

Goalposts – Hopwas Playing Field

Issue/s: A significant length of grass in front of the set of goalposts has worn away and the soil in the goal mouth has been compacted and creates an uneven surface. The current goalposts are damaged and the ‘D-rings’ have had to be removed. New goal nets were installed by the Parish Council in Spring 2021, however the net clips and pegs have needed replacement and do not successfully secure the net to the ground. In addition to this a resident on Nursery Lane has complained about stray footballs from Hopwas Playing Field being found in his garden repeatedly, he is concerned about potential future damage to his property. The Resident would like the Council to consider the addition of ball stop netting along the field adjacent to Nursery Lane.

Evidence:

The picture below is from February 2021 and shows the extent of the damage to the grass before the season.



The picture below shows the current damage to the goal mouth and surrounding area



The picture on the below left shows the extensive damage to the goal mouth and the distance from the existing goalposts to the houses along Nursery Lane, The Picture on the right shows the view of the goalpost through the trees and hedgerow along Nursery Lane from Google maps:



Risk: The risk of injury to users of the Playing Field although low is continuing to increase the further the ground conditions deteriorate however the benefit of the goalposts to playing field users needs to be considered. The risk of significant damage resulting from a stray football from the field is considered to negligible however the good relationship between the Parish Council and the neighbouring residents of the Playing Field is considered valuable.

Responsibility:

The Parish Council are responsible for Hopwas Playing Field. The guidelines on appropriate use of the Playing Field falls to the Parish Council.

The Neighbourhood Plan policy H2 states: The Playing Field situated off Nursery Lane shown on Map 1 shall be retained in its entirety for the benefit of the residents of Hopwas.

Recommended Action/s:

The Parish Council should take steps to consult with both neighbouring residents and users of the Playing Field to be able to fully consider the future of providing goalposts upon the Playing Field and how to resolve or reduce any problems with their ongoing use.

If the existing goalposts deteriorate further for safety the Parish Council need to consider their removal and the implications of this. The Clerk has witnessed organised children’s training groups on the field and the use of free-standing goals and training equipment. It is therefore possible that footballs leaving the playing field are not due to the location of the goalpost and that this occurs when recreational footballers choose to play horizontally across the Playing Field with their own goals. It would be difficult to prevent this from happening in any open space and the removal of the goalpost may result in more people choosing to play in this manner.

The ball stop netting alongside Nursery Lane would be in the region of £1,000 which does not seem an economically viable solution. A more cost effective solution may be to thicken the hedgerow with the planting of more hedging and the saplings could be applied for here: [Free Trees for Schools and Communities - Woodland Trust](#) we may be able to ask the Gardening Club for help in planting these and providing additional watering whilst they become established.

The existing hedgerows could be allowed / encouraged to grow higher, as the hedges are already maintained by our contractors there shouldn’t be any long-term additional costs.

The Parish Council were provided with an approximate figure of £400 + VAT for our existing contractors to soil and seed the goal at the end of the grass cutting season, we would need to try and ensure the seed is regularly watered in the event of a dry spell. The Parish Council would ideally need to stop access to this part of the field for 6-8 weeks. Clerk to check if goal posts are able to be temporarily removed (& if so is there any suitable / affordable storage available nearby.)

Additional Information / Considerations:

The goalposts were picked up on the Annual Play Inspection report last year because a concrete fence post had been put onto the field by some footballers to secure the back of the football net to the ground. The street scene team from Lichfield District Council removed this however the pegs provided by the Parish Council did not manage to secure the net to the ground due to the level of use and another concrete fence post has appeared. The Parish Council chose to provide football nets due to previous complaints from neighbours along the back of the field who had people climbing into their gardens to retrieve stray footballs. The ball stop netting does not go to the ground and there is a small gap. A few weeks ago it was reported that a hedgehog had become entangled in the football net at Hopwas Playing Field and sadly died.

Some public parks use goal end walls as they are long lasting and heavy duty to resist vandalism and high use. They can be used with grass but are often installed with a suitably sized ‘pitch’ of tarmacadam or artificial turf. This would be a sizeable investment for the Parish Council, see example pricing below:

Square Closed Goal Module - With 3m High Panels (6200-138)

- Supply £3,755
- Install £2,172
- Carriage £188
- Total £6,115

