

Proposed Artificial Grass Pitches at:
Simpson Ground,
Hillfoot Road,
Liverpool,
L25 7UJ.

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 Simpson Ground 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 Simpson Ground 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 Simpson Ground 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 Simpson Ground.

The project includes three full sized fenced and floodlit 3G artificial grass pitches (AGPs) and provision of a single storey, six changing room pavilion with a club room and space for coach education together with associated site access and parking. Then approximate site area is 7.76 Ha (19.2 Acres) while the pavilion has a floor area of 587 sq.m).

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 pavilion, AGPs and grass pitch provisions are designed to increase participation and raise the level of footballing skill in players, coaches and referees. For this reason the pavilion also includes 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 Simpson Ground 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 7.76 Ha (19.2 Acres) and is bounded to the West by the Eric Hardy Nature Reserve, to the East by main dual carriageway (Hillfoot Road) and Camp Hill (amenity grassland), to the South by Springwood Cemetery and to the north by further amenity grassland.

The site and surrounding area is designated as Green Space within the Liverpool Unitary Development Plan. We believe that the continued leisure use and improvement proposed to the existing facilities is in general accordance with the applicable planning guidance and relevant policies within the adopted UDP.

Vehicular Access

It is proposed that the new footballing facilities are accessed from Hillfoot Road (via improved/widened current access and pavement crossing, and incorporating new 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 201 cars and improved site access. The number of spaces to be provided reflects anticipated usage patterns and demand.

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

6.0 Design - The Pavilion

Appearance

The pavilion is to be located opposite the existing main access to the site off Hillfoot Road. The proposed pavilion is to be located on site of the current changing room facility which is to be demolished as part of the scheme. The proposed large car park area is to occupy an area immediately to front of new pavilion, between new building and improved access point into site. The pavilion is to be built with its main longitudinal axis on a roughly North/South orientation, with the main entrance façade facing the new car parking to the East and the social areas facing the grass pitches to the North.

The proposed pavilion is a single-storey building with a simple dual pitch roof with a gross interior floor area of some 587m². The design provides a welcoming and open reception area, from which users are directed to either to the education and club spaces to the right or to the changing, shower and toilet facilities to the left.

Layout

In plan, the building comprises six team changing rooms and associated officials' spaces (all with integral showers and wcs) which are grouped to ensure their efficient servicing and management. A clearly defined entrance and foyer leading to a spine corridor to the changing, and a players' exit to the AGPs, allows segregation to maintain cleanliness and supports good practice in safeguarding children.

A club room supported by a kitchenette and servery is provided to allow for post-match refreshments, shelter for parents bringing their children 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 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 modular building installation with standing seam metal detail to eaves and roof and powder coated aluminium glazing and curtain walling to main entrance elevation.

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, 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. Colour to be a mid-grey or similar.

Eaves: Roof edge flashing and soffit to be PPC Aluminium. Colour Grey RAL 9002.

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

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

Plant/Store Doors: Polyester powder coated steel doors, colour to be grey RAL 9002.

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.

Ten 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 six further lighting columns of the same dimensions located along the central macadam concourses and within hardstanding and spectator 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 will be 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 Simpson Ground historically supported a variety of grass football pitches marked out over the years. The most recent layout comprised 1 No. 'full size' 96m x 64m pitch, 4 No. approx. 90 x 55m pitches and 4 No. 58-60m x 40-42m 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 12.00 to 22.00 Monday to Fridays, from 09.00 to 18.00 on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.

The pavilion is to remain open for a further hour until 23:00 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 dense hedgerow bordering the Eric Hardy to the west and some medium aged trees around the site 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.

To improve the visual amenity of the south west and eastern boundaries of the development 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 perimeter fencing and access gates to the site are of metal bar construction approx. 1.8m high. These are generally in a poor state of repair (rusty and damaged) with uprights missing and corroded. New 2.1m high painted vertical bar type fencing, vehicular and pedestrian gates will be installed as part of proposed development works to improve the appearance and security of the site boundary. Separate vehicular and pedestrian gates will be provided within new perimeter fencing to ensure safe access for both pedestrians and cars entering the site.

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.

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 Hillfoot Road.

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 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 and vehicular gates are in poor condition 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. Despite no bus stops existing on Hillfoot Road from which the site is directly accessed the site is well placed for a number of bus routes (166, 188, 266, 288, 787, 86H) that run via nearby bus stops on Woolton Road both into and out of Liverpool. Hunts Cross railway station is within reasonable walking distance of the Simpson Ground.

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. MEAS have also been consulted due to proximity of Eric Hardy Nature Reserve to the site, response incorporated with Ecological appraisal element of Application.

15. Conclusion

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

The loss of one full size adult football field, 1 junior pitch and 4 mini pitches caused by the development of the new pavilion and AGPs 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 pavilion, boundary fencing, site access and gravel car park



Photo 2 – Existing pavilion, perimeter railings and gravel car park area adjacent site entry

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C