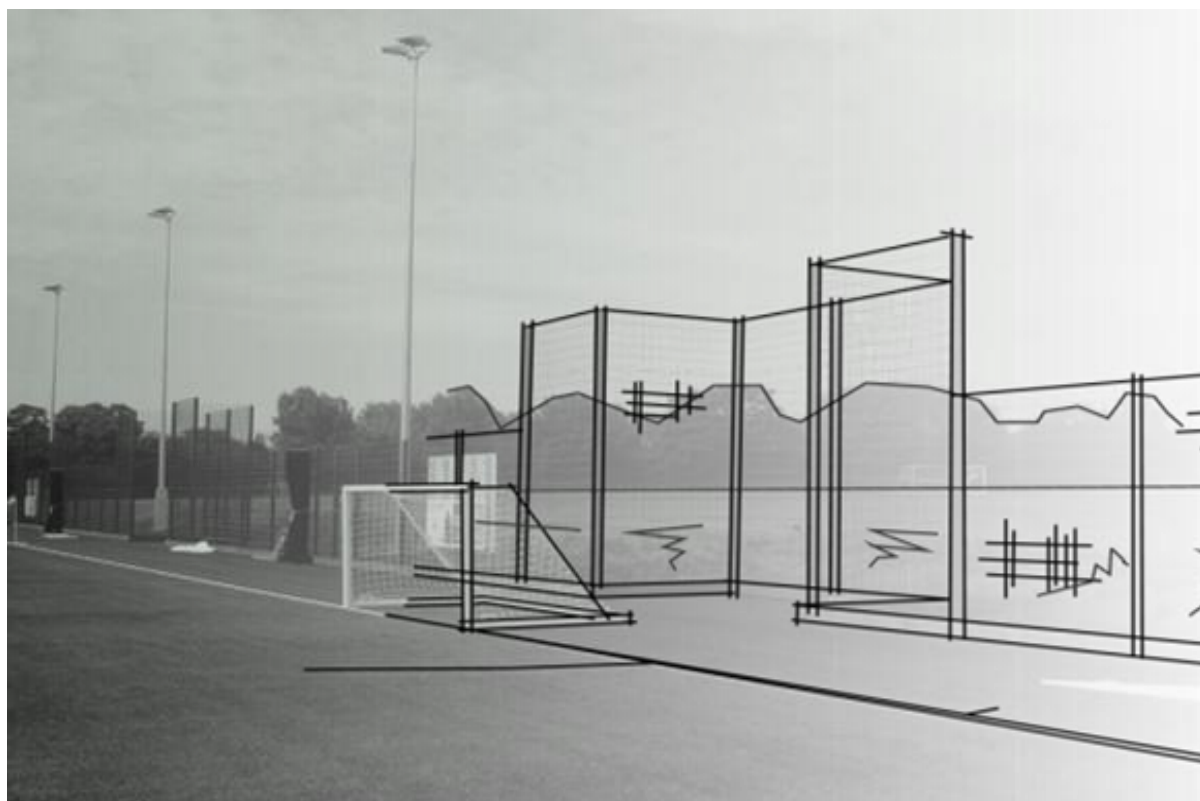


The Highfield School

Creation of a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with perimeter fencing, hardstanding areas, storage container and an access footpath

Design and Access with Planning Statement



Site	The Highfield School Highfield, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3QA		
Project	Creation of a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with perimeter fencing, hardstanding areas, storage container and an access footpath		
SSL project code	SSL3394		
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 SSL3394 02 - Site Location Plan
 SSL3394 03 - Proposed Site Plan
 SSL3394 04 - Proposed AGP Plan
 SSL3394 05 - Proposed Elevation
 SSL3394 07 - Proposed AGP Drainage Layout
 SSL3394 08 - Proposed AGP Drainage Strategy
 SSL3394 09 - Infill Containment Measures

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 Appendix G - Noise Management Plan
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 Appendix K - Tree Constraints Plan
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Introduction

Purpose of the report

This Design & Access with Planning Statement has been prepared by Surfacing Standards Ltd on behalf of The Highfield School to accompany a full planning application for the development of new sports facilities at:

The Highfield School, Highfield, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3QA

The proposal includes the creation of a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with perimeter fencing, hardstanding areas, storage container and an access footpath. The development has been carefully designed to comply with the FA and Sport England guidance, with the intention of enhancing the school's sporting provision. The scheme will provide a modern, durable, and inclusive all-weather sports facility, enabling year-round football activity for both school pupils and the wider community, regardless of seasonal or weather-related constraints.

The Highfield School

The Highfield School is committed to promoting physical activity and wellbeing for its pupils. The addition of the AGP will support this commitment by offering improved training and playing surfaces for various age groups. Furthermore, the facility will be available for some community use being used as a location for local sports and recreational activities.

The development reuses existing open space to deliver football infrastructure for The Highfield School and the wider Letchworth area.

The proposal has been carefully developed to ensure it is sympathetic to its surroundings and will offer significant benefits in terms of sport, health, community access, and education. The design reflects best practice in safeguarding, accessibility, sustainability, and local policy alignment, and will deliver a step-change in the quality and availability of local football facilities.

By providing a high-quality, all-weather sports facility, the development will enhance the school's ability to offer consistent and reliable training and match play opportunities. It will also support the broader community by offering a venue for various sports and recreational activities, promoting physical activity and wellbeing among residents of all ages.

Site Description

The development area is a grassed playing field with a dry pond to the east. To the west is a larger playing field for curriculum use and the main school buildings and car parking to the north.

To the northeast, east and south is the wider residential area of Letchworth along Highfield and the A505. Further to the south is a golf course. To the northwest and west is a small woodland followed by open arable fields.



Figure 1 - Site Location

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Planning and Policy Context

Relevant Planning History

Changes to fenestration and roof top plant (as a non material amendment to planning permission reference number 13/02867/1 allowed on appeal on 12 January 2015 for redevelopment of the site to provide a new secondary school building, new hard and soft surfaces to provide play areas, car parking, multi-use games area (four courts), hard and soft landscaping prior to demolition of existing school buildings, with exception of the Sports Hall).

Ref. No: 15/03182/1NMA
Received: Fri 08 Jan 2016
Validated: Fri 08 Jan 2016
Status: Decided

Discharge of Condition 4 - Sustainable surface water scheme for planning application

Ref. No: 15/02875/1DOC
Received: Fri 13 Nov 2015
Validated: Fri 13 Nov 2015
Status: Decided

Part discharge of condition 3 - sample of material for window/curtain wall for planning application 13/02867/1 allowed 12.01.2015.

Ref. No: 15/02704/1DOC
Received: Mon 26 Oct 2015
Validated: Mon 26 Oct 2015
Status: Decided

Partial discharge of condition 3 (External materials - Brick Sample) of planning permission ref no. 13/02867/1 allowed on appeal on 12 January 2015.

Ref. No: 15/02275/1DOC
Received: Mon 14 Sep 2015
Validated: Mon 14 Sep 2015
Status: Decided

Details reserved by condition 9 (Construction and Environmental

Management Plan) of planning permission reference no. 13/02867/1 allowed on appeal on 12 January 2015.

Ref. No: 15/01256/1DOC
Received: Thu 14 May 2015
Validated: Thu 14 May 2015
Status: Decided

Details reserved by condition 5 (Site Investigation (phase II environmental risk assessment) Report) of planning permission ref no 13/02867/1 allowed on appeal on 12 January 2015

Ref. No: 15/00829/1DOC
Received: Thu 26 Mar 2015
Validated: Thu 26 Mar 2015
Status: Decided

Details reserved by condition 18 (Scheme for reinstatement of Playing Fields) of planning permission ref no 13/02867/1 allowed on appeal on 12 January 2015

Ref. No: 15/00887/1DOC
Received: Thu 26 Mar 2015
Validated: Thu 26 Mar 2015
Status: Decided

Details reserved by condition 7 (Remediation Scheme) of planning permission ref no 13/02867/1 allowed on appeal on 12 January 2015

Ref. No: 15/00884/1DOC
Received: Thu 26 Mar 2015
Validated: Thu 26 Mar 2015
Status: Decided

Details reserved by condition 13 (Schedule of Landscape Maintenance) of planning permission ref no 13/02867/1 allowed on appeal on 12 January 2015

Ref. No: 15/00885/1DOC
Received: Thu 26 Mar 2015
Validated: Thu 26 Mar 2015
Status: Decided

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Details reserved by condition 6 (Remediation Scheme) of planning permission ref no 13/02867/1 allowed on appeal on 12 January 2015

Ref. No: 15/00876/1DOC
 Received: Thu 26 Mar 2015
 Validated: Thu 26 Mar 2015
 Status: Decided

Details reserved by condition 7 (Remediation Scheme) of planning permission ref no 13/02867/1 allowed on appeal on 12 January 2015

Ref. No: 15/00884/1DOC
 Received: Thu 26 Mar 2015
 Validated: Thu 26 Mar 2015
 Status: Decided

Details reserved by condition 6 (Remediation Scheme) of planning permission ref no 13/02867/1 allowed on appeal on 12 January 2015

Ref. No: 15/00876/1DOC
 Received: Thu 26 Mar 2015
 Validated: Thu 26 Mar 2015
 Status: Decided

Redevelopment of the site to provide a new secondary school building, new hard and soft surfaces to provide play areas, car parking, multi-use games area (four courts), hard and soft landscaping prior to demolition of existing school buildings, with exception of the Sports Hall (as amended by plans received on 30 January 2014, 31 January 2014 and 5 February 2014).

Ref. No: 13/02867/1
 Received: Tue 26 Nov 2013
 Validated: Tue 26 Nov 2013
 Status: Decided

New secondary school, car parking, hard surfaces, landscaping and other related purposes.

Ref. No: 13/02638/1SO
 Received: Wed 30 Oct 2013
 Validated: Wed 30 Oct 2013
 Status: Unknown

Erection of free standing curved roof canopy.

Ref. No: 10/02672/1
 Received: Mon 25 Oct 2010
 Validated: Mon 25 Oct 2010
 Status: Decided

Erection of detached building for use as sports hall with two classrooms, landscaping and ancillary works NHDC CONSULTEE ONLY

Ref. No: 08/01562/1CC
 Received: Fri 11 Jul 2008
 Validated: Fri 11 Jul 2008
 Status: Decided

External platform lift and 2 disabled ramps.

Ref. No: 06/00945/1CC
 Received: Mon 05 Jun 2006
 Validated: Tue 06 Jun 2006
 Status: Awaiting decision

Erection of two storey classroom block, additional 28 car parking spaces (to create 102 in total), new coach lay-by involving entrance and exit points into A505, footpath link to school and ancillary works.

Ref. No: 02/01490/1CC
 Received: Thu 03 Oct 2002
 Validated: Thu 03 Oct 2002
 Status: Decided

Siting of 3 double mobile classroom units for a temporary period of 2 years

Ref. No: 02/00755/1CC
 Received: Mon 13 May 2002
 Validated: Mon 13 May 2002
 Status: Decided

Local Planning Policy

The North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011–2031) establishes the overarching development strategy for the district, guiding sustainable growth, community infrastructure, and open space protection. Importantly, the Highfield site lies within the Green Belt, and as such is governed by Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt, which states that development will only be permitted where it does not constitute inappropriate development and maintains openness.

In addition to SP5, two district-wide policies are immediately relevant to this proposal:

- MSGP39: Protecting valuable open space, sports and recreation facilities
- MSGP40: Providing and enhancing open space, sports and recreation facilities

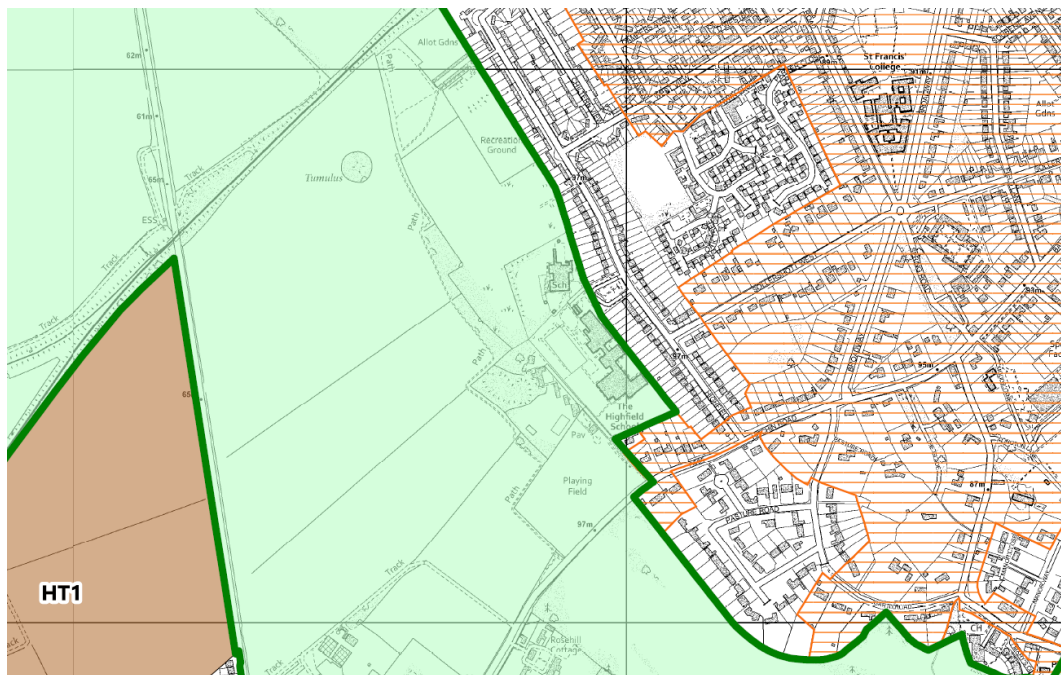


Figure 2 - Local Plan Policies Map

The proposal for a small-sided 3G AGP at Highfield is fully in accord with Local Plan Policy SP5 (Green Belt), along with MSGP39 and MSGP40. As outdoor sports infrastructure of modest scale, the development is deemed appropriate within the Green Belt and preserves the openness of the site. It enhances outdoor recreation in line with SP5's objectives. The existing informal open space is retained and upgraded—there is no loss to community sporting function in compliance with MSGP39. Furthermore, the scheme delivers a high-quality, all-weather sports facility that responds to the Playing Pitch Strategy's identified demand and boosts capacity, reliability, and inclusivity, perfectly reflecting MSGP40.

The location was chosen to maximise existing pedestrian, cycle, and public transport links, in keeping with SP6's aim to promote sustainable travel. The scheme includes secure cycle parking and customer-friendly pedestrian access routes, helping to shift travel habits away from private vehicles and towards healthier, low-carbon modes of travel. These measures support district-wide goals to encourage active travel and reduce traffic-related emissions.

A detailed drainage design ensures the AGP introduces no additional flood risk. Rainwater will be managed on-site via permeable surfacing, attenuation features and green infrastructure.

This aligns with Local Plan policies aimed at reducing flood risk and meeting environmental regulations (NE7 and NE8).

The small-sided 3G pitch at Highfield has been developed in full alignment with Policy D1. The design prioritises high-quality materials and detailing to ensure durability, functionality, and a visually sensitive appearance within the Green Belt setting. Sustainable design measures are integrated into the facility, including durable surfacing, to reduce the AGP surface replacement frequency.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, Dec 2024)

The proposed development aligns with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) by promoting sustainable development that delivers social, environmental, and economic benefits. It supports inclusive community access to sport (para 96) and contributes to improved health and well-being through year-round physical activity (para 98). The scheme mitigates flood risk through SuDS (para 181), ensures design quality and integration with its surroundings (para 131), and reduces environmental impact via sustainable materials and biodiversity enhancements (para 187). It also encourages sustainable travel through active and public transport options (para 110). These principles are embedded throughout the design and long-term operation of the AGP.

Development Description

Development Outline

- Two 43x33m AGPs with 3G artificial grass designed to accommodate 2Nr. 37x27m 5v5 football pitches with two cross pitch training areas.
- Macadam hardstanding viewing and goal storage areas.
- 3.0m high fencing to the perimeter of the facility with a 1.2m high internal fence and a 2.0m high protective dividing fence.
- 3m high acoustic fencing to the south perimeter of the facility
- Maintenance / sports equipment store located within the fenced facility enclosure.
- Macadam access pathways.

Purpose and Use

The AGP will deliver a significant improvement in pitch durability and availability when compared to the existing natural grass playing field, enabling extended use throughout the year. The facility is intended to serve a broad user base, including the school, partner organisations, and other community sports groups, all through structured and pre-arranged access agreements.

Designed as a flexible and inclusive football development space, the new AGP will accommodate two Nr. 5v5 playing pitches within a wider enclosed playing area in accordance with current Football Association (FA) technical guidance. Cross pitches will be included to maximise both participation and training opportunities.

The artificial pitch facility being provided meets the dimensions of the existing natural grass pitch, whilst also providing significantly increased capacity which supports the application in ensuring the benefits outweigh the loss.

The AGP will support the following formal pitch arrangements:

Table 1 - AGP Football Provision

Pitch Size	Colour	Age Group	Quantity
37x27m	White	5v5	1
27x17m	Red	Informal 5v5/junior small sided	2

Amount

The overall scale of development is summarised below:

Table 2 – Scale of the Development

Aspect	Area (m2)
3G Artificial Grass Surface	2,838
Porous macadam areas	488

Layout

The optimum location for a proposed AGP was carefully considered. Key considerations included:

- Maximising the available playing field to accommodate natural grass pitches including athletics facilities.
- Flood risk for the facility itself and ensuring the development does not increase the flood risk to other nearby areas.
- Convenient proximity to changing facilities/welfare/site services.
- Convenient proximity of vehicular parking areas.
- Convenient proximity to transport routes.
- Minimising impact on nearby trees and ecological considerations.

The proposed location will afford pedestrian, maintenance and emergency access and providing for suitable management, supervision and security.

It was concluded the proposed location for the new 3G pitch provides the best solution for the above considerations.



Figure 3 - Proposed Development

Appearance

NPPF - Achieving Well Designed Places

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF (2024) sets out:

“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.”

General Appearance

The AGP is designed to have minimal visual impact, ensuring it is sympathetic to its surroundings and does not affect the visual amenity of the area, in line with local policies. The choice of materials reflects the materiality and conformity of similar AGP installations, ensuring high performance and a high-quality, enduring appearance. These materials have been selected for the following reasons:

- High performance.
- High quality enduring appearance.
- Suitability within the local character.
- Durable and robust with low maintenance.
- Energy efficient and sustainable.

The design complements The Highfield School and the surrounding environment, ensuring minimal visual impact. It is sympathetic to its surroundings, avoiding any unacceptable impact on adjacent public areas or residential neighbours.

3G Artificial Grass Pitch

The installed appearance of the playing surface will comprise a 3G artificial grass system featuring a 40mm pile, partially in-filled with silica sand for stability and granulated rubber for performance. The grass will be coloured grass green to replicate the look of natural grass and maintain visual consistency within the surrounding open space.

This surface will be installed over a shockpad and is recognised as the most suitable artificial playing surface for community football and youth football development.



Figure 4 - A Typical Example of a 3G Artificial Surface

Ball Stop Fencing

The appearance of the perimeter ball stop fencing will be polyester powder coated RAL6005 Moss Green, which provides the most discrete appearance within the surrounding landscape.

Both the 4.5m high perimeter fencing and both the 2.0m high and the 1.2m high spectator fencing will be steel open mesh with a 66x50mm rebound aperture to the internal pitch perimeter barrier up to a height of 1.2m. Above this height the fencing will transition to a 200x50mm aperture, maintaining visibility while reducing visual impact.

Fence panels are insulated from the posts using neoprene washers to be fitted to every fence post / mesh fixing point to aid noise reduction and acoustic attenuation by reducing rattle and vibration from ball impacts.



Figure 5 - A Typical Example of Perimeter Ball Stop Fencing

Macadam Hardstanding

The appearance of new hard standing areas including areas for pedestrian access and circulation, vehicular maintenance and emergency access, and open-air storage for portable football goals; will comprise grey black coloured porous macadam.

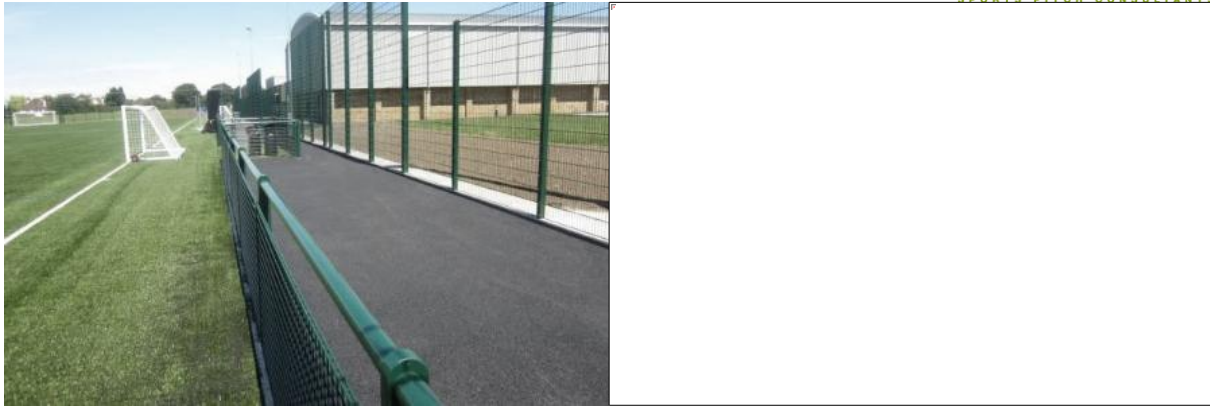


Figure 6 - A Typical Example of a Spectator Area

Storage Container

The new storage container will be utilised to store maintenance equipment and sports kit. The appearance of the new storage container (2.53m high x 6.06m long x 2.44m wide) within the facility enclosure will comprise high tensile profiled steel, finished polyester powder coated RAL 6005 moss green to match the perimeter fence.



Figure 7 - A Typical Example of a Storage Container

Acoustic fencing

The appearance of the new acoustic barrier fence (4.00m high) will comprise natural timber construction containing tongue and groove boards, posts, and capping rails; with a minimum 10kg/m2 density



Figure 8 - A Typical Example of an Acoustic Fence

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Environmental Considerations

NPPF – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (Pollution)

Paragraph 198 of the NPPF (2024) sets out:

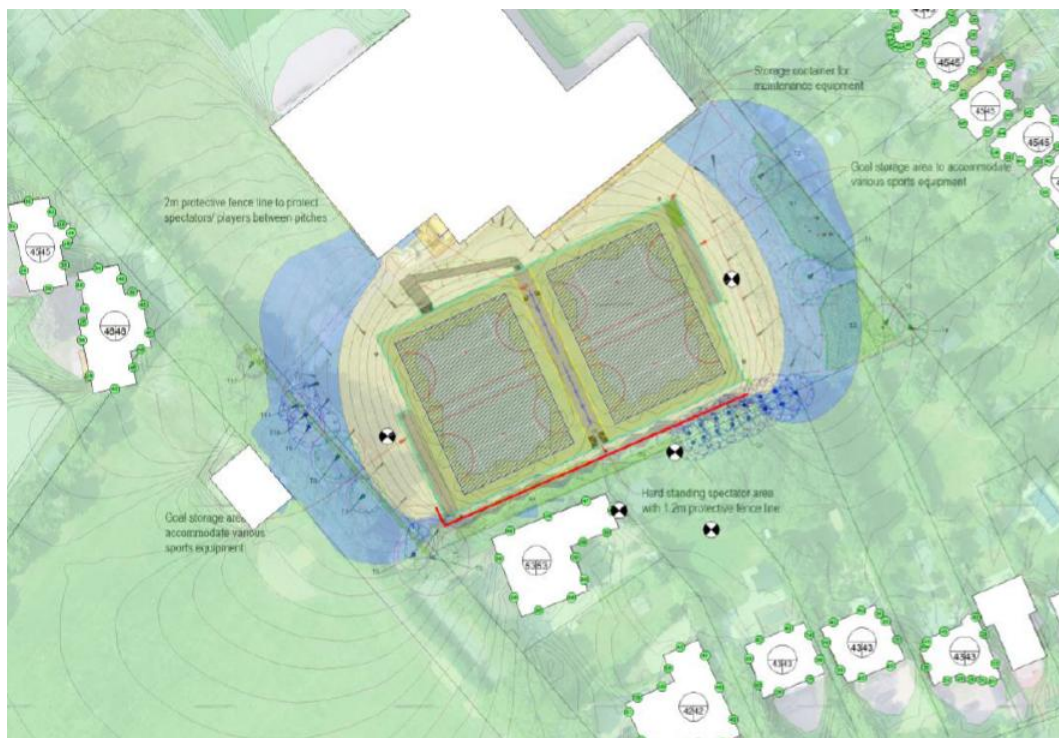
“Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- (a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;”

Noise

It is acknowledged that the application proposal would result in a greater intensification of use, made possible by the enhanced durability of 3G artificial grass in comparison to the current natural grass surface. The nearest residential properties are approximately 10m to the south of the proposed AGP. Therefore, a noise impact assessment has been undertaken and has been provided as a separate document:

Appendix M – Noise Impact Assessment



for levels of “moderate community annoyance” set at 50db, a noise barrier to the south of 4.0m in height is required. The barrier is to be solid and have a surface density of at least 10 kg per square metre.

With the inclusion of the barrier, the highest predicted noise levels in the nearest gardens are approximately 48 dB, which is below the WHO guidelines for moderate community annoyance.

Several additional measures will be implemented as part of the proposed development to reduce the noise impact:

- Neoprene Washers: Fitted to fence panel fixings to reduce rattle and vibration from ball impacts, minimizing noise emission.
- Playing Lines: Set a minimum of 3m from the pitch perimeter to limit ball impacts against the fencing.
- Noise Management Plan: A plan will be implemented for community use, with booking terms and conditions addressing noise and behaviour (e.g. bad language). A draft has been provided as a separate document:
 - **Appendix G - Noise Management Plan.**

NPPF - Climate change, flooding and coastal change

Paragraph 181 of the NPPF (2024) sets out:

When determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment⁶³. Development should only be allowed in areas at risk of flooding where, in the light of this assessment (and the sequential and exception tests, as applicable) it can be demonstrated that:

- (a) within the site, the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk, unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location;
- (b) the development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient such that, in the event of a flood, it could be quickly brought back into use without significant refurbishment;
- (c) it incorporates sustainable drainage systems, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate;
- (d) any residual risk can be safely managed; and
- (e) safe access and escape routes are included where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan.

Flood Risk

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Sustainable Drainage Systems Non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems March 2015

“The surface water drainage scheme must be in accordance with the Non-Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems (March 2015) or any subsequent replacement national standards and unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, no surface water shall discharge to the public sewerage system either directly or indirectly.”

The site is located in Flood Zone 1, indicating a low probability of flooding from rivers or sea. It is also recorded as a very low risk of surface water flooding and no risk from reservoirs.

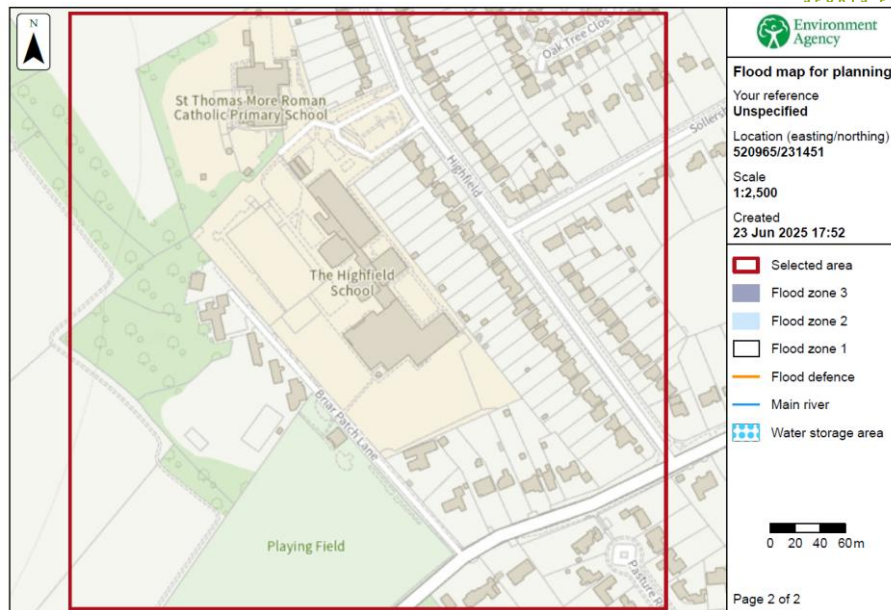


Figure 10 - Flood Map for Planning

Drainage Strategy

The AGP will feature a permeable playing surface and granular sub-base, allowing surface water to infiltrate and be temporarily stored within the base construction. A network of perforated pipes beneath the sub-base will collect and convey runoff to the dry pond to the east of the site. Flow rates will be restricted to 1.0 l/s, calculated using the HR Wallingford method to reflect greenfield runoff conditions. The system has been designed to accommodate storm events up to the 1 in 100-year plus climate change allowance, ensuring flood risk is effectively mitigated. The drainage solution follows the surface water disposal hierarchy set out in Planning Practice Guidance.

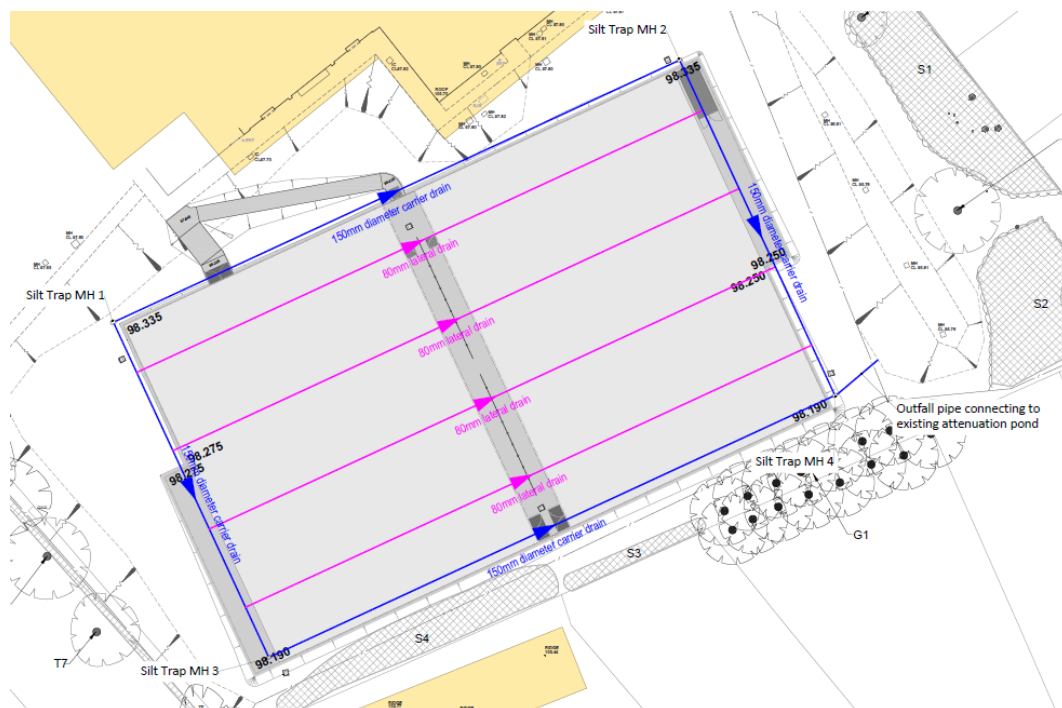


Figure 11 - Drainage Layout

A detailed surface water drainage strategy has been developed for the AGP as a separate document:

Appendix E – Drainage Strategy

Ground Conditions

Made ground was encountered across the site and generally comprised light yellow slightly gravelly sandy clay with occasional brick fragments (reworked natural strata). The made ground was noted to extend to depths of between 1.00m and 1.50mbgl. Please note that the base of the made ground was not encountered in either of the trial pits which extended to a maximum depth of 2.30mbgl. Suspected buried topsoil comprising light brown sandy clay was encountered at the base of the made ground in WS01 and WS03.

The made ground was generally immediately underlain by natural cohesive deposits comprising firm to stiff light yellow slightly sandy gravelly clay. Occasional soft horizons were noted to the uppermost horizon of the natural deposits (e.g. in WS02 and WS04). The natural strata are considered to be potentially representative of the superficial Lowestoft Formation (Diamicton) which is recorded to underlie the site.

The made ground is anticipated to be from the redevelopment of the site in 2018 when the playing field was completely re-developed following the refurbishment of the school.

Ecology and Landscape

NPPF – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- (d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;

Arboriculture

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) has been undertaken to assess the impact of the development to the surrounding arboriculture. The purpose of the AIA is to identify any vegetation requiring removal, pruning and how retained trees are to be protected during the implementation of the development. The AIA has been provided as a separate document:

Appendix L - AIA



Figure 12 - Tree Constraints Plan

Ecology

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Phase II Bat Survey were carried out in September 2024 to assess the ecological impacts of the proposed artificial turf pitch development at The Highfield School. The area identified for development comprises intensively mown, modified grassland with very low ecological value. The habitat was

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dominated by perennial rye-grass, red fescue, and common meadow species. No scarce or invasive plant species were identified.

There are no statutory designated nature conservation sites within 1km of the site, and no adverse effects are anticipated on any designated or non-designated wildlife sites. Four local wildlife sites were noted within 1km, but none are considered close enough to be affected.

No amphibians or reptiles are expected to be affected due to a lack of suitable habitat and absence of local records. The only species potentially impacted is the hedgehog, which may access the site from nearby gardens. To mitigate this, construction phase measures will include escape ramps from open excavations, night-time capping of pipes, and pre-works checks.

No impact is anticipated on nesting birds, provided that existing boundary vegetation (trees and hedgerows) is retained. Should any clearance of tall vegetation be required during the bird breeding season (March to August), pre-clearance nesting bird checks will be implemented.

Boundary hedgerows and trees to the east and west of the development footprint provide important linear habitat, with particular relevance to foraging and commuting bats. A separate Phase II Bat Survey confirmed that bat activity is dominated (97%) by common pipistrelle, a species tolerant of lighting. A small number of passes (<1%) were recorded from more light-sensitive species including Barbastelle, Brown long-eared, and Myotis bats, primarily along the eastern boundary.



Figure 13 - Existing Habitat Plan

It was concluded that with the standard mitigation in place, including restricted working periods, and a bat-sensitive lighting scheme that the development will not result in significant ecological impacts. There will be no loss of habitat of high biodiversity value and no measurable adverse effects on protected species.

The PEA has been provided as a separate document and lists the key findings and recommendations:

Appendix N – Extended PEA Report

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Sustainability and Environmental Considerations

NPPF - Achieving Sustainable Development

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF (2024) sets out:

- (a) “an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy...;
- (b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities...; and
- (c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment...”

Paragraph 85 of the NPPF (2024) also sets out:

"Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity..."

This proposal aims to contribute to these areas:

- Economic Role: Provide a self-funding facility for The Highfield School and partner groups.
- Social Role: Enhancing health and wellbeing through inclusive football provision.
- Environmental Role: Minimise impact through sustainable design and resource reduction and reuse where possible.

Sporting Context

In a sporting context, the AGP will play a key role in supporting local football development by enabling structured, year-round participation. It will provide a high-quality playing surface for use by affiliated clubs, schools, and inclusive organisations, with a focus on increasing opportunities for underrepresented and low-participant groups. The facility will promote lifelong engagement with sport, help reduce dropout rates, and support skill development among young people.

The pitch will also strengthen club and school partnerships, foster new team formations, and contribute to wider FA and Football Foundation objectives for grassroots growth. It will be used for both competitive fixtures and recreational training, supporting a range of age-appropriate formats. The AGP will be added to The FA Register of Football Turf Pitches following compliance testing and managed with a sustainable business plan to ensure its long-term community benefit.

Environmental Context

The AGP has been designed to minimise environmental impact through its construction and operation. Sub-base aggregates will be locally sourced to lower the facility's carbon footprint.

Cradle-to-cradle developments now allow artificial grass surfaces to be fully recycled into raw materials for new turf or secondary plastic products, eliminating their classification as single-use plastics.

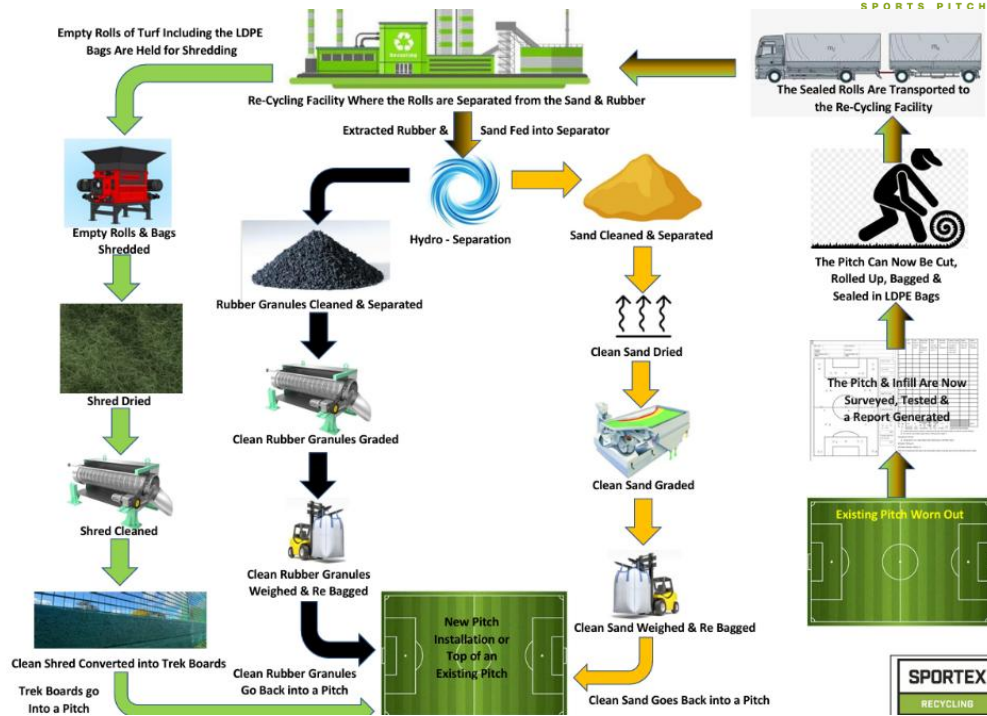


Figure 14 - Example Cradle-to-Cradle AGP Lifecycle

To minimise the migration of rubber crumb, infill containment measures including boot wipers, kickboards, and hardstanding will be installed to adhere with Football Foundation and SAPCA guidance. Details on the containment measures are provided within a separate document:

○ Appendix J – Infill Retention Measures

In conclusion, the development will replace part of a grass playing field with a high-quality, all-weather facility that increases access to football and supports wider participation. Located in a suitable community setting, it will be managed sustainably and delivered using best-practice construction methods to minimise waste and environmental impact.

SBR (Rubber Crumb)

A range of performance infill materials were considered during the development of this proposal, including SBR, EPDM, TPE, encapsulated SBR, and organic alternatives. Currently SBR is the preferred performance infill due to its performance, durability, cost-effectiveness, fibre-free composition, and recyclability.

The SBR material will accord with the Sports and Play Construction Association (SAPCA) Quality Control Protocol for Sports Performance Infill. This protocol provides a robust framework of obligations which suppliers and installers must follow to meet current legislation and regulatory requirements. Developed by the Football Foundation and key stakeholders, the protocol applies to the use of Sports Performance Infills. An extract from the protocol states:

“SAPCA, the UK trade body for the sports pitch industry, has developed a voluntary industry standard that will provide minimum requirements that go above and beyond what is currently required for rubber crumb under European regulation. Sport England and leading sport governing bodies all support this approach and will continue to work with the industry to provide reassurance that pitches in this country are safe.”

Further information with regards to the stance towards rubber crumb taken by the Football Foundation, Sport England and other governing bodies can be found via the following link:
<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport/position-statement-on-3g-pitches>



Figure 15 - Example 3G pitch with Rubber Crumb

Operation and Management

The Highfield School aims to enhance its facilities to increase football opportunities for members and the wider community. Football is a key driver of social and health outcomes. This project will boost participation and enjoyment and is supported by the Football Foundation to expand access, particularly for disadvantaged groups. It represents a major investment in local sports provision.

The club will ensure the AGP generates sufficient income to cover all running costs, including staffing for maintenance and management. It will expand English Accredited Club provision, offering a high-quality environment for football development. The AGP will meet the FIFA Quality Programme standards and be registered on The FA Register of Football Turf Pitches prior to use. Ongoing performance testing will ensure safety throughout the facility's lifespan.

Management Structure

The Highfield School is committed to ensuring the effective operation and management of the new AGP. The club will integrate the new facility into its existing management structure, providing a practical framework for football activities and community use.

The management team at The Highfield School will oversee the operation and maintenance of the AGP. Their responsibilities will include:

- **Overall Responsibility:** The school will ensure compliance with funding terms and financial sustainability.
- **Facility Maintenance:** The senior leadership team will manage upkeep and assign staff for maintenance.
- **Staff Management:** The management team will oversee staff responsible for the day-to-day operation of the AGP.
- **Financial Management:** A sinking fund will be established to ensure the AGP will be refurbished in the long term.
- **Community Use:** The management team will coordinate community access and lettings.
- **Monitoring:** Usage, maintenance and finances will be monitored during the AGP lifecycle to ensure that the AGP and the sinking fund are adequately maintained.
- **Policy Implementation:** The management team will establish, monitor and ensure compliance with health and safety policies.

Operating Times

The proposed Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) is proposed for usage as follows:

Table 3 - Proposed Hours of Use

Day	First Activity	Final Activity
Monday-Friday	08:00	17:00*
Saturday	09:00	13:00

*17:00 or daylight hours (whichever comes first)

No floodlighting is proposed and therefore the hours of use are limited to the above hours during the lighter months but will be further restricted in the winter when daylight hours are shorter and therefore usage would be further restricted.

Surfacing Standards Limited

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Registered in England and Wales under registration number 05154061

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Maintenance Plan

Regular maintenance activities will be carried out by the school's grounds staff and specialist contractors. This will include routine cleaning, inspection, and repairs to ensure the AGP remains in optimal condition. A detailed maintenance plan will be implemented to address both routine and periodic maintenance needs.

Financial Sustainability

Maintenance budgets to renovate, refurbish, and replace the facility at end of its functional life will be allocated accordingly. Income collected from community hire will be put towards a sinking fund to cover all operating costs, thereby ensuring financial sustainability, including:

- Regular and periodic maintenance work, staffing, and supervision.
- Replacement goals and netting.
- Periodic performance testing to ensure the field of play remains safe for play.
- Refurbishment of the AGP surface, fencing, and other associated works at the end of an initial life cycle (e.g. ten years).

Sport England

Sport England will be a statutory consultee for this application due to the proposal involving the replacement of a natural grass pitch with a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP).

Policy Context and Justification

The proposal results in the loss of a natural turf pitch with a high-quality, all-weather facility that supports year-round use and addresses issues such as waterlogging and seasonal unavailability. The facility will comply with Sport England's Exception Policy E5:

"The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field."

Community Use and Access

The AGP will serve both the football club and a wider network of community users, including grassroots clubs, partner organisations, and inclusive sports programmes. A Community Use Agreement (CUA), prepared in line with Sport England templates, will formalise and safeguard community access as a pre-first use planning condition.

It is requested that the Community Use Agreement, conditioned by Sport England, would be a pre-first use condition rather than a pre-commencement condition to allow the school time to develop the CUA in conjunction with Sport England.

Developmental Benefits

The pitch supports age-appropriate formats for training and matches, enabling affiliated clubs, schools, and inclusive organisations to deliver structured programmes. This will boost participation, team growth and access for players of all backgrounds and abilities.

Access and Transport

NPPF - Promoting Sustainable Transport

Paragraph 110 of the NPPF (2024) sets out:

“Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes...”

Accessibility

The Highfield School is conveniently located, providing easy access for service, maintenance, and emergency vehicles. The existing vehicular access and egress arrangements will be utilised, with no changes proposed to established junctions. This ensures that all users will have equal and convenient access to the facilities.

The site boasts an internal one-way system around the immediate parking, with a two-way internal access road leading into the school towards the main parking to the west. A separate entrance and exit around the one way system minimises congestion into and out of the site off Highfield via different entrances and exits.

The proposed facility has been designed to ensure it is accessible to all users. All pedestrian paths and hardstanding shall be compliant with Equality Act 2010 regulations and Sport England’s Technical Design Guidance Note ‘Accessible Sports Facilities 2010’. The Equality Act 2010 replaced the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in England, Scotland and Wales.

The new hardstanding areas surrounding the AGP ensure inclusive circulation space for players, coaches, officials and spectators

Onsite Parking

The club provides free dedicated onsite parking facilities for all users of the facilities, ensuring safe and efficient traffic circulation within the site. The parking provision includes:

Table 4 - Parking Provision

Vehicle	Current Spaces	Proposed Spaces
Car	124	124
Light Goods Vehicles/ Public Carrier	2	2
Disability Spaces	9	9
Cycle Spaces	16	16
Other (drop off space for coaches/busses)	2	2

External Parking Requirements

Community use of the facility will be primarily by local organisations and community sports clubs from Highfield and the surrounding area. The main periods of community use will follow the football league season (typically during autumn and winter seasons throughout September to May). Some football activities would also take place during the spring and summer catering for football training, development activities, summer clubs.

External sporting activities will take place on weekends only, outside the school's typical operational hours.

AGP Trip Frequency

Appendix R – Transport Assessment outlines the trip frequency, parking demand and considers the access, parking and servicing arrangements.

Active Travel Opportunities

All existing active travel modes including walking, cycling, and public transport will continue to be available for everyone visiting the AGP, and the school will continue to encourage players, officials, parents, and all community visitors to travel actively wherever possible.

Construction Stage Traffic Impact

Subject to approval, a construction logistics plan can be provided to ensure construction vehicles will not have a detrimental impact on the vicinity of the site including the provision of adequate parking for construction vehicles onsite and to prevent on-street conflict and impacts to the highway safety and to prevent pollution and the protection of residential amenity.

The proposed times of construction, demolition and site clearance operations will be limited to the following hours:

Table 5 - Proposed Construction Hours

Day	Operating Hours
Monday to Friday	08:00 to 18:00
Saturday	08:00 to 13:00
Sunday	No Operation
Public Holidays	No Operation

HGV movements and installation of equipment on site will not be permitted outside these hours during the construction phase without prior written approval from the Local Planning Authority.

Transport Conclusion

Increased traffic movements to and from the school created by community access to the AGP will be managed and mitigated by adopting these principles to manage and mitigate vehicle trips.

Public transport modes, drop-off / collect systems, and car sharing will be promoted to all visitors unable to walk or cycle (active travel) their whole journey to and from the school. Measures would be promoted to reduce vehicle trip impacts wherever possible; with active travel being encouraged to players, coaches, opposition, and community visitors. For community guests travelling by car, minibus, or coach to the site; adequate permanent onsite parking is available.

With the management and mitigation plans established, sports activities associated with the facility will not create any significant traffic movements or disturbance above and beyond current trip levels to the site centre; instead, creating a steady flow of traffic movements to and from the site within the permitted hours of operation.

These measures will ensure that parking demands are satisfied locally, and do not create unacceptable impacts on the local highway network and highway safety.

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Project Benefits

Project Aims

The aims of this project are to:

- Provide a vital training and match play facility for local football and community sport.
- Provide a reliable sports surface to ensure safe and consistent use and guaranteed all-weather play.
- Support grassroots football development programs.
- Support continued growth of football within local teams.
- Ensure equality, diversity, and inclusion across the development programmes.
- Reduce pressure on existing facilities locally.
- Work strategically with other facilities and organisations locally to support football growth and development.

NPPF - Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

Paragraph 96 of the NPPF (2024) sets out:

"Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

- (a) promote social interaction...;
- (b) are safe and accessible...; and
- (c) enable and support healthy lifestyles..."

Paragraph 98 and 99 of the NPPF (2024) sets out:

"To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- (a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities...
- (b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being...

Paragraph 103 and 104 of the NPPF (2024) sets out:

"Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities... Existing playing fields should not be built on unless the benefits of alternative sports provision clearly outweigh the loss"

Project Outcomes

The proposed AGP will enhance football activities at The Highfield School, providing a facility to work towards meeting local demand for artificial pitches. It will expand accessible sports, recreation, and community facilities, providing valued training and recreational competition spaces for curriculum and community football during weekday evenings and weekends. The improved facility will attract widespread appeal, contributing positively to social and health priorities through accessibility, inclusivity, sustainability, engagement, and usage.

Community access and football growth and development is critical to the success of this proposal. With an improved sporting amenity, the facility will become a prized resource for the local football community, offering inclusive access, long-term sustainability, and meaningful health and social benefits. The delivery of the facility would provide a year-round training and competitive venue for affiliated football clubs and groups.

This proposal would encourage and support healthy lifestyles, with the facility being playable throughout the year, unlike grass pitches which become water-logged during wet winter weather or excessively hard in dry conditions. Furthermore, given the under-supply of similar facilities locally to meet current and future requirements, this development would significantly reduce the need for footballers, visiting teams, and local groups to travel long distances to access appropriate provision.

The plan is to provide long-term sustainable benefits by increasing grassroots football development and encouraging whole-life sport for young and older aspiring footballers. It will also promote increased physical activity and improved mental wellbeing to support healthier lifestyles. Once implemented, the facilities will provide opportunities for more people to be more active, more often.

A managed relationship with community guests and visitors will be arranged before the development is occupied, by way of a Community Use Agreement (CUA) which will be prepared in consultation with Sport England.

Local And Strategic Need

The proposed development has been identified by stakeholders as a key hub for grassroots football and infrastructure investment, aligning closely with priorities set out in the North Hertfordshire Local Football Facility Plan 2025. This strategy emphasizes enhancing local access and expanding the provision of 3G artificial grass pitches (AGPs).

Within North Hertfordshire, there are currently five full-size 3G AGPs, of which four are accessible to the community. Despite this apparent supply, all operate at full capacity during peak hours, serving around 2,792 visits per week—equivalent to need for four pitches

The Football Association (FA) model further recommends one full-size 3G pitch per 42 teams; with 230 competitive teams currently in the district, the theoretical demand is for five pitches – matching supply but leaving zero spare capacity

The strategy identifies Letchworth (alongside Hitchin and Knebworth) as a prime location for more 3G facilities, to better serve clubs such as Letchworth Eagles FC and other growing community clubs in the area. The proposed development would offer a vital opportunity to relieve pressure on local training venues by delivering dedicated small sided AGP access, especially for junior and youth leagues.