

SPORTS AND RECREATION  
**FACILITIES AUDIT**

*for the Local Electoral Areas of  
BALBRIGGAN, SWORDS, RUSH-LUSK.*

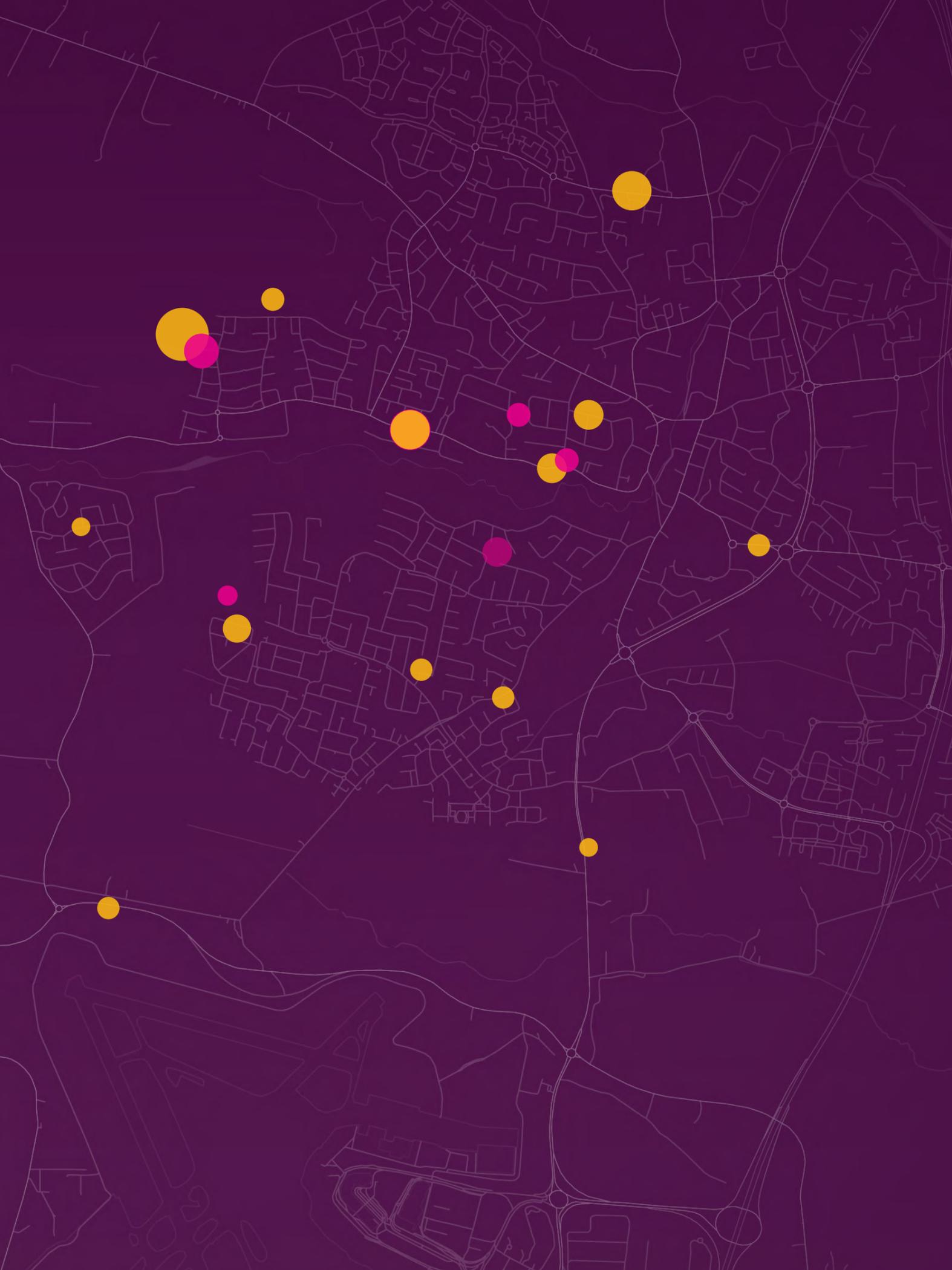
February 2021

FACILITIES AUDIT

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for the Local Electoral Areas of  
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# INTRODUCTION

## SECTION 1

Recreation, leisure and sports activities play an important role in our lives and in strengthening local communities. Their many benefits include improving health and well-being, promoting social inclusivity and contributing to the economic fabric of our communities.



## Policy Context

**The National Sports Policy 2018-2027 recognises the importance of developing a comprehensive, up-to-date database of facilities as the basis for a long-term planned approach to facility management, investment and addressing future needs.**

Specifically, it requires local authorities to undertake an initial audit of sport facilities (whether publicly or privately owned) within two years of the publication of the policy and regularly thereafter. The audit will guide decisions regarding the sport capital projects which will be prioritised for public funding.

In alignment with the National Sports Policy 2018-2027, and to understand the mix of existing provision of facilities, Fingal County Council has commissioned KPMG Future Analytics to conduct a comprehensive audit of recreation, leisure and sports facilities within three of the Local Election Areas (Balbriggan, Rush-Lusk and Swords) in Fingal. This report describes the results of this audit, including analysis of identified gaps and needs in relation to recreation, leisure and sports facilities and reflects on future requirements, particularly in light of anticipated population growth, when making recommendations.

Appendix 1 describes in detail the relevant sports, health and fitness policies and actions of relevance to this audit. These include various international, national, regional and local plans, strategies and frameworks including:



### International:

- UN Sustainable Development Goals
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 31)
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



### National:

- National Planning Framework
- National Sports Policy 2018-2027
- National Physical Activity Plan - Get Ireland Active: Strategic Plan 2017-2020
- Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2025
- Sports Ireland Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities
- Positive Ageing-Starts Now! The National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013
- Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures 2014-2020
- Get Ireland Walking Strategy and Action Plan 2017 -2020
- A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy Action Plan 2016 -2025



### Regional:

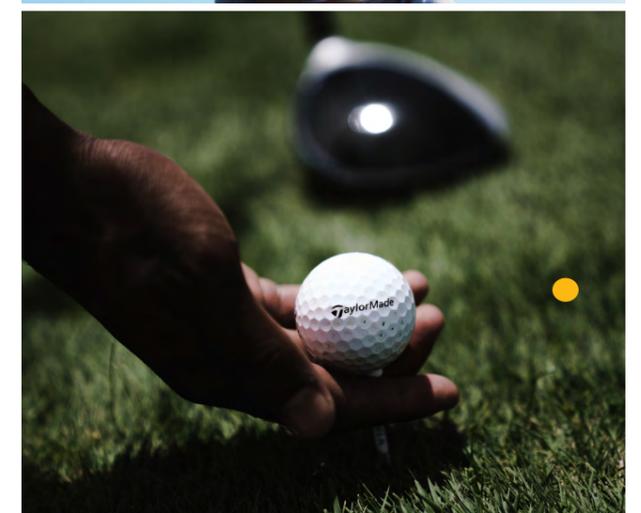
- Eastern Midland Regional Assembly – Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031



### Local:

- Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023
- Fingal Sports Office Vision Statement 2019 – 2021
- Healthy Fingal Framework (draft form)

**" The National Sports Policy 2018-2027 recognises the importance of developing a comprehensive, up-to-date database of facilities as the basis for a long-term planned approach to facility management... "**





## Aims of the Audit

**The aim of this audit is to develop a comprehensive overview of the existing provision of recreation, leisure and sports facilities within the study area.**

The insights gleaned from this audit will help facilitate Fingal County Council's current and future efforts to support the adequate provision of recreation, leisure and sports facilities. This audit provides a framework that will allow stakeholders to work together to ensure that facilities meet the needs of a changing population, that management practices and the quality of facilities will best serve everyone in the community, and that the location of future facilities will be informed and identified through consideration of the existing gaps in provision and projected population growth.

Following the audit, Fingal County Council and stakeholders can work together to determine recreational priorities for the study area and demonstrate commitment, cooperation and shared vision in developing equitable, accessible sport and recreational opportunities for all. This strategic approach will help to improve the health, wellbeing and overall quality of those who live and work in the area, as well as those who visit.

The following aims and objectives have been addressed in the following sections of this report:

**Section 2** – Demographic Profile: Overview of the demography of the study area and including a profile within each LEA.

**Section 3** – Facilities Audit: The audit of facilities within the study area, identifying and categorising each facility to understand key characteristics (through desktop assessment and surveys).

**Section 4** – Gap Analysis: The determination of gaps in facilities across the study area based on the outcomes of the audit.

**Section 5** – The identification of current and future needs within the study area based on the gap analysis, which will allow for the development of recommendations that focus on what is required to improve the range and distribution of sports and recreation facilities.

**Section 6** – Recommendations: This section outlines guidance on what facilities are needed and where, in order to formulate a strong evidence base that can be used to help secure new investment in facilities throughout the study area.

**Section 7** – Conclusions: This provides a summary of the outcomes of this audit.

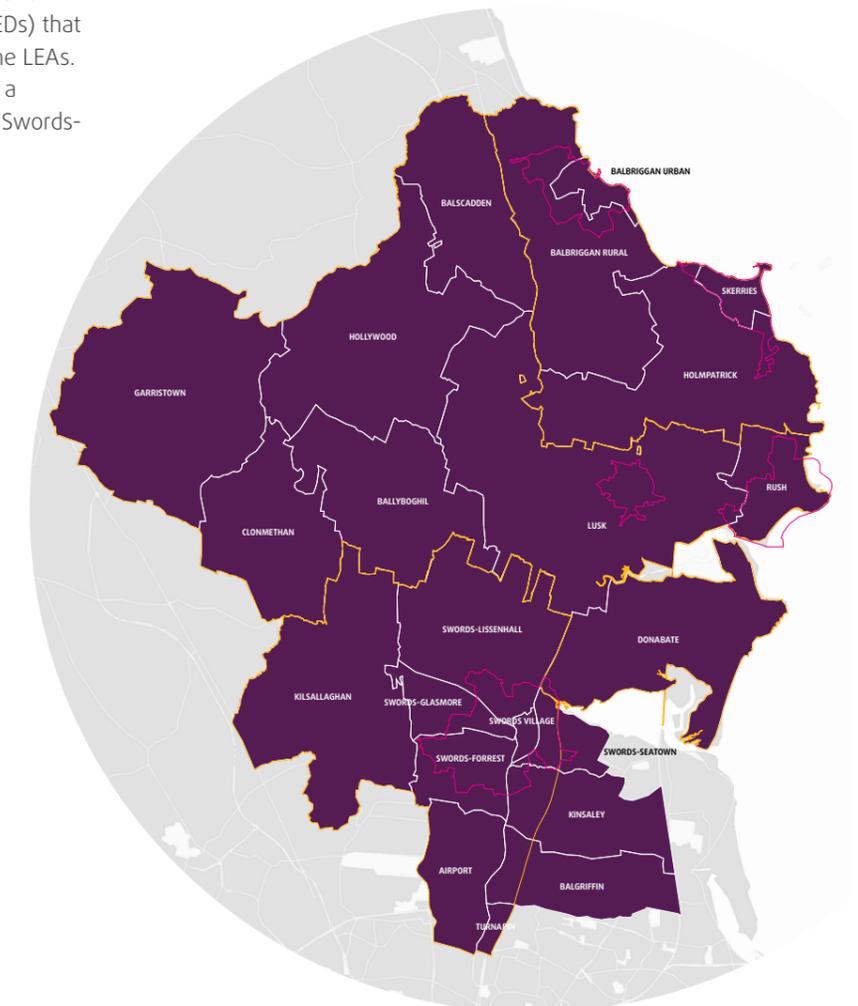


## The Study Area

**Fingal County Council has undergone significant changes in recent years, both in terms of population and the provision of facilities**

The study area identified by Fingal County Council includes the three Local Electoral Areas (LEAs) of Balbriggan, Swords and Rush-Lusk. LEA boundaries provide a comparable basis with which population and the spatial provision of facilities can be assessed. It should be noted that the population projections reflect the Electoral Divisions (EDs) that intersect with the study area rather than the LEAs. This therefore includes some EDs that only a portion falls within the study area, such as Swords-Seatown, Kinsealy and Balgriffin.

Importantly, this audit recognises that infrastructure users do not readily identify with administrative boundaries such as LEAs in terms of their access to and use of facilities. Individuals can choose facilities for a number of reasons, such as those which cater to specific activity types, are of a particular quality, or are closely located to their homes, places of work and/or school. This audit has therefore considered each facility's reckonable catchments (i.e. a reasonable walking distance to each facility).





## Scope of Assessment

The activities supported at individual facilities can be broad and far ranging in type and target audience complicating their assessment as part of this audit.

The following principal characteristics have been examined when classifying individual facilities into useful categories for the purpose of this audit:

- Sport type that occurs at the facility;
- Formally organised sports and informal activities;
- Indoor and outdoor activities;
- Those requiring specialised facilities (e.g. soccer pitches) and those requiring more general facilities (e.g. outdoor pitches that may be used for running, rugby, gaelic football or hurling etc.);
- Those requiring specialised equipment (e.g. private gyms) and those requiring less specialised equipment (e.g. outdoor gym equipment); and
- Those that are commercially operated (i.e. requiring a fee or membership to access) and those that are accessible for all (i.e. non-commercial).

*" The National Sports Policy 2018-2027 recognises the importance of developing a comprehensive, up-to-date database of facilities as the basis for a long-term planned approach to facility management... "*

Sports and recreation facilities cater to a wide array of different activity types and users and in order to assess them robustly, the following broad activity categories were developed to allow for robust assessment:

- Pitch Sports** - Facilities with playing fields or pitches, e.g. GAA, football and rugby.
- Indoor Activities** - Facilities catering to various indoor activities, such as indoor soccer, gyms, classes, etc.
- Family Activities** - Outdoor facilities such as playgrounds and multi-use games areas (MUGAs), as well as general open-air provision; parks etc.
- Water Activities** - Indoor and outdoor facilities catering to water-based sports, such as swimming pools or sailing, etc.
- Other Activities**- Facilities which comprise the remainder of activities, generally fewer in number or more specialised than other categories, e.g. equestrian centres, gun clubs, etc.



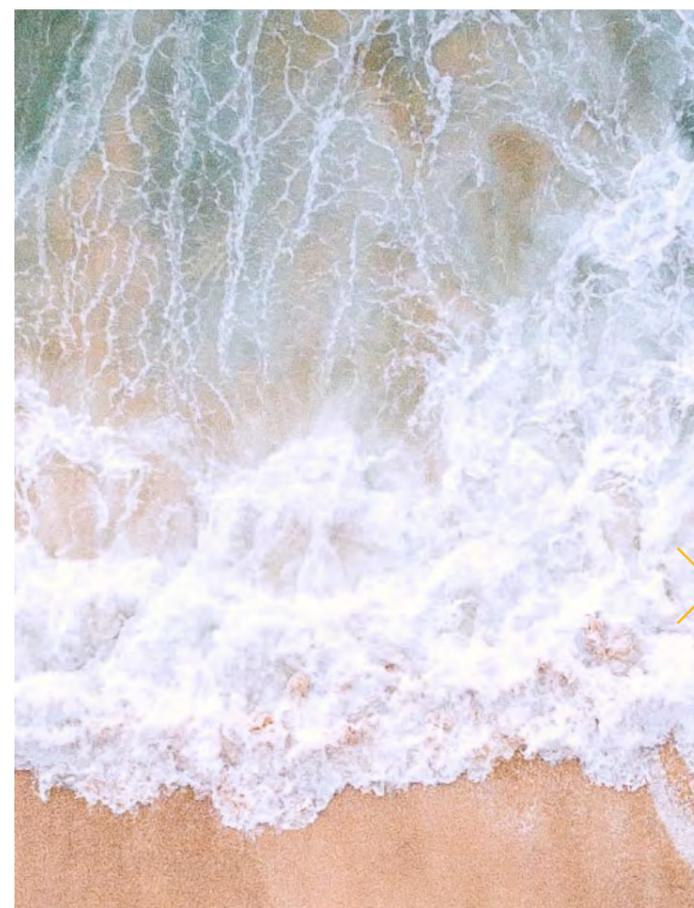
## Limitations, Assumptions and Constraints

The geographic scope of this study (i.e. the study area) has been set out in Section 1.3. The types of facilities that were considered are described in Section 1.4 and it should be noted that paths for walking and cycling, greenways, walking and/or hiking trails and beaches have not been included.

*" Where possible liaison with owners and employees was undertaken to ensure transparency and completeness during the data gathering exercise "*

Information on the characteristics of each facility within the study area was gathered through desktop assessment in advance of being validated on-site. This two-stage process provides a robust framework for independently understanding the characteristics of each facility which was then verified by Fingal County Council during their review thereafter.

Where possible liaison with owners and employees was undertaken to ensure transparency and completeness during the data gathering exercise. This was not possible in all cases and it was not within the scope of this audit to undertake multi-sectoral engagement. A list of questions and responses received is included in Appendix 2. Specifically, formal surveys and engagement exercises with the general public were not undertaken as part of this audit, but this type of exercise would be beneficial to any subsequent assessment of community needs. Insight of this nature in relation to recommendations on next steps are outlined in Section 6 and 7.



## Approach

This audit of sports and recreation facilities across the study area was conducted in four stages:

### 1. Desktop Assessment

Facilities were identified through desktop assessment by using address level data from Geodirectory, Google Earth and OpenStreetMap during May-June 2019.

This information was supplemented by a secondary search of online resources, such as facility websites or group activity webpages.

Characteristic information for each facility was collected across a number of fields, including each facility's name, contact details, ownership, activity types available and entry arrangements (fee, membership, free, etc.).

A location for each facility was recorded to facilitate on-site validation.

### 2. On-site Validation

A GIS database was prepared to facilitate on-site validation of facilities using mobile devices.

Each facility was visited by a team during July 2019 who confirmed the validity of the desktop outputs by comparing it to on-site conditions and updating information as needed.

Confirmation of data was sought from facility employees and/or management, if available. Some comments received from members of the public were also recorded.

Some additional facilities were identified during this fieldwork and were added to the database.

Additional fields of information were also collected where practicable, including the facility's condition, its broad disability access and the range of age groups supported by its activities.

Information on facility capacity and utilisation was sought but could not be reliably determined without more in-depth engagement with each facility operator.

### 3. Email Campaign

Following on-site validation, emails containing a list of questions for each field type were sent to facility representatives, where a point of contact had been determined with either employees or management. This provided an opportunity for validation on behalf of those operators.

A complete list of all questions asked can be found in Appendix 2.

### 4. Final Review

Summary analysis of the facilities database was then conducted.

The audit was completed by KPMG Future Analytics and a draft of this report was prepared.

The analysis and the facilities database were then reviewed by Fingal County Council.

A final iteration of the audit was undertaken and this report was finalised for publication.



# PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

## SECTION 2

Each of the three LEAs within the study area exhibit unique characteristics in terms of demographic composition and patterns of residential settlement.



Each of the three LEAs within the study area exhibit unique characteristics in terms of demographic composition and patterns of residential settlement. The following section analyses the overall demographic profile for the study area in comparison to the national benchmarks. Further, the demographic profile within each individual LEA has been examined to understand how this relates to the provision of existing and need for future facilities.

**Legend**

- Fingal Facilities
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division
- Total Population**
- 707-2263
- 2263-5018
- 5018-8501
- 8501-10447
- 10447-16495

**Swords**

2006  
**49,586**

2016  
**64,703**

% Change  
**30.5%**

**Balbriggan:**

2006  
**27,667**

2016  
**36,570**

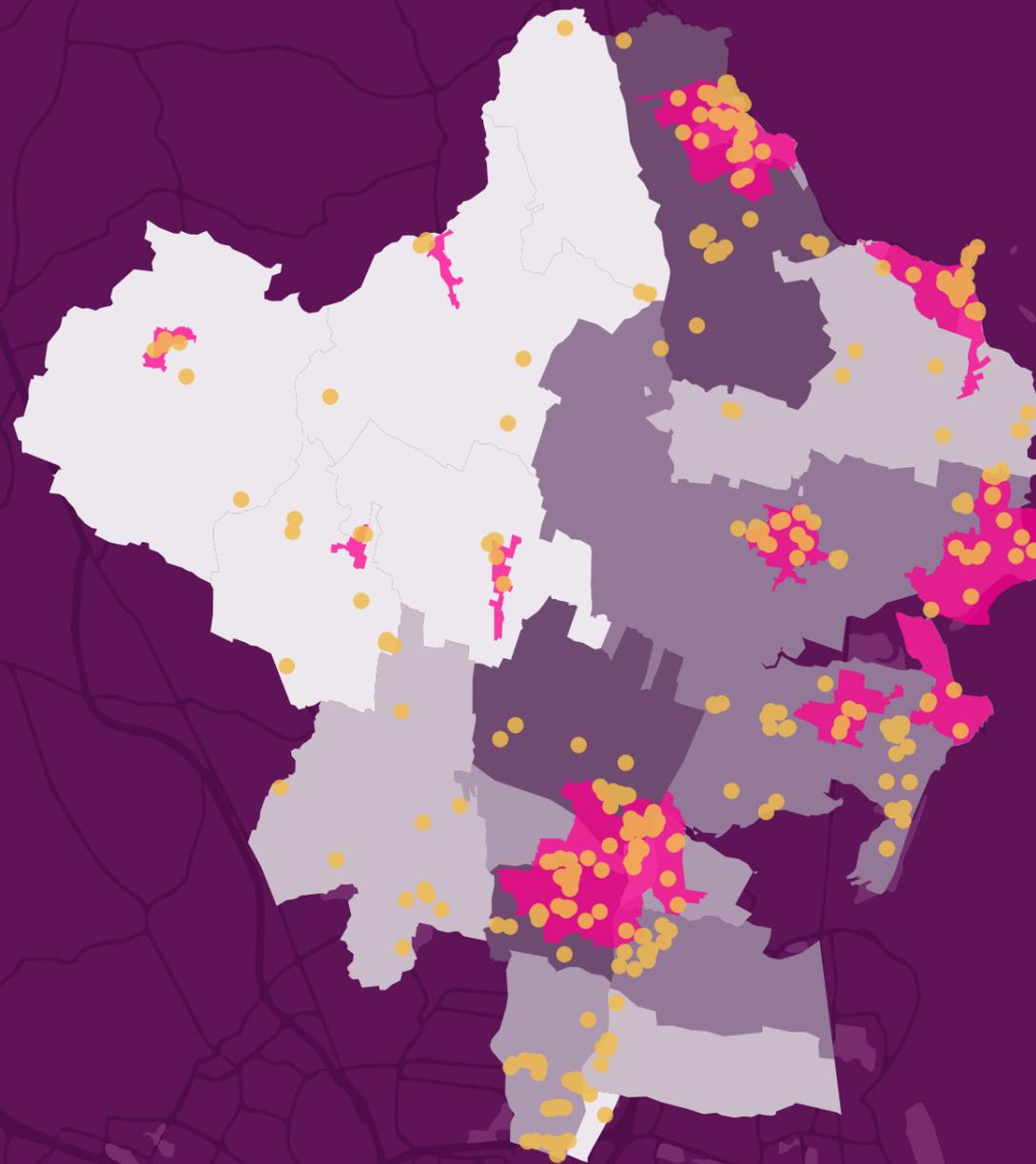
% Change  
**32.2%**

**Rush-Lusk**

2006  
**27,340**

2016  
**34,674**

% Change  
**26.8%**



## The Study Area

**A review of census data shows that the population in the study area increased between 2006 and 2016 from 104,625 to 135,947 people (29.9% growth).**

This is representative of the significant changes in population that Fingal has experienced over the last 10 years and it is recognised that there has been significant population growth across these settlements in the preceding decades. A review of the five largest settlements in the study area (i.e. Swords, Balbriggan, Skerries, Rush, Lusk and Donabate - Portrane), confirms that areas of newer residential development accounted for most of this population growth during 2006 to 2016.

The 2016 census data indicates that the study area generally displays a similar demographic profile to the national average, with some exceptions. Specifically, Fingal has a younger population as demonstrated by the average age in the study area (33.2 years compared to a national average of 36.8 years) and Balbriggan was identified as the youngest town in the country (with an average age of 30.8 years). A significant proportion of the resident population are aged between 20-44 years (52,748 people or 39%), compared to the state average of 35.3%. Further, 25.1% of the population are under 14 years (Almost 4% more than the national average) and 53.5% of the households have children (compared to the national average of 45.7%). With regards to the older population, 8% of the study area are at least 65 years of age which is much lower than the national average (13.4%). However, this varies across the study area when considering each individual LEA. Only 13.9% of households are retired or empty nests (in comparison to a national average of 20%)

The overall age profile of the study area closely mirrors the national average as shown by the population pyramid in Figure 2.1. However, it is clear that growth has occurred within the 30-49 year of age cohorts as compared to the national average. This in turn has highlighted growth within the 0-14 year of age cohort compared to the national average.

The socio-economic profile in the study area is generally good in comparison to the national average. Labour force participation is high as 61.3% of the population were at work (almost 8% more than the average) and unemployment in the study area was 1.3% less than the national average (at 6.6%). Educational attainment is also relatively high with 30.2% of the population having third level education including pockets of particularly high density in Swords, Skerries and Donabate. 37.1% of those travelling to work, school or college use green transport irrespective of commute times being slightly longer than the national average. Whilst car ownership is high (10.8% don't own a car), car use for travel to work, school or college is 5% less than the national average (at 53% within the study area). This highlights the opportunity to promote active transport (i.e. walking or cycling) for commuting particularly within settlements.

Diversity and the quality of health varies within the study area. The disability rate (11.2%) was comparable to the national average (13.5%) with pockets of high density around facilities in Portrane, Balrothery and St Margaret's. The proportion of those in good health (88.4%) was slightly higher than the national average (87%) and this was particularly evident on the outskirts of the settlements. This may be reflective of the relatively young population within the study area, or alternatively the relatively high diversity within the population. 21% of the population were born outside of Ireland and over 25% of the population do not class themselves as 'White Irish' ethnicity.

Figure 2.1: Population pyramid for the 3 LEA's and national levels which make up the study area. (Source: CSO)

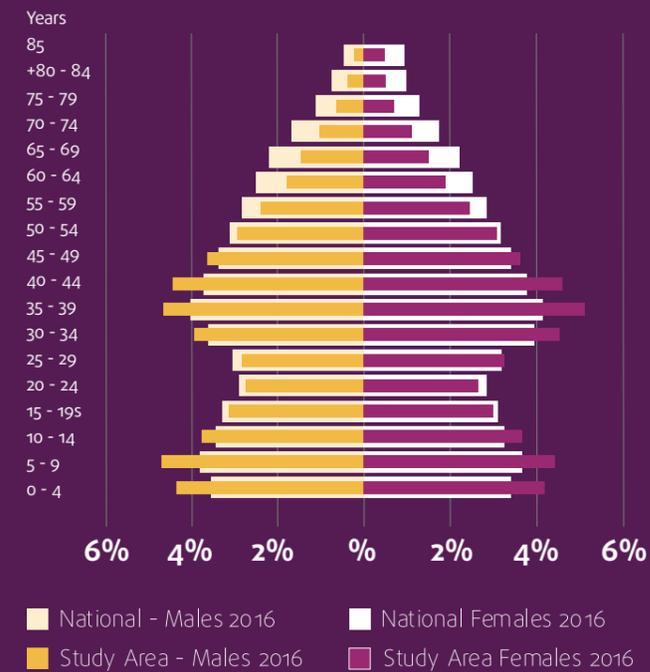


Figure 2.2: Principal economic status within the study area

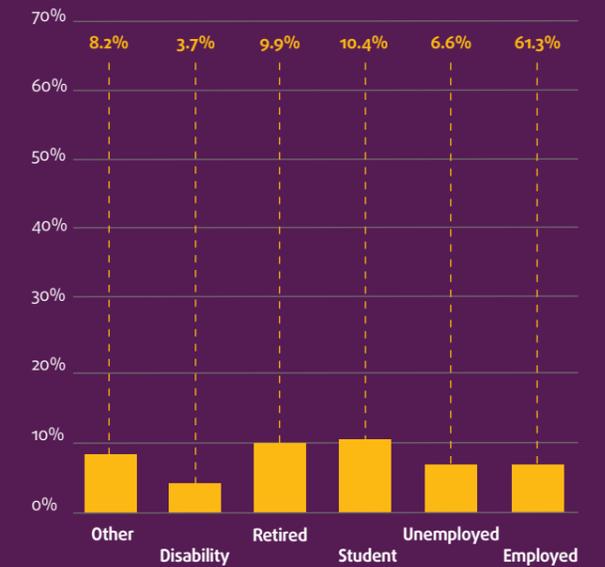
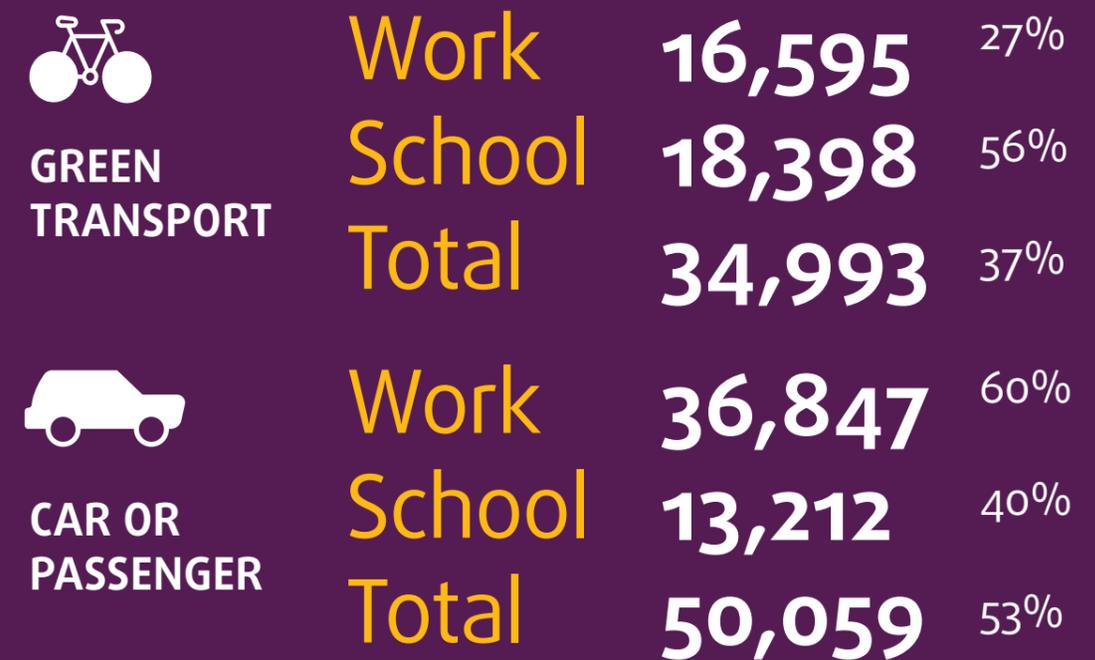


Figure 2.3: Transport modes to work, college and school in the study area



## Profile within the Local Electoral Areas (LEAs)

### Balbriggan LEA:

- Balbriggan LEA is the second most populated area within the study area, with a total population of 36,570 people.
- 0-14 year olds make up 27.6% of the total population of the Balbriggan LEA (i.e. 10,096 people) as illustrated in the population pyramid.
- The pyramid also highlights a large proportion of the population currently aged between 15-64 years (63.9%, i.e. 23,372 people).
- 54.9% of the total population were employed in 2016, with the unemployed rate coming in at 8.8%.
- The proportion over 65 years accounts for 8.5% of the population (i.e. 3,102 people). This figure does not reflect the actual retirement rate within the study area which is currently higher at 10.8%.

### Lusk-Rush LEA:

- Lusk-Rush LEA has the smallest population of the study area, with a total population of 34,674 people.
- The area is located between Balbriggan and Swords, and facilities therein may be used by residents of any of the LEAs.
- Similarly to the Balbriggan LEA, the 0-14 year olds represent 26.4% of the overall population (i.e. 9,158 people), whilst the 15-64-year-old age bracket currently accounts for 64.9% of the overall population (i.e. 22,513 people).
- 8.7% of the total population are currently aged above 65 years, with 10.8% of the overall population retired which is consistent with the study area.

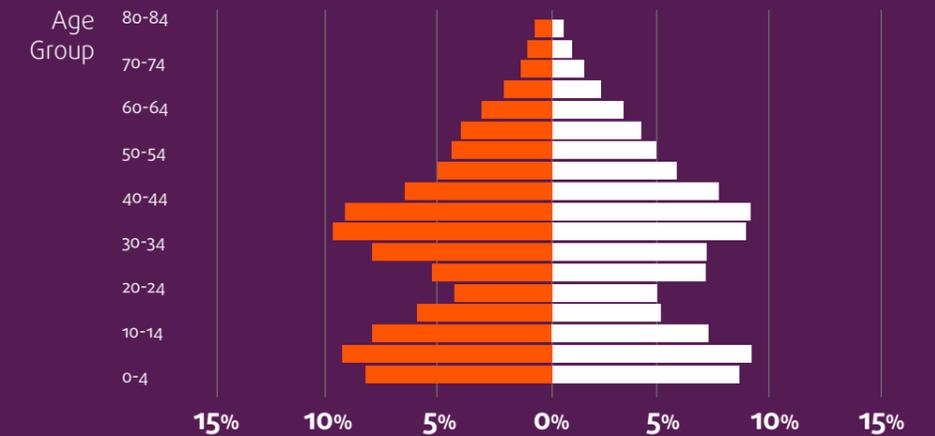
### Swords LEA:

- The Swords LEA has the largest population of the study area, with a total population of 64,703 people.
- Though the young age population of the study area is still high accounting for 23.1% of the total population, this is much lower than the Balbriggan and Lusk-Rush LEAs (14,924 people).
- The 15-64-year-old age bracket currently accounts for 69.4% of the overall population (i.e. 44,895 people), which is a much higher proportion than the other LEAs in the study area.
- The population above 65 years is also very low, accounting for just 7.5% of the population (i.e. 4,884 people). The retirement rate is currently 9% of the total population which is lower than the other two LEAs.

## Balbriggan Population Pyramid

### Legend

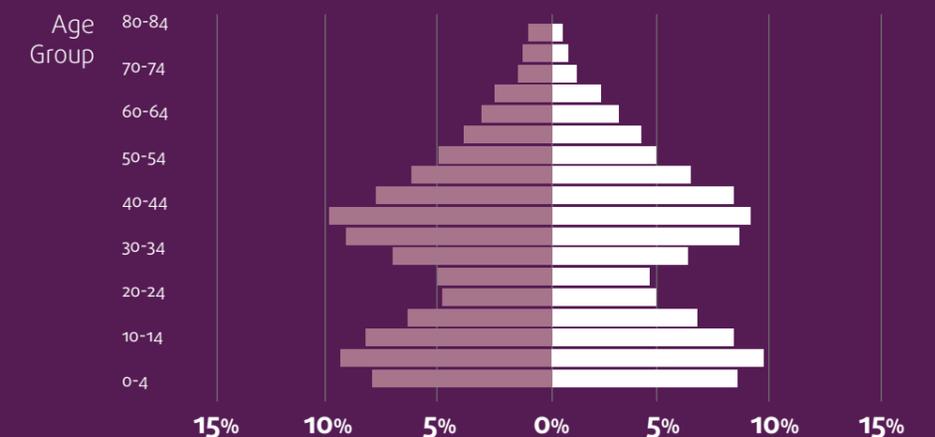
- Female %
- Male %



## Lusk-Rush Population Pyramid

### Legend

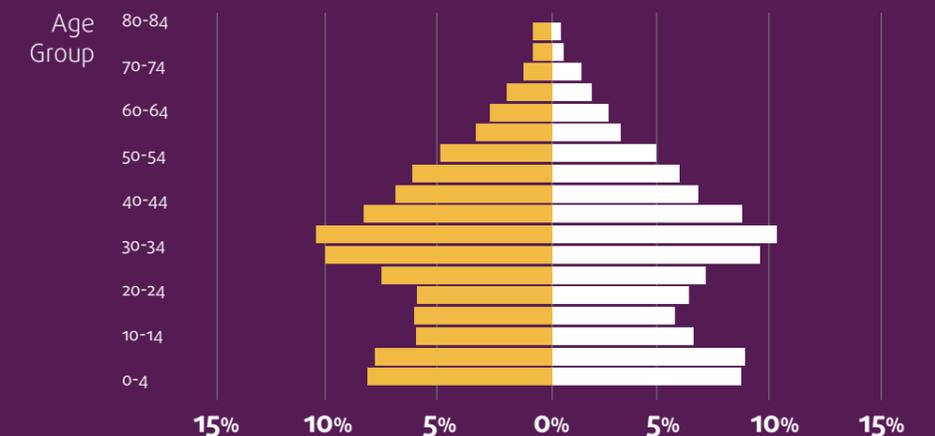
- Female %
- Male %



## Swords Population Pyramid

### Legend

- Female %
- Male %



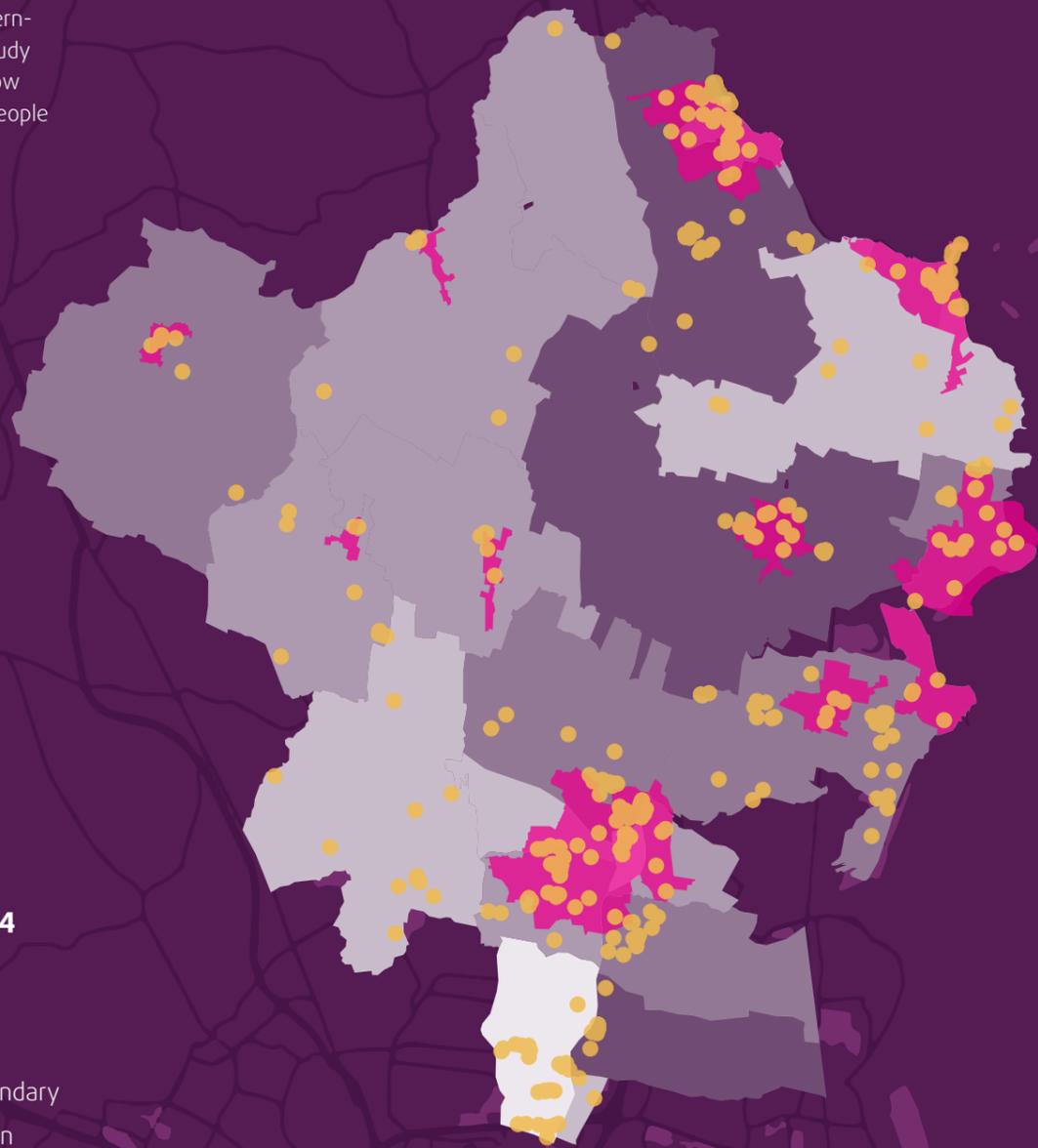
The area adjacent to the M1 corridor has the highest percentage of young people in the study area

Despite the high quantum of facilities, the southern-most portion of the study area has a relatively low proportion of young people in the population.

**Percentage of people from 0-14**

**Legend**

- Sports Facilities
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division
- 14.4%-17.0%
- 17.1%-21.0%
- 21.0%-24.8%
- 24.9%-27.9%
- 28.0%-32.7%



The settlements of Skerries, Balbriggan and Swords have a relatively high proportion of older people.

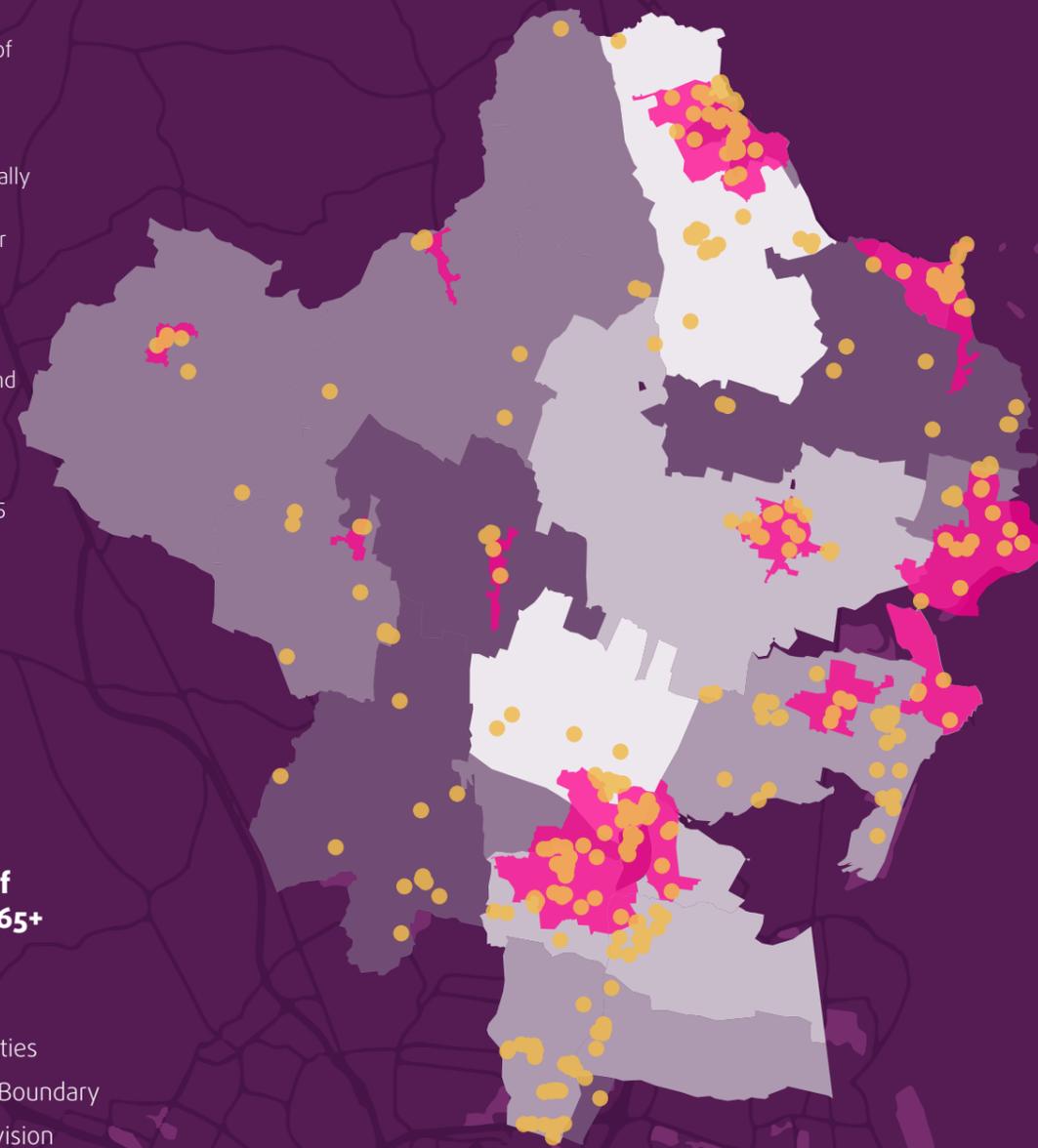
The newer areas of settlements (e.g. north and south Swords and west Balbriggan) generally have a lower proportion of older people.

The rural areas, particularly to the west of Swords and Skerries, also has a relatively high proportion of the population over 65 years.

**Percentage of people from 65+**

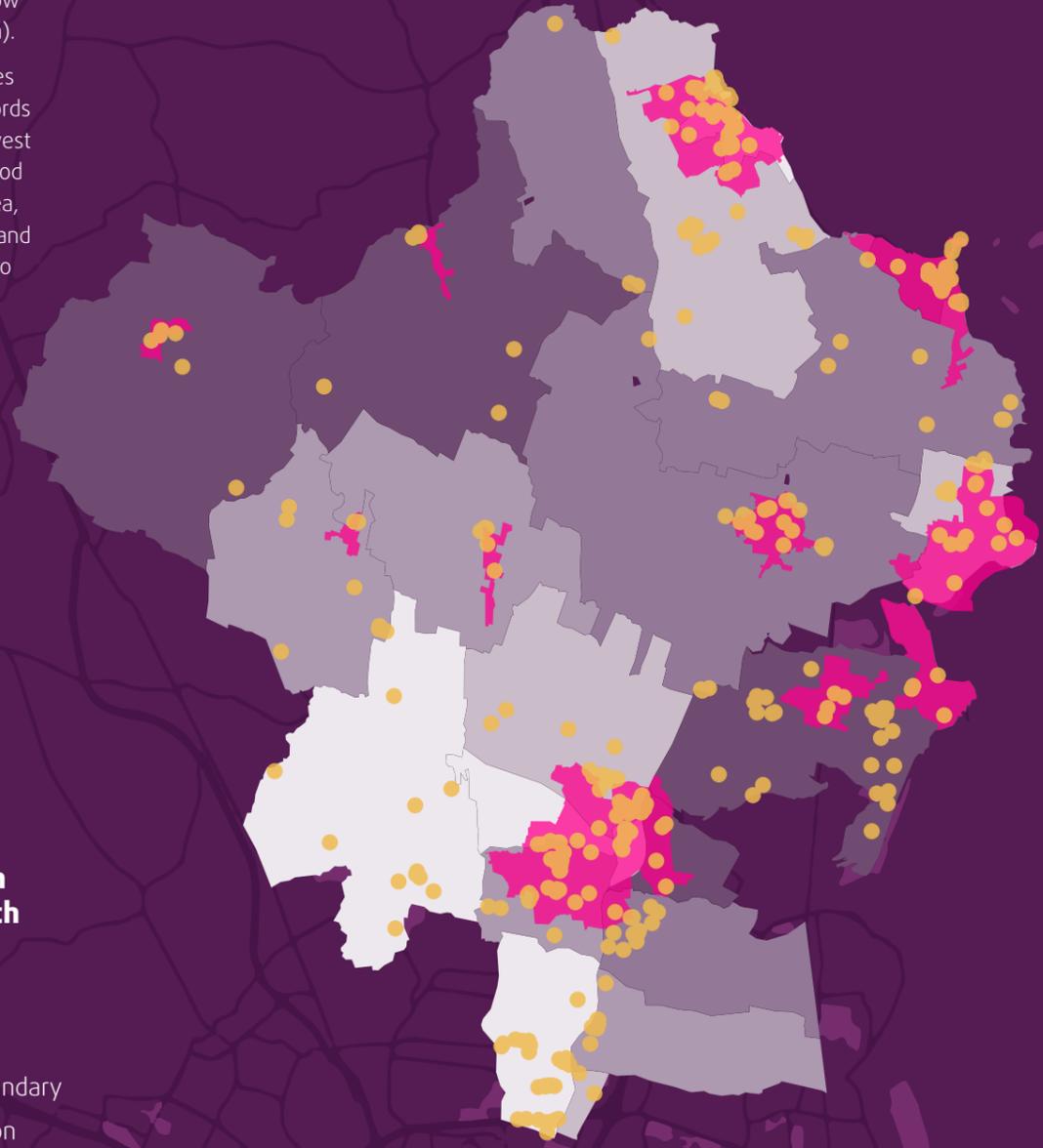
**Legend**

- Sports Facilities
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division
- 3.9%-5.1%
- 5.2%-7.2%
- 7.3%-9.6%
- 9.7%-12.4%
- 12.5%-17.4%



Rural areas to the north west, have the highest percentage of people with very good health, while each town centre record a lower proportion (below 60% of the population).

The major town centres of Balbriggan and Swords currently have the lowest percentage of very good health in the study area, however Kilsallaghan and the Airport EDs are also relatively low.



**Percentage with Very Good Health**

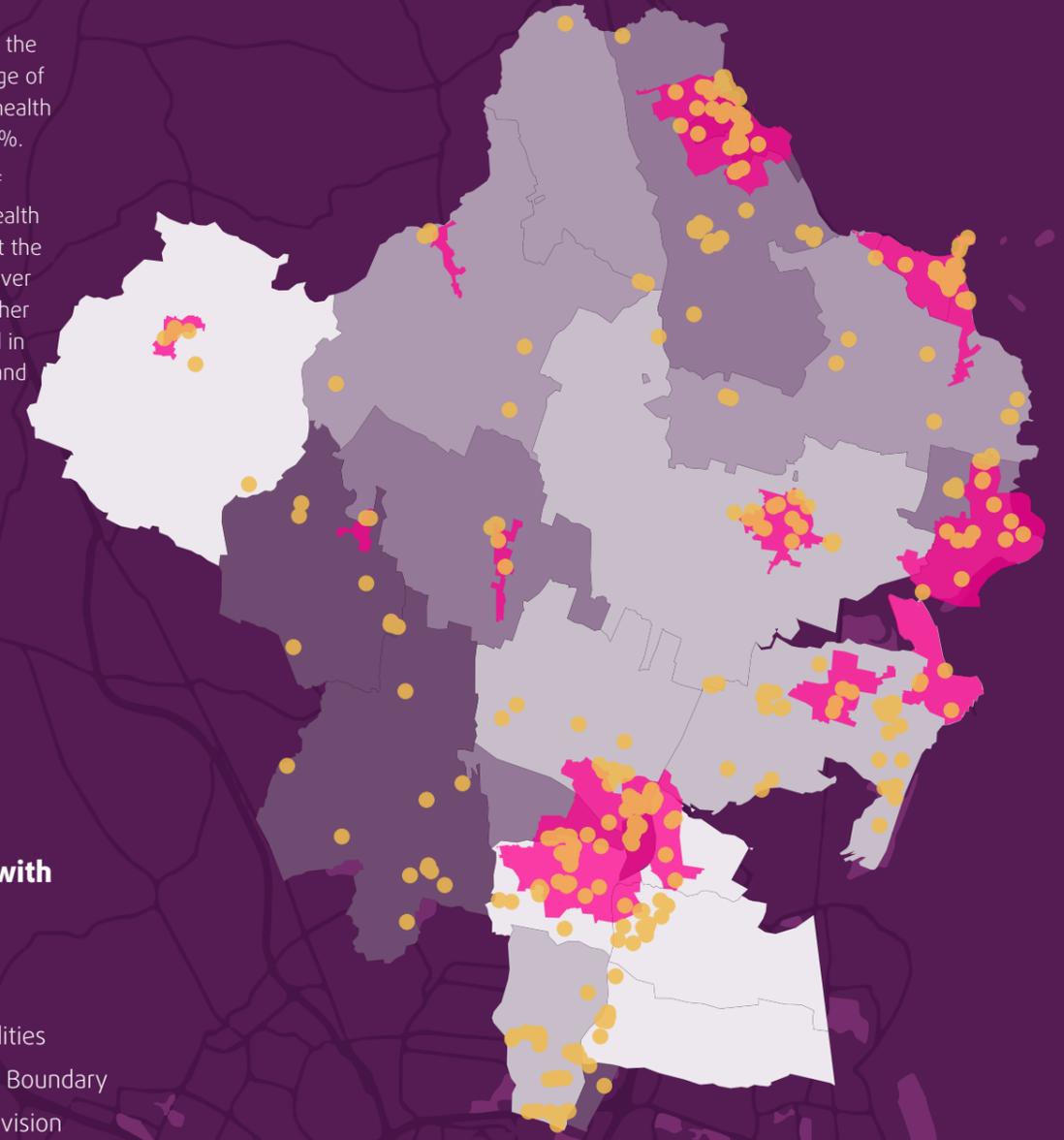
**Legend**

- Sports Facilities
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division
- 51.6%-59.5%
- 59.6%-62.4%
- 62.5%-64.3%
- 64.4%-64.9%
- 65.0%-67.7%

Generally this contrasts well against the proportions identifying as having very good health.

Areas within the Swords LEA have the highest percentage of people with fair health between 7.8-10.1%.

The proportion of those with fair health varies throughout the study area, however generally it is higher town centres and in the Kilsallaghan and Turnapin EDs.



**Percentage with Fair Health**

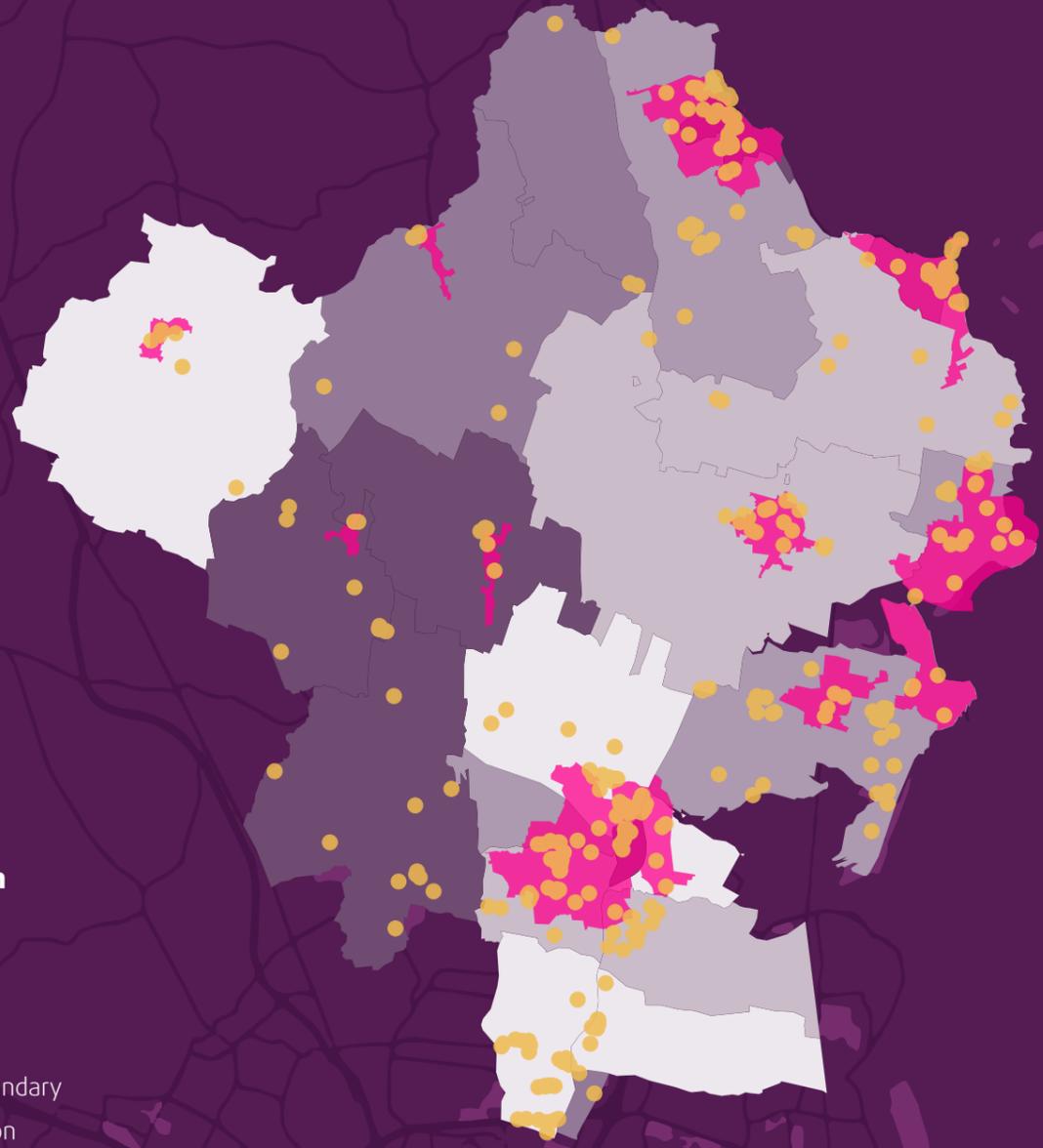
**Legend**

- Sports Facilities
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division
- 4.3%-5.3%
- 5.4%-6.2%
- 6.3%-6.5%
- 6.6%-7.7%
- 7.8%-10.2%

11.2% of the total population in the study area have a disability, with relatively high proportions evident in Turnapin, Swords Village, Kilsallaghan, Balscadden and Balbriggan Urban EDs.

Kilsallaghan ED has a disability rate of 13.7-18.6%, which is high relative to other EDs and in comparison to the national average (13.5%).

Equitable access to all facilities should be made for people with any disabilities.



**Percentage with Disability**

**Legend**

- Sports Facilities
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division
- 8.1%-9.4%
- 9.5%-11.5%
- 11.6%-12.5%
- 12.6%-13.6%
- 13.7%-18.6%



# FACILITIES AUDIT SECTION 3

A total of 323 facilities were identified within the study area as part of this audit.



## Summary

**A total of 323 facilities were identified within the study area as part of this audit.**

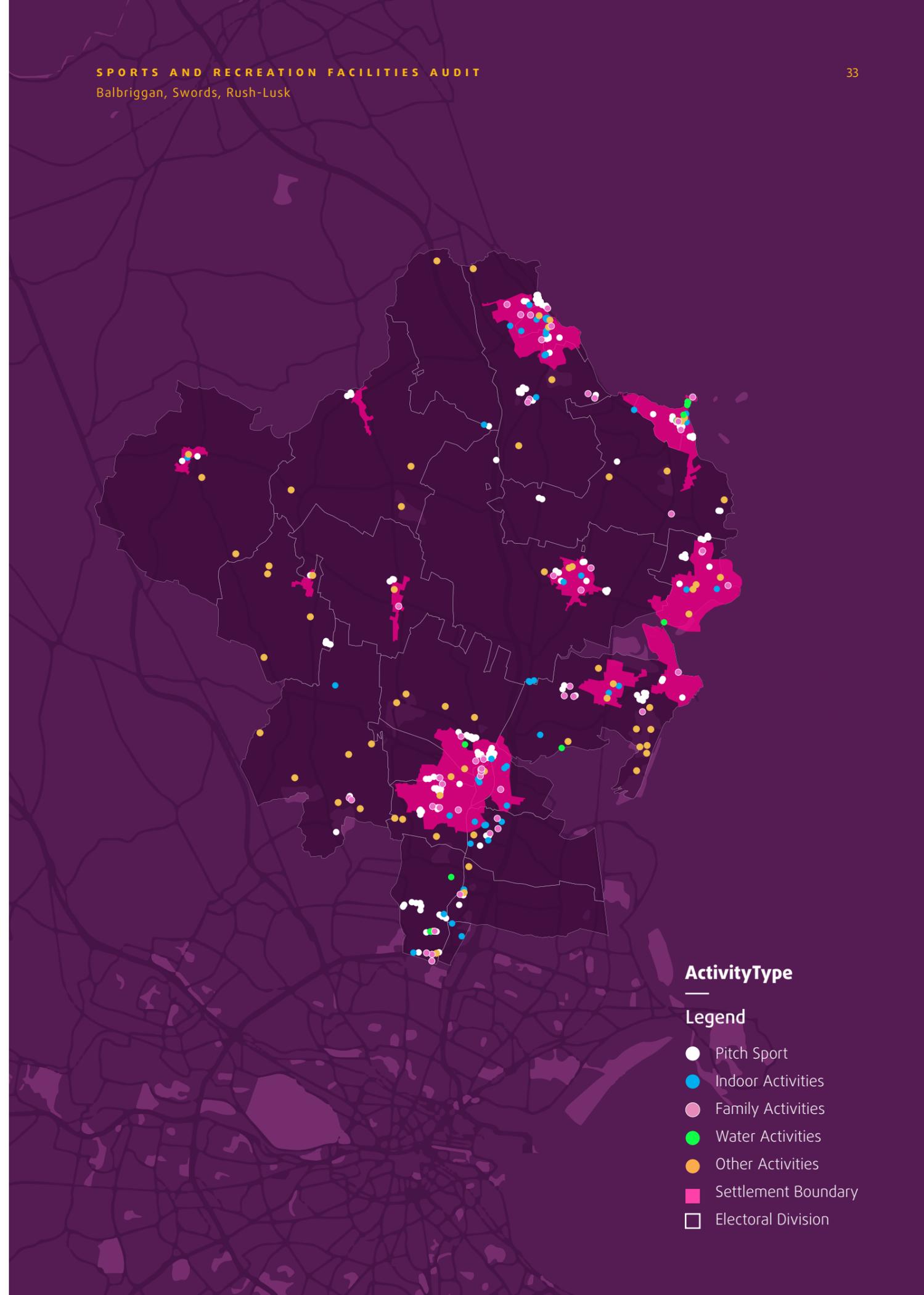
The 323 facilities includes a number of sports centres, multi-sports facilities, playing pitches, clubs, playgrounds, swimming pools, gyms, sailing and water activities, golf clubs, equestrian centres, shooting clubs as well as a concentration of parks and small open spaces in addition to publicly accessible playgrounds and sports pitches. A detailed breakdown of all identified facilities can be found below and overleaf.

The category of facilities across each LEA in the study area is provided below and illustrated in the supporting map overleaf. The distribution of facilities per activity category is not equal between LEAs, and even between settlements. These gaps in provision are explored further in Chapter 4 with the future needs considered in Chapter 5.

It should be noted that ALSAA and Sports Link are two distinct sport and leisure centres within the study area as they provide a cluster of individual indoor and outdoor facilities that support a range of different sports activities within their complex. Both of these sports centres are within Swords LEA and they both have membership schemes, however some individual facilities within the ALSAA and Sports Link complexes can also be accessed (i.e. rented) by individuals and/or organisations that do not have membership for a one off fee. There are also various greenways, cycle paths, walking and hiking trails and beaches within the study area which have not been included within the scope of the audit as set out in Section 1.5.

Table 4.2: List of Sports Categories and the number provided within each LEA and their total.

Sports Categories	Balbriggan LEA	Rush-Lusk LEA	Swords LEA	Total
Pitch Sport	38	47	56	141
Indoor Activity	19	12	24	55
Family Activities	15	12	26	53
Water Activities	4	2	3	9
Other Activities	12	31	22	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>323</b>



**ActivityType**

**Legend**

- Pitch Sport
- Indoor Activities
- Family Activities
- Water Activities
- Other Activities
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division

The combination of desktop assessment and on-site validation identified a variety of facilities within the LEAs. In order to undertake the gap and needs analysis of these facilities, further subdivision into categories based on activity/facility type was undertaken. Table 4.2 outlines the five broader categories that will be used for the thematic assessment of facilities whilst the table below identifies the individual facilities based on the category of sports/activity type. These classifications allow for specific gaps and needs to be identified based on the distribution on facilities across the LEA.

**Pitch Sports:** contains outdoor facilities for pitch sports, ranging from GAA clubs, and their associated grounds, to outdoor free access playing pitches in public parks.

**Indoor Activity:** contains facilities ranging from private leisure centres, such as gyms, to specialised indoor facilities for boxing and martial arts. Community centres also feature in this category as they can facilitate a variety of activities, for all age groups.

**Family Activities:** contains outdoor facilities focusing on public facilities, while including private tennis club facilities, that can be utilised by a range of age groups, with specific child friendly facilities such as playgrounds and MUGAS.

**Water Activities:** contains both indoor and outdoor facilities for water orientated activities, including some swimming pools within private leisure facilities, but there could be additional swimming facilities identified as 'private leisure facilities' in the "indoor activity" category.

**Other Activities:** contains the widest variety of activities and therefore facility types. These include both indoor and outdoor facilities, ranging from golf clubs and equestrian centres to scout clubs and libraries.

Detailed breakdown of Categories and quantity within each LEA.

Category	Balbriggan LEA	Rush-Lusk LEA	Swords LEA	Grand Total
<b>Pitch Sport</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>141</b>
All Weather Pitch	3	4	4	11
Cricket Club*	3	3	†	6
Football Club*	4	6	4	14
GAA Club*	2	11	14	27
Outdoor Pitch	20	23	34	77
Rugby Club*	6		1	7
<b>Indoor Activity</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>55</b>
Boxing Club	1			1
Community Centre	4	2	3	9
Indoor Facility	3		1	4
Martial Arts		1	2	3
Private Leisure Facility	11	9	18	38
<b>Family Activity</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>53</b>
Heritage Site Which Caters For Sport	1	1	1	3
Multi-Use Games Areas	1	1	3	5
Outdoor Basketball Courts	1			1
Outdoor Facility		1	1	2
Outdoor Gym Equipment	2	2	3	7
Outdoor Tennis Courts	3	2	6	11
Play Area	5	5	11	21
Skate Park	2		1	3

\*Total includes identified pitches and clubhouses, for further information see Appendix 3.

†There is a Cricket club based in Swords but their facility is located in Newbridge Demesne which is in Rush-Lusk LEA.

Detailed breakdown of Categories and quantity within each LEA.

Category	Balbriggan LEA	Rush-Lusk LEA	Swords LEA	Grand Total
<b>Watersports</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>
Boating	2	1		3
Private Leisure Facility			3	3
Watersports	2	1		3
<b>Other</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>65</b>
Bowling Club			1	1
Bridge Club	1			1
Caravan Park		4		4
Equestrian	3	9	8	20
Golf Club	2	8	7	17
Gun Club			1	1
Hockey Club		1		1
Library	2	3	1	6
Other	1	2		3
Parish Centre		1		1
Racing	1			1
Running Track			2	2
Scouts	1	2	2	5
Shooting	1	1		2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>323</b>

## Key Findings on the Activity Type, Ownership, Access Type and Condition of Facilities

### Balbriggan LEA:

**Activity type:** Pitch sports have the highest current provision (38), followed by indoor (19), family (15) and other activities (12). There are four water activity facilities currently provided, all located in the settlement of Skerries.

**Ownership:** At present, non-commercial facilities dominate. 69 facilities are non-commercial whilst 19 are commercial.

**Access:** 56 facilities require a membership fee, six require an entry fee, while the remaining 22 are free to enter/use.

**Condition:** 63 facilities are well maintained, 3 require enhancement whilst 22 could not be determined as part of this audit (due to access).

### Rush-Lusk LEA:

**Activity type:** Pitch sports have the highest current provision (47), followed by other activities (31). Indoor activities (12) and family activities (12) come after with relatively low numbers in comparison. Water activity facilities is the lowest with 2 facilities despite the extensive coastline.

**Ownership:** At present, non-commercial facilities dominate. 79 of the total facilities are non-commercial whilst 25 are commercial.

**Access:** 66 facilities require a membership fee, 14 require an entry fee while the remaining 18 are free to enter/use.

**Condition:** 77 facilities are well maintained, 2 require enhancement whilst 25 could not be determined as part of this audit (due to access).

### Swords LEA:

**Activity type:** Pitch sports currently has the highest provision in this LEA (56 facilities), followed by family activities (26), indoor activities (24) and other activities (23). At present there are three water activity facilities – all of which are indoor pools in private leisure facilities.

**Ownership:** At present, non-commercial facilities dominate. 107 of the total facilities are non-commercial whilst 25 are commercial.

**Access:** 75 facilities require a membership fee, 11 require an entry fee, while the remaining 29 are free to enter.

**Condition:** 84 facilities are well maintained, 4 require enhancement whilst 44 could not be determined as part of this audit (due to access).

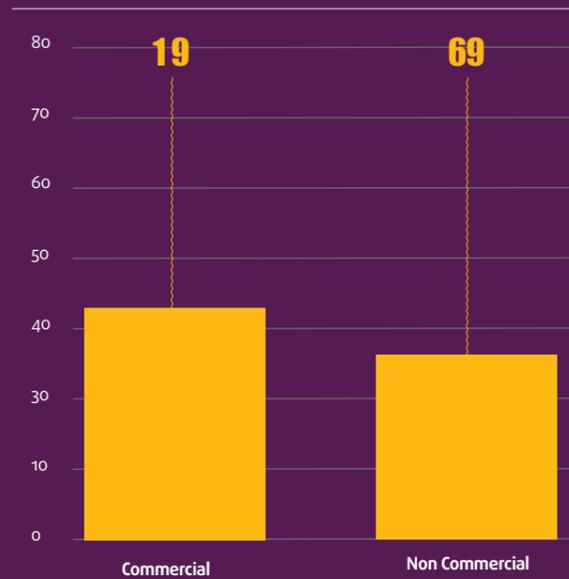
# BALBRIGGAN LEA

## BALBRIGGAN LEA

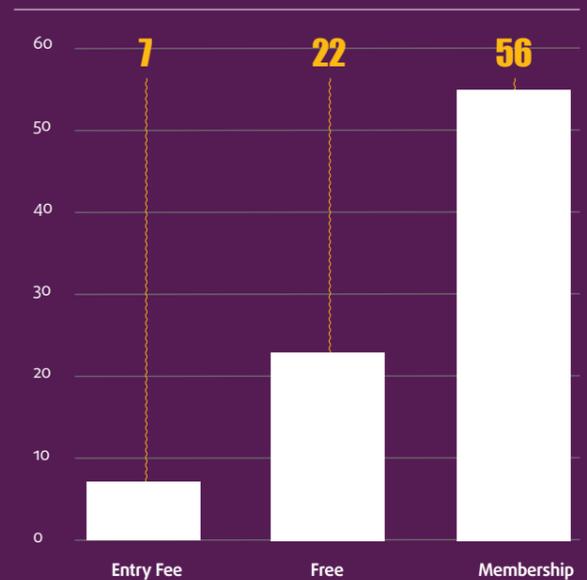
ACTIVITY TYPE



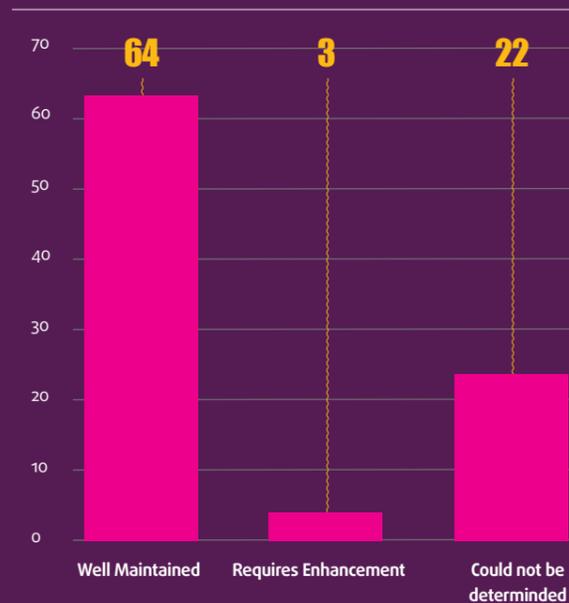
OWNERSHIP



ACCESS



CONDITION



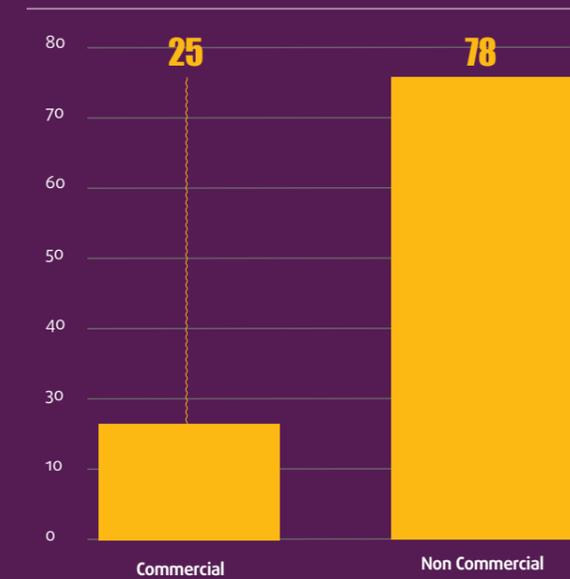
# RUSH-LUSK LEA

## RUSH-LUSK LEA

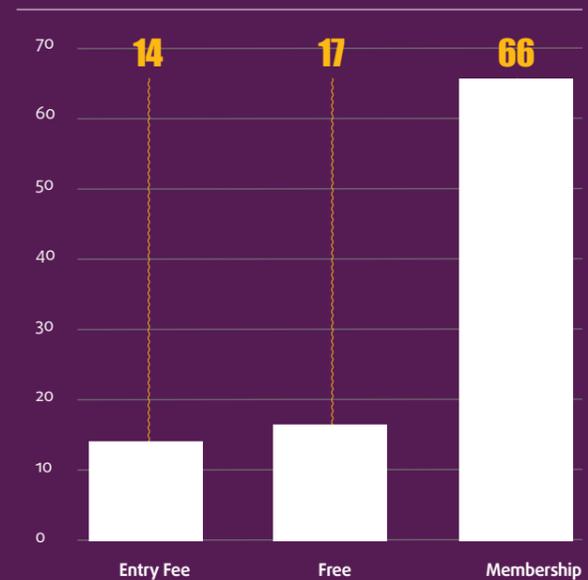
ACTIVITY TYPE



OWNERSHIP



ACCESS



CONDITION



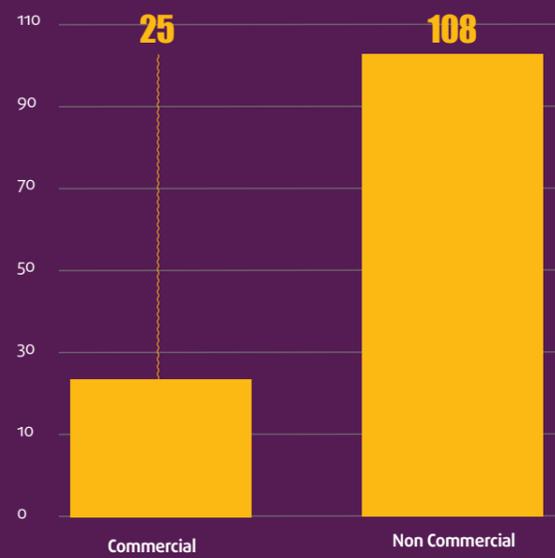
# SWORDS LEA

## SWORDS LEA

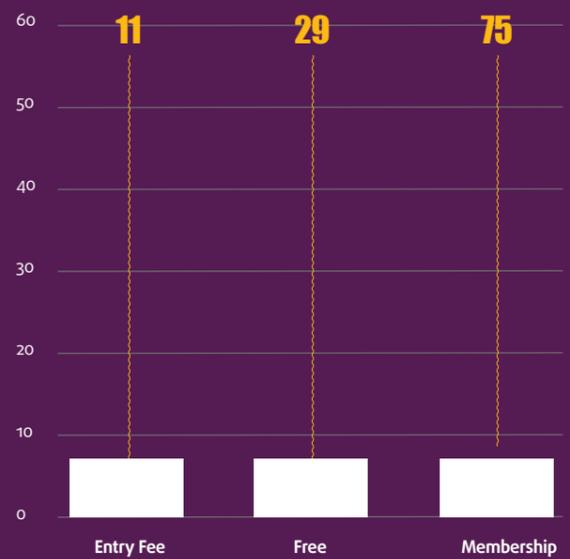
### ACTIVITY TYPE



### OWNERSHIP



### ACCESS



### CONDITION



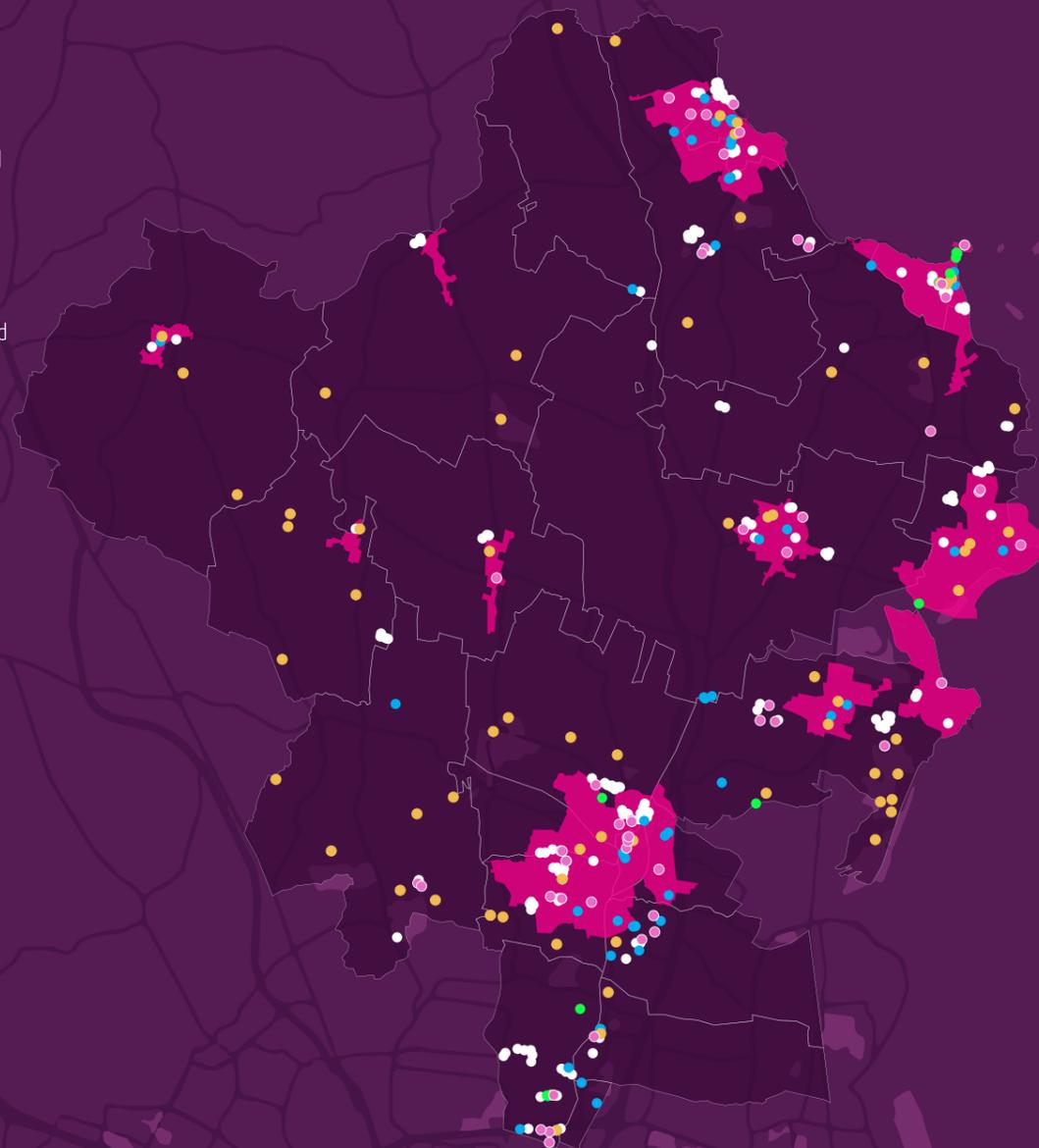


Pitch sport facilities have the highest provision across each LEA.

Water activity facilities have the lowest provision across each LEA.

The western section of the study area has low provision of indoor facilities when compared to the east.

The facilities in western section of Swords and Rush-Lusk LEAs are predominantly associated with "other activities".



**Activity Type**

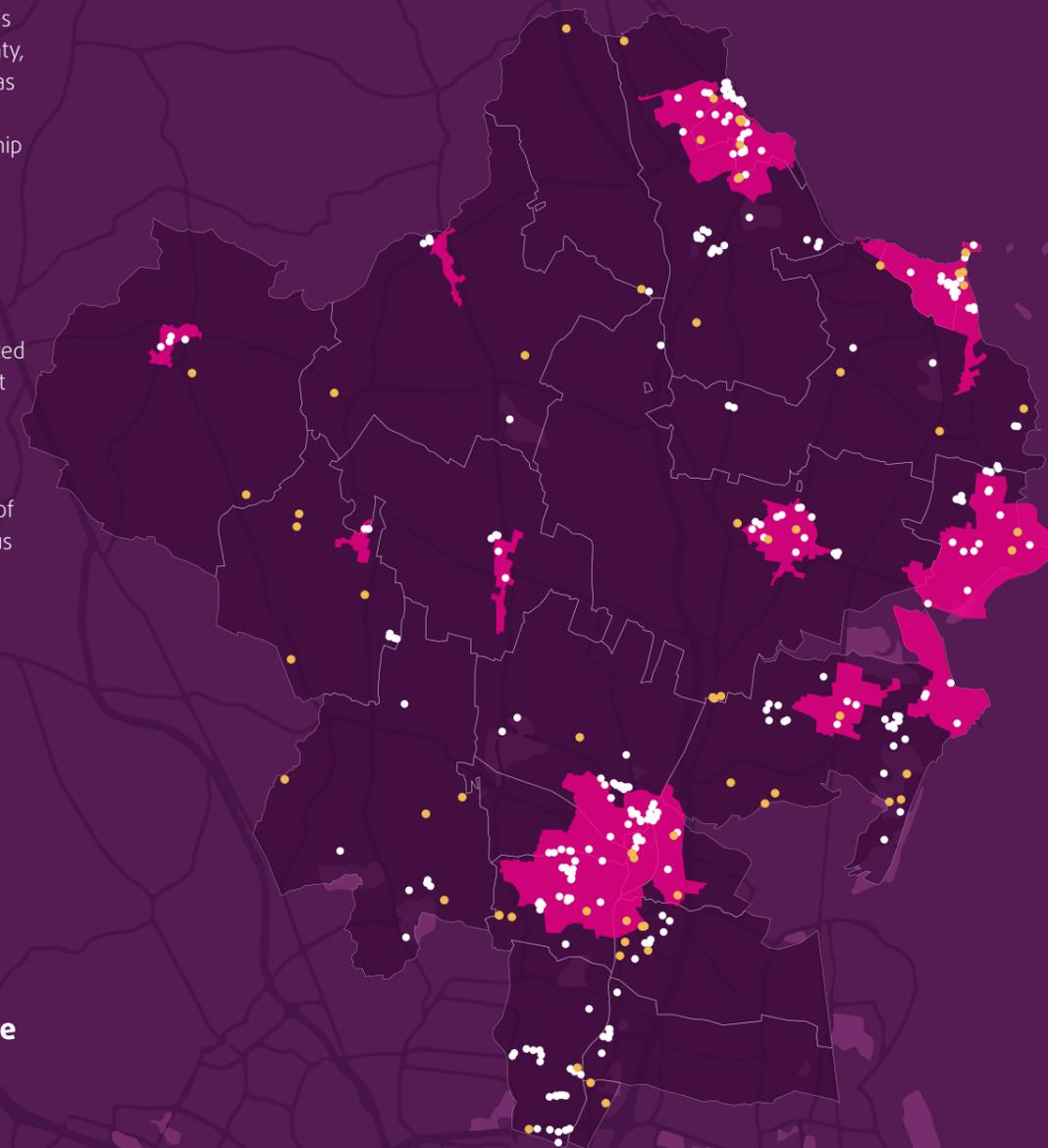
**Legend**

- Pitch Sport
- Indoor Activities
- Family Activities
- Water Activities
- Other Activities
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division

The commercial/non-commercial divide throughout the study area is dominated by commercial operations.

The ownership varies throughout the county, with many rural areas being dominated by commercial ownership at present.

Ownership was assessed online or during the site visit. In some cases, commercially operated facilities may be part of public facility or publicly accessible grounds. Therefore, this is an indication of the observable status of ownership at the time of the audit.

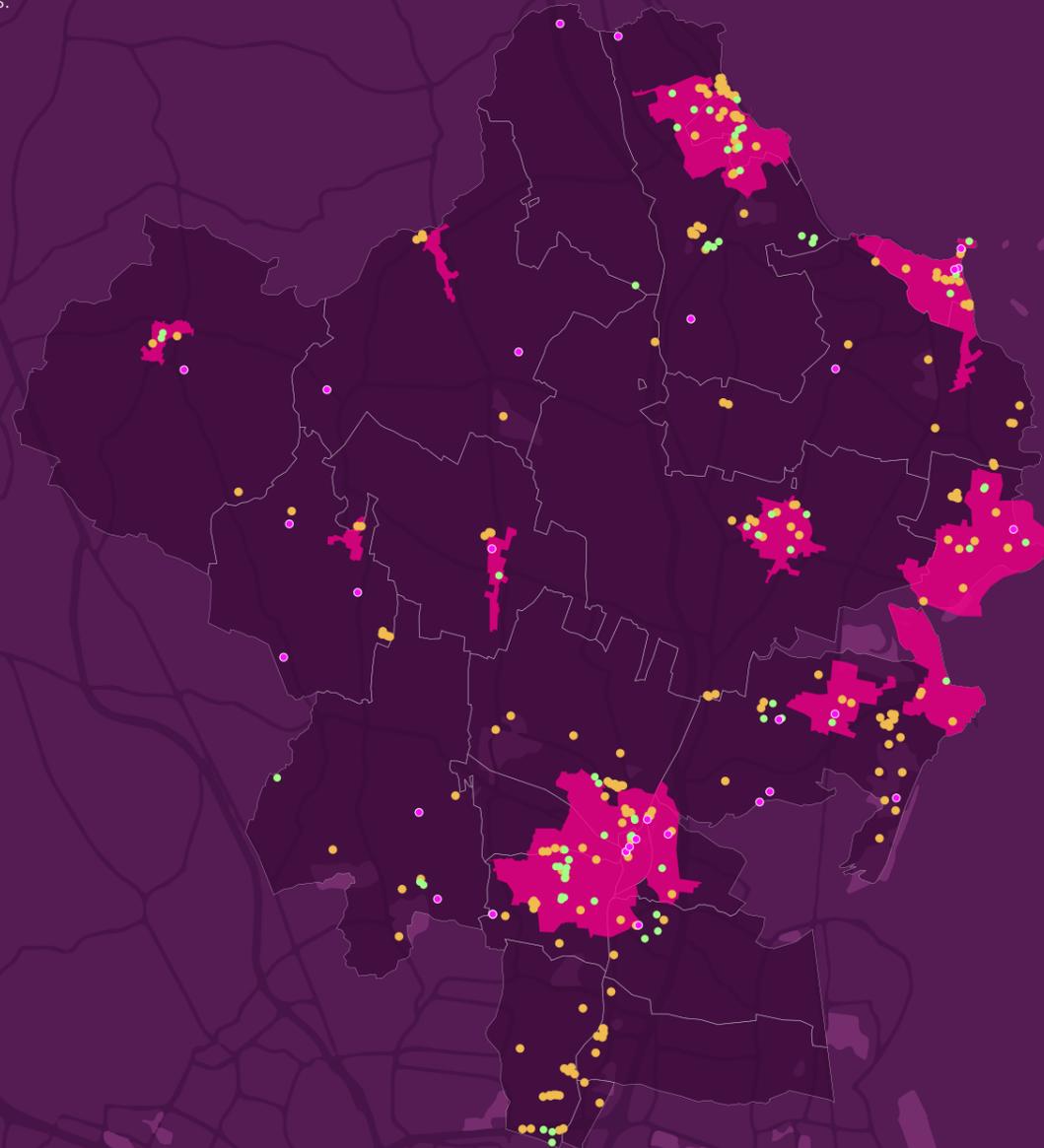


**Facility Ownership Type**

**Legend**

- Commercial
- Non Commercial
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division

Entry fees throughout are dominated by membership, with entry fee and free entry currently running the same number of facilities.



Facility Access

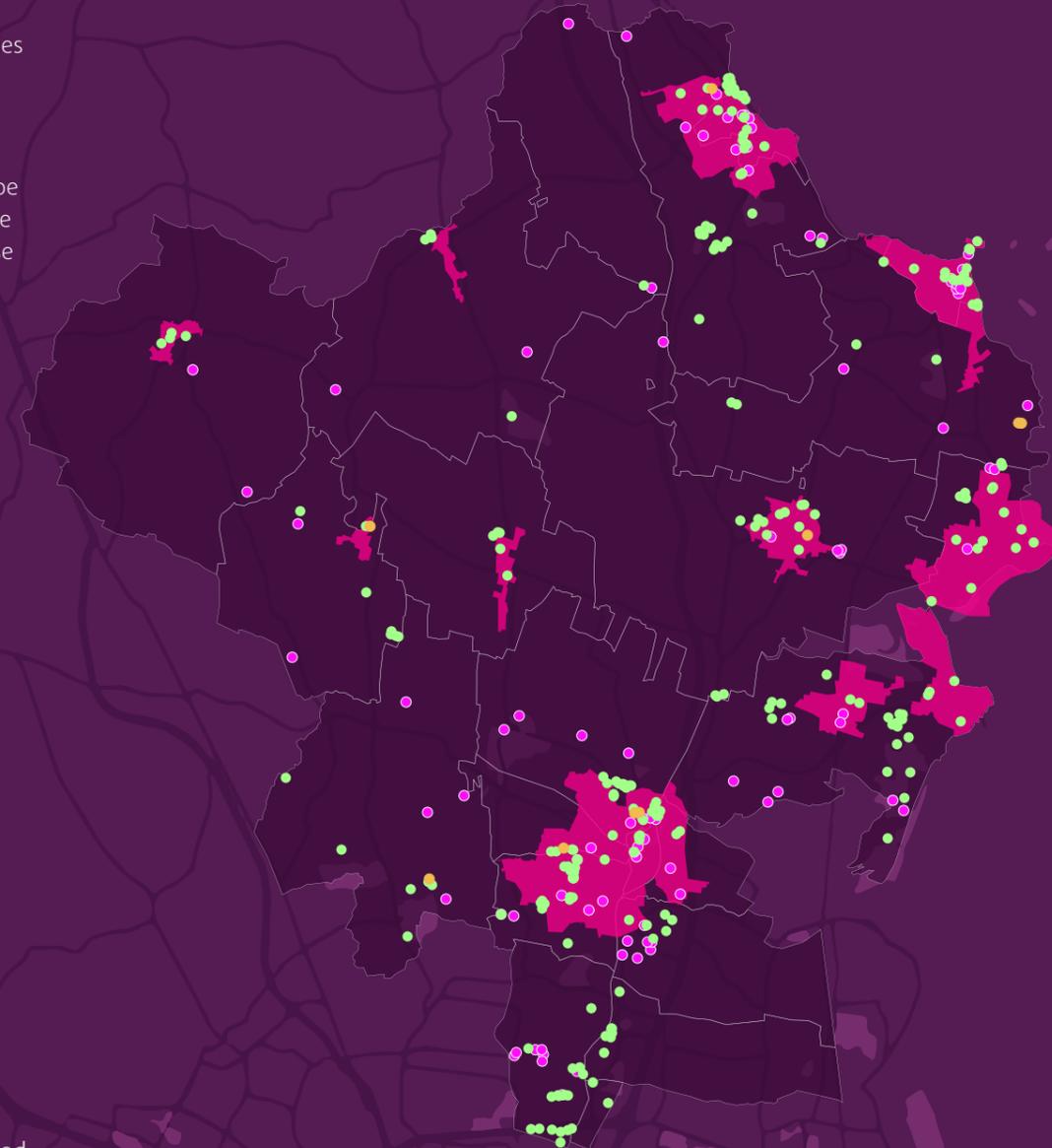
Legend

- Free
- Entry Fee
- Membership
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division

Throughout the LEAs at present, facilities are generally well maintained.

At present there are only a small percentage of facilities notably require enhancement.

In many cases, the condition could not be determined therefore an additional exercise should explore this further.



Facility Condition

Legend

- Well Maintained
- Requires Enhancement
- Could not be fully determined
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division



# GAP ANALYSIS

## SECTION 4



The Gap Analysis is an important aspect of this audit. As stated in the introduction, one of the key objectives of this study is to develop a gap and needs analysis for the study area, which will allow us to generate recommendations focusing on what is required in the study area in order to develop and maintain facilities.



This section describes the types of facilities available and highlights where specific gaps and needs have been identified throughout the study area. A 1km buffer has been allocated around each facility, as a means of informing a reasonable walking catchment area (based on an average walking time of 15 minutes from each facility). It should therefore be noted that facilities outside of the study area considered in this audit may therefore be accessed by those living in the study area.

The spatial distribution of facilities within the study area was assessed and illustrated in the facility density map overleaf. The map illustrates the concentration of facilities based on the overlapping 1km buffers with graduated colouration from light to dark illustrating increasing density of facilities. Light colouration, especially in highly populated areas indicates a gap in facility coverage.

As can be seen in the map overleaf, the highest concentration of facilities is within the settlement boundaries. The settlements of Balbriggan, Skerries and Swords have the highest density of facilities (between 24 to 57 facilities) whilst Donabate, Lusk, Rush and Portrane also are showing a strong presence of facilities. Generally rural areas have a lower density of facilities, particularly those rural locations to the west of the M1.

### Balbriggan:

From viewing the map there are a number of gaps located throughout the Balbriggan LEA, particularly within the centre and south-west of the LEA.

Balbriggan and Skerries are coastal settlements and would benefit from additional water-based facilities, additionally, at present there is no indoor swimming facilities. However, it should be noted that the draft Masterplan for Castlelands (in Balbriggan) that was published in May 2019, identified a potential new swimming pool within these lands which are located to the south-east of the settlement.

The quantum of pitch sports and other activities throughout the area is less than the other LEAs.

### Rush-Lusk:

There are a number of gaps in facility provision throughout the Rush-Lusk LEA, especially within the rural areas located towards the west and north of the LEA.

At present there is a relatively low provision in water activity facilities throughout, with the two water activities present (A sailing club in Rush and Blast Watersports to the south of Donabate adjacent to the Broadmeadow Estuary). There are no indoor swimming facilities in this LEA.

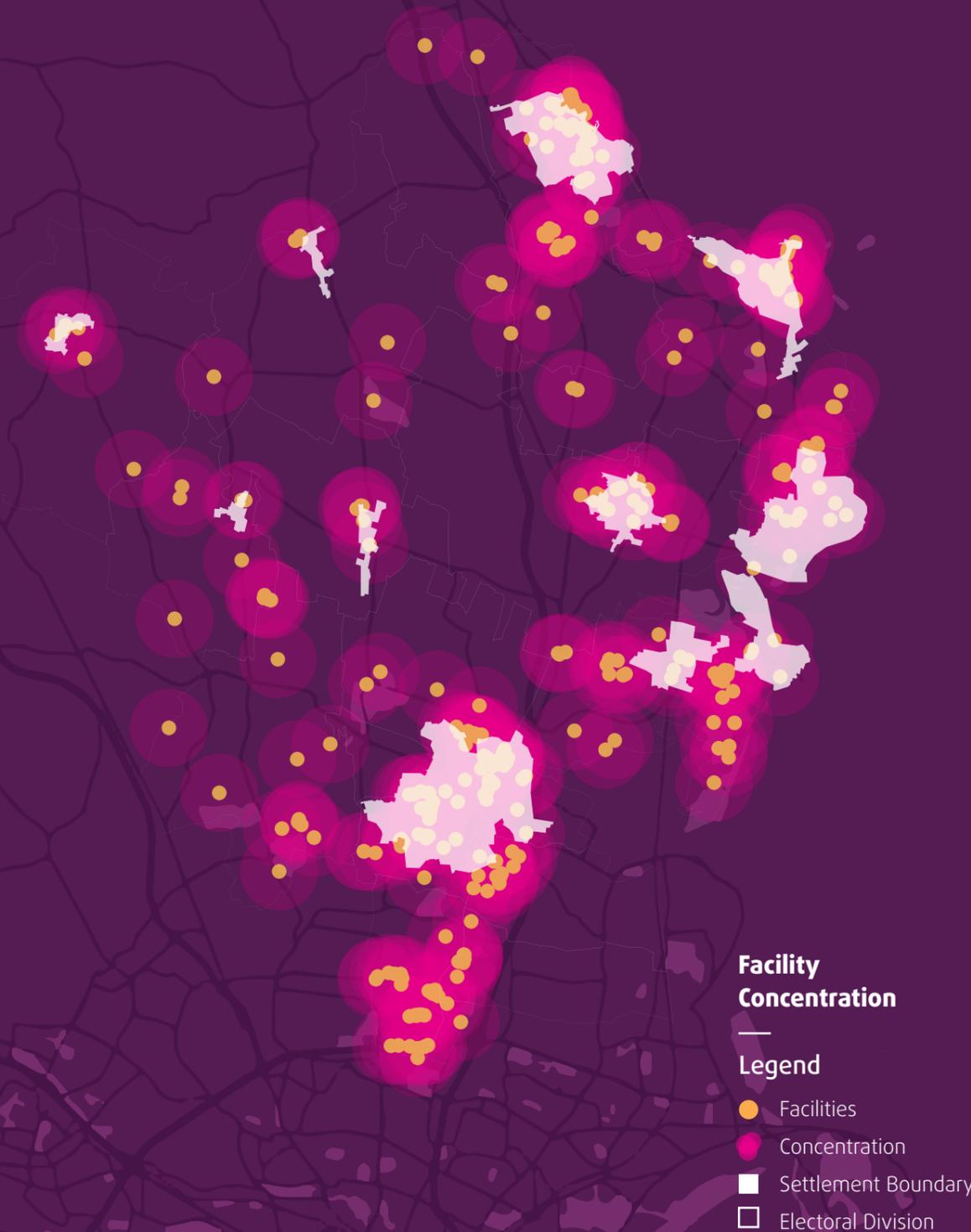
The quantum of indoor and family activities is lower than the other LEAs, with 12 and 13 facilities respectively. The majority of these facilities are distributed between Rush, Lusk, and Donabate settlements whilst Naul and Oldtown settlements have no provision at present.

### Swords:

Swords LEA has the highest quantum of pitch sports, indoor activities, family activities and other activities of all the LEAs. However, it is evident that there is a future needs requirement in the Swords LEA, most notably in rural areas located north and west of the LEA.

Given the limited coastline, water activity facilities in this LEA are in the form of three indoor swimming pools, all of which are located within private leisure facilities.

With the exception of one facility in Rolestown, all other indoor activity facilities are distributed between Swords, the airport environs and Santry, demonstrating a possible future need to the west and north of the LEA.



The following section describes the specific gaps and needs requirements highlighted within the major settlements in the study area.

**Balbriggan LEA :**

Balbriggan and Skerries are two major settlements located along the coast in north Fingal.

At present Skerries currently under performs in the provision of other activities within the study area. As well as this, the area may benefit in the area of family activities however it should be noted that Ardgillan Demense is located nearby (i.e. between Skerries and Balbriggan).

Swimming pool facilities may benefit this LEA. This may be provided in Balbriggan through the Castlelands Masterplan.

**Rush-Lusk LEA :**

Rush-Lusk at present offer a variety of different facilities throughout both towns.

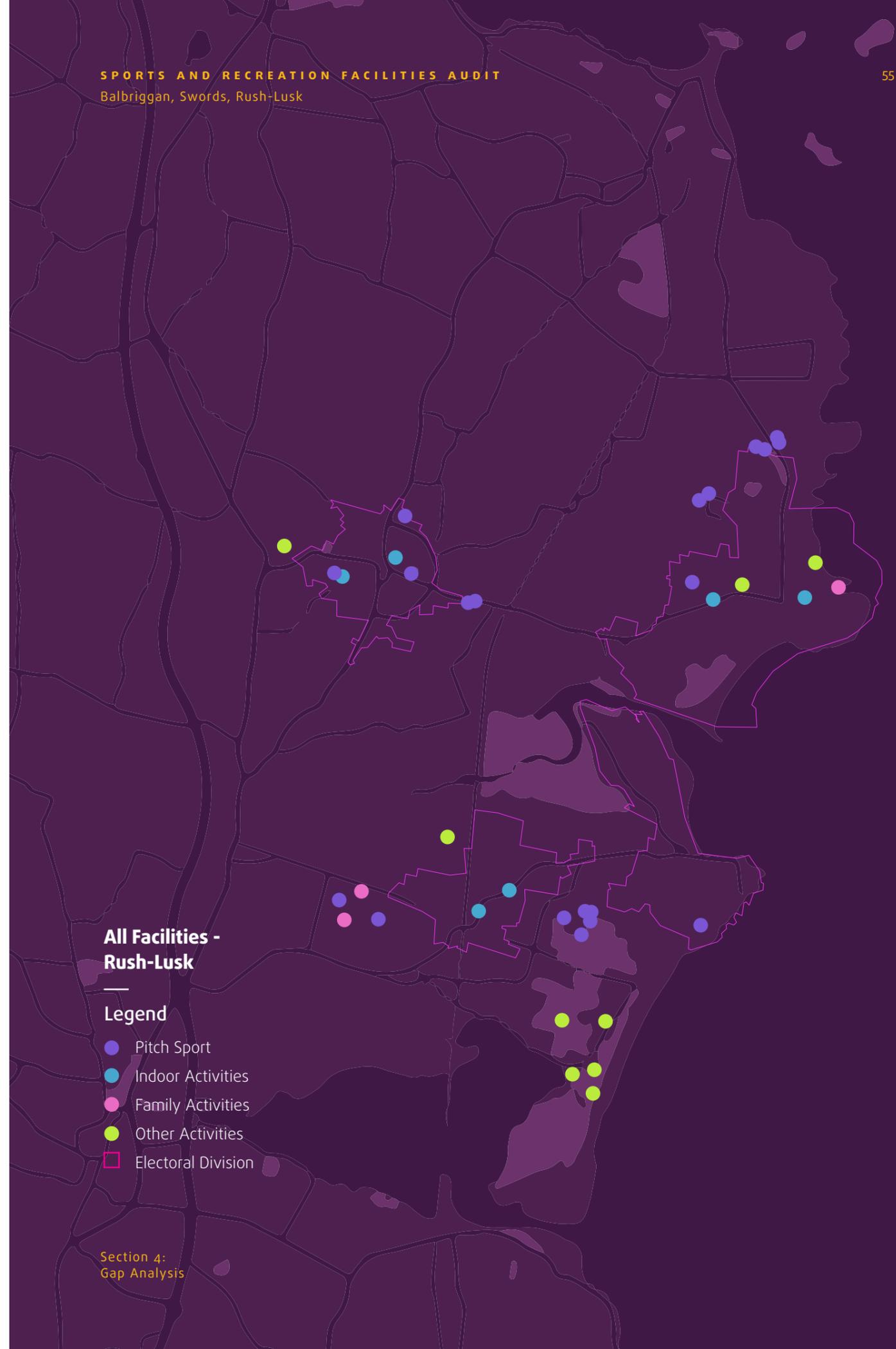
The Rush-Lusk and Donabate-Portrane areas have an equal provision of facilities but a very different distribution of activity types. Rush-Lusk has a greater concentration of Pitch sport facilities whereas Donabate-Portrane has a high proportion of other activity type facilities, mainly golf courses.

**Swords LEA :**

Swords has a variety of activities provided for the local community within its settlement boundaries.

Pitch sports are well represented within this area of the LEA, although they are mainly grouped on the western and north-eastern sides of the settlement with not many facilities located to the east.

Indoor activities are provided towards the eastern half of the settlement, with limited provision of indoor facilities to the north and west of the study area.



**All Facilities -  
Rush-Lusk**

- Legend**
- Pitch Sport
  - Indoor Activities
  - Family Activities
  - Other Activities
  - Electoral Division

All Facilities -  
Skerries

Legend

- Pitch Sport
- Indoor Activities
- Family Activities
- Water Activities
- Other Activities
- Electoral Division

All Facilities -  
Swords

Legend

- Pitch Sport
- Indoor Activities
- Family Activities
- Water Activities
- Other Activities
- Electoral Division

## Pitch Sports

**Pitch Sports facilities are those with playing fields or pitches, e.g. GAA, football and rugby. Consideration has been given to a 1km buffer around each facility, to represent a reasonable walking distance around each facility and to understand gaps across the three LEAs. As illustrated in the map, gaps have been identified in the following areas;**

Pitch sports are the most prominent facility type in the study area with 141 facilities identified.

The highest concentration of pitch sports facilities is located within or on the periphery of existing settlements.

46% of identified pitches are associated with a specific sport.

Rush-Lusk LEA has the highest proportion of football clubs (46%), Swords LEA has the highest proportion of GAA clubs (52%) whilst Rush-Lusk and Balbriggan both have three cricket clubs whilst Swords has none.

Swords LEA has the highest proportion of general outdoor pitches, however there are at least 20 outdoor pitches (that can accommodate a range of sports) identified in each LEA.

Across all three LEAs there is a limited quantity of dedicated rugby facilities.

Rush-Lusk LEA currently have no dedicated rugby facilities and Swords similarly has limited provision, however it is understood that rugby is being played on some of the outdoor pitches particularly around ALSAA.

### Balbriggan LEA :

There are 38 identified pitch sports facilities in this LEA, 42% are within the Balbriggan settlement, while 26% of facilities are within the Skerries settlement.

There are two GAA clubs (Skerries and Balbriggan) within this LEA, which is particularly low for a population of over 36,000 people. It should be noted that there are pitches, but no clubhouse present in Man-o-War.

The three cricket clubs are well distributed throughout the LEA, in the rural area.

### Rush-Lusk LEA :

There are 47 identified pitch sports facilities in this LEA, a large proportion of which are GAA clubs and outdoor pitches.

GAA clubs are provided for throughout the Rush-Lusk LEA as each settlement has a GAA club with adjacent pitches including outdoor pitches and all weather pitches.

There is a greater concentration of the GAA facilities in the rural community to the west of the LEA. This contrasts against a low quantum of facilities for other pitch sports in the same locations.

There are currently no dedicated rugby facilities within this LEA and both of the cricket facilities are located in the eastern section of the LEA.

Football facilities are concentrated within the major settlements, with no dedicated football facilities in the western section of the LEA. Further, the majority of the outdoor pitches in the rural areas are likely to be used for GAA rather than football given proximity to GAA clubs, pitch size and posts noted on these facilities.

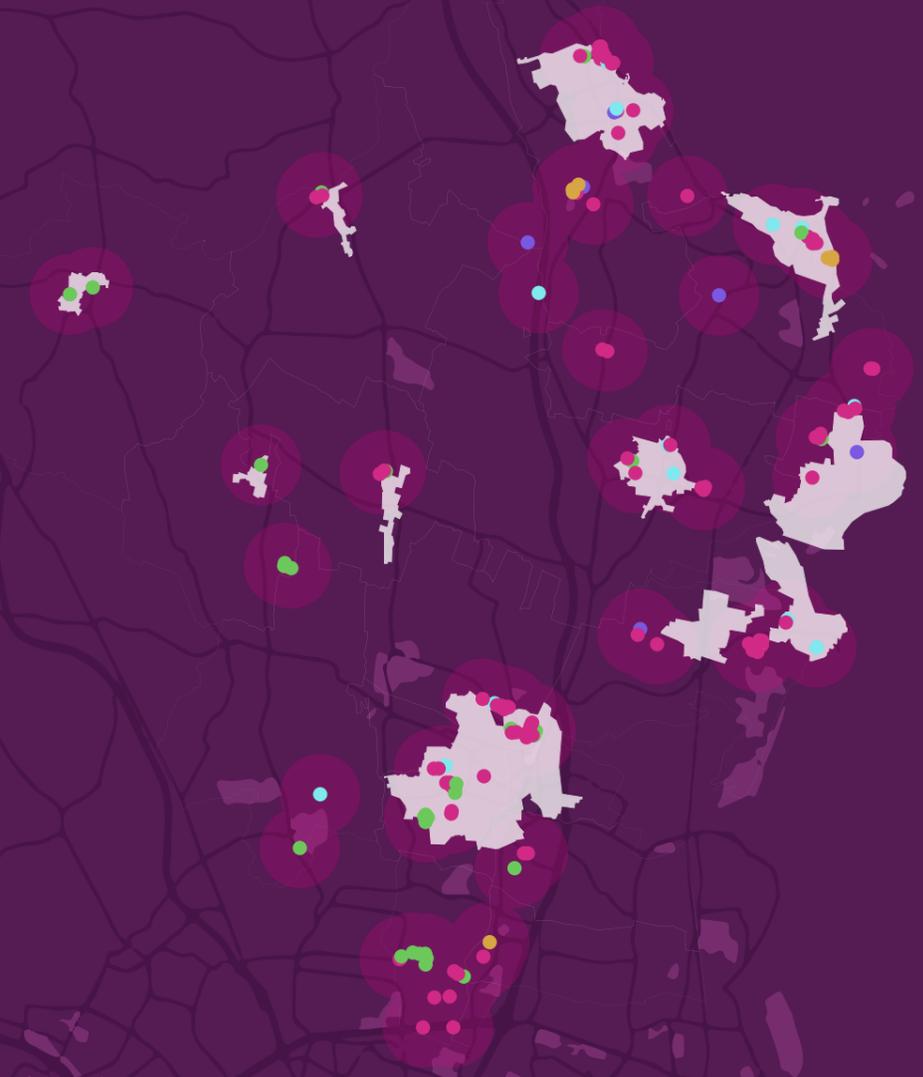
### Swords LEA :

There are 56 identified pitch sports facilities in this LEA, a large proportion of which are GAA clubs and outdoor pitches.

The pitch sport facilities in this LEA are focused in Swords settlement and towards the southern section of the LEA that borders Dublin Airport and Santry. For many of these pitch facilities to the south, they are generally used by airport employees, colleges and/or universities located outside the study area.

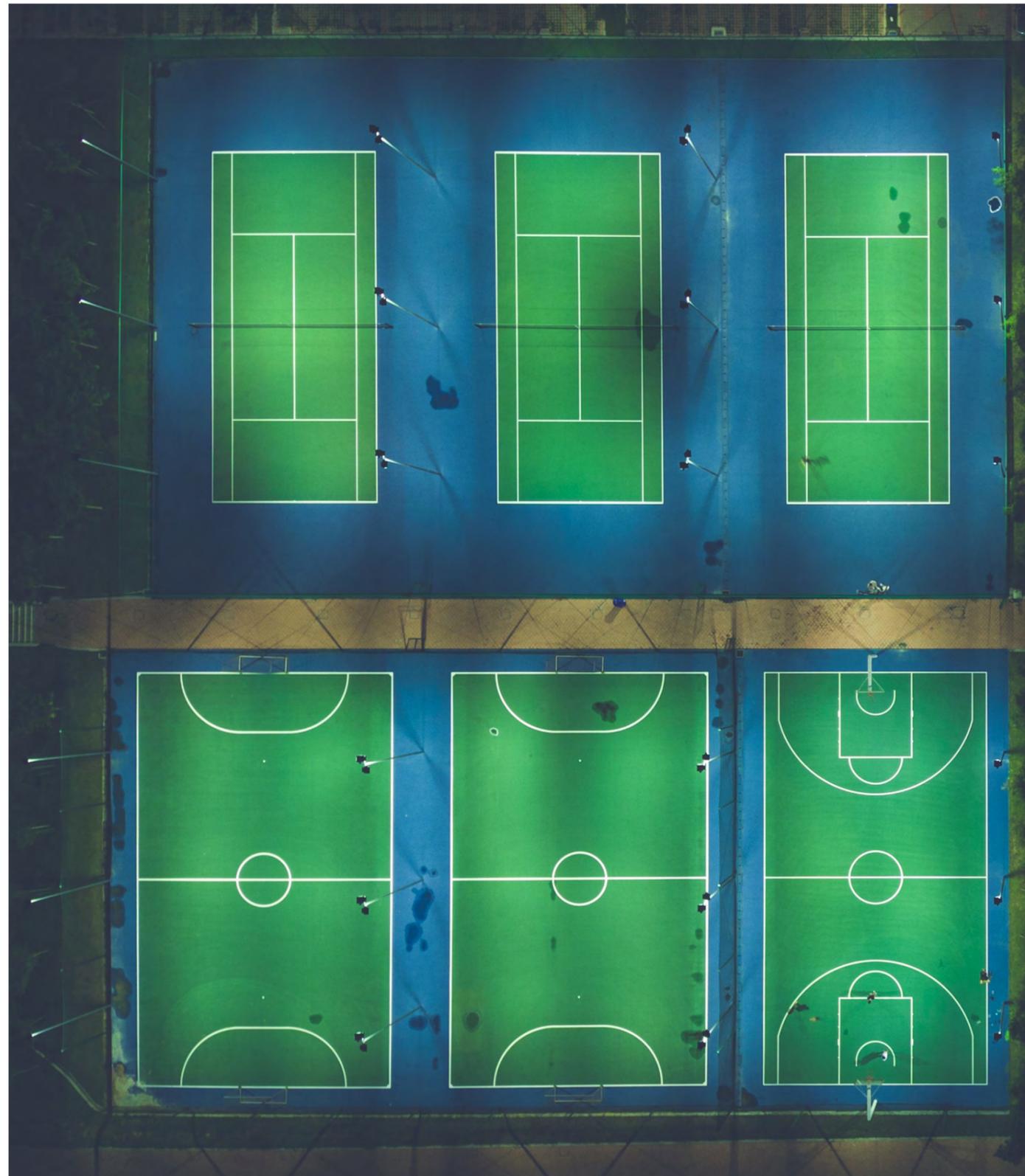
There is currently one cricket facility within the LEA, located within Newbridge Demense adjacent to Donabate.

There is a single dedicated rugby facility within the LEA, despite having the largest population of the LEAs and being located closest to Dublin City. However, it should be noted that Swords Rugby Club make use of outdoor pitches in ALSAA and Newbridge Demesne.



### Legend

- GAA Club
- Football Club
- Rugby Club
- Cricket Club
- Other
- 1km Buffer
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division



Section 4:  
Gap Analysis



Section 4:  
Gap Analysis

## Indoor Activities

**Indoor activity facilities are those catering to various indoor sports activities such as indoor soccer, gyms, classes etc.**

Consideration has been given to a 1km buffer around each facility, to represent a reasonable walking distance around each facility and to understand gaps across the three LEAs. As illustrated in the map, gaps have been identified in the following areas;

55 indoor activity facilities have been identified throughout the study area.

Indoor facilities are mostly located along the M1 corridor and in settlements, leaving rural areas in each LEA without any form of indoor facility.

Balbriggan and Rush-Lusk LEAs have comparable population and provision of indoor facilities. However with the majority of these facilities are all located in in the major settlements, leaving smaller settlements and rural areas without any indoor facilities

69% of these facilities are private leisure facilities with just nine community centres identified.

### Balbriggan LEA :

With the exception of Balrothery Community Centre, all indoor facilities are located within the two main settlements of Balbriggan and Skerries in this LEA.

Over 60% of the indoor activity facilities in this LEA are private leisure facilities.

The only boxing club identified in the study area is contained in this LEA, however there are no martial arts facilities present.

This LEA has the greatest quantum of community centres (four).

### Rush-Lusk LEA:

There are two indoor activity facilities located to the west of the M1 (in Garristown and at Ring Commons), highlighting a possible inequitable distribution across the LEA.

The growing settlements of Rush, Lusk and Donabate have two indoor facilities each whilst the settlements of Ballyboughal and Oldtown have no indoor activity facilities.

75% of the indoor activity facilities in this LEA are private leisure facilities.

There are two community centres identified in this LEA – Garristown and Donabate - Portrane.

There is no dedicated boxing club and just one martial arts facility in this LEA.

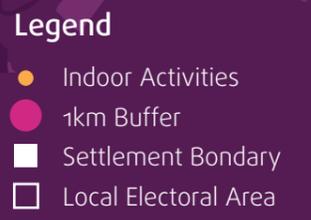
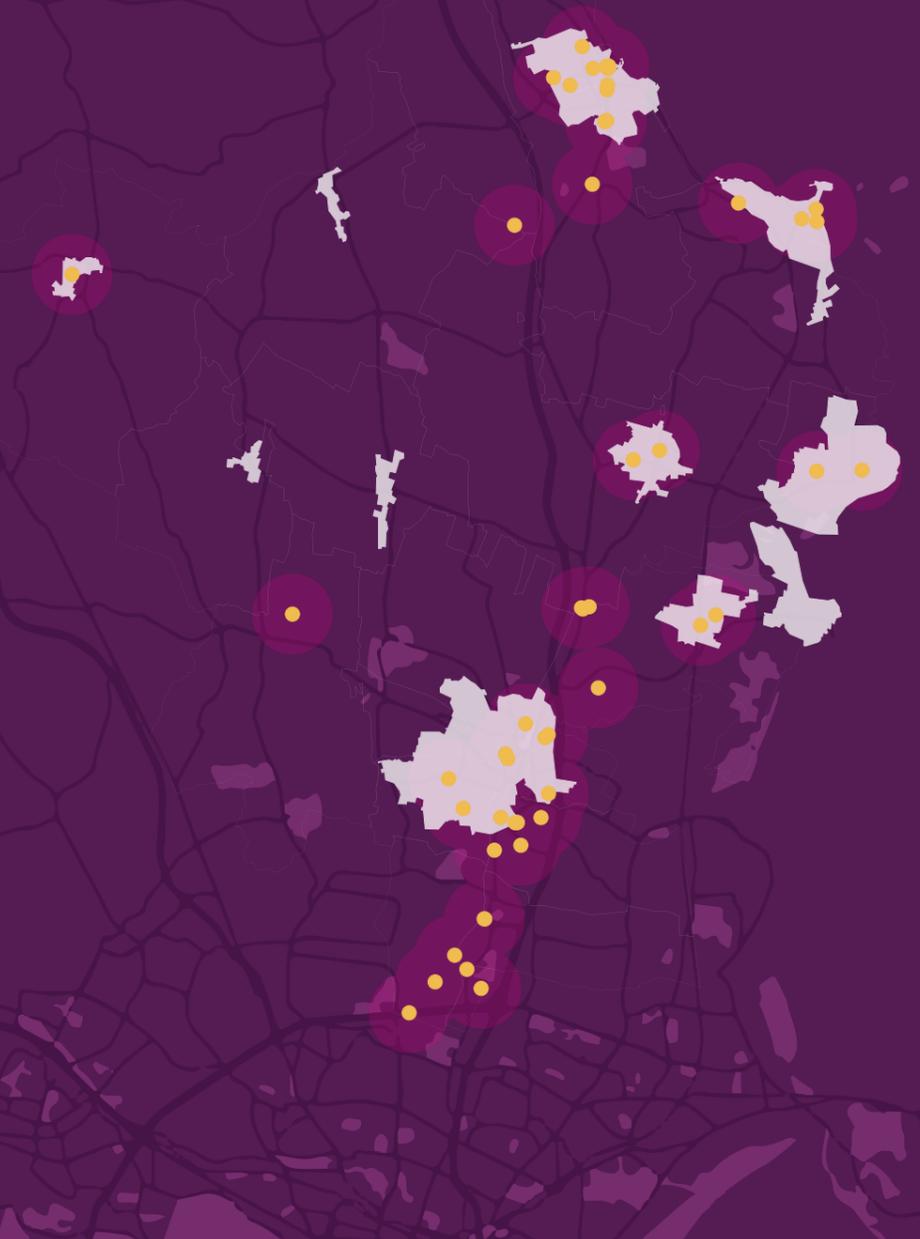
### Swords LEA:

96% of all indoor activity facilities (i.e. all but one in Rolestown) are located in either Swords or the area towards the south that borders Dublin Airport and Santry.

Over 70% of the indoor activity facilities in this LEA are private leisure facilities.

Swords LEA has the highest provision of private leisure facilities, with 46% of all identified private leisure facilities in the study area located within this LEA.

It should be noted that ALSAA and Sportslink are major complexes that support a range of different indoor sports activities as outlined in Section 3.1





## Family Activities

**Family activity facilities are playgrounds and multi-use games areas (MUGAs), as well as general open-air provision, parks etc.**

Consideration has been given to a 1km buffer around each facility, to represent a reasonable walking distance around each facility and to understand gaps across the three LEAs. As illustrated in the the map, gaps have been identified in the following areas;

53 family activity facilities have been identified throughout the study area.

With the exception of Ballyboughal and Rivermeade, all other family activity facilities are located to the east of the R108.

Each LEA has at least two outdoor gym equipment facilities and a heritage site that also accommodates recreation and caters for sport.

The majority of family activity facilities are located in existing settlements or in the heritage sites of Ardgillan Castle and Newbridge House. As such, some rural areas within each LEA are generally lacking provision of some type of family activity facility (with the exception of tennis clubs which are identified close to Balrothery, Loughshinny and Donabate beach). Swords LEA is home to nearly half of all family activity facilities, including 52% of all playgrounds and 60% of all MUGAs identified within the study area.

### Balbriggan LEA :

Within this LEA, 60% of playgrounds are located within the Balbriggan settlement, with Skerries home to only 20%.

At present there is one MUGA facility located within the LEA.

Balbriggan LEA offers 8 outdoor facilities (3 Tennis courts, 2 skate parks, 2 sets of gym equipment, and 1 basketball court) and they are well distributed across the LEA.

Family activity facilities are clustered in the settlements of Balbriggan and Skerries, in the vicinity of Ardgillan Castle and in Balrothery.

### Rush-Lusk LEA :

Rush-Lusk has the lowest quantum of family activity facilities (12) and almost half of these are play areas.

The settlements of Donabate, Garristown, the Naul and Oldtown along with the majority of rural areas have no family activity facilities.

The Donabate and Portrane area contains a tennis club and outdoor gym equipment as well as multiple facilities at Newbridge House.

At present there is one MUGA facility located within the LEA.

Lusk, Donabate and Ballyboughal have one playground each and although Rush has two playgrounds and one MUGA, they are not well distributed across the settlement.

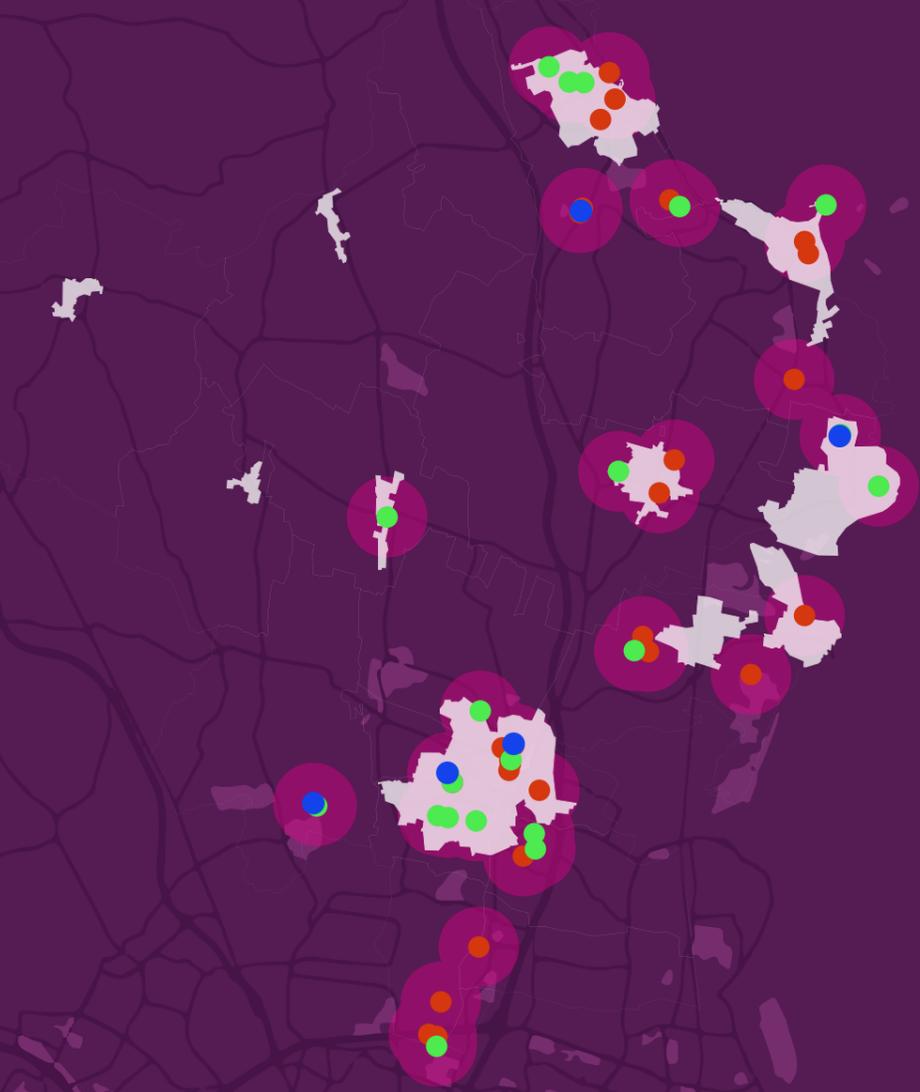
### Swords LEA :

Family activity facilities are highly concentrated in the settlement of Swords.

Swords LEA has six outdoor tennis courts including the only fully accessible public tennis courts in the study area which are located in the settlement of Swords.

This LEA has the highest provision of play areas in the study area (11), and 6 are located in the settlement of Swords.

There are currently 3 MUGAs located across the Swords LEA, 2 of which are within the settlement of Swords.





Section 4:  
Gap Analysis

Section 4:  
Gap Analysis

## Water Activities

### Water activity facilities cater to indoor and outdoor water-based sports, such as swimming pools or sailing clubs etc.

Consideration has been given to a 1km buffer around each facility, to represent a reasonable walking distance around each facility and to understand gaps across the three LEAs. As illustrated in the map, gaps have been identified in the following areas;

Nine water activity facilities have been identified throughout the study area.

There is an overall lack of water activity facilities, despite an extensive coastline including the coastal towns of Balbriggan, Skerries and Rush which have a combined population of over 41,000 people.

There are no water activity facilities in the coastal settlements of Balbriggan, Donabate, Portrane and in the settlements and rural areas to the west of the M1.

The only provision for indoor swimming facilities is within the Swords LEA and these swimming pools are located in private leisure facilities.

#### Balbriggan LEA :

All of the water activity facilities in this LEA are outdoor and located in Skerries settlement, therefore the remainder of the LEA is lacking provision despite the ease of access to the coastline, beaches and piers.

There are no water activity facilities in the rural areas.

There are no indoor swimming pools in this LEA. However, a site has been identified for a swimming pool in the draft development plan for Castlelands and the provision of such a facility may help address this gap in the settlement of Balbriggan.

Whilst there are no identified dedicated facilities, the public can make use of the extensive coastline for walking, swimming, in some cases cycling and other recreational activities.

#### Rush-Lusk LEA :

The Rush-Lusk LEA has two outdoor water activity facilities, both of which are on the coast.

There are no water activity facilities in the settlements of Lusk, Donabate, Portrane, Ballyboughal, the Naul, Oldtown and Garristown.

Whilst there are no identified dedicated facilities, the public can make use of the extensive coastline for walking, swimming, in some cases cycling and other recreational activities.

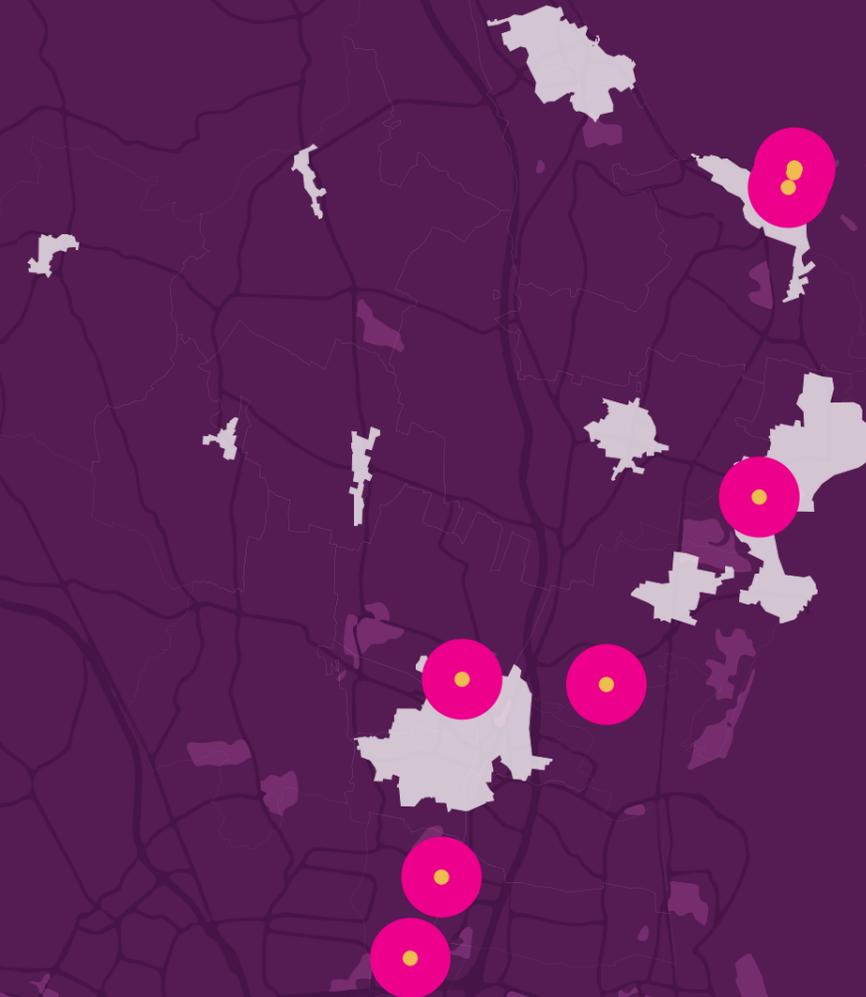
#### Swords LEA :

There are three indoor swimming pools in this LEA and each of these swimming pools is located in a private leisure facility.

The low number of facilities and limited distribution of these facilities means that a large portion of the population within the LEA are not within reasonable walking distance of these facilities.

Swords settlement has one swimming pool facility located to the north, therefore the majority of the settlement is not within a reasonable walking distance of a pool.

In contrast to other LEAs, there is no coastline present and therefore limited opportunity for outdoor water activity facilities in this LEA.



#### Legend

- WaterActivities
- 1km Buffer
- Settlement Boundary
- Local Electoral Area



## Other Activities

**Facilities that cater to other sports comprise the remainder of activities, that are generally fewer in number or more specialised than other categories, e.g. golf clubs, equestrian centres, hockey pitches, libraries, scouts, gun clubs etc.**

Consideration has been given to a 1km buffer around each facility, to represent a reasonable walking distance around each facility and to understand gaps across the three LEAs. As illustrated in the map, gaps have been identified in the following areas;

66 facilities that cater to other activities have been identified throughout the study area.

The variety of different activities provided by the facilities categorised as other introduces complexities in assessing gaps in provision, as the facility needs and capacities change dramatically between activity type.

Overall, there appears to be a relatively even distribution of facilities that cater to other activities across all three LEAs providing a range of diverse activity types in both urban and rural locations.

Activities situated within settlements are predominantly community centres, libraries and clubs, whereas those located outside, are typically more purpose-orientated facilities, such as golf courses or equestrian centres.

Golf and equestrian facilities represent the largest share of other activities across the study area – approximately 26% and 30% of the total respectively. Further, given their nature they are generally located in more rural areas, however typically they are commercial facilities that require payment to access.

### Balbriggan LEA :

There is a concentration of facilities that cater to other activities along the main road into and out of the Balbriggan settlement (R132), including along Main Street.

The facilities that cater to other activities in Skerries are more focused between Churchfield, Skerries Mills and St Patrick's School.

50% of other activities are located within the Balbriggan and Skerries settlements with the remainder in the rural areas.

### Rush-Lusk LEA :

Rush-Lusk LEA has the highest quantum of facilities that cater to other activities (31 facilities), with relatively equal spatial distribution across the LEA.

Within this LEA, there are nine equestrian activities, with 78% of these equestrian facilities located in the rural areas to the west of the LEA.

Golfing is the most prominent other activity type, with eight facilities identified (Almost 50% of the total in the study area), the majority of which are located in the Donabate - Portrane area.

There are four caravan parks in this LEA which are the only facilities of this nature in the study area.

### Swords LEA :

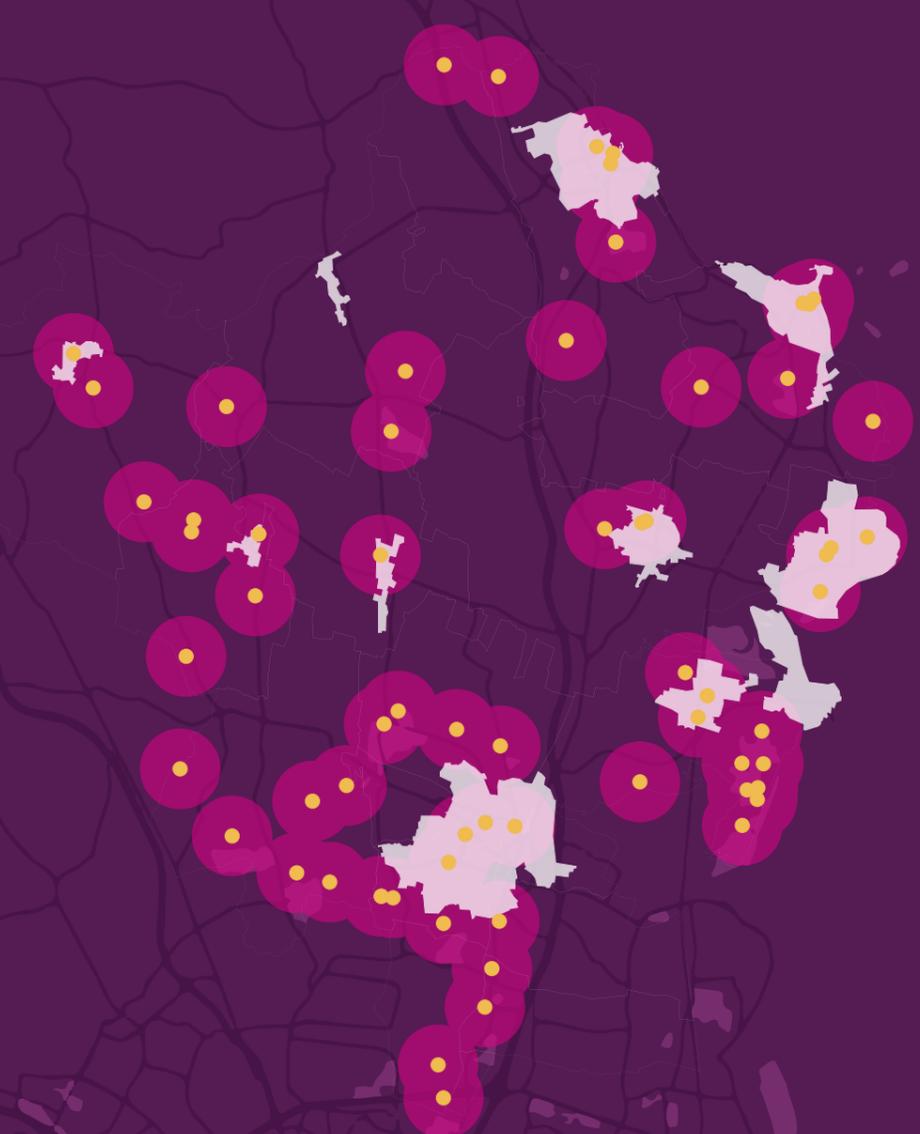
78% of other activities in this LEA are classified as outdoor, with the remaining 22% being indoor focused.

17% of other activity facilities are within the Swords settlement.

More than half of the facilities that cater to other activities are golfing and equestrian (seven and eight facilities respectively), all of which are in the area surrounding Swords settlement.

Swords settlement has two scouts dens and two libraries.

There are two running tracks in this LEA which are the only running tracks in the study area



### Legend

- Fingal Facilities (Other)
- 1km Buffer
- Settlement Boundary
- Local Electoral Area



# IDENTIFIED NEEDS

## SECTION 5



The previous sections have outlined the key categories and the identified gaps in provision across the study area. This section will build on these by identifying the current and future needs within each LEA in relation to the following;

- Pitch Sports.**
- Indoor Activities.**
- Family Activities.**
- Water Activities.**
- Other Activities.**



**The identification of needs as described in this section has considered the number of persons per facility currently (i.e. based on the 2016 population from the Census) and in the future (i.e. based on the projected population in 2026). The current population data has been taken from the 2016 Census whilst a custom population projection scenario has been developed for 2026 at Electoral Division (ED) level.**

This approach was taken in advance of the publication of the NPF Implementation Roadmap and RSES population targets and allows for sub county estimations and determination of the age profile of the future population within the study area which is key to this assessment as it takes place at LEA level. It should be noted that the estimated population for Fingal County is projected to grow to 327,000 – 333,000 persons by 2026 and 340,000 – 349,000 people by 2031 under the low and high range scenarios.

The resulting modelling generated population projections for each ED that has then been combined to generate the population per LEA within the study area. It should be noted that for the population projections all EDs within the study area have been analysed for completeness, therefore there are some EDs extend outside of the study area.

This approach allowed for the identification of changing needs based on the projected shifts in age dynamics in order to facilitate a more robust needs assessment that forms the basis for developing future recommendations within the study area.

The following summary needs have been identified as part of this audit.

**Balbriggan LEA :**

The area may benefit from one indoor swimming facility, which may be forthcoming as part of the Castlelands Masterplan.

The area may benefit from an increase in the provision of outdoor water activity facilities in this LEA is given the extensive coastline and given that all existing water activity facilities are located in Skerries.

An increase in provision of play areas and MUGAs may be explored.

**Rush-Lusk LEA :**

An increase in the provision of water activity facilities in this LEA may be considered given the extensive coastline and the fact that there are currently just two outdoor water activity facilities.

Rural areas may benefit from an increase in the provision of indoor activity facilities in the LEA given the number of facilities to the west of the M1.

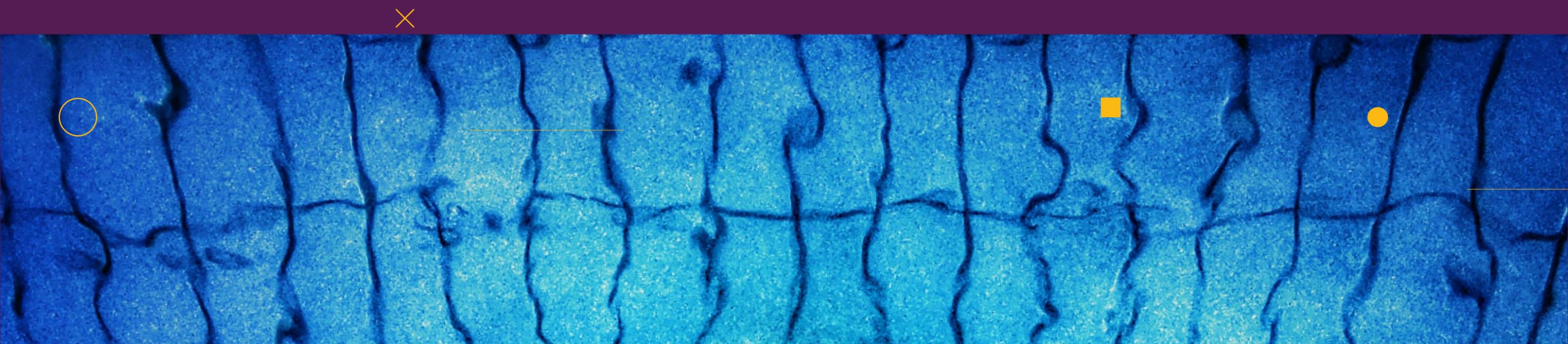
**Swords LEA :**

The distribution of facilities is mostly between the settlement of Swords, the airport environs and Santry, therefore the provision of facilities in rural areas of the LEA may be explored.

At present the population of the of the study area is 135,947 and by 2026 the population is projected to grow by 18% (Refer below) to 159,998 people. The projections are mindful of NPF and RSES targets, however they follow the course of natural demographic trends using a scenario that assumes a continuation of recent levels of net inward migration which have been relatively high.

As set out above, Balbriggan and Rush-Lusk LEAs are projected to grow by 16%, while Swords LEA has the highest projected growth at 19%. The current gaps in provision of facilities (as set out in Section 4) will continue to grow, given the projected increases in population.

LEA	2016 Population	2026 Projected Population	Total Growth	% Growth
Balbriggan	36,570	42,558	5,988	16%
Rush-Lusk	34,674	40,218	5,544	16%
Swords	64,703	77,222	12,519	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>135,947</b>	<b>159,998</b>	<b>24,051</b>	<b>18%</b>



## Analysis of Projected Population

As previously outlined, the custom population projection scenario for the purpose of this audit has been analysed to illustrate the variance in population projections within each LEA and to understand future requirements. This facilitates the identification of needs for facilities at a more granular level.

### Balbriggan LEA :

The projection projects that the Balbriggan LEA will grow by 16% to 2026. However when looking at ED level, the distribution of population growth varies greatly between EDs (from 8% to 23% growth). The EDs with the largest projected growth are Balbriggan Rural and Holmpatrick, (in Skerries) with 23% and 22% growth respectively. These rural EDs would facilitate absorption of the projected growth.

The population projections for the Balbriggan LEA illustrate the following changes in population cohorts:

The proportion of the population between 0-14 years will decrease from 28% to 19%

The proportion of the population between 15-64 years will increase from 64% to 70%

The proportion of the population over 65 years will increase from 9% to 12%

The change in age distribution will impact the future needs of the LEA, especially when considered at the ED level.

### Rush-Lusk LEA:

Similarly to Balbriggan, the Rush-Lusk LEA will see 16% population growth by 2026. At the ED level, the distribution of this growth will range between 9% to 25%. Donabate ED sees the largest projected growth (25%), with the population projected to increase by 2,300 by 2026. Ballyboughal, Lusk and Rush EDs are projected to have growth rates of 17%, 14% and 13% respectively, while the rural EDs to the west will see the lowest growth of 9%.

Under the custom scenario Rush-Lusk LEA will see the following changes in population cohorts:

The proportion of the population between 0-14 years will decrease from 26% to 18%

The proportion of the population between 15-64 years will increase from 65% to 70%

The proportion of the population over 65 years will increase from 9% to 12%

The distribution of the population growth heavily favours growth in those areas to the east of the M1. As outlined in Section 4, this area currently has the greatest concentration of existing sports and recreation facilities.

### Swords LEA:

This LEA is projected to have the greatest population growth within the study area (19%). At ED level there is a large imbalance in the distribution of the projected population, with growth ranging between 4% to 43%. Balgriffin ED has the highest projected growth rate at 43%, however most of this ED is outside of the study area. The lowest growth rate is in Kilsallaghan ED, which is located to the west of the LEA. The EDs that constitute Swords settlement are projected to grow between 14% and 24%, with the largest growth evident in Swords-Lissenhall ED.

Under the custom scenario Swords LEA will see the following changes in population cohorts:

The proportion of the population between 0-14 years will decrease from 23% to 20%

The proportion of the population between 15-64 years will increase from 69% to 70%

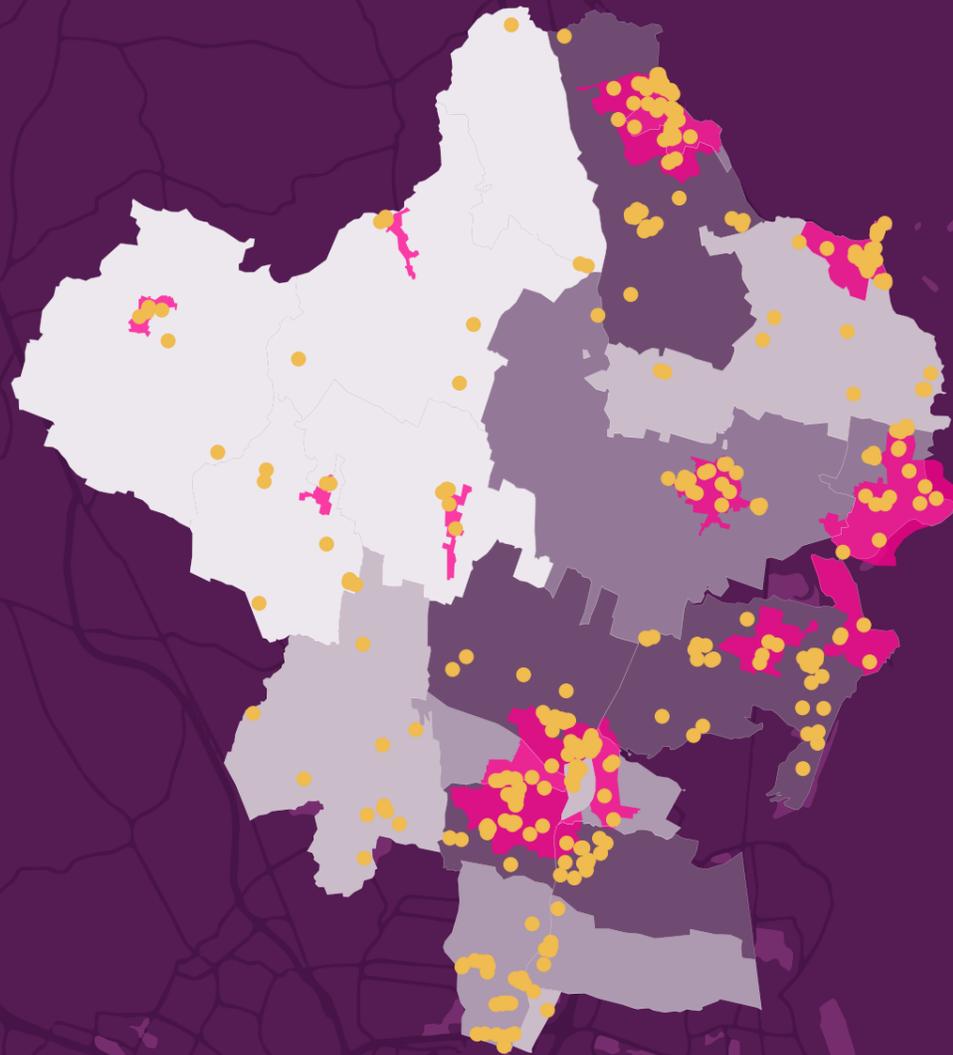
The proportion of the population over 65 years will increase from 8% to 11%

Projected population growth in this LEA is most evident in Swords settlement.

This map highlights that the largest population projected will generally be to the south-west of the existing settlements of Swords and Balbriggan.

The rural area (i.e. to the west of the study area) has a smaller population relative to other areas.

Balbriggan Rural and Swords Glasmore EDs currently have the largest population, however by 2026 Swords Forest and Balbriggan Rural EDs will have the largest population.



**Projected Population 2026**

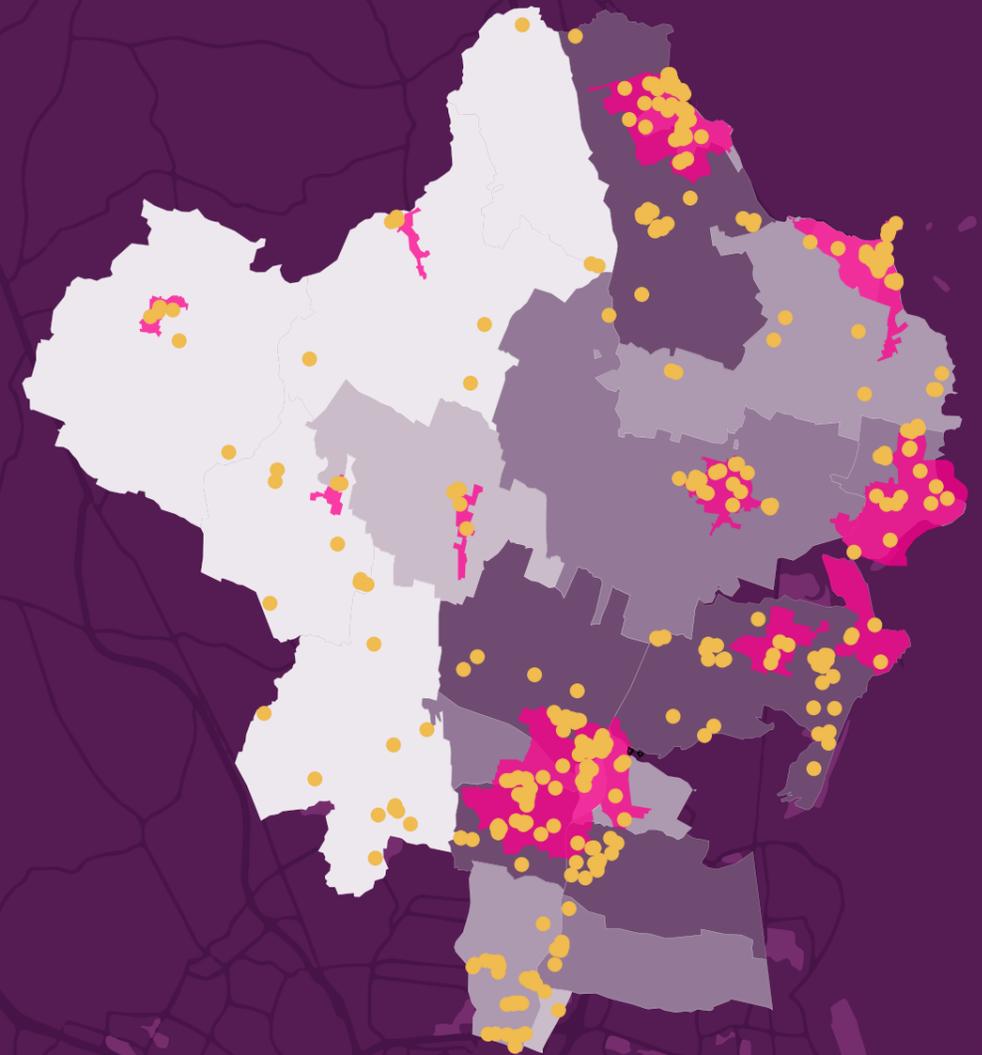
**Legend**

- Facilities
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division
- 772-1,798
- 1,798-4,315
- 4,215-8,855
- 8,855-11,456
- 11,456-20,260

The overall population of the study area as well as the population within each ED in the study area will increase by 2026.

Balbriggan Rural, Donabate, Swords Forest and Swords Glasmore EDs will see the greatest increase in population.

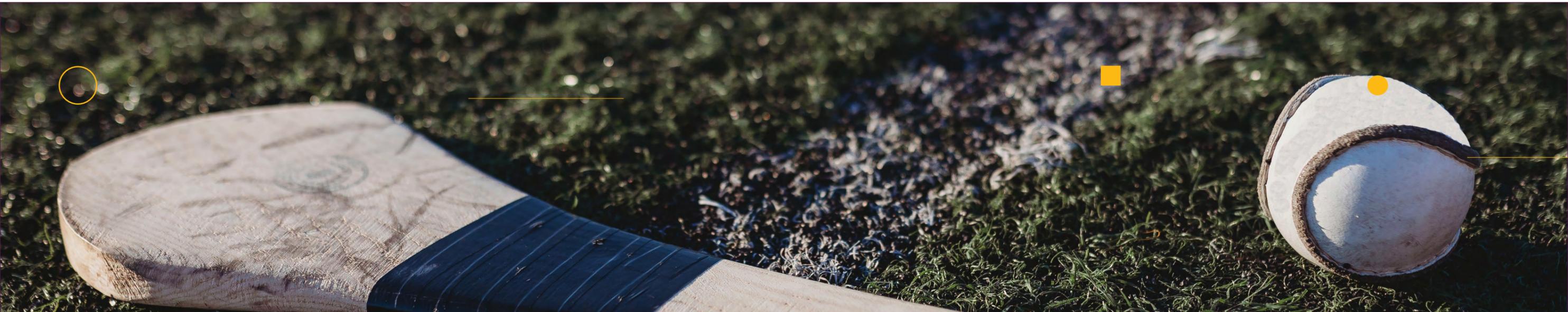
The projected increase in rural areas to the west of the study area is relatively low.



**% Population change 2016-2026**

**Legend**

- Facilities
- Settlement Boundary
- Electoral Division
- 3.9%-9.0%
- 9.1%-13.1%
- 13.2%-17.8%
- 17.9%-21.9%
- 22.0%-42.7%



## Pitch Sports

**There are 141 existing pitch sports facilities within the study area, which are well distributed across the study area. As outlined below, the current and projected population that can be accommodated in the existing pitch sport facilities within each LEA ranges between 856 and 1,379 people per facility.**

Among the three LEA, Swords demonstrates the greatest change in people per facility by 2026, with 224 additional people per facility as well as the highest overall number of people per facility. Rush-Lusk LEA has and will continue to have the lowest number of people per facility.

Category	LEA	No. of facilities	No. of people per facility 2016	No. of people per facility 2026	Difference
Pitch Sport	Balbriggan	38	962	1,120	158 16.4%
	Rush-Lusk	47	738	856	118 16.0%
	Swords	56	1,155	1,379	224 19.3%

### Balbriggan LEA :

45% of the current pitch sport facilities are located within Balbriggan Urban and Skerries EDs, which have the lowest projected growth of 10% and 8% respectively. With higher projected population growth in other EDs, pitch sports facilities located elsewhere may be considered in order to facilitate easy access to the growing population.

Currently there are two GAA clubs within this LEA, serving population of over 36,000 people and it is projected to reach beyond 42,000 by 2026.

The Holmpatrick ED has a relatively low number of pitch facilities compared to Balbriggan Urban and Balbriggan Rural ED and the population is projected to grow by 23% by 2026 which would further increase strain on these facilities.

### Rush-Lusk LEA:

GAA facilities are well distributed across the settlements in this LEA but dedicated facilities for other pitch sports, such as rugby and the demand for a greater range of facilities is likely to increase with a growing population.

10% growth is projected in the western area of the LEA by 2026 and at present the area has an equal distribution of GAA facilities and adjacent outdoor pitches. Consideration may be given for future provision of dedicated facilities for other pitch sports.

### Swords LEA:

The north-western periphery of Swords settlement, particularly around Swords Glasmore ED may benefit from provision of pitch facilities and is projected to grow by over 1,000 people (14%).

Swords Forest ED has the highest population increase, however there is a relatively high number of pitch facilities within and adjoining this ED.



## Indoor Activities

**At present, there are 55 indoor activity facilities in the study area, 44% of which are located in Swords LEA. With the growing demand for indoor activities (especially in the winter period), and the expected growing population in the study area, pressure will increase for all indoor activities into the future.**

Among the three LEAs, Rush-Lusk has the highest number of people per facility by 2026, with 3,352 people per facility and this will further increase the existing pressures. Due to the relatively high number of indoor facilities in the Swords LEA, this LEA has and will continue to have the lowest number of people per facility.

The needs of each LEA differ due to a variety of circumstances; spatial distribution of current facilities, projected population growth, accessibility (public/private), changing age profile. With these factors in mind the following needs have been identified for each LEA in relation to indoor activity facilities.

Category	LEA	No. of facilities	No. of people per facility 2016	No. of people per facility 2026	Difference
Indoor Activities	Balbriggan	19	1,952	2,240	315 16.4%
	Rush-Lusk	12	2,890	3,352	462 16.0%
	Swords	24	2,696	3,218	522 19.3%

### Balbriggan LEA :

The majority of indoor facilities are distributed between the settlements of Balbriggan and Skerries, leaving greater pressure on facilities in the rural area. As outlined previously, the largest projected growth will be in these rural areas of the LEA (particularly Balbriggan Rural ED), therefore future facilities should be distributed to cater for this changing population distribution to alleviate pressure on existing facilities.

Many areas, particularly outside of the town centres of Balbriggan and Skerries do not have facilities within a reasonable walking distance and this will be exacerbated by population growth in these areas (for example in Holmpatrick where the population is projected to grow by 23% by 2026). Consideration should be given for better distribution of facilities, so that indoor facilities can be utilised by all age groups in the area.

### Rush-Lusk LEA:

With the exception of Garristown, there are no indoor activity facilities to the west in the rural areas of this LEA. Whilst population change is relatively low, 15.6% population growth in the population over 65 years is projected in these rural EDs (Ballyboughal, Balscadden, Clonmethan, Garristown, Hollywood) which supports a need for indoor facilities in these areas.

Rush-Lusk has the lowest quantum of indoor activity facilities, therefore the pressures from a growing population are most evident in this LEA as demonstrated by demand in 2026 (3,352 people per facility).

The relatively high population increase in the settlements and areas surrounding Donabate, Lusk and Rush will increase pressure on the existing indoor facilities (two in each settlement).

75% of facilities in the LEA are classified as private leisure facilities, indicating a need for well distributed community centres with less restrictive access, especially in areas with a growing population.

### Swords LEA:

A further distribution of indoor facilities, may be explored as the population grows, particularly to the south-east of Swords settlement as Swords Forest ED has the highest population increase.

Swords Lissenhall and Glasmore EDs have no indoor facilities and relatively high population growth which will exacerbate demand and pressures on facilities in adjoining EDs

75% of identified facilities in the LEA are classified as private leisure facilities, consideration should be given for well distributed community centres with less restrictive access, especially in areas with a growing population.



## Family Activities

**At present there are 51 family activity facilities in the study area, over half of which are located in the Swords LEA. With a relatively high proportion of the population under 14 years, suitable playgrounds for different ages should be considered in the future to accommodate the demand. MUGAs may also be beneficial for teenagers.**

Among the three LEAs Rush-Lusk LEA will have 462 additional people per facility attributable to the relatively low number of existing facilities. As outlined below, Rush-Lusk LEA also has the greatest pressure on current facilities. Due to the relatively high number of family activity facilities in the Swords LEA, this LEA has and will continue to have the lowest number of people per facility.

The needs of each LEA differ due to a variety of circumstances; spatial distribution of current facilities, projected population growth, accessibility (public/private), changing age profile. With these factors in mind the following needs have been identified for each LEA in relation to family activity facilities.

Category	LEA	No. of facilities	No. of people per facility 2016	No. of people per facility 2026	Difference
Family Activities	Balbriggan	15	2,438	2,837	399 16.4%
	Rush-Lusk	12	2,890	3,352	462 16.0%
	Swords	26	2,489	2,970	482 19.3%

### Balbriggan LEA :

Additional MUGAs and playgrounds may be considered across the LEA, as there is only one MUGA present and the proportion of the population under 14 years is relatively high.

The Balbriggan Rural ED is projected to grow by 23% by 2026 and family activity facilities are currently located in Ardgillan Castle, Balrothery and within the northernmost part of Balbriggan settlement. More equitable distribution would improve accessibility for other areas within this ED.

The Holmpatrick ED has one facility and the population is projected to grow by 23% by 2026.

### Rush-Lusk LEA:

The settlements of Donabate, Garristown, the Naul and Oldtown along with the majority of rural areas have no family activity facilities, however the population is expected to increase, particularly in the Donabate ED.

Rush-Lusk has the lowest quantum of family activity facilities, therefore the pressures from a growing population are most evident in this LEA as demonstrated by demand in 2026 (3,352 people per facility).

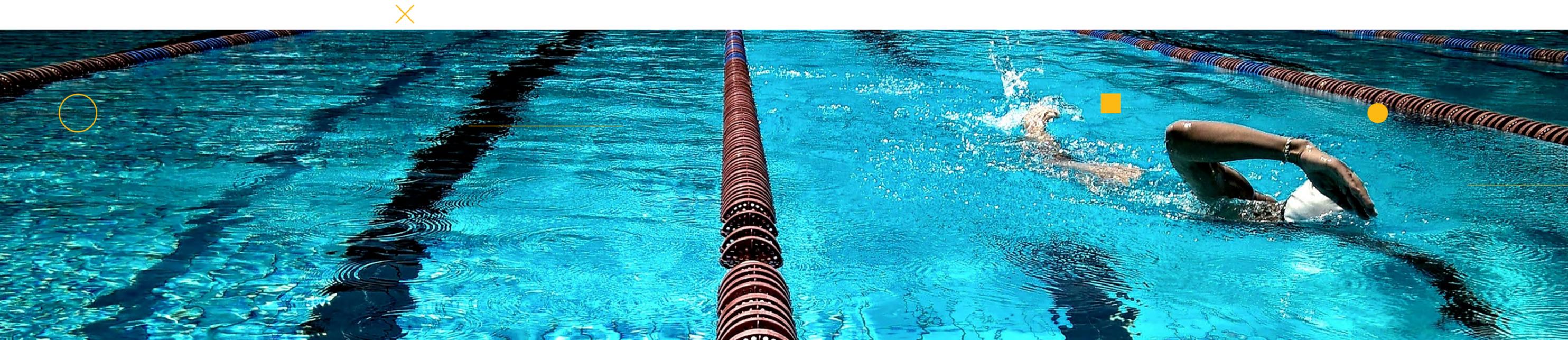
40% of facilities in the LEA are classified as play areas, outdoor courts and equipment with less restrictive access, especially in areas with a growing population may be considered.

### Swords LEA:

Swords settlement has the best provision of family activity facilities in this category and they are well distributed, however relatively high population growth is anticipated to the north and west.

In 2016, 23.1% of Swords settlement was aged 0-14 years (i.e. 14,924 people), however there are 6 play areas and 2 MUGAs. This equates to 1,866 people in this age group per play area/ MUGA and this given the anticipated growth, the need for these facilities will increase further.

Swords-Glasmore ED is projected to grow by 14%, but there are currently no family activity facilities in this ED. This gap may need to be addressed to ensure that future populations to have access to these types of facilities.



## Water Activities

**At present there are nine water activity facilities within the overall study area. The small number of existing facilities does not accommodate the needs of the current population in the three LEAs. The existing pressures on these facilities will be exacerbated as the population grows to 2026.**

The low provision for both swimming pools and outdoor water activities may be considered to ensure sufficient supply for the existing population in the first instance and the growing population thereafter. Water activities require intervention as all three LEAs are currently providing for between approximately 16,000 to 32,000 people per facility in the study area and the demand will grow further by 2026. However, as previously outlined, the public can make use of the extensive coastline for walking, swimming, in some cases cycling and other recreational activities. Note the provision of Swimming pool in Balbriggan through the Castlelands Masterplan.

Category	LEA	No. of facilities	No. of people per facility 2016	No. of people per facility 2026	Difference
Water Activities	Balbriggan	4	9,143	10,640	1,497 16.4%
	Rush-Lusk	2	17,337	20,109	2,772 16.0%
	Swords	3	21,568	25,741	4,173 19.3%

### Balbriggan LEA :

The needs of each LEA differ due to a variety of circumstances; spatial distribution of current facilities, projected population growth, accessibility (public/private), changing age profile. With these factors in mind the following needs have been identified for each LEA in relation to water activity facilities.

Indoor water activity facilities may be provided in this LEA, with the provision of Swimming pool through the Castlelands Masterplan.

As the only water activity facilities are in Skerries, a greater variety and better distribution of water activity facilities to capitalise on access to the Irish Sea, while utilising existing beaches and piers may be explored.

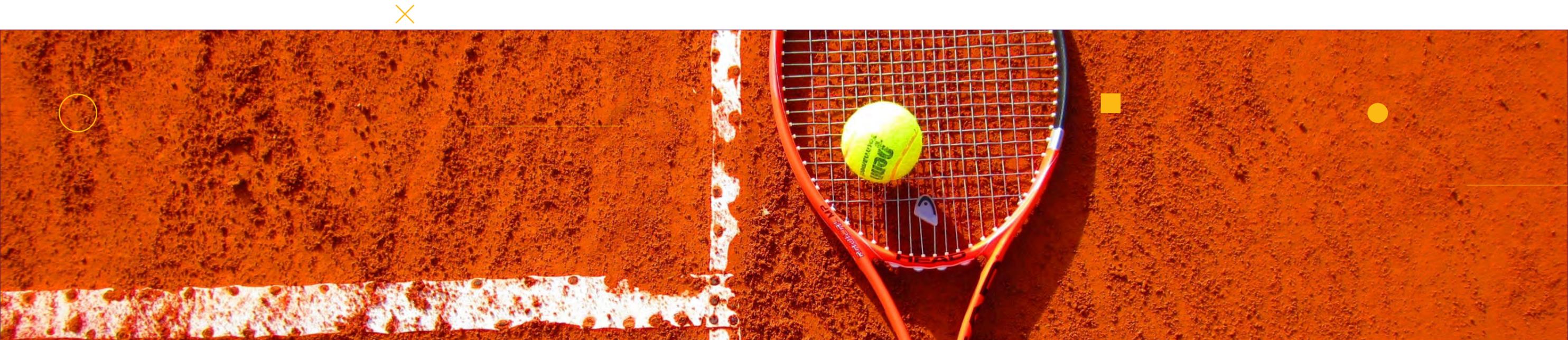
### Rush-Lusk LEA:

Indoor water activity facilities in this LEA may be provided with the provision of Swimming pool through the Castlelands Masterplan

### Swords LEA:

Provision of better distributed indoor swimming facilities may be beneficial in this LEA.

As the only LEA without an extensive coastline, all existing facilities are indoors. Further, each of these swimming pools is located in a private leisure facility, with public access which limits accessibility for the existing and growing population.



## Other Activities

At present there are 69 facilities supporting other activities within the study area, which are well distributed throughout the study area. This is due to rural areas providing land which can house larger facilities like golf clubs and equestrian centres whilst the settlements accommodate indoor activities. Initiatives should be provided for the progression and growth of other activities within the county to diversify the range of sports and recreation facilities available to the growing population.

Category	LEA	No. of facilities	No. of people per facility 2016	No. of people per facility 2026	Difference
Other Activities	Balbriggan	12	3,048	3,547	499 16.4%
	Rush-Lusk	31	1,119	1,297	179 16.0%
	Swords	22	2,941	3,510	569 19.3%

Among the three LEAs, Balbriggan has the greatest change by 2026, with 835 additional people per facility and this will further increase the existing pressures. Due to the relatively high number of indoor facilities in the Rush-Lusk LEA, this LEA has and will continue to have the lowest number of people per facility

Given the variety of facilities and activity types within this category, specific needs assessment has not been undertaken. This type of needs assessment would need to be a strong evidence base on participation rates by activity type to understand local priorities given the range and distribution of facility types. In the future, it is recommended that the focus of the assessment would be first on activity then by location, as the nature of these activities would mean there is a more select participation and usage of facilities.

*" Among the three LEAs, Balbriggan has the greatest change by 2026, with 835 additional people per facility and this will further increase the existing pressures. "*

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## SECTION 6

The following section highlights a number of overarching as well as specific recommendations applicable to the Balbriggan, Rush-Lusk and Swords LEAs. Each recommendation has been informed by the gap and needs analysis that has been undertaken.



**This audit has established that there are a variety of gaps in facility provision and needs for the current and future population to be addressed across the study area. However, each LEA varies and each recommendation differs depending on the category of the individual facility.**

As such the recommendations described in Section 6.1 are based on the identified needs of each of the LEAs (i.e. as informed by ED level population data) based on the types and location of existing facilities that have been determined as part of this audit. Section 6.2 describes overarching recommendations that are more relevant to the study area in its entirety.

When examining the population projections, it is evident that rate of growth will be greatest in those EDs surrounding existing settlements of Swords, Balbriggan and Donabate. Notwithstanding these pockets of rapid growth, the overall priority for the study area should be the equitable provision of accessible facilities across all category types to encourage opportunities to participate in sports and recreation. It should also be considered that the accessibility to current facilities (i.e. those within a reasonable walking distance) may be affected as development expands outside of the existing settlements and the population grows in these rural areas.

These recommendations have been informed by the composition and distribution of existing facilities across the study area. The provision of facilities per person has been determined, and the impact of potential changes in population by 2026 have been set out in Section 5. In order to provide a comprehensive analysis per sport type and/or at the asset level, public perception surveys should be considered to explore prioritisation and opportunities for addressing deficiencies within individual LEAs. Such results can be factored into the next stages of assessment as a follow on from this audit.

The following observations are considered pertinent to the recommendations that have been developed:

At present facilities north of Swords settlement are focused between the M1 and the coast, leaving the rural areas with less provision, particularly in relation to indoor and family activity categories. Provision of these types of facilities in rural areas could improve the rural communities.

Consider prioritising the provision of a swimming pools given the limited distribution and potential funding sources.

Use of coastal areas for family activity facilities as well as water activities including the development of individual facilities that support coastal activities, for example at the beaches and/or along the Broadmeadows Greenway that is currently being progressed.

Co-location and implementation of play areas and outdoor gym equipment in the vicinity of coastal walkways and/or beach areas given the extensive coastline present in the study area.



## LEA Recommendations

### Balbriggan LEA:

It has been outlined that Balbriggan has a number of targeted recommendations for this LEA. Balbriggan Rural ED and Holmpatrick ED are expected to have a significant population growth and thus an increase in demand for recreation and sports facilities by 2026, highlighting a need for consideration to be given for an assessment of a greater number and diversity of high-quality facilities for these areas.

The recommendations for this LEA are:

**Pitch Sports** - Pitch sports facilities are generally provided throughout, with minor gaps in different areas located outside of the settlement boundaries.

**Indoor Activities** - Facilities supporting indoor activities may be beneficial throughout the entire area, particularly in Holmpatrick and Balbriggan Rural EDs where relatively large population growth is anticipated. Further, private leisure facilities dominate therefore the LEA would benefit from more noncommercial and community facilities that facilitate a range of indoor activities.

**Family Activities** - Additional Playgrounds and MUGAs may be considered, especially in the Holmpatrick area, where there is one existing facility and a significant increase in population is anticipated.

**Water Activities** - The existing outdoor facilities exploit the advantage of the vicinity of the Irish Sea, however they are all located in Skerries. Further, swimming pool facilities are required in this LEA and this may be provided in Balbriggan through the Castlelands Masterplan.

**Other facilities** - Facilities that support other activities are provided throughout this LEA. Activities situated within settlements are predominantly community centres, libraries and clubs, whereas those located outside, are typically more purpose-orientated facilities, such as golf courses or equestrian centres.

### Rush-Lusk LEA:

It has been outlined that Rush-Lusk has several targeted recommendations for this LEA. Whilst population growth will be more evident to the east, this LEA has the lowest quantum of facilities for a number of categories (i.e. indoor, family and water activities) which will see increasing pressure on facilities attributable to population growth. Further, the development of facilities may be considered along parts of the M1, as this will provide the best access to facilities along the main commuter road in the area.

The recommendations for this LEA are:

**Pitch Sports** - Pitch sports facilities are generally provided for throughout, with minor gaps for sports other than GAA in those areas to the west of the M1 and those located outside of the settlement boundaries.

**Indoor activities** - Facilities supporting indoor activities may be beneficial throughout this entire area due to the dominance of private leisure facilities. At present, other than Garristown, the west of this LEA has no indoor facilities.

**Family Activities** - Facilities for family activities are provided throughout the study area. Playgrounds may be considered in areas towards the west of this LEA such as the Naul, Oldtown and Garristown.

**Water Activities** - Water Activities - Both outdoor facilities, which take advantage of the Irish Sea, are opportunities that could be developed further for the LEA. At present, Rush is the only area which provides outdoor water activity facilities.

**Other facilities** - Facilities that support other activities are provided throughout this LEA. Activities situated within settlements are predominantly community centres, libraries and clubs, whereas those located outside, are typically more purpose-orientated facilities, such as golf courses or equestrian centres.

### Swords LEA:

It has been outlined that Swords has a number of targeted recommendations for this LEA. Overall the LEA has the largest population which is supported by the largest number of overall facilities. Water activity facilities and facilities that cater to other sports are the only categories where this LEA has does not have the highest quantum of facilities, however this may be attributable to the lack of coastline and more extensive urbanisation when compared to the other two LEAs.

The recommendations for this LEA are:

**Pitch Sports** - Pitch sports facilities are numerous, however there are some gaps in provision evident outside of the settlement boundaries. Moreover, certain sports may require greater development, such as rugby, as the Swords settlement currently has no dedicated rugby club facility and it is understood that Swords Rugby Club make use of facilities in ALSAA and Newbridge House.

**Indoor Activities** - There is no indoor activity facilities to the north and west (with the exception of Rolestown) at present. Further, private leisure facilities dominate therefore the LEA may benefit from more non-commercial and community facilities.

**Family Activities** - Family activity facilities are provided throughout the settlement of Swords. Provision of Playgrounds may be explored in rural areas towards the north of the LEA.

**Water Activities** - Further water activity facilities should exploit the advantage of the vicinity of the Irish Sea and swimming pool facilities, particularly publicly accessible ones, may be beneficial within the LEA.

**Other facilities** - Other facilities are provided and relatively well distributed throughout this LEA. Future provision should be analysed in greater detail to determine specific needs in relation to those that are not provided for such as hockey club, bridge club, parish centre and shooting facilities.



## General Recommendations

**Recommendations that apply across more than one LEA and in most cases that apply to the entire study area have been set out under the relevant facility category types. In addition, a number of overarching recommendations have been set out in reflection of the outcomes of this audit.**

### Overarching Recommendations

Improving the overall health of the population of the study area through mobility initiatives will continue to be a focus of Fingal County Council. The population generally identifies as having good health, however within town centres, lower quality of health was evident. By providing accessible sports and recreation facilities (i.e. those located within a reasonable walking distance of the areas with high population density), this can encourage walking to and from as well as the use of a facility. This in turn, improves participation and the overall health of individuals. As such, there is an opportunity for Fingal County Council to enhance the national initiative 'Get Ireland Walking' by improving walking conditions and increasing membership in existing or creating new walking groups. This may be targeted towards specific facilities and/or those greenways, trails and paths that were not considered as part of this audit.

While there has been considerable work undertaken by Fingal County Council to facilitate access to facilities there is a need to consider improving disability access at all facilities throughout the study area, specifically to ensure equitability and allow for better wheelchair access. Whilst many facilities throughout the study area have wheelchair access and disabled parking spaces were noted, certain facilities, particularly MUGAs and playgrounds are less accessible to those with mobility

and/or disability issues. Equitable access for the disabled to facilities may be explored across the study area as well as inclusive sports clubs which encourage participation. Fingal County Council will continue to facilitate initiatives that promote inclusivity. It should also be noted that whilst wheelchair access has been the primary aspect considered in this audit, facilities implementing features such as braille, cues for those with hearing impairments etc. will enhance inclusivity.

Further strategic work which considers the future sports facilities in the study area as well as those in the other areas of Fingal should be completed in due course to promote a holistic approach to sports, recreation, health and wellbeing. By undertaking a county-wide assessment and integrated audit, Fingal County Council will better understand the supply of and demand for sports and recreation facilities in tandem with gathering information on public health.

For example, by undertaking more detailed surveys and providing more refined recommendations for the entire county of Fingal, county-wide initiatives can be set out for target areas. Specifically, the following targeted surveys are recommended to develop on and supplement the insights ascertained from this audit:



A public perception survey and owner/operator survey should be undertaken to understand the views of the public and owners of the facilities in relation to sports and recreation participation, regular usage, perceived interests and thus targeted priorities. These surveys will allow Fingal County Council to gather local opinions and generate support for action at the local and/or at the asset level.

In addition to the above, an investigation of the affordability of sports and recreation facilities and the impacts fees have on accessibility of facilities would contribute to a more robust understanding of which facilities are inclusive for lower socioeconomic circumstances and ensure that facilities are accessible to the general public.

A detailed assessment of the current condition of identified facilities would enable Fingal County Council to identify which of the existing facilities require investment and maintenance. This may entail consultation with facility management/ownership as well as users of those facilities to accurately assess the current condition of facilities by those that own, manage and use these facilities.

It is recommended that a detailed assessment of the capacity and utilisation of the identified facilities is undertaken. This may be in tandem with or as a separate exercise to an audit of the public open space to cover the greenways, trail, paths and beaches which were excluded from this audit. This is more important than ever given the impacts COVID-19 has had on society and the relatively high physical activity levels that were apparent during the COVID-19 lockdown despite the closure of the many facilities within the study area.



Some of the private clubs and commercially operated sports and recreation facilities have little direct engagement with Fingal County Council, which can lead to imbalances in the provision of certain facility and/or activity types. Regular engagement with the operators would create an opportunity for these facilities (e.g. golf clubs, gyms etc.) to take part in strategic community or charitable initiatives (e.g. Special Olympics Ireland or Healthy Ireland) and could improve participation rates in the study area. This regular, coordinated engagement could improve equitable access to these facilities and create a healthier overall population therefore assisting Fingal County Council to achieve health, wellbeing, amenity and recreational objectives.

As stated previously in this report, Objective PM55 from the County Development Plan states;

***'Ensure coherent clustering of recreational and open space facilities into a recreational hub arrangement unless a more practicable solution is demonstrated.'***

Clustering of facilities should therefore be considered in urban centres in order to develop multi-sports facilities which provide for several activities including both indoor and outdoor units (i.e. similar to what is currently evident at ALSAA and Sports Link). The development of clustered sport and recreation facilities of this nature in other locations within the study area will aid in the promotion of and participation in sport throughout the county and reduce drive times for people.

## Recommendations for pitch sports

Pitch sports facilities are provided throughout the study area for different activity types (e.g. football, GAA, rugby, cricket etc). With the popularity of pitch sports growing year on year and the young population within the study area, a focus on the creation and maintenance of pitch sports facilities in areas like Lissenhall and Holmpatrick may be beneficial, where there is relatively large population growth anticipated by 2026.

Rugby facilities are less common within the study area compared to other team sports (e.g. football and GAA). There are only 3 rugby clubs located in the study area, which may represent a lack of interest in the sport, however there is growing interest in rugby throughout Ireland and consideration for additional facilities could be given. In contrast cricket which has a long history of high participation across the study area, has more clubs throughout the study area than rugby clubs as it has a number of long-standing clubs formed by local communities many years ago. With the development of young players required for rugby to continue to grow, there is an opportunity for both Fingal to collaborate with Irish Rugby in order to promote participation and aid in the development of rugby facilities throughout the study area.

Many GAA pitches and football pitches throughout the study area may require support in order to develop better community facilities, particularly in those rural areas to the west where GAA is the dominant sport. It is recognised that although pitches are generally in good order, accessibility to and the quality of the club house or car park can impact on the overall condition. GAA chairs and the Dublin County Board have indicated that clubs may require support with their application of certain grants (e.g. Lottery Grants, Government Grants) and Fingal County Council will continue to collaborate with individual clubs (through the Sports Office) in order to provide support and facilitate the development of high-quality facilities that support social cohesion.

## Recommendations for indoor activities

The study area is currently dominated by private leisure facilities that are commercially operating. Consideration should therefore be given to explore the feasibility of increasing the number and distribution of ‘community centre’ type indoor facilities. This type of facility can cater to a variety of needs as well as a variety of age groups at a lower cost and thus meets the objectives of the NPF regarding co-location and multi-use facilities. Further, such facilities improve equitability and accessibility which is important to develop social cohesion.

The projections show that 12% of each LEAs population will be at least 65 years by 2026. Multi-use indoor facilities could be fully utilised by this age group, especially if strategically located to allow short travel/walk times. There are currently few indoor facilities in the rural areas of each LEA despite the capacity to serve the population which is generally older. By 2026 all of the rural EDs within Rush-Lusk and Swords LEAs will have at least 15% of their population aged over 65 years, with several over 17% (i.e. the rural areas of Hollywood, Balscadden, and Kilsallaghan). At present Balscadden rural location with an indoor facility, however that can only be accessed via private vehicle. The majority of these rural areas are therefore without any indoor facilities within a reasonable walking distance which should be explored in due course

Indoor activity facilities should be considered throughout the study area, especially in areas where there is currently no provision – i.e. to the west of the settlement of Swords and the M1. At present, a few of the clubs have all weather pitches, however many clubs throughout the county have no indoor facilities and thus no contingency to allow for activities to take place when the weather conditions deteriorate. The development of such facilities would increase the range and co-location of activities within a single facility in accordance with the Guiding Principles set out in the NPF. Further, these facilities could generate money for local communities from rental income.

## Recommendations for family activities

Family activity facilities are well distributed and generally provide high quality facilities to local communities. Certain aspects, however, may require improvement, especially with regards to equitable access for people with disabilities as noted previously. Specifically, access to playgrounds and MUGAs is often hard for people with wheelchairs. For the future development of family facilities, Fingal County Council will continue to take into regard equitable access, but also the placement and distribution throughout the area.

There is an overall lack of family activity facilities outside of the main settlements. Facilities may be considered in the smaller settlements by way of MUGAs or playground facilities, particularly in those EDs that are projected to have significant population growth and those villages that currently have no facilities but have significant housing development such as Donabate, the Naul and Garristown.

## Recommendations for water activities

Both Balbriggan and Rush-Lusk LEAs have no indoor swimming pools, with a three pools in the settlement of Swords. Swimming pools have wide reaching health benefits as they can be used by all ages groups as well as by people with disabilities if appropriate infrastructure is included. Increasing the provision of publicly accessible swimming pools is highly recommended and the provision of Swimming pool in Balbriggan through the Castlelands Masterplan could be implemented by way of the Large Scale Sports Infrastructure fund from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

The projections show that 12% of each LEAs population will be at least 65 years by 2026. Multi-use indoor facilities could be fully utilised by this age group, especially if strategically located to allow short travel/walk times. There are currently few indoor facilities in the rural areas of each LEA despite the capacity to serve the population which is generally older. By 2026 all of the rural EDs within Rush-Lusk and Swords LEAs will have at least 15% of their population aged over 65 years, with several over 17% (i.e. the rural areas of Hollywood, Balscadden, and Kilsallaghan).

Indoor activity facilities throughout the study area, especially in areas where there is currently no provision should be explored – i.e. to the west of the settlement of Swords and the M1. At present, a few of the clubs have all weather pitches, however many clubs throughout the county have no indoor facilities and thus no contingency to allow for activities to take place when the weather conditions deteriorate. The development of such facilities would increase the range and co-location of activities within a single facility in accordance with the Guiding Principles set out in the NPF. Further, these facilities could generate money for local communities from rental income.

## Recommendations for other activities

There are a high number of activities categorised as ‘other’ throughout the study area, especially in rural areas where equestrian centres and golf clubs generally establish themselves. The development and maintenance of these facilities into the future may be required in order to improve participation in these forms of activities.

# CONCLUSION

## SECTION 7

To conclude, this audit has analysed the existing recreation, sports and leisure facilities in the study area (i.e. the Balbriggan, Rush-Lusk and Swords LEAs in County Fingal) and provided recommendations based on the gap and needs analysis that has been presented.





# CONCLUSION

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**To conclude, this audit has analysed the existing recreation, sports and leisure facilities in the study area (i.e. the Balbriggan, Rush-Lusk and Swords LEAs in County Fingal) and provided recommendations based on the gap and needs analysis that has been presented.**

The following objectives have therefore been achieved as part of this audit:

A review of international, national, regional and local policy documents in relation to recreation, health and sports facilities and promotion has been undertaken.

A comprehensive audit of the study area has been undertaken to identify and investigate each facility.

The demographic profiles for the study area and within each LEA have been analysed.

The existing and future population of each LEA has been investigated to understand anticipated demand.

Information on ownership status, accessibility and equitability and insights into the demographics and quality of health.

The gaps and needs analysis of the study area have been interrogated to focus on what is required in order to develop and maintain facilities.

Recommendations have been made to inform a strategy for Fingal County Council which identifies which facilities are needed and where, to allow the evidence base to be used to help secure new investment in facilities throughout the study area.

The gap and needs analysis has identified what facilities are required now and in the future in the study area. There were several concerns related to the gaps in provision and needs associated with current and future provision of sports and recreation facilities highlighted throughout the report which included;

**Overall a total of 323 facilities were identified within the study area as part of this audit.**

**The distribution of facilities varies by category type, however inequitable distribution of some facilities was evident between urban and rural areas in each LEA.**

Pitch sports, are the most prominent facility type in the study area with 141 facilities identified and of these, GAA clubs and outdoor pitches are most common throughout.

The very low provision of water activity facilities throughout the county, especially indoor swimming pools in the Balbriggan and Rush-Lusk LEAs.

**67% of the indoor activity facilities are private leisure facilities that are not publicly accessible.**

The recommendations that have been set out are based on the data obtained as part of this audit. Going forward, the implementation of the recommendations will require commitment from Fingal County Council as well as collaborative partners, facility operators and stakeholders such as national sports authorities, local clubs as well as residents and those involved in the day to day running of facilities throughout the study area.



*Portrane aerial view*

## Appendix 1 - Policy Context

### International

#### UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all United Nations Member States, including Ireland in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. There are 17 goals set out, each with their own actions and targets which compel long term action and strategic thinking about how we can address today's complex challenges and leave a better planet for future generations. The following overarching goals are of particular relevance to this audit:

- Goal 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing
- Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities
- Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Goal 16 – Peace Justice and Strong Institutions
- Goal 17 – Partnership for the Goals

#### UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 31)

Article 31: Leisure, recreation and cultural activities states the following two points in relation to children;

‘State parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities, appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

State Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic

life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.’

#### UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Article 30: Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport states parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life. , and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:

- Enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats;
- Enjoy access to television programmes, films, theatre and other cultural activities, in accessible formats;
- Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance.

It states that parties shall take appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to have the opportunity to develop and utilize their creative, artistic and intellectual potential, not only for their own benefit, but also for the enrichment of society. With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, it states that parties shall take appropriate measures:

- To encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels;
- To ensure that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to organize, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and, to this end, encourage the provision, on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction, training and resources;
- To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sporting, recreational and tourism venues;
- To ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system;
- To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organization of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities.

## National

### National Planning Framework (2018):

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country out to the year 2040.

The core principle that runs through the framework is that of sustainable development, and the creation of sustainable high-quality communities. Two key themes and recognised National Strategic Outcomes of relevance to this audit that are identified within the NPF are 'Enhanced Amenity and Heritage' and 'Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services'. Below are brief descriptions of both of these National Strategic Outcomes;

*'7: Enhanced Amenity and Heritage;*

*This will ensure that our cities, towns and villages are attractive and can offer a good quality of life. It will require investment in well-designed public realm, which includes public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure. It also includes amenities in rural areas, such as national and forest parks, activity-based tourism and trails such as greenways, blueways and peatways. This is linked to and must integrate with our built, cultural and natural heritage, which has intrinsic value in defining the character of urban and rural areas and adding to their attractiveness and sense of place.'*

*'10: Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services:*

*Good access to a range of quality education and health services, relative to the scale of a region, city, town, neighbourhood or community is a defining characteristic of attractive, successful and competitive places. Compact, smart growth in urban areas and strong and stable rural communities will enable the enhanced and effective provision of a range of accessible services.'*

To contribute to the Compact Growth of the Dublin region, and specifically addresses the following National Policy Objectives;

*'26: Support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, through integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy.'*

*'27: Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.'*

There are two Strategic Investment Priorities (7 and 10 respectively), which relate to sport and health within the NPF. These are 'Culture Heritage and Sport' and 'Education, Health and Childcare'. The following is set out in relation to those aspects:

Chapter 4, Page 57;

*'Enhancing public health by encouraging and facilitating more active lifestyles by creating a more walkable and cycling friendly urban environment.'*

Section 6.2, Pg. 82;

*'Our health and our environment are inextricably linked. Specific health risks that can be influenced by spatial planning include heart disease, respiratory disease, mental health, obesity and injuries. By taking a whole-system approach to addressing the many factors that impact on health and wellbeing and which contribute to health inequalities, and by empowering and enabling individuals and communities to make healthier choices, it will be possible to improve health outcomes, particularly for the next generation of citizens.'*

Page 88, Childcare and Young People:

*'The continued provision and enhancement of facilities and amenities for children and young people, such as childcare, schools, playgrounds, parks and sportsground, remains necessary and will need to be maintained at similar levels for the foreseeable future thereafter.'*

Rural Towns, Pg. 72;

*'Ireland's built heritage assets are a non-renewable resource that merit being nurtured in a manner appropriate to their significance as an aid to understanding the past, contributing to community well-being and quality of life as well as regional economic development.'*

### National Sports Policy 2018-2027

Over the past 20 years, Ireland's stock of sports facilities at local, regional and national level has been substantially improved with the help of Government support under the Sports Capital and Local Authority investment programmes. This investment helps promote sports, ensure quality sporting experiences for adults and children, as well as assisting Ireland's top sports persons to compete successfully at the highest levels. The investment is contributing to the health and wellbeing of the nation as well as to social and economic development in Ireland.

Action 16 of the policy document states;

*'We will commit to run the Sports Capital Programme in each year of this policy, to fund facilities targeting increased participation and improved participation experiences throughout the population. The scoring system and assessment process for the Sports Capital Programme will be reviewed to ensure that the programme is achieving objectives in line with this National Sports Policy.'*

As outlined in Section 1, this Policy sets out that a National Sports Facilities Audit (whether privately or publicly owned) will be conducted periodically by local authorities at a local level and completed within 2 years of the publication of the policy (i.e. this audit). The periodic audit will guide decisions regarding the sport capital projects which will be prioritised for public funding.

Specifically, Action 18 states;

**'We will periodically conduct a nationwide audit of sports facilities (whether publicly or privately owned), with the first such audit to be completed within 2 years of the publication of this policy. These audits will guide decisions regarding the sport capital projects to be prioritised for public funding and we will also consult with NGBs in relation to any further actions required. Local Authorities will conduct the audit at a local level, as part of their role in implementing their Local Sports Plans. As part of the audit we will work with relevant stakeholders to develop and maintain a fully-accessible, comprehensive and up-to-date national database of sports facilities which will also be translated into a web-based portal to serve the needs of the public.'**

Further Action 19 identifies further potential funding streams for sports project by stating that:

**'We will establish a new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund to support projects where the Exchequer investment will exceed the maximum amount available under the Sports Capital Programme.'**

### Ireland Active: Strategic Plan 2017-2020.

The vision set out by the Leisure Health and Fitness Association in this Strategic Plan is to be an effective voice for the Irish leisure, health and fitness sector. Further, the mission set out is that Ireland Active promotes, supports and protects the social and economic importance of the Irish leisure, health and fitness sector with the aim of getting more people, more active, more often.

The plan sets out five supporting strategic objective areas aimed at delivering specific strategic objectives (Actions and Deliverables) throughout each area. The 5 strategic objectives are;

- Trusted voice of the industry
- Leadership and Advocacy
- Policy and Standards excellence;
- Enhancing and Supporting Member Services; and
- Operationally Effective Organisation.

### Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2025

This Framework sets out a vision for a Healthy Ireland, where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where well-being is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility. Equitability and the empowerment of people and communities has been emphasised under Theme 3 whilst Action 3.10 identifies:

*'In creating 'activity friendly' environments: cycle lanes, playgrounds, well-lit paths, etc, local authorities will engage with local communities, schools and other stakeholders to plan facilities that are appropriate to the needs of the community.'*

The framework describes four high-level goals;

- Goal 1: Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life;
- Goal 2: Reduce health inequalities;
- Goal 3: Protect the public from threats to health and well-being; and
- Goal 4: Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland.

### Sports Ireland Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities

This policy has been prepared to externalise much of what has been implicit in Sports Ireland's work with the sport sector for many years and explicitly sets a position in relation to the participation in sport and physical activity by people with disabilities.

Several principles and actions have been set to highlight how funding and the growth of sports for people with disabilities will be adopted into the future. Additionally, it highlights that as part of Sports Ireland funding to the Disability Sports Sector in 2017, Fingal received funding from Sports Ireland to employ a Sports Development Officer specifically to develop sport for people with a disability

### Positive Ageing-Starts Now! The National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013

The Strategy was developed on the basis of the expressed views of older people and their representatives about why they, as citizens of Ireland, need to enable them to age positively. Therefore, the Strategy is citizen-centred as opposed to service-centred and the vision statement set out as part of this Strategy was;

'Ireland will be a society for all ages that celebrates and prepares properly for individual and population ageing. It will enable and support all ages and older people to enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential. It will promote and respect older people's engagement in economic, social, cultural, community and family life, and foster better solidarity between generations. It will be a society in which the equality, independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity of older people are pursued at all times.'

It represents a holistic strategy that addresses a wide spectrum of issues to ensure that ageing in Ireland is positive. Further a comprehensive public consultation exercise was undertaken which included the receipt of 190 written submissions from older people, statutory agencies, community and voluntary organisations, academic and cultural institutions as well as the following:

- A series of public consultation meetings which were attended by over 1,100 people;
- Meetings between the Minister for Older People and groups representing vulnerable and marginalised older people to discuss in greater detail issue raised in their submissions; and
- A meeting in Co. Louth to hear the learnings and experience of the Louth Age Friendly County Initiative.

Four national goals emerged with objectives set out to achieve these. Each goal is set out below;

- Remove barriers to participation and provide more opportunities for the continued involvement of people as they age in all aspects of cultural, economic and social life in their communities according to their needs, preferences and capacities;
- Support people as they age to maintain, improve or manage their physical and mental health and wellbeing;
- Enable people to age with confidence, security and dignity in their own homes and communities for as long as possible; and
- Support and use research about people as they age to better inform policy responses to population ageing in Ireland.

### Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures 2014-2020

The national policy framework for children and young people was published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in April 2014. The vision set out in this policy framework is;

‘to make Ireland the best small country in the world in which to grow up and a raise a family, and where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.’

The first of the five national outcomes is ‘Active and Healthy’ which states the following;

‘Being active and healthy is a significant contributor to overall wellbeing. The majority of children and young people in Ireland enjoy good health. However, we have some significant health challenges, including obesity, substance misuse and mental health:

- 6% of 13-year-olds are obese and a further 20% are overweight;
- 20% of 16-year-olds are weekly drinkers;
- 75% of mental health disorders emerge before the age of 25.

The aims are that all children and young people are physically healthy, able to make positive health choices, have good mental health, have a positive and respectful approach to relationships and sexual health, and that their lives are enriched through the enjoyment of play, recreation, sports, arts, culture and nature.’

### Get Ireland Walking Strategy and Action Plan 2017 -2020

Sport Ireland, Healthy Ireland and Mountaineering Ireland established an initiative in 2013 with the core aim to unify and enable the efforts of all agencies and organisations interested in promoting walking. Get Ireland Walking is now a nationwide initiative that will deliver programmes in conjunction with all Local Sports Partnerships and this publication is the first Strategy and Action Plan for Get Ireland Walking.

The vision of Get Ireland Walking is a vibrant culture of walking throughout Ireland and this Strategy and Action Plan provides a blueprint for the promotion of walking to 2021. Within the Strategy and Action Plan, 41 actions have been documented and arranged into seven thematic areas as follows:

- Theme 1 - Public Awareness, Education & Communication aims to create accessible walking-related information and spread a positive walking message.
- Theme 2 - Children and Young People aims to provide children and young people with increased opportunities to be physically active through walking.
- Theme 3 - Health aims to acknowledge and promote walking as a health-enhancing activity.
- Theme 4 - Environment aims to connect walkers with suitable walking environments and advocate for improved pedestrian infrastructure and recreational walking routes.
- Theme 5 - Communities aims to develop and support vibrant and sustainable walking communities.
- Theme 6 - Research, Monitoring and Evaluation aims to provide an evidence-base for the promotion of walking.
- Theme 7 - Partnerships aims to activate and grow a valued network of partners that collaborate to achieve shared outcomes.

Each of the seven distinct themes are interrelated and influence each other in order to promote walking across Ireland. It has been outlined that successful implementation requires multi-agency commitment to deliver a vibrant culture of walking across Ireland.

### A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy Action Plan 2016 -2025

The Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016 -2025 published by the Department of Health outlines the government's desire to assist its people to achieve better health and to reduce the levels of overweight and obesity. The Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016-2025 is based on a set of core principles and informed by the Healthy Ireland guiding principles. The vision of the Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016 -2025 is to turn the tide of the overweight and obesity epidemic with the aim of increasing the number of people with a healthy weight.

The role of physical activity is highlighted therein and addressing sedentary behaviours and realising the benefits of physical activity for weight control and for those who remain overweight or obese are key actions. Specifically, the Obesity Policy and Action Plan 2016 -2025 states that:

*"Many things already happening in Ireland support and encourage participation in physical activity. However, no single organisation working on its own can get the country more active. It takes cross-sectoral partnerships involving all levels of government – national and local – as well as state agencies, the business community, the sports community, the rest of the community and voluntary sector, and of course the commitment of individuals."*

## Regional

### Eastern & Midland Regional Economic & Spatial Strategy 2019-2031 (EMRA RSES):

The Regional and Spatial Economic Strategy takes a strategic approach over a 12 - 20 year period to the spatial planning and economic strategy for nine counties containing twelve local authorities including Fingal. On page 8, the following description is given for what the EMRA RSES is;

*'The principal statutory purpose of the RSES is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Regions. The RSES is required under the Planning and Development Act 2000 to address employment, retail, housing, transport, water services, energy and communications, waste management, education, health, sports and community facilities, environment and heritage, landscape, sustainable development and climate change.'*

The NPF outlines that local authorities should follow these Guiding Principles for recreation and open space:

- Facilitate a sufficient supply of good quality sports and recreation facilities, including networks for walking, cycling and other activities and shall maximise the multiple use of such facilities by encouraging the co-location of services between sports providers, schools, colleges and other community facilities.
- Support play policies to address the play and recreation needs of children and young people and ensure the integration of play provision and child-friendly neighbourhoods.
- Provide for the development of dedicated youth spaces in key urban areas and the development of multifunction spaces in smaller communities / rural areas.

Specifically on page 200/201 of the EMRA RSES, the following is stated about Recreation and Open Space;

*'The focus on compact growth and increased densities in urban areas will require a greater alignment between the development of communities and the provision and planning of open space to provide for the recreational and amenity needs of communities. The RSES supports the preparation of open space and parks strategies by local authorities, and for enhanced cross boundary collaboration to provide for a hierarchy of open space provision including regional scale open space and recreational facilities.'*

*Recreation infrastructure and green spaces which are attractive, rich in biodiversity and well connected are shown to contribute to improved physical and mental health. It is important to consider green space within a holistic framework as it can be enhanced through other means in the built environment including the quality of the surrounding environment, density of residencies, land-use mix, connectedness and walkability. The presence of green spaces also has a role to play in reducing air pollution, mitigating floods, protecting wildlife and improving building energy performance.'*

The following regional planning objectives (RPOs) are set for Recreation and Open Space;

*'RPO 9.14: Local authorities shall seek to support the planned provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve.'*

*RPO 9.15: Local authorities shall support the vision and objectives of the National Sports Policy, including working with local sports partnerships, clubs, communities and partnerships within and beyond sport, to increase sport and physical activity participation levels locally.'*

*RPO 9.16: Local authorities shall support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, through integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policies contained in development plans.'*

*RPO 9.17: To support local authorities in the development of regional scale Open Space and Recreational facilities particularly those close to large or growing population centres in the Region.'*

Pg. 205: Access to Childcare, Education and Health Services

*'It is expected that the number of children will continue to increase until the mid-2020s and decline only slowly thereafter. This means that the continued provision and enhancement of facilities and amenities for children and young people, such as childcare, schools, playgrounds, parks and sportsground, is a priority and will continue to be for the foreseeable future.'*

## Local

### Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023

The Fingal County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 sets the overall strategy for planning and sustainable development within the administrative boundaries. The County Development Plan through the policies and objectives contained therein, provides the direction for the future development of County Fingal and includes the following under the strategic vision:

*'Promote active and healthy lifestyles through increased opportunities for walking, cycling and active sport and recreation.'*

Further, the wellbeing of residents within Fingal is prioritised as set out under Point 2 of the Main Aims of the Development Plan;

*'Provide for the future well-being of the residents of the County by;*

- Supporting economic activity and increasing employment opportunities;*
- Protecting and improving the quality of the built and natural environments;*
- Ensuring the provision of adequate housing, necessary infrastructure and community facilities;*
- Promoting and improving quality of life and public health; and*
- Build on the progress made in the County following the conclusion of the previous development plan.'*

Additionally, the importance of providing recreation, sports and leisure facilities (i.e. those subject to this audit) has been set out under point 19 of the Strategic Policy:

*'Ensure the timely provision of community infrastructure including schools, recreational, sports facilities and emergency services, commensurate with the number of housing units proposed for construction on lands zoned for residential development.'*

Central to placemaking is the development of sustainable communities, where communities are able to evolve and the needs of today can be facilitated without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of new developments and public spaces.

It is fundamentally about responding to the context of a place, through the understanding of its evolution and history, its functionality, its impacts on those living and working there as well as how it interacts with the environment. Access to public transport, education, community facilities, leisure, retail, health services and jobs are as important as the aesthetic of a place. Provision of facilities for community,

educational, health and recreational needs is mentioned throughout the Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023. A number of relevant objectives have also been identified as relevant to this audit:

- Objective SS10 - Promote public parks, outdoor sports facilities and other recreational uses within the Greenbelts in accordance with the Green Infrastructure Strategy and open space policy.
- Objective PM06 - Protect the primacy and maintain the future viability of the existing major towns in the County and develop them with an appropriate mix of commercial, recreational, civic, cultural, leisure, tourism and residential uses.
- Objective PM07 - Ensure each Rural Village develops in such a way as to provide a sustainable mix of commercial and community activity within an identified village core which includes provision for enterprise, residential, retail, commercial, tourism and community facilities.
- Objective PM51 - Provide a wide variety of accessible public open spaces, including allotments, community gardens, permaculture parklands and sporting facilities, on a hierarchical basis throughout the County in order to achieve a choice of open space facilities. Best practice Green Infrastructure Guidelines should be used to determine the location and type of open spaces to be provided.
- Objective PM54 - Allow recreational/amenity facilities (indoor or outdoor) of a more intensive nature to be provided in tandem with larger developments in place of the open space requirement, within a specified timeframe. Such provision shall be at the sole discretion of the Planning Authority. Such facilities shall either be on site or located within the open space 'accessibility from homes' specified in Table 12.5.
- Objective PM55 - Ensure coherent clustering of recreational and open space facilities into a recreational hub arrangement unless a more practicable solution is demonstrated.
- Objective PM56 - Ensure coherent clustering of recreational and open space facilities into a recreational hub arrangement unless a more practicable solution is demonstrated.
- Objective PM57 - Require that intensive recreational/amenity facilities be agreed with, and given in ownership to the Council. The Council may directly manage these facilities and may grant management licences and/or sporting leases in respect of the operation of these facilities, and uses shall be consistent with the provisions of any deed of dedication to which the lands are subject. In areas which are subject to Local Area Plans, the general policy will be decided in the first place at Local Area Plan level, rather than when considering individual planning applications.
- Objective PM58 - Ensure intensive recreational/amenity facilities are not used exclusively by any one group.

- Objective PM59 - Consider in exceptional circumstances particularly desirable open space/ recreation/ amenity facilities which do not comply with the foregoing provisions, but only with the specific approval of the Council.
- Objective PM68 - Promote the clustering of community, recreational and open space facilities, with community facilities being located in local centres or combined with school facilities as appropriate.
- Objective PM72 - Resist the loss of existing social and community facilities such as community centres and youth clubs or any sports facilities including playing fields, unless satisfactory alternatives are available.
- Objective RF112 - Support recreational pursuits which promote the use of natural landscape features in a way which does not detract or cause undue damage to the features upon which any such proposed initiatives rely. Where the proposed pursuit involves land use changes either within or adjacent to European sites, proposals will be subject to Screening for Appropriate Assessment.
- Objective ED72 - Facilitate, where appropriate, the conversion of former demesnes and estates and their outbuildings into integrated tourist, leisure and recreational complex type developments subject to architectural conservation best practice and proper planning and sustainable development, having regard to protecting the demesne type landscape and existing natural features, and providing improved pedestrian access, where appropriate.
- Objective ED82 - Undertake a feasibility study of the Fingal coastline to identify potential sites to accommodate marina development relevant to recreational pursuits and requirements. As part of the study the impact on the receiving marine environment, including the coastline, will be assessed and Screening for Appropriate Assessment and SEA undertaken.
- Objective GI26 - Maximise the use and potential of existing parks, open space and recreational provision, both passive and active, by integrating existing facilities with proposals for new development and by seeking to upgrade existing facilities where appropriate.
- Objective GI27 - Provide a range of accessible new parks, open spaces and recreational facilities accommodating a wide variety of uses (both passive and active), use intensities and interests.
- Objective DMS93 - Any application for community facilities such as leisure facilities, sports grounds, playing fields, play areas, community halls, organisational meeting facilities, medical facilities, childcare facilities, new school provision and other community orientated developments, shall have regard to the following:
  - Overall need in terms of necessity, deficiency, and opportunity to enhance or develop local or County facilities.
  - Practicalities of site in terms of site location relating to uses, impact on local amenities, desirability, and accessibility.
  - Conformity with the requirements of appropriate legislative guidelines

**Fingal Sports Office Vision Statement 2019 – 2021**

The Fingal County Council Sports Office which is part of Sport Ireland’s network of Local Sports Partnerships, has delivered this interim policy statement that facilitates certain functions and procedures as outlined in the National Sports Strategy 2018 – 2027. Local Sports Partnerships of this nature receive funding and support from Sports Ireland to achieve identified functions including:

- Providing local sports education and information.
- Increasing participation at all levels.
- Creation and implementation of plans for long term local sports development.
- The establishment of a sustainable structure to assist all those involved in local sports development.
- Delivery of projects and programmes particularly for target groups.

The key aims of this Vision Statement are to:

1. To create effective pathways for all citizens, to participate in lifelong patterns of involvement in sport, prioritising target groups.
2. Work in partnership with Industry experts to research, plan, develop, deliver and evaluate projects and programmes.
3. Continue to prioritise training and development for sports volunteers, staff and those working at every level in the delivery of sport in Fingal.
4. To provide a ‘best in class’ mass participation schools sports and education platform within Fingal.
5. Research and support the development of a network of accessible, high quality facilities to meet the needs of Fingal’s growing communities.
6. Establish effective leadership strategies, involving partnership with public, private, corporate and voluntary sectors.

**Healthy Fingal Framework (draft form)**

This draft framework document identifies 19 different actions under five pillars, which correspond with the National Healthy Ireland Strategy and provide a roadmap for improving health in Fingal. Specifically, the following objectives and actions are identified under the following five pillars:

1. **Healthy Eating and Active Living** - To ensure that access to existing health focused programmes and amenities is maximised by promotion and provision of comprehensive on line information.
2. **Mental Health and Wellbeing** - To compliment existing strategies such as “Connecting for Life” by supporting people from all age ranges to have access to evidence based wellbeing programmes, as well as the development of dementia friendly communities.
3. **Sexual Health** -To provide a wide range of age appropriate and evidence based sex education and sexual health programmes in Fingal.
4. **Tobacco** - To continue to promote a Tobacco Free Fingal with a particular focus on enhancing the availability of smoking cessation programmes in line with social determinants of health model – ensuring access for the most disadvantaged communities.
5. **Alcohol** - To support interventions that will lead to a reduction in the intake of alcohol and increased uptake of services for younger people.

## Appendix 2: Survey Questions

1. **Name:** Name of the sports facility;  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. **Ownership:** Ownership whether Private or Public;  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. **Chain:** Is the sports facility part of a chain;  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. **Cost:** What is the cost of using the facility and include details on membership etc;  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. **Contact:** Contact number for facility;  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. **Condition:** Condition of the facility within the following three brackets: Good, Fair and Bad;  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. **Utilisation:** Can you estimate the visitor/user numbers to your facility and/or by activity if applicable, e.g. average no. of people in a typical class;  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. **Capacity:** Can you specify what the capacity of your facility is for the above stated activities, e.g. max number of people in a typical class;  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. **Activity:** What form of activity takes place, whether it be soccer, rugby etc;  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. **Opening hours;**  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. **Disabled Access:** Does the facility have disabled access available on site and is there any classes or sports offered to those with disabilities?;  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. **Age:** Ages who use the facility;  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. **Comments:** Have you any comments on what sports facilities are required in the community at present? Have you had any issues with your facility? Where can the council help you?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3: Further detail on Pitch Sports

Category	Balbriggan LEA	Rush-Lusk LEA	Swords LEA	Grand Total
<b>All Weather Pitch</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>
All Weather Pitch	2			2
All Weather Pitch - Football		2	1	3
All Weather Pitch - GAA		2	3	5
All Weather Pitch - Hockey	1			1
<b>Cricket Club</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>6</b>
Cricket clubhouse	2			2
Cricket Pitch	1	3		4
<b>Football Club</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>
Football Pitch	1	1		2
Football clubhouse	3	3	2	8
Outdoor Pitch		2	2	4
<b>Outdoor Pitch</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>82</b>
Football Pitch	8	7	8	23
GAA Pitch	4	9	8	21
All Weather Pitch - GAA		1	1	2
Outdoor Pitch	7	6	22	35
All Weather Pitch - Rugby	1			1
<b>Rugby Club</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>
Rugby Pitch	5		1	6
Rugby clubhouse	1			1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>141</b>



SPORTS AND RECREATION  
**FACILITIES AUDIT**

*for the Local Electoral Areas of*  
BALBRIGGAN, SWORDS, RUSH-LUSK.

January 2021