

Title: Withdrawal of proposal for Artificial Turf Pitch at Newbold Comyn
Lead Officer: Paddy Herlihy
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ian Davison
Wards of the District directly affected: Clarendon

Approvals required	Date	Name
Portfolio Holder	26/04/24	Ian Davison
Finance	26/04/24	Betty Gong
Legal Services	26/04/24	Kathryn Tebbey
Chief Executive	26/04/24	Chris Elliott
Director of Climate Change	26/04/24	Dave Barber
Head of Service(s)	26/04/24	Darren Knight
Section 151 Officer	26/04/24	Andrew Rollins
Monitoring Officer	26/04/24	Graham Leach
Leadership Co-ordination Group	29/04/24	Ian Davison
Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?	Yes	
Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?	No	
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?	No	
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	No	
Accessibility Checked?	Yes	

Summary

The Council has been preparing a proposal to locate a new Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) for football on existing grass football pitches at Newbold Comyn. Approval to proceed with this project was provided by the Leadership Coordination Group on 18th September 2023.

As the project has been developed, however, it has become clear that it would not be appropriate to locate an ATP in this location for the reasons shown in this report. It is therefore recommended that the proposal to locate a new ATP in this location is now withdrawn and other options are considered in the future for the provision of the Artificial Turf Pitches required in the District.

Recommendation(s)

- (1)** That Cabinet withdraws the proposal to locate a new Artificial Turf Pitch at Newbold Comyn and asks officers to keep the provision of appropriate artificial and natural facilities for football under review.
 - (2)** That Cabinet withdraws the application to the Football Foundation for grant funding to support the proposal to locate a new Artificial Turf Pitch at Newbold Comyn.
 - (3)** That Cabinet asks officers to bring forward costed proposals for the refurbishment of the pavilion at Newbold Comyn to the Newbold Comyn Project Board and the Cabinet if necessary to ensure that it is fit for purpose for the existing and future users of the facility for the foreseeable future.
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1 Reasons for the Recommendations

1.1 Recommendation 1

- 1.1.1 It is recommended that the proposal to locate a new Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) for football at Newbold Comyn be withdrawn. This conclusion has been reached by officers following a balanced Gateway Review of the current situation with regard to the project. The key elements in the proposal to withdraw this proposal are as follows:
 - 1.1.1.1 Support for the ATP from football clubs and the public has been lukewarm and mixed. This has not improved as the project has been developed over time, and the football clubs, in particular, remain very uncommitted to the proposal.
 - 1.1.1.2 The location of the pitch is not considered by officers to be appropriate for several reasons. Grass pitches will be lost at the main site for football in the District. Managing the facility will be difficult in such a remote location. Providing First Aid cover and site supervision will be costly. Staff working at the site will be isolated and vulnerable. These issues have become clearer as the management arrangements for the proposal have been identified.
 - 1.1.1.3 There are no examples nationally of ATPs in such an isolated location.
 - 1.1.1.4 There are additional costs for paths, cycleways, lighting and security cameras that have become evident as the design has developed. These would be costly and they contribute to making the proposal poor value for money.

1.1.1.5 The proposal would cost the Council in the region of £2,000,000, which is considered unaffordable. This cost has only been clarified as the project design has been developed. The Council has a maximum of £400,000 in funding available from Section 106 sources, and much of this has not yet been received from developers. Bridge funding would therefore be required.

1.2 **Recommendation 2**

1.2.1 The Council has been working with the Football Foundation for over a year on the proposals at Newbold Comyn. The Football Foundation has indicated that it was minded to provide a substantial grant to the project, provided that certain criteria were met.

1.2.2 These criteria, whilst perfectly reasonable, would add to both the capital and revenue costs of the project. The Football Foundation would require that at least two of the changing rooms in the pavilion were refurbished to modern standards. They would prefer that all the changing rooms were refurbished to the same standard. Refurbishing the 12 changing rooms that officers believe are required at this site would cost around £2,000,000, which is more than the Council is able to allocate to this project.

1.2.3 The Football Foundation would also require that the facility is staffed during all opening hours. As the facility is over 600 metres away from the Newbold Comyn Leisure Centre this would mean that a specific member of staff would need to be present at all opening times, which would increase costs and reduce profitability.

1.2.4 The Football Foundation has indicated that a withdrawal from the grant application process this late in the process will mean that they will have to charge the Council for various expenses that they have incurred. They did inform the Council of this when the previous decision was made to go ahead. This sum has not yet been assessed, but it is likely to be between £10,000 and £20,000. This sum will have to be found from Section 106 funding.

1.3 **Recommendation 3**

1.3.1 The pavilion at Newbold Comyn serves the football teams using the grass pitches at the site. It also serves the participants in the weekly Parkrun on the site, and several other community groups that use the site. It needs some immediate maintenance to comply with various regulatory requirements. This work is being commissioned at the present time. It would also be preferable if some additional refurbishment was undertaken to the existing building to improve conditions for its users.

1.3.2 However, it is considered that a full-scale strip and refurbish, along with an extension, which would be necessary to produce the 12 changing rooms that are required by the existing teams to full Football Foundation recommended standards would be unaffordable. This has been quoted at around £2,000,000 and the Council does not have sufficient funds to allocate that amount to this work.

1.3.3 It is therefore proposed that officers survey the existing building and come forward with a costed proposal for appropriate refurbishment of the existing facilities that improves the existing building within the limited funding available for this work.

1.3.4 The cost of this work will be ascertained when the proposals are prepared. There are several ways to approach this task and there may be some external funding available. This Recommendation therefore requests that the proposals

are brought back to the Newbold Comyn Project Board for approval, and only brought back to Cabinet if the level of funding needed requires it.

- 1.3.5 The Council had retained Pick Everard to provide project management services for the major refurbishment and extension of the pavilion. Their services will no longer be required for the more modest refurbishment now proposed. They will be paid for their services to date. This is expected to be between £7,500 and £21,000. This will need to be found from Section 106 funding.
- 1.3.6 In addition, the Council has paid for early architectural designs, two ecology studies and a traffic survey in connection to the project. The total for these works is £10,982.60. This will also need to be found from Section 106 funding.

2 Alternative Options

- 2.1 It would be possible to continue with the proposal and with the application for grant funding from the Football Foundation. However, the Gateway Review has demonstrated that this would not be an appropriate location for an ATP, and the Council is not able to spend the necessary amount to fully refurbish and extend the pavilion to the extent that would be required.
- 2.2 There are emerging proposals for new sporting facilities in the District. These are in the very early stages, but it is possible that they may eventually lead to new proposals for an ATP to serve the north Leamington area. Councillors and officers will engage in the organisations developing these proposals and monitor their progress as part of the assessment of how best we might provide an ATP for this area of the District.
- 2.3 Withdrawing the proposal for a new ATP at Newbold Comyn will free up Section 106 monies for other projects that will encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyles.

3 Legal Implications

- 3.1 The Council entered into the Procurement Framework managed by the Football Foundation as part of the grant application process, having previously been a client of the same framework for the facility at Racing Club Warwick. However, this does not place any requirements upon the Council and so it is easy to withdraw from this Framework.
- 3.2 When the Leadership Coordination Group gave permission for this project to proceed on 18th September 2023 the Council agreed by exchange of emails with the Football Foundation that it would be liable for any costs incurred by the Football Foundation in progressing this application beyond that point. The Football Foundation has agreed to provide a breakdown of these abortive costs, if the Council withdraws its application, and the Council has agreed to pay them. It is considered likely that these costs will be between £10,000 and £20,000.
- 3.3 In addition, the Council has already spent money on surveys and design work, but all these pieces of work are complete.
- 3.4 The Council will need to pay Pick Everard for their project management services to date. There is no contract with Pick Everard to require any additional severance payments to the company. This cost is likely to be between £7,500 and £21,000. This will need to be funded Section 106 funding.
- 3.5 The Council will then have no further legal commitments to any party in this matter.

4 Financial Services

- 4.1 The Council will be obliged to pay the abortive costs of the Football Foundation in progressing this grant application. This is expected to be between £10,000 and £20,000. This will have to be found from Section 106 funding.
- 4.2 The Council will also be obliged to pay Pick Everard for the services so far provided for project management of the pavilion refurbishment. This is expected to be between £7,500 and £21,000 and will need to be found from Section 106 funding.
- 4.3 In addition, the Council has paid for early architectural designs, two ecology studies and a traffic survey in connection to the project. The total for these works is £10,982.60. This will also need to be found from Section 106 funding.
- 4.4 At its meeting on 6th July 2022 the Cabinet agreed “(3) That Cabinet approves the expenditure of a sum not to exceed £60,000 from s106 funds received by the Council on project development activities in support of the project to construct a new artificial turf pitch (ATP) for football at the Newbold Comyn football pitch site, such that a further report can be made to Cabinet to seek funding for the fully prepared scheme in due course.” This funding can therefore be made available for the project development activities undertaken on this project to date, albeit that the project development is now considered abortive.
- 4.5 The essential maintenance to the pavilion, which is being progressed at this time, will be paid for from the Corporate Maintenance budget. Any further refurbishment of the existing facilities will need to be paid for from Section 106 monies received by the Council from developers. There is potentially £400,000 available from this source. However, only £170,000 of this has been received by the Council to date. If it is intended to spend any more than this lower sum, then bridging finance will be required until the sums are received from developers.

5 Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 Warwick District Council has adopted a Corporate Strategy which sets three strategic aims for the organisation.
- 5.2 Delivering valued, sustainable services – the withdrawal of this project will mean that more resources are available to deliver valued and sustainable services through other projects.
- 5.3 Low cost, low carbon energy across the district – the scaled-back refurbishment of the pavilion will offer the opportunity to improve the energy performance of the building.
- 5.4 Creating vibrant, safe and healthy communities of the future – improving the current pavilion will encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyles. Withdrawing the proposal for an ATP at Newbold will enable Section 106 monies to be spent on other sporting facilities, which will encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyles.

6 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The refurbishment of the pavilion provides the opportunity to improve the energy performance of the building.
- 6.2 The withdrawing of the proposal to locate an ATP at Newbold Comyn will remove the possibility of micro-plastics entering the environment from this source in this rural area. The withdrawing of the proposal to install floodlights in this area will reduce concerns of some local people with regard to a potentially negative impact on the night-time ecology of the area.

7 Analysis of the effects on Equality

- 7.1 The refurbishment of the pavilion provides the opportunity to improve the accessibility of the building.

8 Data Protection

- 8.1 There are no data protection implications of this proposal.

9 Health and Wellbeing

- 9.1 The refurbishment of the pavilion will encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- 9.2 Withdrawing the proposal for an ATP at Newbold will enable Section 106 monies to be spent on other sporting facilities, which will encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyles.

10 Risk Assessment

- 10.1 Withdrawing the proposal to locate an ATP at Newbold Comyn means that there is a risk that there will be no other opportunity to provide an ATP for north Leamington, when the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy says that there is demand for such a facility. This risk will be mitigated by monitoring other opportunities to provide an ATP for this part of the District in the future.
- 10.2 Although this risk is considered unlikely, withdrawing the application to the Football Foundation at this late stage carries the small risk that the organisation will not look favourably on any future application. However, this risk is mitigated by the fact that the Foundation is obliged to judge every application on its merits and so should treat any future application from the Council in the same way as applications from any other organisation.
- 10.3 The scaled-back refurbishment of the existing pavilion carries the risk that the building will remain dated in its design with a potential impact on the quality of the provision for users. This risk will be mitigated by ensuring that any proposal for refurbishment of this facility seeks to optimise the positive impact of any expenditure on the quality of the building.

11 Consultation

- 11.1 These proposals have been considered by the Leadership Coordination Group. It has therefore been considered by both of the Ward Members for the Clarendon Ward at the time of writing this report who remain on the Council at this time, as both are members of Cabinet. It has also been considered by the Newbold Comyn Project Board.

Background papers:

Internal Gateway Review.

Supporting documents:

Warwick District Council Playing Pitch Strategy.