

I'm Alan Bessant, here to speak about the future of Whittlesey Junior Football Club's Field of Dreams. Some of the young players, coaches and families are with me tonight.

The club is a registered charity, founded in 1999, providing grassroots football for children from under seven to under sixteen. Today it has 24 teams, around 250 young players and 75 volunteers. More than 6,500 children have played for the club since it was founded.

Since 2008, Forterra has generously made Stonald Field available at a nominal rent, with Fenland District Council guaranteeing the lease. We are genuinely grateful for that support.

Volunteers have transformed what was a field into a thriving community football ground with 11 pitches, maintained entirely through the club's efforts.



(Ed Goodman)

Nearly two decades of success at Stonald Field have demonstrated what the club can achieve. That track record should give confidence in its plans for further development and investment.

The lease expires in May 2029. Without long-term security, the club cannot pursue major funding opportunities that could bring around £1 million into Whittlesey for an all-weather pitch, clubhouse and improved facilities.

Applications to Sport England, the Football Foundation and other funders take time. Every month of delay is an opportunity lost, and there is no guarantee that the same funding will be available in three years.

Across Whittlesey, football and leisure provision faces uncertainty. Whittlesey Athletic has received assurances about its future, but its agreement remains in principle. The Manor Leisure Centre is awaiting a decision on redevelopment. Surely we should protect and develop a junior football ground that is already thriving.

Several attempts have been made to engage with Forterra this year, but we have not yet received a response. We want constructive discussions about a long-term lease, purchase or transfer of the land to the community, to secure the club's future.

**Tonight, I am asking Whittlesey Town Council to actively support the club, formally approach Forterra and help bring everyone together, including Fenland District Council, to secure the Field of Dreams for future generations.**

The young people here tonight are the reason this matters.

**The Field of Dreams is already a reality. Let's make sure future generations have the same opportunity to realise their dreams.**

