



HATFIELD BROAD OAK PARISH COUNCIL

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Football Goals Risk Assessment

Nature of the Village Green and its uses The Village Green is open access, all year round, and there is no adult supervision other than when sports clubs or other users have planned activities.
Risks Inherent in Free Access
Equipment Goal posts are used for coaching purposes and have been left in situ, complete with nets, with the aim of encouraging children to play football.
Accidents and Remedial Assistance Should an accident occur, there is no guarantee that there will be a responsible and capable adult available to seek to take charge. If there is a group of children then, hopefully, one of them will run to find an adult who can assist but the goals are on the far side of the Village Green and, conservatively, it could take 5 to 10 minutes before help is at hand.
Inconsiderate Behaviour Broken glass and other detritus is left on the grass and could cause injuries.
Children The behaviour of children is unpredictable and groups can generate activities which, perhaps, a single child would not contemplate. It is inherent in children to experiment to find out how far they can go and, occasionally, this results in their putting themselves in a position where harm occurs. The Parish Council is guided in this aspect by a recommendation from NALC as follows Every operator's duty of care is higher in the case of children than of responsible adults. Section 2 (3) of the Occupier's Liability Act 1957 provides that the occupier must be prepared for children to be less careful than adults.

Identified Risks	Assessment
Specific Risks	Risks Assessed
Goal Posts Structure The goal posts (Now junior and intermediate sizes as the Senior goals have been removed as a manual-handling hazard) are made by Harrod UK and are self - weighted. They are designed to be safe for playing football without anchorage and are of high quality. The only risks presented by the structures, if properly checked as recommended by the manufacturers, are those inherent in playing football, i.e. collisions	NONE
Nets The nets used are those designed for the specific goals and, provided that they are fitted correctly in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations offer only normal risks involved in playing football.	NONE



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Climbing	
The Parish Council is aware that children climb on the nets. The nets are not designed for this purpose and there are the following identified risks:-	
Identified Risks	Assessment
<i>Breakage of the cord</i> If a cord breaks whilst under pressure it is likely that a child's leg will become trapped in the net. It is likely that in some cases, because of the weight of the child driving their leg into the hole in the net, the child would be unable to free itself. This raises the question of immediate assistance and the child's reaction. If the child is nearer to the top than the bottom, it is unlikely that its peer group would be able to support it or extricate it from the net. If the child panics and struggles, because the cord is thin it is likely to act as a ligature and could cut into the flesh. The consequences could be very serious. Life-threatening injuries or death are a real possibility. Prompt attention would be needed as well as the means to cut the child from the net. The likelihood of there being an adult readily available and suitably equipped and confident enough to deal with such a problem is thought to be very limited indeed.	It is believed that although the likelihood of an accident is probably low the level of injury that could occur is significantly life-threatening to make the overall risk unacceptable.
<i>Foot slipping through the net</i> This is more likely in shoes with smooth soles and is probably a summer risk rather than one likely to occur during the football season but, with play now into the warmer months, has to be taken into account. The consequences are similar to those for breakages in the cord.	It is believed that although the likelihood of an accident is probably low the level of injury that could occur is significantly life-threatening to make the overall risk unacceptable.
<i>Reverse climbing</i> Because of the nature of children it is inevitable that the challenge of climbing the nets from the inside will occur. The risks involved here are different but potentially more immediately dangerous. The net cords are thin and if a child loses its grip it will fall backwards. Head and spinal injuries would be the likely result and breakages, especially of the neck, could be expected.	It is believed that although the likelihood of an accident is probably low the level of injury that could occur is significantly life-threatening to make the overall risk unacceptable.
<i>Swinging</i> The Parish Council is aware that swinging on the portable goals is an activity undertaken by youths (showing off to girls?) and this does, occasionally, turn into a group activity. It is not known what the combined weight of the swingers would need to be to counteract the inbuilt stabilising weight but it is believed to be possible that vigorous swinging could multiply the combined weight to such an extent that the goals could overturn. One of the goals was found overturned but how this occurred is not known. The goal frames are heavy and serious injuries could occur if a youth were to be trapped underneath a goal as it overturns.	It is believed that although the likelihood of an accident is probably low the level of injury that could occur is significantly life-threatening to make the overall risk unacceptable.



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<i>Falling</i> Children have been seen standing on the crossbars. There are two possibilities here. One, that they jump off on the goalmouth side, or, two, that they fall off. If they fall off on the goalmouth side then it is in the lap of the gods as to how they land. If they fall off onto the netted side then there are, potentially, more serious risks. If a child behaves normally when falling it will put out its hands in front of it to cushion the fall. A child learns this as a toddler. To take this approach into the net could be the worst option but a child will be unable to assess that in the time available and instinct is likely to take over. If arms go through the netting the effect will be to stop the shoulders and the momentum of the body weight will carry on downwards. The potential results do not bear thinking about. This is potentially the worst risk to life and the most likely to generate serious physical damage.	The chances of a child falling from an inherently unstable position are deemed to be likely. The risk is unacceptable and is removed if the nets are not available to climb.
<i>Moving</i> Because the goals have wheels it is inevitable that they will be moved by youths for good reasons and, on occasion, not such good reason. Racing goals and pushing them incorrectly, even with the weighted back bar, could result in their turning over if they hit an obstruction (see Inconsiderate behaviour). The risk of injury is obvious.	The recommendation from the manufacturer is that four persons, suitably trained, should move the goals. Two persons can move them and the grass-cutter, on his own, is happy to move them short distances in order to cut

Conclusion

Taking the risks assessed into account, the Parish Council's Village Green Maintenance and Development Committee has resolved that portable goals, when not in use for organised and properly supervised games, should have their nets removed and be padlocked face to face. The aim is to avoid injuries, especially to children, caused by swinging or climbing on the goals.

The Committee is happy to consider putting fixed goals, without nets, in place to encourage children to continue to play football unsupervised.