

Title of Report: **Sports Park Development – Knights Farm East**

Report to: **Corporate Management Team**

Date: **1st July 2021**

Purpose of Report

To provide a progress update about delivery of a sports park facility, in terms of design options, costs and next steps.

Reasons

To seek approval for:

- The progression of the Sports Park Project, including detailed design development and finalised business case, in advance of Cabinet 'gateway' decision in the Autumn and
- Agreement to commit up to £400,000 from held S106 monies to develop the scheme towards delivery.

Recommendations

To agree the progression of the project design (up to planning submission stage) and development of the business case with further reports being taken to Cabinet in the Autumn and the following Full Council meeting for approval of the project delivery and full construction budget.

Introduction

Improving health and wellbeing is a key priority for Wealden District Council. The District has specific challenges around obesity with 64% of adults classified as overweight or obese and 16.7% of Year 6 pupils. Across the district 21% of residents are classed as 'inactive' (doing less than 30 minutes of exercise a week). Regular sport and physical activity is proven to have a direct and positive impact on health and wellbeing.

Wealden's population is anticipated to grow 0.5% annually to 2043 (greater than regional and national rates) and South Wealden is anticipated to be where much of this growth will be focused. This is illustrated by the fact that 22% of net dwelling completions in Wealden between 2010 and 2020 were located in Hailsham.

The 2018 Playing Pitch and Outdoor Needs Assessment (see Appendix A) looked at the current and future outdoor sport provision for a number of sports including football, hockey, tennis, rugby, cricket etc. It identified there a number of sports where there is a deficit of facilities including football and netball. The report highlighted there is currently only one community use Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP's) in Wealden. This is located at Uckfield Community College. At the time the FA identified an immediate need in Wealden for an additional 4.2 artificial playing pitches. From projected population growth there is an expectation this will rise further to an additional 6.2 adult and 3.5 junior pitches required to

meet the local sporting demand for football facilities by 2028. As part of the Local Plan and delivery of Sport England's Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance there is a commitment to update the Playing Pitch Strategy. This will be available in 2022.

In 2019, the Football Foundation published its Local Football Facilities Plan (LFFP). This identified 14 priority projects within the district. These projects may be considered for grant funding. A number of these priorities are in the South Wealden area including the need for two AGP's, a number of improvements to grass pitches and changing facilities.

Also in 2019, the Council appointed Strategic Leisure Ltd (SLL) to undertake a leisure provision review. This identified the needs of our communities and made a number of recommendations for future leisure provision. In 2021, SLL were re-appointed to provide advice on the required mix of facilities needed at a potential sports park. The facilities are proposed to be located on the Council owned site known as Knights Farm (East), shown in Appendix B.

Working within the limitations of the land, Strategic Leisure have worked closely with architects Roberts Limbrick and developed a recommended plan that includes:

2 x Full Size 3G Pitches
2 x smaller 9 vs 9 size Astro pitches
2 x Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA)

In addition, it is proposed the Bowls Club located on the Vicarage Lane site in Hailsham (Bowls Green and Club house) be relocated to the sports park to facilitate the delivery of the Hailsham Aspires regeneration project.

Specialist architects, Roberts Limbrick were commissioned to undertake a stand-alone piece of design work to identify how these sporting facilities could be located on the site to achieve the most advantageous layout, whilst avoiding the flood zone on the eastern boundary. The architect has produced 2 schemes, shown in Appendix C.

Current Position

[illegible]

To enable the facilities to be delivered, in addition to the borrowing that could be serviced from the annual income stream, further funding would be required. It is anticipated this is likely to be a mix of S.106 receipts (we currently hold £417,000 that could be spent on this project, and have commitments for a further £935,000 pending on-site delivery of housing sites), Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding, with the potential to reduce the impact on the CIL pot through a bid for Football Foundation grant funding, which may yield around [REDACTED] however further work is required to explore this funding as the design is crystallised.

Professional Consultant Fees and Surveys are anticipated to be 10-12% of [REDACTED] construction costs, although not all of this cost will be incurred prior to submission of planning and a full cabinet report. Approval is sought for up half of the anticipated fee budget (£400,000) from available S.106 funding to develop the designs to planning submission stage.

Conclusions

In 2017 Wealden District Council adopted its first three-year Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This strategy acknowledged 3 key themes for Wealden:

- Adult obesity levels
- Physical Inactivity
- Increasing aging population creating additional needs

The objectives of the Council's corporate Plan 2019–2023 highlights the need to make the following improvements in Wealden from 2019–2023:

- Promote a better quality of life for Wealden people through activities that improve health, resilience and well-being.
- Encourage and promote better leisure, sporting and recreational facilities across the District.

Improving and providing new leisure and sporting facilities in Wealden will help address the current and future sport deficits, as identified in the PPS and will enable us to deliver healthier, more active communities.

Relocation of the Bowls Club facilities is key to enable progression of the Hailsham Aspires regeneration project, as the current facilities occupy a key part of the regeneration site.

Whilst there is a requirement for the Council to use S.106 contributions to fund part of the delivery of the site, there is currently unallocated budget which if not spent within the timeframes stipulated within the legal agreement would need to be returned to the developers.

*Whilst an updated Playing Pitch and Outdoor Needs Assessment would be required (this has already been commissioned as part of the Local Plan development work) to demonstrate current need, it is anticipated up to £500,000 of funding could be secured from the Football Foundation to assist with delivery of the new facilities.

A third party operator is a lower risk option as the operator would assume responsibility for the operating income from the site and would be committed to a fixed annual rental payment to the Council, the self-operation model is significantly stronger from a financial perspective.

The use of S.106/CIL funding could close the funding gap in the short term with future income streams from the likes of the Knights Farm Employment site, being used to offset the cost. This could either be to reduce borrowing and risk to the MTFS if there was a fluctuation of annual income or to reimburse S.106/CIL funding contributions.

Next Steps

To enable further work to be undertaken to develop designs and the construction costs, agreement to commit held S106 monies is needed. Utilising the S106 funds now would be in accordance with the terms under which they are collected (for the delivery of such facilities), however whilst this will reduce the direct cost of the project development on the Council's finances it will increase the funding to be found for the construction phase, either from CIL, WDC capital programme as the project progresses. . The indicative Sports Park delivery programme is shown in Appendix E.

This budget will enable the appointment of relevant consultants to develop a scheme that would be suitable for planning submission in Autumn 2021.

A report will be taken to Cabinet in the Autumn with full design and costing information, which if supported would be taken to the following Full Council meeting for approval of the construction budget and tender of a construction contractor.

WDC need to agree their strategy for operation of the site i.e. direct or third party, to enable the correct form of financial modelling to be included within the business plan

Implications

Financial: As set out in the main body of this report, the initial financial impact will be met from S106 funding. Future impacts will be considered in more detail following the review of the business case.

Legal: None arising from this report

Human Resources: None arising from this report

Other: None arising from this report

Contacts/ References:

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Appendices Appendix A 2018 Playing Pitch Strategy Summary
Appendix B Site Location Plan
Appendix C Site Layout Plans

[REDACTED]

Background Papers See Appendices above

Published Ref docs **None**

Key Decision ?

Exempt / Not for Publication **NO**

Appendix A - Wealden's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Needs Assessment, 2018 (Summary)

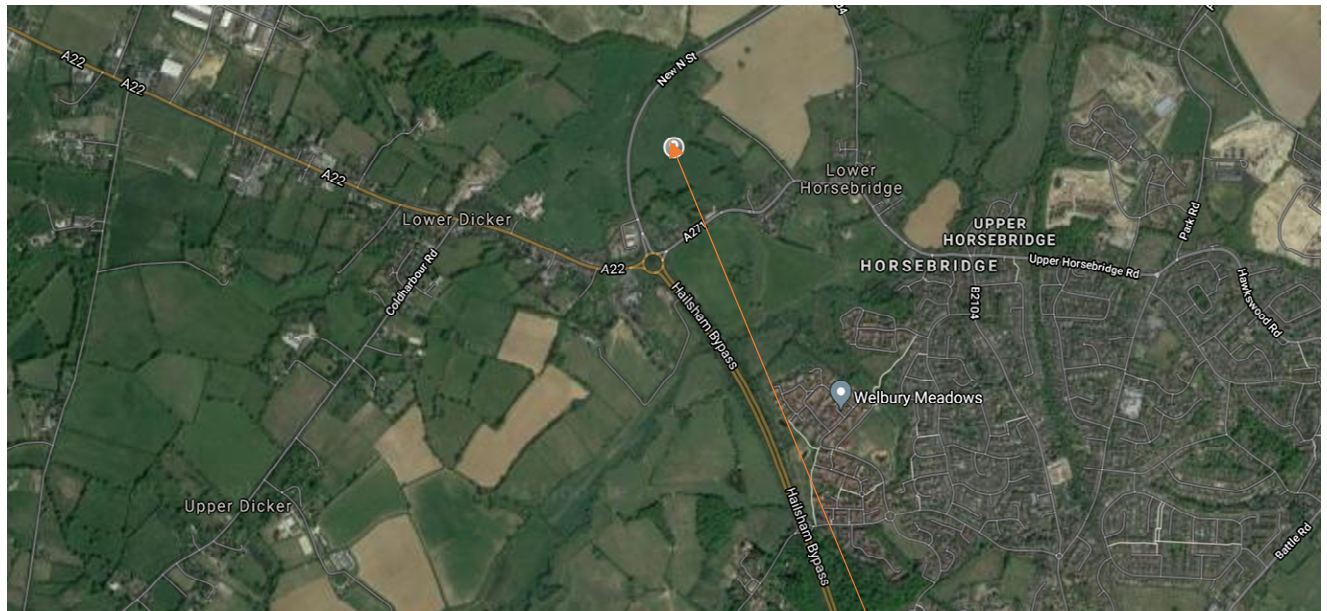
The table below shows the priority sports identified are football, cricket and netball (netball facilities can be used for a number of sports i.e. tennis, basketball etc.).

Football	Page 73 Page 84	FA suggest a need for 5.2 full size 3g pitches, current deficit is 4.2 pitches There will be a need for an additional 6.2 adult pitches, 3.5 junior pitches and 1.6 mini soccer pitches to meet future demand (2028)
Cricket	Page 120	Current supply meets demand Need for 3.3 pitches by 2028
Rugby	Page 143	Overall the quantity of pitches is sufficient to meet current demand Future need by 2028, 1.6 senior and 1.5 junior pitches required
Hockey	Page 160	Key issues – lack of proper flood lighting; ageing and declining surfaces; need to protect existing AGP's Future demand by 2028, additional 1.8 adult teams and 0.6 Junior teams generating a demand for 0.2 new pitches
Outdoor Tennis	Page 174	Wealden not identified by LTA as a priority Lack of indoor provision
Netball	Page 174 Page 189	Central netball venue could be used or shared with other sports i.e. tennis Lack of local facilities; long term hub venue may be justified in South Wealden
Bowls (outdoor)	Page 183	No current unmet demand; no need for additional bowls facilities in future
Stoolball	Page 193	Current spare capacity; existing sports and recreation grounds are likely to cope with increases in population

The full document can be found at:

[https://www.wealden.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/Playing_Pitch_Strategy - August 2018.pdf](https://www.wealden.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/Playing_Pitch_Strategy_-_August_2018.pdf)

Appendix B Knights Farm (East) Location Plan



Knights Farm (East)

Option 1



Option 2

