

Planning Committee

7 August 2026

Agenda item number 9.1

BA/2026/0116/FUL Maltings Meadow Sports Ground, Pirnhow Street, Ditchingham

Report by Assistant Planning Officer

Proposal

Creation of a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with perimeter fencing, hardstanding areas, storage container, floodlights, access footpath, landscaping bund and overflow grasscrete parking area.

Applicant

Mr Jon Fuller

Recommendation

Approve Subject to Conditions

Reason for referral to committee

Objections with significant material weight, and called in by District Member

Application target date

14 August 2026

Application documents

[BA/2026/0116/FUL Associated Planning Documents](#)

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1. Description of site and proposals

- 1.1. The application site forms part of Maltings Meadow Sports Ground, an established outdoor sports and recreation facility located to the south of the A143 and to the south of Pirnhow Street, Ditchingham. The wider sports ground comprises a number of grassed playing fields, associated access, parking and pavilion facilities, together with boundary treatments and areas of landscaping. The site is located on the edge of the

settlement, with residential development to the north/north-west around Pirnhow Street/Ditchingham Dam and a small group of properties immediately to the east/north-east of the proposed development. Open land and field boundaries lie to the south and east, with drainage features and watercourses in the wider area.

- 1.2. The application site is currently open and grassed, with the character of the land being that of an existing sports pitch within the wider Maltings Meadow sports ground. Existing levels across the site are low and flat, with hedging entirely along the north, east, and south boundary, and parking to the west
- 1.3. In its wider context, the site sits between the built-up residential edge of Ditchingham village to the north and the town of Bungay to the south which extends northwards to the A143 along Broad Street and Ditchingham Dam to the south-west. The site is home to Bungay Football Club, Bungay & District Sports Association, and Black Dog Runners Club. Beyond the established sports pitches, which also are located to the east of Pirnhow Street there is open land to the south and east. The A143 lies around 50m to the north, with Waterside Drive to the west, a development of 105 dwellings. The surrounding area therefore has a mixed character, comprising established community sports/recreation use, residential development, and open/rural land.
- 1.4. The application seeks full planning permission for the creation of a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with perimeter fencing, hardstanding areas, storage container, floodlights, access footpath, landscaping bund and overflow grasscrete parking area at Maltings Meadow Sports Ground.

2. Site history

- 2.1. BA/1988/7448/HISTAP - Replacement changing rooms and showers – Approved
- 2.2. BA/2001/6891/HISTAP - Installation of floodlights to first team – Refused
- 2.3. BA/2001/6871/HISTAP - Installation of floodlights to first team football pitch on 12m poles – Approved
- 2.4. BA/2003/6796/HISTAP - Erection of a new sports pavilion – Approved
- 2.5. BA/2003/6827/HISTAP - Change of use from agricultural field to sports field – Approved
- 2.6. BA/2004/6755/HISTAP - Multi-use games area with floodlights – Approved
- 2.7. BA/2004/6772/HISTAP - Modification of condition no 5 ref. E97/03/0194/CU to allow for extended hours of use of cricket pitch from 9am-4pm to 9am-9pm – Approved
- 2.8. BA/2006/6602/HISTAP - Change of use of size of multi-use games area and hours of use for related floodlighting – Approved
- 2.9. BA/2006/6617/HISTAP - Change of use of building and land to mixed use for sporting and social events – Approved
- 2.10. BA/2006/6640/HISTAP - Retention of free-standing signs – Approved

- 2.11. BA/2007/0228/COND - Alteration to condition 4 of previous planning permission 2001/1702 to allow for floodlighting to be used in conjunction with new extended football season – Approved
- 2.12. BA/2008/0236/COND - Removal of condition 1 of PP 2006/1678/CU and amendment of condition 2 "Use of development hereby permitted shall occur between 09.00 hours and 23:00 hours except on up to 15 days per year, when the use of the development shall occur between 09:00 hours and 01:00 hours the following day, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority". – Approved
- 2.13. BA/2009/0141/FUL - Proposed Trim Track and Recreational Cycle Track – Approved
- 2.14. BA/2009/0348/FUL - Erection of single storey side extension to function room – Approved
- 2.15. BA/2010/0244/CU - Change of use for agricultural land next to Sports Club to be turned it into sports pitches – Approved
- 2.16. BA/2012/0060/COND - Amendment of condition one of PP BA/2008/0236/COND to read "Use or development hereby permitted shall occur between 09.00 and 23.30 hours except on up to 52 days per calendar year, when the use of the development shall occur between 09:00 hours and 01:00 hours the following day, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority" – Approved
- 2.17. BA/2025/0255/FUL - Creation of a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with perimeter fencing, hardstanding areas, storage container, floodlights, access footpath and overflow grasscrete parking area. – Withdrawn

3. Consultations received

Parish Council

- 3.1. Support with no comments.

Environment Agency

- 3.2. No comments.

Norfolk County Council (NCC) Highways

- 3.3. No objection.

Natural England

- 3.4. No objection.

BA Landscape Consultant

- 3.5. No objection.

BA Historic Environment Manager

- 3.6. No objection.

Environmental Health Officer

- 3.7. No objection. However, recommend that any approval of this application include the following conditions and notes: The use of the floodlights shall not take place other than between the hours of 09:00; and 21:30; Monday to Friday and 09:00; and 20:00; Saturday, Sunday, bank holidays or public holidays. The use of the 3G Pitch shall not take place other than between the hours of 09:00; and 21:30; Monday to Friday and 09:00; and 20:00; Saturday, Sunday, bank holidays or public holidays.

Cllr Chris Brown

- 3.8. I request that this application should only be determined by Broads Authority Planning Committee. The material reasons for this request include: The substantial level of public and local support for the plans, including so far 97 supporting public comments and support from Ditchingham Parish Council and Bungay Town Council; The significant improvements made to the plans since the previous application, including a reduction in car parking area and substantial landscaping features introduced to mitigate potential impacts; The major investment secured for this facility, which would improve a popular local community asset and enable many more young people to benefit from this sports facility; The detailed assessments of potential noise and light impacts demonstrating that they meet acceptable standards and that measures to reduce both noise and light impact will be put in place; No objections having been raised by Norfolk Highways and Natural England; I believe that this proposal has the potential to provide a major benefit to the local area and that this benefit can best be evaluated and weighed alongside planning policy considerations by the planning committee.

East Suffolk Planning

- 3.9. No objection and support the proposal for the following reasons; This 3G pitch project was awarded District CIL in 2023, in recognition of the shortfall of facilities serving the area. The project is supported by the Football Foundation and is also listed as an enhancement need in the East Suffolk Leisure Strategy. The project is also detailed in the East Suffolk Infrastructure Funding Statement (Infrastructure List).

BA Arboricultural Consultant

- 3.10. No objection.

BNG Consultant

- 3.11. The baseline survey and condition assessment was conducted at an appropriate time of year by a competent ecologist. The baseline mapping appears correct as does the predicted post development conditions. The supporting metric has been completed correctly. The proposed development fails to deliver necessary gains onsite. The applicant proposed to deliver the 10% gain by supplementing onsite habitat creation with 0.75 offsite units. On-site gains are reliant on the medium distinctiveness habitats of mixed scrub and individual trees. Gains in hedgerow units are reliant on a new line of trees. A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan will be produced for the 1,693m² of onsite enhancements that will set out which condition criteria are selected and how they are to be met. The onsite habitats will be secured by condition of planning. It is

recommended that the Biodiversity Gain Plan includes an updated metric that includes offsite units and habitat maps produced using a basemap that is appropriate for a binding agreement such as an OS map suitable for land registry.

Historic Environment Services

- 3.12. The proposed development site is located within an area where various cropmarks of likely archaeological origin have been recorded from aerial photograph. These included a multiple ditched enclosure of prehistoric or Roman date. There is potential for previously unidentified heritage assets with archaeological interest (buried archaeological remains) to be present within the current application site and that their significance would be affected by the proposed development. If planning permission is granted, we therefore ask that this be subject to a programme of archaeological mitigatory work in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (2024), Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, paragraph 211. In this case the programme of archaeological mitigatory work will commence with informative trial trenching to determine the scope and extent of any further mitigatory work that may be required (e.g. an archaeological excavation or monitoring of groundworks during construction)

Norfolk Police

- 3.13. I would like to request that consideration is given within the application to the installation of a barrier or gate at the car park entrance. As this facility expands it may be necessary to prevent unwelcome users of this space when the venue is closed. Similar spaces have attracted antisocial behaviour such as drug activity/car meets and illegal encampments. Signage and surface markers to direct flow of vehicles and pedestrians safely across the area.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust

- 3.14. Although we welcome the proposed measures to mitigate the spread of microplastics, in May 2025, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published a report that reviewed emissions of “intentionally added” microplastics in the UK and found that 3G pitches are the highest source of these found in the environment. Further, a report from June 2025 about mitigation measures for the spread of infill found that 0% of players were using boot brushes or stamping their boots and only 4% of players were emptying their boots, thus we are not confident the mitigation measures proposed will be successful. If the Council is minded granting the application, considerable work will be required to influence player behaviour. The June 2025 report referenced above notes that there is currently very low awareness of the risk of the spread of microplastics, with over half of players having not considered this. We recommend that localised site-based signage and a behavioural change campaign plan is incorporated into the scheme design, making this a condition of planning consent.
- 3.15. We note that The European Commission has set a target of 2031 for a ban on use of the rubber crumbs, although following the UK’s exit from the EU, the regulatory framework for these matters now sits at a UK level. In light of this, we recommend that alternative

artificial pitch systems and more sustainable infill products are explored for this application as soon as they are available. Furthermore, a plan for recycling of the 3G pitch should be part of the proposals. We support comments made by the District Ecologist encouraging the planting of more native tree species and the other biodiversity enhancements suggested.

BA Ecologist

- 3.16. No HRA is required for this development.
- 3.17. The application site is an area of modified grassland surrounded by hedgerows. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal with follow up bat survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment were submitted to support the application. Broome Heath Pit SSSI is 320m north-east of the site. The site is within the SSSI impact risk zone of Tindall Wood, Ditchingham SSSI, although the development does not fall within any of the categories requiring advice from Natural England. There were no ponds within 250m of the Site. Impacts were considered likely on bats from light pollution, nesting birds and commuting mammals, amphibians and reptiles.
- 3.18. Mitigation to avoid impacts to bats commuting along the northern hedgerow has been built into the design by locating the pitch further south, and sourcing lights to be compliant with ILP Guidance for Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night which have a sharp cut off, limited light spillage and sky glow. In addition, current flood lights in the car park area are being changed to a more sympathetic lighting scheme. A landscaping plan has been submitted which will enhance the northern and eastern boundaries of the area. However, it would be preferred if more native trees were used, rather than ornamentals. The RHS Plants for Pollinators: Garden plants has a lot of good suggestions.
- 3.19. We would like to see a variation in the size of the shrubs planted (so they are not all 40-60cm) and would request that plastic free tree guards are used. There is no ground cover suggested on the bund. This is a missed opportunity to enhance the area for biodiversity. A flowering grassland mix should be used as ground cover on the bund, such as Emorsgate Seeds EW1 woodland mix or EH1 hedgerow mix may be suitable, managed by occasional cutting. The development is unlikely to have significant ecological impacts providing the advice of the project ecologist is followed and suggested mitigation is put in place.

Internal Drainage Board

- 3.20. The site is within the Internal Drainage District (IDD) of the Waveney, Lower Yare and Lothingland Internal Drainage Board (IDB) and therefore the Board's Byelaws apply. I note the FRA (Surfacing Standards Limited, 21/04/2026), despite our comments on the withdrawn application BA/2025/0255/FUL, still states "The Alma internal drainage board is located to the north" which is incorrect. The site is in fact within the Waveney, Lower Yare and Lothingland IDD, a member Board of the Water Management Alliance consortium of IDBs. Whilst the Board's regulatory process (as set out under the Land

Drainage Act 1991 and the Board's Byelaws) is separate from planning, the ability to implement a planning permission may be dependent on the granting of any required Land Drainage Consents.

4. Representations

- 4.1. 130 representations have been received of which 108 support the application and 22 object. These can be viewed on the Broads Authority planning section of the website using the following link: [Broads Authority - Associated Planning Documents](#)
- 4.2. Supporters consider that the proposal would;
- provide a reliable, high-quality, all-weather community sporting facility
 - address the frequent cancellation of matches and training due to waterlogged pitches
 - support the growth and sustainability of the football club
 - benefit children, young people, women's and girls' teams, schools and community groups; deliver physical- and mental-health benefits; reduce the need to travel to alternative facilities; and represent an important investment in grassroots sport.
- 4.3. Objectors raise concerns regarding;
- the intensification and extended hours of use;
 - noise from players, spectators, whistles, shouting and balls striking fencing;
 - cumulative disturbance from simultaneous activities;
 - floodlighting and its effect on neighbouring properties, dark skies and wildlife;
 - landscape impact and the urbanisation of the Waveney Valley;
 - the effectiveness and visual impact of the proposed bund;
 - loss of privacy; traffic, parking and highway safety on Pirnhow Street;
 - flood risk, drainage and surface-water runoff;
 - microplastic and other pollution;
 - ecological effects;
 - the accuracy of supporting information;
 - compliance with future controls;
 - the availability of alternative locations further from residential properties;
 - Concern regarding property values was also raised, but this is not a material planning consideration.

5. Policies

- 5.1. The adopted development plan policies for the area are set out in the [Local Plan for the Broads](#) (adopted 2019).
- 5.2. The following policies were used in the determination of the application:
- DM2 – Water quality and foul drainage
 - DM5 – Development and flood risk
 - DM7 – Open space on land, play space, sports fields and allotments
 - DM11 – Heritage assets
 - DM13 – Natural environment
 - DM16 – Development and landscape
 - DM21 – Amenity
 - DM22 – Light pollution and dark skies
 - DM23 – Transport, highways and access
 - DM43 – Design
 - DM44 – Visitor and community facilities and services
 - DIT1 – Maltings Meadow Sports Ground, Ditchingham
- 5.3. With regard to DIT1, it should be noted that the area to which DIT1 applies does not cover the application site. However, the general intention of policy DIT1 is still deemed relevant to this application and therefore has been used to inform the determination of this application. Through the examination of the emerging Local Plan, the emerging policy PUBDIT1 is proposed to be amended to include the application site. This is the standard process where planning permission has been granted.

6. Assessment

Principle of development

- 6.1. The principle of sports and recreational use at Maltings Meadow is long established through both the planning history with planning records starting in 1988, and the site-specific policy framework set out in the Local Plan for the Broads. Policy DIT1 of the Local Plan specifically supports the continued use of the wider Maltings Meadow Sports Ground for sports facilities and proposals to improve existing facilities and provide new facilities. While the site is not currently within DIT1, with the review of the Local Plan, it is proposed to be included, as permission was granted in 2010 for sports pitches it was an omission from the current Local Plan. The proposal is therefore directly aligned with the broad purpose of Policy DIT1 and the continued role of Maltings Meadow as an important community sports facility.

- 6.2. The proposal is also consistent with the wider policy support for protecting and enhancing sports, recreation and community facilities. Policy DM7 supports development on sports and recreational open space where it enhances recreational facilities and their setting, while Policy DM44 supports the provision of community facilities where they meet a local need and are of an appropriate scale and location.
- 6.3. The AGP would provide a durable and inclusive all-weather sports facility, allowing year-round football activity for club members and the wider community. The facility would support different age groups and teams, be available for community use, and promote physical activity and wellbeing among residents of all ages.
- 6.4. There is substantial public support for the proposal, including from users of the facility, local sports participants and Bungay Town Council. The support received identifies public benefits, including improved grassroots sports provision, reduced cancellations due to poor pitch conditions, improved opportunities for children and young people, physical and mental health benefits, and wider community access to sports facilities. In addition, East Suffolk Council supports the proposal as part of the East Suffolk Leisure Strategy in recognition of the shortfall of facilities in the area.
- 6.5. In view of the established sports use of the site, the site-specific support within Policy DIT1, the wider policy support for community and recreational facilities, and the public benefits associated with improved all-weather sports provision, the principle of the development is acceptable subject to an assessment of the impacts of the proposal as set out below.

Design

- 6.6. Policy DM43 requires all development to be of high design quality, integrate effectively with its surroundings, reinforce local distinctiveness and landscape character, and respond to the site's context in terms of siting, layout, scale, form, materials and relationship to surroundings.
- 6.7. The proposal is a functional sports infrastructure. Its design is driven by Sport England/FA requirements, which relates to pitch dimensions, safety, and other pitch considerations. The submitted layout includes the AGP, fencing, lighting, hardstanding, maintenance gates, goal storage, boot cleaning facilities, grasscrete parking and landscaped bund.
- 6.8. The fencing and lighting columns would be visually prominent, but they are typical features of this form of sports development. The use of bunding, planting, retained hedgerows and grasscrete parking helps integrate the development into the existing sports ground context.
- 6.9. Therefore, in terms of an appropriate design for the proposed use, the application is acceptable in terms of Policy DM43 – Design.

Impact on the landscape

- 6.10. Policy DM16 requires development proposals to conserve and enhance the key landscape characteristics of the Broads. It requires the design, layout and scale of development to conserve and enhance landscape features worthy of retention and safeguard the positive experiential and visual amenity qualities of the landscape.
- 6.11. Policy DIT1 requires proposals to retain the general character of openness of the area, take particular care in considering the landscape impacts of fencing, lighting columns and other structures, achieve a high standard of design, materials and landscaping, and reduce light pollution where possible.
- 6.12. A previous application BA/2025/0255/FUL, which related to a similar 3G AGP scheme at the site was withdrawn by the applicant following discussions with the authority. The current submission seeks to respond to the previous concerns and now includes additional landscape mitigation, most notably a 2 metre high landscaped bund, associated planting/screening and further biodiversity landscaping. This represents an improvement to the previous scheme and provides a more robust landscape buffer between the proposed AGP and the eastern edge of the site.
- 6.13. The use of the application site is established for sports. The existing grass football pitch would be replaced by an artificial grass pitch, hardstanding, fencing, a storage container, floodlighting columns, grasscrete parking and a landscaped bund. The proposed elevations have 4.5 metre high perimeter fencing, 13 metre high floodlighting columns, 6 metre high amenity lights, a 1 metre picket fence and a storage container. These elements would be more engineered and formal in appearance than the existing grass pitch and would reduce the current open, undeveloped appearance of the immediate field.
- 6.14. Objectors have raised concerns that the proposal would result in the over-urbanisation of an open area, would harm the Waveney Valley landscape, would be contrary to the openness requirement of Policy DIT1, and would introduce visually prominent fencing, lighting and artificial surfacing close to residential properties. This impact is acknowledged given that the proposal would alter the appearance of the existing grass pitch and would introduce built sports infrastructure into an area which is presently open and grassed.
- 6.15. In considering the landscape impact, the harm must be assessed in its full context. The site forms part of Maltings Meadow Sports Ground, an established sports and recreation facility with grass sports pitches, pavilion/clubhouse facilities, tennis courts, parking areas and existing sports infrastructure. The application site is already maintained as a sports pitch and is experienced as part of the wider sports ground, it is not an undeveloped rural field with no existing recreational or built context.
- 6.16. The BA's Landscape consultant identifies the site as falling within Landscape Character Area 2: Waveney – East of A143 Bungay/Ditchingham to Shipmeadow/Geldeston. The consultation response acknowledges that settlement fringe development can erode the

traditional pastoral landscape of the marshland and that mitigation should be sought to limit or prevent this. However, the response also recognises that the existing landscape features of the site are maintained grass and clipped hedges and that the land is already used as sports fields, meaning that the visual change would occur within an established sports context and would not extend into the wider countryside.

- 6.17. The Landscape consultant identifies the principal physical landscape impacts as the permanent loss of existing grass to artificial surfacing, grasscrete, footpaths and hardstanding, together with the introduction of fencing of various heights and lighting columns, resulting in a degree of loss of openness. These impacts are acknowledged as the proposal would not retain the field in its existing open grassed form. However, Policy DIT1 does not require Maltings Meadow to remain unchanged; rather, it specifically supports new and improved sports facilities, provided that the general character of openness and other landscape considerations are appropriately addressed.
- 6.18. In this case, the AGP would occupy one part of the wider sports ground and would not result in the enclosure or built development of the wider facility. The most visually prominent elements would be the fencing and lighting columns, but these are functional sports infrastructure directly related to the use supported in principle by Policy DIT1.
- 6.19. The Landscape consultant notes that the revised scheme includes landscape mitigation; the submitted layout has a 2 metre high soil bund with 1,693sqm of BNG planting/screening, retained hedgerows, a 1 metre picket fence around the bund and grasscrete parking and planting of standard trees.
- 6.20. The bund and planting would have a dual purpose. It would help soften and screen views of the AGP from the sensitive eastern side near Alma Cottages, while also providing biodiversity enhancement and a stronger planted edge to this part of the sports ground. It is acknowledged that the bund would itself be an engineered landscape feature, and this has also been raised by objectors. However, in the context of the proposed use, the bund is considered an appropriate mitigation response because it would reduce the visual prominence of the pitch infrastructure and provide a planted buffer between the development and nearby residential properties.
- 6.21. grasscrete is proposed for the overflow parking. While it would formalise parking and introduce a managed parking surface, it would have a softer visual appearance than conventional tarmac or concrete hardstanding and would allow the area to retain a greener character when not in use. This is preferable in landscape terms to a fully engineered car park surface and supports the objective of limiting the visual impact of the parking provision.
- 6.22. In assessing openness under DIT1, it is important to distinguish between the existing open appearance of the grass pitch and the wider general openness of the sports ground. The proposal would reduce openness in the immediate location of the AGP through fencing, lighting and surfacing. However, it would not fundamentally alter the

wider open sports ground character of Maltings Meadow. The development would remain low-level in terms of built mass, with no substantial buildings proposed, and the surrounding pitches/open areas would remain visually and functionally open.

- 6.23. The objectors' concerns regarding over-urbanisation are acknowledged. The proposal would introduce a more formal sporting character to this part of the site. However, that change is localised, occurs within an established sports ground, is supported in principle by the site-specific policy for Maltings Meadow, and is mitigated by bunding, planting, retained hedgerows, and grasscrete parking. The proposal is not considered to result in such harm to the wider Waveney landscape or the special qualities of the Broads as to justify refusal.
- 6.24. The proposal delivers social and community benefits through improved all-weather sports provision, youth participation, health and wellbeing, and wider community access. These benefits are relevant to the balancing exercise in Policy DM16, which requires benefits to be weighed against landscape impact. In this case, it is considered that the localised landscape harm is outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme.
- 6.25. Therefore, subject to conditions requiring the implementation and long-term management of the landscaping scheme, bund planting, retained hedgerows, replacement planting, the proposal is considered to retain the general open sports ground character of the area and to respond appropriately to the landscape impacts identified. The development therefore accords with Policy DM16.

Amenity of residential properties

- 6.26. Policy DM21 of the Local Plan for the Broads states that development will not be permitted where it would have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of existing or potential neighbouring properties or uses. Relevant material considerations include; overlooking, overbearing impact, light pollution, noise and disturbance and vibration. Policy DIT1 also requires proposals for new or improved sports facilities at Maltings Meadow to avoid unacceptable impacts on neighbouring occupiers.
- 6.27. The impact on neighbouring occupiers is one of the principal considerations in the determination of this application. Objections have been received from nearby residents, to the east/north-east of the proposed AGP at 8-11 Alma Cottages, which are the four closest residential properties. Residents have questioned the accuracy of distances shown on the submitted plans, including whether existing residential extensions have been fully shown. Following a site visit it can be confirmed that there is a distance of 25 metres to the nearest property boundary of 8 Alma Cottages.
- 6.28. Objections are raised to the potential for a greater frequency and duration of noise and activity. It is acknowledged that the proposal would be a more intensive and formalised sports facility close to residential properties. Unlike the existing grass pitch, the AGP would be capable of more reliable year-round use and would be supported by floodlighting, meaning that use during darker winter evenings would be possible.

- 6.29. However, the site is already an established sports ground, and the proposed use would remain a sports use within that existing context. The proposal would not introduce a new incompatible use next to residential properties; rather, it would improve and formalise an existing lawful sports use. The relevant planning judgement is whether the additional amenity impacts arising from the AGP would be unacceptable, having regard to the existing site context, the technical evidence, the Environmental Health position, and the mitigation and controls that can be secured by condition.
- 6.30. The applicant has agreed to the Environmental Health Officer's recommended hours. Importantly, these hours would apply to the AGP, and the car parking area. All sports activities, use of the site and external lighting within the application site would cease by 21:30 Monday to Friday and 20:00 on Saturdays, Sundays, bank holidays and public holidays. This provides a clear and enforceable control over the operation of the sports ground. It is worth noting that other elements of the wider site, have different hours and are not subject to this application.
- 6.31. The existing permission for team formation sports restricts such activities to 09:00–18:00 on weekdays and 09:00–17:00 on weekends and bank holidays, with up to 20 extension days per year to 20:30. The proposed hours would allow later use than the existing team sport restriction, and this weighs against the proposal in amenity terms.
- 6.32. At present, the wider site has a complex planning history with different uses and controls. The proposed condition would formalise the operation of this part of the facility and secure a clear end time for all sports use and lighting. This would give nearby occupiers certainty and would allow the Local Planning Authority to take enforcement action if the site were used beyond the approved hours.
- 6.33. Objections have been received relating to noise, and the applicant has submitted a Noise Management Plan. This identifies potential noise sources as footballs being kicked and striking the ground or perimeter fencing, shouting and cheering during matches, anti-social behaviour such as swearing, and people arriving and leaving the facility. The plan sets out management measures including staff attendance when the pitch is in use, regular observation of the pitch, monitoring by a nominated Noise Monitoring Officer, and a complaints process.
- 6.34. The applicant's supporting statement recognises that intensification is made possible by the enhanced durability of a 3G surface, but states that the noise assessment predicts emissions from the AGP at nearby noise-sensitive properties based on measured data from existing AGPs and noise modelling. The submitted statement concludes that the proposal would meet the World Health Organisation guideline level for "moderate community annoyance" of 50dB and would therefore be acceptable in noise terms.
- 6.35. There is a material betterment in the physical relationship between sports activity and the closest resident at 8 Alma Cottages. At present, users of the existing grassed area are not contained within a formal fenced pitch enclosure and can stand or congregate much closer to the eastern boundary/hedge adjoining neighbouring residential

properties. The application shows the formal AGP playing area would be contained by fencing, with playing lines set a minimum of 3 metres from the pitch perimeter to limit ball impacts against the fencing, and neoprene washers fitted to fence panel fixings to reduce rattle and vibration from ball strike. The submitted layout also introduces a 2 metre high landscaped bund with BNG planting, between the AGP and nearby residential properties.

- 6.36. This does not remove all noise impact, and residents' concerns remain understandable given the close relationship between the AGP and Alma Cottages. However, the proposal would replace an informal and less controlled edge condition with a managed, enclosed and physically separated sports facility. Together with the mitigation measures proposed, the development would provide a more controlled operational relationship with neighbouring properties than the existing open grassed pitch arrangement. The residual noise impacts are therefore considered acceptable subject to conditions securing the approved layout, bund, fencing, Noise Management Plan and site-wide hours restriction.
- 6.37. Concerns have also been raised that the proposed bund could be used by spectators or others to look into nearby homes and gardens. This is a legitimate concern given the proximity of the bund to neighbouring residential properties. The submitted layout shows a 2 metre high soil bund with planting/screening and a 1 metre high picket fence with "keep off the bund" measures. A condition will be applied, requiring details of bund planting, fencing, signage and management to ensure the bund is not used for spectating, informal access or any other activity that could give rise to overlooking.
- 6.38. In terms of lighting, the impacts are considered under Policy DM22 separately, but they are also relevant to residential amenity under Policy DM21. The proposed floodlighting would be visible from nearby properties and would change the evening character of the site during periods of use.
- 6.39. The submitted Sports Lighting Statement assesses the proposed lighting against the Institution of Lighting Professionals guidance. The site has been assessed on a precautionary basis as an Environmental Zone E1, reflecting its sensitive Broad's context. The lighting design maintains an average of 200 lux across the pitch, while using flat-glass LED luminaires selected to reduce spill towards surrounding land and nearby dwellings. The assessment identifies that horizontal light intrusion to the nearest property would be less than 0.2 lux at ground level and vertical illuminance on the eastern boundary would be a maximum of 0.4 lux, both below the 2-lux pre-shut off threshold identified for Environmental Zone E1. During cut off hours, lighting intrusion would be 0 lux, complying with the relevant post-shut off threshold.
- 6.40. Obtrusive light has also been assessed from observer positions at nearby residential properties, including at ground and first-floor height. The assessment submitted with the application states that the highest maximum luminous intensity from the proposed lighting would be 590 candelas, which is below the 2,500-candela pre cut off threshold for Environmental Zone E1. The submitted lighting information also confirms that

calculations have been undertaken without allowing for intervening obstructions such as trees, hedges, fences or acoustic fencing, and therefore represent a worst-case assessment.

- 6.41. The lighting would be required to comply with the approved lighting scheme and will be subject to a condition requiring automatic shut-off by the approved hours and post-installation verification. Subject to those controls, the lighting impact on neighbouring occupiers would not be unacceptable.
- 6.42. Concerns regarding antisocial behaviour are also noted. While antisocial behaviour is not automatically a reason to refuse planning permission, the management of the facility is relevant where it affects residential amenity. The recommended Site Management Plan and Noise Management Plan should include a code of conduct, arrangements for supervision, contact details for complaints, and procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Norfolk Police's comments can also be addressed through the site management and parking management conditions.
- 6.43. Overall, in terms of neighbour amenity, while the proposal would result in a change for nearby residents, it is not considered that the impacts would be so harmful as to be unacceptable in planning terms subject to the proposed site-wide hours restriction and restriction on the use of the floodlights, the Noise Management Plan, the proposed bund and planting, lighting controls, and the ability to secure detailed management measures by condition. Therefore, subject to conditions to control the above, the proposal would comply with Policy DM21 and the amenity requirements of Policy DIT1.

Highways

- 6.44. Policy DM23 requires development proposals to be assessed in terms of their impact on traffic capacity, highway safety, generated traffic, access, visibility, turning facilities, sustainable transport, parking and travel planning.
- 6.45. Objectors have raised concern that the development would increase parking pressure and displace informal parking currently taking place on the field during larger events.
- 6.46. The proposal includes formalised grasscrete overflow parking for 79 vehicles. This would provide a more organised and managed parking arrangement than informal parking on grass, and verges. Norfolk County Council Highways has raised no objection, and as such, the proposal is not considered to result in unacceptable highway safety impacts. The proposals are therefore acceptable under Policy DM23.

Other issues

- 6.47. Policy DM11 requires development to protect, preserve or enhance the significance and setting of historic, cultural and architectural heritage assets and the wider historic environment, including archaeological interests.
- 6.48. Historic Environment Services has advised that the site lies within an area where cropmarks of likely archaeological origin have been recorded, including a multiple ditched enclosure of prehistoric or Roman date. There is therefore potential for buried

archaeological remains to be present. The proposed development involves groundworks for the AGP, drainage, fencing, lighting columns, hardstanding and bund formation. These works could affect below-ground archaeological remains. Historic Environment Services has not objected, subject to archaeological mitigation beginning with trial trenching to determine whether further work is required. Subject to a written scheme of investigation condition, the proposal is acceptable under Policy DM11.

- 6.49. Policy DM2 requires development to demonstrate that it would not have an adverse impact on water bodies, including surface water and groundwater, in terms of quality and quantity. The proposal does not raise significant foul drainage issues, but surface water quality and potential rubber crumb migration are relevant. The submitted infill containment and drainage measures, including waste sumps and filtered drainage features, are intended to prevent rubber crumb entering the drainage system.
- 6.50. Although not a specific Local Plan policy issue, microplastic migration is relevant to Policies DM2, and DM13. Norfolk Wildlife Trust has raised concern that 3G pitches are a source of intentionally added microplastics and recommends signage, behavioural change, infill collection equipment and post-construction monitoring. The proposed infill retention measures include recycled plastic containment barriers, hardstanding around the AGP, reduced infill requirement through use of a shock pad, boot cleaning stations, detox infill collection grates and drainage inspection chambers with waste sumps. The end-of-life recycling procedure also identifies a process for recycling.
- 6.51. The site is within the Waveney, Lower Yare and Lothingland Internal Drainage District and IDB byelaws apply. Any Land Drainage Consent is a separate regulatory matter, but planning conditions should secure the drainage details necessary to make the development acceptable. Subject to drainage, maintenance and infill containment conditions, the proposal is acceptable under Policy DM2.
- 6.52. Policy DM5 requires development in flood risk areas to be compatible with national policy, supported by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment where required, and designed so that flood risk is acceptable and not increased elsewhere. Policy DIT1 also identifies flood risk as a constraint and requires development to manage flood risk on site and not increase flood risk elsewhere.
- 6.53. Objectors have raised concern that the artificial pitch and associated works could displace surface water and increase flooding elsewhere. The submitted AGP construction includes porous asphalt, sub-base, geotextile membrane, lateral drains and perimeter drains. The proposed parking area would be grasscrete rather than conventional impermeable hardstanding. Subject to a condition securing the final surface water drainage scheme, drainage maintenance and compliance with the submitted drainage principles, the proposal is considered acceptable under Policy DM5.
- 6.54. Policy DM13 requires development to protect biodiversity value, minimise habitat fragmentation, maximise opportunities for restoration and enhancement of natural habitats, and include beneficial biodiversity features where appropriate.

- 6.55. The submitted BNG report confirms that, without mitigation and compensation, the proposal would result in a biodiversity net loss, with the lost habitat comprising amenity grassland. The proposal includes on-site enhancement through the landscaped bund, BNG planting, retained hedgerows and proposed planting. The BNG position would also need to be secured through the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan process, together with any required off-site units and a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan.
- 6.56. In relation to bats, the ecologist, and Norfolk Wildlife Trust, welcomes the mitigation proposed, including moving the pitch further south, use of bat-sensitive lighting, sharp cut-off lighting, limited spill and changes to existing car park lighting.
- 6.57. Subject to conditions securing the above, the proposal is acceptable under Policy DM13.
- 6.58. Policy DM7 seeks to protect existing open space and recreational facilities unless they are replaced by equivalent or better provision. Although the proposal would replace an existing grass pitch with an artificial playing surface and introduce associated infrastructure, the land would remain in active recreational use. The development would improve the quality, reliability and year-round availability of the facility, enable more use and provide wider community benefits. There would be no material loss of recreational open space, and the proposal is therefore consistent with Policy DM7.
- 6.59. Policy DM22 requires the tranquillity and dark sky experience of the Broads to be conserved and enhanced. External lighting outside Dark Sky Zone 1 will only be permitted where it is required for safety, security or community reasons and where the design minimises light spillage.
- 6.60. The site lies within Light Pollution and Dark Skies Zone 2. Objectors have raised strong concerns regarding existing lighting, cumulative lighting, proposed 13m columns, light spill into windows, glare to drivers on Pirnhow Street and effects on dark skies. The proposal would introduce additional artificial lighting into a sensitive dark skies area. However, Policy DM22 does not prohibit all external lighting. It allows lighting where it is justified and designed to minimise light spillage.
- 6.61. The submitted Sports Lighting Statement explains that lighting is required to allow the facility to be used safely during darker winter months and that lighting would operate only during permitted evening use, after dusk and up to the approved cut off. The submitted bat lighting evidence states that, to limit negative effects on bats, white and low red light should be avoided in or close to bat habitat, while high red lights may be used without significant impact. Subject to conditions requiring the lighting to be installed in accordance with the approved scheme, no additional external lighting, automatic shut-off by the agreed operating hours, the proposal is considered acceptable under Policy DM22.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The proposal has generated significant public interest, including substantial support and a number of detailed objections which raise legitimate planning concerns. In particular, the development would introduce a more formalised and engineered sports use on this part of the site and enable more reliable and frequent use than the existing grass pitch, including evening use during the darker months.
- 7.2. These impacts weigh against the proposal. However, Maltings Meadow is an established sports ground and Policy DIT1 acknowledges this and supports the improvement of the wider site and provision of sports facilities, subject to the impacts being acceptable. The principle of consolidating and improving sports provision in this location is therefore supported.
- 7.3. The application is supported by evidence of local and wider community need, including representations from users and support from Bungay Town Council and East Suffolk Council. The proposal would deliver significant public benefits through improved all-weather sports provision, youth engagement, grassroots football, community access, and improvements to health and wellbeing.
- 7.4. The proposal would also provide an improvement in the management of the site. The applicant has agreed to the Environmental Health Officer's recommended hours, meaning that all sports use and lighting within the application site would cease by the conditioned times.
- 7.5. Further mitigation would be secured through conditions and includes a Noise Management Plan, lighting controls and an automatic lighting shut off, landscaping and bunding, biodiversity net gain planting, grasscrete parking, a Travel Plan, drainage measures, infill containment, ecological mitigation and archaeological investigation.
- 7.6. Policy DM44 supports local community uses and facilities where a need has been demonstrated, the location within the Broads is justified, the development is of an appropriate scale and sustainably located, and there would be no unacceptable effects on protected species, habitats, landscape character or the historic environment. Given the identified need, the established sports use of the site and the proposed mitigation, these requirements are considered to be met.
- 7.7. On balance, the policy support and public benefits arising from improved community sports provision are considered to outweigh the identified localised harms. Subject to the recommended conditions, the proposal accords with Policies DIT1 and DM44 and the Local Plan when read as a whole. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

8. Recommendation

8.1. Approval subject to the following conditions:

- i. Time Limit
- ii. Approved plans
- iii. Site-wide hours restriction.
- iv. Automatic lighting shut off.
- v. No additional external lighting.
- vi. Lighting installed as approved.
- vii. Site-wide Management Plan and Code of Conduct.
- viii. No amplified sound or PA system.
- ix. Parking Management Plan.
- x. Highways
- xi. Grasscrete parking delivered before first use.
- xii. Landscaping and bund planting.
- xiii. Biodiversity Gain Plan and HMMP.
- xiv. Ecological mitigation.
- xv. Tree and Hedgerow Protection and Replacement Planting
- xvi. Infill retention and microplastic control.
- xvii. End-of-life recycling plan.
- xviii. Surface water drainage and maintenance.
- xix. Construction Environmental Management Plan.
- xx. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.

9. Reason for recommendation

- 9.1. The proposal is considered to accord with Policies DM2, DM5, DM7, DM11, DM13, DM16, DM21, DM22, DM23, DM43, DM44, DIT1.

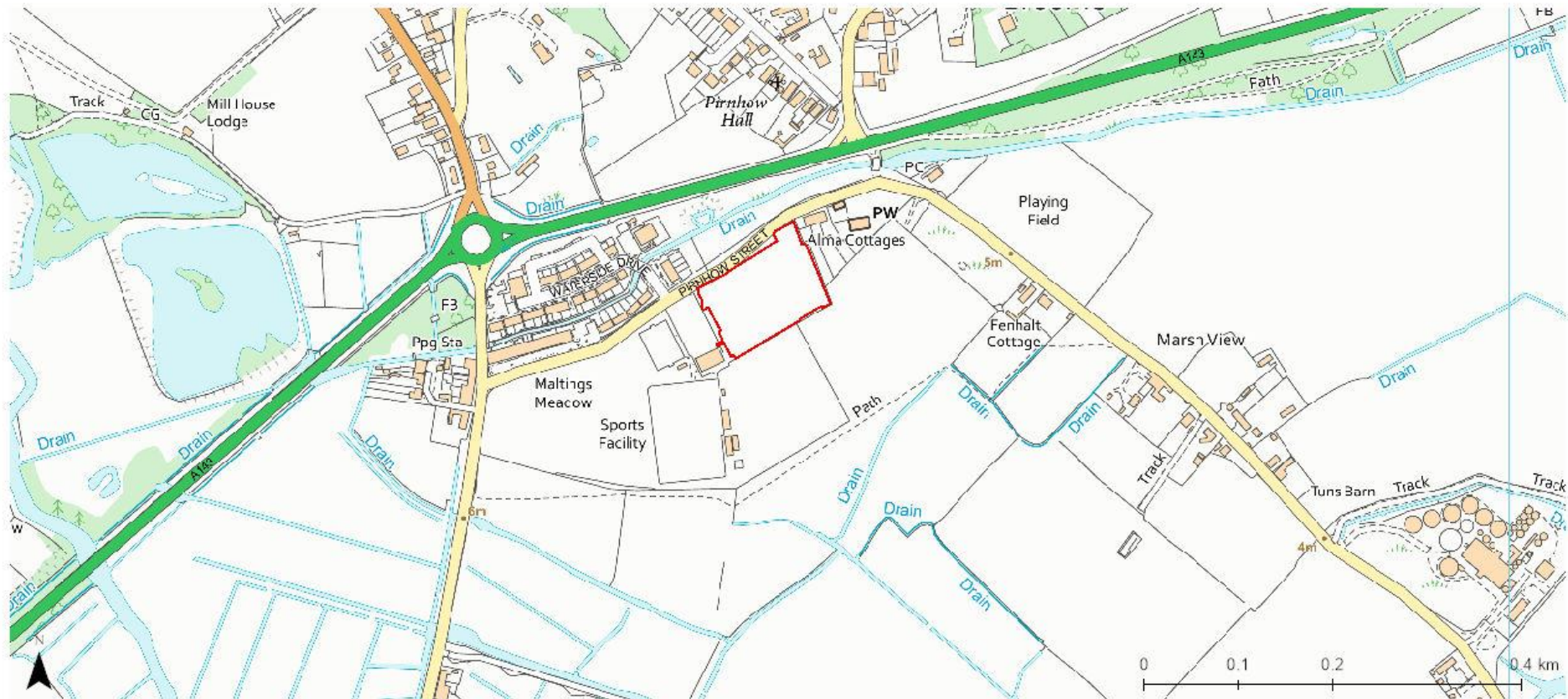
Author: Callum Sculfor

Date of report: 27 July 2026

Appendix 1 – [Location map](#)

Appendix 1 – Location map

BA/2026/0116/FUL - Maltings Meadow Sports Ground, Pirnhow Street, Ditchingham, NR35 2RU



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