



An iconic new grassroots sporting facility, designed to integrate effortlessly with its environment, has been officially opened in Thamesmead by Football legend Sir Trevor Brooking CBE.

Built thanks to funding through the Football Foundation, the country's largest sports charity, and other contributors, Sporting Club Thamesmead boasts an outstanding new changing pavilion, floodlit third generation (3G) artificial grass pitch (AGP), and multi-use games area (MUGA) and represents a much-needed investment to an area that has significantly lacked in community facilities, particularly sports facilities, for many years.

The club building and the layout of the outdoor facilities have been designed by architects Saville Jones to reinforce the open nature of the site and to keep the impact of the built form on the land to a minimum. The design philosophy was that the building should 'touch the earth lightly', creating minimal impact and allowing the building to be appreciated as part of, and not simply placed on, the land.

A sensitive environmental approach to the design of the structure was then developed, with the principal environmental objectives being to minimise the amount of energy and other resources used in the construction and operation of the building, and to encourage biodiversity.

The latter has been achieved by replacing the grass lost with a sedum roof providing an environment for nesting birds and insects and 'sinking' the building into the ground.

The earth mounding around the perimeter has been seeded, concealing part of the building from view. The structure literally grows out of the ground. The earth also acts as an insulator and increases the energy conservation.

The main principles to create an integrated environmental strategy have been to incorporate ecological approaches in both the design philosophy and construction. These include:

Maximisation of daylight by incorporating roof lights and large areas of glazing.

Natural ventilation, with mechanical cooling only in high activity areas.

Some use of recycled materials that can be recycled at the end of their life.

The integration of landscaping including safe cycle paths and footpaths to encourage eco-friendly means of transportation.

Rainwater harvesting, the collection and recycling of rainwater stored in an underground cistern to reduce mains water consumption.

Solar thermal panels to provide hot water.

Ground source heat pumps generate the space heating, via an under floor heating system.

Haydn Jones, Saville Jones Architects, commented: “The Sporting Club Thamesmead building recedes into the landscape creating a sustainable, sensitive addition to its parkland setting. Externally a quarter of the building is hidden below ground and earth mounding, however from inside unrestricted views of the pitches and high levels of natural light creates a park pavilion atmosphere for all the community to enjoy.”

To gain funding for the project, Trust Thamesmead worked in partnership with the London FA to secure a £769,112 grant from the Football Foundation. Funded by the Premier League, The FA and the Government (via Sport England), the Football Foundation is the country's largest sports

charity. Since it was launched in 2000, the Foundation has awarded around 9,500 grants worth more than £410m towards improving grassroots sport, which it has used to attract additional partnership funding of over £560m. Across London alone, the Football Foundation has awarded 125 grants worth £22m towards grassroots sports projects worth £52m.

Additional funding for the club's new floodlit 3G AGP and top-of-the-range floodlit MUGA came from the Football Stadia Improvement Fund (FSIF), in the shape of a £75,000 grant, in order to create a much safer environment for players throughout the year.

Funded with £6m each year from the Premier League, the FSIF is the country's largest provider of grants towards projects that help improve the comfort and safety of lower league football grounds in both the professional and amateur game. These improvements range from new football stands and turnstiles to floodlighting and improved provision for disabled supporters. In total, the FSIF has awarded 24 grants worth £3m towards grassroots sports projects worth £11m across London.

The project has also received £200,000 funding from The FA, as part of their capital allocation within the Whole Sport Plan agreed with Sport England. This is awarded to support the sustainability of community clubs and create more opportunities to participate in sport within a high quality environment.

Speaking at the opening of the site, Sir Trevor Brooking CBE said: "I am so pleased to be opening such a fantastic facility. Projects such this one in Thamesmead, are so important for the local community. They help increase participation in our national game by allowing more people to play, purely for the love of it. They are also critical to supporting The FA's agenda for developing more home-grown talent.

"The funding provided by the Premier League, The FA, and the Government, through the Football Foundation, is making a real difference, with stunning new facilities, such as this one, springing up right across the country. I congratulate everyone involved, including the London FA, for their work in making this happen."

For more information about the work the Football Foundation is doing all over the country visit www.footballfoundation.org.uk

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