
Faraday Road 3G Pitch Development

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	25 September 2025
Portfolio Member:	Portfolio Holder: Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside
Date Head of Service agreed report: <i>(for Corporate Board)</i>	25/07/25
Report Author:	Jon Winstanley
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4725

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To report on the result of a feasibility study and outline business case regarding the provision of a 3G pitch to replace the grass pitch at Faraday Road and to seek that this project is included in the 2025/26 and 2026/27 capital programme.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That members be informed about the proposed project and to consider the business case to replace the grass football pitch at Faraday Road.
- 2.2 To include the funding for the project in the 2025/26 and 2026/27 capital programme.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>Planning, design and delivery of a 3G pitch to replace the grass pitch at Faraday Road is estimated to cost £1,250,000.</p> <p>It is estimated that the annual net income from use of the pitch will be approximately £70,000. Further financial analysis can be seen in section 5.6 of the report and Appendix B.</p> <p>The options for funding the project is through capital borrowing and/or the use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). If capital borrowing is pursued the cost of borrowing over a 10-year period would be £1,384k based on current rates. As the nett income would be £700k, this would leave a £684k revenue pressure over a 10-year period. Although CIL could be used to fund all or part of the project, CIL commitments are currently being reviewed to ensure that there is sufficient CIL to fund the</p>

Faraday Road 3G Pitch Development

	<p>demand in the Capital programme. It is highly likely that using CIL to fund the project would either necessitate borrowing for other infrastructure projects or the cancelling/reprofiling of other infrastructure projects to divert CIL funds to this scheme. Once the scheme construction commences, the funding model for the scheme will be reviewed, taking into consideration borrowing rates, to establish the optimal financial blend of borrowing and CIL.</p> <p>A sinking fund of £300k will need to be created using Cil/capital to support the replacement of the pitch every 10 years.</p> <p>Given the current programme it is anticipated the construction will span 2 financial years. It is therefore proposed that £600,000 be included in the capital budget for the 2025/26 financial year and £650,000 in the 2026/27 financial year.</p>			
Human Resource:	None as part of this recommendation.			
Legal:	None as part of this recommendation.			
Risk Management:	Risks are identified along with mitigation under section 5 in the body of the report.			
Property:	None as part of this recommendation.			
Policy:	The provision of additional 3G pitches is in line with the emerging West Berkshire Playing Pitch Strategy.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
<p>A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?</p>		x		<p>Provision of an artificial pitch will increase the amount of use for all.</p>

Faraday Road 3G Pitch Development

<p>B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?</p>		x		
<p>Environmental Impact:</p>		x		<p>The Council's Sustainability Assessment Tool has been used to assess the environmental impact of this proposal and can be viewed in Appendix C</p>
<p>Health Impact:</p>	x			<p>Regular access to high-quality sports facilities promotes physical fitness, mental health, and social interaction across all age groups.</p>
<p>ICT Impact:</p>		x		<p>None as part of this recommendation.</p>
<p>Digital Services Impact:</p>		x		<p>None as part of this recommendation.</p>
<p>Council Strategy Priorities:</p>	x			<p>This proposal supports Priority 5 of the Council Strategy 'Thriving Communities with a Strong Local Voice'.</p>
<p>Core Business:</p>	x			<p>This proposal supports Priority 5 of the Council Strategy 'Thriving Communities with a Strong Local Voice'.</p>
<p>Data Impact:</p>		x		<p>None as part of this recommendation.</p>
<p>Consultation and Engagement:</p>	<p>Consultation with key stakeholders has been undertaken as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy review. This includes Sport England.</p> <p>The delivery of the artificial 3G pitch will be subject to planning approval and associated consultation through the planning process.</p>			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 West Berkshire Council is committed to improving sports amenities across the district, and to build on the success of the reintroduction of football to Faraday Road. The emerging Playing Pitch Strategy has identified a significant need for 3G pitches across the District and particularly in the Newbury area. This proposal aligns with the emerging recommendations of that strategy to meet the need for pitches in the district. This scheme is a priority for the current administration and formed on of the key commitments in the Liberal Democrat manifesto.
- 4.2 This report details the result of a feasibility study to replace the grass pitch at Faraday Road with a 3G pitch, undertaken by specialist consultants Sports Lab. This can be seen in Appendix A. An outline business case has been produced, which can be seen in Appendix B. These reports demonstrate that the provision of a 3G pitch is feasible, and the design and delivery will cost £1,250,000. Whilst the project will deliver a modest return on investment, it should be noted that if borrowing is necessary, the interest payments would result in a £684k revenue pressure over a 10-year period (based on current borrowing rates). CIL income could be used; however, the CIL commitments are currently being reviewed to ensure there are sufficient CIL funds to cover existing commitments in the capital programme. In order to deliver this project without resulting in a revenue pressure, it will be necessary to remove or delay projects from the capital programme to release the required CIL funding.
- 4.3 The proposal will enable the Council to maximise the use of the pitch at Faraday Road and the opportunity for residents to take part in sport. This will provide significant health and community benefits through the provision to a sustainable, year-round playing surface. It is therefore recommended that this project be included in the Council's capital programme for delivery in the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years as detailed in the body of the report.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 West Berkshire Council is committed to improving sports amenities throughout the district and is currently finalising the review of the Playing Pitch Strategy. The emerging strategy has identified a need for additional sports pitches in the Newbury area This proposal will significantly increase the football playing pitch availability in line with the objectives of the strategy. This scheme is a priority for the current administration and formed on of the key commitments in the Liberal Democrat manifesto.

Background

- 5.2 In November 2023 football was successfully returned to Faraday Road. The grass pitch at Faraday Road has seen significant use in the last 18 months, however playing time on grass pitches is limited and is at the mercy of changing weather conditions. The emerging Playing Pitch Strategy refresh has identified a need for additional football playing availability in the Newbury area. A way of achieving this is to convert the existing grass pitch at Faraday Road to a 3G artificial pitch.

Faraday Road 3G Pitch Development

- 5.3 The delivery of a 3G artificial pitch at Faraday Road will provide a sustainable, year-round playing surface maximising the ability for the facility to be used more intensively, enabling greater resident participation on sport to meet the needs of the community.

Proposal

- 5.4 In late 2024 specialist consultants Sports Labs were commissioned to undertake a feasibility into the provision of a 3G pitch. The results of the feasibility study can be seen in Appendix A.
- 5.5 In summary, Sports Labs concluded that the replacement of the grass pitch with a 3G pitch at Faraday Road would be reasonably straight forward. There is a minor complication of a peat layer in the substrate that will require reinforcement although some reinforcement of the subgrade is not unusual. Of course, any pitch provision would be subject to planning approval.

Financial Analysis.

- 5.6 The design and construction of the pitch is estimated to cost £1,250,000. It is also proposed that a sinking fund will be created in line with best practice. This fund will be used to fund the replacement of the artificial surface every 10 years.
- 5.7 Based on the usage and income from the 3G pitch at Henwick, it is anticipated that the pitch would achieve an annual income of £170,000. Annual maintenance, operation and business rates is estimated at £100,000, with a net annual return of £70,000.
- 5.8 This project could be funded from income received from the CIL. However, it is unlikely that there will be sufficient CIL funding to cover the CIL funded projects allocated in the current approved capital programme. To deliver this project using CIL, it is likely that other projects in the capital programme identified to be funded from CIL would either need to be removed entirely or deferred until further CIL income is gained.
- 5.9 There is the opportunity to fund the delivery of the project using borrowing. In this case, the interest payments would result in a £684k pressure over a 10-year period based on current interest rates.
- 5.9 It is anticipated that, based on the current programme, the work could start at the end of the 2025/26 financial year and complete at the beginning of 2026/27. Funding has therefore been profiled over 2 financial years as detailed in the outline business case in Appendix B. However, as planning permission is required for the proposed pitch, this would require support from the Environment Agency (EA). The Council is engaging with the EA ahead of the application being submitted and every effort will be made to ensure that the supporting information to satisfy them is submitted as part of the planning application. However, based on experience, the EAs consideration of this information and/or any further request they make for further information could result in some delay to the project.

Community Benefits

- 5.10 There are a number of community and health benefits as follows:

Faraday Road 3G Pitch Development

- a) **Year-Round Access.** The 3G pitch can be used in all weather conditions, reducing cancellations and ensuring consistent availability for training, matches, and community events.
- b) **Increased Participation.** With extended hours of usability, more local teams, schools, and community groups can access the facility, encouraging greater participation in sport and physical activity.
- c) **Health and Wellbeing.** Regular access to high-quality sports facilities promotes physical fitness, mental health, and social interaction across all age groups.
- d) **Support for Local Clubs and Schools.** The pitch will provide a reliable venue for grassroots football clubs, school sports programs, and youth development initiatives.
- e) **Social Inclusion.** The facility will be accessible to a wide range of users, including underrepresented groups, helping to reduce barriers to participation in sport.
- f) **Community Cohesion.** Hosting local leagues, tournaments, and events will bring people together, fostering a stronger sense of community.

Programme

5.11 If approved, the officers would aim for the following key milestones:

Activity	Start Date	Duration
Planning permission	17/09/25	13 weeks
Procurement (can run in parallel with planning process)	01/11/25	8 weeks
Construction	01/03/25	9 weeks

Please note that the planning application is dependent on consultation with the Environment Agency. This often leads to delays in the planning process as the EA object if they do not have all of the information they need and they have limited resources to respond in detail at an early stage.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 Do nothing. The pitch will continue to be used as a grass pitch, however the additional benefits detailed above will not be realised.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposed all weather 3G pitch at Faraday Road would provide a significant contribution to meeting the need for playing pitches in the district and Newbury Area as identified through the emerging Playing Pitch Strategy. This represents a sound investment and will delivery strong sport and community benefits. It aligns with local strategic goals for sport, health, and infrastructure development. Approval is recommended to proceed with the project and include the requested funding in the 2025/26 and 2026/27 capital programme.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Sports Labs Feasibility Report

8.2 Appendix B – Financial Business Case

8.3 Appendix C - Sustainability Assessment

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

Wards affected: Clay Hill;

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