

Prince Henry's Proposed Astro Turf Pitch Frequently Asked Questions – updated July 2020

Please note, if we get planning permission and achieve our fundraising targets, the earliest that the pitch could be built is for use in Summer 2021.

Where will the pitch be located?

We are seeking planning permission for the site at the front of school, on the frequently flooded rugby pitch. There are several reasons for this, detailed below.

This enables us to move the pitch further away from surrounding properties than the alternative site. The alternative site would also reduce the overall number of pitches available, as it would occupy two grass pitches, which is not allowed under Sport England regulations. We do not have any land (including at Wharfemeadows, which has 6 regulated pitches with no room for a seventh) to replace the extra pitch which would be lost. Disabled access to the changing rooms and toilets is much more difficult at the rear of school, due to the steep bank at the back of the Sports Hall.

The bats roost on the North side of the Sports Hall, so the ecological survey showed that it would be preferable to **lay** the pitch at the front of school. The survey also showed that, with the extensive mitigating measures now in place, it will have a “negligible impact” on the local bat populations commuting and foraging routes and roost.

What about the bats and the local ecology?

During 2019, we undertook an additional extensive bat survey, with local ecologists Haycock and Jay Associates Ltd. The pitch has been resized to allow for significant planting along the Western side of the pitch, which will both maintain and improve the foraging and commuting for bats and enhance the area for other wildlife. The lighting hours will also be reduced during April and October, key months for the bat population.

The report states that, once the mitigating measures have reached maturity (including extensive tree planting, bat and swift boxes and habitat creation), “The proposed management plan will benefit the soprano pipistrelle maternity roost.... [and] the biodiversity enhancement measures and commitment to long-term enhancement at the site for bats, nesting birds and hedgehog will deliver biodiversity net gain for the proposed scheme.”

We will also be approaching local environmental groups to help us manage the habitat, alongside our school Eco-Mittee.

How does the pitch fit with the Otley Neighbourhood Plan?

The development of the pitch ties in with several of the key objectives and policies outlined in the Otley Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted by the town with a ‘Yes’ vote of 75%. From one of the initial overarching objectives of the plan [“To ensure the retention and provision of better community, cultural and leisure facilities for all”], to policies GE5, CF2 and CF5, among others, the development is supported by the Plan.

POLICY GE5: PROTECTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE BIODIVERSITY OF THE EXTENDED LEEDS HABITAT NETWORK WITHIN OTLEY

The pitch does not fall into the area of the Extended Leeds Habitat Network, however, the biodiversity mitigation measures show that the project, which will deliver a net gain to the area, fits the criteria, as follows: “To be supported, development within the Extended Leeds Habitat Network, as shown on the Neighbourhood Plan Map, must demonstrate that: i. There will be an overall net gain for network biodiversity, including a positive contribution to the network through habitat protection, enhancement and creation; ii. The design of new development, including landscaping, enhances existing wildlife habitats and provides new areas and opportunities for wildlife; iii. There is no significant adverse impact on the integrity and connectivity of the network. Development which includes measures that would fill gaps in or further extend the Extended Leeds Habitat Network, will be supported”.

Additionally, this section of the plan states that “Any wildlife opportunities, for example in the form of habitat features such as bat boxes or ‘swift bricks’ which development can provide are encouraged and will generally be supported.”

POLICY CF2: NEW SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

“Development which would provide new sports and recreation facilities or secure improvements to existing facilities will be supported. Support will be given to proposals for multiple sports and recreation provision on a single site but also for the development of single sport facilities on separate sites. “

Additionally, the plan states that Development which would improve or add to the facilities listed in these categories - relevant to the pitch - will be supported: Civic and community; Educational; Health; Youth; Older People; Sports and leisure.

POLICY CF5: NEW EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

“Development proposals for a new school or extensions to existing schools, in order to increase capacity and/or improve facilities, will be supported.”

How does the pitch fit with Leeds City Council strategy?

Leeds Local Facilities Football Plan (LFFP) was developed in partnership between the Football Foundation, the West Riding County FA, Sport England, Leeds City Council, Leeds United Community Foundation and West Yorkshire Sport. The LFFP for Leeds identifies opportunities to accurately target investment in grassroots football facilities across the local area, to ensure that they meet needs specific to their local area. The LFFP identifies 39 priority projects for Leeds, of which 15 are 3G all-weather pitch proposals. The sites have been identified as strategically important hub sites in the City or single pitch locally important, community based sites. This list includes Prince Henry's Grammar School, Otley.

In addition, the Leeds Playing Pitch strategy states that there is a shortfall of 13 3G football pitches across the City and identifies both the football pitches and rugby first team pitch at Prince Henry's as “poor quality”.

The pitch would support the work of Leeds City Council's ‘Get Set Leeds’ campaign, the aim of which is to increase physical activity across the City. They have found in their research that one of the main barriers to physical activity is access to facilities.

How does the pitch benefit the local community?

It would greatly reduce the number of training sessions and matches lost to waterlogged pitches in the local area – both for school and for many community clubs.

It would increase the number of people of all ages who are able to take part in physical activity, by providing opportunities for more clubs to participate, including new opportunities and activities for females and older residents, such as walking football. This would support the work of Leeds City Council's ‘Get Set Leeds’ campaign.

It would increase capacity for netball and other sports, as there would be increased capacity in the Sports hall at Prince Henry's.

It would enable better curriculum provision in school (for one example, although hockey matches cannot be played on the pitch, it would improve training facilities in hockey) and reduce the number of hours lost to waterlogged facilities.

The pitch would increase the activities which holiday clubs are able to provide for our partner Cluster schools and their pupils, increasing the offer to more young people, particularly disadvantaged students. Prince Henry's already substantially subsidises the rental costs for local activity providers for holiday activities, in return for places for pupil premium students across the Cluster, and this principle would apply to the astro turf pitch as well.

There would be a net biodiversity gain once environmental mitigation measures mature.

What will the opening hours be?

We are still in the process of planning this. We would expect to keep standard opening hours for an astro turf, in line with our current lettings, starting from 9am on weekends and through the holidays. These will be reduced in April and October, to protect the local bat population. As part of the conditions of the funding from the Football Foundation, our planning application has to ask for opening hours up until 10pm in months where the floodlights are lit (October to April), but we have not yet finalised the actual opening hours for the pitch.

How high is the fence? Will the ball be in my back garden every 5 minutes?

The fence has two sections – a lower section of chain link green fence (about 6ft tall) and then a higher section of see-through ‘fisherman’s net’ ball netting, which takes the fence up to roughly 15 feet tall in total. Therefore, the ball should stay inside the pitch. During the pre-planning process, the pitch has reduced in size and moved further away from residents’ houses and an acoustic fence has also been added, as has significant planting of new trees, alongside the current mature trees, which will provide a fairly dense area of shrubs and trees.

But don’t these pitches have very bright lights at night?

The pitch will be floodlit by specially designed floodlights, at a height recommended to minimise horizontal light spillage outside the pitch. The floodlights can also be adjusted, to ensure that obtrusive light is minimised and they only operate when needed. There are also mature trees along the boundary of the school (as well as additional planting) which will screen the pitch.

The proposed floodlights have been upgraded from the original plan in order to reduce the already low light bleed. These modern floodlights for 3G pitches are specifically designed to point inwards, with very little bleed. As part of the planning process, drawings are made of where the light may fall. These drawings clearly show that the light will fall on the Prince Henry’s side of the tree line. The light will be much less intrusive than a streetlight, as is confirmed by the light survey, which will be part of the planning application.

Integral louvres will be fitted to all sixteen floodlights to reduce horizontal and vertical overspill. These ensure that upward waste light is minimised, achieving full cut-off with 0% projected into the atmosphere. This satisfies the recommendations by The British Astronomical Association's Campaign for Dark Skies, an organisation which lobbies for low light pollution lighting systems. In addition, the lighting proposal accords with an Environmental Zone E2 (ILP) which is rural location with low district brightness, for example a village or relatively dark outer suburban location.

What about noise?

We will work with the users of the pitch to minimise disruption from noise. While there will be a degree of noise from playing, we will work with them to minimise anti-social levels of noise. We will embed conditions about noise in the terms and conditions of rental and residents will have a named person to contact if they have any concerns. Failure to comply with the terms of lettings may lead to the cancellation of individual lettings.

During the building of the pitch, a mound of earth that is roughly 4 feet tall will be created by the process, which will also act as a barrier to sound along the length of the pitch. Although it is not a condition of the planning, we have included an additional acoustic barrier fence which will further reduce noise for our neighbours.

The acoustic barrier is specifically designed to reduce noise from the pitch and designed in conjunction with a noise survey. It should be noted that there are likely to be very few spectators in the small spectating area. The main use of the pitch will be for training purposes and the vast majority of any matchplay taking place will be for junior football, which is small-sided. These matches likely to be played are likely to have an audience of fewer than 30 people. Spectators have to be quietly respectful for junior sport, under RFU and FA guidelines, and this is enforced by the referee.

Noise is assessed as part of the planning process and more mitigating measures can be put in place, if the Planning Department request it.

What about parking?

Again, we will embed conditions in the terms and conditions for rental about parking. We are aware that residents of Prince Henry’s Court, for example, may be concerned about parents dropping off and picking up at

evening/weekends. Unlike the normal school drop off and pick up times, when the school car parks are closed to parents, due to the volume of school buses and taxis, the car parks at both the Farnley Lane and Newall Carr Road entrances will be open to users at evenings and weekends. This will mean that parents of younger club members will be able to park on site to pick up and drop off and not use Prince Henry's Court. We will work with the users and local residents to make sure that this is the case. The re-opening of Aireborough Leisure Centre has also seen a substantial drop in traffic to the school site.

You said the current flat pitch floods – will the work just send the water in to my garden?

The water problems will be alleviated by the work and drainage has been considered as part of the process, right from stage one. The pitch will not worsen the drainage in neighbouring gardens and a suitably sustainable drainage system will be developed as part of the planning process.

How can the protected line of trees near the development site avoid being damaged with the work due to take place so close?

The pitch has reduced in size and moved further away from the trees, towards the school buildings. The trees will not be affected by the work or the final pitch. This has been confirmed by the ecological survey. Many more trees will be planted as part of the scheme.

How can the pitch be cleaned effectively without chemical run-off causing environmental damage/pollution?

The pitch is not cleaned in the traditional sense. The fibres are 'ruffled' by a tractor to make sure that they remain playable and are not flattened. People playing on the pitch will be using clean boots to FA specifications. No chemicals are applied to the pitch and there is no jet washing or other application of water, only rainwater. The rubber crumb is highly regulated and is recycled when replenished.

The Football Foundation states: "We have monitored numerous independent scientific studies on this issue, which have reported a very low/negligible level of concern for human health as a result of 3G pitches and rubber crumb. Indeed, the European Chemicals Agency has recently published its own findings, following an extensive EU-wide study, and has found no reason to advise people against playing sport on 3G pitches with rubber crumb."

The current design includes a 'kick-board' which will reduce the loss of rubber crumb. We will ensure that our suppliers are compliant with current legislation.

Why can't you build it at Wharfemeadows?

The access to Wharfemeadows is difficult, with very limited parking. The access roads, including the initial turn off Farnley Lane, have multiple ownership (they are not included in our tenancy of the land at Wharfemeadows) and, as a result, can be poorly maintained. It would be very difficult to maintain the security of the pitch at Wharfemeadows. The main school site is staffed and the access is much better.

Otley is a rugby town, why isn't it going to be a rugby pitch?

We are very proud of our rugby heritage, and the building of the new pitch will in no way reduce the amount of rugby played at Prince Henry's – in fact, it will increase it. The current front pitch is regularly waterlogged, so very few matches can be played on it. The new pitch will be a dual-use rugby and football pitch, complete with markings and posts for both sports.

The only available funding for a 3G pitch is from the Football Foundation and they are happy that we will be adding a shock pad layer, thus making the pitch suitable for full contact rugby and rugby training for all ages. We have approached the Rugby Football Union and they have no money available to fund a pitch. Both Otley Rugby Club and Old Otliensians are members of the Sports Chevin Group and have been vocal in their support of the project.

How is the pitch going to be funded?

We have the support of the Football Foundation and have funding of £110,000 allocated by Sport England and will be applying to the Otley Town Council Investing in Otley Fund. The Football Foundation have identified Otley as an

area in desperate need for such a facility and they are more than happy for the proposed football astro turf to be laid with a rugby shock pad underneath, thus allowing both sports to be played on the pitch.

In addition to the Football Foundation grant application (which makes up the bulk of the project) we are applying to Otley Town Council and have also been fundraising in school and through local clubs to reach the total estimated cost of £705,000 required to build the pitch. Although this funding will be paid to Prince Henry's, the grants are available as a joint school/community use of the pitch and the identified need for a facility of this kind in our area.

The FA have identified over 60 teams in the local area that require such a facility including many junior teams. The RFU have also identified a number of teams in the local area that would benefit from such a surface. Countless fixtures (and training sessions) are cancelled every season due to waterlogged pitches across the area. This is an ongoing problem.

Who will use the pitch?

During the daytime, the pitch will be used for school PE, much enhancing the facilities for the students and allowing much better curriculum teaching in wet weather. After school hours, the pitch will be for the use of the local community as well, through lettings.

As part of our initial planning, we have secured the partnership and support of many local clubs who are keen to use the facilities for training and matches. These include Otley Town Football Club, Otley Zebras Rugby, Rugby League, Pool AFC, Menston Junior Football Club, Guiseley Football Club, Otley Athletics Club and more. We are also part of the Sports Chevin Group, who are working to improve sports facilities across the town.

Not only would this surface enable many of the local football and rugby teams to train and play all year round, but part of the project plan would be to increase access for under-represented groups in Sport such as girls, older residents and those with disability. The facility will also encourage sessions for under-represented groups, such as girls' football and rugby, walking football for seniors and sessions for people with disabilities. This will allow the local football and rugby clubs to introduce girls' teams to the area.

The pitch would also increase the activities which holiday clubs are able to provide for our partner Cluster schools and their pupils, increasing the offer to more young people. Prince Henry's already substantially subsidises the rental costs for local activity providers for holiday activities, in return for places for pupil premium students across the Cluster, and this principle would apply to the astro turf pitch as well.

Who will own and run the pitch?

The pitch will be owned and run by Prince Henry's Grammar School, but in partnership with the local councils, clubs and organisations who have helped us to make the project a reality. The Steering Group, made up of all these organisations, will make the key decisions around the project.

Since it costs so much to build, won't it cost a lot for local clubs to rent?

No – most of the funding will come from grants to enhance the sporting provision in the area. Our lettings fees for local clubs who have volunteer coaches are always kept as low as we can, without costing the school money for repairs and overheads. Prices will be set at an affordable rate, to include such costs as Site Staff Cover, ongoing maintenance of the pitch and surroundings and to allow for replacement of the 3G surface in due course, for example. We will be working with the Football Foundation, as the major funder, to set appropriate prices, similar to those in other facilities in the area.

Won't Prince Henry's make a profit from the pitch?

No. The fees for letting the pitch will go back into the maintenance of the pitch and wear and tear on surrounding areas (for example, the changing rooms, toilets, car parking etc). Local clubs will also be able to use the pitch for fundraising activities.

If it's a football pitch, does that mean Prince Henry's will no longer be a rugby school?

No. We are very proud of our heritage, reputation and history in the town (and the country!) in rugby. The current pitch at the front of school floods badly and is only usable for a few matches each year. Our plan is to make Wharfemeadows the main hub for rugby at the school and we will also continue to use the other school rugby pitch at Prince Henry's. As you may be aware, we have recently improved the changing rooms and pavilion at Wharfemeadows, thanks to grants from Otley Town Council and the National Lottery Awards for All Fund.

The pitch will also allow us to play more football, as our grass pitches are not in a good condition. The astro turf pitch would also allow us to further develop other sports in PE lessons, such as athletics and hockey, as it will be usable in wet weather. Local football clubs are also supportive of the pitch, as it will improve facilities in Otley for these clubs.

The surface is not suitable for hockey matches, as the requirements for a hockey pitch are very different to those for football and rugby.

What about litter?

Again, we will embed conditions in the terms and conditions for rental about litter. We will also provide lots of bins for litter and the school site will be staffed whenever the pitch is open.

Why does the pitch have to be here, in a residential area?

As part of the feasibility studies, Leeds City Council, the Football Foundation and Prince Henry's have considered many other sites in Otley – this is why the Football Foundation approached Prince Henry's originally. Both Leeds City Council and the Football Foundation are keen that the facility is used during the day, which reduces the options for locations. The issues of security, access and maintenance access have also been considered. There are many pitches of this kind in schools with similar locations, such as at Sherburn High School, Horsforth School and Bradford Academy.

We have tried to mitigate the effect of the pitch on our neighbours – our current alterations have added significant costs to the project. The school has been in this location for 100 years, during which time many improvements have led to additional building work, to cope with the demands of a growing school.

Why can't the pitch be built on Pool Road as part of the rugby club's relocation proposal / the East of Otley scheme?

There are many issues with the use of land as a part of the East of Otley scheme.

Both Leeds City Council and the Football Foundation (the majority funders) are keen that the facility is used during the day. If the pitch was to be built in the East of Otley scheme, it would not be practical to use it during the day. The site at Prince Henry's leads to far more access for young people and it is closer to the disadvantaged areas of Otley.

Prince Henry's has no ownership or lease on any land in the East of Otley development.

The plans for the development of the East of Otley scheme, including potential plans from Otley Rugby Club, Old Otliensians and Otley Town FC use every piece of land in that area, including some which have yet to be acquired. There is no suitable land available in the area of the development.

Why has the school not communicated with the local residents?

The school has been in regular communication with local residents since May 2018. There is no obligation to talk to residents until planning permission has been applied for, but we understood that the pitch would affect our neighbours and so informed them of our plans in advance.

4 May 2018

- Letter hand delivered to all houses which border the PHGS main fields.
- Page created on PHGS website, updated as necessary, including FAQs.

16 May 2018

- Drop in information meeting.
- Email addresses gathered for future updates, both from those attending and those who contacted PHGS to say they couldn't attend but wanted to know more.

May/June 2018

- Letters/emails from several local residents received and responded to.

18 July 2018

- Update sent to email list, Sports Chevin Group, Councillors and MP, stating that next update would be second half of Autumn Term.

13 November 2018

- Update sent to Wharfedale Observer
- Survey launched.
- Letters hand delivered to all properties bordering on PHGS, containing drawing of proposed pitch.
- Letter circulated by email to local LCC and Bradford Councillors, local MPs, via EO of Otley Town Council to Otley Town Councillors and to email update list.
- Page on website updated.

November/December 2018

- Following letter, phone calls and emails received and responded to.

January – November 2019

- Project paused for additional ecological survey.

December 2019/January 2020

- Email list and school website updated with current situation.

July 2020

- FAQs updated on website
- Local residents updated by email.

Why was the online survey worded vaguely?

The online survey clearly stated that it was seeking opinions on a 3G pitch located at PHGS. Some of the survey questions were more general, as the survey was also used to gather feedback on Otley facilities in general, as this is a community project. All the communications regarding the survey, which were also hand delivered to all properties which border on the PHGS site, showed a clear drawing of the proposed pitch location. The information sent to local clubs, parents and carers and the local newspaper also contained this drawing.

Why isn't it a 4G Pitch?

3G pitches are the most up to date pitch in terms of quality performances indicators. 4G pitches are not recognised by any National Sporting Governing Bodies, so the pitch would be unusable.