

Campus Close-up: A look at the grass pitch



Is there a need for a new grass pitch?

The old middle school pitch is still being played on, and there are grass pitches on Dairy Hill.

A lack of playing pitches has been identified in the area (<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Leisure/Playing-Pitch-Non-Pitch-Assessment.pdf>), meaning there is a need for practice and match pitches locally. The Campus site is part of the Halesworth/Holton Healthy Neighbourhood under Policy WLP4.1 of the East Suffolk Council Waveney Local Plan (March 2019), which allocates part of the Campus site for a grass pitch. The development of the new, improved grass pitch will fulfil the requirements of the Local Plan, and will provide a net gain in terms of game time and availability.

How will the current pitch be improved? What makes a patch of grass into a proper

pitch for match play?

The new grass pitch will be completed to full Rugby Football Union standard. As well as the installation of permanent floodlights, it will be increased to full size with run-offs that ensure safety for both players and spectators. Acoustic fencing and ball-stop netting will improve the playing experience and limit noise for neighbours.

Is the grass pitch just for rugby and not football?

Rugby and football have different requirements for a playing pitch surface. Southwold Rugby Club have had eight teams practising across the seven-acre site for six years and so, under planning law, the 2.5-acre pitch will be developed for rugby purposes. The new 3G pitch will provide additional training and match facilities for football where multiple games can be played back-to-back without pitch deterioration. Out of season there may be opportunities for other use on the grass pitch beyond the annual touch rugby sessions every Monday through June and July, although it will need down time for the playing

surface to recover.

Why are we building a pitch in Halesworth for Southwold Rugby Club to play on?

More than 160 men, women and 13-18-year-old boys train at least once a week on the Halesworth Campus site. In fact, Halesworth is the epicentre of Southwold Rugby Club's catchment area with around 75% of members living within a 10-mile radius of the Campus. Only three members of the club actually live in Southwold! SRC have funded the existing mobile floodlights, rugby posts and line marking. Their teams have seen much success locally and nationally in recent years and Halesworth Campus is proud to host SRC's training sessions on our site.

But rugby is for men.

What about women and girls?

Rugby as a sport has been growing in popularity worldwide and part of that growth has been due to an increase in take-up by women and girls. Southwold Rugby Club has had a women's team for 18 years.

Where will the grass pitch

be on the site?

To the north of the site, adjacent to the Harrisons Lane entrance.

Is it a good idea to place the grass pitch right next to the future care home?

This is not considered to be an issue by the healthcare providers, nor by the planners, who both see the proximity of residents to normal town activities as positive and preferable to their being kept at a distance.

Will there be any space for spectators?

Yes. Seating will be provided and matches and practice sessions can be watched both from around the perimeter of the pitch and from outside the fence line.

There don't seem to be any changing facilities for all these players?

But there will be! A planning application for Phase Two of Halesworth Campus is in process and will be submitted later this year. This application will include a sports centre with two sets of changing rooms and showers; one for indoor gym users, another for outdoor pitch users. We would hope that construction will start on this phase in autumn 2023

with completion projected for autumn 2024.

It's a big site. Isn't there room for another grass pitch?

There might be! We have funding to create a temporary pitch on the patch of land behind the Skills Centre for use while construction work is completed, if necessary. Although this land is designated for housing in the Local Plan, Halesworth Campus would like to retain it, if possible, for sports use. This will require more funds to be found to replace what would have been raised by the sale of the land to a housing developer but we hope to make it reality.

When will construction start and when will it be ready to play on?

We hope to start on site in the summer and have the pitches ready by the autumn of 2023.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PLAYING RUGBY IN THE AREA, PLEASE VISIT:

www.southwoldrugby.club/
www.pitchero.com/clubs/beccles/

Next time on Campus Close-up – finding a new sports and leisure operator.

