

An aerial photograph of a large, green village square. In the background, a row of houses with red-tiled roofs and a church with a stone tower are visible. The square is filled with people; some are sitting on the grass, while others are engaged in sports. A soccer game is in progress on the left, and a cricket match is taking place on the right. The scene is bathed in the warm light of late afternoon.

Sports & Leisure Strategy (Draft)

Wheatley Parish and the Surrounding Area

2027 – 2037

Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of a sports and leisure strategy for Wheatley and the surrounding area is to provide a clear plan to increase participation in physical activity and improve the health and well-being of the local community. It aims to ensure that sports facilities and green spaces are well-maintained and accessible to all residents, while supporting local clubs and promoting inclusivity. Overall, the strategy helps guide investment and decision-making to create a more active, connected, and healthier parish.

Why Sports and Leisure Matters

Social value of sport and Leisure

- **Strengthens community wellbeing** — Sport and leisure activities are essential to life in Wheatley and Holton, helping residents stay active, connected, and proud of their local area
- **Improves physical and mental health** — Regular activity in Wheatley's parks and recreation spaces reduces risks of obesity, heart disease, and stress while boosting mood, confidence, and energy. A more active community is a healthier, happier community.
- **Encourages active lifestyles** — Accessible spaces for walking, football, and informal exercise make it easier for residents to build healthy habits into everyday life.
- **Builds stronger social bonds** — Sport brings people together across ages and backgrounds, reducing isolation and creating shared experiences that strengthen local relationships.
- **Promotes inclusion and belonging** — Activities supported by Wheatley and Holton Parish Council help ensure everyone feels welcome and able to participate, fostering a community where people feel valued and connected.
- **Creates a more resilient community** — When residents come together through sport and leisure, Wheatley and Holton become more supportive, more cohesive, and better equipped to face challenges

Village Overview

Wheatley is a thriving village in South Oxfordshire, midway between Oxford and Thame, serving as a hub for surrounding communities.



4,300

Population
(Census 2021)



460+

New Homes
Planned (Holton)



25%

Residents
Aged 65+



18%

Residents
Under 18

Village Future Population

01

Population Increases

The population will likely grow significantly above current levels owing to new homes.

02

Ageing Population

Wheatley and the surrounding area may become *slightly younger* if the new homes attract young families, but ageing is still likely to be a feature.

03

Inclusive Participation

Diversity will increase but remain limited relative to larger towns/cities.

04

Local Services

Local services (schools, transport, health care) may need to respond to a shift in demand from both families and older residents.

Recreation Grounds & Open Spaces

- **Church Road Recreation Ground**
Climbing frame, swings, balance course, seating, football goals
- **Cullum Road Play Area**
Climbing frame, slide, swings, spinners, football goal
- **Farm Close Road**
Swings and seating area – improvements planned
- **Littleworth Road**
Open space adjacent to the Primary School
- **Holton Playing Fields**
Pitches, Courts and changing facilities



Community Indoor Spaces – Add scouts

- **Mary Bells Village Hall**
Hosting meetings, social events, clubs, and local activities in its hall and meeting rooms.
- **Holton Village Hall**
Hosting meetings, social events, clubs, and local activities in its hall and meeting rooms.
- **Wheatley Churches'**
Hosting meetings, social events, and local activities
- **Wheatley Sport's Pavilion**
Social and training events, clubs
- **The Park Sport Centre**
Main leisure facility, offering a gym, sports hall, squash courts, and fitness studios for residents, clubs, and school use.
- **Wheatley Schools**
Indoor spaces such as classrooms and a school hall used for PE, assemblies, clubs, and community activities supporting both education and wider extracurricular use.



Sports Clubs & Facilities



Wheatley Playing Field Trust

- Football, rugby, cricket pitches & tennis courts
- Managed by Wheatley Playing Fields Trust
- Changing rooms & function areas



Park Sports Centre

- Modern gym facility
- 5-court sports hall
- Squash courts
- Dance studio & fitness classes



Community Clubs

- Wheatley FC
- Wheatley FC Juniors
- Wheatley RUFC
- Walking Football group
- Wheatley Oaks FC
- Karate Club



Leisure & Social Activities

A vibrant community
with diverse activities
for all ages

Social Sport and Activities

Team Sports and community-led activities (Walking and Wellbeing groups)

Youth Activities

Boys and Girls Football, Scouts, Guides, Beavers, and primary school led activities

Indoor Sports

Gym, Badminton, Football dance studio, fitness classes at Park Sports Centre

Walking & Cycling

Extensive network of footpaths and bridleways to open countryside

Outdoor Recreation

Shotover Country Park (300 acres), extensive footpaths and bridleways

Strategic Context

Aligning with district and national frameworks for sports and leisure provision

South Oxfordshire Leisure Facilities Strategy 2023–2041

- Protect and enhance existing facilities
- Provide new tennis courts, gyms, and swimming pools
- Approved unanimously by Cabinet in November 2024

South Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy 2023–2041

- Strategic plans for football, cricket, rugby, and hockey
- Increased demand from housing growth
- Action plans to allocate funding with partners

Sport England Uniting the Movement 2020–2030

- Joining forces on the big 5 issues
- Catalysts for Change
- Advocating for movement sport and physical activity

VMOST - A Strategic Framework



VMOST – Vision and Mission

Vision

An active and vibrant inclusive community

Mission

To create an active and inclusive community where everyone can take part in sport and leisure. Working with local communities to improve facilities, protect green spaces and promote healthier, more connected lifestyles.

VMOST - Objectives

01

Increase Participation

Maintain and upgrade existing recreation grounds, play areas, and sports pitches to ensure safe, high-quality provision for all residents.

02

Protect & Enhance Facilities

Provision of new facilities to meet the increasing population. Maintain and upgrade existing recreation grounds, play areas, and sports pitches to ensure safe, high-quality provision for all residents.

03

Support Clubs and Organisations

Develop programmes for underrepresented groups including older residents (25% aged 65+), young people, and those with disabilities.

04

Active Partnerships

Collaborate with local government, sports clubs, schools, and the Wheatley Playing Field Trust to deliver shared goals. Respond to population growth from the 500 new homes in Holton by developing new facilities to meet increased demand.

Sports and Leisure Strategy 2027 - 2037

Vision	An active and vibrant inclusive community			
Mission	To create an active, inclusive community where everyone can take part in sport and leisure. Working with the local communities to improve facilities, protect green spaces, and promote healthier, more connected lifestyles.			
Objectives	Increase Participation	Protect and Enhance Facilities	Support Clubs and Organisations	Active Partnerships
Strategies	Focus on Children and young people – Develop lifelong participation habits	Maintain and improve existing facilities	Club Development	Partnership to support the delivery of Sport and Leisure
	Focus on older age (55+) groups to support health benefits	Facilities plan based on local need (Brookes site, etc)	Governance and funding support	Build strong relationships with local stakeholders
	Community-led activities that appeal to different interests, ages and abilities.	Secure sustainable funding and partnership	Volunteer development	Strengthen partnerships with schools
	Improve awareness and communication of the local offer	Enhance outdoor spaces	Leadership pathway (Youth)	Develop health and wellbeing sports partnerships
	Make participation affordable, accessible and welcoming. = Reduce barriers/Improve experiences		Collaboration to share resources (Events, venues, training)	Engage with local businesses

Immediate Delivery & Action Plan

An active and vibrant inclusive community

To create an active, inclusive community where everyone can take part in sport and leisure. Working with the local communities to improve facilities, protect green spaces, and promote healthier, more connected lifestyles.

Active Partnerships	Formalise joint working with district strategies Define and develop strategy management group/sport association	2026–2027	All stakeholders
Increase Participation	Play Areas - Upgrade Farm Close Road & Cullum Road facilities	2026–2027	Parish Council, SODC
Protect and Enhance Facilities	Improve pitch drainage & facilities refurbishment Lease on the Littleworth road field	2026–2028	Playing Fields Trust, Clubs
Support Clubs and Organisations	Promote and develop new and existing sports and leisure programmes based on the Sports and Leisure Strategy	2026–2027	Sports clubs, Schools
New Development	Secure developer contributions for sports provision	2026–2036	SODC, Developers