

Lapstone Playing Fields

Football Pitch Re-Provision Supporting Statement

1. Proposals

Lapstone Playing Fields currently consists of 1 cricket pitch, 2nr 11v11 football pitches, 1nr 9v9 football pitch, 2 tennis courts, a 4 changing room pavilion and car parking. The project proposal is for this to change to 2 cricket pitches and 2 football pitches, with the existing 9v9 pitch to the north of the site being retained, the 11v11 pitch to the south moving approximately 20 yards west, and the 11v11 pitch in the middle of the site being lost to accommodate the new cricket pitch layout. This change in pitch configuration is with a view of the new One Horton Heath (OHH) development of 2,000 homes to the south of Lapstone Playing Fields providing additional on-site football provision for the local area in the next few years, which will accommodate existing and future demand. This provision is yet to be fully determined and will be informed by the new Eastleigh Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) which is currently being commissioned by Eastleigh Borough Council. Tennis, changing and parking provision at Lapstone would not be affected by our proposals. A key driver of these proposals was to fully utilise the existing 4 changing room pavilion to create a sustainable solution for cricket club and parish in the long term by facilitating all cricket provision on one site. Alternative options were explored to provide an additional pitch elsewhere in the parish, or as part of the new OHH development, but this approach would have created two – split-sport sites (football and cricket). This would have created significant additional capital and ongoing maintenance costs to deliver, creating an unsustainable solution for both Parish and Cricket Club. These proposals will provide enhanced facilities to meet the match play and training requirements of Fair Oak Cricket Club to facilitate their development and growth, whilst also removing the current risk their teams experience, having to seek alternative pitch provision outside their borough on a season-by-season basis. Please see design proposals on the 'Layout Plan' attached.

This project has been in the pipeline for many years and the Council would therefore like to progress the Lapstone cricket project in advance of the OHH sports pitches coming on board. We therefore have sought to ensure suitable alternative provision for the 1 football pitch being temporarily lost, so that no football teams are displaced without suitable alternative provision as a result of the project. The football pitches at Lapstone are currently well used by local club Wyvern FC. However, with the significant investment the council have made in expanding its football provision in the last few years via an infrastructure first approach, we believe there to be adequate capacity on existing sites to accommodate the teams displaced by the loss of 1 pitch at Lapstone until the new provision at OHH is delivered. Options considered have included the following:

- Use of the unused 11v11 grass pitch at Wyvern School adjacent to Lapstone (school use now met by new 90m x 55m 3G pitch).
- Increased match play capacity with new 90m x 55m 3G pitch at Wyvern School.
- 3 new community pitches Boorley Green (opening Autumn 22)
- 3 new community pitches and full size 3G at Berrywood Fields & Deer Park School (opening Autumn 22)

Having explored these options with Hampshire FA and Wyvern FC, the first choice proposal is to invest in the unused 11v11 pitch at the adjacent Wyvern College and make it available for the community, due to its close proximity to Lapstone Playing Fields and because the football club already heavily use the 3G pitch at Wyvern College. This has been agreed in principle with the college and the Hants FA completed a pitch power condition survey on 13th September 2022. We are awaiting the report for the recommended maintenance improvements, which we would intend to be undertaken in order to have the pitch ready for the start of the 2023 season. This would facilitate the implementation of the new cricket facilities (subject to planning approval), and ensure continuity of use for current football users, Wyvern FC. Please see plan below which shows the proposed revised football pitch provision.



2. Relevant Policy

Paragraph 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that “Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

The development has carefully considered ensuring it does not contravene paragraph 97 of the NPPF through the temporary loss of 1nr 11v11 football pitch in advance of its formal replacement at the OHH development. Through the alternative football provision proposed, we believe the development complies with paragraph 97 via a combination of exception b) and c) and exception 5 of the Sport England Protecting Playing Fields Policy.

3. NGB Consultation

Throughout the development of the project proposals, consultation has taken place with the National Governing Bodies of the sports to be effected. Key points from our consultation with the England Cricket Board, Hampshire Cricket Board and Hampshire FA are summarized below:

ECB/HCB consultation

- We have liaised with Neil Higginson at the ECB, and Simon Jones and Ben Thompson at Hampshire Cricket Board to discuss and agree the proposed layout and are pleased to confirm that we have been able to achieve a layout compliant with ECB pitch guidelines. This includes the ECB verbal guidance of having a 30m gap between adjacent pitch boundaries.
- A ball trajectory risk assessment by Labosport (attached) has confirmed that no mitigation is required on safety grounds, just recommended on the western boundary of the northerly pitch to minimize ball loss.
- We have also engaged with the local leagues to ensure that our proposals would meet their league ground grading requirements to permit FOCC's men's teams playing league fixtures on the pitches.

Hants FA consultation

- Facilities Manager, Sacha Nicholas has been involved in discussions and project proposals throughout to try and ensure a suitable alternative provision for the football pitch being lost. The longer term of view of providing additional football provision at the OHH site to meet the existing and future requirements of Wyvern FC are acknowledged and the proposals for this provision to be guided by the recently commissioned PPS is

welcomed, as the borough has seen significant delivery of football facilities since the last PPS (2017). These include Stoneham Lane Football Complex, Hardmoor Sports Ground, Deer Park and Berrywood Fields and Boorley Green.

- The extent of 'imported demand' experienced by the borough, with many of its facilities accommodating the training and match play requirements of clubs from outside the borough is acknowledged.