Clubhouse design and site layout

The importance of providing adequate changing and social facilities is key to the survival of many clubs. Rundown club houses with poor changing facilities and cold showers make it very difficult to attract and retain players and non playing members alike.

Despite the current economic climate people are becoming more demanding with regards to the standard of leisure and recreation facilities they frequent, hence the growth of private leisure provision. We must therefore recognise that the future development of the game is dependant upon the quality of our facilities to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience.

General facility requirements

For an average sized club running a selection of minis, juniors, youth, women’s and girls’ and senior teams, the requirements for clubhouse facilities are fairly similar. Clubs should be looking to provide 2 - 4 changing areas with on suite showers and both male and female toilet facilities, an officials changing room for up to 5 officials with its own showers and toilet, an equipped medical room, disabled access to all areas, a social/community area and bar, bar storage area and cleaners and equipment storage areas.

Changing rooms

Changing areas should be provided as individual team changing rooms but may offer the flexibility of being large communal areas if required. This may be useful if the club runs an extensive minis section and or hosts large events or tournaments. However the key points in terms of ensuring that you provide adequate changing areas are that:

- Layouts provide for flexible male and female use
- Changing areas should be large enough to accommodate the maximum number of players/coaches likely to use the room (up to 30 per team).
- A general rule of thumb is to allow 1m² per person when calculating the size of a changing room
- In terms of bench area per player, allow for a minimum of 500mm bench length and 450mm depth (Note that 2 places are lost when a bench is carried around an internal corner)
- The recommended minimum area for a Rugby team is 25m².

Shower and toilet areas

Each changing room should have its own shower area and it should be located as far as possible from changing room entrances and WCs in order to prevent water migration and to separate mud and water. Shower areas should allow one shower point for every 3 changing spaces including 1m² for showering and the same for a drying area.

Each changing room should also have access to toilet facilities that provide the following minimum requirements:

- Male Changing: 1 x WC, 2 x Urinals, 2 x Washbasins.
- Female Changing: 2 x WC’s and 2 x Washbasins.

Officials changing area

It is important to provide good changing facilities for officials both male and female.

It is suggested therefore that 2 official changing rooms are provided. These should be at least 5m² in size and contain a shower, a washbasin, a WC and a bench space.
Medical room

It is recommended that all rugby clubs have a designated medical room. This room should be a minimum of 10m². The medical room should be secure, easily accessible and demarcated as a Medical Room. Access to the room should ideally be through a double door that will easily accommodate a player on a stretcher. The keys for the room should be available at all times when there is activity in the club, with instructions on the door as to the location of the keys.

*Further information and a list of standard equipment for a medical room are provided in the Medical Room guidance notes.*

Club room/social/bar area

The club room or social area should provide for the full range of activities that it may be required to accommodate. First and foremost it needs to provide for the needs of the players, members, spectators and guests on match days and training nights. The bar and kitchen areas (including storage) need to be able to support and service the maximum number of teams that could be using the facility at any one time and provide sufficient area for players and members to socialise after a game. It is worth considering having sufficient space or a storage area for tables, chairs and any indoor sports or activity equipment.

Disabled access provision

It is important that any pavilion or clubhouse design provides for the needs of disabled people and not only meets the need of relevant legislation but also looks to apply best practice in its provision for disabled people. The issue is not about making special provision for a special class of citizen but making the building accessible and safer for the whole population which includes those with varying levels of disability and impairment. Designs need to follow a number of key principles of access and movement and the majority of buildings will go someway towards providing equal access and provision for all.

Firstly, ‘easy access for all’ means that the facility will need to provide for a wide diversity of groups including children, older people, players with kit bags, carers with small children, people who are fit and not so fit as well as those who are more easily recognisable as having a disability.

Issues to consider therefore include:

- Easy ramps and stairs
- Handrails and grab rails
- Slip resistant floor surfaces
- Wide doors and corridors
- Appropriately sized and equipped lifts
- Spacious and sufficient toilet and changing areas
- Clear building layouts
- Signage and lighting
- Tactile signs
- Audible aids, such as PA and induction loops

Secondly, in terms of understanding the needs of people with a disability and consequently influencing the design and layout of their facilities, clubs should consider the obstacles that need to be negotiated throughout a visit to the facility, such as:

- Parking the car or arriving by public transport
- Finding and getting to the entrance
- Passing through the clubhouse or locating the playing areas
- Access to the playing areas
- Finding and using the changing rooms
- Finding and using the toilets
- Having to leave in an emergency
Generally the key points about the building design are adequate widths, shallow slopes, firm nonslip floors and keeping all handles, push buttons and other controls low enough to be reached from a sitting person.

Further information can be found in the Accessible facilities & Compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act guidance notes.

Site layout

In terms of the best location for a clubhouse or pavilion, the shape and contours of the land and pitch locations will go someway to determine the best site. However the proximity of existing access roads and services will be the prime determining factors if large site development costs are to be avoided.

In terms of the ideal orientation of a pavilion, the main entrance should be away from the direction of the prevailing wind. However, in terms of spectators, the principle viewing area should not face the direction of the setting sun. When determining the orientation of pitches and the clubhouse and their relationship to each other, clubs should consider the following:

- Facilities and viewing positions should be orientated to avoid low sun angles
- There should be no conflicting relationships between users (particularly with users of multi sport sites) for matches, training, etc.
- Issues relating to access and security: visibility, lighting, roads, footpaths, etc.
- Ensure adequate car parking
- Consider car parking, access and potential effect on neighbours for planning permission purposes
- Protection of users from the elements
- Sufficient space for proposed pavilion and potential expansion
- Access for service and emergency vehicles
- Relationship with the pitches it serves.

Planning permission

Planning permission is used to control new development and is usually issued by the local county council. Most forms of development require planning permission. This includes new buildings and extensions to existing buildings, new access points, changes to external appearance, demolishing of buildings, felling of trees and floodlight installations. If any of the above work is undertaken without planning permission being granted, the planning authority can demand that the land/building is put back to its condition prior to the work undertaken. It is therefore vitally important that the local planning authority is contacted at an early stage in any proposed development to ensure compliance with their conditions.

Further information about planning permission is available in the Planning Permission guidance notes.