

ARTIFICIAL PITCHES AT WIDE LANE SPORTS GROUND PLANNING STATEMENT

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Appendix 1

LIST OF EXTERNAL/COMMUNITY SITE USERS AND CONSULTEES

1.0 Introduction

This Planning Statement is prepared by Bidwells on behalf of the University of Southampton ('the applicant') to support a full planning application to Eastleigh Borough Council ('the Council').

The description of the proposed development is the *"Installation of 2no. synthetic sports pitches, erection of fencing including new pedestrian access route, associated engineering operations, and landscaping"*.

The application site is located at the site of the University of Southampton Sports Ground, Wide Lane, Eastleigh, SO50 5PE.

The planning application comprises the following documents and assessments:

- Planning application form
- Planning Statement (including Construction Management Plan and Open Space Assessment)
- Design & Access Statement
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (including Metric 3.1 calculation)
- Landscaping Plan
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
- Geotechnical and Geo-Environmental Desk Study

The application is accompanied by requisite planning drawings which are necessary to determine this application.

1.1 The Site

The Wide Lane Sports Ground is located to the north of the M27 and to the west of Southampton Airport. Several sports grounds and playing fields sit to the west of the site. The application site is within the Sports Ground itself, in the vicinity of the sports pavilion building.

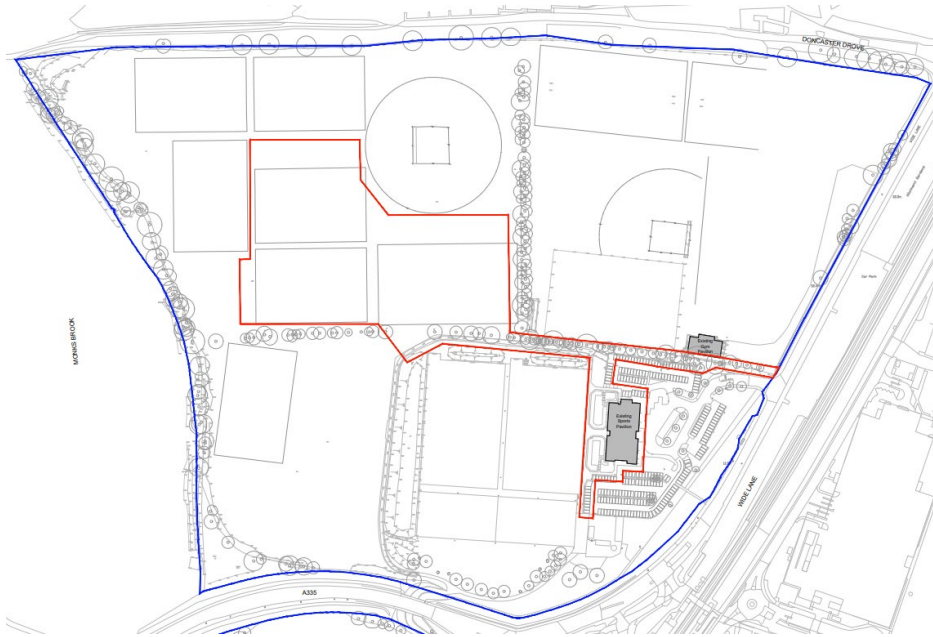


Figure 1.1. Extract of Site Location Plan.

The site is well served by public transport, with Southampton Airport Parkway Station within easy walking distance, and the *UniLink* bus service offering a regular and frequent service to/from the site. Parking for cars and bicycles is provided to the front of the pavilion.

1.2 The Facility

The University of Southampton has several sports sites across the region, with their main outdoor sports pitches being located at the Wide Lane Sports Ground. It is an established facility for University students, community and public users. It is a well-used and popular facility.

The Sports Ground has a wide range of users, including University students and staff and many external and community sports clubs. Current external and community users are shown in Appendix 1 of this Statement. Use of the site by is governed by a formal Community Access Agreement between the University of Southampton and Eastleigh Borough Council. An extension to this agreement, beyond 2025, is currently being negotiated with the Council.

1.3 Need

The grass pitches are susceptible to waterlogging during winter months, often for weeks on end. This means that sports seasons are forced to be condensed into shorter time periods. The proposed artificial grass pitches (AGPs) would alleviate pressure on the facilities by enabling play year-round. Sporting activity would therefore be more evenly spread across the year, reducing peak pressure on facilities. The reduced maintenance burden of the artificial pitches will also enable existing time and resources to be concentrated on the remaining grass pitches, thereby improving their quality.

Monitoring and feedback from site users shows that users are requesting additional time slots, more space, better quality of pitches and improved drainage. They have also raised concern over

cancellations during winter months when the grass pitches are waterlogged. Limited space and cancellations, often at short notice due to weather conditions, mean that University clubs and other organisations are turned away as the site does not have sufficient capacity to accommodate all requests. This would be addressed by the provision of modern, fit-for-purpose AGPs.

The proposed AGPs will replace three existing grass pitches (2no. youth/training football pitches and 1no. rugby pitch). The AGPs offer a wider range of uses than the existing grass pitches and will not suffer from the same weather-dependency. The AGPs would replicate the existing pitches in terms of type of sports provision and would increase the hours and duration of use. Whilst there would be a net loss in one pitch, the longer hours of daily and year-round operation will increase the capacity and availability of the site and will allow more users to be accommodated at the site.

The University's 2020-2025 Sport Strategy contains ambitious targets for sports participation, including a target of 75% students being active. This target, combined with future growth in student numbers, will require enhanced and improved sports pitches at Wide Lane Sports Ground. The proposed development will meet this need.

1.4 Programme

The subject planning application includes replacement pitches, fencing, drainage system and ducts for lighting. A second application will follow for associated lighting columns and fixtures.

This split approach has been taken to enable the pitches themselves to be installed by as soon as possible. Specialist pitch contractors have advised that pitches can only be installed in warmer months, so there will be a delay of a year in commissioning the new pitches if work cannot commence before Winter 2023. Due to the potential need to carry out bat surveys from May 2023, the lighting columns and fixtures will be subject to a separate application. The lighting columns/fixtures will only be installed once they have been granted planning permission.

1.5 Scope of Application

The scope of work for this application includes the installation of two AGPs, below ground drainage works, ducts for electricity supply, and fencing. The pitches will be Third Generation (3G) pitches, consisting of synthetic fibres infilled with rubber granules, as follows:

- Rugby and football combined AGP (126 x 80 metres)
- Football AGP (106 x 70 metres)



Figure 1.2. Indicative proposed site plan, showing the location of the proposed AGPs and security fencing.

The proposed AGPs will be permeable. A positive drainage system will be installed for each of the new pitches to infiltrate water through a series of land drains. The proposed drainage trenches will be approximately 100mm wide, 500mm deep at 5 metre centres along the length of the pitch.

Below-ground ducts will supply the site with electricity to facilitate the installation of lighting in due course. Ducts will be routed from the existing kiosk to the north of the pavilion and surround the two pitches.

Wire mesh fencing will enclose the pitches. This will be up to 5.08m in height and Moss Green in colour (RAL 6005).

A new wire mesh security fence is also proposed at the front of the site. This fence will be 2.03m in height and black in colour. At present the site does not have controlled access, which presents the risk of damage to facilities by unauthorised uses. The security fence will ensure that access is only gained via the pavilion.

Two short extensions to the existing aggregate path will provide access to the new pitches. The siting of the pitches close to the existing pathway reduces the length of these extensions.

The pitches have been designed in accordance with technical advice from sports pitch specialists, and align with the guidance of Sport England, the Football Association and World Rugby. The specification of the proposed pitches is shown below.

PITCH PROVISION	
FOOTBALL PITCH	
Main pitch	1 no. over 18 and adult football
Over markings	2 no. youth U11/U12 football
	4 no. football training areas
RUGBY AND FOOTBALL PITCH	
Main pitch (Rugby)	1 no. senior rugby (up to 15 a-side)
Over markings (Football)	1 no. over 18 and adult football
	2 no. youth U11/U12 football
	4 no. football training areas

1.6 Planning History

There have been several planning applications for tree works and temporary uses at the site. In 2003, permission was granted for the comprehensive redevelopment of the site (Z/08767/025/00) to include 2 no. synthetic turf pitches, 8 no. tennis courts, associated lighting, remodelling of the car park (to accommodate 240 cars and 5 coaches) and the erection of a new pavilion.

2.0 Pre-application Enquiry and Consultation

2.1 Local Planning Authority

A formal pre-application enquiry was submitted to the Council on 10 January 2023. A Planning Officer, Tree Officer and Ecology Officer from Eastleigh Borough Council attended a site visit on 6 March 2023, where the principle of development and technical considerations were discussed.

A written response has been received by Eastleigh Borough Council. The matters raised have been addressed by the design team and are outlined in this Statement.

2.2 Eastleigh Borough Council Leisure Services

The University of Southampton has regular contact with Eastleigh Borough Council regarding their joint provision of community sport facilities. The Leisure Services Manager is aware of the proposed development and has expressed support for the enhanced sporting facilities that it will provide.

2.3 Site Users

The applicant contacted a range of stakeholders prior to the submission of this application. This included Ward Councillors for Eastleigh South. Site users were contacted to ask for their feedback on the proposed development. A complete list of external site users and those subject to consultation are shown in Appendix 1.

2.4 Responses

Four responses were received from site users. These were broadly positive and endorsed the principle of AGPs and the flexibility they would give to playing sports at the site year-round.

3.0 Planning Assessment

This section provides an assessment of the proposed development.

3.1 National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 92 (Promoting healthy and safe communities) of the NPPF requires that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which, *inter alia*, enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – including through the provision of sports facilities.

Paragraph 93 requires that, to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should, *inter alia*, plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (including sports venues) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

Paragraph 99 (Open space and recreation) requires that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless, *inter alia*, 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.

3.2 Eastleigh Borough Local Plan

The Local Plan for Eastleigh Borough Council was adopted on 25 April 2022. It sets out policies which are relevant to the proposed development. These are outlined in the table below, along with an assessment of compliance.

POLICY	CONSIDERATION	ASSESSMENT
S5 (New development in the countryside)	Planning permission will be granted for new development in the countryside provided it is related to outdoor recreation and open space.	The proposed development is related to the provision of outdoor recreation and is in accordance with Policy S5. The installation of fencing is necessary for security purposes and will ensure the effective and continued use of the site for outdoor recreation. The Wide Lane site is currently used for sporting provision and includes a range of buildings, fencing and lighting to support this use; the proposed development for enhanced outdoor recreation is therefore considered to be in keeping with the character of the existing site and wider area.
S6 (Protection of settlement gaps)	Development within a Settlement Gap will be permitted provided that it would not undermine the physical extent and/or visual separation of settlements and would not have an urbanising effect detrimental to the character of the countryside or the separate identity of the adjoining settlements.	The installation of two AGPs and extending the existing aggregate path would not affect the openness of the site. The Wide Lane site is near a number of major roads and significant infrastructure, influencing wider openness of the site. The proposed fencing is a permeable mesh, meaning that visual openness within and beyond the site will not be obstructed. Fencing will be located towards the centre of the site, in proximity to the existing pavilion, lighting and pitch enclosures. As such, the proposed fencing is not considered to affect the separation of adjoining settlements or cause substantial harm to the openness of the existing site.

POLICY	CONSIDERATION	ASSESSMENT
DM6 (Sustainable surface water management and watercourse management)	New development should incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Wherever feasible, naturalised filtration should be included within the treatment.	There will be no additional run off from the proposed pitches or paths in comparison to the existing situation. The new pitches will be located over the existing pitches that have land drains. Permeable pitch surfacing will be used to aid infiltration into filter drains. There is an existing soakaway on site, which would be connected into to provide attenuation if deemed necessary.
DM11 (Nature conservation)	A net gain of biodiversity is sought on all development sites through the protection, enhancement and connection of existing, and provision of new, habitats and features of nature conservation interest.	As set out in PEA and BNG Assessment submitted with this application, there are no designated protected habitats on the site. The proposed development will deliver 11.3% biodiversity net gain through management of the retained grass within the site boundary with native wildflower seeding and a low-intensity maintenance regime.
DM32 (Protection of recreation and open space facilities)	The loss of existing recreation and open space facilities is only likely to be permitted in exceptional circumstances, including where any loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location or the development is for alternative recreation or open space facilities where the need for which clearly outweighs the loss.	The proposed AGPs will replace 3 existing grass pitches (2no. youth/training football pitches and 1no. rugby pitch). The AGPs offer a wider range of uses than the existing grass pitches (detailed in section 1.5) and will not suffer from the same weather-dependency as the grass pitches. The development would therefore increase the flexibility of use and represents an increase in the provision of recreation and open space facilities available for use by the community and the University of Southampton, in accordance with DM32.

3.3 Access

Policy DM34 of the Local Plan states that developments should be readily accessible to those they are intended to serve by means of transport other than the private car. The site is well connected via public transport. It is a short walk from Southampton Airport Parkway railway station and the *UniLink* bus service provides a regular service to/from the site and numerous locations across Southampton. For example, buses to the site depart from Highfield Campus every 10 minutes. Most students travel to and from the site by public transport, which is encouraged by the University.

Policy DM13 stipulates the need for safe and convenient access to the highway, and sufficient provision of parking. The site is well located adjacent to the A355, which provides highly convenient access from the road. The car park, with capacity for approximately 240 cars is located adjacent to the site access.

The proposed development will not increase the peak capacity of players at any one time but will increase the usable capacity throughout the year, with the proposed facility able to stay open during poor weather and into the evenings in colder months once flood lighting is installed.

At peak times, such as event days, there is provision for overflow car parking within the site adjacent to Wide Lane. At the current time, this is seldom required and it is not anticipated that the proposed development would increase the peak volume of site users.

3.4 Archaeology

An archaeological desk-based assessment accompanies this planning application. The assessment concludes that the impacts of the scheme will be low and no further work is necessary.

Minor disturbance will be caused by the excavation for fencing, cabling and pitches/below ground drainage. Given that the depth of topsoil is 600-900mm, and extensive drainage up to 1000mm in depth was inserted under the pitches previously, excavation of the AGPs and utilities is not likely to impact on archaeological remains. No further work is recommended.

3.5 Biodiversity

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal submitted with this application has assessed the habitats currently provided on site. Over the assessed 22 hectares, the site largely consists of modified grass playing fields. There are also multiple buildings on site and an asphalt car park to the south-eastern side. There is woodland along the western and northern boundaries, a tree line and hedgerow along the eastern boundary, and a line of broadleaved trees bisecting the site.

The site is not statutorily or non-statutorily designated for its wildlife interest. The proposed works to build two new artificial grass pitches on existing areas of modified grassland – a habitat of low ecological importance – and will not adversely affect nearby designated sites or the habitats of principal importance for conservation on site (the native hedgerow and lowland mixed deciduous woodland).

The development proposals are not considered to have any adverse impact on protected species, so no further surveys or specific mitigation measures are recommended. Trees T5 and T8 are proposed for removal due to their poor condition; it is recommended that they are inspected for bat roost potential before felling.

The development proposals include measures to enhance biodiversity on the site. The biodiversity of the site will be increased by seeding areas disturbed by construction activities with native wildflower mix, and the adoption of a low intensity mowing regime for the retained modified grassland within the development boundary.

Enhancing this area of poor condition grassland into moderate condition grassland would produce a net gain in biodiversity of 11.3%. This enhancement to biodiversity on the site is in accordance with Local Plan policy DM34 (1c) for new recreation and open space facilities.

3.6 Flood Risk and Drainage

A Flood Risk Assessment and drainage strategy has been prepared for the proposed development. The site is in Flood Zone 1 which is at the lowest risk of flooding. The site is shown to be at a low risk of flooding from fluvial, tidal, groundwater, artificial sources and pluvial sources.

The proposed AGPs will be permeable, with no increase in flood risk from the proposed works. The proposed drainage trenches will be approximately 100mm wide, 500mm deep at 5 metre centres along the length of the pitch. These would provide sufficient capacity to accommodate the 1 in 100 year event, with climate change allowances.

The proposed development can be constructed and operated safely and will not increase flood risk elsewhere. Surface water will infiltrate within the site boundary with a series of filter drains installed beneath the pitch build up. These will be designed to accommodate storm events up to

and including the 1 in 100 year event plus 40% allowance for climate change. Therefore, in respect of flood risk the proposed development is shown to be safe for its design life and will not increase any flood risk elsewhere.

3.7 **Trees**

As set out in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment, two trees and one stump are proposed to be removed as part of this development. T5 and T8 are proposed to be removed for health and safety reasons – T5 has a dead second stem and large basal wound, and T8 has a suppressed crown and leans heavily towards to car park. The Assessment also includes a works to several retained trees, such as removal of deadwood and lifting of crowns, to improve their health.

The information submitted with this application also includes detailed tree protection measures to be adhered to throughout the construction process. For example, the proposed pathways will be installed on top of the existing ground level using a geoweb construction to spread loading within RPAs; the existing fence post holes will be reused where possible, and if new excavation is required in proximity to roots these will be hand dug with monitoring from an arboriculturist; and the lighting ducts have been located away from root protection areas.

3.8 **Visual Amenity**

The proposed development does not include any new buildings at the site. The proposed security and pitch fencing will be a wire mesh, which is visually permeable. Given the proximity of the proposed fencing to the existing pavilion, pitch enclosures and floodlighting at the site, the proposed development is not considered to have a significant effect on the settlement gap, particularly as the majority of the existing open space at the site will be retained.

Views of the proposed development will be possible from the A355. The site is well screened by dense trees along this route, and the key public vantage points adjacent to the site are shown in Figures 3.1-3.3.

Where views of the proposed fencing can be gained the existing pavilion, gym building, fencing and lighting already influence these views. The proposed fencing has been located near to the pavilion and existing artificial pitches to reduce its impact on the openness of the site. Most of the site remains as open space and the settlement gap between Southampton and Eastleigh will therefore be protected.

The existing site features and their proximity to the location the proposed visually permeable fencing mean that there will be a very low less than substantial impact on openness. The benefits of the fencing for both security of the site and enhancing sporting facilities, to meet demand for student and community users, strongly outweighs any less than substantial impact on the openness of the site.



Figure 3.1 Glimpsed view of Wide Lane Sports Ground from A335.



Figure 3.2. View of entrance to Wide Lane Sports Ground from Wide Lane.



Figure 3.3. View of wide lane sports ground, including gym and pavilion buildings, from Wide Lane.

4.0 Construction Management Plan

The proposed development is of a modest scale which will have limited impact on the site and wider area. We have outlined the principles which would be applied during construction to ensure that the amenity of the site and wider area would not be impacted during construction.

4.1 Strategy

Construction activity within the site would be limited and would be confined to the pitches and areas immediately adjacent. The proposed development is limited in scope and would not require import/export of soil to/from the site. Any soil arising at the site would be incorporated back into the ground.

Traffic movements during construction would be limited and can be accommodated using the existing site entrance. Typical daily traffic movements would comprise approximately 2no. two-way HGV movements, 10no. two-way LGV movements, 5no. two-way car movements.

4.2 Access

Access to/from the site would be taken off Wide Lane. Given the limited scope of the proposed development there would be a limited number of vehicle movements during construction. Parking for contractors would be provided at the existing car park but the number of staff required would not exceed five in total.

Safety and direction signage would be provided at the site entrance and adjacent to construction activity/site compound to ensure that the safety of site users is not compromised. No additional protection would be provided for pedestrians and cyclists accessing the site, due to the low number of anticipated construction vehicles per day.

4.3 Machine and Materials Storage

A site compound would be erected within or adjacent to the application site. This would provide a secure location for storage of materials, machinery and equipment associated with construction of the proposed development. It will also act as a holding area for excess soil which will be temporarily stored at the site.

The compound will be located away from the root protection area of the trees at the site. The compound will be established and maintained in accordance with the tree and root protection measures outlined in the arboricultural assessment.

4.4 Dust

There are not expected to be significant number of HGV movements to/from the site and it is not anticipated that wheel washing is generally necessary at the site. This may be introduced during periods of hot weather where work produces significant quantity of dust. Where construction occurs in periods of hot weather, appropriate dousing and dust mitigation measures will be taken.

4.5 Lighting and noise

It is not anticipated that flood lighting would be required during construction. Any lighting required would be localised and downward facing. Noise would be limited during construction and no mitigation measures are envisaged. No piling would be required.

4.6 **Construction hours**

Construction and delivery activities would take place during the following hours:

- Monday to Friday: 0800 - 1800
- Saturday: 0800 – 1300
- Sunday and public holidays: No construction activity

There may be the requirement for occasional construction or site setup activities outside these times but this will be limited in duration and scope.

4.7 **Liaison and consultation**

The appointed contractor would appoint a designated point of liaison for complaints and enquiries. The nominated person and their contact details would be advertised at the contractor site entrance.

Any complaints will be logged on site. The required actions will be different in each specific case, depending on the operation, equipment or location or applying additional controls. All complaints received under the scheme from any source will be recorded.

The contractor will stay in contact with the complainant until the site or company has investigated and responded to the complaint and until the company is satisfied that the site is adhering to the Site/Company Code of Practice, at which point the complaint will be taken off the 'active' list.

5.0 Conclusion

The proposed development would provide enhanced sporting facilities to University students and a range of community and public users. It will allow use of the sports pitches on a year-round basis which will increase sporting participation, health and well-being. It will provide better provision of sporting facilities in terms of quality in a highly accessible location. Whilst there will be a net loss of one pitch, the proposed pitches will increase capacity for football and rugby at the site and allow more sports clubs and organisations to use the site over the course of a year.

The proposed development is in accordance with relevant national and local planning policies. As such, this application is commended to the Council with a view to granting planning permission.

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF EXTERNAL/COMMUNITY SITE USERS AND CONSULTEES

ORGANISATION	SPORT	PITCHES USED
Eastleigh District Mini Soccer	Football	7v7 pitches
Stoneham Rugby FC	Rugby	Rugby pitches
Hedge End Rangers FC	Football	9v9 pitches
Comrades FC	Football	11v11 pitches
TGK Academy	Football	11v11 pitches
Price Waterhouse	Football	Rubbercrumb
CMA Recruitment Group	Football	Rubbercrumb
Riverside Rovers	Football	11v11 pitches
Halfway Inn Football Club	Football	11v11 pitches
SCCC Football Club	Football	Rubbercrumb
Pavilion Panthers	Football	11v11 pitches
Eastleigh Borough Council	Netball	Netball court
Waltham Wanderers FC	Football	11v11 pitches
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Women's Football	Football	Rubbercrumb
AFC Eagles	Football	11v11 pitches
Barnsley FC	Football	11v11 pitches
Winchmore Camps	Mixed	Mixed
Gattaca	Football	Rubbercrumb
UK Ultimate	Frisbee	11v11 pitches
The Gregg School	Mixed sport	Mixed
Itchen College	Football	Rubbercrumb
JD Fives	Football	Rubbercrumb
Geefit Training Bootcamp	Fitness	Perimeter
Locksheath Pumas RFC	Rugby	Rugby pitches
AFC Station	Football	11v11 pitches
Ravens Netball Club	Netball	Netball court
New Forest Baseball Club	Baseball	Diamond
Solent Softball League	Softball	11v11 pitches
Hampshire Police	Football	Rubbercrumb
UK Running Events	Inflatable events	11v11 pitches
AFC Shirley	Football	11v11 pitches

Planning Statement
Proposed Artificial Grass Pitches and Fencing, Wide Lane Sports Ground

ORGANISATION	SPORT	PITCHES USED
RR10 Running League	Fitness	Perimeter
Southampton Community Cricket Club	Cricket	Cricket pitches
Eastleigh Cricket Club	Cricket	Cricket pitches
Eastleigh Tornadoes Fc	Football	11v11 pitches
Romsey Town Football Club	Football	11v11 pitches
Southampton City Ultimate Frisbee	Frisbee	11v11 pitches
Eastleigh Football Club	Football	Rubbercrumb
Solent Ultimate	Frisbee	11v11 pitches
Solent Community Football	Football	Rubbercrumb
AFC Stoneham Vets	Football	11v11 pitches
One School Global	Mixed sport	Mixed
Warsash Wasps	Football	11v11 pitches

