

The Dowson Field September, 2021, report

Background:

The Dowson Field is part of the larger field between Devil's Bridge and The Chains corner of the River Lune. With the exception of the areas occupied by the Dowson Field, the football club and the cricket club, the remainder is owned by Underley Estates and is leased for grazing to the Nicholson family.

The DF was left to the town to be used as a playing field for the benefit of the youth of the town and the surrounding area. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commissioners. Earlier this year, KLAFC asked KLTC to consider providing parking space within The Dowson Field (DF) to be used by the club on match and training days.

Facts:

There is permitted pedestrian access to the cricket club, the DF and the football club via a marked path running along the perimeter of the cricket ground to the DF and the football ground.

Vehicular access is permitted only for emergencies and/or repair and maintenance work on the three grounds.

We have had email correspondence with Underley's land agent, Henry Armitage. If parking was provided for the football club alone, and only at specified times, they would want to charge for licences permitting access across their land to a car park. They would not agree to unlimited access at all times to everyone. They would not contribute to the cost of providing parking.

The Charity Commissioners have been approached several times by email and phone and are of the opinion that under the terms of the conveyance they would not permit car parking to be provided either for the football club alone, or for general use by everyone. A playing field is a playing field, to paraphrase their response.

KLTC's solicitors have recommended registering the DF with the Land Registry as KLTC property. This is being done.

Two residents of Lune Close, whose properties overlook the DF, have objected to any car parking provision. Other residents in Ruskin Drive would also be affected by noise. There would be a need for public consultation.

We believe that if a parking area was created, an access route would have to be fenced, and it would be necessary to police in some form to control numbers and movement of vehicles.

We further believe that any parking area would have to have adequate drainage and hard surfacing, to protect against ground damage during inclement weather.

Any proposal to do something different at DF would require planning permission from SLDC.

Recommendation:

Council agrees that:

- (a) despite making best efforts to find a solution, it is not possible to provide parking facilities on The Dowson Field, and
- (b) Council will consider at some future time how best to use The Dowson Field, but in the immediate future is prepared to enter into discussions with KLAFC to update and formalise an arrangement whereby the club can use The Dowson Field to enable football to be enjoyed by the youth of the parish and surrounding area.