

Item 6

Proposed 3 Football Facility Ancells Park

FULL COUNCIL

Wednesday 5 March 2014

OFFICER: James Corrigan - Town Clerk

DATE: 27 February 2013

SUBJECT: Proposed 3 Football Pitch

1. Background

Fleet Town Council was approached by Hart District Council (HDC) last summer to look at delivering a Third Generation 5 a side Artificial Football pitch (3G) on Fleet Town Council's (FTC) land with approximately £180,000 of developer gain funds (S.106) that is available as result of new housing in Elvetham Heath.

FTC has previously agreed that the only suitable location within its estate for this type of facility is at Ancells Farm. A condition from Sport England and of the S.106 agreement is that the pitch cannot be at the expense of a grass pitch.

Following an invitation from HDC to submit an expression of interest an outline bid was submitted on the 18th August 2013, **Appendix 1**. The RLA Committee on the 16th October decided to undertake some consultation on the proposal. The consultation exercise has taken place since this time including a Facebook, website link to a Survey Monkey survey, advert in Fleet Life and the distribution of leaflets to the whole of the Ancells ward. Surveys have also been available throughout in The Harlington.

A consultation day was held in the football pavilion on the 1st February to give local residents an opportunity to secure answers to any queries they may have. Over 200 people attended and discussed the project with Councillors and officers.

The survey closed on the 21st February 2014 and analysis has since taken place of the results.

The Town Council has met with HDC and has exchanged correspondence throughout this time, the last meeting taking place on Monday the 24th February 2014. At this meeting it was emphasised that there is no spare time to deliver this project now and that FTC would have to give HDC a final decision on the 6th March 2014.

It has been suggested that there is another option to spend the £180,000 fund already agreed. This is not the case and the potential project extremely unlikely to be possible for a number of reasons.

This option is the possibility of locating it at Calthorpe School. However whilst the school does have plans to introduce a new full size 3G on its site after the school expansion programme has been completed as the location is on the proposed work cabin and car park site it will not be completed within the strict timeline of the S.106 agreement. The location appears to be an existing football pitch thus contravening both the agreement and the Sport England requirements. Finally the plans at the school, to meet curriculum requirements are for a full

size 3G, the 106 agreement states it must be for 5 a side. Another issue of contention is that the proposed 3G at Calthorpe School will be closer to housing than the proposed one at Ancells Park.

2. Survey results

The survey itself was kept simple and was aimed to ensure that as many people as possible took part. The survey available on line was identical to that in the leaflet that was hand delivered to every household in Ancells Ward and was available throughout the period at The Harlington, **Appendix 2**. The first question was house number and postcode, the second was do you support a 3G football pitch at Ancells Park yes or no? The third was if yes which size do you support small or medium? Finally question four was any comments? The comments are attached as **Appendix 3** and have previously been circulated to Councillors. The redactions are to hide personal data where this was necessary.

There was a tremendous response, in total there were 722 surveys returned. Taking the votes as a whole, i.e. for the whole Town they are;

In favour of the 3G Football pitch?

YES	551	76.32%
NO	171	23.68%

Pitch size

SMALL	3.88%
MEDIUM	72.71%
NA	24.93%

Of those who want a pitch

SMALL	5%
MEDIUM	95%

If the results are then taken as the **Ancells residents** alone the picture is

In favour of the 3G Football pitch?

YES	174	57%
NO	157	43%

Of those who want a pitch

SMALL	6%
MEDIUM	94%

Clearly the overwhelming majority (76.32%) of the Town residents (including Ancells) want a medium 3G football facility at Ancells Park.

When this is reduced to Ancells residents only the figures change to a majority in favour (57%)

Within both areas the vast majority who want the pitch want a medium size one, 94% and 95%. The reasons for this are outlined below, but simply a smaller facility would not be of any significant help to the 1200 plus youth players in the Town playing in organised teams. It would

inevitably become used more by casual 5 a side adults which would be more difficult to police and would inevitably result in not meeting the needs of those in favour or those against the facility.

A detailed analysis of the voting habits of households indicates that there were thirty households where more than one vote was cast, presumably by different residents. Of the thirty households where this occurred thirteen households voted yes to the facility, thirteen no, one of which had three votes. Four households had one yes and one no vote. Therefore the impact of the double and one treble vote from a house is a net position of one gained vote for the no vote, so is negligible.

3. Unmet demand for football facilities in Fleet

Fleet Town Council through the Chairman of RLA and the Town Clerk / Sports Development Officer regularly meet with the local football clubs. It has been made clear at these meetings that there is a significant demand for training and match pitches in the Town which is currently not being met forcing residents to travel out of Town to fulfil their fixtures and training requirements. Currently in the Town there are approximately the following young people playing football.

Fleet Town Colts	300 players	Sat/Sun (20 teams)
Fleet Town Girls	125 players	Sat/Sun (10 teams)
Fleet Spurs youth and girls	325 players	Sat/Sun (24 teams)
Crookham Rovers	250 players	Sat/Sun (19 teams)
Hart FC	200 players	Sat/ Sun (17 teams)

The total number of youth players therefore is approximately 1200. Of these none can currently train within Fleet for most or all of the season and approximately quarter have to play their fixtures outside of Town.

4. Concerns raised during consultation

Respondents to the consultation have raised a number of concerns that they feel are either reasons for not installing the new facility or should be addressed in order to facilitate the new facility. The issues are fairly consistent and are outlined below together with potential actions to address the concerns.

4.1 Loss of open space

The total size of Ancells Park, not including the adjacent forest, is approximately 19000 m², the total size of the medium sized 3G football pitch would be 2580m², which represents approximately 13.5% of the space available at the site.

The common complaint in the feedback is also that there is “already a large part of the park set aside for football with the existing pitch”. However it should be noted that the football pitch is only used for football on average twice a week for just over two thirds of the year, late August to April. Therefore the total time the pitch is used for football is 90 hours a year, which is a very small percentage of the time. The pitch is available, and is used, as a public open space all of the remaining time and is also used for other activities including the fundraising days at the Park. For four months of the year there are no pitch markings or goalposts in situ at the site.

The FA recommends that on average there should only be 1.5 to 2 games per week on a grass pitch, a 3G one could accommodate up to ten on a weekend if necessary. The

grass pitch at Ancells, as is the case with the grass pitches at Oakley Park, Calthorpe Park and Basingbourne is at or beyond capacity.

The pitch does suffer from poor drainage also and has a high percentage of games called off, there have been none there for the past 8 weeks. Were a 3G pitch on the site some of these games and some from our other pitches could have been accommodated, however this would only be the case with the medium size pitch were chosen, see below.

4.2 Car parking

This was the most common issue raised in the consultation. Car parking is an issue that will need to be considered in detail and addressed as appropriate. However as some consultees pointed out the number of users of the football facility at any one time will be a maximum of 40 - 50 people at the crossover time, so only for 10 minutes or so every hour with the typical number being 20 -30 at any one time. In comparison were a school to be located on the field adjacent to the Park as was originally planned at peak times there would have been potentially 300 visitors. In comparison as was raised by one respondent Calthorpe School, where many Ancells residents attend, has just agreed to increase its size to 1300 pupils.

There are a number of possible solutions to address the potential problem of car parking these include;

Entering into a partnership arrangement with a nearby business park premises to use their car park.

Better management of the existing arrangements at the car park near the Ancells shops by the car park owners, such as introducing a 3 hour limit. It is perceived that some spaces there are taken up all day by residents, shop workers and even commuters. This would require the cooperation of the land owner's management company and is not within the control of FTC.

Better utilisation / management / partnership arrangement for the spaces to the rear of the Ancells shops. Observations have been taken on several occasions and of the 32 spaces to the rear of the shops the most that have been viewed to be occupied at any given time was 15, with the norm being 8 - 10. This solution could be made more practical by creating a link road from the rear of the Faulkners Arms to these spaces. This would be approximately 10 metres long.

Extension of the existing Town Council owned car park parcel of land to the rear of the Faulkners Arms. The original transfer deed for this land shows this car park as being approximately twice the size it is now. Currently it could accommodate 6 cars, this could be increased to 12 cars comfortably and if required over 20 cars could be accommodated.

A car park could be located within the park itself beyond the gate, to the left near the changing rooms. This would however change the appearance and dynamics of the open space.

The open space to the rear of the Community Centre which seems to be discounted as an open space by some respondents could have a car park created to the end near the community centre.

Another issue around car parking was that some residents believed that Oasthouse Drive would inevitably be used as a parking place for users of the facility. This would not only be impractical for residents but also footballers, the location is not the easiest to get to compared to other locations. This idea would be akin to users of the shops parking there which is not raised as an existing issue. However in any event this could easily be managed as all users will be signing up to a users' agreement. This will require that they do not park in residential areas but in a specified car park (to be decided upon). Therefore if any groups do transgress residents can report this and action will be taken against the transgressing football team potentially leading to the team being barred from the facility.

Potential congestion is reduced further as a number of people connected with Hart FC live in Oasthouse Drive and nearby streets so will not be driving to the Park.

Additionally "lots of youth parents currently using similar facilities conduct a "kiss and drop" culture for training sessions with only circa 10 to 20% of parents remaining so cars significantly reduced compared to what would be there if every user was in a car"

A local resident who specialises in traffic management and car parking solutions has offered to provide some technical support in this area also. This is being explored further.

4.3 Noise

Teams will sign up to a users' agreement and could be barred if they cause a nuisance to local residents. The principle groups that will be targeted and will make block bookings for the facility will be youth teams (this will be different if the smaller facility is chosen see below) this will mean that they are supervised and are playing structured football sessions and training sessions. Bad language will be very rare from such groups as it is not tolerated as it contravenes the FA Charter.

The noise from the facility is being ameliorated by locating the pitches as far to the north east corner of the field as possible. In addition it is proposed to plant some new mature trees on the parcel of land between the facility and the drainage ditch next to the changing rooms to further soften any noise in addition to the existing trees in this location, as shown on the draft plan, **Appendix 4**.

The distance for the noise is also less or comparable to similar / noisier facilities in the Town and area. Please see **Appendix 5**.

It can be seen that the skate park at the views for example is 44 metres from the nearest house, the medium sized 3G would be 45 metres from the nearest house with more screening in place than there is at The Views. The policing and management of the skate park is obviously a lot more difficult than the 3G would be as users do not pay and sign a users' agreement. There have been no complaints about noise at the skate park in the past 12 months.

The 3G football pitch at neighbouring Cove is 31 metres away from the nearest housing. Whilst the artificial hockey / football pitch at Courtmoor school is only 30 metres away from the nearest housing.

4.4 Litter

The service level agreement with the grounds maintenance contractors requires a litter pick every day, Monday to Saturday. There have been very few complaints (one) about

litter in the park in the last 12 months which is well maintained with the litter being picked in accordance with the agreement.

The drainage ditch is currently only cleared fully once per month but items that can be reached easily are removed as part of the daily pick. The 3G space itself would be a very easy area to litter pick and would be undertaken as part of the daily routine. Litter bins would be located strategically to ensure those who want to dispose of litter correctly can do so.

Similarly to other potential problems the users' agreement will require that teams do not create litter so this can be policed. The introduction of CCTV on the courts will assist

4.5 Light pollution

Lighting technology has improved significantly in the past 5 years with directional lighting such as that on the cycle path through Calthorpe Park becoming the normal. This lighting of course was approved by Fleet Town Council and is closer to housing than the proposed 3G at less than 30 metres. This lighting is also switched on until later in the evening at 11pm, 9pm being the proposed limit for the football at Ancells. The lights would also only be on when a team is using the facility so would not be every night until 9pm just the nights when there is activity in the winter. There is already a lit up background to Ancells Park with the lights on Ancells Road unlike the lights placed in Calthorpe Park.

The expectation is that the nights when the facility would normally be used would be Monday to Thursday, anything else would be unusual and not as frequent, the lights will only be on when in use.

4.6 Wildlife

The impact on the wildlife would be minimal as the area is not a particularly diverse area of habitat as it is currently mown about 20 times per annum and is boggy a lot of the time. There is no diversity of species in the grass, which is poor quality due to dampness. The minimal impact could be ameliorated somewhat by undertaking a small habitat development project in the adjacent woods which FTC owns. It is worth noting also that the majority of the parkland owned by Fleet Town Council is given over to wildlife habitation rather than open spaces for people.

It is also worth noting the damage to the environment of transporting over 1000 young people to facilities out of Town to train every week as opposed to doing it within Fleet.

4.7 Casual use

The question of allowing young people on not associated with a club was raised as both an issue and a potential good point. The proposal is to allow only bookings on the facility as this enables the Council to control and if necessary bar and or remove groups that cause a nuisance in any way. However as part of the business plan if the medium size pitch is chosen (not if the smaller pitch is chosen) there will be enough surplus funds to employ sports development / youth workers to provide free / subsidised sessions on the facility (and on the park in general) during most of the school holidays.

5. SMALL OR MEDIUM IN SIZE

The medium pitch is supported by 95% of respondents who want a pitch for a number of reasons. It would address the current short fall of facilities in the Town to a much greater extent, as detailed in 3 above.

The smaller pitch so far as holding competitive games on it would only be suitable for one Under 7's or Under 8's game at a time. The medium size pitch could facilitate two under 7's or Under 8's games at once. However in addition it could also be used for under 9's and under 10's league games as well. The majority of youth teams are made up of these four age ranges, about 60% of the local club in terms of numbers of players.

Whilst there will be some league games played at the facility, this will only be when the grass pitches are out of use due to ground conditions, as has been the case for the past eight weeks.

Also the medium size pitch would enable the usual training group size to train at once the smaller pitch at Peter Driver has recently lost bookings and does not get bookings because it is not big enough to accommodate a full training group. Hart FC recently relocated one of its groups to a pitch 8 miles away. It is not practical to split training groups as this means the volunteer coaches have to give up twice as much of their time.

Consultation with the local clubs has also revealed that if the pitch were a medium size pitch the uptake would be significantly more so that "120 players from u10's downwards could move from out of town to Ancells Farm and rent slots from 6 to 8pm (on Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday evenings). Equally Saturday morning slots from 9 to noon could be booked. If the smaller pitch was realised then only 40 players from U7/U8 would use it."

Once youth teams put in place a block booking for a training session time for the season the facility is only available to them for that time. If the smaller option is chosen it is highly likely that bookings will come in from casual adult 5 a side. This will be more problematic as the issues of inappropriate language and more cars per user impacting on parking are more likely, though inevitably the group would get barred there would be a period leading up to this which could cause some angst. Of course there will be some adult groups, who we would like to attract, will present no problems at all as they value the facility and act appropriately.

6. RECOMMENDATION

That in line with the results of the public consultation exercise the Council agrees to proceed with the medium sized (61m x 43m) 3G football pitch at Ancells Farm Park.

That the Council authorises the Town Clerk to progress the project through planning as soon as possible.

That the Town Clerk attempts to secure additional funds to potentially cover the costs for drainage at the park and ancillary improvements to accommodate the project.

That the £180,000 S.106 funds be allocated to the project also a contingency of £18,000 from the capital projects budget, and that any additional finances required are reported back to the Council. Recommendation