

# FOULSTON PARK/ BRICKFIELDS

Background Paper



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Foulston Park (FP) project (formally known as Brickfields) is a landmark initiative that Plymouth City Council (PCC) have jointly embarked on to enhance the sports and community infrastructure in our city and to deliver the Brickfields Masterplan, creating some of the finest sports and wellbeing facilities in the Southwest.
- 1.2 The Plan includes reconfiguration of the existing sports centre, delivery of new pitches and creation of a community wellbeing hub that aligns with the Corporate Plan priority to improve the health outcomes and reduce health inequalities experienced by our residents. The range of programmes and services available through Foulston Park will contribute to improving the core determinants of society (including health, education and employment) that can have a positive life-long impact on health and wellbeing.
- 1.3 In March 2023, the Council's Cabinet approved the key recommendation (0903/2023 Brickfields) that it would support the investment in FP which included a funding commitment of £2.753m. Since this date, the project has moved forward at pace, with planning permission granted (23/01622/FUL), and leases entered into.
- 1.4 Following on from the March 2023 Cabinet Paper there was a further allocation to the capital programme of £917,944 in March 2024 (L59/23/24), which included external funding, and service borrowing of £182,944, primarily to support off site sports mitigation in line with planning requirements. However, as the project has progressed, there have been several unforeseen challenges and constraints, leading to a necessary re-evaluation of the budget and funding requirements. Despite meticulous planning, budgeting and value engineering, the overall project cost has escalated from the initial estimates.
- 1.5 Plymouth Argyle Community Trust and Plymouth Argyle Football Club who have responsibility for project delivery at Foulston Park have requested an additional £0.900m capital support from the Council in the form of a Grant. The cost to be funded by corporate borrowing.

## BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A Cabinet Paper was approved in March 2023 to deliver the Brickfields Masterplan, 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 hub. The proposals are a once in a generation opportunity to regenerate the community and elite sports provision for the west of the city.
- 2.2 The gains this project will deliver for the people of Devonport and beyond extends the opportunities for our residents to feel better, healthier and happier with facilities that will support people on their journey to better health, education, training and employment opportunities.
- 2.3 The former sports centre (known as the Hub) is part of Plymouth's network of nine Wellbeing Hubs, offering a range of health and wellbeing opportunities, including a state-of-the-art gym, physical activity programmes, mental health support, youth and veterans' programmes and life skills training. The wider Foulston Park development will include:
  - A new permanent home for Plymouth Argyle's youth wing, the Argyle Academy and Plymouth Argyle Women

- New grass and all-weather 3G pitches (with community access)
- Athletics facilities for the City of Plymouth Athletics Club and other users
- Play zone exclusively for public use
- Grass pitches (with community access)
- Better public access, landscaped public areas and parking
- Community wellbeing Hub (one of 9 in the city)

## **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

3.1. Do Nothing: By not securing the funding it would hinder the operation of the site and potentially stop some of the works being completed. This would also hinder the PAFC/PACT business plan which intends to be self-sufficient and not reliant on any subsidiaries from the Council. This option would mean that it is likely that the full masterplan for FP would not be delivered. This in turn would limit the community benefits from the site and reduce the beneficial impact of the project.

3.2. Do Minimum: All value engineering options have been considered by PACT/PAFC and their professional advisors, reducing the scope further whilst delivering the required project outcomes is not an option. This option would mean that it is likely that the full masterplan for FP would not be delivered. This in turn would limit the community benefits from the site and reduce the beneficial impact of the project.

3.3 Viable Alternative Option. No alternative as works have started on site and all other funding avenues have been explored.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISK**

4.1 The recommendation is that the Council approves the addition of a further £0.900m to the capital programme funded by corporate borrowing, for the award of a Grant of £0.600m to PAFC and a Grant of £0.300m to PACT.

4.2 Agrees the funding switch from service borrowing to corporate borrowing against the original project approval.

4.3 Any risks, to the Council, of further rises in costs through the remainder of the construction delivery programme are to be mitigated through the ring-fencing of a defined grant with clear and enforceable legal obligations.

## **TIMESCALES**

5.1 The Hub opened in March 2025, 3G pitches, the playzone and grass pitches will be delivered during 2025 and 2026.