

# University College Birmingham

## Interest in grant of lease for Holders Lane and Pebble Mill playing fields – April 2012

### Introduction

Increasingly, when deciding which institutions to apply to, prospective students consider not just the quality and reputation of an institution or a particular course but also a range of other factors including: social life, access to cultural and recreational facilities, part-time job opportunities etc. In recognition of this and in order to satisfy demand from existing students, University College Birmingham (UCB) has, for the last two years, been trying to identify suitable sites in or around Birmingham to develop high quality sports facilities.

Holders Lane and Pebble Mill playing fields have been identified because of their location – just three miles from the UCB main site – and their potential to develop first class facilities. The site (outlined in red) is an existing sports ground that has suffered from a lack of investment.



*Holders Lane and Pebble Mill playing fields*

The UCB proposal brings with it the potential for significant capital and ongoing revenue investment to bring these facilities up to required standards and to provide access to first-class facilities for our students and the wider community.

### **UCB's Requirements**

In recent years Sports Management provision, at both further education (National Diploma) and undergraduate (degree) levels, has been a growth area within the curriculum and vocational offer at UCB. Alongside this we have seen a major expansion of our Sports Therapy (sports injury and rehabilitation) offer at undergraduate level. We also see Sport, Sports Management and Sports Therapy as growth areas for the future.

Existing UCB students engage in a range of extra-curricula activities primarily organised through the Guild of Students. Hundreds of students, each year, represent UCB in regional and national competitions organised by the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS).

Currently, with the exception of the College's sports hall at the Maltings Halls of Residence and the gym at Richmond House, all other facilities are hired and can involve students travelling as far afield as Walsall or Worcester to access pitches.

The UCB requirement therefore falls into two distinct categories:

1. **To support the curriculum.** Students require access to first class facilities but also to have the opportunity to work with the community (including schools) to develop their coaching and organisational skills together with encouraging more active and healthier lifestyles.
2. **Extra-curricula activities.** To provide first class facilities that are conveniently located and create the right image for our own students and for visiting teams drawn from across the region and nationally.

### **The Proposal.**

Given the requirements outlined above and the likely level of investment required to bring the facilities up to the required standards, UCB would wish to be granted a long leasehold from the City Council. Details of the lease and its length would require discussions between the College and the City Council at an appropriate stage.

In addition, and in recognition of the importance of the facility to residents, we would be prepared to enter into an agreement to guarantee existing, known, formal and informal use of the site by the local community. We understand that the facilities are currently used by junior football teams and a local cricket club and would wish to encourage continued use by these and wider groups.

In addition, we believe that the reinstatement/development of the floodlit all weather facility would present new opportunities and generate considerable demand from the community.

We also understand that there is likely to be demand from schools and the new Academies in Birmingham. Again, we would actively encourage use of the site by these groups.

We see these initiatives as part of UCB's contribution to the wider healthy nation agenda.

Should the Council grant us a lease to both Holders Lane and Pebble Mill playing field, then UCB would envisage committing to the following investment programme:

- Phased programme (subject to survey) to bring existing pitches (drainage seeding etc) up to an acceptable standard and for some of the pitches to be at the standard required for regional/national competitions.
- To develop (subject to survey) the existing floodlit, hardcore pitch into a multi-purpose, all weather facility.
- Subject to survey and planning demolish the existing changing facilities and create new, fully compliant changing and associated facilities.

It would also be our intention to develop (subject to planning) some classroom facilities for use by our Sports Management and Sports Therapy students. At present, we envisage not more than three classrooms and an office. At least one of these rooms could, subject to availability, be made available for community use.

Professor R. L. Linforth  
Principal  
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18<sup>th</sup> April 2010