

APPLICATION REPORT – 19/00763/CB3MAJ

Validation Date: 7 August 2019

Ward: Astley And Buckshaw

Type of Application: Major Chorley Regulation 3

Proposal: Playing pitch improvements including the installation of primary and secondary drainage and associated landscaping works.

Location: West Way Playing Fields West Way Astley Village

Case Officer: Mr Iain Crossland

Applicant: Chorley Borough Council

Agent: Mr Steve Wells, Steve Wells Associates Ltd

Consultation expiry: 30 August 2019

Decision due by: 6 November 2019

RECOMMENDATION

1. It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.

SITE DESCRIPTION

2. The application site comprises grass pitch playing fields that are located in the settlement area of Chorley to the west of residential development at Astley Village and with open agricultural land beyond the site to the west. The character of the area is generally suburban residential at the fringe of the urban area, and the site is bound by West Way to the west from which vehicular access is gained. There are trees to the periphery of the site and a water course to the north.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3. This application seeks full planning permission for playing pitch improvements including the installation of primary and secondary drainage to the grass playing pitch areas to the east of the site along with sward improvements and grass reinforcement to the overspill car parking area. The grass reinforcement is a green 11mm thick plastic mesh through which natural grass would grow and that would be maintained along with the surrounding grass playing fields.
4. The proposed development forms part of a more comprehensive development of the playing fields. A separate planning application (19/00670/CB3MAJ) has been submitted for the construction of a new fenced and floodlit artificial grass pitch (AGP) and a single storey changing pavilion with access and car park works.

REPRESENTATIONS

5. Representations have been received from the occupiers two addresses citing the following grounds of objection:
 - Impact on neighbour amenity through noise and disturbance during development
 - Impact on neighbour amenity through noise from the use of the artificial pitch

- Impact on neighbour amenity through floodlighting
- There is a current lack of parking for the playing fields, which must be addressed before any facilities are upgraded
- Impact on the ability of residents to exercise dogs

CONSULTATIONS

6. Astley Village Parish Council: No have been received.
7. Greater Manchester Ecology Unit: Have no objection subject to conditions.
8. Lead Local Flood Authority: No comments have been received.
9. Environment Agency: No comments have been received.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of the development

10. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay.
11. Of particular relevance to the proposed development is paragraph 96 of Framework that states *“Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities[...].”*
12. Paragraph 97 of the Framework goes on to state *“Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless: [...] b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.”*
13. The Central Lancashire Core Strategy policy 24 covers sport and recreation and seeks to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access good sport, physical activity and recreation facilities (including children’s play) by (b) Protecting existing sport and recreation facilities.
14. The application site is located in the settlement area of Astley Village. The Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026 states that within the settlement areas excluded from the Green Belt, and identified on the Policies Map, there is a presumption in favour of appropriate sustainable development.
15. Policy HW2 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026 seeks to protect existing open space and states that land and buildings currently or last used as, or ancillary to, open space or sports and recreational facilities will be protected unless certain criteria can be met. This approach is reflected and supported in the Framework.
16. The application site is an existing playing field facility providing grassed football pitches, and the proposed development seeks to upgrade these facilities through improved drainage, pitch alignment and overspill car parking provision. These works are linked to the more comprehensive upgrade of the wider site, which is being addressed as part of a separate application (ref. 19/00670/CB3MAJ). The proposed grass pitch improvements do not diminish existing provisions, rather they provide greater flexibility in the layout and use of this area of maintained playing fields. The proposed development would retain and improve the existing use and facilities, whilst open access to the public would remain, therefore, the proposal complies with policy HW2 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026, and is acceptable in principle.

Design and impact on the character of the area

17. The application site currently comprises grassed playing fields and the proposed development would involve engineering operations to the playing fields in order to install the drainage to the grass playing pitch areas, carry out sward improvements and introduce grass reinforcement to the overspill car parking area. As such the area would remain as open grass playing fields following the delivery of the works, which would reflect the existing character of the area. The development is, therefore, considered to be in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026.

Impact on residential amenity

18. The site itself is already in use for playing fields and, therefore, already has some impact through noise and disturbance on nearby properties. The proposed development would not alter this situation, although the improvements may result in increased use. The wider facilities such as the artificial grass pitch and floodlights form part of a separate application.

19. It is noted that during the course of the works there is some potential for noise and disturbance in close proximity to residents. Although the effects of noise and disturbance during the course of development are temporary and must be accepted as part of any development works, these should be managed to result in the least possible disruption. It is, therefore, recommended that a condition is attached to any grant of planning permission requiring a construction method statement.

Highway safety

20. The existing vehicular access to Westway Playing Fields is off the B5252 West Way. This is currently used by football teams using the site at weekends with unmarked and informal parking on the grass but off the playing pitch areas.

21. Parking for the whole site has been addressed in the planning application for the wider AGP and pavilion developments (19/00670/CB3MAJ), which includes a large metalled car park as well as a reinforced grass overspill parking area. Together, these 154 vehicle spaces include 6 dedicated to disabled users and 6 electric vehicle charging points. In addition, mini bus parking and larger bays for occasional coach parking are included, plus secure cycle parking.

22. The grass pitches would continue to be used for competitive games at weekends during the football season. If all three grass pitches are being used concurrently, it is anticipated that participant numbers would be around 80 (players, reserves, and officials). Matches are typically organised for morning or afternoon kick-offs, so there would be no overlap in players arriving or leaving site at the same time.

23. The proposed development would improve on the current situation and would continue the existing arrangements of vehicular access from West Way.

24. It is, therefore, considered that the proposed development would not have a significant impact on highway safety, capacity or amenity in the immediate vicinity of the site over and above the existing situation.

Ecology

25. The application is accompanied by an ecology assessment of the site. This has been reviewed by the Council's ecology advisors (Greater Manchester Ecology Unit) who advise that no significant ecological issues were identified by the ecological consultants. Issues relating to amphibians, badgers, proximity to Euxton Brook, nesting birds, Himalayan balsam and landscaping can be resolved via conditions and informatives.

26. Surveys in 2016 found no evidence of great crested newts. eDNA analysis in 2019, however, provided one positive result for pond 1. This, however, has been interpreted as a false positive by the ecological consultants based on previous surveys, their assessment of the pond and the fact that all other eDNA results for this pond were negative. Given the nature of the pond which contains fish, these conclusions are accepted.

27. Common toad were recorded on the site, which are a UK Biodiversity Priority Species and, therefore, a material consideration for planning. It is proposed that a reasonable avoidance method statement be produced to reduce the impact of the development during construction on this species. This is supported and it is recommended that a condition is attached to any grant of planning permission requiring a method statement to be provided.
28. No potential impacts are anticipated on any other protected species. There was no evidence of badgers found on the site in 2015 and whilst this survey is now out of date, given the nature of the site, primarily playing field, their presence would be easily detected and the consultants have since returned to the site to inspect trees for bats and the ponds, with no mention of any badgers. It is, therefore, considered that risks are low.
29. No tree removal is proposed within this part of the development, though a number of trees are located along the perimeter of the site. The developer should, however, be mindful of the need to provide adequate protection to root protection areas during the course of the development and that under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended it is an offence to remove, damage, or destroy the nest of a wild bird, while the nest is in use or being built.
30. Himalayan balsam was identified on the site in 2015 along the northern boundary. This species is highly mobile and may have extended its range over the last four years. It is, therefore, recommended that a resurvey is carried out prior to any earthworks and that a condition requiring this and a method statement detailing eradication and/or control and/or avoidance measures be attached to any grant of planning permission.
31. The EU Water Framework Directive requires environmental objectives to be set for all surface and ground waters to enable them to achieve good status or potential for heavily modified water bodies by a defined date. One objective is to prevent further deterioration, which can include changes to flow pattern, width and depth of channel, sediment availability/transport and ecology and biology. No direct impacts would occur to Euxton Brook and the wooded buffer is significant and adequate to prevent any impacts during construction. It is noted, however, that the proposal to drain surface water from the site in to the brook post development, with the potential for negative impacts from increased nutrient levels, pollutant levels, sediment loads and flow fluctuations. Measures are proposed to prevent flow fluctuations from the AGP. Drainage from the car parks would also be directed towards the Euxton Brook, but there are no details provided at this stage. It is, therefore, recommend that a condition is attached to any grant of planning permission requiring that details are provided as to the impact on the ecological status of Euxton Brook and any mitigation measures that may be required to protect it.

Drainage

32. Improvements to the grass playing pitches at West Way centre on the installation of a primary and secondary drainage system to replace an original piped land drainage scheme that has long since failed.
33. The primary drainage scheme comprises 80mm diameter perforated uPCV laterals installed at 5m centres connected to 160mm diameter perforated uPCV mains leading to a new hydrobrake chamber before out-falling to a new pre-cast concrete headwall on the Euxton Brook.
34. Drainage trenches would be backfilled with 6mm down to 2mm of clean gravel covered with 150mm of topsoil. An off-line dry basin would be incorporated into the system as shown on the plans.
35. Secondary drainage would be a 'replacement' system (Koro Top-drain) ensuring a good connection with the primary drainage backfill beneath.
36. Secondary drainage would be installed at 90 degrees to the laterals over the whole of the playing pitch areas. Drainage slits would be 40mm wide, 220mm deep and at 500mm centres, and backfilled with clean river sand.

37. The preferred method of surface water discharge would be via a headwall into Euxton Brook.

CONCLUSION

38. The proposed development would enhance the recreational potential of the existing open space. It would not impact on the overall appearance and character of the area and there would be no harmful impact on neighbour amenity over and above the current situation. Nor would there be any harmful impact on highway safety, ecology or surface water drainage that cannot be addressed through appropriate conditions. On this basis it is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

RELEVANT HISTORY OF THE SITE

Ref: 98/00479/COU **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 14 October 1998
Description: Use of land for siting of two changing rooms and one storage container,

Ref: 19/00670/CB3MAJ **Decision:** PCO **Decision Date:** Pending
Description: Erection of sports pavilion and engineering operations including the layout out of a full size artificial grass pitch, 100m sprint straight, grass football pitches, children's play area and 90 space car park with additional over-spill provision.

RELEVANT POLICIES: In accordance with s.38 (6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the application is to be determined in accordance with the development plan (the Central Lancashire Core Strategy, the Adopted Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Consideration of the proposal has had regard to guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the development plan. The specific policies/guidance considerations are contained within the body of the report.

Suggested conditions

| No. | Condition | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|----------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1 | <p>The proposed development must be begun not later than three years from the date of this permission.</p> <p><i>Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004</i></p> | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | <p>The development hereby permitted for one dwelling shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Title</th> <th>Reference</th> <th>Received date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Location plan</td> <td>CBC-WW-01</td> <td>07 August 2019</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pitch drainage strategy</td> <td>CBC-WW-03</td> <td>07 August 2019</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.</i></p> | Title | Reference | Received date | Location plan | CBC-WW-01 | 07 August 2019 | Pitch drainage strategy | CBC-WW-03 | 07 August 2019 |
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| Pitch drainage strategy | CBC-WW-03 | 07 August 2019 | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | <p>During the construction period, all trees to be retained shall be protected in accordance with British Standard BS 5837:2012 or any subsequent amendment to the British Standards.</p> <p><i>Reason: To safeguard the trees to be retained.</i></p> | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | <p>Prior to any earthworks or site clearance associated with the development hereby approved taking place a reasonable avoidance measures method statement for amphibians shall be supplied to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.</p> | | | | | | | | | |

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| | <p>The agreed method statement shall be adhered to and implemented in full unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.</p> <p><i>Reason: To protect amphibians during the course of development.</i></p> |
| 5 | <p>Prior to any earthworks associated with the development hereby approved taking place the site shall be surveyed for invasive plant species, including Himalayan balsam, and the findings supplied to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Should any invasive species be present a method statement detailing avoidance, control and eradication measures shall be supplied to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, prior to any earthworks. The agreed method statement shall be adhered to and implemented in full unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.</p> <p><i>Reason: To ensure the eradication and control of any invasive species, which are found on the site.</i></p> |
| 6 | <p>No development shall take place until it can be demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the ecological status/potential of Euxton Brook resulting from the disposal of surface water post-development. Details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. The details, as approved, shall thereafter be implemented in full in accordance with a timetable, which has first been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.</p> <p><i>Reason: To protect the ecological status of Euxton Brook.</i></p> |
| 7 | <p>No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors ii. hours of operation (including deliveries) during construction iii. loading and unloading of plant and materials iv. storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development v. the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate vi. wheel washing facilities vii. measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction viii. a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works <p><i>Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to protect the amenities of the nearby residents.</i></p> |