

Report to: PLANNING COMMITTEE **Date of Meeting:** 2nd June 2021

Subject: [DC/2021/00807](#)
[Marine Football Club, College Road, Crosby, L23 3AS](#)

Proposal: Construction of a 3G artificial football pitch and widening of the site entrance

Applicant: Mr Paul Leary **Agent:** Diaz Associates
Marine AFC

Ward: Victoria Ward **Type:** Full Application - Major

Reason for Committee Determination: Major application with 5+ objections

Summary

The proposal is to replace the existing grass pitch at Marine FC's ground for a third-generation (3G) all-weather artificial pitch. Alterations are also proposed to the access point off College Road. The proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle as it would provide a better-quality playing surface and facilitate increased community use. Given the increased use of the facility and the sensitivity of neighbouring properties, the Environmental Health Manager has objected without mitigation such as acoustic fencing. The applicant does not intend to alter the existing boundary treatments to the playing pitch or floodlights. Given the long-established use of the site which is capable of being used to any degree without the need for planning permission it is considered that a condition limiting the hours of use for non-professional games would provide sufficient protection for local residents.

The Highways Manager has raised no objection to the proposal, as it would not directly affect the busiest periods at the site (i.e. professional match days). A Travel Plan is to be secured by condition on order to encourage sustainable modes of transportation while the applicant has also put forward management proposals for traffic and parking. While some harm has been identified, there are clear social and economic benefits presented in supporting the growth of Marine FC which is a local asset. The proposal on balance is considered to comply with adopted local and national policy and is recommended for approval.

Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

Case Officer Steven Healey

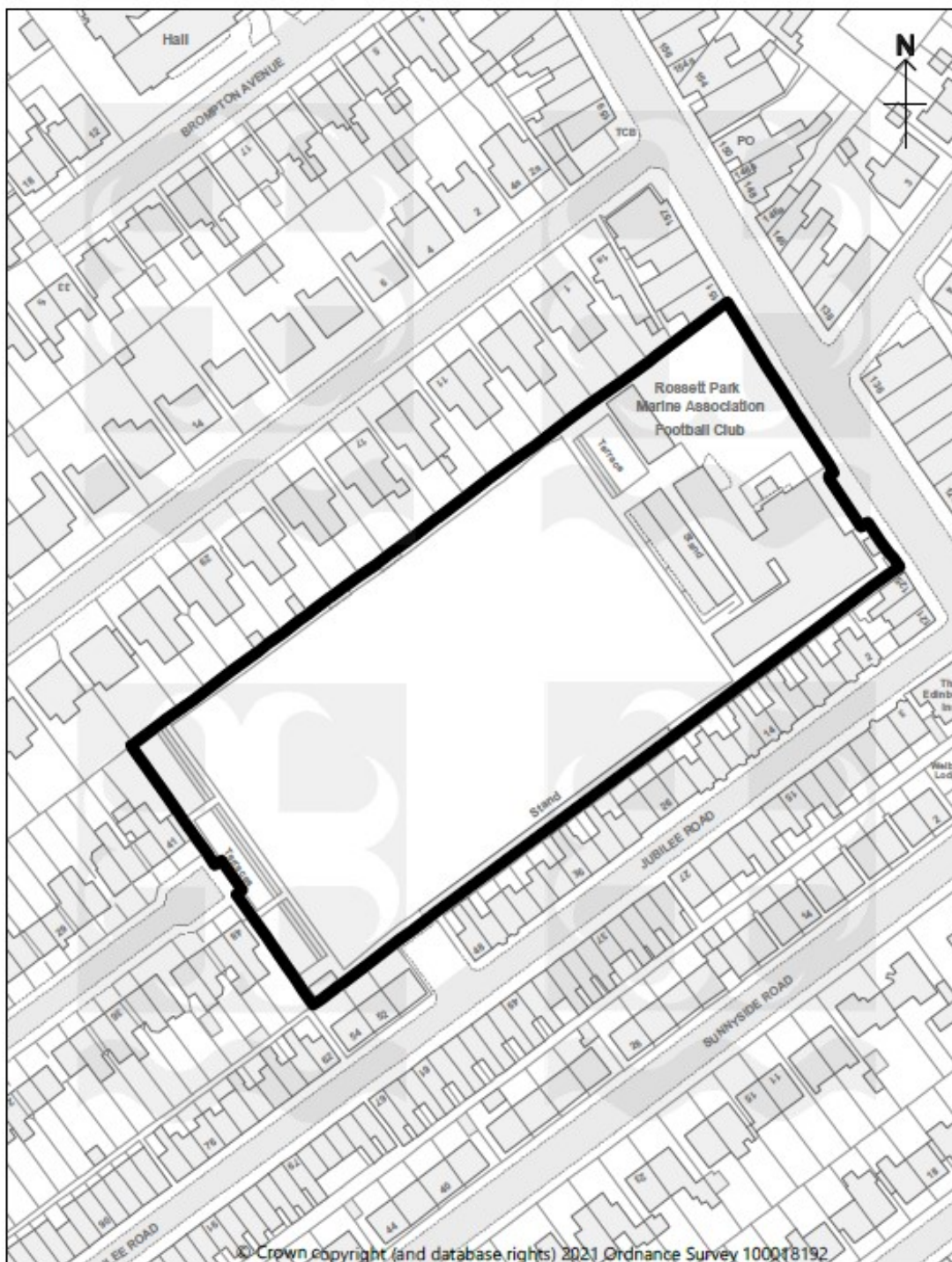
Email planning.department@sefton.gov.uk

Telephone 0345 140 0845

Application documents and plans are available at:

<http://pa.sefton.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=QQGXC7NW08800>

Site Location Plan



Sefton Council



Reference: Map reference

Date: 21/05/2021

Scale: Scale: 1:1250

Created by: Initials

The Site

The application site comprises Rossett Park, the home ground of Marine Association Football Club, and associated buildings and parking at College Road, Crosby.

History

Planning permission granted in January 2021 for the erection of a community shop in the car park (reference DC/2020/02373). Permission granted in February 2019 for the erection of a single storey building in the car park to be used as a table tennis centre (DC/2018/02114).

Permission granted in February 2018 for the erection of a new single storey amenity block and turnstile at the grounds following demolition of an existing block behind the main stand (DC/2017/02269).

Permission refused in April 2014 for the erection of a convenience store within the car park alongside a new single storey block for Marine A.F.C. following demolition of an existing block (DC/2014/00188).

Permission granted in April 2011 for the erection of a new stand and snack kiosk at Crosender Road end and siting of four 20-metre high floodlighting columns to replace the eight existing floodlights (S/2011/0276) The floodlights were later amended through a non-material amendment application (S/2012/0012).

Permission granted in December 2002 for the erection of an extension to the existing dressing rooms (S/2002/1108).

Various other applications approved during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in association with use as a sports ground.

Consultations

Environmental Health Manager

No Noise Assessment has been submitted, it is likely given the intensification of use that acoustic screening will be required. This could be secured by condition although without mitigation the application cannot be supported. No alterations are proposed to the floodlighting structures however the off-times proposed by the club appear to be a betterment.

Flooding and Drainage Manager

No objection.

Highways Manager

No objection subject to conditions requiring the submission of a Travel Plan and off-site improvements to facilitate the new access.

Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service

No objection.

Sport England

No objection subject to a Community Use Agreement being secured by condition to ensure the intended sporting benefits cited to meet policy requirements are implemented.

Neighbour Representations

Objection received from seven addresses within the area on the grounds of increased traffic and parking issues, increased usage throughout the day which has already increased recently from just Marine AFC using the pitch, resulting in greater noise (including players, spectators and traffic noise) and light disturbance. Concerns raised over loss of privacy, impacts on health and security of neighbouring properties. Some residents state there are already similar facilities in the area.

Letters of support received from St Luke's Halsall Primary School, St Mary's Primary School, St Nicholas Primary School, Parkinson's Support, Sefton Council Voluntary Service and Valewood Primary School praising current access to the pitch through 'Marine in the Community', community support and social and economic benefits of the club in general and improvements which would be delivered through a new artificial pitch (erroneously referred to as 4G as opposed to 3G), greater availability of use, curricular and extra-curricular opportunities, and associated health and wellbeing benefits.

One neighbour points out that a recently approved community shop is not shown on the plans which would result in loss of parking.

Policy Context

The application site lies within an area designated as Open Space in the Sefton Local Plan which was adopted by the Council in April 2017.

Assessment of the Proposal

The proposal is to replace the existing grass pitch at Marine AFC with a 3G artificial pitch, to widen the existing vehicular access substituting existing palisade fencing for a low-level knee rail and planting.

Principle of Development

The application site is within an area designated as Open Space subject to Local Plan policy NH5. This policy supports 'environmental improvements which enhance the site's environmental quality or green infrastructure benefits, including built facilities necessary for the use of the site'. This policy is supported by Supplementary Planning Document 'Open Space' which states works to enhance open space could include new pitches or improvements to existing pitches where this will help to increase pitch capacity.

The site at present is primarily occupied by a full-sized grass football pitch, with a stand, club buildings and parking positioned towards College Road. While this would be lost, an all-weather 3G pitch would allow for more frequent usage. The 2016 Sefton Playing Pitch Strategy identified a shortfall of at least 11 full-size 3G pitches across the Borough, while the 2019 Local Football Facility Plan found an even greater shortfall of 17. Eight priority projects are identified in the plan including a new 3G pitch at a non-specified location in Crosby. In this respect, the proposal would contribute to an identified need and would provide a better-quality pitch, complying with Local Plan policy NH5.

Sport England has been consulted as statutory body for development affecting playing pitches. Following clarification from the applicant regarding their outline proposals for community access, and clarification that the various sized pitches which form the 3G pitch would adhere to national design specifications the proposal is considered acceptable. Sport England considers that subject to the submission of a Community Use Agreement, the proposed development would be of 'sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field'.

Environmental Matters

Noise, Light and Pollutants

The proposal would facilitate increased community use which has the potential to result in increased noise and disturbance. The applicant has submitted a short Management Plan and Flood Lighting Impact Statement. The Environmental Health Manager initially requested the submission of a Noise Assessment; however, this has not been provided. In the absence of a Noise Assessment it has been suggested that an acoustic barrier a minimum of 3m in height is likely to be required around the pitch.

The applicant has pointed out that there is no existing physical mitigation and that during the football season the pitch is typically used three nights per week up until 10.15pm. The applicant states that many residents enjoy the ability to watch matches from the confines of their property which would be inhibited should acoustic screening be introduced. Aside from this there is the potential for an extensive fence of 3m high or more to impact on the general outlook of these properties.

The applicant has proposed to limit the hours of community use of the pitch compared to professional games which often end at 10pm, with shorter hours still on weekends and off-season. This is considered to be a reasonable compromise given the long-established presence of Marine FC at Rossett Park which is capable of accommodating non-professional games regardless. While not specifically requested by the Environmental Health Manager, Planning Services has dealt with a number of similar proposals recently and have conditioned the requirement of a Noise Management Plan. This would provide further assurance in this case also.

In addition to the above the existing floodlights on site are to be unaffected. These are subject to a restriction on hours of use, which similarly the applicant has agreed to reduce when the pitch is being used by the wider community.

Overall, while increased use of the site would result in more noise and disturbance, the hours proposed by the applicant are not unreasonable with respect to the existing lawful use of the site and it would not be reasonable to insist on the installation of an acoustic fence which with being so close to residential properties risks harming outlook from those properties.

Drainage

The Flooding and Drainage Manager has raised no objection to the proposal. In terms of surface water drainage, it is proposed to install a series of lateral drainage pipes below the pitch surface which would connect to the existing drainage system on site which is deemed acceptable.

Ground Conditions

The Environmental Health Manager has raised no objection given the low likelihood of contaminants on site. Regarding levels, the applicant has submitted a schedule of works which clarifies that the existing grass pitch and topsoil would be excavated down 320mm, with the new 3G pitch placed a top. The future ground level would therefore remain indistinguishable from present.

Access, Transportation and Highway Safety

The proposal would result in intensified use of the application site, due to the additional capacity created by the 3G pitch. The applicant has submitted a Traffic Management report which has been reviewed to the satisfaction of the Highways Manager. This set out various measures Marine FC proposes to implement such as shuttle services during certain matches. The statement also clarifies that there will be a permanent staff presence to assist during non-match days also, while traffic will be minimised by the use of minibuses by community groups.

The site is an existing sports complex without restriction on the number of matches which can take place. It is expected that the greatest number of visitors, and thus vehicle trips, would be during the professional matches which already take place. It is considered that the traffic generated by the proposal can be readily accommodated within the local highway network, while any increased

demand for parking would not result in significant cumulative adverse impacts. In order to encourage more sustainable modes of transportation the Highways Manager has recommended the implementation of a Travel Plan. This is reasonable and can be secured by condition. Physical measures to encourage more sustainable modes of travel include cycle parking and electric vehicle charging points which can also be secured by condition.

The proposed widening of the access is supported as it would allow for two-way movements. This will require off-site works including dropped crossings, the relocation of street signage, a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to provide double yellow lines across the access and amendments to existing TROs. It is considered necessary also to require the submission of a Construction Traffic Management Plan given site constraints and the extent of works proposed.

Design, Character and Visual Impact

The proposed 3G pitch itself would maintain a similar appearance to the existing grass pitch, which is not immediately visible from the public realm. There are no proposals to alter existing boundary treatments or lighting to the pitch. The replacement of the palisade fencing to the College Road frontage and replacement with knee rails and planters would improve the appearance of the street scene and is supported from a design perspective.

Other Matters

Neighbour Comments

Most neighbour comments are addressed within the report. Aside from this it is not considered that there would be a loss of privacy to neighbours above what is already experienced, or any greater security risk given the procedures which will be implemented including staff being present on site at all times during games/ training sessions.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

The proposed replacement pitch would facilitate increased use due to being suitable in all weather conditions. In this respect there are clear benefits associated with health and wellbeing given it would be available for wider community use more regularly. There are also economic benefits associated with supporting the viability of a professional football club. Nevertheless, the site is constrained by residential properties and any intensification of use risks further noise and disturbance.

The applicant has not proposed any form of physical acoustic mitigation which the Environmental Health Manager is opposed to. However, such a request would have to meet the tests of reasonableness and necessity. Given the long-established presence of Marine FC at Rossett Park which is capable of being used to any extent without the need for planning permission and residents are fully aware of this, the request for acoustic mitigation is not considered to be reasonable. Other measures are to be implemented including restrictions on hours of use and a

noise management plan. On the whole it is not considered that increased use would constitute significant harm.

The Highways Manager has raised no objection on highway safety grounds and considers there would not be any significant cumulative impacts on the local network either. Overall and on balance it is considered that the identified harm is outweighed by the significant benefits presented by the proposed development and on the whole the proposal complies with adopted local and national policy. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

Recommendation - Approve with Conditions

Approve with Conditions

Conditions

This application has been recommended for approval subject to the following conditions and associated reasons:

Time Limit for Commencement

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In order that the development is commenced in a timely manner, as set out in Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Approved Plans

- 2) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:
 - Location Plan
 - Proposed FTP Drainage (DP0001 Rev 01)
 - Proposed 11 A-Side Pitch Layout (591-11-A)
 - Proposed 9 A-Side Pitch Layout (591-12-A)
 - Proposed 7 and 5 A-Side Pitch Layout (591-13)
 - Car Park (594-07)
 - Existing & Proposed Entrance Changes (594-15)
 - Works Description
 - Management and Traffic Management Plans

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

Before the Development is Commenced

- 3) No development shall commence until a Construction Traffic Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan must include a programme of works, days and hours of working, a site layout during the construction phase, methods for traffic management and full details of the proposed measures to ensure that mud and other loose materials are not carried on the wheels and chassis of any vehicles leaving the site and measures to minimise dust nuisance. The provisions of the approved Demolition and Construction Traffic Management Plan shall be implemented in full during the period of construction.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

Before the Development is Occupied

- 4) Use of the development shall not commence until a community use agreement prepared in consultation with Sport England has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agreement shall apply to the Artificial Grass Pitch and changing rooms, and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by non-partner club users, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review. The development shall not be used otherwise than in strict compliance with the approved agreement.

Reason: To secure well managed safe community access to the sports facilities, to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport and to accord with Local Plan policy NH5 and paragraph 97 of the NPPF.

- 5) No part of the development shall be brought into use until a Noise Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be operated and managed in accordance with the approved plan at all times.

Reason: In order to minimise noise and safeguard the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and land users.

- 6) No part of the development shall be brought into use until a detailed scheme of highway works together with a programme for their completion has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of widening of the vehicle access onto College Road, the associated dropped kerbs and tactile crossings relocation of two signposts, alterations to existing Traffic Regulation Orders and a new Order for double yellow lines fronting the access. The highway works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of the development or in accordance with a timetable to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety.

- 7) No part of the development shall be brought into use until areas for vehicle parking, turning and manoeuvring have been laid out, demarcated, levelled and surfaced in accordance with the approved plans and these areas shall be retained thereafter for that specific use.

Reason: To ensure that enough car parking is provided for the development and to ensure the safety of highway users.

- 8) No part of the development shall be brought into use until two electric vehicle charging points have been installed and are operational in accordance with details that shall previously have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning. The approved infrastructure shall be permanently retained thereafter.

Reason: To facilitate the use of electric vehicles and to reduce air pollution and carbon emissions.

- 9) The development shall not be occupied until facilities for the secure storage of cycles have been provided in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and they shall be retained in perpetuity thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that enough cycle parking is provided for the development in the interest of promoting non-car based modes of travel.

- 10) The development shall not be occupied or brought into use until a Travel Plan comprising immediate, continuing and long-term measures to promote and encourage alternatives to single-occupancy car use has been prepared, submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Travel Plan shall then be implemented, monitored and reviewed in accordance with the agreed Travel Plan Targets.

Reason: In order to meet sustainable transport objectives including a reduction in single occupancy car journeys and the increased use of public transport, walking & cycling.

Ongoing Conditions

- 11) The use of the 3G pitch hereby approved for those groups expressly identified within the Community Use Agreement as set out by condition 4 shall take place as follows:-

From 2nd Sunday of May until 1st Friday of August inclusive:

09:00-18:00 Monday to Friday with floodlighting switched off outside the hours of 09:00-18:15,

09:00-16:00 Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays with floodlighting switched off outside the hours of 09:00-16:15

All other times:

09:00-21:00 Monday to Friday with floodlighting switched off outside the hours of 09:00-21:15,

09:00-18:00 Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays with floodlighting switched off outside the hours of 09:00-18:15.

Reason: In order to protect the living conditions of neighbouring residents from unacceptable noise and light disturbance.