



Supporting Sporting Opportunities and Social Development in Northchurch

Northchurch Cricket Club - Net Appeal



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1. Sport in Northchurch

Northchurch Cricket Club is affiliated to the Northchurch Sports Association (NSA), a registered charity promoting participation in sport, particularly for young people, in the village. The Sports Association has provided support for local football, cricket and tennis for decades, funding developments and protecting the facilities for future generations.



2. Cricket Net Development: Project Summary

Northchurch Cricket Club is seeking to meet the challenges arising from increases in the local population, specifically the provision of and access to sport, sports coaching and enhancing the benefits of community involvement. Since the 2019 cricket season, we have questioned how best to extend the club's Junior coaching programme to accommodate both the current and anticipated demand.



After undertaking consultation with the existing membership and the local community, we identified the need for increased and improved practice facilities as a key component to village sporting development. We plan to improve the cricket club's appeal to the community of Northchurch, as well as increasing participation levels amongst our current membership by replacing our current run-down two net practice facilities with a new, enclosed, three lane structure, manufactured to English Cricket Board (ECB) standards.



3. Why is this development needed?

As a result of the introduction of ECB initiatives such as All Stars Cricket, the success of the England cricket team (occasionally!), the continued growth in our local population and the superb work of our volunteers, Northchurch Cricket Club is experiencing a significant increase in demand for its services. The current Junior membership is over 120 but has the potential to expand much further, alongside the introduction of a Ladies section next year. The current level of Junior attendance has meant limiting the amount of practice time. The Club is struggling to give our current Junior membership the necessary facilities to allow the coaching required to progress or even learn the basics of the game to start with. Over 120 Juniors are trying to train on the outfield during weekday evenings/weekends, and that's only available when matches are not scheduled. This results in this generation of new and existing players currently being allowed less than a few minutes each batting time per week. This capacity issue has been accentuated by our current cricket net facilities being largely unusable for younger players due to safety concerns.

The current two net practice facility is not safe for Junior players due to the surfaces' condition and lack of sufficient enclosed protection. They are additionally insufficient for the cricket section's planned expansion and hinder proper player development.

Working with the local community, the other sections in NSA, Hertfordshire Cricket and our membership, we have drawn up formal plans to construct a new and safe three-net, enclosed facility. This will involve demolition of the old nets, the taking up of existing surfaces, levelling a section of the car park and the construction of a new three-lane facility with suitable playing surfaces (see attached plans). The new nets will be fully enclosed to meet current safety guidance and are specifically designed to meet ECB technical specifications too.



“These facilities will extend the range of opportunities for new players, allow existing membership to develop their skills further and introduce the wider Northchurch public to sporting opportunities generally, honing their cricketing skills through involvement and coaching thereafter. This initiative will awaken the minds of children and young people to the positive and active use of their leisure time, integrating them into the local community through their use of the facilities and through the meeting of existing club members”



4. Who will the project benefit?

The cricket club has over 250 members with over 120 Juniors actively involved in coaching, practice and organised cricket. We currently field two Saturday teams in the Hertfordshire League, two Sunday teams and play in mid-week leagues/cups. The Junior section has an ECB All Star introductory coaching programme for 5-to-8-year-olds; under 9s, under 10s, under 12s, under 13s and two under 15 teams.

Members and supporters are drawn from across Dacorum but are largely from Northchurch itself, Berkhamsted and the surrounding villages. Of the current Junior membership, 80% reside in the village. Of our current Senior membership, 60% came through our Junior section but only 10% still live in Northchurch (interestingly, the vast majority cited 'cost' of property as the reason they had to move away).

Our local volunteer workforce/coaches (all qualified and police checked) can meet the anticipated demand, but the facilities i.e., net space/time, is not currently available. We estimate that replacing our existing two nets and adding an additional lane will result in a 35% to 50% increase in capacity.

One of our goals is to commence with a Ladies section, the plans are in place and the necessary coaching volunteers identified (we do currently have several girls playing in our existing Junior teams already by the way). A third net is vital in providing them with the necessary time for this exciting, new initiative.

5. How the project meets the Mission of Northchurch Parish Council for 2021

The proposed development of the new and improved net facilities at the cricket club will help support Northchurch Parish Council's declared Mission for 2021:

Help local people to improve their physical health and mental wellbeing

- i By providing improved, locally available sports facilities the new nets will increase participation in cricket, and sport generally. They will encourage a greater number of residents to become physically active and involved with the Sports Association in some way (be that football, tennis or cricket). We have wonderful facilities, voted on numerous occasions as the Saracen' Cricket League's best in Hertfordshire, and encouraging Northchurch residents to fully utilise The Meadow can only help promote better individual mental health as well as a strong sense of 'belonging' throughout the local community.



Our consultation with both club members and the local community has shown there is a strong demand for such a facility. Moreover, in a rural area such as ours, high inactivity levels and limited access to quality facilities will only result in the demise of community spirit, healthy living and therefore the desire for people to live here in the first place. Being situated adjacent to the recreation ground, with a range of other attractions, we anticipate a growth in casual usage by local adults, parents and their children.

The club will reach out to the local community by organising introductory 'have-a-go' net sessions for both Juniors and adults. There will also be open invitations that target local businesses, pubs, social groups and friends where local people can take advantage of the new nets and The Meadow as a whole. The nets will be available for supervised public use outside of club times to encourage families and people not connected to the club to come and try cricket in a relaxed, fun and comfortable environment.

In addition, the construction will appeal to older Northchurch residents, many of whom can become inactive and/or socially isolated. For the majority, their primary cricket involvement/enjoyment comes from spectating and the related social activities provided for in our Clubhouse (we had over 70 villagers watch the England v Croatia football match on Sunday 13th June for example).

Our Juniors are mostly drawn from schools in Northchurch and the surrounding area, however most of these lack good facilities for cricket. We have existing contacts with local schools and the Club will promote our new outdoor net facilities to all primary/secondary schools e.g., St Mary's, Westfield, Bridgewater, Egerton Rothsay, Thomas Moore and Greenway, allowing us to expand our relationships, encouraging them to attend net sessions at the club.

To accommodate the projected increase in participation, the club has successfully encouraged and financed several local (older) Juniors, parents and others to undertake ECB coaching qualifications; this ensures we maintain the necessary coach-to-player ratios. Increasing participation has both physical and mental benefits: as numbers increase, more people from the area are recruited as volunteers and become active and integrated into the community, improving both coaching and playing standards.





One strategy we are pursuing is to partner with a professional cricket coach (job creation for a local) to provide a sustainable leadership and raise training standards for our team of volunteers. This coach would also lead outreach cricket programmes in local schools (funded by third parties or NCC so no cost to the school) and summer holiday training camps, further increasing participation and levels of activity amongst children in the village. The increase in training facilities will give us the capacity to deliver these programmes and give us the business opportunity to increase membership and make the professional coach financially self-sustaining.

The cricket club has already increased its website and social media usage, alongside their traditional marketing activity. Partnership-work and word-of-mouth will raise awareness of the new opportunities this development will provide, both around Northchurch and further afield.

ii. Preserve the environment and increase biodiversity

The cricket club has a good record in helping maintain the local environment both through our policies around the Meadow, grounds and hedgerow maintenance and installing solar panels to help increase sustainable power for ourselves and the year-round childcare business housed in our pavilion.

iii. Be open and accessible

Outlined in section 4 are our proposals for improving and increasing accessibility to the net facilities and The Meadow. It should not be forgotten that through the pavilion and its bar (that the Parish Council helped the fund by the way!) we offer a hub for community gathering and the ability to watch major sporting, televised events.

iv. Engage with local people

The cricket club is managed by a committee made up of local residents or those with significant connections with the Northchurch Parish. This has been the case since the club was founded in 1884. The Sports Association generally and the cricket club specifically are at the heart of not just sporting provision for Northchurch, but quite possibly the future of the village's social 'heart' too?



6. Timeline for completion of work

Action	When
Consultation	Spring to Summer 2020
Formal Estimate	Autumn 2020
Commence fundraising	Autumn 2020
Access ECB balancing Loan (if reqd)	September/October 2021
Appoint contractor	Summer 2021
Start on site	Late Autumn/Winter 2021
Complete	Early 2022
Open	April 2022

7. Fundraising Plan

Total cost: £47,000 Funding potentially secured : £21,000

The total cost of the project is circa £47,000 and so far, the cricket club have raised significant funds and have commitments and further funding promises from a variety of sources as indicated below. The plans for supporting social events to run in conjunction with this fundraising have been hindered by COVID 19 but we have been diligent and somewhat successful in applying through other sources.

Funding Source	Amount (£)	Status
NCC (savings/VP gifts/fundraising, rents etc)	15,500	Secured
Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation	5,000	Secured
Robert Clutterbuck Charitable Foundation	3,000	Application reviewed, advised to apply for this June round
Herts County Council	500	Secured
Herts County Cricket fund	5000	applied
ECB loan scheme	tbc	Last resort



Current Shortfall: £26,000

Our request is for funding of £20,000. Should we be successful in any other of the funding work currently underway, we will adjust this amount accordingly.

We would request Northchurch Parish Council to consider supporting this exciting sports development initiative which will improve the quality of both sporting and social life for Northchurch residents, particularly the young, and enhance and encourage community inter-action in the Parish.

Thank you.