets.

**Easy read version & Paper versions were available*

A consultation guide was available, and a digital copy of the draft strategy was available on a dedicated website for the Sport and Leisure consultation. This website was in an accessible format and a link from the Bedford Borough Leisure centres page and consultations page was created to guide users to the consultation survey.

- The consultation document was circulated via a range of partners and advertised at several key locations. The QR code link was on poster and the full survey was available in paper copy version and easy read version at all Bedford Borough leisure sites, the Customer Hub, Borough Hall, Bedford Central Library, Kempston Library, Putnoe Library, The Higgins Bedford, Kempston Town Council and posters were also in place at a number community venues

	<p>including Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara, Project 229, Bedford College, St Pauls Church and local pharmacies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultation was shared digitally with health partners at the ICB, NHS, Public health, The East London Foundation trust, Circle MSK, Mind BLMK, Age UK, and other groups via the BBC communications team. • The national governing bodies of sports organisations were shared the information, and 114 sports clubs received the information via our Active Partnership Be Active's email and the information also went out in their newsletter. • All Bedfordshire schools received the survey via our School Sports Coordinator and educational institutions such The University of Bedfordshire and Bedford College were shared the survey. Bedford College students took part in a workshop to provide feedback and complete the survey directly. • Better (GLL Greenwich Leisure Limited) who manage the Council's leisure sites sent an email during week 1 and week 5 to all GLL members and non-member casual users. • BBC Sports Development sent the survey information within their biweekly newsletter throughout the consultation period to 13,000 subscribers interested in Sport and Physical Activity from the public. • The online campaign achieved significant visibility and interaction, generating 826,000 impressions (the number of times the ads were displayed, 72,000 reach – the number of unique individuals who saw the ads and 4,405 direct clicks – users who clicked directly through to the microsite from the digital advert. <p>Focus groups</p> <p>In person focus groups were also conducted in partnership with the Council's consultants (Alliance Leisure and Active Insight) who are the industry leader in customer insight and market intelligence within the active leisure industry.</p> <p>The groups were advertised to everyone who completed the survey, who were then invited to register their interest for an online or in person workshop. The objective of the engagement group was to</p>
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explore attitudes and perceptions towards the proposed improvements at Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex

Demographics of the 456 responses to the Mowsbury Golf and Squash survey

What is your Gender?

Female (Including Transgender Woman)	25%
Male (Including Transgender Man)	72%
Non-Binary	0%
Undecided	0%
Prefer Not to Say	2%
Other (please specify)	1%

What is your Age?

Under 16	0%
16-24	5%
25-34	6%
35-44	14%
45-54	18%
55-64	30%
65-74	0.2137

What is your Ethnicity?

Asian/Asian British or Asian Welsh - Bangladeshi	0.00%
White Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.00%
White Roma	0.00%
Other Ethnic Group - Arab	0.22%
Other Ethnic Group - Any Other Ethnic group	0.22%

	Asian/Asian British or Asian Welsh - Pakistani	0.45%
	Asian/Asian British or Asian Welsh - Other Asian	0.45%
	Black/Black British/Black Welsh/Caribbean or African - Other Black	0.45%
	Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups – White and Asian	0.45%
	Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups – White and Black Caribbean	0.45%
	Asian/Asian British or Asian Welsh - Chinese	1%
	Black/Black British/Black Welsh/Caribbean or African - African	1%
	Black/Black British/Black Welsh/Caribbean or African - Caribbean	1%
	Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups – Other Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	1%
	White Irish	2%
	Asian/Asian British or Asian Welsh - Indian	2%
	Prefer not to say	4%
	White - Other White	6%
	White/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish or British	80%
	Disability	
	What is the nature of your impairment?	%
	Blind/Partially sighted	0%
	Physical impairment: Power chair user	0%
	Physical impairment: Use a wheelchair for sport	0%
	Deaf/Hard of hearing	2%
	Intellectual impairment/Learning disability	2%
	Physical impairment: Permanent manual wheelchair user	2%
	Autism/Neurodiverse	4%
	Physical impairment: Ambulant and use sticks/crutches/prosthetic	7%
	Mental health condition	9%
	Other (please specify)	15%
	Conditions related to old age	20%

	<p>Physical impairment: Ambulant 39%</p> <p>Activity levels</p> <p>Looking at the physical activity guidelines, would you consider yourself active/fairly active or inactive?</p> <p>Active 50%</p> <p>Fairly active 46%</p> <p>Inactive 4%</p>
What does this evidence tell you about the different protected groups?	<p>The findings of the consultation indicate a strong desire among respondents for enhancements to the facility with a significant 82% stating that a redevelopment would encourage them to use the facility more frequently.</p> <p>The evidence tells us that the proposed upgrades to the centre by adding Padel tennis courts could offer a greater range of sporting opportunity to all residents.</p> <p>It also tells us that the majority of people consulted were active or fairly active and more research could be done with groups who are inactive. The LTA recognises that currently Padel tennis could be a more inclusive and diverse activity and is looking to develop the workforce so that is more representative of a wider variety of communities and encourage partnerships with local authorities to ensure a Padel offer is inclusive and available to all.</p> <p>The consultation and members data tells us there is an older demographic of golf users. Parking disruption during building work must be reviewed so that users with low mobility can still access the complex</p> <p>The glass walls of the courts can be bright/reflective and depending on the lighting selected this may need to be considered for those with visual impairments and neurodiversity.</p> <p>The consultation tells us that while there is a clear mandate for redevelopment the success is dependent on addressing existing maintenance deficits, implementing a sensitive pricing strategy and ensuring that new offerings genuinely meet diverse community needs.</p>

What further research or data do you need to fill any gaps in your understanding of the potential or known effects of the activity?	As part of the procurement and construction phase it is important that the selected court surface is suitable for mobility aids. The planned location for the courts is on the the top car park, and it is important that this is accessible as the current gradient to this area is quite steep. Further consultation with key user/non-user groups will be critical to assist with the design phase.
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General Equality Duty

Which parts of the general equality duty is the activity relevant to?			
	Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Advance equality of opportunity	Foster good relations
Age Children Older People		The addition of padel aims to offer a new activity and therefore more options to take part in physical activity for different age groups.	Padel is currently less popular with older people however it is an accessible sport for all ages.
Disability	The padel courts will be fully accessible to all.		GLL are committed to providing a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for everyone. They believe that by creating, supporting and developing an inclusive and positive culture, they can continue to break down barriers and be a true leader in creating opportunity for all.
Gender reassignment	The padel courts will be fully accessible to all.		

Pregnancy and maternity	No issues or benefit identified.	No issues or benefit identified.	
Race	The padel courts will be fully accessible to all.		Padel is one of the fastest growing sports globally and is popular with many different cultures and therefore adds a new dynamic to the golf and squash complex.
Religion or belief	No issues or benefit identified.	No issues or benefit identified.	GLL are committed to providing a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for everyone. They believe that by creating, supporting and developing an inclusive and positive culture, they can continue to break down barriers and be a true leader in creating opportunity for all.
Sex	No issues or benefit identified.	No issues or benefit identified.	As above.
Sexual orientation	No issues or benefit identified.	No issues or benefit identified.	As above.
Marriage & civil partnership	No issues or benefit identified.	No issues or benefit identified.	No issues or benefit identified.
Other Relevant Groups			
Social-economic	There are currently no affordable courts locally to play Padel despite its popularity. The LTA acknowledges the need for tennis and padel to be inclusive and accessible to all and municipal		

	Padel courts will ensure it is not only available to those who can afford an expensive membership.		
Care experienced people	No issues or benefit identified.	No issues or benefit identified.	No issues or benefit identified.
Carers	No issues or benefit identified.	No issues or benefit identified.	No issues or benefit identified.
Rural residents	The Mowsbury complex is on the edge of North Bedford and located within 5 miles of many rural villages.	No issues or benefit identified.	No issues or benefit identified.

Impact on Protected Characteristic and Other Relevant Groups

Based on the evidence presented what positive and negative impact will your activity have on equality?				
	Positive impact	Negative impact	No or neutral impact	Explanation
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The proposed Padel courts will be positive for all ages as a new and popular physical activity option would be available to all. It is more popular with all ages which would increase the diversity of casual users at the facility.</p> <p>However, during refurbishment there may be some impact on the parking areas and space and availability for parking which may impact the local routines during the works for older people. Parking access will need to be carefully considered for those who may struggle to walk up from parking further away at alternative parking.</p>
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The centre is fully accessible, and the improvements are planned to include disabled access to the Padel courts and facilities.

				During refurbishment there may be some impact on the parking areas and space and availability for parking which may impact the local routines during the works for older people. Parking access will need to be carefully considered for those who may struggle to walk up from parking further away at alternative parking.
Gender reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The refurbishment will allow for new sports and access for all which can be promoted in partnership with Rainbow Bedfordshire to welcome all.
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No impact greater than any other group.
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No impact greater than any other group.
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The courts will be open and glass and based in the car park area. This may inhibit participation for those preferring modest dress requirements but further data is required to understand this.
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No impact greater than any other group.
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No impact greater than any other group.
Marriage & civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No impact greater than any other group.

Other Relevant Groups

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	No or neutral Impact	Explanation
Social-economic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The provision of new local Padel facilities will enable more people from low-income families to access a new popular sport which is currently not available locally at an affordable market rate (if it is priced and included in the wider leisure concessions offer by GLL).
Care experienced people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No impact greater than any other group.
Carers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No impact greater than any other group.
Rural residents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The new Padel court access will add a racquet sport facility that is accessible by rural areas in the north of Bedford Borough.

Actions

	What will be done?	By who?	By when?	What will be the outcome?
Actions to lessen negative impact	The redevelopments proposed will need to be scheduled to not impact on the current parking for golf users. The planned area for the build is not currently well used however the site plan will need to factor the full car park at busy times.	Leisure developer guided by Strategic leisure projects manager	2025-26	Continuity of access to current services.

	<p>To work with delivery partners to ensure pathways and access are designed in accessible ways.</p> <p>To work with the facility to ensure accessible changing cubicle options are available.</p> <p>Work with the club pro shop to stock affordable specialist Faith-based activewear.</p>			
Actions to increase positive impact	<p>The new padel courts will be widely promoted all local groups from all the key characteristics.</p> <p>Provide inclusive changing facilities.</p> <p>Consider pricing structure to avoid excluding lower-income groups.</p> <p>Consult with diverse user groups during planning.</p> <p>Ensure booking system accommodates different cultural/religious needs.</p>	Strategic leisure projects manager	2026-27	By working with the leisure operator to monitor the increased usage at the facility and the usage by key groups will help to highlight the impact of the interventions.

	Provide beginner-friendly sessions for all groups.			
Actions to develop equality evidence, information and data	To monitor the diversity and usage of the new padel courts.	Strategic leisure projects manager	2026-27	By monitoring usage the council can ensure to provide the most accessible service possible which will keep residents engaged in physical activity to a higher level.
Actions to improve equality in procurement / commissioning	The design and delivery phase of the works and the procurement for the supplier should include criteria to ensure that install provider has a strong record in providing inclusive activities and has a strong understanding of differentiating for key characteristics.	Strategic leisure projects manager	2026-27	This will ensure that access to the Padel courts is inclusive and that the design is suitable for all.
Other relevant actions				

Recommendation

No major change required <i>The evidence shows no negative effect or potential for discrimination.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Adjustments required <i>The evidence shows your activity requires changes or adjustments to ensure it does not negatively affect any protected equality groups or miss opportunities to affect them positively. Explain the reasons for the steps you are taking in the 'Summary of analysis' section below.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Justification to continue the activity: <i>Negative impact on equality has been identified, however your activity can continue because the activity does not unlawfully discriminate as there are reasonable factors that make it objectively justified (looking at legal facts only) to do so. If unsure, please seek guidance from EDI Officer</i> <i>You will need to explain your justification in the 'Summary of analysis'</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Stop the activity- <i>The equality analysis identified that your activity unlawfully discriminates and cannot be mitigated. This also cannot be objectively justified and your activity must stop.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Summary of analysis

Please refer to Section 8 of the Equality Analysis Guidance.

In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

There are positive benefits for all key characteristics from the additional of Padel courts to the Council leisure portfolio. The Sport is accessible and growing with a wide range of audiences. The new courts will offer more opportunities to be active and provide affordable access to a new and internationally popular sport.

There could be some small adverse impact on all members and users of the golf and squash facility during the development of the courts due to access restrictions however this will be mitigated by careful planning of the car parking to minimise disruption.

The evidence available supports the redevelopment of the facility and ensures all protected characteristics are recognised in the plans.

Monitoring and review

Monitoring and review	Review date
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once agreed and the final plans are scheduled all key groups will be supported with leisure access throughout the works.	N/A

It is the responsibility of the service area to hold a copy of the final version of this Equality Analysis and to ensure that it is accessible upon request.