

WALLINGFORD SPORTS PARK

AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY

New pitches, a new sport, improved access, parking and drainage

WELCOME TO OUR CONSULTATION

This community consultation offers you an early opportunity to find out about, and discuss, our ideas to improve the sports facilities.

On the boards we tell you about:

- What the Sports Park offers now (boards 2&3)
- Our vision for the future and the improvements we want to make (boards 4-6)
- The flooding problem we face and the wider issues we must consider (boards 7&8)
- Three broad options for siting the new pitches, facilities and addressing parking/access issues (boards 9–11)
- What happens next (board 12)

We would love to hear what you think, what you like or don't and ideas for improving one or more options. Please use our feedback form for that.

The **feedback form** can be accessed here at www.wallingfordsportspark.co.uk

This **consultation ends** on Wed. 17th July (17.00).

The Sports Park's ideas are at a formative stage and after this consultation we will investigate the pros and cons of each option before making decisions. There are a lot of issues to go into.

If you have queries Sports Park people will be on hand at the drop-in sessions and will do their best to help you.

If you can't get to one of the drop-ins but have questions before the close of the consultation, please email jerryunsworthplanning@gmail.com and someone will get back to you.

We believe that involvement in sport can lead to better physical and mental health in our community. We want to offer the best facilities we can to enable the Sports Park to meet current and future needs.

We hope you will join in this consultation and, perhaps, join us on the pitch sometime - or at one of the many events at the Sports Park.

Thank you for your interest.





Wallingford Sports Park today - what's where?


**Wallingford Castle
Archers**

Summer only on
'Jubilee' Rugby
120 seniors
100 juniors


Wallingford Rugby Club

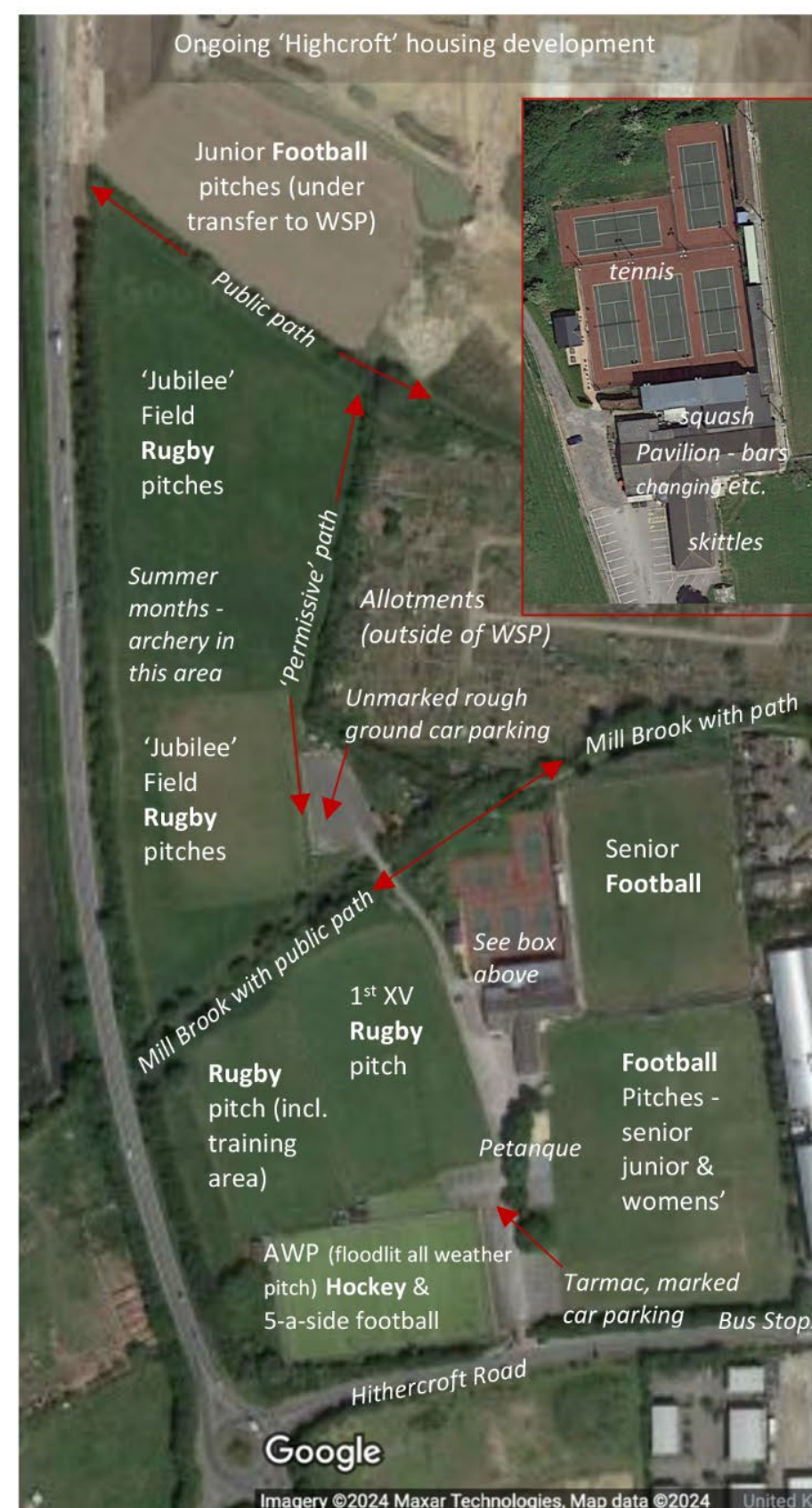
2 senior pitches
5 other/ junior pitches
120 seniors, 380 juniors


Petanque Wallingford

3 'terrains'
80 seniors


Wallingford Hockey Club

1 pitch (the AWP)
185 seniors
354 juniors


Portcullis Tennis Club

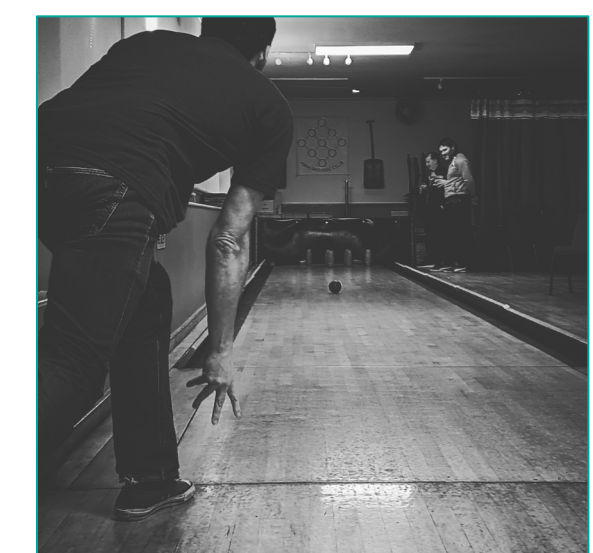
5 hard courts
120 seniors, 80 juniors


Hithercroft Squash Club

3 courts (1 glass backed)
100 seniors


ABM Skittles Club

1 skittle alley
122 total


**Wallingford & Crowmarsh
F.C.**

5 pitches (incl. the one due
from Highcroft)
50 seniors, 500 juniors



- The Sports Park is run under a registered charity, the Wallingford Sports Trust
- Established in 1972
- 14 trustees who carefully consider the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance
- An exemplar of a volunteer based, high quality, community sports facility
- Core Objectives of the Sports Trust:
 - Inspiring participation in sport
 - Promoting community interaction and well being
 - Environmental responsibility
- Visit www.wallingfordsportspark.co.uk to find out more about the Sports Park and its aims and objectives

THE SPORTS PARK IS HOST TO SO MUCH MORE FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- Style Acre & Abingdon Mind
- Bunkfest camping & music
- Wallingford Vehicle Rally
- Wallingford Carnival Parade Starting Point
- Mother and baby classes
- Exercise & Fitness classes
- Martial Arts
- Citizens Advice training
- Full circle (holiday camps)
- Fugro and Rouse Honey summer staff fetes
- School Sports Day
- Rugby tots and football tots
- Function Room for wedding receptions, parties and bands
- Club and meeting rooms
- Sports Therapy Clinic
- Car Boot Sales



OUR VISION

The Wallingford Sports Trust is intent on providing affordable sports and social facilities for access by the local population to a wide range of sports facilities catering for people of all abilities.

We want to see a Sports Park we can all be proud of that promotes the health and well-being of our community.

OUR STRATEGY

- To achieve our vision, building on the existing facilities and addressing the constraints of our site at Hithercroft
- We need to provide playing surfaces that can be multi use and not weather dependent, given the ongoing climate issues.
- This will mean higher utilisation and allowing for growth and consolidation of existing sports on the site and support for new opportunities, to include a new sport - Padel.

OUR KEY DRIVERS

- Capacity constraints on the existing all-weather pitch (AWP) limiting the ability of hockey to grow and other increased usage such as 5 a side football etc.
- The need for Wallingford and Crowmarsh Football Club to consolidate on one site rather than being spread across multiple sites around the town
- The need to provide for other forms of football such as for women those with disabilities, walking football and to offer the best playing surfaces for children to learn the skill of their sports
- The pressure on grass pitch areas particularly rugby and football for training and matches due to growth in the respective sports and the need for space, particularly in youth age groups
- Being able to accommodate other, occasional, sports and community use of our grassed areas
- Widening access to sport – e.g. for women, those with disabilities, veterans, walking sport
- The changing weather patterns and the growth in sport requiring more robust and weather resistant solutions at our site
- Finding solutions to the (increasing) flooding and drainage and irrigation problems will be benefit not only the sports but also the whole financial viability of the Park -which underpins so much
- The need for better arrangements for parking, local access (walking and cycling) and safer/ more sensible circulation within the site
- Our desire to widen recreational activities at the Sports Park to meet the diverse needs of our growing community - population is growing not only in Wallingford but across our catchment Benson, Crowmarsh, Cholsey, Didcot, Berinsfield and other villages too

THE CONCEPT

- Maximise use of the land available for sport – get the most out of what we have
- Provide artificial grass and floodlit pitches
 - A '3G' artificial grass multi-sport 'stadium' pitch - focus on football (3G)
 - An all-weather artificial grass multi-sport pitch - focus on hockey (AWP)
- Provide grass pitch area(s) suitable for some football (not full senior men size) and as much other occasional sports and community use as possible e.g. junior cricket, athletics, rallies and camping
- Provide two outdoor padel courts with a retractable roof
- Retain the existing pétanque area – or relocate it if that is essential to fit in the new pitches etc.
- Understand why we have such flooding, drainage and irrigation problems and see solutions delivered in collaboration with the relevant authorities
- Review and improve the existing football team changing room and spectator facilities for the new '3G' stadium in conjunction with the relevant governing bodies
- Ensure suitable storage facilities associated with the new pitches and existing ones
- Ensure emergency vehicle access to the new and retained pitches
- Make general improvements to the existing parking, pedestrian and cycle access within the Sports Park
- As part of this exercise the Sports Trust will review club use and the financial model arising from installation of the all-weather pitches for football, rugby and hockey, together with wider community use.
- It will also review the impact on our existing facilities (e.g. the pavilion, toilets, team changing rooms and parking) of new pitches and activity, bringing more intensive use.



Padel Court

NB. We envisage a retractable roof over the court.



3G artificial grass football pitch



All-weather artificial grass hockey pitch



What is a '3G' stadium pitch?

- State of the art artificial grass in-filled with sand/ rubber
- Suitable for football (including matches) but also for rugby training and multi-use
- Allows use 7 days a week and many hours each day, including evenings
- Fenced area with floodlights (about 15m high)
- Ideal size 116m x 76m but 106m x 70m (minimum) would meet governing body standards
- Existing home / away team & officials changing facilities
- Spectator entrance/ grandstand & toilet facilities

What is an All-Weather Pitch (AWP)?

- Multi-use pitch 'sand-dressed' artificial grass with shock-pad
- Designed for hockey but (as the existing pitch) also multi-use e.g. 5-a-side football & school cricket
- Allows use 7 days a week and many hours each day, including evenings
- Fenced area with floodlights (about 18m high)
- Ideal size 102m x 63m but 98m x 60m (minimum) would meet governing body standards
- Spectator facilities with tiered seating and player warm up area, if possible



Grass pitch area(s) for football and other occasional sports and activities

- A grass football pitch area with some floodlights for training
- Size - 100m x 60m (with run off / safety area)
- Within this area to allow junior cricket (with a temporary drop-in wicket)
- For other grass pitch areas (including the Jubilee Field) build in as much flexibility as possible to accommodate other 'occasional' sports and community activities
- Hours of use limited in winter months as it is natural grass

What is Padel?

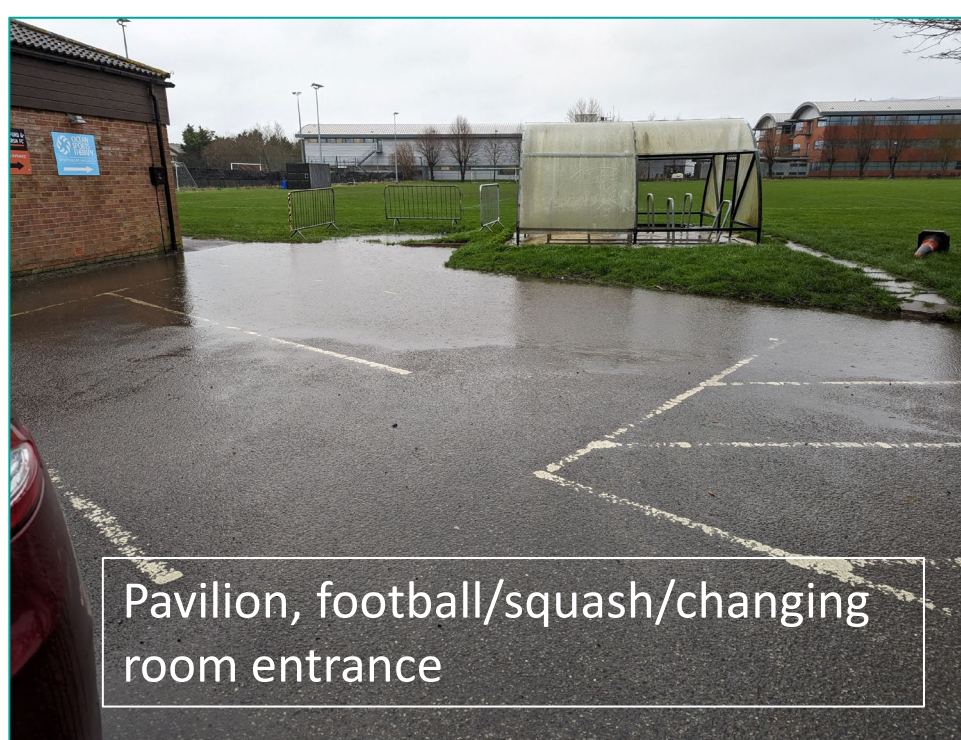
- A sort of cross between tennis and squash, appeals to all ages and mixed abilities
- Outdoor with a retractable roof and floodlit (columns about 10m high)
- Synthetic turf allows use 7 days a week and many hours each day, including evenings
- Overall size for two courts, including run off and fencing - 40m x 10m
- Said to be the fastest growing sport in the world



FLOODING AND DRAINAGE AT THE SPORTS PARK



Jubilee Rugby pitches



Pavilion, football/squash/changing room entrance



Tennis courts

HOW MIGHT THESE SOLUTIONS HELP?

- We see the drainage solutions making the Sports Park more robust to counter the inevitable heavy seasonal rainfall.
- But, despite implementation of these measures (if they prove workable after detailed investigation), the grass pitches at the Sports Park will continue to experience waterlogging.
- For those sports the plans for new artificial surfaces can guarantee year-round pitch availability and high-quality surfaces.
- Even with new artificial surfaces detailed drainage solutions (with cost) will need to be devised to avoid exacerbating problems at and adjoining the Sports Park.
- Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS) will be part of future changes at the Sports Park. 'SUDS' features, including 'swales' (see note on the plan) minimise run-off beyond the site and help the wider area, as well as within the Park.

WHAT OUR INITIAL INVESTIGATIONS REVEAL

- Climate change will bring more bad winters
- Increasing flooding of grass pitches close to the Mill Brook is believed to have been exacerbated by heavy rainfall not finding a way out of the Mill Brook at its western end.
- Solutions to the Mill Brook problem need to be vigorously pursued with the highway authority (Oxfordshire CC), our local Council (SODC) and the Environment Agency – all have a role in the better level of maintenance needed.
- Alongside other measures, we propose creating a 'wetland basin' around the western end of Mill Brook to help manage drainage from nearby sports pitches, but to also act as a wildlife/ biodiversity area, connecting with the Mill Brook ecological corridor beyond.
- This 'wetland basin' is indicated on the Options (boards 9-11). The area would be dry or damp for periods of the year, but a pond in winter. Its benefit will depend a lot on changes we can make to drainage across the Sports Park and actions by the authorities.



Playing our sports and operational factors

This covers what works best for each sport and requirements of various governing bodies - includes minimum/ desirable dimensions, safety and environmental factors. There is a 2024 Council Playing Pitch Strategy that we expect to be soon finalised.

There are also issues unique to each club which will need to be clarified.

Flooding and Drainage Problems

See Board 7 – solutions to the serious flooding issues are needed irrespective of the other proposals, new pitches will also have to have sophisticated drainage.

Funding and affordability

Our vision and the new facilities must be paid for, not only the initial outlay but also on an ongoing basis. Site and pitch maintenance must have a funding stream.

The Sports Trust (and its constituent clubs) has a business plan and work has started to develop, as part of this project. A financially sound business plan is essential for our vision to be realised.

Whilst new facilities benefit club members the essence of the Sports Park is that it offers a community facility as part of the Wallingford area's infrastructure. The health and well-being benefits flowing from sport and community activities hopefully speak for themselves.

The Sports Trust will be looking at a range of capital funding sources, such as:

- Grant schemes from sports organisations e.g. the Football Foundation
- Grant schemes for charitable organisations
- Local Council grants
- Sponsorship and partnership funding
- Funding from developers, including via the 'Community Infrastructure Levy'
- Funds from the Sports Trust and its constituent clubs

Neighbour impacts

Houses in Fir Tree Avenue are close to the main football pitch and noise and lighting impacts need to be carefully handled to retain living conditions.

We want a positive relationship with our neighbours – commercial ones as well as residential.

Archaeology

We have not yet investigated this; we will need to. We do not anticipate archaeological significance. If there is (underground) it should not prevent construction but may affect how it happens.

Access and Parking

The existing arrangements have come about incrementally. Parking is a problem at peak times (and will only get worse if nothing is done) but solutions are not just about more parking. We have many challenges, such as:

- Overflow parking on Hithercroft Road
- Poor access to the Park by bike and a lack of bike racks by the pavilion entrance
- Safety issues for drivers manoeuvring and mixing with people on foot and cycle
- Ensuring emergency access at all times (important with sports injuries)

All options include the same walking and cycling ideas and a slight realignment of the 1st XV rugby pitch – see our options. All options improve parking provision, some more than others

The Sports Park has started the journey with a Travel Plan which shows our ambition.. This will be updated alongside our plans.

See: <https://www.wallingfordsportspark.co.uk/about-us/>

Biodiversity and Environment

Whilst our focus is on sport we must work within government and other requirements and be environmentally responsible. As an example the rules on '3G' pitches are changing, as covered in this statement: <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport/position-statement-on-3g-pitches>

Energy Use affects the environment and the financial position of the Sports Park. We recently installed a bank of solar panels on our roofs and will look to minimise future energy use.

We have tried to minimise impacts on existing trees and vegetation but, with some options, impacts occur. This will need assessing in detail and some minor adjustments may be warranted.

All our options include a wetland basin by Mill Brook and other areas have biodiversity potential. Incorporating this into our final plans is likely to be essential, particularly with the national requirement now for 'Biodiversity Net Gain'.

Community Use

Again, whilst our focus is on sport, we see potential for widening community use. This can be a win-win, enhancing facilities for the wider area, leading to greater 'footfall' and income for the Park. As a charity this cross-subsidises our core activities. All for community well-being.

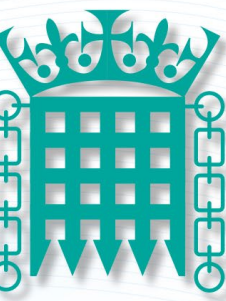
Planning Permission

Hopefully the key issues we identify here are the big issues when we come to apply for planning permission. But the Councils have policies (Local Plan & Neighbourhood Plan) and exercise discretion. We may have to adapt.

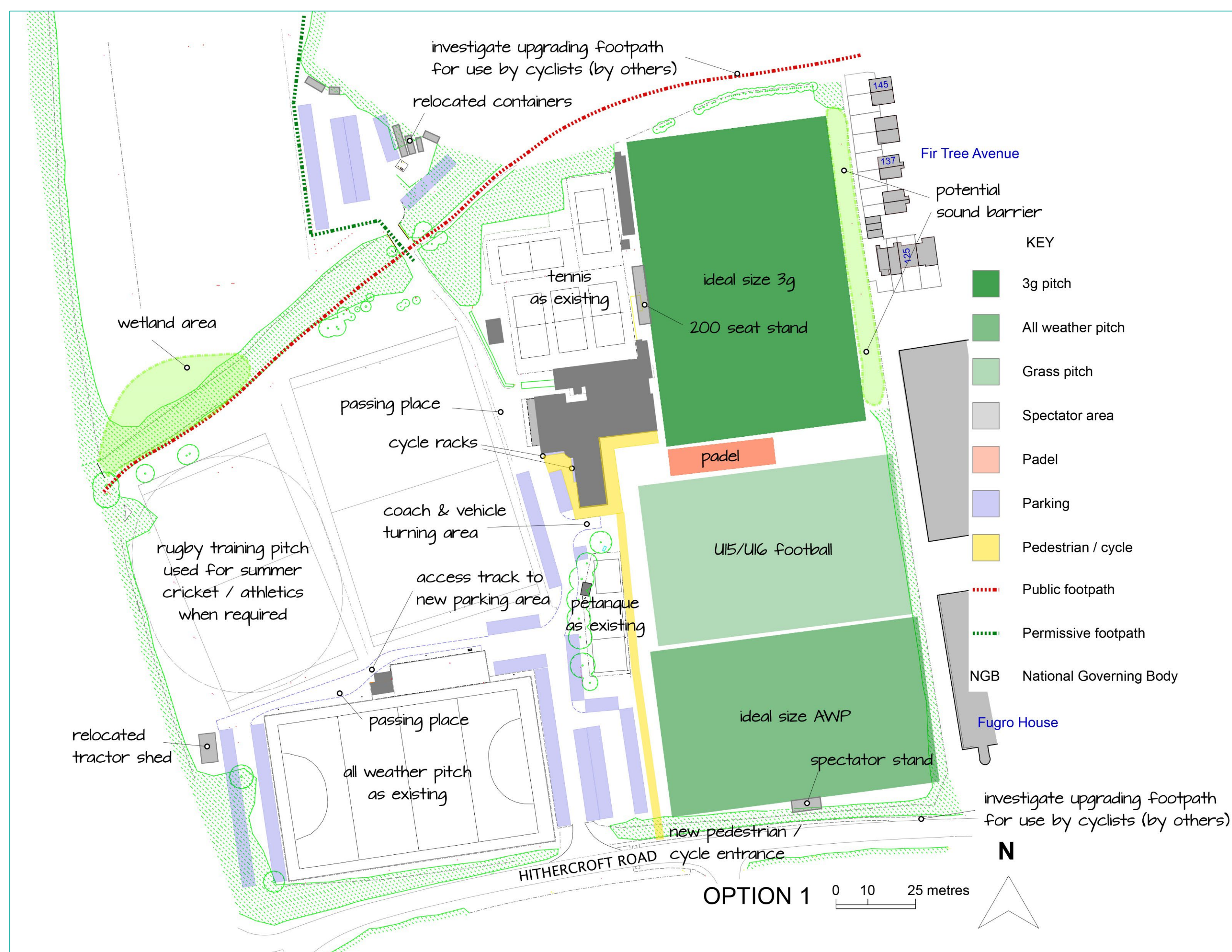
Introduction to the 3 Options

On boards 9, 10 and 11 we set out three options for how the Sports Park could be laid out to accommodate the new pitches and other improvements. The plans are based on a detailed land survey, so they are realistic.

There are elements in the options that are interchangeable, so further options may emerge once we have considered your feedback. Please help us by sharing your ideas. We are in listening mode. If you think we are overlooking an issue, please tell us.



3G IN THE CORNER & AWP BY HITHERCROFT RD

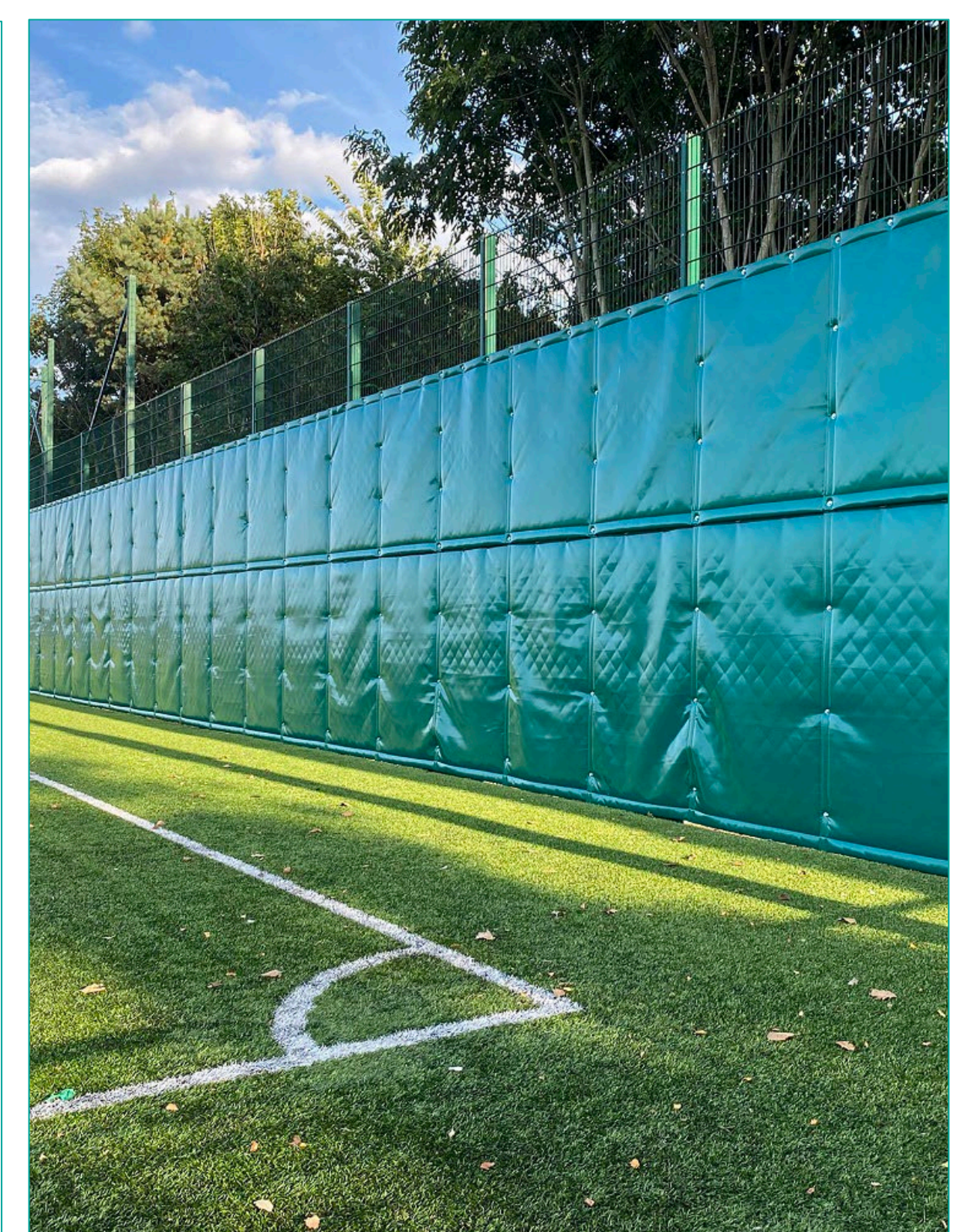


ISSUES

We will need to consider all the issues on Board 8 but, on this option, particularly:

- the impact on our neighbours
- floodlighting considerations
- flooding and cost considerations
- the availability of grass pitches for football and other activities
- the 3G pitch location being the 'home' of Wallingford football
- impact of the access track to the new parking area on rugby

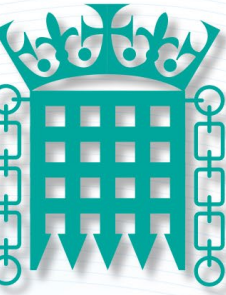
The impact on neighbours could be reduced by a sound barrier against the fencing and introducing buffer landscaping. There would be some separation to the residential boundary. Light spill can be managed by using modern LED lights with hoods.



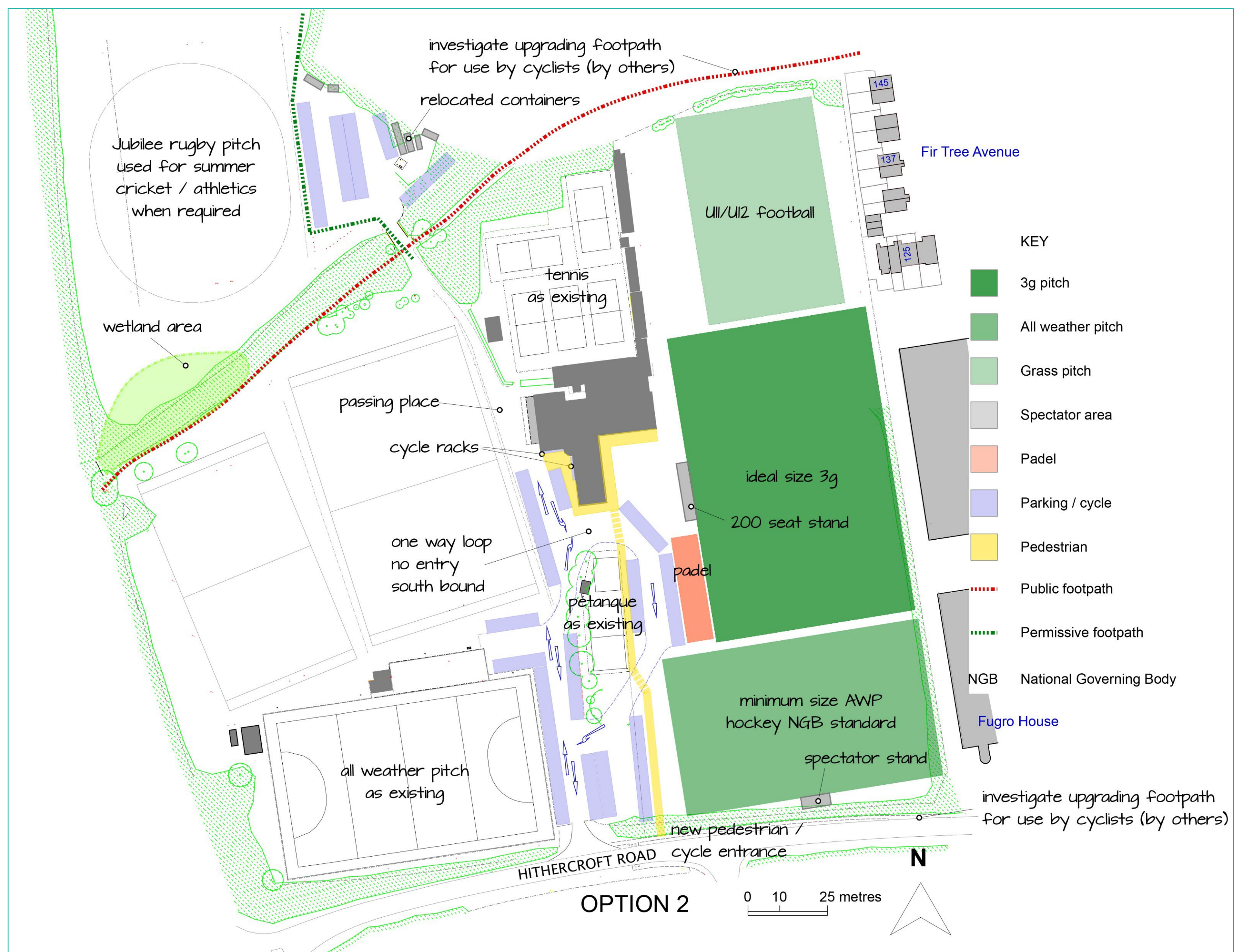
What do you think?

What do you particularly like or dislike about this option? How could it be improved?

PLEASE GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK



3G BY FUGRO & AWP BY HITHERCROFT RD



ISSUES

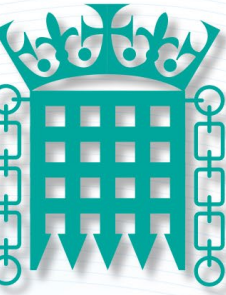
We will need to consider all the issues on Board 8 but, on this option, particularly:

- the lesser impact of the 3G on residential neighbours, but how it and the AWP relate to Fugro
- the increased 'presence' of the 3G pitch as part of the more central zone with the pavilion
- the reduced space for grass pitches for football and other activities
- the benefits of having a different vehicle circulatory system
- the less-than-ideal AWP size

What do you think?

What do you particularly like or dislike about this option? How could it be improved?

PLEASE GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK



3G BY HITHERCROFT RD & AWP BY BY-PASS



ISSUES

We will need to consider all the issues on Board 8 but, on this option, particularly:

- The less-than-ideal size of the 3G and the AWP
- The increased space for grass pitches near the pavilion and how that could facilitate other activities in summer months
- The 'adjacency' of the new AWP to the existing AWP and ability to fit in a warm-up area, facilitating events and other activities
- Impact of the new AWP and access track to the new parking area on rugby

What do you think?

What do you particularly like or dislike about this option? How could it be improved?

PLEASE GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK



When	What
17th July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Consultation Ends Please submit your feedback form by 17.00 on 17th
Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse consultation comments Investigation of key issues raised and 'mitigation' plans Specialist advisors engaged as necessary Trustees progress business plan and funding package
Autumn 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports Trust (with its clubs) considers way ahead and engages further specialist advisors as necessary Discussions with key authorities and stakeholders Trustees decide its plans for future Sports Park layout, pitches and facilities Sports Park Business Plan and funding package firmed up Preparation of Planning Application (not all our improvements will need to go through Planning)
Winter 2024/ 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submission of Planning Application with public consultation
Early 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SODC decision on planning application Funding decisions
Mid-late 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work up the scheme detail, obtain approval under 'building regulations' and obtain landlord (SODC) approval
2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target for construction of new pitches and other work. All to be confirmed.

Thank you for your interest

Please use the feedback form to let us know what you think