



Portfolio Holder Decision

Published on 03 September 2026

Decision: Whitelands Farm Sports Ground Cricket Mitigation

Decision taker: Councillor Dr Lisa Smith, Portfolio Holder for Leisure

Decision Date: 3 September 2026

Is decision subject to Call-in? Yes

Deadline for Call-in: Noon on 9 September 2026

Is decision Exempt? No

Is decision urgent? No

Summary

The purpose of the report is to obtain Portfolio Holder Approval to re-purpose the existing cricket square, outfield and associated areas at Whitelands Farm Sports Ground (Whitelands) in Bicester with a view to increasing formal sports provision on the site based on evidenced need.

The loss of rugby facilities at the Oxford Road Sports Facility, has required a thorough exploration of the options to increase provision at Whitelands for both rugby and football.

When Whitelands was constructed, it included the provision of a cricket pitch on the site. The cricket facility has never been used since the facility was opened some 10 years ago, and there has been very limited interest from any local clubs/organisations in booking it. The cricket facility is located at the furthest point from the pavilion, limiting its appeal. There are no local cricket clubs with a desire to make this a regular place to play.

The decision requested is for the approval to remove the provision of the cricket square and outfield at Whitelands and explore the options of providing additional formal grass pitch sports provision. Oxfordshire Cricket Board (OCB) have been involved in these discussions and have agreed off site mitigation through enhancement of cricket facilities at Fringford Cricket Club.

Decision

Resolved

That:

- (1) The removal of cricket provision at Whitelands Farm Sports Ground be approved, which will be mitigated at Fringford Cricket Club.
- (2) The repurposing of the space for increased formal grass pitch sports provision at the site, particularly for rugby, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

The recommendation is to re-purpose the cricket facility at Whitelands Farm Sports Ground to enhance the provision for formal sports pitches at the site. The recommendation also includes mitigating the loss of the cricket facility at Fringford Cricket Club, in line with strategic objectives identified by Oxfordshire Cricket.

Options Considered

The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Maintain the cricket provision at Whitelands Farm Sports Ground. This option was rejected as there has been no use or request for use since Whitelands opened in 2017.

Option 2: Re-purpose the cricket facility to increase rugby provision at Whitelands Farm Sports Ground without mitigation.

This option was rejected as Oxfordshire Cricket / England and Wales Cricket Board opposed the loss of a cricket facility without enhancement of another facility in the locality.

Conflicts of Interest Declared and Dispensations Granted by Head of Paid Service

None

Information about this decision statement

Call-in

Notice of call-in must be submitted in writing, by email or text to the Chief Executive by the deadline specified above, and must state the reason or reasons why "call-in" has been requested;

Call-in can be requested by any five non-executive members of the Council.

Decisions not called-in by the deadline specified above will become effective immediately the deadline has expired (unless they are recommendations to the Council).

The Council has stipulated that the call-in procedure should not be used to challenge decisions as a matter of course and should be used only when fully justified.

Shiraz Sheikh
Monitoring Officer