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# Results of Public Consultation – Potential Sports Pitch at Manor Park

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Executive
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	21 September 2023
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Janine Lewis
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	7 September 2023
<b>Report Author:</b>	Paul Martindill
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX4434

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## 1 Purpose of the Report

To report on the results of the public consultation in relation to the potential creation of a grass sports pitch at Manor Park, and to determine whether the proposed sports pitch should be progressed for a planning application.

To set out the potential implications of not developing the sports pitch at this location within the context of the Newbury Sports Hub and Playing Pitch Strategy.

## 2 Recommendation

Not to progress with a planning application for the creation of a sports pitch at the Manor Park site and to explore alternative locations for the creation of new sports pitches.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	The cost estimate in 2022 for the sports pitch is £382k- £409k. Applying an additional 10% for inflation is advisable based on 2023 market conditions. Cessation of the project would enable the budget to be allocated to alternative priorities with the Playing Pitch Strategy. Additional costs for the toilet block are estimated at £30-£60k and further budget contingency will be required if unforeseen measures are required to protect the oil pipe work beneath Manor Park, increasing the car park capacity, or the movement of the locally equipped play area to an alternative location on the site.

## Results of Public Consultation – Potential Sports Pitch at Manor Park

	<p>The cost of creating a grass sports pitch is always dependent on the specification and local ground conditions. In seeking cost comparisons a range of £50,000-£350,000 represent the usual range. The cost at Manor Park exceeds this in large part due to the requirement for substantial soil importation (13,000 cubic square metres) to address a 7 metre gradient that runs across the site and the requirement for a comprehensive pitch drainage system to prevent water logging due to the nature of the soil quality. Progressing the development of the sports pitch is therefore very high cost and does not represent good value for money.</p>
<b>Human Resource:</b>	N/A
<b>Legal:</b>	<p>In light of the clear recommendation not to proceed with the full planning application and construction at the Manor Park site, there are no legal implications with regard to planning, procurement or the main property. It is noted that the land on which the car park is currently situated should be transferred to the Council for no monetary value (although this will require officer resource) within the terms of the original Section 52 Agreement and on the same terms as were applicable to the 2002 transfer to WBC of the existing Manor Park open space. Accordingly, it is likely that the officers will proceed with that transfer.</p> <p>Dawn Bond – 27 July 2023</p> <p>Sarah House - 27 July 2023</p>
<b>Risk Management:</b>	<p>The site has a number of physical and environmental challenges, all of which can be addressed but will add considerable cost to the creation of a grass sports pitch. An assessment of the value for money in progressing the development mitigates against pursuing the proposal for a full planning application.</p> <p>Further, the public consultation demonstrated that there is considerable opposition, with local residents strongly disagreeing with the proposal to submit the project for full planning application.</p>
<b>Property:</b>	<p>A Section 106 agreement has secured the provision of a Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) via an adjacent housing development. If the sports pitch was developed the LEAP</p>

**Results of Public Consultation – Potential Sports Pitch at Manor Park**

	would need to be relocated from the north end to the south end of the Manor Park.			
<b>Policy:</b>	The Playing Pitch Strategy has identified a need for more grass and artificial sports pitches to meet growing demand, especially for football, where team numbers have grown significantly in the last 4 years			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?				N/A
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				N/A
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>				A baseline UK habitat classification survey was undertaken. The site was noted to have good ecological elements with many natural species of trees and wildlife habitats currently present.

## Results of Public Consultation – Potential Sports Pitch at Manor Park

<b>Health Impact:</b>				<p>The provision of a grass sports pitch will increase opportunities for participation in team sports for adults and children and, thereby, contribute to improving the physical and mental health of participants.</p> <p>However, there are also benefits to maintaining the area as public open space for activities such as dog walking and play.</p>
<b>ICT Impact:</b>				N/A
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>				N/A
<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>				<p>As set out in the Playing Pitch Strategy, there is a requirement for a greater number of sports pitches and a need to increase the number of sports pitches across West Berkshire to meet growing demand.</p>
<b>Core Business:</b>				N/A
<b>Data Impact:</b>				N/A
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	<p>A public consultation was conducted between 27 April 2022 and 26 June 2022 that received 430 responses. Of these, 92% were from individuals, with the remaining responses received from local football clubs, parish council and local leagues.</p>			

## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The report is brought to consider the results of a public consultation relating to the potential development of a sports pitch at Manor Park. The report also summarises the challenges of creating a sports pitch at this location.
- 4.2 Manor Park is 2.119 hectares in size and consists of grass land with mature tree boundaries. A housing estate is located to the east of the site.
- 4.3 A feasibility study undertaken by the Sports Turf Research Institute confirmed that the site could accommodate a sports pitch of the dimensions 94m x 70m.
- 4.4 The public consultation was undertaken between 27 April and 26 June 2022. A webinar was also conducted to address a range of public questions.

## Results of Public Consultation – Potential Sports Pitch at Manor Park

- 4.5 A total of 430 responses were received, of which 92% were from individual local residents. A total of six responses came from local football clubs and leagues.
- 4.6 The results showed that 50.5% of those that responded, strongly disagreed with the proposal to develop a sports pitch, and 9% disagreed. In contrast, 21% strongly agreed and 13.75% agreed with the proposal. The remaining responses were neutral towards the proposal, with a number of respondents not responding to this question.
- 4.7 The primary concerns raised were:
- Loss of quiet green rural space and impact on wildlife habitat
  - Cost of the project
  - Increased traffic, parking and noise
  - Increased risk of anti-social behaviour
  - Incompatibility with dog walking
- 4.8 There was significant support from local football clubs including Thatcham Town Harriers, Thatcham Tornados, AFC Newbury, Newbury Sunday League, Football Fun Factory and a local youth football team.
- 4.9 The feasibility study showed a number of site-specific challenges that would make the development of the sports pitch expensive, with a cost estimate of £410k without essential ancillary facilities. This cost is considerably higher than the normal cost range for a sports pitch. The primary limiting factors are:
- The site has a pronounced diagonal fall from the north-west corner to the south-east corner and would require the import of a substantial amount of soil material (13,353 cubic metres) to level the site, adding £130k-£150k to the cost of the pitch.
  - An oil pipeline runs across the north end of the site and would require 750mm of cover if pitch construction takes place.
  - Poor topsoil would require the pitch to be installed with a drainage system and soakaway.
  - There are no toilet facilities on the site.
  - Parking capacity would need to be increased.
- 4.10 A grass pitch has limited capacity, with usage levels recommended at around three matches per week (4 hours), with 50% enhancement to this capacity if the pitch is used by children aged 15 or under.
- 4.11 In consideration of the public consultation results, the site challenges with the resulting high cost of development and the fairly limited level of usage that will be achieved, it is not recommended to progress with the proposal for a formal planning application.
- 4.12 New opportunities are emerging and better value may be achieved by the development of new artificial pitches, which have significantly greater capacity to meet the growing demand in the area.
- 4.13 The public consultation results showed significant support for the principle of provision of additional sports pitches within West Berkshire (see appendix A) and work is progressing, to explore alternative sites and increase the quantity and quality of

artificial and grass sports pitches through the implementation of the Playing Pitch Strategy.

## **5 Supporting Information**

### **Introduction**

5.1 This report presents the results of a public consultation undertaken between 27 April 2022 and 26 June 2022, relating to the provision of a new sports pitch at Manor Park.

### **Background**

5.2 A Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), including a Priority Action Plan, was adopted by the Council in November 2019. The overall position stated in the PPS is that there is a significant short fall in the provision of artificial and grass pitches in relation to demand from local teams.

5.3 Manor Park was identified as a potential location for an additional sports pitch and a feasibility study was commissioned and undertaken by the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) to determine whether a sports pitch could be located at this site (See appendix B).

5.4 The results showed that there is sufficient space for the development of the sports pitch, however, the more detailed feasibility study conducted at the site has demonstrated that there are primary limiting factors that made this development costly, very challenging and, therefore, not representing value for money in relation to the additional playing capacity that would be achieved.

5.5 A public consultation was undertaken in May and June 2022 to explore public support for the proposal. This included eight questions and the results of these are shown in Appendix A.

## **6 Results of Public Consultation**

6.1 A total of 430 responses were received. 92% of the responses were from individual residents of West Berkshire, of which 50.5% “strongly disagreed” with the proposal and a further 9% “disagreed”.

6.2 In contrast 21% of respondents “strongly agreed” with the proposal and 13.75% “agreed.” Several clubs and football related organisations responded, including a local Sunday league and several teams indicated they would wish to play at Manor Park if the sports pitch was developed. The limited additional capacity created by a new grass sports pitch could not meet the expressed demand from the clubs that responded to the public consultation and this could lead to frustration even if the development was completed.

6.3 In relation to the question “How important is it that the Council addresses the shortfall of sports pitches?”, 47% of respondents viewed that this was “extremely important” or “very important”, with a further 19% stating it was “somewhat important”. 13% of respondents felt that addressing the shortfall of sports pitches was “not important at all” (Appendix A)

- 6.4 Respondents were asked how the Council might address their concerns in relation to this specific development. The most common grouping of responses was to reopen Faraday Stadium, find another alternative location and to increase community access to more school sports pitches.
- 6.5 Analysis of the results of respondents by postcode showed that within the postcode RG14 2NG (in which Manor Park is located), 73% of residents “strongly disagreed” with the proposal and 8% “disagreed”.

## 7 Site Challenges

- 7.1 The feasibility report undertaken by the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI), highlighted a number of principle challenges to developing the site to accommodate a sports pitch (Appendix B)
- 7.2 The site has a pronounced roughly diagonal fall from the northwest of the site (110.79m) to the south of the site (103.19m). A major ‘cut and fill’ earthworks operation would be required to create a pitch platform with uniform grade to meet Sport England requirements requiring in excess of 13,000 cubic square metres of soil at an estimate cost of £130k-£150k.
- 7.3 The existing site topsoil is of poor-quality (clay loam topsoil), with poor drainage characteristics, indicating likely waterlogging. An intensive sports pitch drainage system would be required for a sports pitch installation to prevent water logging. One utility service which was confirmed was an oil pipeline. STRI mapped the approximate surface location of the oil pipes during the topographical survey. STRI met with Exolum, who operate the pipeline. The pipes are noted to be approximately 1m under the surface and have 8 and 10 inch pipe diameters. These oil lines were noted to be running to Heathrow. It was suggested that one of the pipes may be unused but there is no way of knowing unless a trial hole excavation was carried out. It is possible to construct over this pipeline, however, usually 750 mm cover is needed. Exolum will need to be present while working in this area. To divert the pipeline around the park would cost approximately £20,000 per m per pipe (two pipes). The location of the oil pipeline is shown in Appendix B.
- 7.4 It should be noted that there are no toilets at this location. If any works were to take place toilet facilities would need to be provided.
- 7.5 Extra parking needs to be considered. There is some scope to extend the car park to the south-west to create more spaces. That car park is, however, outside of the Council’s ownership. Legal Services has considered the position as to ownership of the car park and it has been established that the current owner (David Wilson Homes) is under an obligation to transfer the land upon which the car park is situated to the Council at no cost, pursuant to the provisions of a Section 52 Town and Country Planning Act 1971 Agreement. Property Services have held discussions with David Wilson Homes in relation to this matter and terms have been agreed for its transfer to the Council pursuant to the Section 52 Agreement. As such it is likely that this transfer will proceed regardless of any decision as to the sports pitch.

## 8 Cost Estimates

8.1 Cost estimates for the scheme were collated by STRI in 2022 and are detailed below. For the scheme to commence in 2023/2024, an additional 10% should be considered due to inflationary factors. This excludes provision for a toilet block and works associated with increasing the size of the car park.

8.2 Table 1 - Cost estimates

Item	Cost (£)
Pre-Planning Surveys and Engagement	40,000
Planning Submission	15,000
Soil Importation (if required)	130-150,000
Construction	105,000
Contingency Allowance (10%)	29,000 – 31,000
Total Exc. VAT	319,000 – 341,000
Total Inc. VAT (20%)	382,800 – 409,200

## 9 Pre-Planning Application Advice

9.1 A pre-planning application was made for the sports pitch and written advice received on 18 July 2022. This highlights that the principle of the development is acceptable, however, all other material considerations will need to be addressed as part of a full planning application. Sport England (SE), is a statutory consultee for all sport related development. As such, SE will need to be consulted at planning application stage if the proposal is to proceed. Previous indications from SE estimates a deficit of approximately 27.5 adult size natural grass pitches identified in the PPS. The proposed playing pitch is, therefore, compliant with the PPS in terms of partly addressing the deficit.

9.2 The pre-application also sets out the process for relocating a Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) previously established via a Section 106 Agreement. This would need to be relocated from the north east of the site to the south east to enable a full size pitch to be located at Manor Park.



## 10 Proposal

10.1 In evaluating the results of the public consultation, alongside the feasibility report produced by STRI, and the pre-planning application advice, it is evident that the construction of a sports pitch at this site would go against the wishes of the majority of respondents from the public consultation and prove to be a very complicated and expensive development. It is therefore proposed not to progress with a full planning application for the creation of a grass sports pitch at Manor Park.

## 11 Other options considered

11.1 There will remain a deficit in the number of playing pitches in West Berkshire in comparison to demand and the Council will continue to assess sites within the district with a view to their suitability as playing pitches. Such assessments to take into account local demand, costs, public opinion and the views of Sport England and National Governing Bodies of Sport.

11.2 The Playing Pitch Strategy has placed a strong emphasis on increasing the number of artificial grass pitches across West Berkshire, primarily due to their vastly superior capacity to accommodate training and matches compared to a grass sports pitch. Allocating funding to 3G artificial pitches will be a more effective way to meet community demand.

11.3 A Stage E review of the PPS has been completed, following consultation with both Sport England and the National Governing Bodies of Sport for Football, Rugby, Cricket and Hockey and will be reported to a future Executive, setting out the latest demand and supply data relating to sports pitches across West Berkshire and reviewing priority projects.

## 12 Conclusion

12.1 Whilst there is a clear strategic requirement to increase the number of playing pitches in West Berkshire in order to meet demand from increasing numbers of teams (with particular growth in teams for women and girls), there are a number of factors that align against the development of a sports pitch at Manor Park.

12.2 Most significant is the strong local opposition expressed through the consultation, primarily by individuals who live within the postcode in which Manor Park is located. This was in contrast to respondents who represented local football teams who were supportive of the proposal.

12.3 Secondly, there are a number of site factors that make the development of the sports pitch very expensive, including a requirement to import significant volumes of soil to level the site and to install a comprehensive drainage system to prevent flooding due to the soil characteristics at the site.

12.4 Thirdly, significant work will be required with third parties to build the sports pitch over the existing oil pipeline, to relocate the locally equipped play area and to complete negotiations to acquire land to increase the size of the car park.

## Results of Public Consultation – Potential Sports Pitch at Manor Park

- 12.5 All of these factors point to a costly and complex development that would only create a single grass sports pitch that could accommodate 4-6 hours of play each week. Capital expenditure is forecast to exceed £400,000 to create the pitch and will also require additional expenditure on ancillary facilities (toilet block and additional car parking) to support the sports pitch are factored into the total cost plan.
- 12.6 The provision of a sports pitch at Manor Park had the potential to mitigate a potential Sport England requirement to secure a new grass sports pitch if the Newbury sports hub was developed. If the Sports Hub was developed an alternative location for a sports pitch will need to be identified. A recent review of supply and demand for sports pitches and new emerging opportunities will enable alternative locations to be considered for future sports pitch provision.

## 13 Appendices

13.1 Appendix A – Powerpoint presentation of public consultation results relating to Manor Park

13.2 Appendix B – Manor Park Sports Pitch Feasibility Study

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### Background Papers:

Pre-Planning Application Advice for Sports Pitch at Manor Park

#### Subject to Call-In:

Yes:  No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
- Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

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