

LITTLEHAMPTON TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

Improvements to Football Pitch Floodlighting

Planning Statement

Background

The Littlehampton Town Football Club was formerly founded in 1896. But there are reports that organised football was played in Littlehampton 1891. In the early years, games were played at Selbourne Road together with the Littlehampton Cricket Club. The link with cricket continued when sport in the town was centralised at The Sportsfield in St Floras Road – where matches continued to be played to this day. Littlehampton Town Football Club joined the Sussex County Football League in 1928 and the club remained in Division 1 for sixty-seven years. The Littlehampton Sportsfield is a private facility with the Littlehampton Cricket Club as freeholders but with a charitable lease (the Sportsfield Charitable Trust) that continues until 2097. The objectives of the Sportsfield have been encapsulated into a Mission Statement that affirms the Trust will create, develop, co-ordinate and promote opportunities for all the community to participate in sport, physical activity and recreation leading to an improved quality of life, health, social and emotional well-being. It will develop and maintain a sporting infrastructure and use its best endeavours to meet the aspirations of member clubs and their governing bodies. The Sportsfield will work closely with partners, both internal and external, to maximise the use of the facilities and create a centre of sporting excellence in Sussex. The Trust will endeavour to shape the success of the Sportsfield into the future, to assist many thousands of sports' enthusiasts and to provide a general benefit to the local community.

Playing Structure

The Littlehampton Town Football Club now plays in the Southern Combination Football League Division 1. In addition to the first team and the reserve team, the Club has two junior teams – Under 16 and Under 23. Also there is an exceptional and very successful ladies team – AFC Littlehampton. The Ladies have 30 members. The Football Club has a total of approximately 176 playing members and nearly 83 non playing members. 63 players aged between 16 and 18; and 83 players over 18 years of age. The Club also ground shares with Littlehampton United who have 28 playing and non-playing members. The Littlehampton Town Youth FC remains independent of the adult teams, and concentrates on the development of local youngsters. There are currently 168 youth players registered to play football with the Town Youth Club. The number of youth teams has increased this year from 14 registered teams to 20 teams.

Floodlighting

One of the main Football Association criteria for playing senior football in the Southern Combination Football League is for the Club to have an efficient floodlighting system that conforms to a minimum average lux level that meets the requirements of the Football Association and the Southern Combination Football League. The current floodlights were installed in 1987 and, whilst the floodlighting columns remain in the original positions, the lighting configuration has varied minimally to meet ongoing improvements in the average lux criteria imposed by the Football Association. The lux levels of the current floodlighting system barely meet

the current average level of 120 lux. Lux levels are based on the pitch grading set by the FA. The Littlehampton Town Football Club is currently graded at Level F and the new average lux levels have been set at a minimum of 180 lux. However, the Football Association has recommended that Clubs should aim to provide lux levels of 200 lux. If any Club fails to meet the required average level it will be relegated. So far as the Littlehampton Town Football Club is concerned, this would mean relegation to the Southern Combination Football League Division 2 which is regarded as intermediate level. Attached to the application for Planning Permission are diagrams showing the lux level readings for the existing floodlighting system and the proposed floodlighting system.

The existing system has four columns with a total of 29 light fittings, distributed as follows. South-east 5 lamps; south west – 7 lamps; north-east – 7 lamps; and north west (off centre) – 10 lamps. The flood-lighting survey chart shows the lux measurements of the existing season. The proposed system would provide 16 lamps (5 on the north west column; 4 on the south west column; 4 on the north east column; and 3 on the south east column) which are precisely aimed onto certain points of the football pitch. The proposed floodlighting beams will meet the required lux levels and the new lighting should reduce the upward light spill. The attached flood-lighting survey chart shows the lux measurements across the football pitch. These are taken at pitch level and recorded on a horizontal plane. The readings are recorded on a grid of 88 markings (8 across and 11 down). Also attached is a specification from Abacus Lighting of the light units to be used.

Future

The Club has a history of playing a high standard of amateur football for many years. It is a well-managed Club and is a founder member Club of the Littlehampton Sportsfield. The growth in youth and juniors football in Littlehampton has developed considerably over the past few years with increases in the membership of the Town Football Club and the Town Youth Football Club. The provision of floodlighting is an absolute necessity to remain as a member of the senior amateur football League in the area. Failure to provide floodlighting and also to meet the criteria of the Football Association would seriously prejudice the continuing existence of the Littlehampton Town Football Club. New and more efficient lighting would secure the future and allow the Club to gain promotion to the Southern Combination Premier League and beyond.

Funding

Funding for the project will be sought from the Football Foundation who has already indicated that the scheme would qualify for funding. The revised estimated cost of updating the existing lighting will be in the region of £24,000.

Environmental Impact

The Sportsfield is bordered on the north and east sides by housing; on the south side by football stands and on the west side by a mixture of housing and existing sports related buildings. The new lighting units will be fixed to the existing columns and will have reduced light overspill and glare with forward throw of light from 60 degree peak beam elevation. There will be a reduction in the levels of light spillage but, of course, the new fittings will be brighter which might have an impact on neighbouring property.

Usage

The attached schedule – Programme of Use - gives an indication of the usage of the football pitch floodlighting. Floodlighting plays an important role in the delivery of football across several key areas of the game. It is a key requirement for clubs within the National League System to ensure extended community use which allows for increased hours of play and football outcomes. The floodlights on the main pitch are only to be used during the football season which runs from the first weekend in August until the 1st weekend in May. The floodlights will only be required on Saturdays when there is insufficient natural light for a match requiring a 3pm kick off, this will be from October until March. Saturday matches should require the floodlights only from 3pm until 6pm during this period. The club will restrict the midweek matches to a minimum during the football season (first weekend in August until the first weekend in May). The midweek matches (usually Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings) will permit the floodlights to be used from 7pm until 10pm; this allows sufficient time for cup matches which may require extra time or penalties to conclude the match.

Outcome

Floodlighting of the main football pitch at the Littlehampton Sportsfield has been in existence since 1987. The lighting has played an important and essential part of the Club's ability to play at the top amateur level in Sussex. The Football Association and the Southern Combination Football League have agreed that amateur Clubs playing at this level will need to increase the lux levels from an average of 120 lux to a new level of 180 lux. Failure to meet this criterion will result in the Club being compulsorily relegated to Division 3 from Division 1. This will have a significant impact on the future of the Club and the provision of football at all age levels in Littlehampton. There are currently three senior clubs using the Sportsfield – Littlehampton Town Football Club; Littlehampton United Football Club and the AFC Littlehampton Ladies Football Club. These three Clubs have a total playing membership of over 230 players. The Littlehampton Town Youth Football Club has a membership of 270 players with eighteen teams at various ages under 18 years of age. Failure to comply with this new lux level would have a serious impact on the level and intensity of football played on the Littlehampton Sportsfield. This might well impact on the number of players taking part and could result in the Town Football Club looking for alternative venues.

Hugh Milner
General Manager of the Littlehampton Sportsfield
(on behalf of the Littlehampton Town Football Club)

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Discussion

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