

Royston Rugby Club Floodlight Proposal Community Benefits

Overview

For many years now, an area of Therfield Heath (alongside the Baldock Road in Royston) has been utilised by the people of Royston and Therfield for the enjoyment of sport and in particular Rugby. The protection of this activity was enshrined in what many consider to be the first piece of environmental legislation passed (1888). This specifically sets out that *“the Heath is to be maintained for the benefit of the people of Royston and Therfield, for them to have somewhere to play sports and enjoy the open air.”*

Royston Rugby Club is proud to have been playing rugby on the Therfield Heath since 1968 and over the years we have seen our mini and youth teams grow to over 300 children who utilise the Heath for training and matches on a Sunday. In an age of children spending an increasing amount of time in front of the television or tablet devices, we are proud to be providing access for so many children to enjoy sport and fresh air on the Heath whilst also learning Rugby’s core values of respect and fair play.

Royston Rugby Club has also seen the development of a Touch Rugby and women’s teams in addition to its growing senior teams. Subsequently this has increased the total number of people playing rugby on the Heath throughout the week. As such the club has been utilising the Heath for training sessions each evening (Monday to Friday between 6pm and 9.30pm) for a number of years.

Current Situation Regarding Floodlighting

Royston Rugby’s senior and youth teams currently train during the week (Monday to Friday between 6 and 9pm), as they have been doing for many years, on an area of the Heath alongside the Tennis Courts that has fixed floodlighting. In order to train during the winter months, Royston Rugby Club has been floodlighting this area during the winter months on weekday evenings. At present this involves portable generator powered floodlights being used during the winter months. Unfortunately this situation leads to a number of unsatisfactory outcomes:

- The Heath is churned up due to having to move the large portable floodlights from the storage area to the area alongside the tennis courts.
- The generators used to power each of the floodlights are incredibly noisy which then leads to players needing to shout to be heard over this noise.
- Pollution is also produced from each of the floodlight generators which are diesel powered.
- There is light overspill from the floodlights onto non-playing areas.

Community Benefits from fixed Floodlighting

The proposal to install fixed floodlighting will address all of the unacceptable circumstances listed and also bring about several community benefits. These include:

- The quality of the Heath surface being much better protected.
- A significant reduction in noise by no longer needing the generators.
- A significant environmental improvement by the elimination of diesel engine fumes the risks associated with the storage of diesel and the dangers to the environment of spillages.
- Removal of light overspill issues.
- Greater access to sport for children, children and adults on the Heath.

Stakeholder and Community Consultation

Royston Rugby Club is currently engaged in a stakeholder and community consultation exercise with local residents, the wider community and other stakeholders to discuss our plans; to share what we believe will be a significant improvement on the current situation, and also discuss the benefits to the local community from this proposal. We are also seeking to hear any concerns that the stakeholders and the community may have, so that we can seek to address those concerns. Royston Rugby Club will ensure that the NHDC Planning Dept. is fully informed of the results of this community consultation.

Conclusion

Royston Rugby Club hope that the NHDC Planning Dept. will find this proposal fits with planning policy and will recommend it for approval.

The proposed lighting scheme will be far less prominent than the existing fixed floodlighting around the tennis courts, which was approved several years ago. The proposed lighting scheme will also provide a much cleaner, quieter and less obtrusive solution to that which is currently being used.

This proposal will eliminate all the environmental issues of the current lighting arrangements and is sensitively designed with regard to its impact on local residents and wildlife on the Heath. This will result in significantly enhanced access to sport and recreation for the people of Royston and its surrounding areas.

We have support from the Conservators of the Heath and it will assist them to deliver on their covenant to ensure *“the Heath is to be maintained for the benefit of the people of Royston and Therfield, for them to have somewhere to play sports and enjoy the open air”*.

