



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024
Subject	ALLOCATION OF S106 MONIES TO WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL TO DESIGN, BUILD AND OPERATE A NEW THIRD GENERATION (3G) PITCH AT WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND
Wards Affected	All Witney wards and catchment wards
Accountable Member	Councillor Tim Sumner – Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects Email: <a href="mailto:tim.sumner@westoxon.gov.uk">tim.sumner@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable Officer	Andy Barge – Assistant Director, Communities Email: <a href="mailto:andy.barge@publicagroup.uk">andy.barge@publicagroup.uk</a>
Report Author	Rachel Biles – Strategic Projects Lead (Leisure) Email: <a href="mailto:rachel.biles@publicagroup.uk">rachel.biles@publicagroup.uk</a>
Purpose	To obtain approval to release S106 funding to Witney Town Council for the design, build and operation of a new third generation (3G) pitch with sports lighting at West Witney Sports Grounds, Witney.
Annexes	Nil
Recommendations	That the Executive resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Approve that West Witney Sports Ground is the preferred location for a new 3G pitch, and approves a Section 106 funding spend on the project to be transferred to Witney Town Council to design, build and operate the facility;</li><li>2. Delegate authority to Assistant Director for Communities, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Executive Members for Leisure &amp; Major Projects and Finance, to finalise the legal agreement for terms of transfer.</li></ol>

Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Putting Residents First</li> <li>● A Good Quality of Life for All</li> <li>● Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Executive Members, WODC Legal Department, Sport England, Witney Town Council, Sporting National Governing Bodies (NGBs) (namely: Oxfordshire Football Association, England Hockey, Rugby Football Union, English Cricket Board and the Lawn Tennis Association), and Wood Green School.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** Witney is reaching a critical point in terms of its outdoor leisure facilities. The growth of the town has resulted in increased strain on existing grass and artificial turf pitches, meaning a lot are overmarked and overplayed. This demand for access to pitches is scheduled increase further, with future developments in the town.
- 1.2** The Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (reviewed Jun 2024) identifies that there is a shortfall of at least one full sized 3G pitch for affiliated football training in the Witney analysis area. This is exacerbated by a shortfall of five adult 11v11 grass pitches up to 2031.
- 1.3** Section 106 (s106) funding has been collected through various developments in the town to help support and provide the required leisure infrastructure, including notable sums from the loss of the old Witney Town Football Club stadium site, which is allocated to provide a new 3G artificial turf pitch with sports lighting, to support the development of grassroots football in Witney.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

- 2.1** Over the years, multiple discussions have taken place to determine the optimum location for a new 3G pitch facility. Most recently officers have worked with Wood Green School with a view to siting the 3G pitch there. However, due to protracted delays in receiving the school's business case, officers reconsidered potential locations again, working with Sport England and the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport to produce a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis for four possible locations. Witney Town Council and Woodgreen School were also consulted on sites in their ownership.
- 2.2** The four potential sites analysed were; Wood Green School, Madley Park Playing Fields, Burwell Recreation Ground and West Witney Sports Ground.
- 2.3** One of the biggest weaknesses for three of the sites (Woodgreen School, Madley Park Playing Fields and Burwell Recreation Ground) is insufficient parking to meet the required demand from a new 3G. This coupled with a lack of suitable and adequate ancillary facilities, was a drawback given that the facility will be used for competitive fixtures therefore the supporting infrastructure is essential. Also, two of the locations (Madley Park Playing Fields and Burwell Recreation Ground) are likely to become targets for vandalism and anti-social behaviour, as would be located at unmanned sites.
- 2.4** Of the four sites West Witney Sports Ground was deemed the most appropriate site as all the ancillary facilities are already in place. This site is owned and operated by Witney Town Council. The Town Council currently has plans to enhance and reconfigure the existing club house facilities and is willing to take on full operation and maintenance of the 3G facility going forward. It is a multi-sports facility, which is model that Sport England is supporting, which could open opportunities for funding in the future.

### *s106 contributions and indicative project costs*

- 2.5** As mentioned in 1.3 the allocation of s106 contributions has been accumulated from the following developments, all of which have now been received:

Planning Application no.	Development Location	Amount	s106 Agreement	Expiry Date
16/01450/OUT	Curbridge	£941,336	Towards the provision of grassroots football development in Witney	8 July 2029
16/01450/OUT	Curbridge	£22,801	Towards either the provision of a spectator stand for a football pitch(s) in Witney or the surrounding area or the improvement of football facilities in Witney or the surrounding area	10 Dec 2031
20/02452/FUL	Curbridge	£37,964	Towards Sport and Recreation facilities within the catchment of the site.	29 Sept 2032

- 2.6** Based on the above there is an allocation of £1,002,101 s106 funding to support the development of a new 3G pitch, with the largest contribution due to expire in July 2029.
- 2.7** The Oxfordshire FA have advised that a minimum sized 3G pitch is 99m x 54m (this includes the required 3m run off) to be Football Association compliant and be suitable for competitive fixtures. The latest Sport England Facility costs are indicating that a facility of this size could cost up to £1.2m. Investigations into addressing the funding shortfall is underway, with the potential to approach the Football Foundation if the project was part of a wider scheme.

#### *Legal Agreement Conditions*

- 2.8** The transfer of the s106 contributions to Witney Town Council would be subject to the appropriate agreement being put in place with the following terms and conditions:
- a. Witney Town Council to establish a funding strategy for the project, and that the top up funding required is secured.
  - b. The pitch is designed in line with the FA standards as set out in the FA guidance for 3G football Turf Pitch Design Principles and Layout.
  - c. The pitch is constructed to FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf – Quality accreditation or equivalent.
  - d. The pitch should be tested every 3 years in accordance with the FA performance criteria and be registered and remain on the FA Register for 3G football turf pitches for the lifespan of the surface in line with FA guidance.
  - e. The operational management is the full responsibility of Witney Town Council along with all repairs and maintenance of the facility. Sport England and FA also recommends that a carpet replacement fund be put in place for long term

sustainability to fund future repair and eventual surface replacement at the end of surface lifespan to cover surface replacement when required.

- f. Protected community use (non-commercial) on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursday at peak times (6-9pm) via community use agreements to secure access for local sports club.
- g. Encourage greater transfer of match play demand from grass pitches to the 3G where possible, ensuring a match play rate (less than hire rate) on Saturdays and Sundays.

*Operational management and conditions associated with the 3G pitch.*

- 2.9** Witney Town Council have expressed that they would take on the future management and operation of the 3G facility and are fully aware of the ongoing financial commitment to the Town Council for maintenance and the requirement to establish a pitch replacement fund for the carpet replacement at the end of life, as set out in 2.8.e.

*Timescales.*

- 2.10** Whilst it is understood that all parties would be keen to push ahead with the 3G works once authorisation from the Executive has been reached, expectations around timeframes do need to be understood and managed. WODC would transfer the s106 monies to Witney Town Council for them to design and build the 3G facility once the final funding strategy was established and secured. While every effort will be made to expedite this project, the likely timeframe from endorsement by the Executive to a fully operational 3G pitch is anticipated to take up to 2-3 years.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

- 3.1** Sport England, NGBs of sport and Witney Town Council are all supportive of Leisure Officers recommendation that the 3G pitch be located at West Witney Sports Ground and that s106 contributions be transferred to Witney Town Council to design, build and operate the new 3G pitch facility.

### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION**

- 4.1** We are required to spend the s106 funds by the expiry dates detailed in s106 agreements, or risk having the funds returned to the developers. The largest sum of s106 funds is required to be spent by 8 July 2029.

### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1** Any commitment of s106 funding needs to adhere to the conditions set out in the relevant s106 agreements. A commitment to this site for funding purposes does not absolve the Town Council of the need to secure planning permission and does not fetter the discretion of the local planning authority to determine the resultant application as it sees fit.

(END)

