



PLANNING COMMITTEE LIST

Brighton & Hove City Council COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATION

Cllr. Bridget Fishleigh

BH2024/02499 – Longhill School, Falmer Road, Rottingdean

27th November 2024:

I am writing to object to the 3G pitch with floodlights being proposed at Longhill School. Please note that I have only received one direct message from a supporter of the plans and dozens from people who have concerns.

The issues I would like to raise with the planning committee are as follows:

Overcapacity

In BHCC's Sports Facilities Investment Plan 2021-31 there is no mention of a lack of 3G pitches in this part of the City.

Within a 5-10 min drive of Longhill there are 3G pitches at BACA, Stanley Deason, Manor Gym @ Whitehawk, Brighton University and Sussex University. Looking further east there are pitches in Seaford and Newhaven.

Both Saltdean United and Peacehaven/Telscombe FC are building 3G pitches. When I called every existing 3G venue listed above last week all pitches had availability for the weekend.

Financial Considerations

I met Longhill's business manager who told me that the school has set aside £300k for the pitch and will apply for an £800k grant from the Football Foundation which requires £25kpa to be put in a pot for pitch replacement. This equates to £2k a month plus maintenance and other costs that the pitch hire fees must cover.

Longhill School will have to cover any losses the pitch generates. Given today's economic environment, I do not think that Longhill should be taking on high-risk financial ventures.

In addition, I think that approaches to external funding bodies from Council-related organisations should be co-ordinated. For example, what if the Football Foundation only has funding for one more pitch in the City? Would it be beneficial for the City's footballers to have this money going to Longhill - or to other parts of the City where there are no or fewer 3G pitches?

There is, in fact, a precedent for a holistic view of funding across the City. Around a decade ago, BHCC asked the Saltdean Lido volunteers (including myself) to hold off submitting our lottery application for a few months as BHCC had submitted a bid for a separate project. This we did.

Alternative locations for a new pitch

Happy Valley – Around £200k has been allocated from 106 money generated by developments in Rottingdean to football facilities in this location. If a new 3G pitch is needed in the area (against the advice of BHCC's sports team) then it should be here.



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Loss of amenities and inclusion for pupils at Longhill

Schools in the City that have 3G pitches - Patcham, Stringer, BACA, Blatchington Mill and Cardinal Newman – all have larger playing fields so there is still room for pupils to gather on grassed areas during breaks.

What is currently an open area for all Longhill pupils to utilise for a variety of games and activities will now be restricted to pupils who like football or rugby - and who can afford the specialist 3G boots.

This 3G pitch will not be inclusive - of course, not everyone enjoys playing football or rugby - and will mean this grassy area is not available for other sports that have, and could be, played in the future – rounders, hockey, cricket, sports track and field, to name a few.

Loss of amenities for residents

Of course, when people move near to a school they should expect some noise and, in 5.5 years of being a Councillor, I have never received a single complaint from Longhill's neighbours.

Noise from the pitches is currently generated:

- 0800 –1445 every school day
- After school clubs some days until 4pm
- Saturday mornings
- Saturday pm from 2pm to 4pm
- Sundays KO 11am or 2pm
- Easter and Summer holidays - football and outdoor summer camps

However, the proposed opening hours for the 3G pitch are:

- Monday to Friday: 08:00-22:00
- Saturday: 08:00-20:00
- Sun /Bank Holiday: 08:00-20:00

The proposed site is in a valley with homes to the west, south and north. This area is very quiet when school's out – and especially in the evenings.

People living across the area will be adversely affected by noise and light coming from the pitch despite the school's reassurances in its application.

I hope that planning officers and the planning committee agree that these blanket hours are unreasonable and should be shorter and more flexible (ie seasonal); because 6pm-10pm in February is an entirely different proposition to 6pm – 10pm on a sunny day in the summer.

Environmental Impact of 3G pitches

Prior to this application, I thought that 3G pitches were good things and I had never considered the adverse effects on the environment. I've changed my mind now and do not think that a city which prides itself on its environmental aspirations should allow any more 3G pitches to be built until the materials are eco-friendly.