



PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

TO: Planning Committee North

BY: Head of Development and Building Control

DATE: 5th December 2023

DEVELOPMENT: Conversion of stadium pitch to 3G surface with new perimeter paths, fencing, floodlighting and goal storage area.

SITE: Horsham YMCA Football Club, Gorings Mead, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 5BP

WARD: Denne

APPLICATION: DC/22/2257

APPLICANT: **Name:** Mr Tim Bass **Address:** Reed House 47 Church Road Hove BN3 2BE

REASON FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA: More than eight persons in different households have made written representations within the consultation period raising material planning considerations that are inconsistent with the recommendation of the Head of Development and Building Control.

By request of Forest Neighbourhood Council

RECOMMENDATION: To refuse planning permission

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 To consider the planning application.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION

1.2 This planning application was considered at the 3rd October Planning Committee North meeting where it was resolved to defer consideration for the following reasons:

- To consider the financial viability of the club and the future of the club with and without the provision of a 3G pitch
- To consider alternative construction methods for a less invasive means of providing the proposed retaining wall in order to preserve the veteran tree (T10)
- To allow consideration and formulation of appropriate conditions should the application be approved.

The October committee report is attached as an addendum and forms part of the assessment of this application. The previous report should therefore be read alongside this report.

1.3 No other aspects of the development proposals have been amended since consideration of the application at the October Planning committee meeting.

2. PLANNING HISTORY AND RELEVANT APPLICATIONS

| | | | | |
|-----------|--|---------------------------|-----------|----|
| HU/11/69 | Demolition of existing buildings and erection of new dressing room and covered accomm. for spectators. Comment: Outline. (From old Planning History) | Application 13.12.1969 | Permitted | on |
| HU/257/84 | Floodlights. (From old Planning History) | Application 01.11.1984 | Permitted | on |
| HU/295/77 | Single storey extension. (From old Planning History) | Application 20.01.1978 | Permitted | on |
| HU/30/58 | Ladies and gent's toilets. Comment: And b. regs. (From old Planning History) | Application 31.03.1958 | Permitted | on |
| HU/322/76 | Renewal of use of covered stand (From old Planning History) | Application 21.01.1977 | Permitted | on |
| HU/334/75 | Renewal: use of premises as playgroup. (From old Planning History) | Application 04.02.1976 | Permitted | on |
| HU/376/69 | Erection of building for accom for spectators, dressing and club. Comment: B. regs approved 19/08/69 (From old Planning History) | Application 28.08.1969 | Refused | on |
| HU/396/66 | Renewal of permission for use of covered stand. (From old Planning History) | Application 01.12.1966 | Permitted | on |
| HU/471/69 | Erection of building for accomm. for spectators, dressing and club. Comment: And b. regs. (From old Planning History) | Application 23.10.1969 | Permitted | on |
| HU/5/82 | Renewal hu/322/76: covered stand. (From old Planning History) | Application 12.02.1982 | Permitted | on |
| HU/50/82 | 8 floodlight towers – sportsground (From old Planning History) | Application 30.06.1982 | Refused | on |
| HU/539/71 | Renewal- covered stand use. (From old Planning History) | Application 09.12.1971 | Permitted | on |
| HU/96/69 | Erection of concrete framed building for spectators shelter, dressing rooms and clubrooms Comment: Outline. (From old Planning History) | Application 20.03.1969 | Permitted | on |

3. OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS

3.1 Where consultation responses have been summarised, it should be noted that Officers have had consideration of the full comments received, which are available to view on the public file at www.horsham.gov.uk

INTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

HDC Arboricultural Officer: Objection

Comments (dated September 2023)

The Council's Tree Officer has advised that *'the alternative method of constructing the retaining wall, as is proposed in the attached plans, would help to partly address the issues with root severance for this aspect of the proposal. However, drawing MCA-MUK2566-30 refers to how the existing unsuitable material will be removed and then replaced within the part of the trees RPA that is sited within the pitch, so we [the Council] would need to have a clear understanding of how the works will be undertaken in this area in a way that will not harm the tree.'*

[Applicants] *'could dig a test trench with a toothless buck on a digger along the edge of the pitch within the RPA behind the goal down to the required depth to reach the virgin ground under Arboricultural supervision'*.

The Council's Tree Officer has advised that he would be happy to attend for this and oversee the excavations. The Council's Tree Officer advises that if no significant roots are found, it would be *'unlikely'* that he would have *'any serious concerns with how the drainage system is installed'* as the Applicants *'would be able to demonstrate that the impact on the tree's rooting system would be minimal'*. However, it is also made clear by the Council's Tree Officer that *'if roots are found in the test trench, then they would need to re-assess how the drainage system will be built with the new retaining wall to ensure that the roots can be retained, and the retention of the tree will remain viable'*.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

No Further External consultations

(Refer to original report for original consultation responses)

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

Representations

Since the application was heard at the 5 October 2023 Planning Committee North meeting, **four (4)** additional neighbour letters have been received comprising:

2 letters of **support** on the grounds of improving access to healthy activities for young people, facilities for the football team and possibly local schools and clubs, and securing the future of the football club.

1 letter of **objection** on the grounds that neither viability or the football club's financial difficulties can be considered 'wholly exceptional reasons' to justify the deterioration/loss of this irreplaceable habitat, and the club's accounts should independently reviewed by the District Valuation Service.

1 letter of **comment** specifically relating to the route of PROW 1673; query regarding the public recording and public speakers; request for information including date of the relevant committee for consideration of this deferred application; and a request to speak.

4. HOW THE PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION WILL PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY

4.1 The application has been considered having regard to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out a person's rights to the peaceful enjoyment of

property and Article 8 of the same Act, which sets out their rights in respect to private and family life and for the home. Officers consider that the proposal would not be contrary to the provisions of the above Articles.

- 4.2 The application has also been considered in accordance with Horsham District Council's public sector equality duty, which seeks to prevent unlawful discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people in a diverse community, in accordance with Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. In this case, the proposal is not anticipated to have any potential impact from an equality perspective.

5. HOW THE PROPOSAL WILL HELP TO REDUCE CRIME AND DISORDER

- 5.1 It is not considered that the development would be likely to have any significant impact on crime and disorder.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENTS

- 6.1 As set out above, the application was deferred from the October Planning Committee North meeting for the following reasons:

- To consider the financial viability of the club and the future of the club with and without the provision of a 3G pitch
- To consider alternative construction methods for a less invasive means of providing the proposed retaining wall in order to preserve the veteran tree (T10);
- To allow consideration and formulation of appropriate conditions should the application be approved.

Financial Viability of the YMCA Football Club

- 6.2 To address the first reason for deferral the applicants have submitted more detailed financial information covering the past 5 years. This includes the management accounts for the Football Club. It is advised that this information *'forms part of an integral part of the audited YMCA Downs Link Group Annual Accounts'*.

| YMCA Downslink Group Horsham YMCA FC Income and Expenditure Report | YEAR 2018-19 | YEAR 2019-20 | YEAR 2020-21 | YEAR 2021-22 | YEAR 2022-23 |
|--|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| INCOME | | | | | |
| Total Income | 73,179 | 70,473 | 79,900 | 81,787 | 84,190 |
| EXPENDITURE | | | | | |
| Total Expenditure and Depreciation | (114,641) | (96,992) | (60,344) | (95,362) | (108,713) |
| Surplus / (Deficit) | (-41,461) | (-26,519) | 19,556 | (-13,575) | (-24,523) |
| Surplus or deficit (after exceptional C-19 grant income removed) | (-41,461) | (-26,519) | (-46,592) | (-31,825) | (-24,523) |
| Underlying prior five year average deficit | | | | | (-34,184) |
| Total underlying deficit (losses) last five years | | | | | (-170,920) |

- 6.3 The financial accounts submitted by the applicants demonstrate that the Horsham YMCA Football Club income is around £80,000 per annum, and that it has total costs of around £100,000-£115,000, thereby resulting in a deficit of £25,000 -£40,000 which the YMCA Downs Link Group are currently funding. It is advised by the applicants that in 2020-2021 and 2021-22 that the Football Club benefited from one-off covid related grants which helped to reduce the deficit. The applicants further advise that without these one-off grants (which are unlikely to be repeated) the underlying annual losses have averaged £34,184 per annum over the last five years. Cumulative five-year losses were £170,290.

- 6.4 It is noted that the Downslink YMCA is a charity which is regulated by the Charities Commission. As a charity it is advised that they are expected 'to operate on a sound basis' The applicants advise that 'without a 3G pitch the Football Club level of deficit would become unsustainable for YMCA DLG' (Downslink Group) and the YMCA Football Club 'would not be viable and would probably have to close'.
- 6.5 Forecasts have been provided by the applicants which show the future viability of the Football Club with and without the 3G Artificial Pitch as set out below:

Forecast with 3G Pitch:

| With 3G Pitch | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2024-25 | 2025-26 | 2026-37 | 2027-2028 |
| 3G AG Pitch Hire Income (after VAT taken off) | 98,550 | 113,333 | 121,266 | 121,266 |
| Other income (room hire, donations, bar, advertising, gate) | 115,415 | 137,859 | 137,859 | 137,859 |
| | | | | |
| Total Income | 213,965 | 251,192 | 259,125 | 259,125 |
| Total Expenditure | (171,626) | (201,889) | (209,672) | (209,672) |
| EBITDA (Including additional staffing costs) | 42,339 | 49,303 | 49,453 | 49,453 |
| Depreciation | (39,000) | (39,000) | (39,000) | (39,000) |
| Earnings (surplus / Deficit) | 3,339 | 10,303 | 10,453 | 10,453 |
| Cumulative Earnings | 3,339 | 13,642 | 24,095 | 34,549 |

- 6.6 The applicants forecast demonstrates that if a 3G pitch was constructed, the additional revenue income would provide the Football Club with an annual surplus / profit of £10,000 per year from year two. The 3G pitch would bring revenue after VAT of approximately £98,000 rising to approximately £120,000 by the third year. It is advised by the applicants that income is also likely to increase from bar takings and room hire, as experienced by other football clubs who have installed 3G pitches and that associated costs have increased in parallel given the need to employ an operations manager as well as additional staff.

Forecast without 3G Pitch

- 6.7

| Without 3G Pitch | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 3G AG Pitch Hire Income (after VAT taken off) | - | - | - | - |
| Other income (room hire, donations, bar, advertising, gate) | 87,432 | 90,412 | 93,495 | 96,687 |
| | | | | |
| Total Income | 87,432 | 90,412 | 93,495 | 96,687 |
| Total Expenditure | (-126,067) | (-132,370) | (-138,989) | (-145,938) |
| EBITDA (Including additional staffing costs) | (-126,067) | (-132,370) | (-138,989) | (-145,938) |
| Depreciation | (-7,000) | (-7,000) | (-7,000) | (-7,000) |
| Earnings (surplus / Deficit) | (-45,635) | (-48,958) | (-52,493) | (-56,251) |
| Cumulative Earnings | (-45,635) | (-94,593) | (-147,086) | (-203,337) |
| | | | | |
| Earnings difference with 3G Pitch vs without | 48,973 | 59,261 | 62,947 | 66,705 |

- 6.8 The applicants advise that without the additional revenue that would arise from the 3G pitch revenue stream and other benefits that would arise from both bar sales and room hire the Horsham YMCA Football Club is 'forecast to see accelerating losses of around -£45,000 -

£55,000 per annum, culminating in four-year losses of -£200,000'. The annual earning difference both with and without a 3G pitch is indicated at the bottom of the table above.

Development Costs and Funding of 3G Pitch

- 6.9 In regard to the 3G Pitch development cost and funding, it is advised by the applicants that the latest estimate of the 3G pitch cost is £1.1m as set out in the table below:

Gorings Mead Horsham Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP)

| Financial Framework | £ | Comments |
|---|------------------|---|
| 3G Stadia AGP Cost (Tiger Turf / Mc Ardle Sport) | 858,051 | FF Stage 3 cost based on initial surveys and tender |
| Community Interest Company (CIC) start-up costs m | 22,300 | Business plan for Football Club CIC |
| Provision for cost escalation since Sept 2021 | 188,000 | |
| Contingency | 32,000 | Contingency for unplanned costs including any planning conditions |
| Total Project Cost | 1,100,351 | |
| | | |
| Funding | | |
| Football Foundation | 740,000 | Football Foundation 3G AGP Grant, subject to grant approval |
| Football Foundation | 88,000 | Football Foundation Stadium Improvement Fund, subject to grant approval |
| Football Club Funds | 50,000 | From YMCA Horsham FC Club Funds, subject to Board approval |
| YMCA Downs Link | 100,000 | YMCA Downslink Group funds, subject to YMCADLG Board approval |
| Other Matching Funds | 50,000 | Ground Sponsorship, Local Football Clubs, Youth league etc |
| Sub-total | 1,028,000 | |
| | | |
| Remaining Gap | -72,351 | |

- 6.10 The above table reflects the total project development costs of the 3G AGP which amount to £1,100,351. Funding available amounts to £1,028,000. The applicant's figures indicate that there is a remaining £72,351 funding gap in funding provision. It is not clear how this funding gap will be bridged.
- 6.11 The applicants advise that the YMCA Football Club is not therefore viable without further additional income, and that the 3G pitch would provide the necessary income revenues to help sustain the club and secure its viability going forwards. It is advised by the applicants that the provision of a 3G pitch would also provide the following:
- *'A community asset where a diverse group of people, young and old from across Horsham can benefit from sporting and other social activities.'*
 - *Provide the YMCA Downslink Group with a facility where vulnerable local young people can enjoy sport and benefit from improvements to their physical and mental health and be supported on a path to independence.*
- 6.12 The applicants state that no funding has been provided by the Council towards the development costs in providing the 3G Pitch and would welcome a contribution 'given the community benefits and alignment with the HDC Playing Pitch Strategy and Local Plan.'

- 6.13 In respect of costs associated with the replacement of the 3G Pitch it is advised by the applicants that *'the carpet of a 3G pitch will eventually wear out and require replacement. The length of time depends on pitch usage but is typically around ten years. The Football Foundation advise making annual sinking fund payments of £25,000/year to cover the eventual cost (£250,000).* The Applicants confirm that they have *'made this provision within the YMCA FC business plan forecasts and that this 'is covered in the annual depreciation charge line (£39,000/pa).'*
- 6.14 The income received for the short term let of car parking spaces to local businesses has not been specifically identified within the financial details submitted, however the applicants have confirmed that *'the parking on site is a temporary measure while [they] wait for a planning decision on the 3G pitch. We are simply utilising unused parking capacity to try and generate some income and stem the football club's financial losses. The income from car parking in the last financial year 2022-23 averaged £1,270 per month and this year it is running at ~£1,800 per calendar month. We were unaware that any additional permissions are required. If we receive planning permission for the 3G pitch we expect in future we will need to confine use of the car parking for the football club 3G pitch hire customers and the long-standing club house community activities (i.e., NHS blood donors, slimming world, dancing, snooker, and pigeon clubs).'* Based on annualising the above car parking income, the additional income from the short term let of the car parking spaces amounts to around £15,240-£21,600 per annum, less than the average losses for the Football Club cited above of some £34,000 per annum.
- 6.15 The financial information provided has been assessed and your officers note the financial benefits arising from the provision of the 3G Pitch which would help to secure the viability of the club going forwards.

Impact on the Veteran Tree (T10)

- 6.16 The Council's Tree Officer has raised concerns regarding the impact of the proposed 3G Pitch on the root system of the Ancient Tree (T10), these concerns are reported in full in the original committee report appended to this report.
- 6.17 The application was deferred by members at the October Planning Committee to allow further consideration of alternative means of constructing the retaining wall to the 3G pitch to avoid impact on the veteran tree.
- 6.18 The base of the veteran tree (T10) is set approximately 2.5m below existing pitch level at the southwest boundary of the site. The applicants have advised in supporting information that *'since the club's arrival at Gorings Mead in 1929 the levels have been built up and retained with site waste which includes advertising boards and heras fencing. As a result of this inadequate build up parts of existing grass pitch are subsiding'*. In order to construct the 3G pitch properly, material within the area of ground within the tree root system of the veteran tree it is necessary to *'remove the unsuitable material and to construct a retaining structure install and backfilled with suitable material.'* This work requires engineering works that would result in severance and removal of some degree of the veteran tree's roots, which would then affect its health and its future viability.
- 6.19 Given the concerns raised by the Council's Tree Officer, the applicants have submitted an alternative method of construction for the retaining wall. The retaining wall system that is now proposed is a King Post type wall. Additional plans submitted (including MCA-MUK2566-32 T10 - King post retaining wall Plan, and MCA-MUK2566-30 rev B T10 King post retaining wall Cross Section) show a plan view of the location of the posts to be driven into the ground at 3m centres and a cross section of the proposed retaining wall, including details of the area of unsuitable ground which needs excavating and replacing with suitable material.

- 6.20 The Council's Tree Officer has been re-consulted and he has advised that *'the alternative method of constructing the retaining wall, as is proposed in the attached plans, would help to partly address the issues with root severance for this aspect of the proposal. However, drawing MCA-MUK2566-30 refers to how the existing unsuitable material will be removed and then replaced within the part of the trees RPA that is sited within the pitch, so we [the Council] would need to have a clear understanding of how the works will be undertaken in this area in a way that will not harm the tree.'*
- 6.21 The Council's Tree Officer has suggested that the applicants *'could dig a test trench with a toothless buck on a digger along the edge of the pitch within the RPA behind the goal down to the required depth to reach the virgin ground under Arboricultural supervision'*; The Council's Tree Officer has advised that he would be happy to attend for this and oversee the excavations. The Council's Tree Officer advises that if no significant roots are found, it would be *'unlikely'* that he would have *'any serious concerns with how the drainage system is installed'* as the Applicants *'would be able to demonstrate that the impact on the tree's rooting system would be minimal'*. However, it is also made clear by the Council's Tree Officer that *'if roots are found in the test trench, then they would need to re-assess how the drainage system will be built with the new retaining wall to ensure that the roots can be retained, and the retention of the tree will remain viable'*.
- 6.22 The applicants responded to the Tree Officer's suggested way forward and advise that *'...the suggestion of carrying out exploratory works is not suitable, the club are in the middle of their football season and cannot be without a large portion of their pitch dug up; furthermore, the exploratory holes would not alter our construction method, as we need to build the material up suitably (as detailed in our planning application)*
- ... There is a drainage system being installed in the formation of the pitch, and to the back of the retaining wall, however the major works will be re-building this area of the pitch properly to ensure a stable base.*
- Finally, we did meet with the tree officer on site in late 2021 and explained in person why this area of the pitch needs reconstructing and a retaining wall installing; the tree officer's comments have been consistent and so have ours: the club will not financially survive if they cannot get funding from the Football Foundation for a 3G pitch. The Football Foundation will not provide funding unless the contractor can provide a 22-year base warranty, the contractor cannot provide a 22-year base warranty without building the base properly, and the base cannot be built properly without excavating out the existing unsuitable ground and building a wall to retain the pitch'.*
- 6.23 Given that the Tree Officer's suggestion to oversee works has been rejected by the applicants, the Tree Officer maintains his objection.

List of Conditions

- 6.24 At the request of committee members at the previous committee meeting a list of suggested conditions is appended to this report at Appendix 2 for consideration in the event that the Planning Committee North resolves to grant planning permission.

Conclusion and Planning Balance

- 6.25 As set out in the October committee report appended to this item, the proposed development is considered by officers to be acceptable in respect of its principle, general design and highways impact, and subject to conditions would be acceptable in respect of its impact on neighbouring amenity. It has also demonstrated water neutrality. However, the deterioration and loss of the veteran Ash tree through managed decline is in conflict with the requirements of Policy 31 and specifically that of Paragraph 180 of the NPPF. The requirement of Paragraph 180(c) sets a high bar when considering applications which would result in the

loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats such as veteran trees, requiring that there are 'wholly exceptional reasons' and that a suitable compensation strategy exists.

- 6.26 The applicants have proposed a 'King Post type wall' as an alternative construction method for the retaining wall to the 3G pitch to avoid impact on the veteran tree's roots. The Council's Tree Officer considers this to be acceptable in part, provided they (or suitably qualified person) is able to oversee the foundation works to assess the impact on the veteran tree's root system. If the dig reveals that roots will be severed, then this system will not work. The appellants are unable to agree to the level of risk that this brings as certainty is needed to secure the necessary funding for the 3G pitch in the first instance. It is also not possible to undertake the dig works now as it would make the current pitch unplayable. The Council's Tree Officer therefore maintains an objection to the deterioration and loss of this tree due to its age, its protected and veteran status, and because it appears to be structurally sound and currently not infected with Ash Die Back.
- 6.27 As this solution is not workable in practice, it remains that the deterioration (through managed decline) of the veteran tree would lead to its loss, bringing the development proposals into direct conflict with Paragraph 180(c) of the NPPF.
- 6.28 In such circumstances Paragraph 180(c) allows for the loss of the veteran tree where there are 'wholly exceptional reasons'. Footnote 63 advises that such reasons include infrastructure projects (including nationally significant infrastructure projects), where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration of habitat.
- 6.29 In order to evidence a 'wholly exceptional reason', the applicants have advanced a case that without the 3G pitch the financial viability of the Football Club will be at serious risk. To support their case, and as requested by the committee resolution, the applicants have submitted a summary of their financial accounts for the last five years. These financial accounts show that the Horsham YMCA Football Club operates with an annual deficit of £25,000 -£40,000 which the YMCA Downs Link Group are currently funding. These underlying annual losses have averaged £34,184 per annum over the last five years, some £170,290 cumulatively over five years. These losses are tempered to a significant degree by the short term let of car parking spaces on the site which according to the applicant's supplementary data seemingly yielded £15,240 in 2022/23 and is on course to yield approximately £21,000 in 2023/24.
- 6.30 The applicants nevertheless advise that without the additional revenue which would come forward via the 3G pitch revenue stream (including other benefits that would arise from both bar sales and room hire) the Horsham YMCA Football Club is '*forecast to see accelerating losses of around -£45,000-£55,000 per annum, culminating in four-year losses of £200,000*'. It is assumed that these figure do not include any ongoing income from the letting of the car parking spaces. Conversely, the 3G Pitch would help generate a profit of £10,000 annually from year two.
- 6.31 The Applicants advise that *without a 3G pitch the Football Club level of deficit would become unsustainable for YMCA DLG*' (Downslink Group) and the YMCA Football Club '*would not be viable and would probably have to close*'. The detailed financial accounts submitted are considered sufficiently detailed to demonstrate that the implementation of the proposed 3G Pitch would stem the current losses and therefore increase the viability of the Football Club.
- 6.32 As previously advised, Officers accept that the applicants have explored all reasonable alternatives to avoid the need to manage the decline of the veteran Ash tree and agree that the proposed replacement of the existing grass pitch with a 3G pitch constitutes a public benefit by allowing for increased use of the site for activities that promote exercise, health, and overall well-being. However, this, and the fact that alternative layout options have been discounted, is not necessarily unusual or unique such as to meet the high bar 'wholly exceptional reasons' test of Paragraph 180(c). Whilst it is an aspiration of the Council to

increase the number of 3G pitches in Horsham, it is not the case that there are no existing 3G pitches, or that this site represents the only option for increasing the number of such pitches generally.

- 6.33 Fundamentally, the tree is in good health and has not been identified as having Ash Die Back. It would not be appropriate to agree to the loss of this tree on the basis that it might get Ash Die Back in future, as there is no evidence it certainly will. The tree in all other respects is a healthy specimen with strong amenity and ecological value due to its veteran status. Whilst opportunities for compensation by way of new tree planting and the veteranisation of existing trees exist, such compensation must only be considered once the principle of the loss/deterioration of the veteran tree has been accepted. The fact that compensation exists cannot form part of the justification to lose the tree in the first instance.
- 6.34 Accordingly, whether 'wholly exceptional reasons' have been demonstrated now rests on the financial/viability argument that the Football Club may cease to exist without the additional income stream from a 3G pitch. Officers do not dispute the figures provided by the applicants that show an average £34,000 per year loss, or that the installation of a 3G pitch would allow for a modest annual profit to be made for the Football Club. The aforementioned losses are though currently being tempered by the applicants ability to short-let the club's car park which they state brought an income of some £15,240 in 2022/23 and a likely £21,000 in 2023/24. This significantly reduces the annual losses mentioned above.
- 6.35 Having carefully considered the applicants submissions, officers are of the view that the degree of losses and the limited levels of profit that would result from the additional income generated by the 3G pitch are not sufficient to demonstrate the necessary 'wholly exceptional reasons' test of Paragraph 180(c), particularly as the applicants have identified an additional income stream that has seemingly helped reduce the current losses to less than that set out in the above tables.
- 6.36 The proposal therefore fails to comply with the requirements of Paragraph 180(c) of the NPPF and policies 31 and 33 of the HDPF and is recommended for refusal.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the application be refused for the following reason(s).

Reason(s) for Refusal:

- 1 The proposals would result in the assisted decline of an otherwise healthy veteran Ash tree which is of amenity and ecological value to the locality. No 'wholly exceptional reasons' to justify the managed deterioration/loss of this irreplaceable habitat have been satisfactorily demonstrated as required by Paragraph 180(c) of the NPPF, therefore the proposals are considered as contrary to Policies 31 and 33 of the HDPF, and Paragraph 180(c) of the NPPF (2023).