

FELIXSTOWE & WALTON UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB FACILITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN



**‘A VISION OF FUTURE
SPORTING PROVISION WITHIN
THE TOWN GROUND
FOOTBALL HUB’**

Introduction

In the last 5 years, Felixstowe & Walton United FC has developed on and off the pitch to a level that surpasses anything that could have been forecast just a handful of years ago.

The progress achieved on the pitch has seen the First Team now playing at the highest level in its history, the formation of a Football Academy and a Junior section bursting at the seams with record numbers of teams and participation, providing sporting opportunities for all across the Town.

The Facilities at the clubs home at the Town Ground in Dellwood Avenue have matched that progress with a host of developments and improvements including the replacement of the dilapidated wooden clubhouse and changing facilities with a modern, purpose built, fully inclusive complex adjacent to the main pitch containing 6 senior and junior changing rooms, function room, bar & cellar, kitchen, offices and toilet facilities. An increase in attendances, coupled with promotion to Step 4 has resulted in the need to meet Ground Grading (D) standards for the higher league and completed projects include-

- Turnstile block
- Upgraded PA system
- New 100 seater Grandstand behind the Colneis Road end (The Dave Ashford Stand)
- Upgraded perimeter spectator barrier
- New fencing to further enclose the main pitch
- Small extension to car park
- Storage areas
- Hospitality room (Emirates Lounge)
- Replacement dugouts
- Physio/Treatment room
- Players retractable tunnel
- Additional hard standing

These developments have been achieved through a combination of fund-raising, donations and grants. The grants were predominantly from the FA Premier League funded Football Foundation and Football Stadia Improvement Fund, alongside additional matched grant funding through Veolia Landfill Credits, Greene King and Local Councillors 'Enabling communities budgets'.

All the improvements to date have been fully funded before work commenced, with no loans or other debt incurred by the Football Club.

There has been a long term objective of East Suffolk Council to create a number of Sports Hubs in Felixstowe, with each sport taking over the lease and maintenance of their grounds. The Town Ground was identified as the Football Hub and efforts have been made over recent years to relocate the Cricket Club to brand new facilities elsewhere in the Town, as they too have grown to a point that sharing limited space with the Football Club presents challenges and limitations on what each club can achieve.

The Football Club signed (In December 2015) a 'Pre-agreement to Lease' to take over the whole of the Town Ground site, when, and if, the cricket club were found a new home. It is prudent of the Football Club to draw up plans for that eventuality.

With aspirations of further promotion to Step 3 for the First Team, and the further aspiration to bring as many of the clubs teams, and an Academy base to the main ground, and grow participation in areas that are not currently possible in the limited facilities available (Particularly disability football, walking football & women's football).

There is therefore a need to identify and plan for future development needs, and these include-

- Additional spectator accommodation & further items to achieve Ground Grade C (Appropriate to Step 3 level)

- Extension to clubhouse (to accommodate Academy classrooms and larger social area).
- Full size 3G pitch (AGP - artificial grass pitch) & associated facilities.
- Additional car parking
- Modifications to changing area
- Additional storage
- Replacement of floodlighting with LED lights
- Replacement of former hospitality building with 'spectator hub'

Whilst it is difficult to put timelines and priorities on each item, as this will be subject to finances, football fortunes on the pitch, grants available at any particular time and developments elsewhere in the town such as the relocation of the cricket club which is outside of our control, we have attempted to give an aspiration of a timescale to each project detailed below.

Short Term (1-2 years)

Additional spectator accommodation & further items to achieve Ground Grade C (Appropriate to Step 3 level).

The club already meets many of the requirements for Step 3 football, with just a small handful of items required. All ground grading improvements will rely on grants being obtained from the Football Stadia Improvement Fund, plus matched funding for the balance of costs.

Entrances- "There must be at least 4 spectator entrances to control the ingress of spectators. These must be controlled by fully operational turnstiles of the revolving type, and be suitably housed and lit'.

Proposed development- Second turnstile block to match the existing 2-bay block located between the 2 grandstands on the West side of the main pitch. Location proposed adjacent to clubhouse at the south end, by the existing exit-way, utilising the exit pathway as a new entrance.

Covered Accommodation- “The minimum covered accommodation must be 500, of which at least 250 seated. These 250 seats in not more than 2 stands.”

Proposed development- The ground already has cover for 300, including 200 seats (located in 2 x 100 seater stands on the West and North sides) and additional covered standing for 100. 2 x small shelters (12m long, 2m deep and 2.1m high) are proposed on the East and South sides, each with a capacity of 75 to bring standing cover upto 250. A decision then needs to be made how to add the additional 50 seats as they must be attached to one of the existing seated grandstands to meet the “seats in not more than 2 stands” rule.

Toilets- “The following minimum toilet facilities must be provided in total, excluding those located within any clubhouse- Male: 4 urinals and 2 WC’s. Female: 2 WC’s”.

Proposed development- In addition to the male, female and accessible toilets located within the clubhouse entrance lobby, the following additional toilet facilities are currently located in the ‘matchday toilet corridor’- Male: 2 urinals and 1 WC. Female: 2 WC’s. Plus additional accessible toilets.

Short term, the additional toilets needed can be of the temporary or mobile type, but there is the possibility of toilets being included in the proposed re-development of the former hospitality building in the North West corner of the ground (see below)

Extension to Clubhouse-

Planning permission has already been obtained to extend the function room end of the complex. This will provide a flexible, multi-purpose space that can accommodate the Academy during the week, which currently hires classrooms in Ipswich.

The space can then be utilised to create more room on a matchday, in the short term for the main pitch, and in the medium term to provide social facilities for a future full size AGP. The use of a folding wall will provide the option of hosting large events and functions to increase the off-field income, to invest into football operations for all sections of the club. The extension is subject to obtaining a grant linked with the phased installation of the AGP and it's associated facilities. It's possible the extension could be created first as a Phase 1, with the 3G to follow as Phase 2.

Full Size 3G pitch- (Medium term 4-5 years)

If the football club takes over the rest of the Town Ground within it's lease, subject to the cricket club moving to a new purpose built home, the aspiration is to site a full size, floodlit AGP where the junior grass pitches are currently located. The orientation of the pitch will limit its impact on surrounding residential areas and a 'buffer' of small sided grass pitches will remain around the perimeter of the AGP.

In the Local Football Facility Plan, the club are a high priority for a AGP and this will allow more Junior teams to be accommodated at the Town Ground, using the existing facilities on site, rather than being spread out around the Town. The surface can be used in all weathers, all year round with no detriment to the surface, something that is not possible with the current grass pitches where usage is limited to the quality of the surface and weather conditions.

The club have reached the ceiling with the number of players, teams, training and fixtures that can be accommodated within the existing pitches (1 x full size grass & 4 x unlit junior pitches shared with cricket club). The installation of a full size AGP will enable the club to increase participation across across all ages, genders and abilities, becoming a hub of the community with the pitch able to be used by other clubs, schools and community groups with particular attention given to currently

unrepresented groups by introducing walking football and disability football.

Associated facilities will be included as a 'package', including LED lights (energy efficient with no light spillage), perimeter fencing with acoustic barriers to control noise and disturbance and can also include limited spectator accommodation so that more matches can be moved from the main grass pitch, improving that surface and easing usage levels for neighbours. The clubhouse extension could then be used as a social space for users of the AGP, and the existing junior changing rooms (under utilised at the current time) can service the needs of the AGP also.

Many significant hurdles remain before this can come to fruition as jigsaw pieces are gradually put into place-

- Cricket club vacating site
- Grant funding from the Football Foundation
- Matched funding from other sources- fund-raising, sponsors, additional grants
- Planning permission
- Construction

Car Parking-

Linked with the AGP development, the aim is to increase the car parking area, alleviating parking problems in surrounding roads for our neighbours. Additional blue badge parking will be made available and an area for a visiting team coach.

LED Floodlights-

The replacement of the existing floodlights would result in a significant saving in energy usage and running costs. The installation is not just a case of changing the bulbs, but would require a complete new system and cabling. It is unclear if collapsible LED columns are available, given the need to lower the existing columns each close season.

The cost of replacement must be weighed up against the potential savings, and be dependant on any grants being available from sources such as the energy trust.

Spectator Hub-

This project would see the replacement of the former hospitality hut in the North-West corner of the main pitch site. This hut contains the floodlighting electrical systems and these would need to be re-sited into a purpose built cabinet during a close-season to avoid the impact of being without floodlighting during the works. The installation of LED lighting, and the need to replace the electrical infrastructure could link in with this project, enabling the hut to be replaced.

The hut is in very poor condition and is a money pit with regular repairs required to extend its life.

A replacement on the same footprint could be formed from many different sources, such as converted shipping containers, modular building, brick built or a wooden 'lodge style' structure. Toilets, refreshment kiosk and a press-media area (balcony?) could potentially be created, significantly improving the appearance of this run-down part of the ground. The building could be double-sided to allow for usage by those on both sides (main pitch and AGP).

It is unclear if grants would be available for this project, although certain aspects may be covered by the Football Stadia improvement Fund such as the increased toilet provision.

Changing room improvements-

The current changing rooms are quite basic in their nature. A proposal exists to create a small extension under the veranda adjacent to the 'home' senior changing room and knocking a door through to create an extended area to accommodate storage, ice bath, massage area and exercise equipment.

This project would have to be self funded, with no grants available.

Summary

Whilst acknowledging the huge progress achieved, it is important to use the above plan to guide the clubs future needs and aspirations. A dedicated development plan enables us to push for, and meet those objectives.

It is important to note that significant contributions will be required from the football club towards any aspect of the plan and it will take the combined efforts of everyone within the club to keep the improvements coming, thus ensuring we continue being the largest community sports club in the area, with provision for all.

Note- All aspects of this plan are subject to the relevant planning permission being granted. The club will endeavour to work with all parties to minimise the effect of the sports ground on the neighbouring residential areas.

Completed by Chris Daynes (Joint Chairman & Facilities Manager) and Andy Clarke (Joint Chairman & Development Officer)- November 2020

For any further information please contact chairman@felixstowefootball.co.uk