



# **Planning Support Document for Proposed Cricket Pitch within Hillfield Park**

*Enabling sport to flourish through a  
partnership between Solihull MBC and  
Solihull Blossomfield Cricket Club*

**28<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

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# 1. Executive summary

Solihull MBC is committed to encouraging active and healthy lifestyles in the borough – a goal that is shared by Solihull Blossomfield Cricket Club (SBCC). Founded over 75 years ago, the club has attracted over 200 members, including 155 juniors, and has a growing women's and girls' section.

Through collaboration, the Council and the Club have an opportunity to enhance the facilities available to local residents and those that continue to move into this thriving borough.

By accessing an unused area of Hillfield Park that adjoins the existing ground owned by The Blossomfield Club, together we can create a second cricket ground for use by the community.

## **Background and next steps**

On 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019, members of SBCC met Councillor Tildesley, Chris Barr and Nick Garnett to discuss the feasibility of accessing this area in Hillfield Park. The new cricket ground would be created in the area shown on the site plan in Appendix A. It would be developed in close partnership with SMBC, for the mutual benefit of both the local community and the local club.

We also discussed the current challenges arising from the lack of alternative playing facilities in the area, which is limiting opportunities for players while hindering SBCC's expansion and incurring considerable expense from the need to hire out other grounds for both senior and junior cricket. SBCC has had to look outside the Borough to find suitable alternative grounds for their Saturday teams, which has a potential effect on future recruitment.

We have included an analysis of our efforts to find alternative grounds in Appendix B. We're concerned that the provision is reducing almost annually, as other grounds, such as Old Silhillians and Camp Hill OBs, have been or are being converted for football usage.

SMBC explained its criteria for further exploration of this idea which are now outlined in this formal proposal, addressing the various points raised.

In this report, we confirm:

- our need for another cricket ground
- the lack of available cricket facilities in the Borough and our efforts to find suitable alternatives
- how the community will benefit
- the project itself and
- how we will manage the project.

We look forward to meeting you again to review this document and agree the way forward.

## 2. The need for an additional cricket facility

Solihull Blossomfield Cricket Club is an integral and expanding section of The Blossomfield Club Ltd, a sports and social club with over 800 members, situated in Widney Lane, Solihull B91 3JY. The Club has freehold ownership of its site and is a Community Amateur Sports Club.

The Cricket Section, which plays as Solihull Blossomfield Cricket Club, has had a focused development plan over the last 3 to 4 years, concentrating on the following areas:

### Senior cricket

- We were promoted into Division 1 of the Warwickshire League in 2019, now the 4<sup>th</sup> tier below county cricket, and finished third, only just missing out on promotion.
- Senior membership (over 18s) has increased to 45 members, enabling us to compete with the best in our division and, importantly, establish a 4<sup>th</sup> XI for the first time in our history.
- Our policy of fast-tracking talented young cricketers in senior cricket has seen their rapid development and increasing contribution to our success – and this growth of our youngsters is vital for our medium to longer term progression on a sustainable basis.  
Every Saturday at least 25% of players in our senior sides will come from our junior ranks of under 18s, both boys and girls.
- As well as four Saturday teams, we have Sunday 100 Ball and Midweek teams.

### Junior cricket – Boys

- Membership numbers are increasing, going from 70 in 2018, to 125 currently.
- We now enter teams in the Warwickshire-run leagues at Under 10, 11, 13, 15 and 17, but the number of teams will increase to 10 in total from 2020, reflecting the substantial increase in our membership.
- Our boys also play in Under 9 festivals, with our girl members.
- We have employed a specialist coaching company who provide ex-county cricketers to help develop our younger players more rapidly for senior cricket.

### Girls and Women's Cricket

- Membership numbers for girls have increased from 22 to 32 over the last 12 months and are still rising.
- This has enabled us to compete in the Warwickshire leagues at Under 11, 13 and 15 age groups – and the Lady Taverners KO Cup at Under 13 and 15 levels.
- Around a third of our girls each year are invited for county squad trials and most are selected - this success is reflected in our very good record in the Warwickshire competitions. In the last two years we have won the Warwickshire Girls Under 13 and 15 championships.
- Our Women and Girls Player Pathway, as shown in Appendix C, shows how our girls can progress from the age of 5 up to Women's cricket at county level.  
This Pathway has been based upon County and National guidelines, and we are keen to implement the stated ECB strategic objectives for W&G Cricket in our area.
- In 2020, for the first time, we will enter the Women's Competitive Softball and the WCB Hardball Leagues, run by Warwickshire, and will market this development widely to attract more women into cricket.

And we will continue playing Women's Social Softball festivals for those who are less competitive but enjoy the activity.

- We have just signed up a Warwickshire county cricketer to lead our women's team and she is also a qualified coach, which considerably strengthens our W&G section.
- Birmingham will host the Commonwealth Games in 2022 and, for the first time, will include a 7-day Women's T20 Tournament, to be held at the Edgbaston Stadium.

### **Junior cricket – general**

- In 2019, England won the ICC Cricket World Cup, with the final being shown on terrestrial TV for the first time for cricket since 2005. With the success of The Ashes and a new competition starting in 2020 (The Hundred), supported by significant marketing from the ECB, there is a definite buzz around cricket, with numbers of children showing an interest in cricket expected to grow significantly.
- Clubmark – we have appointed two Club Welfare Officers to help us implement high standards of child welfare and protection, and we were re-accredited again in 2018.
- We now play well over 60 matches a year at junior level, for both boys and girls – and that number will increase considerably as we need to provide more competitive cricket.
- Boys and girls train throughout the year, with indoor coaching for an extra 10 weeks in both Autumn and Spring terms
- We support the ECB's (England and Wales Cricket Board) All Stars programme for introducing 5 to 7-year-olds into cricket. In 2019, over 40 new children came to the sessions we ran, and a number of them transitioned to membership of our club.
- The ECB have just launched their new Dynamos programme, targeting 8 to 11-year-olds who have not played cricket before. This will run alongside and complement our Junior Sections for both boys and girls. It will be strongly promoted nationally by the ECB, taking advantage of the substantial increase in interest in cricket following the Cricket World Cup this summer.
- We are heavily dependent upon the generous contribution of volunteers' time for the success of our juniors. Just this year, our Blossomfield members have received the following recognition:
  - John Boyce, our Girls Head Coach, won the Solihull Sports Award for 'Services to Solihull Sport'
  - Terry Bird received the Warwickshire County Cricket's OSCA (Outstanding Service to Cricket Award) for his Lifetime Contribution to cricket and Blossomfield playing and coaching
  - Liz Steventon, our Junior Boys Manager, also received an OSCA from Warwickshire for her Inspiring and Diverse Offer, citing her enthusiastic commitment and breadth of her contribution to Blossomfield. Liz was selected to go to Lords, along with two others, from entrants all over the country, where she was runner-up for the National OSCA.

### **Ground improvement**

Over the last 15 years, we have increased our investment in the ground, and the following innovations in the last two years have provided us with first class facilities:

- Installation of a new, state-of-the-art, two-lane net practice facility
- A new electronic scoreboard (erected in June 2019)

- Over the last 2/3 years, we have been renovating our clubhouse to attract more members of the public from our local community into our Club.

### **The challenge**

We are a victim of our own success, because:

- We cannot find good quality grounds for our 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> XIs to use for their Saturday Warwickshire Cricket League matches, so are obliged to pay substantial sums for less than ideal facilities outside the Borough.
- We have developed the facilities at our ground as far as possible, but it can no longer accommodate all our Junior and planned Women's matches – which mean we will have to hire alternative facilities, at extra cost.
- We will be supporting the new Dynamos initiative from the ECB and fully expect to see a further increase in junior membership numbers.

For all the above reasons, we need another cricket ground which we can call 'home' for both our members and the local community.

SBCC would use the additional ground every Saturday during the summer for senior cricket, together with most weekday evenings and Sundays, by a combination of Junior Boys and Girls and our Women's cricketers, both for matches and practice.

When not in use at these times and on weekday afternoons, the ground would be available for use by others in the community, such as schools, colleges or even local businesses. Let's discuss the basis of ground-sharing with you.

We have discussed our situation with the Warwickshire Cricket Board General Manager, who speaks on behalf of the ECB in such matters, and he has confirmed his full support for our proposal in letter, included in Appendix D.

### 3. The benefits to the community

Our role in the community has expanded considerably over time and we now offer full support for those interested in cricket, in the following ways:

- Boys and girls aged 5 to 8 can join our All Stars programme, designed to introduce cricket in a fun, active and friendly manner to children, for the first time. Membership of our Club is not necessary and over 40 children participated in 2019. This is part of the ECB's national strategy to increase the numbers playing cricket, by attracting children at a younger age.
- We support the Chance to Shine programme for Years 4 and 5, hosting festivals for 250/300 boys and girls in May each year, from seven local schools. Boys and girls are split approximately 50/50 and you are welcome to come along to see their enthusiasm and enjoyment at these occasions.  
After these age groups, there are relatively few opportunities for girls in particular to have organised cricket and we are keen to explore this area.
- The ECB have just launched their Dynamos initiative, targeting boys and girls aged from 8 to 11, who have had little or no previous experience of playing cricket. Again, no membership of our Club is necessary and we will enthusiastically support this campaign too, particularly because it is one element of the ECB's wider strategy for greatly increasing the number of girls playing cricket.
- The Solihull and Blossomfield catchment areas provide large numbers of children who are interested in playing cricket and we have seen a spike in interest following the success of the Cricket World Cup this summer. The increase in our junior numbers reflects this and there are big opportunities to attract more girls, in particular, into cricket.
- Our successful Girls Section is the basis of our expansion into Women's cricket, as outlined in the Women and Girls Pathway. This programme follows the national guidelines and is open to all women and girls in our community and we hope to generate considerable extra support via Solihull Active.
- We offer year-round cricket coaching, with 20 weeks of indoor training, as well as a full programme of coaching and matches during the summer. This helps us to maintain the focus on cricket and ensure greater continuity of membership, with all the other distractions locally.
- We recently met Julie Chrysostomou, the PE and School Sport Development Officer (SMBC), and agreed to work with Julie to assist secondary schools with their cricket provision - and to arrange a festival for girls during the summer.
- We encourage our Junior members and their parents to take coaching courses to help their personal and cricketing development. In recent years, 12 boys, girls and parents have taken the ECB Coach Support Worker course and are now helping our senior coaching staff.
- We also support young people who are completing the Duke of Edinburgh Award by providing opportunities to volunteer at coaching sessions.
- We are working with Solihull College - one of their students has just started work experience with us, helping to coach at boys' and girls' sessions. This could extend to a full 300 hours and, if so, we would put him through a Level 2 Coaching course and give him opportunities to manage a team too. We may also help a Media student and others who are interested in sports performance.
- In previous years, we were able to allow both Solihull Colleges to use our ground for their midweek matches, but we do not have any capacity nowadays.

- On 9<sup>th</sup> June 2019, we held a Community Fun Day which attracted over 250 people from the Solihull area and included 3 cricket matches for Seniors (our first 100 Ball Smash match), Boys and Girls, plus music and other entertainment. We received 10 membership enquiries from youngsters who enjoyed the day. The event was also featured on Sky Sports News and BBC Midlands TV.
- We run a Bonfire and Fireworks Night, which attracts around 1,000 people from our community each year.
- We have extended our social media coverage to help make more people aware of what Blossomfield has to offer.
- We have contributed to a podcast organised by Warwickshire CCC, highlighting best practice for cricket clubs across the region.
- We are aware that some local secondary schools, e.g. Alderbrook and St Peters, have no cricket ground and others have limited capacity.

**We believe this additional ground would offer both SMBC and SBCC substantial opportunities as a focal point for expanding the provision of cricket in our local community and we look forward to working with you to our mutual advantage.**



## 4. The proposed project and the way forward

We propose the installation of a cricket ground on land at Hillfield Park, adjacent to our existing cricket ground at Widney Lane, Solihull B91 3JY.

There would be a 6-wicket square plus an artificial track, and work would be carried out in line with ECB standards, in order to achieve a good quality facility, suitable for longer term use by both senior and junior cricketers – and others in the community.

We will provide a visual picture of the new ground in early January, but as a guideline we envisage a facility similar to that enjoyed by Sutton Coldfield CC, who use Rectory Park, which is owned by the Birmingham City Council and open to the public.

We appreciate that fencing around the ground would prevent access by other park users, although we would need to install some security around the site, such as low-level barriers or mounds, to reduce the risk of unauthorised access, vandalism and malicious damage.

In addition, the WCB/ECB have suggested that we consider the installation of changing rooms to ensure that we can offer a high level of facility to support the increased usage from our target audience.

We have identified our own Project Team and have provided their details in Appendix E. We would like to establish a working group with you to drive through the project as quickly as possible. The preparation and bedding in time for a new cricket square is lengthy, ideally around 18 months, and we are keen to target playing cricket there during the summer of 2021, at least for our juniors on the artificial wicket.

It is too early to provide a fully costed proposal as further information about the site is needed. The cost can be fully evaluated once we have carried out appraisals of the following, in conjunction with the Council:

- Ecology
- Site clearance – with any ecological mitigation and compensation work required
- Levelling and drainage – is there a plan of existing drains on the site?
- Re-seeding of the outfield and preparation of the square
- Installation of the non-turf wicket
- Perimeter barriers and landscaping
- Ongoing maintenance

## **In conclusion**

We look forward to meeting you to discuss this proposal and reach an agreement in principle, so that we can establish a joint action plan with timescales.

Without this new facility, we will struggle to maintain our current level of activity and this will reduce the opportunities for residents to participate in cricket in the Borough.

This is an exciting opportunity to support our community as we bring together a breadth of expertise to deliver the project and enable us to achieve our mutual objectives as quickly as possible.

## **Contacts**

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### **Roger Lewis**

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# Appendix A: Plan of the proposed site

Proposed ground - red circle bottom left



## Appendix B: Analysis of alternative grounds available

### Possible 3rd and 4th XI Grounds - Clubs, Schools and Councils

Alvechurch & Hopwood	No	
Arden School	No	No ground available at present
Aston Manor	No	KE VI, Trinity Rd, B6 - already over-used
Aston University	Possible	But it's in Great Barr, B43, and £140 per match, min £1,260 per season (no discount for weather cancellations)
Bearley	??	Emailed – awaiting response
Berkswell	No	New 3rd XI ground but decided not to hire out
Birmingham Council		We discussed 2/3 grounds with the Council but the ones inspected were unsuitable due to poor quality, rubbish and dog walkers or no changing rooms
Bishop Vesey School	No	Sutton – not available
Bournville	No	
Camp Hill School	Possible	But Vicarage Road, Moseley and cost - £150 to £175 per game
Catherine de Barnes	No	
Claverdon	No	
Coleshill	No	Running 2 teams next year
Coventry & NW Council	No	Tried but they have no capacity available for cricket. Over 15 years, 23 sites have reduced to only 5!
Eversfield School	No	Don't hire out
Grace Academy	No	
Great Alne	??	Not tried yet - only 1 team, but 30 minutes away
Hampton & Solihull	No	Share with Dorridge
Hampton Village	No	
KE Handsworth Girls School		Jane Williams £200 per match in B21
KE Sheldon Heath		We used this in 2019 but too small and outfield unsafe, and cost was £125 per match
Henley CC	Unlikely	Have emailed club
Kings Heath	No	
Langley School	No	
Lapworth	No	
Lode Heath School	No	
Lyndon School	Possible	but not satisfactory as small ground, artificial wicket and football played on outfield
Marston Green	No	

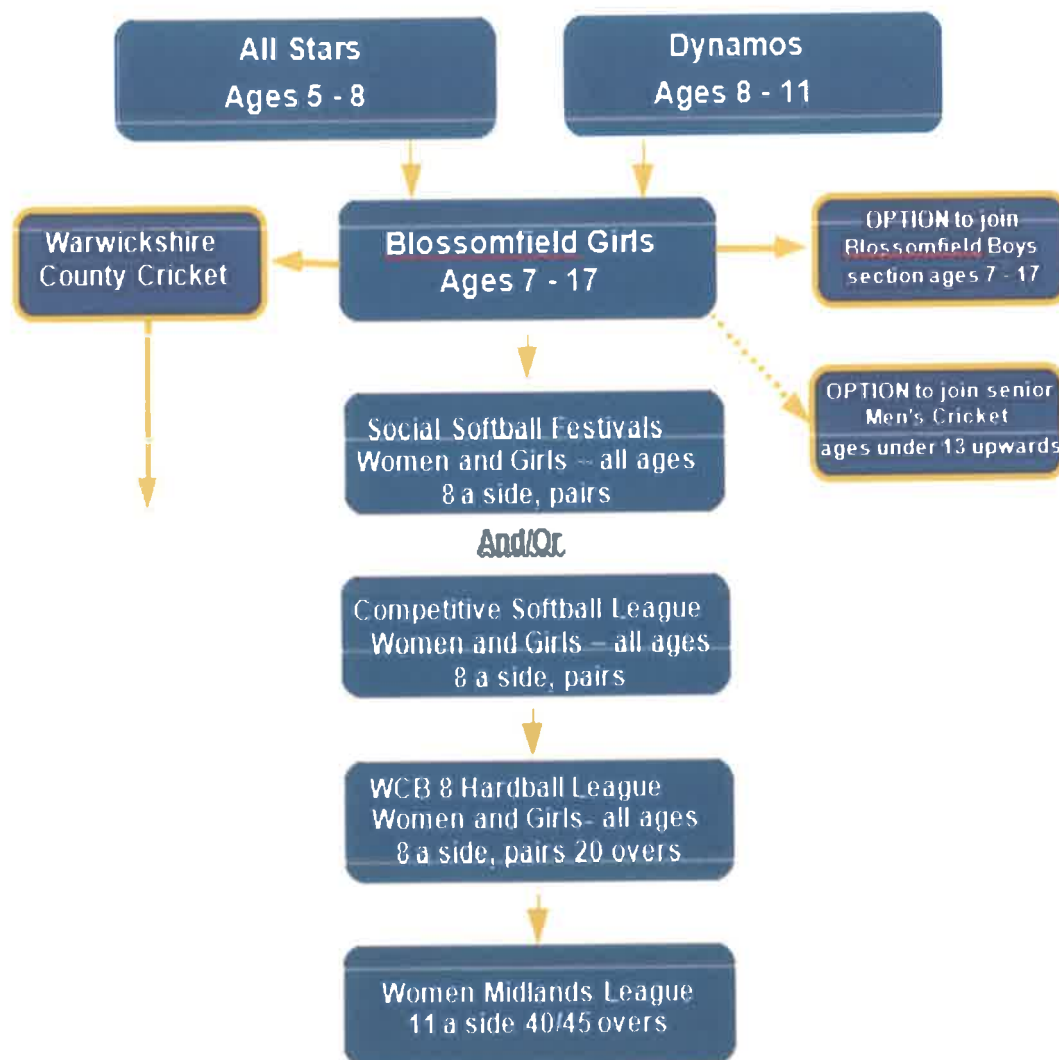
Massey Ferguson CC	No	
Meriden Sports Club	??	Response awaited but not available in 2019
Snitterfield	Possible	Distance is an issue
Solihull School	Possible	We are to meet SS after intro from Councillor Tildesley on 6 <sup>th</sup> Dec.
Sport for Life Charity	Possible	Poss Barrows Lane ground, Sheldon
Spring Lane Playing Field	Yes but	it's B24 and cost not yet known
Tanworth and Camp Hill	No	Second ground was used by Earlswood 3rds and 4ths but usage has now been changed from cricket to football
Weoley Hill	No	Suggested Aston Old Eds, astro wicket along A34
Willclare	Yes	We have arranged for our 4ths to play here from 2020, sharing with Old Edwardians CC
Woodbourne CC	No	Tried but they have socials there on Sat evenings and too small to accommodate cricket as well

In addition, we contacted all Warwickshire League Clubs via email but without any response

We have also tried various clubs in the Cotswold League which are not too far from Solihull, but have found no grounds available to date

*Compiled in December 2019 by Roger Lewis and Paul Wigley, captains of 3rd and 4th XIs, respectively*

# Appendix C: Women and Girls Pathway



## Contacts

All Stars / Boys

Girls / Women / Men

Liz Steventon 07909 912525

Roger Lewis 07831 277819

# Appendix D: Letter of support from WCB



4<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Dear Solihull Borough Council

Regarding: Solihull Blossomfield Cricket Club's plans to develop adjoining field into a cricket ground

Warwickshire Cricket Board wishes to express its wholehearted support for Solihull Blossomfield's project.

Cricket in Solihull is growing and we need more grounds to accommodate this demand. Solihull Blossomfield CC is an exemplification of this. It has growing women's, girls', adult and junior sections. It is currently having to beg, steal and borrow grounds for its adult third and fourth teams which is becoming increasingly difficult and challenging to do. It has a growing number of teams to accommodate. The development of the neighbouring field owned by yourselves would be the perfect solution.

The club has a good track record of managing projects: I worked with them on their new two bay net system project where they attracted £20k's worth of investment from the England & Wales Cricket Board. Their paperwork submissions were excellent and timely.

The club has achieved the ECB's Clubmark status.

The club works exceptionally hard to follow the advice of the governing bodies and runs:

- ECB's All Stars programme for 5-8 year olds
- I understand they will also be supporting the new ECB initiative, Dynamos, which will target the introduction to cricket of youngsters between the ages on 8 and 11 to cricket, many of them for the first time.
- One Hundred ball cricket on Sundays
- Girls coaching and match play programmes & Women's Softball Cricket
- Boys teams at every age group

There is a clear pathway from 5 years old all the way to their first team for boys and girls. In particular the club is one of very few who can offer cricket to females of all ages. All this in a club with a friendly and family-orientated approach.

They are well governed and have a strong body of volunteers, a number of whom have been recognised with Local or County Awards.

Their commitment to women and girls' cricket is particularly noteworthy currently given the ECB's strategy to make game-changing and transformational developments in the female game within its new Strategy (Inspiring Generations) and their W & G Pathway provides a good basis for attracting more women and girls into the game.

Please be in touch further if I can supply any information or support for the project.

Yours sincerely

Edward McCabe  
General Manager, Warwickshire Cricket Board, 07748337880

# Appendix E: Solihull Blossomfield Cricket Club: Project Team

<b>Paul Law</b>	Project Leader and Cricket Club Chair RICS, FCIQB
<b>Tim Jones</b>	Treasurer BA Hons, CIPFA Accountant, Prince 2 certified Project Manager
<b>Roger Lewis</b>	Secretary, Grants and Council liaison Management, finance and project experience
<b>Ben Seifas</b>	Club Captain and Liaison with WCB and ECB at Edgbaston BA Hons in Sport Management Change, Marketing and Commercial Management at Edgbaston
<b>Liz Steventon</b>	Fund Raising and Junior Boys Manager Chair, Friends of Solihull Hospital

We hope that SMBC will provide a representative on our Project Team.

We will also employ consultants to advise on and manage the various specialisms, once the contract has been agreed in principle.