

Thornton Sports and Education Centre



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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

Ferndown Upper School is keen to facilitate an exchange of ownership of land of equal square footage between Dorset Council and KGV Charity. This will enable a significant improvement in local amenities through the provision of enhanced sports facilities, for the benefit of students and the wider community. The proposed location for these facilities is on the site of the hard surfaced Redgra to the west of the school site and would comprise mainly of a 3g Synthetic Turf Pitch (STP).

Third Generation (3g) surfaces are artificial turf pitches which are ideal for football and other sports. They are made up of a durable synthetic surface with a grass-like texture, which is infilled with sand and rubber. They offer a similar experience to playing on natural turf, with the added benefit of year-round use.

The generous layout of the Redgra offers opportunities for an athletics track to be reinstalled, enabling a wide variety of sports to be enjoyed by our children and young people, and the local community. Spectator viewing areas and outbuildings for equipment would also form part of the enhanced sporting facilities.

1.2 Executive Summary

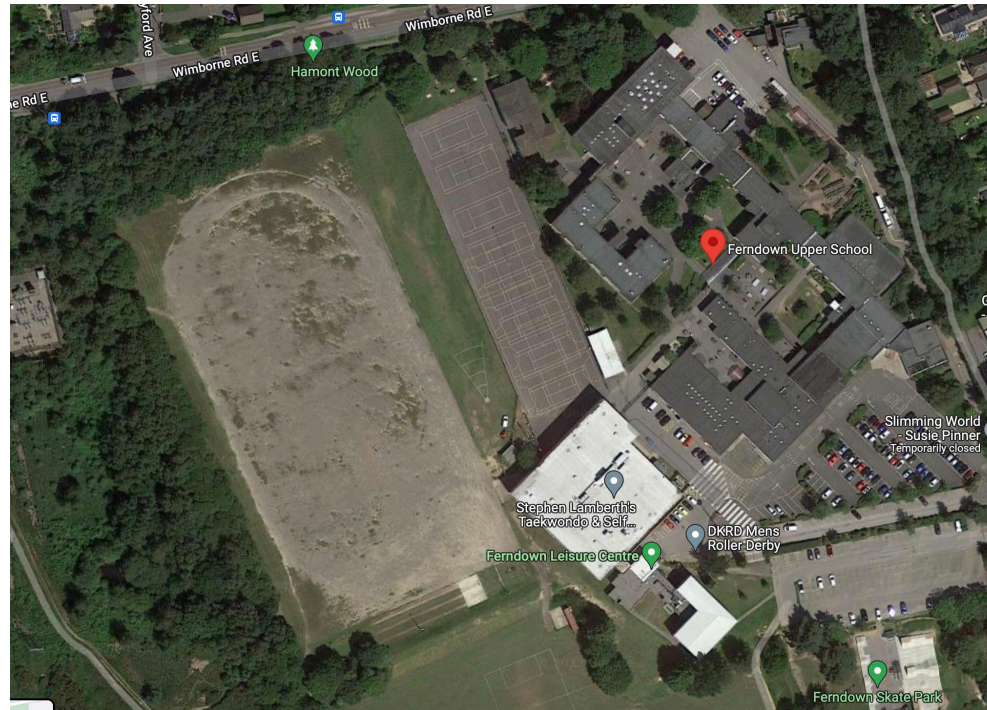
Ferndown Upper School was opened in 1972 and a Redgra surface to the west of the school was installed to provide an 8-lane running track. This surface is no longer fit for purpose and with the increasing number of pupils at the school, there is a need for the provision of a multi-function facility and surface (STP).

A joint use agreement enables Ferndown Leisure Centre to use the facilities when not required by the school. Project funding has not yet been secured and will be a combination of funding from the Football Foundation, Ferndown Upper School, and other grants and charitable donations.

2.0 Existing Site

2.1 Location

The Redgra is situated beside Ferndown Upper School, adjacent to the tennis courts. It is enclosed by Harmont Woods to the north, a mini nature reserve and community space under the care of Ferndown Town Council and King George V Charity, and Ferndown Common, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), to the west. The King George Playing Fields lie to the south of the Redgra, with the school site adjoining the eastern boundary.



This site was once a valued local amenity but is sadly in poor condition and no longer in regular use. There is huge potential to regenerate the site for the benefit of local children and the wider community and has been identified multiple times as being suitable for enhancement.

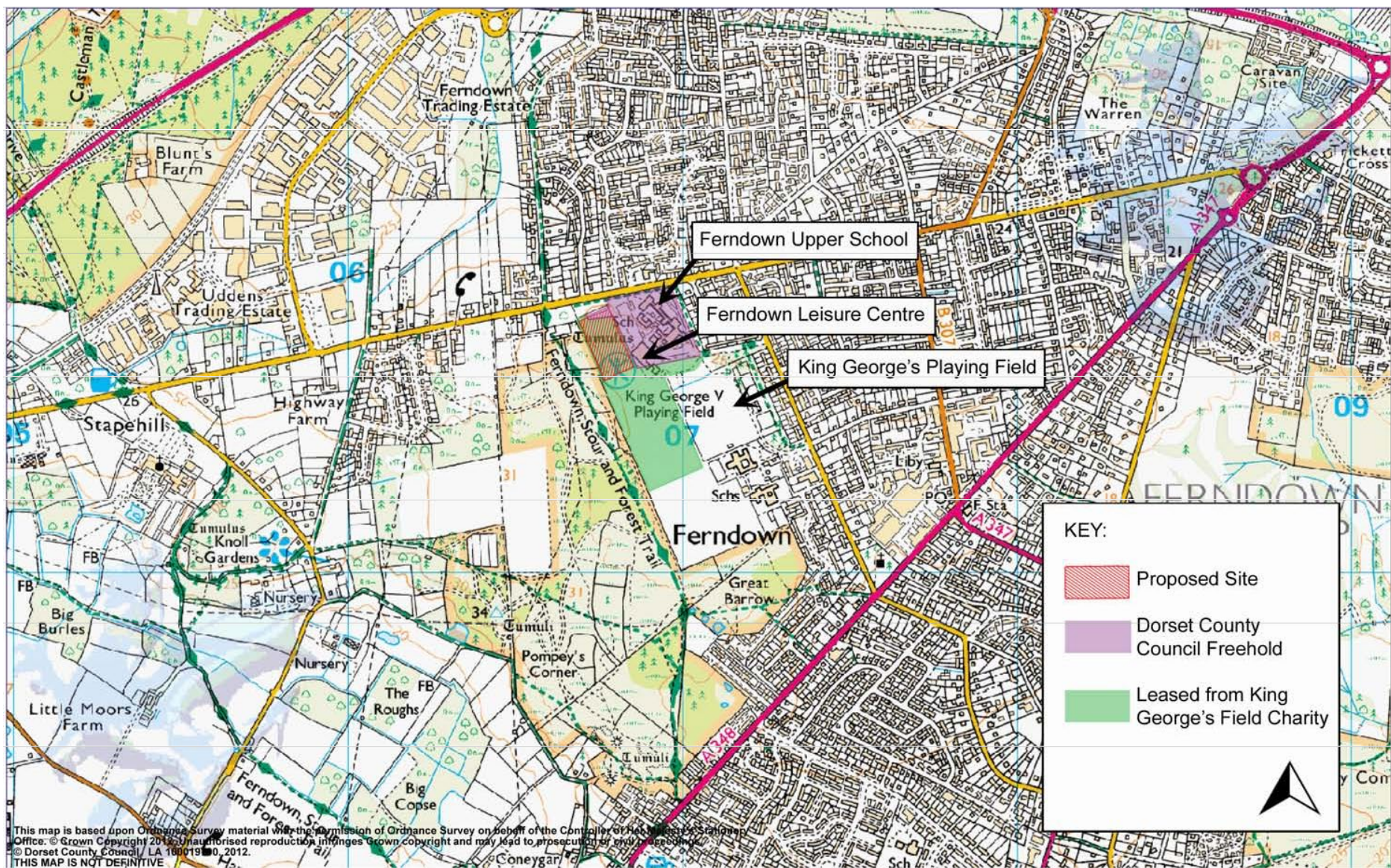
Attempts to bring about a positive change for the future of the Redgra have included a proposal from Dorset Council and Ferndown Leisure Centre for a synthetic grass pitch and an expression of interest from AFC Bournemouth for classrooms and pitches for their development side, which would have been solely funded by the Football Association. This demonstrates there is interest in using the Redgra for this purpose, and Ferndown Upper School is keen to have the opportunity to work with suitable partners to attract investment and enrich the local sporting offer in Ferndown.

2.2 Land Ownership

Dorset Council and King George V Charity currently own sections of land known locally as King George's Field. Dorset Council leases land from the charity to provide outdoor sports facilities, however access to this land is shared with the public, even when children are using this space for PE lessons and school activities. This creates challenges in keeping children safe from approaches by members of the public and dogs.

The sole trustee of KGV Charity is Ferndown Town Council, therefore it is Ferndown Councillors who make decisions on behalf of the charity. When elected to represent Ferndown, councillors automatically join the charity board. There are two Sole Trustee meetings each year and all councillors, as Trustees, are invited to attend and make decisions together, for the good of the charity.

A land swap will benefit the charity, as it would control the stretch of land from the heathland, and the Redgra, which requires substantial funding to bring it back into use, would become the responsibility of Dorset Council. Therefore, the KGV Charity would own better quality land which could provide income opportunities relatively quickly and without substantial investment.



3.0 School Sports and PE

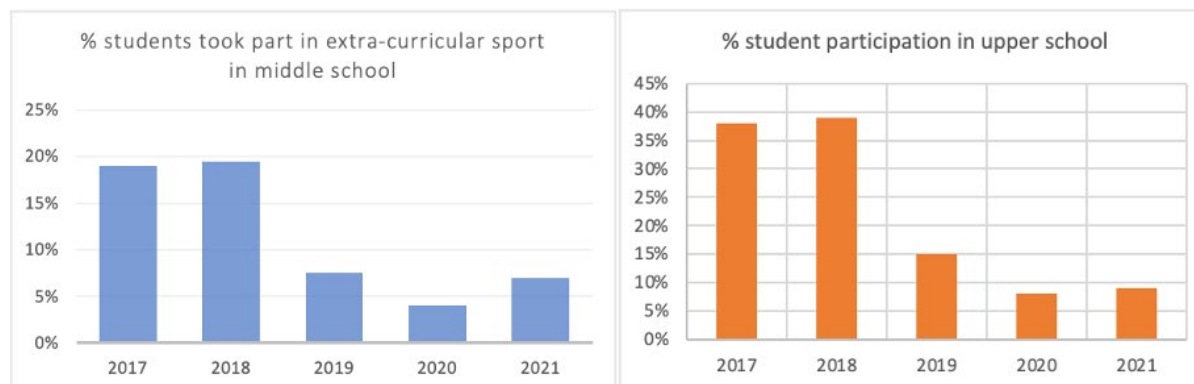
3.1 Our Commitment to Improving Children's Health and Wellbeing

For the past two years our community has experienced major upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For over a year, formal sporting activity within our schools and the wider community were heavily disrupted, resulting in a decline in participation.

An initial report in 2021 by Sports England found levels of participation in sports and physical activity heavily reduced across the Country. This has resulted in three key impacts:

- Reduction in fitness levels: this can lead to life-long health implications which not only reduce quality of life and life-expectancy, but also reductions in people's productivity and ability to contribute to our communities.
- Less community cohesion: sport provides the ideal vector in which people can meet formally and informally to play, have fun and work together for a single purpose. This improves mental health and the willingness for participants to become constructive citizens.
- Less experience for children and young people: for two years, younger people have had less access to physical activity. When these opportunities were reintroduced, fewer young people willingly participated. This is likely due to anxiety and a lack of routine surrounding participation in sport.

At Ferndown Upper School, we have observed a significant decline in participation in extra-curricular sport activities and those participating more professionally outside school, in areas such as athletics, since the pandemic. Our feeder schools have also faced these challenges, and students transferring to our school have reported reduced participation in sports during this time.



The increased cost of living in recent months has further impacted the uptake for sports and wellbeing activities.

During the first full academic year following the COVID-19 restrictions, Ferndown Upper School embedded comprehensive academic and mental health catch up programmes within the student experience. However, we believe it is vital to broaden our offer by ensuring our young people catch up physically too. This inclusive approach to supporting all children and young people to be the best they can be is at the heart of Ferndown Upper's vision and ethos.

To provide the highest quality support in physical development, we require excellent facilities. The Thornton Sports and Education Centre would provide our students with excellent sporting facilities and a safe outdoor space throughout the school day and during after school clubs. The space will be shared with other local schools when needed, and use of the facilities by local youth groups would provide opportunities for youth workers to support children and young people, by offering a safe space to make friends, learn new skills and foster community spirit.

This inclusive approach to supporting all children and young people to be the best they can be is at the heart of Ferndown Upper's vision and ethos, and we would very much like to support our local community by sharing our facilities. The space will also be used by the wider community at evenings and weekends, with bookings managed through Ferndown Leisure Centre. By bringing a 3g STP to Ferndown, this will reduce travel further afield to access facilities at Verwood or Wimborne and enable local people to enjoy local sports.

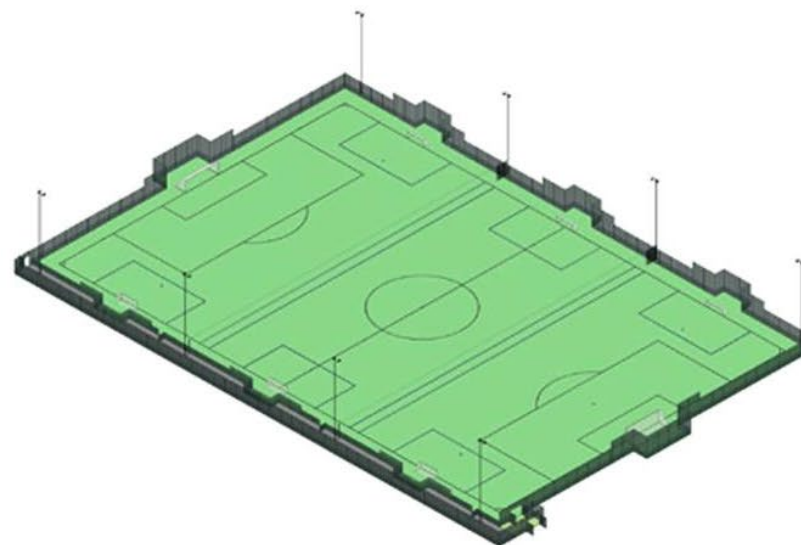
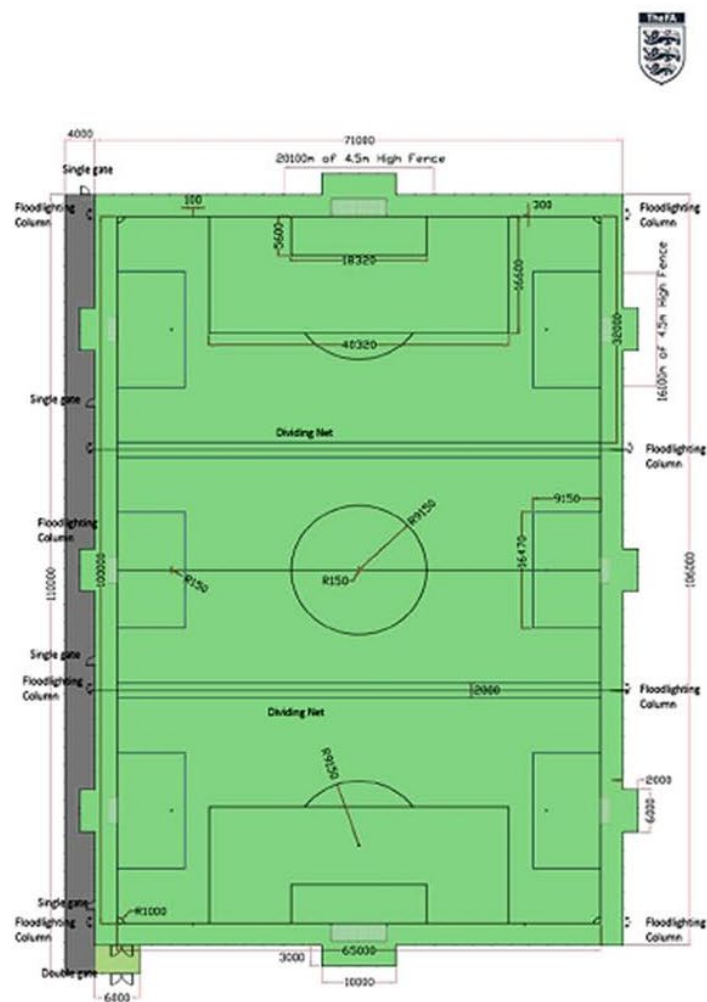
4.0 Development of the Thornton Sports and Education Centre

4.1 Overview

Regenerating the Redgra with enhanced sporting facilities would allow our students to enjoy access to a safe outdoor space throughout the school day and during after school clubs, and the facilities would be shared with other local schools. The Thornton Sports and Education Centre is a multi-phase plan that will result in the following facilities for our school and wider community:

- A Football Association approved 3g Synthetic Turf Pitch: 106 x 71 metres, including run off margins, ends and sides, and suitable for a range of school sports
- 400m professional grade athletics track
- Floodlighting
- Good access to suitable changing facilities
- Storage for sports and maintenance equipment
- Spectator viewing area
- Sports education facilities
- Good access for maintenance and emergency vehicles

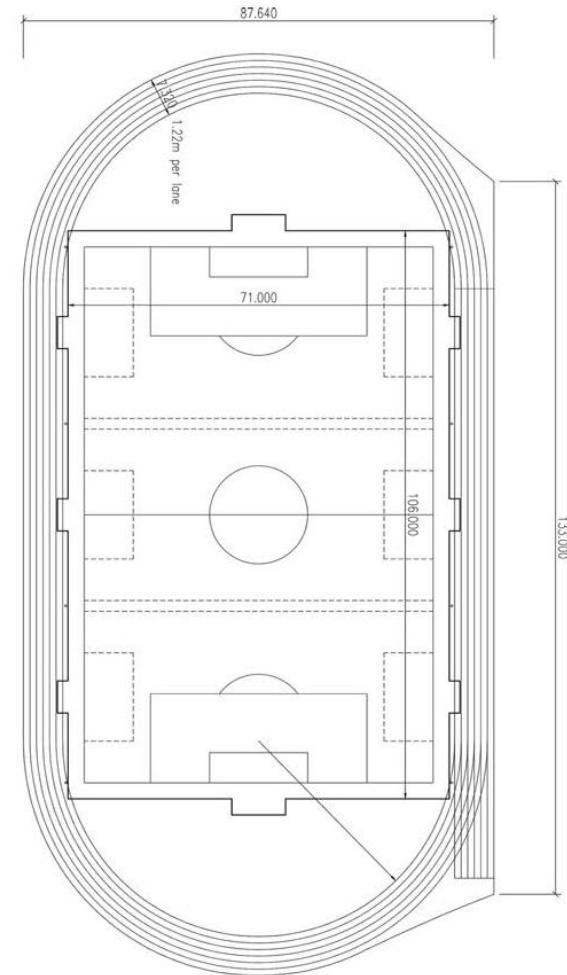
4.2 Football Association Pitch Guide



Dimensions and layout of typical full size community pitch
(minimum size 106m x 71m - playing area 100 x 65m)

Taken from 'The FA Guide to Artificial Grass Pitches'

4.3 Potential Layout of 3G Pitch and Athletics Track



This layout gives the 'best fit', but it is not possible to fit a typical full-size pitch (106m x 71m) within a 6 lane 400m running track around the outside; the two facilities overlap. A four or five lane running track could accommodate a 3G pitch without overlap.

4.4 Benefits to Students and the Community

The Thornton Sports and Education Centre would be ideally suited to provide access to exercise, and health and wellbeing opportunities for children and young people, and the wider Ferndown Community, throughout the year, with the floodlighting providing additional hours of use during the evening. The 3G pitch could be used in all weathers, therefore minimising disruption to outdoor sports and PE lessons that is experienced with grass playing fields.

Students will benefit from improved access to a wide range of activities. Athletics provides opportunities to develop skills through the various disciplines, building confidence and self-esteem by ensuring students of all abilities can participate and experience success. A high-quality, multi-purpose sporting facility directly linked to their school will provide a safe space for students to enjoy their PE lessons and after school clubs

The perimeter fencing would safeguard students against members of the public walking through lessons and dogs interfering with PE equipment and disrupting lessons. Our PE staff work incredibly hard to minimise the risk to students; having a safe space for sports and PE lessons would ensure they can focus on delivering high-quality lessons without dealing with incidents and cleaning up after dogs. The fencing would also ensure the safety of the public using the adjacent field when the 3G pitch and athletics facilities are in use, by keeping equipment within the playing area.

The space will be used by the community at evenings and weekends, with bookings managed through Ferndown Leisure Centre. As well as generating an additional income stream for the leisure centre, local businesses would benefit from increased numbers of visitors to Ferndown, with higher footfall in the nearby town centre and use of services in the local area. In addition to this, the creation of new job opportunities to service the sports facilities would benefit the local community and further enhance Ferndown's economy.

4.5 Proposed Schedule of Use

Children and young people would enjoy use of the Thornton Sports and Education Centre through their schools, as well as Ferndown Leisure Centre's holiday clubs and Ferndown Youth Club. Ferndown Upper School is ambitious for its students and enhanced sports facilities would transform the PE department, improving student attainment and participation in a wide range of sporting activities and after school clubs. During school hours, Ferndown Upper would manage use of the facility for its students and local schools.

3G Pitch

The 3G pitch would be available for use by local football clubs for training and competitive matches for a wide range of age groups from Under 6s through to young people and adults. The increased interest in women's football following the success of the England national team winning the European Championships in 2022 has led to the creation of more opportunities for girls to participate in the sport. The Thornton Sports and Education Centre would have the capacity to help meet local demand for safe spaces to train and play games, through the hire of facilities by local clubs and youth groups.

Around 100 students actively participate in Ferndown Upper's own football clubs, which run after school every week, and cater for all ages and abilities. As part of our commitment to supporting our students to build resilience and lead healthy, active lifestyles, these clubs are open to all abilities and fitness levels. In addition to school-based opportunities to play, Dorset schools have their own football leagues and tournaments, as well as the school Poole and East Dorset School Sports Association. It is anticipated that the 3G pitch at Ferndown will be used for trials, training sessions and fixtures as part of the suite of Dorset-wide facilities currently hosting games.

Athletics Track

There are a limited number of athletics tracks in the Dorset area, and a facility such as this would attract clubs, leagues, and school competitions, as well as use by students, local schools, youth groups, and the wider community. By ensuring the new athletics track meets the standards of league and club level athletics, the following events could be hosted in Ferndown:

- Dorset athletics leagues
- County Championships
- Dorset trials
- County training sessions
- School leagues and competitions

The nearest tracks with suitable provision for club level athletics are situated in Ashdown and Kings Park, and a local athletics club has expressed an interest in using a track at Ferndown. This would be for up to 9 hours on selected weekday evenings and Saturday mornings, at a rate of £40 per hour (£360 per week). The track would also be available for running clubs, individual athletes, sports clubs, personal trainers, and fitness camps.

5.0 Funding Opportunities

5.1 The Football Foundation

There are many exciting opportunities in terms of funding and local growth. An example of this is The Football Foundation's investment programme, which aims to improve facilities for children and young people, and local communities.

The Dorset Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) is the product of a consultation between The Football Foundation, Dorset Council, Sport England, Dorset County FA, and Active Dorset. This plan specifically highlights the Redgra as having potential for conversion to a 3G football pitch because it would not impact the existing grass pitches on King George V Fields. Since 2000, the Football Foundation has supported over 75 successful grant applications in Dorset, which has resulted in around £1.6 million in funding for local development. The LFFP would offer access to national funding partners who are keen to deliver better facilities for grassroots football and encourage greater participation in football by girls and young women. We would work collaboratively with local partners to develop a funding application that demonstrates our aims and aspirations in providing high-quality, sustainable facilities, and highlight suitable match-funding opportunities that are available to schools.

There are strict conditions which must be met to access grant funding from the Football Foundation and Football Association: these include, but are not limited to:

- Planning Consent for the facility must be in place
- The facility must be tendered through the Football Foundation's Framework Agreement for Artificial Grass Pitches
- Evidence of a partnership relationship with a local football club or community partner
- A spectator viewing area is strongly recommended
- All pitches are to be constructed and certified to the FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf; one star category.

The transfer of ownership of the Redgra through the land swap will ensure the cost of meeting these conditions, together with the development of a fully costed business plan for maintenance and a proposed schedule of use for the school and the community will not be borne by the charity.

5.2 Grants and Charitable Donations

Due to the complexity of the project, multiple funding sources will be required, and these will be sourced and managed by Ferndown Upper. The school has a proven track record in securing grant funding for the provision of outstanding educational facilities and a reputation for delivering projects for the benefit of its students and staff.

Funding for the athletics track and educational facilities will be sourced through grants and charitable donations at National and local level. As a community school, under the control of Dorset Council, Ferndown Upper can also access funding for maintenance and improvement of the school site at County level.

5.3 Project Costs

It is anticipated that the cost of delivering the primary phase of the Thornton Sports and Education Centre will be as follows:

3G Synthetic Turf Pitch	
Athletics Track	
Outbuilding for sports equipment and maintenance storage	
Secure fencing and floodlighting	
Estimated total	£1.7 million

6.0 Conclusion

Ferndown Upper School believes that an exchange of land between Dorset Council and King George V Charity can be the catalyst for positive change and regeneration in Ferndown. The redevelopment of the Redgra could provide new facilities for Ferndown that can be used and enjoyed by a wide range of local people of all ages.

Ferndown is the only local town without 3G football facilities, and the school has absolute confidence that if ownership of the Redgra was transferred to Dorset Council then Ferndown Upper would be able to source a 3G pitch for its students and the local community, as well as funding for an athletics track.

Ferndown's schools strive to offer the best education for all our children and young people, which enables them to learn, develop and grow; we hope that by working together we can extend these ambitions beyond the school gates.

7.0 Contact Details

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