

Facilities Planning Model (FPM) Assessment for Sports Hall Provision for Medway Council

Completed by Sport England

May 2026

Draft Summary

1. Purpose and Context

Medway Council has undertaken a Facilities Planning Model (FPM) assessment to understand whether existing and future sports hall provision can meet demand up to 2041. The study is a spatial and quantitative assessment of need. It assesses impact of population growth; housing development has on the demand for sports halls in 2041. The assessment also considers options for changing the supply of sports halls.

The FPM provides a robust, nationally recognised evidence base to inform the Local Plan, Built Facilities Strategy and future investment priorities.

2. Modelling Scenarios (Runs 1–4)

Run 1 – Baseline (2025): Current provision and demand.

Run 2 – Future Demand (2041): Population growth applied.

Run 3 – Refurbishment Scenario (2041): A new refurbished Sports Centre in the Lordswood area

Run 4 – Replacement Scenario (2041): Strood Sports Centre replaced with a new Sports Centre located nearer to the Gravesham border

Across all runs, the overall level of provision remains broadly consistent, with changes focused on quality, attractiveness and location rather than capacity increases.

3. Key Findings – Demand and Supply

Demand Growth

- Population increases by 5% to 2041
- Sports hall demand increases by 3%
- Weekly peak demand rises to 22,300 visits

This reflects demographic change, including an ageing population, which moderates demand growth.

Overall Balance of Supply and Demand

- 97–98% of demand is met across all runs
- Medway has sufficient sports hall provision to 2041

- Demand remains below available capacity in all scenarios

Key conclusion: There is no quantitative need for additional sports halls.

Unmet Demand

- Very low: 2–3% of total demand (1.5–2 courts equivalent)
- 96–100% of unmet demand is due to distance, not lack of capacity

The issue is accessibility and location, not overall provision

Capacity and Utilisation

- Overall usage increases from 55% (2025) to 59% (2041)
- Key sites operate at 80–100% capacity at peak times, including:
 - Strood Sports Centre (Run 1)
 - New Strood Park Sports Centre (Run 4)
 - Maritime Academy (Runs 2–4)

Public leisure centres are critical, high-demand facilities with strong “draw”

4. Housing Growth and Spatial Implications

Housing growth is concentrated in two main areas:

- **North Medway (Hoo Peninsula / Chattenden):**
Significant growth but relatively low and dispersed demand, with weaker accessibility.
- **South Medway (Lordswood / Capstone / Walderslade / Gillingham):**
Higher and increasing demand, aligned with existing facility provision.

Southern Medway – Strategic Role

- Demand increases significantly around **Lordswood and Capstone Valley**
- Refurbishment of a Lordswood Sports Centre strengthens provision in this high-demand area
- Facilities here benefit from:
 - Strong accessibility
 - Proximity to growth areas
 - Ability to serve cross-boundary demand

Modern, well-located facilities in the south have a clear “draw effect”, increasing participation and usage.

Northern Growth Areas

- Growth in Hoo Peninsula increases demand but:
 - Demand remains low and dispersed
 - Unmet demand is too small to justify new provision

Priority should be:

- Improving connectivity and access
- Maximising use of existing facilities

5. Import and Export of Demand

Exported Demand

- Stable at 6% of demand
- Majority exported to Gravesham

Imported Demand

- Increases from 3,800 to 4,800 visits/week
- Represents 16% → 19% of used capacity
- Largest inflow from Maidstone (20–30%)

Medway is a net importer of demand, with significantly more users travelling into Medway than leaving.

Strategic Significance

- Medway's facilities serve a wider sub-regional catchment
- Southern sites (e.g. Lordswood) are particularly important in:
 - Meeting demand from Maidstone
 - Supporting cross-boundary use
 - Maintaining Medway's role as a net provider of sports hall capacity

Investment in southern facilities is therefore strategically justified.

6. Accessibility

- Residents within a 20-minute walk reduce from 78% to 69% by 2041
- Car travel remains dominant (73–75%)

While access remains generally good, some growth areas (particularly in the north) have reduced walkability.

Improving access is more important than increasing provision.

7. Role of School Sports Halls

- The education sector provides 71–72% of all sports hall capacity
- 22 school sites form the majority of community-access provision

Without school facilities, Medway would not be able to meet demand.

Challenges

- Access varies between schools
- Many are unavailable during daytime hours
- Some have limited community programming

8. Community Use Agreements (CUAs)

Community use of school sites must be protected and strengthened.

Key Requirements

- Maintain CUAs at all existing school sites
- Require CUAs for new and replacement schools
- Actively monitor delivery and access

CUAs are essential to:

- Protect capacity
- Ensure long-term community access
- Support housing growth
- Maintain the positive supply-demand balance

9. Strategic Conclusions

1. Sufficient Provision

- Medway has enough sports halls to meet demand to 2041

2. No Need for New Facilities

- Additional provision is not justified
- Focus should be on optimising existing stock

3. Prioritise Existing Facilities

- Increase availability at peak times
- Improve quality and attractiveness
- Target investment at key centres

4. Protect School Provision

- Schools provide over 70% of capacity
- Community access must be secured through CUAs

5. Support Strategic Locations

- Southern Medway (e.g. Lordswood) is a key investment area
- Supports:
 - Local growth
 - Cross-boundary demand
 - Sub-regional role

6. Address Accessibility, Not Quantity

- Focus on transport, connectivity and programming
- Address localised gaps without new build

Headline Message for Members

Medway has sufficient sports hall provision to meet future demand. The key priority is to protect and maximise access to existing facilities, particularly school sports halls, while focusing investment on high-demand areas such as southern Medway, which play a vital role in supporting both local communities and significant cross-boundary demand.

Facilities Planning Model (FPM) Assessment for Swimming Pool Provision for Medway Council

Completed by Sport England

May 2026

Draft Summary

1. Purpose and Context

Medway Council has undertaken a Facilities Planning Model (FPM) assessment to understand whether existing and future swimming pool provision can meet demand up to 2041. The study is a spatial and quantitative assessment of need. It assesses impact of population growth; housing development has on the demand for swimming pools in 2041. The assessment also considers options for changing the supply of swimming pools.

The FPM provides a robust, nationally recognised evidence base to inform the Local Plan, Built Facilities Strategy and future investment priorities.

2. Modelling Scenarios (Runs 1–4)

Four modelling scenarios were tested:

Run 1 – Baseline (2025): Current provision and demand.

Run 2 – Future Demand (2041): Population growth applied.

Run 3 – Refurbishment/New Provision Scenario (2041): A new refurbished Sports Centre in the Lordwood area with pool.

Run 4 – Replacement Scenario (2041): Strood Sports Centre replaced with a new Sports Centre located nearer to the Gravesham border

These scenarios test the impact of new and replacement facilities, particularly in response to housing growth and ageing stock.

3. Key Findings – Demand and Supply

Demand Growth

- Population increases by 5% to 2041
- Swimming demand increases by 2%
- Weekly peak demand rises to 20,000 visits

Demand growth is modest due to demographic change (ageing population).

Supply vs Demand

- 95–96% of demand is met across all runs
- Demand is consistently below available supply

Key conclusion: There is no quantitative need for additional swimming pools.

Unmet Demand

- Low at 4–5% of total demand
- Equivalent to 130–161 sqm of water
- 81–89% due to distance, not capacity

Again, the issue is location/accessibility rather than lack of provision.

Capacity and Utilisation

- Overall utilisation rises to 73–77%
- Several key sites are 100% utilised at peak times, including:
 - Cozenton Park Leisure Centre
 - New Sports Centre in Lordswood
 - New Strood Sports Centre
 - Educational sites

This indicates:

- Facilities are busy and operating near comfortable limits
- Limited headroom to absorb additional demand

4. Housing Growth and Spatial Implications

Housing growth is focused in:

- **North Medway (Hoo Peninsula / Chattenden):**
Significant growth with increasing demand but limited provision
- **South Medway (Lordswood / Capstone / Gillingham):**
Highest and growing demand, aligned with key facilities

Demand increases most:

- **East Capstone Valley (+75 sqm water)**
- **Gillingham North (+65 sqm)**
- **Chattenden / Hoo areas**

Strategic Role of New/Upgraded Facilities

- **Lordswood Sports Centre (Run 3):**
 - First public pool in southern Medway
 - Improves accessibility in a major growth area

- Increases proportion of demand retained in Medway
- **New Strood Sports Centre (Run 4):**
 - Replaces ageing 1977 facility
 - More attractive → higher usage and draw
 - Fully utilised at peak times

New and modern facilities significantly improve:

- Attractiveness
- Usage
- Retention of demand within Medway

5. Import and Export of Demand (Sub-Regional Role)

Exported Demand

- Decreases from 12% to 8% as new facilities are introduced
- Main destinations:
 - Maidstone
 - Gravesham

Imported Demand

- Increases from 2,900 to 4,500 visits/week
- Equals 15% → 20% of used capacity
- Largest inflows from:
 - Gravesham
 - Maidstone (increasing with Lordswood)

Medway is a strong and growing net importer of demand

Strategic Implications

- Medway's pools serve a wider sub-regional catchment
- New and modern pools increase this role
- Southern facilities help:
 - Capture demand from Maidstone
 - Retain Medway residents within the Borough

6. Accessibility

- Only 39–43% of residents within a 20-minute walk
- 76% of journeys made by car

Accessibility remains:

- Car-dependent
- More limited in northern Medway

Improving access is more important than increasing provision.

7. Critical Issue: Age and Condition of Pools

This is a key strategic issue for Medway.

- Average age of pools:
 - 39 years (2025 public sites)
 - Rising to 55 years by 2041 without intervention
- Several key sites:
 - Medway Park (1973)
 - Hoo Sports Centre (1973)
 - Strood Sports Centre (1977)
 - Not refurbished
- Only two sites modernised since 2005

Compared to sports halls:

- Pools have seen significantly less recent investment
- Stock is older and less attractive

Impact of Age on Demand

- Older facilities have lower attractiveness
- New facilities show clear “draw effect”
- Without investment:
 - Participation may decline
 - Users may travel outside Medway

Quality and condition are now as important as quantity

8. Key Site-Specific Considerations

Hoo Sports Centre (North Medway)

- Only pool serving the north of the Borough
- Located near major housing growth
- Ageing and unmodernised

Critical to retain and refurbish to maintain access and participation

Medway Park Sports Centre

- Largest and most strategically important site
- Located in highest demand area
- Only diving facility

Requires modernisation to maintain borough-wide role

9. Strategic Conclusions

1. Sufficient Provision Overall

- Existing stock, including all public, education and private pools can meet demand to 2041

2. No Need for Additional Pools beyond the East Capstone / Lordswood area

- New standalone provision is not required elsewhere, but improvements to existing facilities is required.

3. Facilities Are Operating Close to Capacity

- Limited flexibility to absorb more demand
- Peak-time pressure remains high

4. Ageing Stock is the Critical Issue

- Many pools are 40–50+ years old
- Lack of recent investment compared to sports halls
- Risk of declining attractiveness and participation

5. Investment Priority = Modernisation

- Refurbishment is essential to:
 - Maintain participation
 - Retain users within Medway

- Support Local Plan growth

6. Target Strategic Locations

- **Southern Medway (Lordswood / Capstone):**
 - Justifies investment due to high demand and inflow
- **Northern Medway (Hoo Peninsula):**
 - Requires protection and refurbishment of existing provision

7. Support Sub-Regional Role

- Medway is a net importer of demand
- Investment strengthens this strategic role

Headline Message for Members

The assessment confirms that Medway has sufficient swimming pool provision to meet demand both now and to 2041 when including all public, educational, and private pools. However, this masks a more challenging operational picture; public leisure centres are already highly utilised at peak times, with no scope to increase opening hours further as facilities are operating at maximum availability. While overall supply is adequate, capacity pressures at key sites mean that many pools are effectively full, limiting flexibility to accommodate future growth or expanded programming.

Therefore, there is opportunity to address this through enhancing existing facilities and exploring a new pool in the south of Medway and a replacement pool in the east of Medway. Further to this, there is opportunity to increase the size of newly built pools as part of any new developments, which would create additional capacity and allow for a broader programme of use. However, even with these enhancements, facilities are expected to remain busy, reinforcing the importance of maximising efficiency and design in any new developments, e.g. a minimum 6-lane main pool and 12m x 10m teaching pools if there is still sufficient demand for learn to swim programmes.

The most significant issue identified is the age and condition of the existing pool stock. Key facilities such as Medway Park and Hoo Sports Centre are over 50 years old and have not been modernised, reducing their attractiveness and potentially impacting participation levels. This is particularly critical in north Medway, where Hoo Sports Centre is the only accessible pool serving a growing population linked to major housing development. Sustained investment in refurbishment and modernisation is therefore essential to maintain participation, ensure equitable access, and support planned growth.