

# WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Thank you Chairman

You have received written submissions on behalf of the Hampshire Playing Fields Association but I would like to emphasise 4 points.

## **Firstly**

Winchester City Council has an unusually attractive recreation ground with open space, footpaths and an ecological interesting wetland area. After 10 years it is now reaching maturity, with well – planned sports provision for children, young people and adults and just enough space for people to enjoy informal recreational walks around the ground.

But after just 10 years it is already an under provision. With a population of around 6,000, there is a need for some 27 acres of grass playing fields (a shortfall of            acres) before taking local needs and demographics in Whiteley into account.

## **Secondly**

The high number of current users is demonstrated by the following facts :

- One junior and two senior cricket clubs play on the one square and practice nets.
- 3 senior and one large junior football club with some 180 members, boys and girls use the two pitches and two small 5 aside areas.

Young people have met with Parish Council Members and articulated their need for more adventurous, activities and a well planned skate area has been almost completed as an alternative to skating in the streets and on Meadowside car parks. Adjacent to the skate area, recently constructed tennis courts are sited in the least obtrusive area of the recreation ground after lengthy consultations with local residents. If they are moved to any other

available space they will be visually unattractive and create greater noise disturbance, to the disadvantage of local residents.

### **Thirdly**

We are extremely sceptical about the County Council's development proposals for the movement and reinstatement of the grass pitches. We have no knowledge of any feasibility study that would normally be undertaken in major works of this type which includes an extensive 'cut and fill' operation into a wetland area. The development proposals may only have been the result of a desk exercise.

The feasibility exercise undertaken by NPFA Technical Manager Alan Penn confirms that.

1. Movement of the football pitch at the west end of the site would require an extensive cutting operation and infilling part of the wetland area. Current use would have to relocate but where to?
2. Almost all construction work on natural turf pitches is undertaken in the spring and summer to avoid the wettest weather and the detrimental effect of heavy plant on soil structure which could result in major drainage and other problems for years to come.

Whilst it is possible to construct a pitch in 12 months we doubt it can be playable until 2008 at the earliest bearing in mind infilling a wet area and the probability of settlement and substance) quote **Horndean PC**

Construction of pitches will also have an impact on residents and users from noise and dust. Lorry access difficult and will damage other areas.

3. Moving the cricket square will reduce the boundary from current average of 55m. It will be difficult to meet ECB minimum of 45.72m from the centre of pitch in use.

There is also concern about striking cricket balls to nearest houses – only 57m to hedge boundary and into the children’s play area, depending how far it is moved nearer to housing at west of the site.

4. If the west football pitch is moved 40m westward the distance of the corner flag to the nearest house will be approximately 16m. ROSPA recommend a minimum of 35m and at least 40m from a children’s play area.

FA regulations require a 6m run-off area at the side of the pitch for the safety of players and spectators, plans show less than a metre to the path in places.

#### **4. Finally**

Meadowside is a shining example of sports development which is making a major contribution to the achievement of the City Council’s Cultural strategy and Government and Sport England’s targets for healthy exercise, increasing participation particularly among young people and encouraging well qualified, committed volunteers.

All of these will be jeopardised if this proposal goes ahead. Even, if playing fields are not lost permanently, the sports clubs fear the loss of incentive from players and volunteer coaches.

At best they will lose some of both, and at worse clubs will fold.

The message will be clear all the policies for sport and communities can too easily be sacrificed for other ‘more important’ things.

Is this the kind of message we should be giving to young people. HPFA urges the Council to require the County Council to work together with them on the feasibility of an alternative site or sites.

