

Subject: Objection to Planning Application 25/01830/FP – Creation of 3G Artificial Grass Pitch at The Highfield School, Letchworth

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing as the residents of **23 Highfield, Letchworth Garden City**, to **formally object** to the planning application for the creation of a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) at The Highfield School (Ref: 25/01830/FP).

Our objections focus on the **material change of use from educational to commercial**, the **severe impact on residential amenity from noise and lighting**, and the **lack of justification** given the **abundance of existing artificial pitches** already available in Letchworth and the surrounding area.

1. Change of Use: From School Playing Field to Commercial Operation

This proposal represents a **fundamental change of use** from a school playing field used during school hours to what is effectively a **commercial sports facility** operating until **8:15pm on weekdays** and throughout the weekend. This shift is not minor. The inclusion of:

- Structured community lettings
- A revenue model
- Management and curfew systems
- High floodlights and acoustic fencing
- Parking assessments for evening and weekend traffic

... all make clear this is a facility designed for **external, non-school usage** well beyond normal school operations between 8-4pm.

The **impact of this commercial-style operation in a residential neighbourhood is wholly inappropriate**. It will significantly disrupt the peace, privacy, and amenity we and our neighbours currently enjoy.

2. Noise and Light Pollution – Severely Harmful to Residential Amenity

Even the applicant's own **Noise Impact Assessment** predicts **noise levels of up to 68 dB from whistles** and **64 dB from ball impacts**—even after mitigation. These are sharp, sudden noises that will carry directly into neighbouring homes and gardens. The suggestion of a "no whistle policy" is unrealistic and unenforceable.

Similarly, the inclusion of **six 11-metre floodlights** introduces **industrial-level illumination** into what is currently a quiet, dark residential area. The claim that these floodlights are

“discreet” or non-intrusive is simply not credible, especially for residents whose upstairs windows will sit level with the light source.

3. No Demonstrable Need – Pitch Provision Already Strong

The applicant has failed to make the case that this development is necessary—because **demand is already being met elsewhere**. Letchworth is already home to multiple full-sized and small-sided 3G pitches, including:

- Hertfordshire FA County Ground
- Letchworth Corner Sports Club
- Letchworth Eagles Football Club
- St Christopher School
- Nearby options at Baldock Arena and Knights Templar School

Many of these are **better located** for parking and access, and crucially, they **do not sit directly behind residential homes**. Even the **Football Foundation’s Local Facility Plan** identifies other more suitable sites for new development—**none of which included this school field**. It explicitly states: *“No other sites locally in Letchworth were deemed appropriate to meet the shortfall.”*

This proposal appears driven by the school’s desire to generate income—not to meet a clearly evidenced local need.

4. Inappropriate Design and Visual Impact

The proposed facility—with **high steel fencing, towering floodlight columns, acoustic barriers, and storage containers**—introduces a jarring, enclosed, urban-style structure into a residential garden suburb. This is **entirely inconsistent** with the principles of the Letchworth Garden City, and would set a damaging precedent for development in the area.

Residents are required to meet strict planning controls in Letchworth, and we ask that the school be held to the same standard.

Conclusion

This proposal is not a minor school improvement. It is a **material change of use** that will:

- Significantly harm residential amenity through extended evening use, noise, and light
- Introduce a large, visually intrusive structure into a peaceful neighbourhood
- Duplicate existing football pitch provision already well catered for elsewhere

We urge the Council to protect the character of our neighbourhood and the wellbeing of residents by **refusing this application**.

Yours faithfully,

Tom & Vicki Roberts

23 Highfield
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 3QD