

Proposed Artificial Grass Pitches at:
Heron Eccles Playing Fields,
Abbotshey Avenue,
Liverpool,
L18 7JS.

Design & Access Statement

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1.0 Background

In October 2014 the Football Association released The Chairman's England Commission Report No.2 which set out the current state of English football with regard to the falling involvement of English players at the top level of the game, the causality of this situation and sought to outline, in detail, the FA's proposals for its redress.

'In twenty years the number of English players playing in the top division of English football has fallen by more than a half and the trend remains downwards. The same applies to the Championship where the number of English players has fallen from 61% to 51% in 10 years. This matters because of the effect the decline has on the availability of top English players for a strong and successful England team. But it also matters because it means that young English players are increasingly unlikely to be able to reach the very top of the game.'

Extract from The Chairman's England Commission Report no.2

The proposed solution to develop English football is to implement an ongoing programme of providing new all-weather facilities to promote the participation in, and education about, the game. This solution is referred to as:

'The City football hub model

By mapping current and future participation requirements in a city against existing and potential new facilities, a pitch blueprint will be produced. This blueprint will identify the 'appropriate' number of core football hubs at which the city's football demands can be met by the provision of high quality AGPs. Each football hub will differ depending on local circumstances but typically each would be floodlit and provide changing, classroom and catering facilities. A football hub will be used to host both formal league fixtures on weekends and recreational/informal football opportunities during the week, but with particular emphasis on:

Ensuring where possible all mini-soccer and kids football up to the age of 13 is played on AGPs.

Allowing all County FA and local pro-club youth development and FA coach education programmes to be facilitated on AGPs.

Providing high quality natural turf pitches where appropriate.

Providing midweek affordable training opportunities for local clubs.

Optimising school and community usage during off-peak hours.'

Extract from The Chairman's England Commission Report no.2

This proposal at the Heron Eccles Playing Fields is one of several City Football Hub pilot projects being developed in Liverpool.

2.0 Introduction

The development of the AGPs and changing pavilion at the Heron Eccles Playing Fields is supported by a number of national and local authority policies and is underpinned by a strong strategic case.

The project supports the priorities identified in the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy and 2015 Liverpool Football Mapping Study by meeting identified shortfalls in facility

provision in areas of high need. This is key to attracting significant external investment from Sport England and through the Football Association.

However, the project goes much further than addressing the need for new facilities by adopting an innovative delivery model which will serve as an example of good practice nationally in sustainable sports provision.

As a Football Hub with natural turf pitches and floodlit AGPs, the Heron Eccles Playing Fields will deliver affordable community football facilities and significant participation opportunities which are self-sustaining and will not rely on a Council subsidy after five years.

The pro-active stance taken by Liverpool Council in developing a number of sustainable Football Hubs across the city to raise standards of provision while reducing the reliance on public sector funding is recognised as cutting edge sports development in the FA Chairman's Commission Report 2 published in October 2014.

In short, this facility development will meet the needs expressed by clubs, teams, players and their coaches who are demanding better facilities that can accommodate the way they want to play, and better playing surfaces to foster improved skill development.

In a climate of reduced and reducing public spending, local authority owners and managers can no longer afford to subsidise football facilities as they have in the past.

It goes without saying that there are substantial positive social and community benefits to be realised through new investment into such facility provision.

3.0 The Proposal

This document has been prepared on behalf of The FA Football Trust and Liverpool City Council in support of a full planning application to Liverpool City Council Planning Department for the proposed improvement to outdoor sports facilities at the Heron Eccles Playing Fields.

The project includes three full sized fenced and floodlit 3G artificial grass pitches (AGPs) and an extension to the existing ten changing room building on site which will provide a new main entrance and Reception facilities, club room and space for coach education together with associated site access improvements and increased parking provision. The approximate site area is 14.3 Ha (35.3 Acres), the existing pavilion has a floor area of 523 sq.m and the proposed extension will provide 255.6 sq.m of additional floor space.

This development supports both the local authority's city-wide strategy to improve access to sport and the FA's national strategies aimed at improving access to year round, high quality footballing facilities.

The existing pavilion, proposed extension works, AGPs and grass pitch provisions are designed to increase participation and raise the level of footballing skill in

players, coaches and referees. To facilitate such participation the existing pavilion is to be extended to provide space for club, social and educational use.

The proposal aims to address the shortage of playing field space identified in the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy. In addition, this proposal represents the national pilot of second report of the FA Chairman's England Commission in proposing a radical reshaping of football delivery through hub sites in major city areas.

This proposal aims to improve existing football facilities at the Heron Eccles Playing Fields through the development of three new floodlit AGPs, provision of supporting changing and club house facilities all designed to FA, Football Foundation and Sport England design criteria.

4.0 Funding

The whole project capital costs will be met through a mix of funding from Liverpool City Council, the Football Association, the Football Foundation and Sport England. In line with the FA's aims to reduce dependence on public funding for the provision of football facilities, the new facilities will be managed and run by a local Football Trust specifically created to manage this facility and others that follow.

Trust membership will include representatives from the City Council, the County FA, partner football clubs to the Simpson scheme, and other agencies with a direct concern for the well-being of publicly accessible sports facilities in South Liverpool.

The Trust will be responsible for running these facilities ensuring financial stability and independence. It will be the Trust's responsibility to drive football development at this site in the delivery of the Football Development Plan and Business Plan drawn up to support the funding applications for this project.

5.0 The Site

Location

The overall site is some 14.3 Ha (35.3 Acres), and is bounded to the NE and NW by residential areas, to the SW by a railway line and further residential housing and to SE by a primary school and housing. The site is situated in a mainly residential setting with one point of access available off Abbotshey Avenue.

The site is designated as Green Space within the Liverpool Unitary Development Plan and is surrounded by areas designated as Primarily Residential. We believe that the continued leisure use and improvements proposed to the existing facilities are in general accordance with the applicable planning guidance and relevant policies within the adopted UDP.

Vehicular Access

It is proposed that the improved footballing facilities on site are accessed from Abbotshey Avenue (via improved/widened current access and pavement crossing, and incorporating new separate vehicular and pedestrian gates).

Please note that this is dealt with separately elsewhere in the Planning Application documentation.

Parking

The pavilion, AGPs and grass pitches will be supported by a new large car parking installation catering for 283 cars and improved site access. The number of spaces to be provided reflects anticipated usage patterns and demand, with a significant number of additional spaces to be provided to mitigate potential traffic and parking issues in the area. **Please note that this is dealt with separately elsewhere in the Planning Application documentation.**

6.0 Design - The Pavilion

Appearance

The existing brick built changing pavilion is to be retained in its current location and extended to provide a new entrance, reception, club room and education space. The enlarged and improved car parking facilities are to occupy an area immediately to front of new entrance and to side of the extended pavilion, between the extended building and the improved access point into site. The pavilion extension is to be built with its main longitudinal axis on a SW/NE axis to match the orientation of the existing pavilion building with the main entrance façade facing the new car parking to the North and the social areas facing the grassed area to the north east.

The existing ten changing room pavilion building is a single-storey building with a simple dual pitch roof and lower roof elements over shower areas down either side of building. The gross interior floor area of the existing pavilion building is 523 sq.m with the proposed extension element adding an additional 255.6 sq.m of floor space. The extension has been designed to complement the existing pavilion and the design provides a welcoming and open reception area, from which users are directed to either to the education and club spaces to the left or to the changing, shower and toilet facilities to the right.

Layout

In plan, the existing pavilion building comprises ten team changing rooms and associated officials' spaces (all with integral showers and wcs) which are grouped to ensure their efficient servicing and management. The previous entrance to the existing pavilion is to be utilised as a players' exit to the AGPs and allows segregation to maintain cleanliness and supports good practice in safeguarding children. The new extension element will provide a clearly defined entrance facing the extended car park and a reception counter via which all facilities will be accessed. Access to facilities to be controlled by means of electronic turnstiles. The extension element will also provide a club room supported by a kitchenette and servery to allow for post-match refreshments, shelter for parents bringing their children to training, and as a space for coach education, referees' courses, etc. in support of the FA's aims to increase all aspects of the game. These social and educational spaces are designed to give views across the playing areas and are supported by separate male, female and accessible toilets

Natural light is provided into social/education areas by way of larger windows in order to create light and visually interesting interiors, and minimise energy use while maintaining privacy and security.

Materials

The single storey pavilion extension is to be designed to be a robust construction while still remaining a recognisable and attractive destination for outdoor team sport activities.

External materials chosen include facing brickwork outer skin to complement the existing brickwork to the original pavilion building with standing seam metal details to new eaves and roof and powder coated aluminium glazing and curtain walling to main entrance elevation in line with the existing pavilion construction.

All windows and door openings will benefit from steel roller shutters which will be closed during non-opening hours to secure the building. Note these shutters are to be built within the wall build-up.

External walls: Consist of Rustic Buff Multi facing brick to 2.7m above FFL or to match existing adjacent, with a high level feature band of feature cladding to be C16 Slate Grey Marley Eternit Equitone (Tectiva) rain-screen cladding with face fixing or similar.

Entrance Feature: Entrance feature to be rendered masonry. Colour to be white or light cream (tbc).

Roofs: Profiled Plastisol Roof to match existing. Colour to be a mid-grey or similar.

Eaves: Roof edge flashing and soffit to be PPC Aluminium. Colour Grey RAL 9002 or to match existing on site.

Windows: Polyester powder coated aluminium double-glazed thermally broken glazing system. Colour to be grey RAL 9002 or to match existing on site.

Entrance Doors: Polyester powder coated aluminium double-glazed thermally broken glazing system. Colour to be grey RAL 9002 or to match existing on site.

Plant/Store Doors: Polyester powder coated steel doors, colour to be grey RAL 9002 or to match existing on site.

Conservation of Fuel and Power

The proposed modular building installation will comply with Part L2 of the current Building Regulations, the building to be suitably insulated and an efficient controlled heating system incorporated accordingly.

7.0 Design - The Artificial Grass Pitches

The proposals include a triple AGP development comprising three full sized artificial grass pitches each with a playing area capable of supporting a 100m x 64m football pitch or smaller pitches marked within the enclosure surrounded by a safety margin of 3m to all sides giving a total enclosure of 106m x 70m plus goal recesses to each AGP.

The AGP playing surfaces are to be a green 60mm+ pile synthetic turf carpet with performance characteristics meeting FIFA 1 Star criteria.

An 8m wide macadam central concourse provides the route for player access and a spectator area and is located between the AGPs.

Each AGP will be capable of division across the half-way line by a retractable nylon mesh dividing net supported on catenary wires and strained by posts on either side of the pitch. The dividing net will be black nylon 50mm square mesh up to 4m high.

The three AGPs will be protected by a green powder coated welded mesh perimeter fence to 4.5m high on all sides. This fence will also act as a barrier between the AGPs along the centre of the macadam concourse dividing the main playing areas. This fencing includes personnel and maintenance access gates along with recesses for goal storage.

Within this fenced perimeter boundary, and defining the spectator area and the playing pitch, is another fence line at 1.2m high along the length of each AGP. This fence extends to 2.0m high behind and on 2.0m either side of the adjoining crosspitch goal recesses.

Eleven 15m high galvanised steel floodlighting columns are to be located on the perimeter of the AGPs and external to the pitch enclosure fence lines with three further lighting columns of the same dimensions located along the central macadam concourses and within hardstanding, spectator and enclosed areas adjacent to pitches and pavilion. Each of these columns supports luminaires which, in total, provide a minimum average horizontal luminance of 200 lux to the playing surface within each AGP fence line – full details and information contained in Appendix C.

Details of the proposed floodlighting design and lux level plots have been submitted with the full application. Lux level plots have been prepared on a grid within the playing area and as isolux contours outside the AGP fence lines which show a rapid reduction in light trespass to areas 'outside' the pitch confines.

Horizontal illumination levels have been predicted at no more than 5 lux at an average of 20m from any part of the AGP perimeter and zero at the site boundary. There will be no upward light trespass.

8.0 Design - Playing Pitch Improvements

The existing playing field area at the Heron Eccles Playing Fields has historically supported a variety of grass football pitches marked out over the years. The most recent layout comprised 2 No. 'full size' 100m+ x 64m pitches enclosed within spectator barrier railings and 3 other large football pitches approx. 100 x 60m in size, with 3 No. smaller 90-93 x 59m size pitches which double up as 81 x 46 junior pitches, and various other 63/61 x 42m (4 No.), 55 x 37m (3 No.), 54/52 x 35m (5 No.) and 37 x 28m (2 No.) mini/junior football pitches.

While the proposed triple AGP development will occupy a substantial part of this playing field area, the loss of any natural grass playing field is deemed acceptable under the following section from paragraph 74 of the NPPF:

"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"

The floodlit AGPs which will extend the playing day and allow continued use during inclement weather. These facilities will also take the pressure off the natural grass pitch areas generally leaving them in better condition for match play.

In addition, the quality of the remaining grass playing pitches on this site will be improved (at a later date as part of the FA Pitch Improvement Programme) through the provision of primary and secondary drainage, soil amelioration, applications of fertiliser and herbicide, and de-compaction.

9.0 Hours of Use

The Applicant seeks permission to use and operate the AGPs (including floodlighting as needed) between the hours of 10.00 to 21.00 Monday to Fridays and from 09.00 to 18.00 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.

The pavilion is to remain open for a further half hour until 21:30 Monday to Friday, and to 18.30 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays to allow players to shower, change and exit the site safely. These hours of operation are consistent with other community accessible facilities in Liverpool.

10.0 Landscape

Other than several trees on site and some medium aged trees around the playing field perimeter there is little of landscape merit within the confines of the site. All existing vegetation on or enclosing the site of the pavilion, AGPs and pitch developments will remain unaffected by the proposals with possible exception of one tree which may be removed to facilitate expansion of car parking on site.

To improve the visual amenity of the north-west corner of the site facing the extended car park area the proposals will include some ground modelling and shelter belt planting in the form of mounding and some tree/bush and flowerbed planting.

The proposed vehicle access, car parking, cycling and pedestrian paths will be tarmac and delineated according to use.

The existing front entrance perimeter fencing and access gates facing Abbotshey Avenue are of palisade type construction approx.1.6m high. These are in a reasonable state of repair but have a galvanised finish which is not attractive. In order to improve the appearance and security of the site entrance elevation the proposals are to install new 2.1m high painted vertical bar type fencing with vehicular and pedestrian gates incorporated to provide separate safe access to both vehicles and pedestrians.

The boundary treatment to the rest of the site is currently high metal fencing to railway track side and existing variable garden fencing and brick walls to the rear of houses backing onto the playing field site. These fences and walls are to be retained as existing.

11.0 Environmental Issues

Trees

None of the trees adjacent to the site or on it are subject to Tree Preservation Orders. It should be noted that the proposed development does not affect any of the trees currently on site or adjacent with the exception of one tree on proposed car park extension area.

Flooding

According to the Environment Agency the site does not sit within a flood plain, or in an area which is considered to have flooding issues.

Please note that this is dealt with separately elsewhere in the Planning Application documentation.

Flora & Fauna

There is no evidence of any unusual flora or fauna on the site, no evidence of protected species being present or resident.

12.0 Security

Crime prevention has been considered in the design development of this proposal. The site is accessed via one primary combined vehicular and pedestrian route from Abbotshey Avenue.

The pavilion is designed with metal roller shutters to all external openings which are to be lowered and secured automatically when the building is not in use in order to minimise the risk of unauthorised access out of working hours. The roof eaves, height and overhangs to the extension element have been designed to minimise the opportunity for unauthorised access onto the building roof.

The AGPs are securely fenced and will also be secured against unauthorised use out of hours. The proposed scheme has been developed on the principle that both AGPs and grass pitches will only be accessible via the front entrance to the new main pavilion and hence access to all football facilities on site is controlled through the main Reception within the building.

The existing perimeter fenceline to the Abbotshey Avenue entrance elevation and associated vehicular gates are in reasonable condition but of unsightly galvanised palisade construction and will be replaced with new 2.1m high painted vertical bar type fencing incorporating separate vehicular and pedestrian gates. The higher fence and lockable gates will provide improved site security. Additional 2.1m high mesh type fencing will be installed to separate the car park area from grassed areas on site to ensure that all pitch users access football facilities through the new building.

13.0 Sustainability Statement

Economy

The proposed scheme is a sports and leisure development and consequently will generate a direct economic impact not only during the construction phase but in its continued activity. The development will increase the number of visitors to the area and as such may provide an increase in economic activity for businesses in the vicinity.

Neighbourhood & Community

As has been highlighted elsewhere within this statement, the development is seen as being beneficial for the community. We believe that the scheme will provide a welcome positive addition to the area.

Environment and resources

We have provided adequate space for the storage of waste and recycling materials.

Movement & Inclusion

All areas of the facility will be accessible to wheelchair users and in accordance with Part M of the building regulations and relevant UK and European codes.

Although it is highly likely that many of the prospective users will arrive by car or cycle many may choose to use public transport. The site is reasonably well placed for bus stops on both Mather Avenue and Rose Lane and these are serviced by bus routes 86, 86A and 86 (Mather Avenue) and 61, 80, 80A, 173 and 201 (Rose lane). There are two rail stations within reasonable walking distance of the Heron Eccles site, namely Mossley Hill and West Allerton Stations.

Access by Cycle

We are aware of the current Liverpool Cycle Route Network and the continuing development of an extensive network of cycle routes as part of the City's Cycling Strategy (Liverpool's Cycling Revolution – a Cycling Strategy for Liverpool 2014-26). The proposed site sits not far from several of these designated cycle routes and as a result it is anticipated that the number of people accessing the site by cycle may increase over time.

Design & Construction

All buildings will be designed and constructed to meet all applicable statutory regulations and requirements. More detail on the design of the scheme sits elsewhere in this document.

14.0 Planning Commentary

The National Planning Policy Framework states the following under *“74. Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless: an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or 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 the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss. “*

It is our contention that the improved facilities, both the pavilion and the enhanced sports provision provided by this development outweighs the loss of a small amount of open space. We therefore consider that this proposal is acceptable under this policy.

Pre-application discussions and meetings

A number of pre-application discussions and meetings have taken place with Planning and Highways representatives of Liverpool City Council. A Pre-Application meeting was held with John Hayes (LCC Planning) in attendance on 2nd February 2016 to discuss current proposals and Planning submission requirements.

Public consultation

A public exhibition/consultation was held at Calderstones School on 19th March 2016 to discuss proposals with local residents and interested parties. Further consultations are ongoing.

15. Conclusion

This proposal is designed to support and enhance the improvement proposed for the Heron Eccles Playing Fields by significantly improving the standard of community accessible facilities for outdoor sport and active recreation.

The loss of 16 natural turf pitches (mainly mini and junior pitches) overall from the current 22 pitch layout caused by the development of the new pavilion, AGPs and the revised grass pitch layout option selected will be more than compensated by the provision of the 3 no. floodlit AGPs which can accommodate adult, junior and small sided games and will extend the playing day and allow continued use during inclement weather. This facility will also take the pressure off the natural grass pitches leaving them in better condition for match-play.

APPENDIX A



Photo 1 – Existing site access and car park beyond from Abbotshey Avenue



Photo 2 – Existing site access and car park beyond from existing pavilion car park side



Photo 3 - Existing tarmacadam car park areas in foreground, permeable overspill car park beyond



Photo 4 - Existing car park areas and site access gates taken from permeable parking area



Photo 5 - Existing frontage to pavilion which will become back of extended building facing new pitches



Photo 6 - Existing rear to pavilion which will become part of front elevation of extended building facing new car park area



Photo 7 - Existing end gable of pavilion retained (extension proposed for other end of building)



Photo 8 - Existing end gable of pavilion to which new extension is to be built (knock through required)



Photo 9 - Existing frontage to pavilion which will become back of extended building facing new pitches

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D