



**Supporting Planning Statement for
proposed improvements to existing
sports complex to include improved
playing surfaces, Clubhouse, Changing
facilities, 3G pitch, floodlights and
improved parking at East Bierley
Playing Fields**

Date: January 21

Reference: 10019

1.0 Introduction and background

- 1.1 This Supporting Planning Statement has been prepared by **D5 Planning** on behalf of the applicant in support of a planning application for improvements to existing sports complex to include additional playing surfaces, Clubhouse, Changing facilities, 3G pitch, floodlights and improved parking.
- 1.2 By way of background, East Bierley Community Sports Association (EBCSA) was formed in 2012 (with charity status gained in 2016) as a result of Birkenshaw ARLFC and Hunsworth FC joining forces to generate funds to redevelop the changing rooms at East Bierley Playing Fields.
- 1.3 East Bierley Recreation Ground (EBRG) was asset transferred from Kirklees Council in 2016 on a 125 year lease, and to date, has secured funding from Sport England, the Football Foundation, Locality, Big Lottery, Spen and Batley District Committee to assist in fulfilling their ambition of improving the sporting facilities to allow for a wider use.
- 1.4 The Association have managed to develop some basic new changing rooms, but these are at full capacity and unable to cope with any further demand. The Association has funding applications currently lodged with Sport England and Power to Change which are aimed to help fund Phase 2 of the re-development works.
- 1.5 The existing facilities fall short of what is required, and the site is not fulfilling its potential or meeting future sporting needs in the locality. The current site is owned by Kirklees Council, but under a long-term lease (125 years) to EBCSA which was signed in 2016. The area consists of one full size grass football pitch, one full size grass rugby league pitch, a changing block which was modernised in 2016 but has now reached

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its capacity and is currently unsuitable for any further usage. There are also two storage containers (both owned by Birkenshaw Blue Dogs Rugby League Club). EBRG is an extremely well-used facility by both the members of EBCSA and a number of other clubs. The existing facilities are at capacity and cannot accommodate additional training or competitive use. This means that the existing facilities cannot cater for any more use, or indeed demand which exists in the locality.

- 1.6 100% of these facilities are currently booked to pretty much capacity during core hours and would be totally unable to accommodate even 10% of known usage demands, let alone anywhere near the levels required. This relates to the existing teams using EBRG - There are no other facilities available for these teams to train or play, and the lack of capacity at these existing facilities is actually preventing both opportunities to increase participation for existing and new users, but also making it very difficult to create any kind of pathway for talent at any level.
- 1.7 There is a need to significantly enhance the changing facilities and improve the quality of the pitches to both meet the needs of existing participants and cater for future demand. The need for the proposed investment is significant and without, it is likely that existing user clubs will seek alternative facilities for both training and competition likely to be outside of the Kirklees District, or even worse, the clubs / participants could be lost to grassroots sports forever.
- 1.8 There has been no infra structure work on the playing surfaces for over 20 years and as a consequence approximately 30% of match play and training are called off every year due to poor drainage, grass quality and sub-surface quality.
- 1.9 There is no playing pitch capacity to expand women's teams sports and there is no provision for disabled changing.
- 1.10 This application seeks to address the identified deficiencies of the site.

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2.0 Proposed development

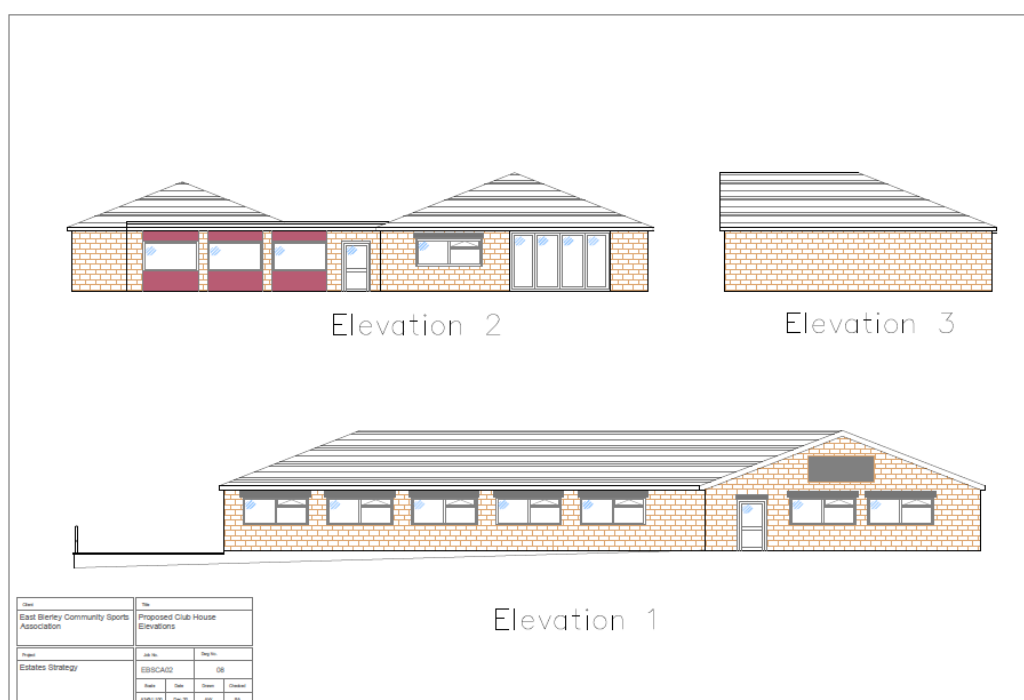
2.1 As detailed above the proposed development seeks to improve the existing sporting facilities. The existing grass pitches and amenities are in need of significant improvement. The whole site slopes significantly in that there is a 9 m level difference from the top boundary to the bottom of the existing rugby pitch and a difference of approximately 2.5m across the width of each pitch. The sports clubs have reached capacity and can no longer increase player numbers at the current facility, which means that opportunities for junior development, introduction of girls and women's football and rugby are non-existent. The facility is at risk of all clubs moving to a more appropriate facility or being lost to their sports completely unless there is significant investment to the facilities and pitch provision on site.

2.2 The additional facilities upon completion will comprise:

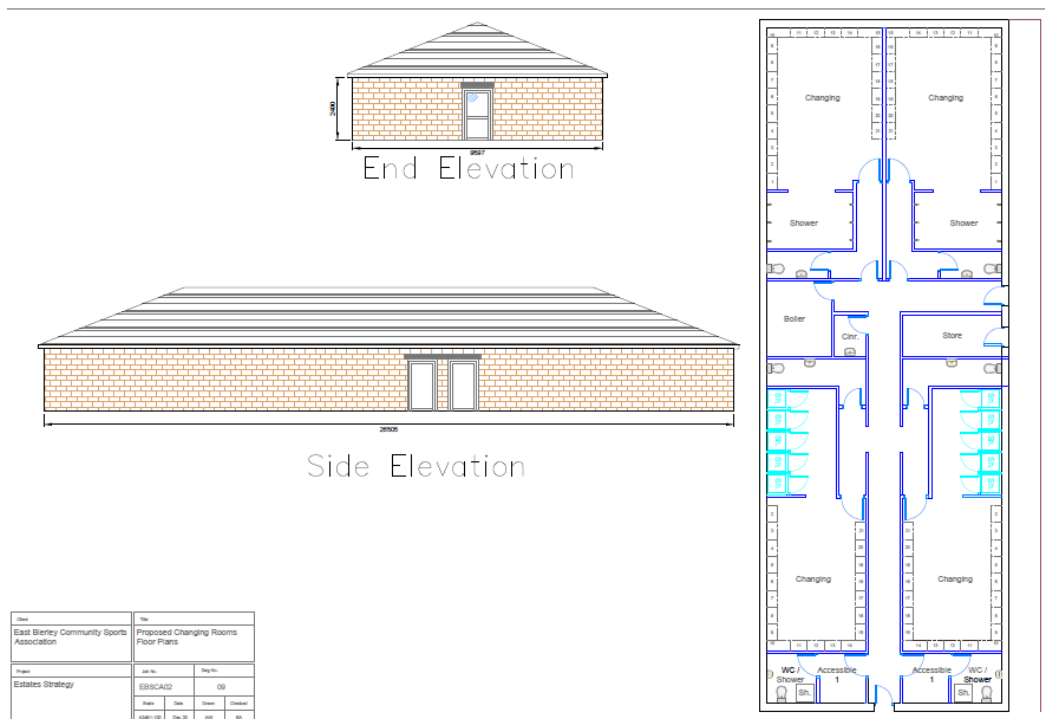
- **A New Grass pitch and evening training facility;**
- **An improved grass pitch;**
- **Appropriate ground drainage and irrigation system;**
- **A 3G pitch (World Regulation 22 rugby pitch);**
- **Five a side facility**
- **Club House and multi-function space;**
- **4 new changing facilities;**
- **Improved car parking provision.**
- **Floodlights.**

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2.3 The application is supported by plans detailing the proposals (see above) and a number of reports:

- Supporting Planning Statement.
- Geotechnical Report.
- Highway statement.
- Coal Mining Report.
- Chemical Testing Information.
- Bat Transect Survey Report.
- PEA
- Surface Water Management.
- Lighting Report.

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3.0 Relevant Planning Policy

- 3.1 The Development Plan for the area is the Kirklees Local Plan (LP) adopted in February 2019. The site is allocated in the Kirklees Local Plan as Green Belt. Below is a list of the key KLP policies relevant to the proposal.

LP1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development – *the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF. Proposals that accord with the policies in the KLP will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*

LP2 – Place shaping – *All development proposals should seek to build on the strengths, opportunities and help address challenges identified in the KLP.*

LP20 – Sustainable travel – *A travel plan will be required where a proposal has the potential to generate significant transport movements.*

LP21 – Highways and access – *Proposals should demonstrate that they can accommodate sustainable modes of transport and be accessed effectively and safely by all users. Furthermore, development will normally be permitted where safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved.*

LP22 – Parking – *This policy sets out that the provision of parking is to be based on particular principles.*

LP24 – Design – *Good design should be at the core of all proposals and should be considered at the outset of the development process. Proposals should promote good design by ensuring that, amongst other things, the form, scale, layout and details of development respects and enhances the character of the townscape, heritage assets and landscape; provide a high standard of*

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amenity for future and neighbouring occupiers; provide charging points to encourage the use of electric and low emission vehicles etc.

LP27 – Flood risk – *All proposals will be expected to include flood mitigation measures*

LP28 – Drainage – *The presumption is that Sustainable Drainage Systems will be used.*

LP30 – Biodiversity and geodiversity – *The Council will seek to protect and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity of Kirklees.*

LP51- Protection and improvement of local air quality – *Development will be expected to demonstrate that it is not likely to result in an increase in air pollution.*

LP52 – Protection and improvement of environment quality – *proposals which have the potential to increase pollution must be accompanied by evidence to show the impacts have been evaluated and mitigation measures incorporated.*

LP53 – Contaminated and unstable land – *On such land the submission of an appropriate contamination assessment and /or land instability risk assessment will be required.*

LP56 – **Facilities for outdoor sports and recreation – Proposals for appropriate facilities will normally be acceptable as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green belt and there is no conflict with the purposes of including land within it. (Our emphasis).**

- 3.2 Also relevant is advice in the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (The Framework. **Chapter 13** – Protecting Green Belt Land – A Local Planning Authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate. **Exceptions to this include the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor**
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sport and outdoor recreation as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

4.0 Comments in support of the application

- 4.1 The application site is a long-established outdoor sports facility. The site is located within the Green Belt. Paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that a Local Planning Authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this include the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments, as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Framework, the principle of facilities for outdoor recreation would therefore not be inappropriate, as long as it preserved the openness of the Green Belt and did not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This is considered further below.
- 4.3 National policy guidance in the Framework should also be read together with the relevant development plan policies. In this case, Policy LP56 of the Kirklees Local Plan (Facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and cemeteries) is also applicable and states that in the Green Belt, proposals for appropriate facilities associated with outdoor sport, outdoor recreation or cemeteries will normally be acceptable as long as the openness of the Green Belt is preserved and there is no conflict with the purposes of including land within it. Proposals should ensure that:

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- a. The scale of the facility is no more than is reasonably required for the proposed functioning of the enterprise or the use of the land to which it is associated:
 - b. The facility is unobtrusively located and designed so as not to introduce a prominent urban element into a countryside location, including the impact of any new or improved access and car parking areas:
 - c. In the case of all-weather riding arenas or other facilities for the exercising of horses, the degree of engineering operation required and the resultant re-grading of land, including any earth mounding and retaining structures, does not result in incongruous or discordant landform out of character with its setting that cannot be mitigated through the use of appropriate hard and soft landscape techniques.
- 4.4 As can be seen from the proposed site layout plan the prominent land use will be improved sports pitches and an upgraded car parking area. The new club house and changing rooms will be located in the area of existing buildings on the site. Their scale and location would limit any impact on openness whilst the facilities provided would be of an appropriate scale and use related to the level of sporting activity on the site. As such they would accord with Local Plan Policy and advice in the Framework.

5.0 Concluding comments.

- 5.1 The proposals improve the existing sporting provision on site, upgrading the existing outdoor sporting facilities to provide greater opportunities for all to participate in outdoor sporting activities.
- 5.2 The site falls within designated Green Belt. As demonstrated above, the proposals would be appropriate development in the Green Belt and comply with LP Policy LP56 and advice in the Framework.

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- 5.3 As we look forward to a post-Covid 19 world it is vitally important that we provide appropriate facilities to encourage healthy lifestyles and get people involved in sport at all levels. This application provides a real opportunity to do that and sustain sport in this locality for the future.
- 5.4 EBCSA are keen to push on with their vision for this site and welcome support of the Council in granting planning permission for the proposals.

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