**Meeting to discuss Proposed 3G Playing Pitch at Lincroft School**

**Present:** Cllrs. Phillips (Chair), Fardon, Frampton, Jones, Olney, Nicholas, Sansom, Saunders, Taylor, Walker & White, the Clerk Mrs. Paice (Parish Council), Mr. Duke, Head Teacher Mr. Edwards, Lead Professional in PE (Lincroft School), Mr. Sharp, Chief Operations Officer (Sharnbrook Academy), Ms. Smith (Castele Consultancy), Mr. Betts (technical consultant), Mr. Mann (Beds FA) & 74 members of the public.

Chair welcomed residents to the meeting and introduced the speakers – Cllr. Fardon, Mr. Duke, Ms. Smith, Mr. Betts & Mr. Mann. He thanked Lincroft for hosting the meeting and asked residents to provide email addresses if they wanted to be contacted when the planning application was issued for comment. He explained the purpose of the meeting, the agenda and timeline for consultations on the pitch.

Mr. Duke explained that Lincroft was aware of residents’ concerns about parking. The school had 150 – 200 parking spaces on site and clubs using the pitch would be required to park at the school and walk the 150m to the pitch. Only coaching staff would be permitted to park on the field. Managers & coaches would need to sign agreements detailing the use of the pitch, codes of conduct and the parking arrangements and a football co-ordinator would manage the pitch and oversee the parking agreements. Individual launch evenings would be held with football clubs before the pitch opened to explain the terms for use and if there was an event or parents’ evening at school, football training would be cancelled.

Ms. Smith then explained the project showing how the pitch would be used and managed and Cllr. Fardon detailed Council’s visits to other 3G sites and set out the planning process. (see [www.oakleyvillage.co.uk](http://www.oakleyvillage.co.uk) for the presentations).

A Q & A session followed the presentations and residents were concerned about:-

1. Light pollution from the floodlights. Mr. Betts explained that the light was focused downwards & Mr. Sharp invited residents to visit the floodlit artificial pitch at Sharnbrook. Representative from AFC Oakley noted that he taught at a school in Milton Keynes with a floodlit Astroturf pitch and houses closer than those in Station Road & Lovell Road and there had only been two occasions when the lighting had caused problems.
2. Parking in Station Road & surrounding streets. Parking was not currently well managed during school hours with parents causing problems by driving & parking dangerously. Lincroft advised that clubs would be required to sign a parking agreement and would be encouraged to lift share. Their contracts could be terminated if they did not adhere to the parking terms. Representative from the Oakley Sports & Social Club commented that young people playing at OSSC generally arrived individually and as parents often did not like to walk they would drop off their children as close to the pitch as possible.

1. Traffic in and out of the village. 80 young people playing per hour could generate an extra 160 vehicle movements in and out of the village each hour. Access to Oakley was some of the worst in the county with both the twin bridges & Lovell Road entrances into the village restricted, potentially causing huge congestion. One resident commented that the pitch would reduce the number of traffic movements out of the village to take young people to other pitches. Chair of Bromham FC added that they would work with parents and managers to limit the traffic they would bring into Oakley.
2. Noise. Residents from Lovell Homes commented that they can already hear young people on the field and with the pitch being used until 10.00pm the noise would be unacceptable, especially as their bedrooms were on the Field side of their homes. Ms. Smith commented that Lincroft would work with neighbours to mitigate noise and on some other sites acoustic fences or bunds had been installed.
3. Where teams would change. Lincroft advised that youth football teams usually arrive already changed and go home in their kit.

1. Safety of young people crossing the road at night. Lincroft appreciated the importance of safety and agreed that the issue would need to be addressed.
2. Adverse impact on the village community and OSSC. Cllrs. Nicholas & Sansom were personally concerned that Oakley was not the right site for the pitch. Redborne & Wixams were urban sites, which were more appropriate in terms of lighting, noise traffic & parking. Cllr. Walker commented that the young people were part of the community and Mr. Duke added that Oakley teams would use the pitch the most.
3. Funding for the pitch. Ms. Smith advised that the cost would be £550K - £600K with a 50% grant expected from the Football Foundation and the rest from Lincroft and grants from bodies such as Sport England. The proposal could be submitted to the Football Foundation before all the funding was in place but the Foundation would not release monies until all the funding was secured. Concern was raised that as Sharnbrook Academy was a private company, it could potentially fold. Mr. Sharp noted that the Academy Federation was a Trust and if the Trust closed, the pitch would move back into public ownership. If the Lincroft site were sold the pitch would have to be relocated.
4. Reduction in funding for local clubs. Residents suggested that funding from the Football Foundation would be better used to support local clubs rather than a school. Ms. Smith noted that the pitch would sustain local clubs as it would give access to the facility without the cost of managing & maintaining it. Most clubs were run by volunteers who would not have the time or desire to run the facility. Lincroft would also have to keep a sinking fund so that sufficient money was available to replace the pitch when necessary. Chair of Bromham FC added that they had looked into installing an artificial pitch but realised that, as a small club, they could not afford one & therefore they supported the Lincroft bid.
5. Lack of information/data. Residents asked whether the pitch was in accordance with the Local Plan, whether light, noise & traffic assessments had been carried out and whether other sites were being considered. Ms. Smith confirmed that the pitch would be compliant with the Local Plan. Some of the assessments had been completed, others were in progress and would be completed before the planning application was submitted. Cllr. Sansom commented that alternative sites had been considered but neither Beds FA nor Bedford BC would release the report. Ms. Smith commented that other pitches might be being considered but it was not a case of either one or another. The Bedfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy had identified a need for 3.29 3G pitches and Lincroft would meet the need in the rural north-west area.
6. Presentations were biased and the Parish Council had already decided to back the proposal. Chair confirmed that Council would not make a decision until the planning application was circulated for consultation and it would be a majority decision if views differed. This meeting was intended to provide information so that residents could make their own judgements. Cllr. Olney added that the Parish Council would consider all views and traffic, parking etc. would be addressed as a part of the process. Bedford BC Planning Department would also be considering these issues.

Several residents commented that Lincroft School was an excellent facility for the community as a whole and the pitch would help keep young people engaged in education and sport. One suggested that without the pitch Lincroft would be at a disadvantage once 2 tier education was introduced as they had no artificial pitch at present.

Chair noted that the next Parish Council meetings were 6th October, 3rd November & 1st December and that minutes were published on the notice board and website. Once the planning application was circulated residents would need to submit their views individually to Bedford BC. He thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.