

5th January 2022



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Sports & Leisure
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Dear Resident,

LAUREL PARK 3G PROPOSAL

Following a Playing Pitch Strategy on local authority football facilities, Laurel Park has been identified as a potential site for a brand new 3G (3rd Generation) football pitch. The pitch will help with the challenges due to lack of training and match facilities for local grassroots clubs.

Wokingham Borough Council and the Football Foundation are looking into the feasibility of installing a new flood-lit, all-weather pitch at Laurel Park towards the end of 2022. As a resident living close to the ground, it is appropriate that we provide you with as much information as possible and relay a few of the questions that have come from the Maiden Erlegh Residents' Association and from individuals.

Hopefully this letter, and the accompanying Questions & Answers page, will answer any concerns you may have but we will be pleased to answer any individual queries. Wokingham Borough Council Sports & Leisure do not, at this stage, have planning permission and we will require the Football Foundation, who will be part funding the project, to be satisfied with the surveys and the management of the impact that the 3G will have on football development in the area.

Background

The report has highlighted that with the growth of football in the borough, and with grass pitches running at full capacity, there is a need for a 3G pitch in the area. Also highlighted are a need for enhancements to the sports pavilion, and additional car parking. The council is also looking into a new artificial cricket wicket, an outdoor gym and a bike shelter.

Upgrade Plan

The proposal is to install a 3G (3rd Generation) flood-lit, 11 a-side pitch to include the capability of having four 5 a-side pitches, two 7 a-side pitches, two 9 a-side pitches and an 11 a-side pitch marked within the ground. The facility would be of the highest current technical standards set by the Football Association (The FA) and provide a high-quality training area for all ages and a match play area for all ages. Wokingham Borough Council is currently taking advice from the Football Foundation, the County FA and consultants on the feasibility of the project along with the proposed location.



The proposed site will need take into consideration and address:

- distance from households
- car and pedestrian access routes
- car parking
- proximity to the nature reserve
- floodlit spill
- impact on the natural wildlife
- noise management plan

Wokingham Borough Council and our funders want to ensure that the site can be used by other local grassroots clubs, schools, and community groups.

Please take some time to read the attached Q & A section.

We would like to advise that Wokingham Borough Council has not yet submitted a planning application and we will be leading a public consultation to take on board residents and stakeholders views and suggestions.

Any comments related to the project can also be submitted via the Planning Application portal once the application has opened.

If you have any questions related to the project, please email sport@wokingham.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

Beverley Thompson

Sport & Leisure Service Manager
Wokingham Borough Council
Sport & Leisure

3G All Weather Pitch Proposal at Laurel Park

Questions and Answers

Q: What is a 3G Pitch?

A: It is a 50mm green artificial grass pitch with a shock layer and rubber crumb at its base. This gives a very even bounce and a fast pace that replicates grass but is all weather. Unlike the old Astro turf or sand based pitches it is less prone to burns and injury. It is the preferred choice of the Football Association, and the proposed pitch will be 11 a-side size. (100m x 70m approx.)

Q: Is floodlighting the pitch form part of the proposal?

A: The 3G Facility would need floodlights to allow for evening usage. Subject to planning permission. Wokingham Borough Council has installed a number of 3G floodlit pitches and the light spill falls within the confines of the 3G pitch. The lights used are down lighting LED lamppost style lights in the proposal and are totally different to regular large ground angled floodlights or lights previously used at old fashioned football grounds. Whilst they are very energy efficient, these lights are also designed to contain the light within the pitch and avoid lighting areas not required.

Q: Why do we need an artificial pitch and why floodlit?

A: Currently, Laurel Park Football Club teams play on grass at the weekend in league matches and the site is also used for Sunday morning football matches. Whiteknights Football Club are another grassroots club that use local pitches and they have been identified by the Berks & Bucks FA as a key partner club to join Laurel Park in sharing the 3G pitch. Over the winter period, both clubs train at sites that are a distance from the area and adds to the travel impact when local members drive to Wokingham, Woodley or Reading for training. The grass pitches Laurel Park cannot accommodate the heavy schedule of training and league matches and they are not floodlit, so on winter evenings, the clubs football teams train away on a variety of different floodlit artificial pitches of varying quality. We want to be able to offer a facility where local players and members do not have to travel far for training.

Q: Who will use it?

A: The main user on winter weekday evenings (up until about 10pm) will be Laurel Park Football Club (LPFC) and Whiteknights Football Club (WFC). The 3G pitch will be available for the local primary school for day time usage as well as for walking football for over 50s, some outdoor exercise activities and by the Reading Football Club Community Trust. There will also be some pay and play sessions for hirers during off-peak times.

Q: Do you envisage that the upgrade to 3G will lead to increased use of the facilities?

A: Evening usage would grow to cater for the additional training slots for the local, grassroots clubs who provide football opportunities for boys and girls. The borough council is currently investigating ways in which the traffic and car parking provision is located and managed to alleviate concerns from residents.

Q: As artificial turf does not absorb water, will the run off from the field lead to flooding nearby?

A: The assigned contractors would need to put provisions in place to reduce any impact on the surrounding area. Surveys will be conducted on the current drainage on the site along with how the new 3G drainage would be connected to reduce any flooding. The council's Planning Department would need to be satisfied with the proposals on how the impact on the nature reserve and surrounding areas would be managed.

Q: What about noise – will this intrude on us?

A: We will need to put in a 'Noise Management Plan' to satisfy the planning requirements and the site may require acoustic fencing to reduce noise levels from the 3G pitch. We will be careful to reduce any possible noise impact by a series of controlled measures.

- Possible inclusion of a 2m acoustic fence to help absorb stray sounds.
- Limit times of use in summer.
- Midweek closure of 10pm

Q: What about start and finish times?

A: During winter months (Sept-March) the predictive timetable shows the evening has the main usage from 6-9pm with the grassroots clubs and possibly some ad-hoc session may take place up to 10pm weeknights. Weekends will see the pitch predominately used between 9am and 1pm.

Q: Parking around the site is bad at weekends and will the 3G make it worse?

A: The borough council are investigating option on access and car parking to reduce the parking challenges at weekends and with the associated midweek use. No decision has been made and this will be carefully considered.

Q: Who would be responsible for running and maintaining the new facility and how often is it likely to be used compared with now?

A: WBC Sport & Leisure would manage the site and we would see increased use of the facilities midweek and allow for greater playability at weekends for our local club/s.