

REQUEST FOR JUNIOR FOOTBALL PITCHES AT SIMPASTURE PARK

AGENDA ITEM No. 12

MEETING: RECREATION COMMITTEE

DATE: 27TH MAY 2026

REPORTED BY: WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT MANAGER

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Members of a request from Newton Aycliffe RnD Youth FC to provide football pitch provision for youth teams within Simpasture Park.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Currently there is one adult football pitch at Simpasture which is used by two teams.

2.2 The adult pitch is currently situated in the optimum position to take advantage of the recently installed drainage improvements, which results in the facility being used for the maximum amount of time during inclement weather.

2.3 It would be the officers' recommendation that the adult pitch is not moved from its current position to accommodate this request.

2.4 The request from RnD Youth FC is to provide one 7 versus 7 pitch and two 3 versus 3 pitches.

3.0 RnD Youth FC

3.1 RnD Youth FC is a grassroots junior football club like others on the town.

3.2 They are not a business or a community interest company (CIC) at the moment, but a group of like-minded coaches looking to grow the provision of youth football in the area.

3.3 They are working with Durham FA to become fully affiliated and this should be achieved once coaches have completed the necessary upcoming courses.

4.0 Practicalities and Considerations of the Request

4.1 The request is for one 7 versus 7 pitch, which has recommended dimensions of 55 metres x 37 metres, and is generally used by children 10 to 11 years old.

4.2 The further request for two 3 versus 3 pitches is not an issue because these pitches generally measure 10 x 15 metres and can be accommodated in numerous locations across the park. This size pitch is generally used by children under 7 years old.

- 4.3 Officers have considered various locations around the field at Simpasture Park and the favoured layout is highlighted in Appendix 1.
- 4.4 Officers considered placing the 7 versus 7 pitch at 90 degrees behind the adult goal at the Ashfield end. However, this left little room between the pitches, and the adults would be potentially shooting directly towards the junior pitch which is a safety concern.
- 4.5 Therefore the preferred alternative is to place the 7 versus 7 pitch staggered and partially parallel with the side of the adult pitch. This allows the pitch to fit in a relatively safe location as the pitch is still 2.5 metres away from the side of the adult pitch, 10 metres away from the junior play area, and in excess of 30 metres away from Pease Way.
- 4.6 Part of this proposed pitch is beyond the drainage installed last year and the area is known to retain standing water after periods of significant rain, so potentially would not be playable for periods of the winter season. However, representatives of the club have indicated that the children are unlikely to be playing in such inclement conditions.
- 4.7 The 3 versus 3 pitches can be located in various locations to the side of the MUGA and behind the adult goal at the Ashfield pitch end but set further back from the main adult pitch. Players are likely to be younger children and so the risk of the ball straying far from the pitch is lower.
- 4.8 Indications are that the teams will be predominantly playing on Sunday mornings. This is a potential clash with the adult teams who play in the Sunday league.
- 4.9 Consideration also needs to be given to car parking, as during big fixtures such as derbies and cup games the car park is regularly full and player / spectator cars are often parked on the grass surrounding the park.
- 4.10 Depending on numbers of juniors' games playing at any one time, there is a risk that numerous additional vehicles will attend.
- 4.11 Representatives of RnD have indicated that many of the members live local to the park and so would arrive on foot, others will be encouraged to park away from the car park if busy, or if there is a clash in fixtures. However, this may put additional pressure on residential parking.
- 4.12 RnD have indicated they only require the pitches to be line marked, and they will provide temporary goals for games.
- 4.13 Their preferred location is Simpasture as there is capacity to store the temporary goals within the park pavilion (at their own risk).
- 4.14 The proposed layout aims to minimise any safety risk to players of both the junior and adult teams.
- 4.15 Representatives of the adult teams have been contacted about the proposal and have stated they do not foresee a problem with the additional junior provision as long as their pitch remains in the current location.

- 4.16 It is known that there are various locations across County Durham where adult and junior teams co-exist and play at the same facility successfully. However, safeguarding of the junior players will require careful consideration by the management of RnD to ensure children will remain safe at all times.
- 4.17 The park pavilion will not be used for changing by the junior players. Junior players will need to be accompanied by a responsible adult and all coaches will be DBS checked.
- 4.18 Junior members will use the pavilion for toileting purposes only and will be supervised by their responsible adult.
- 4.19 The potential for obscene language from the adult teams or spectators will need to be moderated and addressed by club officials.

5.0 Consideration of Other Locations

- 5.1 Other locations were also considered, including Horndale fields and the back field at the Oak Leaf, previously used by AJX Academy. However, the key advantage of Simpasture is the storage potential of the pavilion to house the portable goals required.
- 5.2 Horndale is designated a sports pitch with Sport England. However, the facility is known to become very waterlogged in wet winters and so the former pitches were often unplayable.
- 5.3 The back field at the Oak Leaf is also currently vacant and could potentially be used. This location is also a designated sports pitch with Sport England. However, when this site has previously been used there has been fixture conflict issues as when the site is used for caravan rallies and parking for community events and this area is increasingly used as a dog walking field with associated problems.
- 5.4 However, both sites do not have any attached building to include toilets, changing facilities or storage. In regard to the back field at the Oak Leaf, there is the potential that an arrangement could be made at a supplementary charge to use the Sports Complex facility and potentially store goals at this location.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 This report complies with the Council's Strategic Aims 2 and 3: -
"To manage the Council's finances and assets in a responsible manner".
"To provide accessible, affordable leisure facilities and opportunities".

7.0 Staffing Implications

- 7.1 Additional works staff time would be required to mark the additional pitches when required.
- 7.2 An appropriate agreement for use of the pitches would need to be drawn up and checks undertaken on the paperwork of RnD Youth FC e.g. insurance, risk assessments, DBS checks, safeguarding policies etc.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 An appropriate fee would need to be established to cover the additional cost of line marking material and staff time, and the cost of any storage, taking into account the limited use of the changing facilities (toilets only).

9.0 Crime and Disorder Implications

- 9.1 None, although as highlighted earlier the issue of parking would need to be considered and addressed.

10.0 Equal Opportunity Implications

- 10.1 The young footballers potentially using this additional facility will be young children and potentially an unknown percentage of these will be girls.

11.0 Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change Implications

- 11.1 None

12.0 Risk Assessment

- 12.1 It is not considered that the matter contained in this report poses a risk to health and safety of staff or to the financial or public standing of the Council to a degree that a risk assessment should be appended to this report.

13.0 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

- 13.1 Is any personal or sensitive data required for this proposal which may have any implications for GDPR? **NO**

14.0 Recommendations

- 14.1 It is recommended that Members:
1. Receive the report.
 2. Consider the request for junior football pitches at Simpasture Park from RnD Youth FC.

Works and Environment Manager

Proposed Location of Additional Football Pitches at Simpasture Park

