

Newbury Community Football Group (NCFG)

*Newbury Football Ground:  
A compelling proposal and business  
case for alternative temporary use*

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## 1. Management Summary

West Berkshire Council (WBC) has submitted a planning application, with respect to the current football ground at Faraday Road, that is a temporary project, that will take up to a year to deliver at a significant capital cost to the local taxpayers of **£191,000** none of which can ever be recouped or re-used.

There is an alternative and compelling proposal that all decision makers and Councillors need to be made aware of that will provide a **much better outcome** to both WBC and to the local community / taxpayers that will cost **no more** than **£27,000**, that can be delivered in a timeframe of two months and at the end of the project provide a return on investment by the retention or resale of purchased assets.

This proposal outlines an alternative project that can be delivered for a mere £27,000 (or less) yet still provides the Council with the same desired outcome but at a mere fraction of the cost.

### 1.1 Current situation and need from West Berkshire Council's perspective

WBC wants to have the option and ability to redevelop (by building flats) the current football ground as part of its vision for the wider LRIE.

Despite closing the football ground in June 2018, due to numerous factors, there is still no date or even an outline timescale for when the Council will be in a position to submit a planning application for its vision. In addition, any planning application has to go through the due process and despite the Council's confidence there is no guarantee that its vision once submitted as a bona fide planning application will be approved.

As a result of the closure of the ground in 2018 a number of the buildings at the ground are now in a dilapidated condition and the Council, quite rightly, needs to ensure that this is not a hazard to the general public. However, although no maintenance has been carried out at the ground for nearly three years the actual grass football pitch seems to be in reasonable condition.

The current football ground is seen as a greenfield site that has the current status of "vacant possession". The Council has stated that this is really important to them as it wants to retain the ability and flexibility to develop the ground as quickly as possible on that assumption that it will at some stage (yet to be established and determined) in the future obtain planning permission to deliver its vision.

In December 2020, due to the ongoing uncertainty and the pressure and need to utilise a valuable community asset, the Council submitted a planning application (20/02402/REG3) to demolish all of the remaining buildings (which includes an A4 Drinking Establishment) at the current ground and to turn the grass football pitch into a **temporary** general recreation space that can be used by the general public until (or if) the ground is required for redevelopment. Also included in this planning application is the creation of 123 new car parking spaces. The total budget associated with this planning application is £191,000. In summary the four key objectives for the Council in submitting this planning application is to:

- 1) Retain maximum flexibility to quickly and freely commence re-development of the ground if / when required planning permissions are obtained.
- 2) Ensure that the buildings at the ground are not a public liability / hazard.

- 3) Allow (temporary) public access to the grass area of the ground for general sports & leisure purposes
- 4) Minimise the Council's involvement with the running and management of this temporary project.

The delivery of 123 new car parking is not a priority or a known need. Also due to the current requirements associated with the planning application the Council has recently stated that, if the application is approved, the date for allowing temporary public access to the grass area of the ground for general recreation purposes would not be available until early 2022 at the earliest.

In January of this year the Council announced that its preferred option for a replacement football ground would be on the site of Newbury Rugby Club. Discussions regarding this option is ongoing with the Rugby Club and the appropriate National Governing Bodies (the FA, Sport England and the RFU). However, WBC seems confident that when the full the details of the Rugby Club proposal are published (which has yet to be provided) and understood it will be greeted "as the best football facility the town has ever had".

### 1.2 Current situation and need from the Community's perspective

The current ground is in a real mess and represents a total waste of a great publicly owned facility.

The current ground is in a central location, close to public transport and other town centre facilities but has been left unused since it was closed in June 2018. There is a real need to breathe new life and vibrancy into this area of central Newbury even on a temporary basis.

The Council's plan (if progressed / approved) to provide a temporary general recreation facility and 123 new car parking spaces at the current football ground could not, if approved, be delivered until early 2022. There is not a requirement for another unmanaged general recreation space in Newbury but there is an overwhelming need to use the current football ground for organised football matches and training.

Post Covid there will be a real and pent-up demand for secure and accessible football facilities to be made available this summer and autumn – especially for youngsters who need to arrange matches and training to catch up after the lockdown.

A replacement football ground has yet to be finalised and approved and will need to go through numerous and various approval and planning processes. From what we have been told WBC's proposal for the Newbury Sports Ground at the rugby club has an ambitious opening target date of March 2022 but to date the detail and project plans are still not available to view.

As such there is still a great deal of uncertainty with respect to when a replacement football facility will actually be operational and what it will actually provide. The need is for secure and accessible football facilities now and in the future. For a modest investment the current ground could be made ready to host organised football matches and training within the next 2 months.

### 1.3 Providing a genuine win/win outcome

There is a simple and cost-effective alternative solution that will meet all of the key objectives for WBC and at the same time provide tangible short-term benefits to the local football community and to the local taxpayers of West Berkshire:

- This proposal would not require or entail entering into a new formal contractual relationship. As such the Council will retain maximum flexibility to quickly and freely commence re-development of the ground if / when required planning permissions are obtained.
- This proposal will ensure that the ground is made safe, secure and will not be a public liability / hazard. Rather than demolish the existing club house it is proposed that additional security fencing will be erected to ensure that no one can gain access to it. The other advantage of retaining the club house (in the short term) is to avoid the need to undertake a bat survey, which would delay the opening of the ground to the public. The perimeter fencing will be retained (and repaired where required). Other temporary outbuildings will be dismantled and removed from site. Before allowing public access, a full health and safety check would be undertaken.
- The grass area of the ground would be open to the public for sports & leisure purposes. Instead of providing a temporary general recreation space, which the Council has acknowledged there is no evidence of need for, this proposal would retain the ground's original purpose for the provision of a facility that can host organised and managed football matches and training which there is a huge demand for.
- The Council's involvement in the running and management of this temporary project would be minimal as NCFG in conjunction with Newbury Town Council would take prime responsibility.
- Temporary male and female toilets will be provided which would make this facility self-contained and much more usable.
- This would be a real community project and involve volunteers to make this happen.
- All of this can be achieved for a modest budget, not in excess of, £27,000 (which includes a £4,000 contingency that may or may not be required). This is not a sunk investment as a significant amount of assets procured can be recouped and / or reused.
- The alternative is to do nothing or spend £191,000 on demolition and additional car parking spaces / none of which can be recouped and / or reused. Surely any work required to prepare the ground for any future development should only occur when (if) full planning permission has been achieved and any costs has to be borne by the entity that will actually be developing the ground?

### 1.4 Call to action

WBC are urged to work closely and quickly with NCFG and / or any other suitable group to deliver the most cost-effective solution that will provide genuine and tangible benefits that can be delivered within months, yet still provide the Council with the options / flexibility it needs.

The proposal is to use robust metal security fencing to secure the clubhouse, deploy temporary male and female toilet facilities on site and provide pitch side rope and rail fencing to create a bookable venue for organised football from May 2012 to February 2022. The clean-up works would be

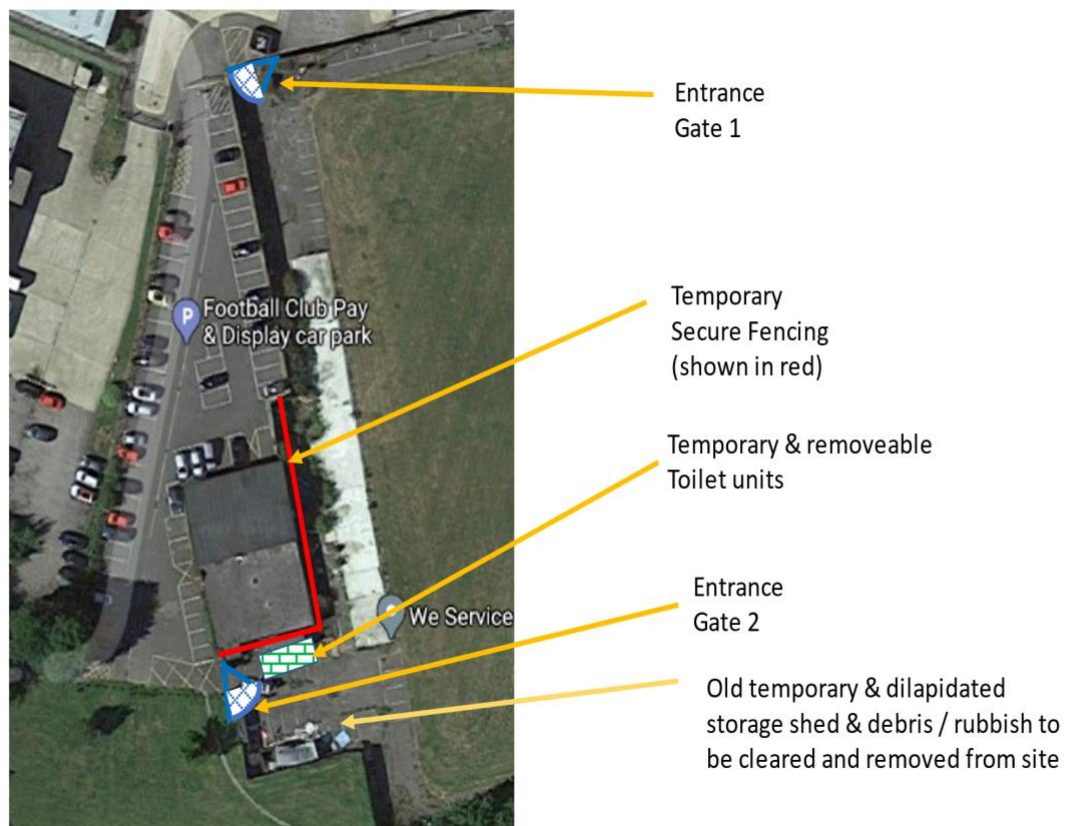
completed by volunteers and the management of the pitch would be done in partnership with NCFG (and / or any other suitable group) – all for around £27,000 (or less).

Although this is a simple, short term project that requires a modest investment a detailed plan and commitment on all sides is required. Within a week NCFG will be in a position to provide firm prices for this proposal. We would request a call / meeting with WBC to discuss and agree the following points:

- 1) As the site's landowner are there any specific reasons that would prevent WBC from progressing and adopting this alternative proposal? If so, what are they?
- 2) Will WBC commit to providing the modest investment required?
- 3) Would WBC want to manage and deliver this project or would they expect / prefer a third party (e.g., NCFG and / or any other suitable group) to manage and deliver it?
- 4) What would WBC need / expect as assurances prior to adopting this alternative proposal?
- 5) Who from WBC would need to be involved in progressing and approving this alternative proposal?

## 2. The Project / Proposal

The objective of the project is to get the football ground back into temporary community use within the next month or two whilst ensuring that the facility is 100% secure and safe for public use.



## 2.1 Recruiting local volunteers

The first step of the project will be to recruit local volunteers who will provide the commitment and effort to work alongside professional tradespeople to bring the ground back into use. The volunteers will mainly be involved in the clearing and tidying of the ground that will provide the necessary preparation required for the delivery of the temporary male and female toilets and the installation of the secure fencing required for the clubhouse.

## 2.2 Securing and making safe the onsite buildings

The main clubhouse is structurally sound but it does need to be made secure to ensure that no one can gain access to the building. The dimensions of the clubhouse are approximately 30 metres x 20 metres and at least 2 sides will require new secure fencing to be installed. The other two structures on site are temporary type buildings and are in a dilapidated condition that can be easily, quickly and safely dismantled by volunteers. A large roll on / roll off skip will be hired and placed on site to enable the removal of the all rubble and rubbish.

## 2.3 Securing and repairing the perimeter

The main perimeter fencing is a combination of high wooden panels (two sides) and metal link fencing (two sides) with large double gates at the north side and east side of the ground. There are also two additional (single door size) entrances on the east and west side of the ground.

All perimeter fencing around the ground will be thoroughly checked and all necessary repairs will be made so that the only access to the ground will be via the secure and lockable gates. New locks will be acquired and installed on all of the gates.

## 2.4 Providing onsite toilets

Temporary toilet units that can be delivered complete on a lorry will be acquired and installed on site. These toilet units will require less footprint than the dilapidated unit that will be removed and will be located on the same site as the old external toilets to ensure easy access to existing drainage and electricity supply. These units will provide separate facilities for both male and female use. The male facility will have three toilets, three urinals and three sinks with hand washes. The female facility (in the 3+1 unit) will have one toilet, one sink and one hand wash. An additional unit providing two further female toilets will also be provided. Both facilities will have full lighting, heating and high-level fans, the toilet units are fitted with jack legs and are fully secure and easily transportable.

The goals that would be purchased as part of this project would be stored on the tarmac alongside the pitch (where the previous spectator stand once stood). There may be a requirement for covered storage (to house football and maintenance equipment) but this could be satisfied by a large garden shed type structure (the cost of which could be covered from the contingency fund if required)

## 2.5 Preparing the pitch

The playing surface will need to be fully assessed and any remedial work undertaken prior to the pitch being marked. The pitch will be marked to enable it to be used for both adult and youth matches. A simple spectator & crowd barrier will also need to be implemented around the full area of the pitch.

## 2.6 Providing goals and other equipment

A pair of 24ft X 8ft self-weighted wheeled Senior Football Goals will be acquired to allow for 11 v matches.

Additional goals to allow for youth football matches (for example 7v7, or 9v9) will also need to be acquired, for example 2 pairs of 9v9; 16ft x 7ft Wheeled Football Goals has been included in the budgetary pricing.

## 2.7 Health and safety check

Before allowing public access, a full health and safety check would be need to be undertaken. This could be undertaken by WBC or a suitable third-party organisation.

## 2.8 Looking after the facility

This is a temporary project and NCFG and / or any other suitable group would be responsible for looking after and maintaining the facility whilst in use (cleaning, security & access, pitch bookings / hire, paying utility bills, ground maintenance etc.)

## 2.9 End of project handover

This is a temporary project (May 2021 to February 2022). At the end of the project equipment / assets that have been purchased (e.g., toilet units, football goals, security fencing) will either be reused elsewhere or sold.



### 3. Budgetary Costings

No.	Item	Cost	VAT	Delivery	Install	Total Cost
1	3 + 1 Toilet block	£3,300.00	£660.00	£450.00	£250.00	£4,660.00
2	1 + 1 Additional Double Toilet Unit	£2,800.00	£560.00	£450.00	£250.00	£4,060.00
3	Erect Security fencing around clubhouse	£1,250.00	£250.00		£400.00	£1,900.00
4	Repair and make secure perimeter fencing and provide new locks for gates	£500.00	£100.00		£350.00	£950.00
5	Roll on / roll off Skip Hire	£1,050.00	£210.00			£1,260.00
6	Pitch Marking & Preparation					£600.00
7	Full sized Goals 24ft X 8ft (pair)					£2,900.00
8	9v9 Goals 16ft X 7ft (pair)					£2,300.00
9	9v9 Goals 16ft X 7ft (pair)					£2,300.00
10	Health & Safety checks					£750.00
11	Electricity & Water (9 months)					£700.00
12	Pitch maintenance (9 months)					£600.00
13	Contingency & other items					£4,000.00

**Total**

**£26,980.00**

*Notes:*

*Items 1, 2 & 3 can be re-used or sold once this project is completed*

*items 7, 8 & 9 will be re-used once this project is completed*

## Appendix 1: Supporting Details / Documents

### 3 + 1 Anti Vandal Toilet Block

This toilet unit is 16ft x 9ft, Female consists of 1 toilet, 1 sink and water heater. Male consists 3 toilets, 3 urinals and 3 sinks with water heaters. Each side has heating and lighting.

#### Features

- Electric Heating
- Electric Lighting
- Sinks
- Water Heaters



### 1 + 1 Additional Double Toilet Unit

This toilet unit is 8ft by 4ft and comes complete with 2 separate toilets 1 wc; handbasin, hot & cold-water supply, down flow heating and lighting.



2.4m High "V" Mesh Security Fencing



Goal Posts / Nets

***MH 11 v 11; 24ft X 8ft Self Weighted Wheeled Senior Football Goal Package - Pair***



***MH 9v9; 16ft x 7ft Wheeled Football Goal Package - Pair***



[Goggle map of the ground](#)

