

Appendix J – Football Feasibility Background

Members will be aware of the recommendations of the Play Pitch Strategy, the Built Facilities Strategy and the Local Football Facilities Plan for Brentwood, which was agreed at 4 December Community Health and Housing Committee. The recommendations in respect of football looked at the need for additional 3G pitches ideally as part of a football hub, and the Brentwood Centre site was identified as a priority location for the development. It is proposed that a feasibility study is undertaken to explore the potential development of a football hub at the Brentwood Centre site which will support a number of clubs across the Borough including Brentwood Town Football Club who are also located on the site. This will identify preferred location, configuration, surveys required and external funding sources to reduce any budgetary considerations required by the Council.

The Play Pitch Strategy and the Local Football Facilities Plan set out the recommendations that directly relate to football improvements cross the Borough.

The Play Pitch Strategy for Brentwood set out six key recommendations for football:

- a. Protect the current level of football across the Borough, especially The Arena (Brentwood Town Football Club) at the Brentwood Centre site
- b. Seek to increase the number of full sized 3G AGP's (third generation, artificial grass pitches) that are available for community use, through the development of new facilities or improving the access to existing facilities.
- c. Explore potential options for the creation of football hub sites, in order to provide high quality multi-pitch facilities in strategic locations across the borough.
- d. Continue to invest in the grass pitches across the borough, to improve the quality and reduce the amount of cancelled games during periods of poor weather. Prioritise sites that are key for future community use using site-specific actions and prioritization.
- e. Address the football pitch capacity at periods of peak demand by moving mini and youth football to the proposed new 3G AGP provision while working with the leagues and clubs to establish a more flexible kick-off policy and allow teams to play throughout the day on Saturday's and Sunday's.

The feasibility study would include the preferred location of the hub, the configuration and requirement of the 5 grass pitches and the 3G AGP(s) and changing facility requirements. Surveys would need to be undertaken to identify and mitigate the possible environmental, traffic and planning constraints and to identify the budgetary requirements needed to deliver the project.

The requirements of Brentwood Town Football Club also need to be addressed as part of the feasibility study, such as their current location and their security of tenure.

Their lease is due to expire at the end of December 2020. Due to the short time left of their lease they are unlikely to be successful in attracting funding from the Football Foundation as the Foundation require a minimum lease of 10 years.

As part of the feasibility study external funding sources will need to be identified to understand the budgetary requirement that the Council will need to contribute if they were to develop the football hub. Currently there is an allocation of £750k in the 2019/20 and £750k in the 2020/21 capital programme budget. As this is seen as a strategic development for the Essex Football Association and the Football Foundation it is expected that the Council would be successful in receiving external funding to support the development of the project. The Football Foundation has also indicated that any feasibility costs borne by the Council will be considered as any match funding for the project.

Subject to the feasibility work being agreed then a full business case would need to be developed and submitted to the relevant Council committee for Members consideration.

Subject to Members agreeing to the business case then a planning application will need to be submitted to be considered by the relevant planning committee.