



## EUROPEAN TURFGRASS SPECIALISTS



### Cromwell Orchard: Mickleover

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

**Please note:** This report is confidential and is intended for the sole purpose of the above recipients. We aim to assist and represent our clients on matters concerning sports surfaces. All our recommendations are provided free of bias. We have no commercial connections or obligations to any manufacturer, supplier, or contractor.

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## Introduction

Bloor Homes commissioned European Turfgrass Specialists to inspect a site located at Cromwell Orchard, Mickleover, to confirm existing ground conditions ahead of the proposed construction of two football pitches. While CAD drawings (including drainage layouts) and a topographical plan have already been produced, the site had not yet been assessed by a RIPTA-qualified agronomist, and no detailed specification of works or bill of quantities had been prepared. Our visit therefore focused on establishing current site constraints and the factors likely to influence construction and long-term pitch performance.

The inspection included five test pits excavated within the main working area, which had already been stripped to the sub-base, together with an additional review of a separate stockpile to consider its suitability for reuse as topsoil. Samples were collected from one pit to benchmark the on-site soil characteristics, and a cylinder test was undertaken at one location to provide a more detailed assessment of soil performance.

Findings and constraints identified during the assessment are documented within this report and Appendix. The next stage is to agree a pitch design and develop a clear specification for tender, supported by appropriate supervision, stage sign-off, and independent agronomic oversight during construction.

This report is intended to support planners, architects, engineers/agronomists, and contractors involved in delivering this project.

## Test pit locations

A series of test pits were excavated across the site in order to assess the existing surface and subsurface conditions. The locations of the test pits were selected to provide a representative overview of the proposed pitch areas and to identify any variations in soil profile, construction, or condition.

The test pit locations are shown on the accompanying site plan. Pits were positioned across both central and peripheral areas to reflect any potential differences in ground conditions. Each test pit was excavated to facilitate visual inspection of the rootzone and underlying soils.

The observations and findings from each test pit are detailed in the following sections of this report.



Figure 1. Location of test pits 1 to 5 (highlighted in green) that were excavated during this site visit

## Test pit 1



Figure 2. Surface and subsurface characteristics of test pit 1

## Turfgrass

### 1. Perennial ryegrass - *Lolium perenne*

#### Surface

The area surrounding Test Pit 1 supported only intermittent grass cover, with occasional weeds present. Overall sward cover was low (up to approximately 1%). Loose stones were visible at the surface. Surface cracking was also observed; this appears consistent with recent scraping activity undertaken during the winter period.

#### Subsurface

No thatch or organic material was observed within the profile, suggesting that the upper layer comprises former sub-base material rather than established topsoil. The soil exhibited a reddish-brown colouration, with the upper approximately 90 mm relatively uniform and darker in tone. The material felt plastic to the touch, and stones were present within the profile at depth (typically 10–20 mm in diameter). Moisture content measured 24.7%. Two penetrometer readings indicated relatively high resistance, with penetration limited to approximately 75 mm at 200 psi and 300 psi respectively, confirming that the material is compact.

A cylinder test was carried out at this location to assess the in-situ performance characteristics of the existing sub-base, and a soil sample was collected from the same area for particle size distribution analysis.

## Test pit 2

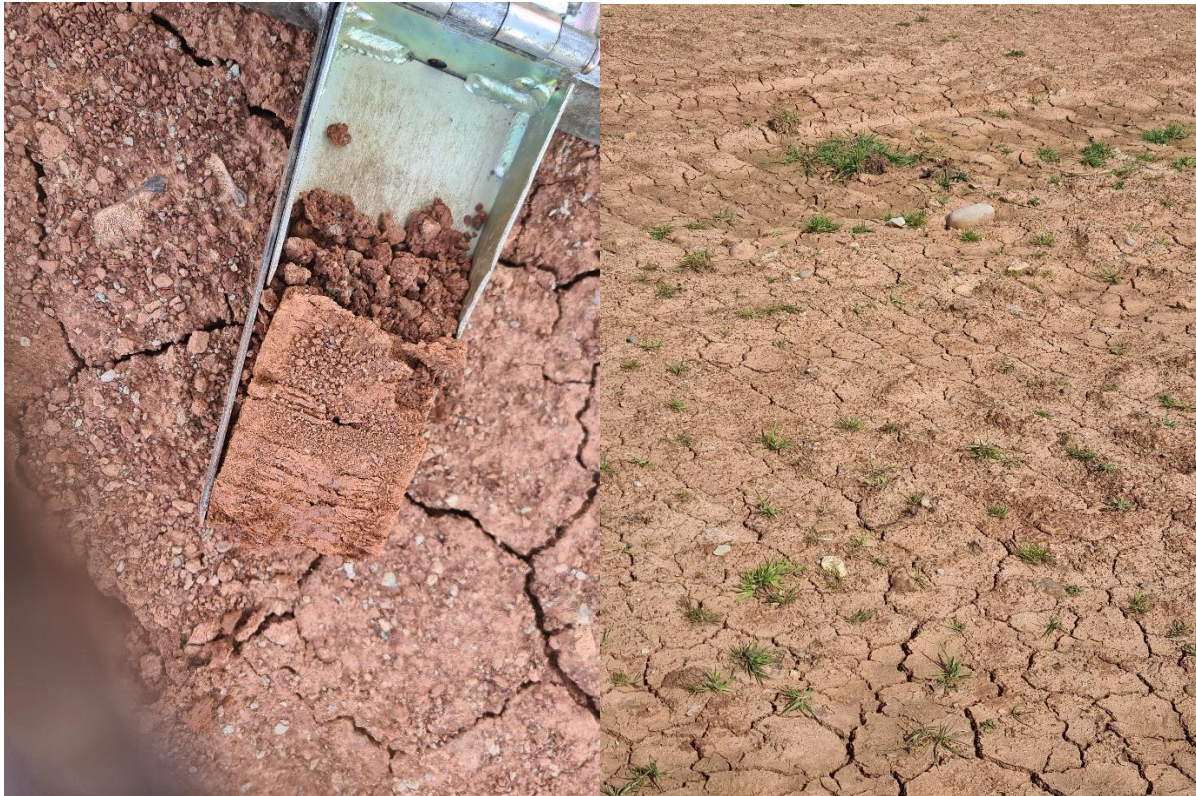


Figure 3. Surface and subsurface characteristics of test pit 2

### Turfgrass

1. Perennial ryegrass - *Lolium perenne*
2. Annual meadowgrass – *Poa annua*

### Surface

Vegetation at this location consisted of isolated plantlets spreading into open areas. These plants are exploiting moisture retained within surface cracks and are establishing roots in the absence of competition. Less than 2% sward cover was observed around Test Pit 2. Several large stones were present, including rounded stones exceeding 10 cm in diameter. Localised rutting was also noted, associated with winter works undertaken during preparation of the sub-base. Overall, the surface was slightly uneven.

### Subsurface

No organic material or thatch was evident within the soil profile. The profile was notably drier than at Test Pit 1, with a moisture content of 16.5%. The sub-base was highly compact, and stones of varying size were present throughout. Penetrometer testing confirmed significant resistance, with penetration limited to approximately 30 mm at 200 psi and 50 mm at 300 psi, again highlighting compaction. The material was very firm and tended to crumble when handled. A steep embankment is located adjacent to this area.

### Test pit 3



Figure 4. Surface and subsurface characteristics of test pit 3

#### Turfgrass

1. Perennial ryegrass - *Lolium perenne*
2. Annual meadowgrass – *Poa annua*

#### Surface

Surface conditions at this location were notably uneven and soft underfoot. Isolated metal strips and other debris were observed within the sub-base. Standing water was present in lower-lying areas, and footprints were evident, indicating localised softness and poor surface stability. Turfgrass and weed growth was more vigorous here than in other areas inspected. Small grey stones were also noted at the surface. The edge of the constructed platform forms a distinct ledge, with a different material present behind it; this interface should be considered within any remedial works, as it effectively defines the perimeter and levels for the wider project.

#### Subsurface

Penetrometer testing at this location indicated low resistance, with no notable compaction recorded at either 200 psi or 300 psi to a depth of 300 mm. The profile was therefore easier to excavate, which is consistent with the higher moisture content measured (26.7%). The soil appeared broadly uniform through the inspected depth and may become progressively more clay-rich at greater depth.

## Test pit 4

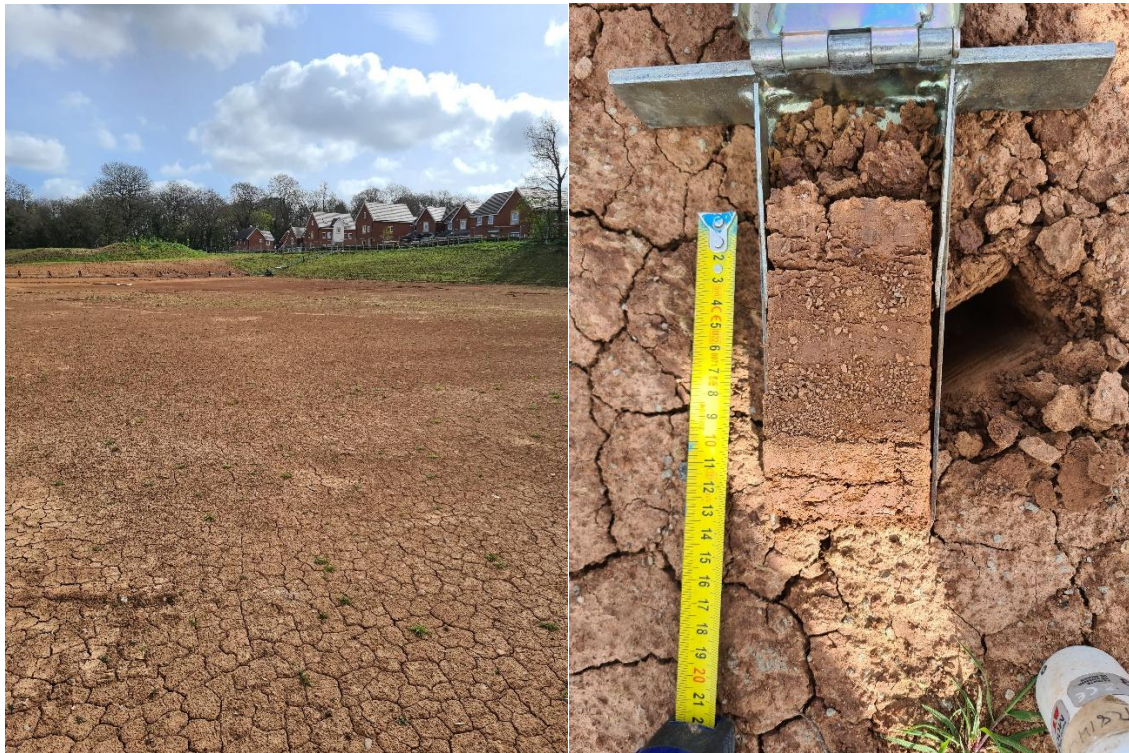


Figure 5. Surface and subsurface characteristics of test pit 4

### Turfgrass

1. Perennial ryegrass - *Lolium perenne*

#### Surface

Surface cracking was evident, and vegetation occurred only intermittently. Small, loose grey gravel was present across the surface, together with occasional larger stones.

#### Subsurface

No thatch or organic material was observed within the profile. Overall, the soil profile at Test Pit 4 was comparable to that recorded at Test Pit 3. Moisture content was 20.7%, indicating slightly drier conditions than at Test Pit 3. Penetrometer readings at both 200 psi and 300 psi showed no notable compaction to a depth of 300 mm. Small stones and gravel were present at the surface and throughout the profile, with occasional larger aggregates (>50 mm) encountered intermittently. The soil comprised a plastic, red-brown, clay-based material.

## Test pit 5



Figure 6. Surface and subsurface characteristics of test pit 5

### Turfgrass

1. Perennial ryegrass - *Lolium perenne*
2. Yorkshire Fog – *Holcus lanatus*
3. Annual meadowgrass – *Poa annua*

### Surface

Standing water was again observed in a low-lying area around Test Pit 5. Intermittent grey mottling was also noted at the surface, suggesting prolonged surface wetness in the past and/or that material formerly present at greater depth has been brought closer to the surface.

### Subsurface

The upper 10–20 mm of the profile was extremely hard and friable, consistent with drying and oxidation following exposure to air; this layer is considered likely to comprise former subsoil rather than established topsoil. Below this, the material became noticeably softer and moister and retained its structure more readily. Stones were encountered intermittently at the surface and throughout the profile, with variable particle sizes present. A grey horizon was again evident at approximately 100 mm depth.

## Soil pile on site



Figure 7. Characteristics of soil pile

### Surface

A stockpiled soil material stored on site was inspected. The material was not friable or readily workable and comprised large, cohesive clods, consistent with a clay or silty-loam subsoil rather than suitable topsoil. On this basis, the stockpile is not recommended for reuse within the pitch construction, and an alternative imported topsoil source should be identified. A laboratory sample was not taken, as the material was considered unsuitable and further testing was not warranted.

## Laboratory test results

A soil sample was collected from the area around Pit 1, and a cylinder test was undertaken on soil adjacent to Pit 1 (Figure 8). The samples were submitted for laboratory analysis to assess the physical characteristics and drainage performance of the existing soil profiles. The results provide a benchmark to support the visual assessment and to inform the suitability of the soils for use as sports pitch bases or rootzones. Full laboratory data are presented in the Appendix.



Figure 8: Cylinder located in soil prior to collection and sending off to the Laboratory for testing

### Sampling overview

Soil samples were analysed from the following locations:

- **Pit 1**
  - Particle size distribution
  - Percolation rate
  - Particle density
  - Bulk density (moist and dry)
  - Total porosity
  - Air-filled porosity

- Water-filled porosity
- Water retention

#### Pit 1

The soil sample collected from Pit 1 was classified as a **silty clay**, comprising approximately 4% gravel, 14.2% sand, 41.1% silt and 44.7% clay. While the sand fraction provides limited drainage potential, the combined silt and clay content places the material close to an outright clay classification, indicating that improvement works would be required for reliable use as a sports pitch rootzone. Percolation testing within the upper 75 mm of the profile recorded a saturated hydraulic conductivity of **0 mm/hr**, which is unacceptable for sports turf. Particle density was **2.685 g/cm<sup>3</sup>**, with bulk density values of **2.0 g/cm<sup>3</sup> (moist)** and **1.59 g/cm<sup>3</sup> (dry)**; these values may be used for material volume calculations during any future improvement works. Total porosity was **40.8%**, which is acceptable; however, air-filled porosity was extremely low at **1%**, while water-filled porosity was very high at **39.8%**. Water retention was also high at **26.3%**. Overall, the results indicate that although the soil retains water readily, it provides very limited aeration when wet, increasing the risk of surface instability and reduced turf performance during prolonged wet periods. The rate at which water moves through the profile is therefore a key constraint and should be addressed through an appropriate drainage installation strategy.

#### Key issues to overcome

The site inspection and laboratory testing have identified a number of constraints that must be addressed to deliver two football pitches that perform reliably and remain sustainable over the long term. The key issues are summarised below.

##### Existing soil

At the time of inspection, the site had been stripped to sub-base level. The underlying soil exhibits low permeability and therefore has limited capacity to transmit water through the profile. As such, it is unsuitable for use as a sports pitch rootzone, although it may remain acceptable as a sub-base layer. A minimum of 200 mm of suitable sandy loam topsoil will need to be imported and installed under appropriate ground conditions. A robust, well-engineered drainage system will also be required to intercept and convey water to an appropriate low point/outfall, thereby reducing the risk of prolonged surface wetness and instability. The drainage design should take account of the properties and depth of the imported material to ensure a sustainable, integrated solution. A suitably qualified agronomist should be appointed to undertake this design work.

##### Existing water course located nearby to the pitches

The adjacent watercourse (associated with the site stormwater system) should be reviewed to confirm its alignment, capacity, and freeboard relative to the proposed pitch levels. Given that it is located upslope of the pitch areas, the design should be verified to ensure that flows are contained during peak rainfall events and that there is no risk of overspill, seepage

or erosion affecting the pitches. Any required protection measures and set-backs should be incorporated into the pitch and drainage design.

### Existing pitch direction layout

The two main pitches shown on the existing layout (Figure 1, page 5) are orientated north-west to south-east. This arrangement aligns with Sport England's recommended pitch orientation guidance for football, which is illustrated in Figure 9 below.

Figure A2 Recommended pitch orientation

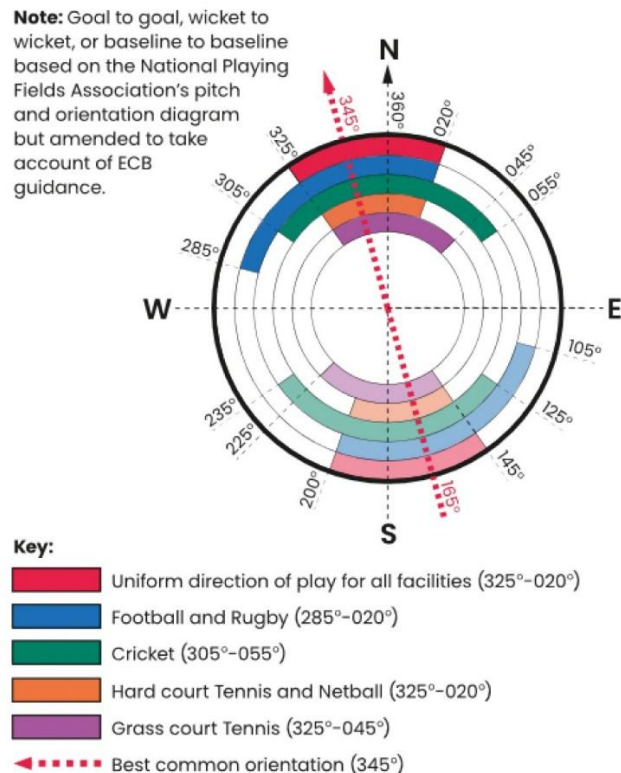


Figure 9. Pitch orientation guidelines from Sport England

### Existing topography

The as-laid sub-base topography is presented in Figure 10 below. The site currently rises by approximately 1.0 m from the west to the east of the pitch area and falls by approximately 0.60 m from south to north. Overall, levels fall from south-east to north-west at approximately 1:100. These gradients are acceptable and fall within typical guidance (<1 in 80 in the direction of play and <1 in 50 across the direction of play). However, the surrounding banks do not meet the slope criteria required for safe and effective maintenance; a maximum allowance of 1 in 3 (33%) is recommended. This threshold is exceeded in the current design, and reshaping of the steep bank above the pitches will be required. Drainage provision at the toe of this bank should also be upgraded accordingly, to manage runoff and reduce the risk of water ingress onto the pitch surface.

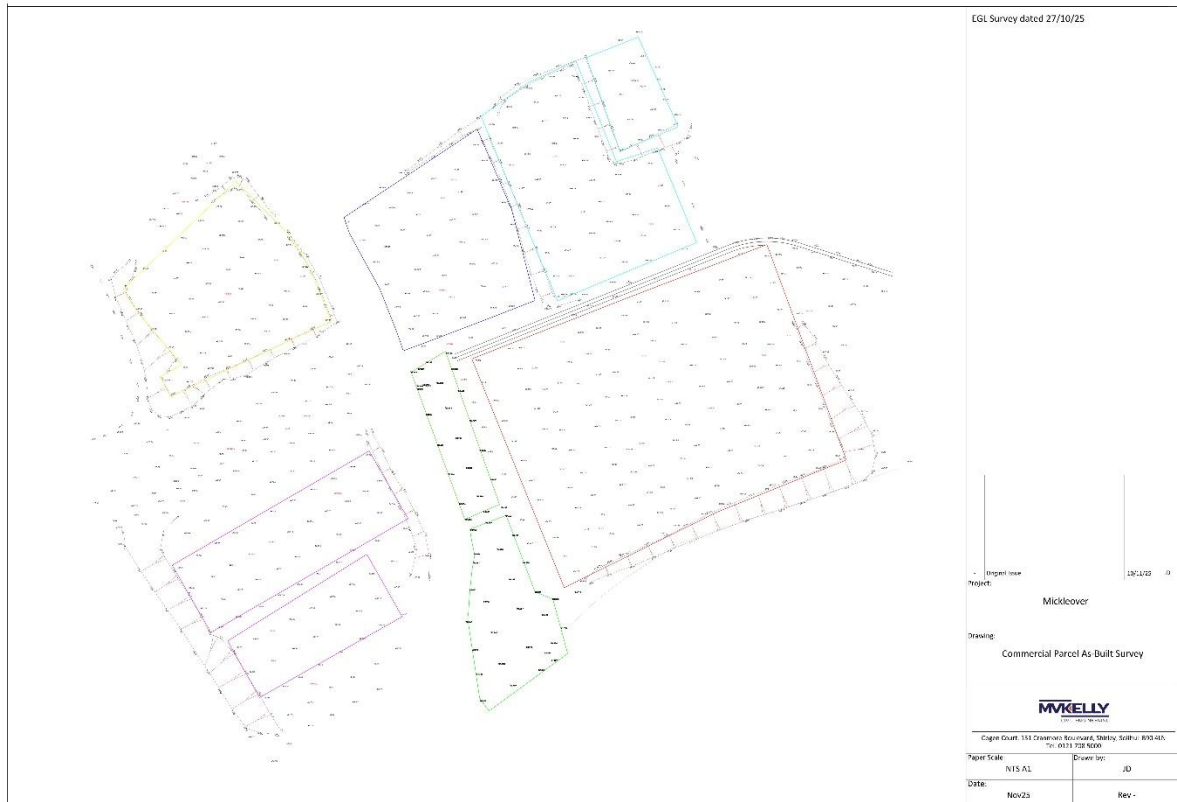


Figure 10. As laid topographical survey of the existing pitches subbase

#### Existing drainage plan design

The overall drainage concept is appropriate; however, the proposed lateral drain spacing should be confirmed only once the final rootzone specification has been selected, as the interval may need to be adjusted to reflect the permeability of the imported material. In addition, a continuous main collector drain is recommended along the full length of the southern boundary of both pitches to intercept runoff from higher ground and prevent water entering the playing surfaces. The two pitch drainage systems can remain separate, but the southern collector should be carried across the gap between the pitches to provide continuity. These amendments should be reviewed and agreed during the planned video conference, and after the appropriate rootzone has been selected and agreed upon, following which the CAD drawings can be updated accordingly.

#### Stone content

A limited number of stones are present within the sub-base and do not appear to present a significant constraint. However, any loose stones or debris at the surface should be collected and removed, particularly where individual stones exceed approximately 30 mm in diameter. The sub-base material is prone to becoming extremely hard during dry conditions and very soft under wet conditions. Consideration should therefore be given to using a stone separation/removal machine across the sub-base prior to trenching and associated

construction works, to reduce the risk of larger stones being brought to the surface and to facilitate subsequent finishing operations.

#### Wear and compaction

The proposed future use of the site will inevitably increase wear and compaction, which in turn will restrict natural drainage and root development. The anticipated intensity of use (including match and training demand, and any ancillary activities) should therefore be confirmed before the pitch construction specification is finalised, so that the design can be appropriately aligned with end-user requirements and long-term performance expectations.

#### Other key aspects checked on site

Other key aspects noted during the site visit are summarised below:

- As far as could be determined during the inspection, no visible above- or below-ground services (e.g., electricity, gas, water, telecommunications/fibre, foul drainage, or other pipelines) were identified within the pitch footprint.
- All contractors should undertake their own statutory service searches and on-site verification prior to any groundworks.
- No constraints relating to conservation designations (e.g., SSSI), archaeological restrictions, flooding/groundwater, contamination, or protected areas were identified during the visit.
- The potential influence of runoff/catchment from the nearby stormwater pond has been noted elsewhere in this report and should be reviewed as part of the drainage design.
- Planning approvals/consents should be confirmed with South Derbyshire District Council, including agreement of proposed drainage outfalls and connections to existing drainage infrastructure.
- A detailed geotechnical report has been completed for the site and should be referenced during design development and construction planning.
- It is anticipated that a full-size football club will take over the pitches following completion.
- A new community building is proposed nearby, with access to utilities and associated services.
- A hardstanding area is proposed nearby and may provide a suitable location for temporary storage of materials, subject to programme and planning constraints.
- Pitch establishment is expected to be by seeding rather than turfing; the preferred programme is to seed in autumn.
- The site is currently fenced, and access is understood to be via Bloor Homes or Taylor Wimpey.

## Next steps

Following review of this report, decisions from Bloor Homes, Wimpey Taylor and the football club who will use these pitches is required regarding the design questions raised in this report and then a final pitch design should be created. The question of irrigation has not been discussed or raised at this stage and should also be considered in the design stages.

Following this a complete specification of works and bill of quantities should be created by a qualified and impartial party, based on the agreed design plans. This will need to be sent out to three reputable contractors and checked to see which offer is suitable and appropriate. Upon acceptance of the chosen contractor and a pre-contract being agreed with them you will need to organise, chair, and administer regular site visits from a qualified Agronomist to confirm compliance with the specification. These site visits may include but are not limited to several key stages of the construction process including:

- site remodelling and regrading
- topsoil placement and grading
- drainage installation
- materials testing
- seedbed preparation
- grass establishment.

The visits will produce action plans, agendas, and minutes of the process to aid the whole construction process. Upon successful completion of the pitch construction a post construction phase monitoring process is also advised to help grow-in the pitches successfully and establish a successful grow-in period and project sign off.

Recommendations for aftercare and maintenance should also be considered at this stage as this will help with the overall success of the project as well.

Site visit and report compiled by:

Philip Armitage B.Sc. Hon's M.B.P.R,  
RIPTA Administrator from 2017 to Present  
Turfgrass Agronomist for the European Turfgrass Specialists Ltd.

## Appendix

Remaining photos taken on site











## Laboratory test results

| 23957/1    | PARTICLE SIZE DISTRIBUTION |  |  |                                                                     |
|------------|----------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | SAND / SILT / CLAY         |  |  |                                                                     |
|            |                            |  |  | Test Report      Number 23957/A      Page 1 of 2                    |
| 100%       |                            |  |  | Cromwell Orchard: Sub Base                                          |
|            |                            |  |  | ** Stones present > 16mm **                                         |
| 13/04/26   |                            |  |  | Sample Received Date & Sample Test Date                             |
| moist      |                            |  |  | Sample Moisture (very wet, wet, moist, dry, n/a)                    |
| plastic    |                            |  |  | Sample Consistency (hard, friable, plastic, n/a)                    |
| high       |                            |  |  | Sample Homogeneity (high, medium, low, n/a)                         |
| SA         |                            |  |  | <b>Particle Size Distribution – ASTM F1632-03 (Reapproved 2018)</b> |
| M          |                            |  |  | Angularity (VA, A, SA, SR, R, WR, n/a)                              |
| % Retained |                            |  |  | Sphericity (H, M, L, n/a)                                           |
| 3.6        |                            |  |  | % Coarse Gravel > 3.4 mm                                            |
| 0.4        |                            |  |  | % Fine Gravel 2 to 3.4 mm                                           |
| 0.8        |                            |  |  | % Very Coarse Sand 1 to 2 mm                                        |
| 1.0        |                            |  |  | % Coarse Sand 0.5 to 1 mm                                           |
| 2.5        |                            |  |  | % Medium Sand 0.25 to 0.5 mm                                        |
| 3.3        |                            |  |  | % Fine Sand 0.15 to 0.25 mm                                         |
| 6.1        |                            |  |  | % Very Fine Sand 0.05 to 0.15 mm                                    |
| 39.5       |                            |  |  | % Silt 0.002 to 0.05 mm                                             |
| 42.8       |                            |  |  | % Clay less than 0.002 mm                                           |
| 4.8        |                            |  |  | % greater than 1mm                                                  |
| 3.5        |                            |  |  | % Coarse + Medium Sand                                              |
| 3.3        |                            |  |  | % Fine Sand                                                         |
| 88.4       |                            |  |  | % Fines less than 0.15 mm                                           |

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

| 23957/1 |  |  |  |  | <b>PARTICLE SIZE DISTRIBUTION</b>                |
|---------|--|--|--|--|--------------------------------------------------|
|         |  |  |  |  | <b>SAND / SILT / CLAY</b>                        |
|         |  |  |  |  | Test Report      Number 23957/A      Page 2 of 2 |
|         |  |  |  |  | Coarse Gravel Criterion                          |
|         |  |  |  |  | Fine Gravel / Very Coarse Sand Criterion         |
|         |  |  |  |  | Coarse / Medium Sand Criterion                   |
|         |  |  |  |  | Fine Sand Criterion                              |
|         |  |  |  |  | Very Fine Sand Criterion                         |
|         |  |  |  |  | Total Fines Criterion                            |
|         |  |  |  |  | Silt Criterion                                   |
|         |  |  |  |  | Clay Criterion                                   |

Angularity codes:            VA, very angular; A, angular; SA, sub-angular; SR, sub-rounded; R, rounded; WR, well rounded.  
 Sphericity codes:            H, high; M, medium; L, low

**ASTM Method: F1632-03 (Reapproved 2018)**

**"Particle Size Analysis and Sand Shape Grading of Golf Course Putting Green and Sports Field Root Zone Mixes"**

These results refer only to the samples provided. No guarantee is given that they are representative of the bulk material.

Lab Results are based on the Simple Acceptance Decision Rule.

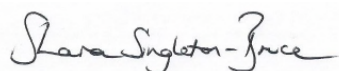
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**European Turfgrass Specialists Ltd**

Beacon Innovation Centre, Beacon Park, Gorleston, Norfolk, NR31 7RA

Approved by:



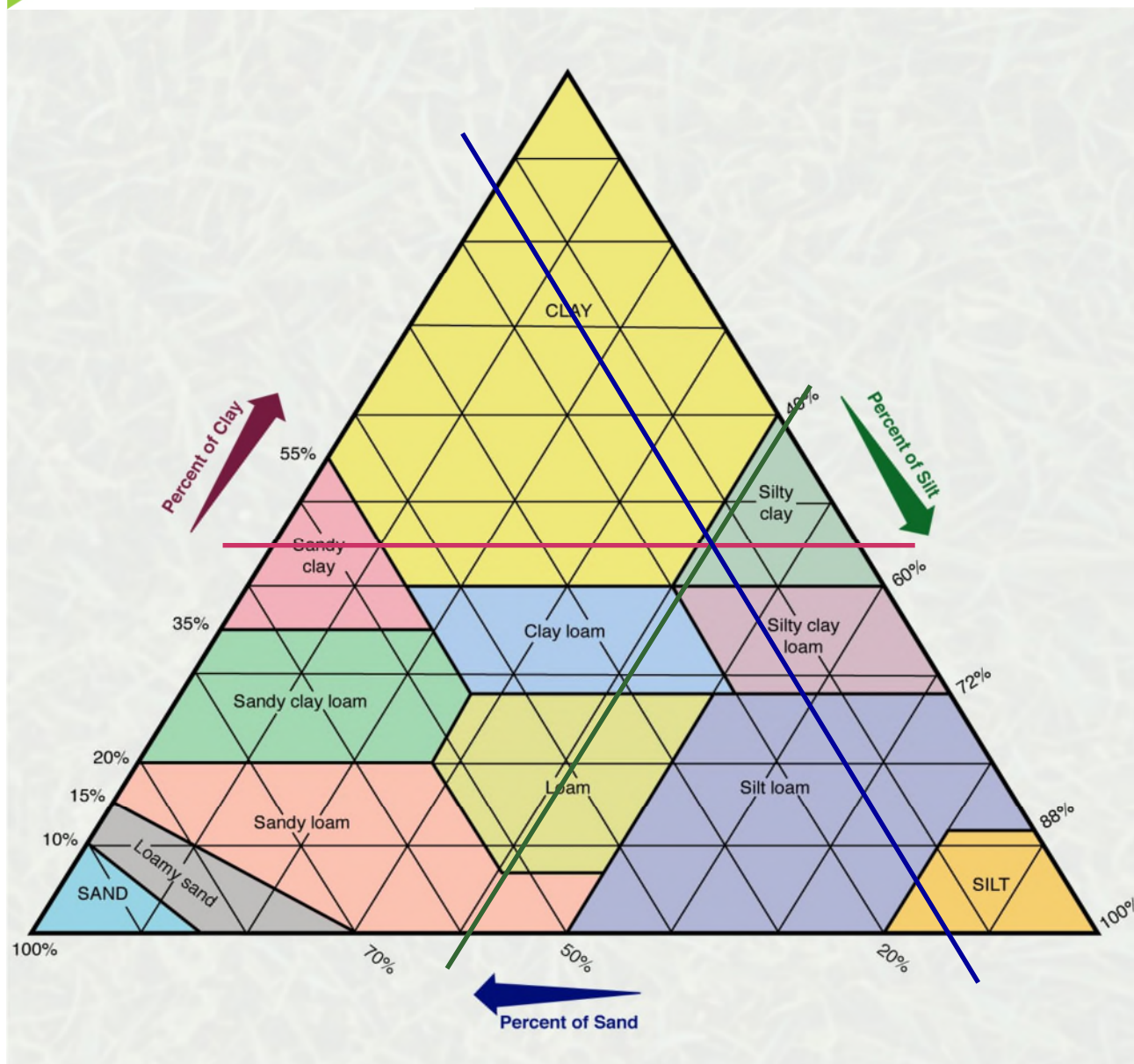
Date: 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026

Managing Director, for European Turfgrass Laboratories Ltd



## Triangle of Texture : Soil Classification

Date of Issue: May 2011, Revision 2,  
Issuing Authority: Sharon Singleton-Bruce



**Soil Sample: European Turfgrass Specialists Ltd**

**Report 23957/A**

| Sample                        | % Gravel | After removal of gravel |        |        | Soil Texture Classification |
|-------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|--------|--------|-----------------------------|
|                               |          | % Sand                  | % Silt | % Clay |                             |
| Cromwell Orchard:<br>Sub Base | 4.0      | 14.2                    | 41.1   | 44.7   | Silty Clay                  |

Signed:

*Sharon Singleton-Bruce*

Date: 16th April 2026

for European Turfgrass Laboratories Ltd

| 23957/2  |  |  |  |  | PERCOLATION RATE,<br>DENSITIES & POROSITIES<br>CORE SAMPLES<br>40cm Tension |
|----------|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          |  |  |  |  | Test Report Number 23957/B Page 1 of 1                                      |
| 100%     |  |  |  |  | Cromwell Orchard: Soil Core ex. Sub Base                                    |
| Cyl 1    |  |  |  |  |                                                                             |
|          |  |  |  |  |                                                                             |
|          |  |  |  |  |                                                                             |
| 13/04/26 |  |  |  |  | Sample Received Date & Sample Test Date                                     |
| n/a      |  |  |  |  | Sample Moisture (very wet, wet, moist, dry, n/a)                            |
| n/a      |  |  |  |  | Sample Consistency (hard, friable, plastic, n/a)                            |
| n/a      |  |  |  |  | Sample Homogeneity (high, medium, low, n/a)                                 |
| 0.0      |  |  |  |  | Saturated Hydraulic Conductivity @ 40 cm tension (mm/hr)                    |
| 2.685    |  |  |  |  | Particle Density (g/cc)                                                     |
| 2.00     |  |  |  |  | Bulk Density (g/cc) (MOIST)                                                 |
| 1.59     |  |  |  |  | Bulk Density (g/cc) (DRY)                                                   |
| 40.8     |  |  |  |  | Total Porosity (%v/v)                                                       |
| 1.0      |  |  |  |  | Air-filled Porosity (%v/v @ 40 cm tension)                                  |
| 39.8     |  |  |  |  | Water-filled Porosity (%v/v @ 40 cm tension)                                |
| 26.3     |  |  |  |  | Water Retention (%w/w @ 40 cm tension)                                      |

ASTM Method: D5550-23

"Specific Gravity of Soil Solids by Gas Pycnometer"

These results refer only to the samples provided. No guarantee is given that they are representative of the bulk material.

Lab Results are based on the Simple Acceptance Decision Rule.

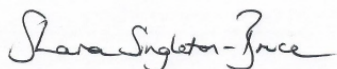
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Approved by:



Date: 17<sup>th</sup> April 2026

Managing Director, for European Turfgrass Laboratories Ltd