

BRICKFIELDS



Cabinet Briefing Paper Part I

1.0 The Proposals

1.1 This report sets out proposals for an exciting and transformational £21m investment in Brickfields, encompassing the redevelopment of the outdoor sports facilities to increase the number and scope of playing pitches, as well as the reconfiguration of the existing sports centre to create a new community wellbeing and sports hub. The entire complex will be reconfigured and upgraded with:

- a. Facilities for Plymouth Argyle Football Club's academy, including a new building with class rooms, changing rooms and office space, as well as training pitches.
- b. An improved suite of playing pitches, providing three grass playing pitches for football.
- c. Replacement of an existing grass rugby training pitch with a new 3G pitch.
- d. A new floodlit 3G football pitch to replace a poor condition (currently closed) hockey pitch.
- e. A new, covered 3G football pitch.
- f. Investment in the existing 60m x 40m rubber crumb pitch to provide new PlayZones.
- g. Reconfiguration of the existing sports centre to create a new community wellbeing and sports hub.
- h. Better site access, public realm and parking.

1.2 The Brickfields Masterplan places Brickfields as the central physical activity hub, within a wider city vision to connect Brickfields with neighbouring activity spaces: Devonport Park, Stonehouse Creek, and Victoria Park, and aligns to Plymouth's vision to be the most active coastal city by 2034.

1.3 The proposals are a once in a generation opportunity to regenerate the community and elite sports provision for the west of the city. This plays into the three key themes of the Plan for Sport:

Participation – this will increase the community use around sport and physical activity, widening the different opportunities and ensuring that the offer is more engaging and more accessible.

Places – this proposal seeks to maximise the potential of Brickfields, a sporting facility in one of the most deprived areas of the city. Significant investment is needed to maintain the facilities at their current level and this proposal goes significantly beyond that.

Pride – locating the Plymouth Argyle Youth Academy in Brickfields further strengthens the links between the city and Plymouth Argyle Football Club (PAFC) – as well as making it more accessible to young people living locally and creating a sense of aspiration.

- 1.4 A Health and Wellbeing Hub (Hub) is located within the Cumberland Centre in Devonport. At the time this was set up (pre-Covid) the building was easily accessed, and the co-location with medical services was a conscious decision to test the model. Unfortunately, with Covid-19, access to the building became very restricted for obvious reasons, and the use of the Hub came to a halt. Given that this is a clinical setting, there are ongoing concerns that this period with no or very limited access means that the community are not engaged with the Hub, and there is a possibility that access might be limited in the future. Therefore, the Hub will move to the Brickfields Sports Centre and will be relaunched to fully engage the community. Wellbeing Hubs support the delivery of Thrive Plymouth, our programme for tackling health inequalities; the plans to move and therefore widen the reach of the Hub further supports the City's goal to reduce health inequalities.
- 1.5 The investment into Brickfields will be provided by PAFC, Plymouth Argyle Community Trust (PACT) (including external grants) as well as a contribution from Plymouth City Council. The proposals would also provide Plymouth Albion Rugby Football Club (Albion) with greater land security, which would allow them to invest in improvements to their facilities and provide the club a solid platform from which they can grow.

The total estimated project costs are £21,018,068. The table below sets out the contributions that will be made by each of the parties.

Party	Contribution
Plymouth City Council	£2,752,903
Plymouth Argyle Football Club	£11,000,000
Plymouth Argyle Community Trust	£7,265,165
Total	£21,018,068

- 1.6 The report seeks approval for the Council to enter into three new leases with PAFC, PACT and Albion (as well as completing a number of other related property transactions), to make a capital investment, including the provision of financial support for the proposals and to amend the existing arrangements for the operation and management of Brickfields Sports Centre.
- 1.7 The Council has been working with PAFC, PACT, Albion and Devonport Community Leisure Ltd (DCLL) to consider plans for investment in sports and community facilities at Brickfields. The facilities proposed reflect consultation which has been undertaken with the local community over recent years and will provide enhanced access to a wider range of facilities which the local community has been asking for.
- 1.8 An existing site plan is provided at Appendix I.

A masterplan for the site has been prepared which would provide:

- a. Facilities for PAFC's academy, including a new building with class rooms, changing rooms and office space, as well as training pitches.
- b. An improved suite of playing pitches, providing three grass playing pitches for football
- c. Replacement of an existing grass rugby training pitch with a new 3G pitch
- d. A new floodlit 3G football pitch to replace a poor condition (currently closed) hockey pitch
- e. A new, covered 3G football pitch
- f. Investment in the existing 60m x 40m rubber crumb pitch to provide new PlayZones
- g. Better site access, public realm and parking
- h. Indoor space for City of Plymouth Athletics Club (COPAC) to replace their current club house;
- i. An increase in the number of hours of community access to outdoor sports on the site;
- j. Refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing sports centre to provide a wellbeing community hub, offering affordable access to a range of health and wellbeing activities for local residents;
- k. Shared use of communal areas, managed by PACT;
- l. Relocation of petanque;
- m. Ongoing discussions are taking place with England Hockey to ensure that our commitment to secure and protect the future of hockey in the city is realised, with investment set aside to mitigate the loss of the sand based artificial grass pitch.

- 1.9 DCLL have played an important role in Brickfields since the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme provided around £49m towards regeneration in Devonport between 2001 and 2011. Established to act as a legacy of the NDC programme, DCLL was granted a 25-year lease of the Brickfields sports centre in 2011. (This lease is therefore not due to expire until 2036.) In 2022 DCLL granted a tenancy at will of the sports centre to Plymouth Active Leisure Ltd (PALL) which allowed PALL to take over the day-to-day management of the building. DCLL operates within Devonport and its objectives include:
- Providing or assisting with the provision or improvement for recreation or leisure;
 - Promoting community participation in healthy recreation;
 - Promoting health; and
 - Promoting the physical, social and intellectual development of young people.

DCLL is therefore an important partner in the Brickfields project and it is proposed that DCLL will take an active role in the governance of the site, including helping to agree the "community promises" that will be enshrined in the governance vehicle. Once the redevelopment of the site has been completed, DCLL would take a leadership role and would continue to represent and act in the interests of the community by ensuring that the project achieves its objectives and delivers the enhanced community offer.

- 1.10 The proposals are expected to cost around £21m, of which the Council would contribute up to £2,752,903, funded by savings from its leisure revenue budget, as the costs of maintaining and operating the facilities would transfer to PAFC and PACT under their leases. The Council would make a further contribution by leasing the land to PAFC, PACT and Albion. The balance of the funding is to be provided by PAFC and PACT. Further investment would also be secured by PACT (working in partnership with Albion) in order to allow Albion's existing grass training pitch to be upgraded to a 3G pitch.

In order to facilitate the redevelopment it is proposed to grant individual leases to PAFC, PACT and Albion. The leases to PAFC and PACT would be subject to agreements for lease which would be conditional upon:

- i) PAFC / PACT obtaining a Satisfactory Planning Permission for the redevelopment;
 - ii) PAFC / PACT securing funding for the redevelopment;
 - iii) PAFC / PACT completing site investigations, the results of which are satisfactory to both parties and the Council;
 - iv) The Council obtaining vacant possession of the Property and / or all necessary third party consents; and
 - v) PAFC, PACT, Albion and the Council completing an overarching agreement which sets out how the wider Brickfields site will operate and the key outcomes that will be achieved from joint use of Brickfields.
- 1.11 The leases will contain clauses that set out the minimum amounts of community use to be provided, as well as the standards to which the site is to be maintained. Although there will be parts of the site that will predominantly be used for elite training purposes, the leases will ensure that public access to the site is maximised and is maintained in perpetuity.
- 1.12 All three leases would be conditional upon a shared use / management agreement being completed that would set out how the operation of the site would work. This would include agreement to grant various rights over land, etc. A plan is provided at Appendix 2 which provides an indication of how the site would be divided between the three parties for the purposes of the leases. However, this plan is indicative only at this stage and may be subject to change. It is also proposed that a new, longer lease could be granted to Albion in future once further details of additional development of Albion's facilities have been confirmed.
- 1.13 It is proposed that PACT would manage the various spaces that have mixed community use to a high standard, including the sports centre, athletics track and field, outdoor changing rooms, the 60m x 40m rubber crumb pitch / PlayZones, the car park, the walkways across the site and areas of informal open and natural space, trees and woodland etc. Legal arrangements will be put in place to ensure that appropriate rights of access, etc over these spaces are granted to PAFC and Albion. This agreement will include arrangements regarding the sharing of parking spaces – in particular on match days.
- 1.14 In addition to the wider consultation that took place with the community (as referred to in paragraph 1.7) consultation has also taken place with a wide range of key stakeholders, including

- PALL staff (who run the existing sports centre);
 - Local Ward councillors, including a site visit and presentation in January 2023;
 - The Portfolio Holder / Shadow Portfolio Holder;
 - DCLL;
 - Sport England;
 - England Hockey;
 - COPAC;
 - Devon Football Association;
 - The Rugby Football Union;
 - England Athletics;
 - The petanque club;
 - Brickfields hockey club;
 - City College; and
 - Livewell.
- I.15 Final approval to the proposals is required from Sport England and notice is required to be served on the Ministry of Defence as they have a licence for use of the site.
- I.16 An initial pre-application meeting with planning officers has already been held. Further pre-application discussion will need to take place prior to the submission of a planning application which is expected to be made later this year. The intention is that work would start on site by Spring 2024 and complete by Spring 2025.

2.0 Improving Sporting Facilities & Access for Community Use

2.1 The table below sets out further details of the new facilities that would be provided.

Proposed pitch provision
60m x 40m artificial surface: potentially two zones with different surfaces with floodlighting
Albion (second pitch): relay with 3G RFU-regulation compliant surface with floodlighting
Covered 3G pitch / dome with lighting
Full size 3G pitch with flood lighting
Grass pitch (reinstated) within the centre of the existing athletics track
Provision of 2 grass pitches on the lower plateau with future option of small spectator stand (circa 150 seats) with floodlighting on 1 x pitch
Proposed outdoor ancillary provision
Refurbished community outdoor changing room block, with indoor clubhouse provision for COPAC to replace their current facility
Academy youth hub, with office space, changing rooms, catering, and classroom provision
Active walkways connecting the wider Stonehouse, Devonport Park and Devonport communities *
Off-site provision
Re-provision of pétanque off site
Commitment to ensure the future of hockey provision in the city
Sports centre / new community hub
Health and wellbeing hub, including provision and support for: physical, mental and emotional services / dedicated youth space (currently no dedicated youth provision in Devonport) / education, employment suites with multi course training including: apprenticeships, traineeships, adult education. Large soft play, community function room, café and bar, improved gym offer and indoor space for sports.

* subject to detailed design and surveys

- 2.2 There would be a significant increase in the amount of community use of the facilities at Brickfields, as the tables below set out.

Type of facility	Current provision	Proposed provision
grass football pitches	2	3
grass rugby pitches	2	1
all weather pitch	1 (sand / temporarily closed)	3 (3G / rubber crumb)
athletics track and field	track and field	track and field (with Academy grass pitch in central oval)
petanque	1	0 (to be relocated off-site)
60m x 40m multi surface provision	1	1 (re-surfaced)
hockey	(see "all weather pitch" above)	commitment to ensure the future of hockey provision in the city is realised

Proposed pitch provision	Current community use (hours per week)	Available community use (hours per week)
Plymouth Albion second pitch (grass / 3G RFU compliant)	12*	70 (community rugby and football)
Full size 3G	No provision / no use	25
Covered 3G	No provision / no use	25
All weather sand (no proposal to install full size sand at Brickfields)	20 hrs (prior to closure in the autumn 2022)	commitment to ensure the future of hockey provision in the city is realised
Grass pitch x 2 lower plateau	6*	6*
Grass pitch (reinstated) central oval of athletics	0	0
60m x 40m: Play Zone / potentially two zones with different surfaces	35	88 (aligned to opening hours of community hub)
Athletics track and field	88 (available for track and field)	80 (available for track and field)

* average across the season and subject to ground conditions

- 2.3 Overall there is a significant increase in the quality and quantity of sports facilities, as well as the level of community access to use these facilities. However, as there is a limited amount of space on the site, it will no longer be possible to provide on-site provision for petanque or hockey.
- 2.4 It is proposed that new petanque rinks will be provided at Stonehouse Creek and an allowance has been made in the project budget to cover the cost of this relocation.
- 2.5 Ongoing discussions are taking place with England Hockey to ensure that our commitment to secure and protect the future of hockey in the city is realised, with investment set aside to mitigate the loss of the sand based artificial grass pitch.

3.0 Alternative Options

- 3.1 **Do nothing:** Some existing facilities on the site are in a poor state of repair, such as the sand-filled all weather pitch which has been closed since autumn 2022. This facility along with grass pitches require inward investment at a time when the Council is reducing its operating subsidy for Council-owned leisure facilities. Attendance and income levels have not returned to pre-Covid levels and the community have provided feedback that they would like to see more opportunities to improve their health and wellbeing. If the Council does nothing, there will be no inward investment, more facilities will fall into disrepair and the facilities will not align to the needs of the community. Furthermore, PAFC are likely to look outside of the city boundary for a location to host its youth academy if the Brickfields scheme is not delivered.
- 3.2 **Capital Investment:** The proposed inward investment is at a scale and level that the Council cannot achieve alone. PACT is able to access funding through football that the Council is unable to lever.

4.0 Planning and Access

- 4.1 Planning permission will be required for the proposed redevelopment and the proposals will need to consider car parking, active travel and compliance with safety standards for emergency vehicle access to Albion's stadium.
- 4.2 The proposals will include the ability to connect adjoining neighbourhoods by accessing protected walkways and cycle routes through the site.

5.0 Legal Issues and Conditionality

- 5.1 DCLL have an existing lease of the sports centre and it is proposed that this is surrendered to allow a new lease to be granted to PACT. DCLL will continue to be formally involved in the governance of the site.
- 5.2 The recommendations set out in this report and the Council's intention to proceed with the project will be subject to a number of conditions being met at various points in time. These include the following:

- The agreements for lease with PAFC and PACT will be conditional on planning (including details of fencing and public access), funding, satisfactory site investigations and vacant possession. Therefore, if these conditions are not met, the leases will not be completed.
 - That all lessees agree to enter into a "Site Agreement" which includes arrangements for management and governance of the site.
 - That all lessees agree to enter into a grant funding agreement to reflect the financial support being provided by the Council through financial subsidy and the granting of leases. The funding agreements will include details of the community promises that the lessees will be required to comply with.
 - The leases to PAFC and PACT will include a longstop date by which the redevelopment must be completed.
 - The agreements to lease to PAFC and PACT will be completed simultaneously.
 - DCLL and PALL to surrender their existing lease / sub-lease of the sports centre.
 - COPAC to surrender their lease of the existing clubhouse.
 - The initial lease to Albion will include a longstop date by which any further development proposals must be agreed. If this longstop date is not met the lease will not be extended beyond the term originally agreed.
 - Approval to the proposals (including the future provision of hockey offsite) is required from Sport England. Notice is also required to be served on the Ministry of Defence.
 - Terms and conditions of any existing or future external funders must be aligned to ensure that they reflect the vision for the site.
- 5.3 Albion's surrender of the 60m x 40m rubber crumb pitch will be conditional upon completion of their new 3G training pitch.
- 5.4 The Council is under a legal obligation to obtain the best price reasonably obtainable in its land transactions (s123 Local Government Act 1972) unless the Secretary of State consents to the disposal. As a result of the Local Government Act 1972: General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 specific consent is not required if a disposal of any interest in land assists in the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area and the difference between the unrestricted value and the consideration accepted is £2 million or less.
- The Council considers that the proposals will improve the social wellbeing of the residents of the area for the reasons set out elsewhere in this report, and therefore the consent of the Secretary of State is not required.
- 5.5 The Council considers that the proposals will improve the social well-being of the residents of the area for the reasons set out elsewhere in this report.

6.0 Finance

- 6.1 As set out at paragraph 1.5 above the proposed investment from PAFC, PACT and the Council is as follows:

Party	Contribution
Plymouth City Council	£2,752,903
Plymouth Argyle Football Club	£11,000,000
Plymouth Argyle Community Trust	£7,265,165
Total	£21,018,068

- 6.2 Included in the PACT contribution above is an allowance for the upgrade of Albion's existing training pitch to a new 3G pitch.
- 6.3 The Council's capital investment will be funded from service borrowing and this revenue provision will be available as a result of the savings achieved from no longer providing a subsidy for the provision of services at Brickfields.
- 6.4 It is proposed that the rent for each of the leases will initially be at a peppercorn. This is below the market rent for the site and will serve as a further contribution which the Council will be making to the project. Further details are provided in the Part II report.

7.0 Governance

- 7.1 A separate report concerning governance will be prepared for future Cabinet consideration.
- 7.2 The proposals include protection of community access arrangements, through a number of 'community promises'. These will be enforced by including community use clauses in the leases and establishing governance for the site that includes all lessees, DCLL, the Council and representation from the community.