

Local Football Facility Plans

3G Football Turf Pitches (FTPs)



Guidance note



— ■ FUNDING PARTNERS ■ —

Introduction

3G FTPs are a high quality and essential part of modern football. The impact they make cannot be underestimated and this is only set to increase as we aim to double the current stock by investing in 1,000 additional pitches.

Quality

In recent years the industry has seen major innovations and improvements to artificial surfaces and sports lighting. This has created playing surfaces that replicate a good standard natural turf pitch whilst significantly increasing levels of use (x20). All FTPs must have sports lighting to achieve this.

The high quality, consistent playing surface creates a perfect environment to play the game and for young people to learn. When a regular maintenance programme is implemented, they can be heavily used all year round with no decline in pitch quality and no annoying fixture cancellations during winter months, helping to create a regular habit of physical activity.

To achieve high quality standards consistently, and to minimise problems, our 3G framework takes care of the technical aspects (including design and planning, procurement, construction and testing).

Inclusivity

High capacity levels offer a great opportunity to embrace all formats and engage all participants. That means being fully inclusive to all sections of the community, with a particular focus on under-represented groups such as women and girls, disability, BAME and people from lower socio-economic groups.





To achieve this, the people involved with each 3G project must understand the needs of each group and then create the right environment. For 3G FTPs this can be achieved via local consultation, appropriate pricing, programming and having the right football offer.

Engagement

We expect a balanced programme of use across all formats of football. This includes the small-sided and recreational game. It also means fully engaging with your professional football club community programme and a diverse set of local community groups.

Local football clubs also play an important community role and 3G FTPs are an ideal facility for training and match play. We expect key multi-team clubs and leagues to have partnership agreements in place.

Prior to a funding application to the Football Foundation, each project will be underpinned by a 'site development plan' to capture this activity.

Sustainability

We want 3G pitches to benefit the community for a long time to come, that means investing in the correct number to meet local demand. While some local areas have supply that meets demand, the reality for most is one of significant shortfalls. It is therefore our priority to help address this.

Prior to a funding application to the Football Foundation, we shall work with each project to develop a business plan that factors in all the operational features that make a 3G pitch work, such as accessible pricing, life-cycle costs, booking management systems and maintenance.

Usage

A full-sized 3G has an average of 1,200 regular participants and is suitable for various location types. Site location is important and we encourage people to think creatively about the best options in your local area.

Additionally, the way pitches are used is rapidly changing; current line-marking systems allow match play for all formats of football (5v5, 7v7, 9v9 and 11v11), making this usage as equally important as training. Full-sized pitches are now normally divided into quarters, allowing increased capacity and an improved business model (compared to thirds).

Examples and case studies

The following pages provide examples and case studies of the most popular location and facility types.



Example

Strategic hubs

The concept of a 'strategic hub' brings together a number of investment priorities. Such sites will typically have multiple 3G FTPs, a large number of grass pitches and ancillary facilities to create a destination venue for local football.

Strategic hubs are not appropriate for all areas. However, as part of the LFFP process, they should be considered as a possible solution when a) significant 3G undersupply issues exist and b) extra large / strategic sites are identified that require improvement.

Site locations may include transforming existing large strategic grass pitch sites by adding multiple 3G FTPs and ancillary facilities. This, together with grass pitch improvement (made possible by 3G surplus reinvestment) can create a high impact, high quality, sustainable facility.

Alternatively, it may be better to add a high quality football offer such as multiple 3G FTPs (including small-sided pitches) to existing built facilities stock. This could occur at existing or planned leisure /sports centres.

All strategic hubs must have extremely high participation demand across all formats for football. Multi-sport environments are also positively encouraged.

Case study

Multiple 3Gs

offering a focal point for training, matches and recreational football



Grass pitches

that are well-maintained and good quality



Community

pavilion offering social, changing and health and fitness facilities



Sustainable

operating model with profits from 3G or health and fitness reinvested into grass pitch improvement.



Example

Small-sided centres

Facilities include multiple small-sided 3G pitches with line-markings, goalposts, nets and sports lights to allow for play day and night. This can be achieved at strategic site locations or adding small-sided pitches to existing high-quality built facilities such as leisure / sports centres.

Small-sided centres are an excellent option and should be considered during the LFFP process when local football demand for the small-sided game is higher than the demand for club and league football or when space is highly restricted.

The number and size of pitches can be configured to fit individual locations, providing flexibility that is particularly beneficial when developing small-sided centres in densely populated urban areas.

Each facility is maintained with dedicated staff on site to manage the venue and co-ordinate bookings. There are small sided leagues, walking football, Just Play sessions, football clubs and training sessions, programmes for other community groups and 'pay and play'. There is access to coaches on site and there are indoor spaces supporting education, health and wider community development initiatives for the local area. Facilities include changing rooms, a family friendly café/bar, vending machines, secure storage and toilets.

Case study

Multiple small pitches



Central urban location



Changing rooms and social facilities



Diverse usage for all



Example

Small-sided (single pitch)

This facility type provides a single, small-sided 3G FTP to support and develop small-sided football. It provides a great amount of flexibility and can suit a range of location types - presenting an opportunity to think creatively.

The refurbishment of dated existing facilities is increasingly popular – such as converting a old and unused multi-use games areas, tennis court or sand-based artificial pitch with a new high-quality 3G surface.

Remote locations can now benefit from modern operating systems such as online booking and keypad access which enables more efficient management arrangements.

Usage typically involves some club training, but mainly small-sided teams and league play, organised recreational sessions such as FA Just Play, walking football or 'pay and play'. Activation programmes such as those delivered by Professional Club Community Organisations (CCO's) often provide an excellent way to engage with hard to reach groups and people from lower social economic backgrounds.

Case study

Flexible
to suit a range of
location types



Urban
locations



Rural
locations



Modern
operating systems
for booking
and access



Example

Small-sided (indoor 3G)

In recent years, there has been an increasing number of indoor 3G pitches. They have the dual benefit of a high-quality 3G surface and weather protection.

Typically, facilities will refurbish existing indoor structures, such as an unused sports hall. Conversations of other indoor facility types such as gymnasiums and community halls can also be considered but should only be identified when sufficient supply exists (evidenced by a built facilities strategy). When satisfied, as part of the LFFP process, these indoor spaces can be considered as potential sites for conversion based on the prevalent need in the local community.

Sites should be in prime locations with excellent access, public awareness and suitable surrounds. Contrastingly, places that cannot be seen and have unfamiliar settings should be avoided (such as industrial estates).

Case study

Refurbish existing indoor structures



Prime locations with excellent access and public awareness



Multiple 3G and futsal pitches



Weather protection



Example

Education

Education sites often make excellent locations for 3G FTPs and we expect most LFFPs will identify a number of priority sites for potential investment. The location enables both students and the wider community to utilise the significant playing capacity offered by 3G FTPs.

A good education site will have an excellent football programme both within the curriculum and after school hours. This must be combined with a clear commitment to community use. Secondary schools tend to be the most popular site locations, along with a number of further education institutions and universities.

Community use involves establishing a broad programme to develop all formats of football including small sided, professional club community foundation activity and key partner clubs and leagues.

Ancillary facilities such as changing rooms, natural turf pitches and car parking, along with other sporting facilities such as sports halls, should all be available for community use and are a key aspect of the site development plan. The condition of these facilities should be of a suitable quality to provide a positive overall experience for users.

Surplus generated from a 3G FTP must be reinvested back into football. This can be used to improve the quality of other football facilities at the site (such as the natural turf pitches). Some schools also use this to pay for a football development officer role to manage and oversee the successful delivery of football development and community engagement.

Case study



THE MANCHESTER
HEALTH ACADEMY

Learning for a healthy future

Curriculum

and out of school hours
programme



Community

partnership agreements
with key community
football clubs and
leagues



Pro club links

and programme delivery
with Manchester United
Foundation



20%

most deprived areas in
England



Example

Conversion (sand-based to 3G)

Many sand-based AGPs were built before the evolution of 3G so when these surfaces require replacement more and more organisations are now choosing 3G as the replacement surface of choice, making conversions increasingly popular.

Such projects should only be considered when there is a sufficient supply of sand-based AGPs for community based hockey (evidenced by a Playing Pitch Strategy / supported by England Hockey). When this is satisfied, as part of the LFFP process, surplus AGPs can be considered as priority projects for potential investment based on the prevalent need in the local community.

This approach often delivers cost efficiencies as there is an existing structure to build upon. The level of such savings is variable and dependant on the condition of the existing facility (such as the sub-base, fencing, sports lighting etc.). This can be investigated at a later stage after the LFFP is produced and when a project is ready to proceed.

When a pitch has been converted to 3G it is common to see significant increases in usage levels. To achieve this, a strong marketing campaign is needed to inform the community about the improved facilities. This should complement partnership agreements with grassroots football clubs and leagues and diverse community groups.

Case study

Pro club
community foundation
operated



3,500
diverse weekly users



**Social
outcomes**
delivered through
football and other key
programmes



Growth
in participation is strong



Example

Large multi-team clubs

Its easy to see why the aspiration of many clubs is to have their own 3G FTP. However, while club sites can make good locations, there are some essential ingredients that must be in place.

Firstly, a club needs to be well-established and have at least 30+ teams (to provide a strong base for demand). This must be supplemented by a robust, diverse programme of community activity including small sided and other multi-team clubs and leagues.

From a business perspective, 3Gs change the running and operations of a club. Matters such as corporate governance, management and operations, finance and marketing all need to be carefully considered alongside a club's willingness, skills and experience.

A common limitation of club site locations is low daytime usage. For example, it is rare for schools to travel to external sites (due to time and money), meaning community activity levels need to be much stronger to achieve a sustainable business model.

As with other location types, all ancillary facilities must be of a suitable standard.

Case study



Match play

central venue for
Gateshead Youth
League



Pro-club link

partnerships with
Newcastle United
Foundation



Community programme

with key groups
delivering social
outcomes



Surplus reinvested

into improving
grass pitch quality



Example

Stadia 3G FTPs

Converting a stadia natural turf pitch to 3G can be transformative for a club. As the quality of artificial surfaces has increased so has their popularity in the National League System (eligibility is dependant on league status and rules). However, for this to be successful a number of factors must be carefully considered.

All ancillary facilities must be of high quality - matching the standard of the 3G surface. Achieving this helps create a quality environment to provide a positive experience for users.

While a 'first team' will use the pitch for training and match play, wider community use is essential. Clubs often have large multi-team setups and the stadia 3G FTP is also used for training and match play for these teams.

Clubs must be open and inclusive to all sections of the whole community and establish a diverse group of local partnerships to utilise the site and increase participation. This includes programmes for small-sided football.

Some of the main challenges when converting a stadia pitch to 3G are aspects relating to business and operations. Stadia use becomes a seven-day operation; the pitch should be constantly occupied every night and every weekend. As a result, revenue goes up, but so does the volume of responsibility to run a successful and modern facility. All these matters need to be carefully considered at a later stage after the LFFP is produced and when a project is ready to proceed.

Case study



CIRENCESTER TOWN
FOOTBALL CLUB

Match play

for all club teams



Training

for 25+ clubs teams and
many other users



Community

partnership and usage by
other local clubs, schools
and colleges



Growth

strong plans to grow
participation



“3G FTPs are a high quality and indispensable part of modern football. The impact they make cannot be underestimated”



