

## **APPLICATION REPORT – 21/01389/OUTMAJ**

**Validation Date: 14 January 2021**

**Ward: Croston, Mawdesley And Euxton South**

**Type of Application: Major Outline Planning**

**Proposal: Outline application for the construction of sports pitches and multi use games areas (with all matters reserved).**

**Location: Croston Sports Club Westhead Road Croston Leyland PR26 9RR**

**Case Officer: Mr Iain Crossland**

**Applicant: Croston Together**

**Agent: Mr Richard Bramley, Bramley - Pate + Partners**

**Consultation expiry: 11 June 2021**

**Decision due by: 08 October 2021**

---

### **RECOMMENDATION**

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

### **SITE DESCRIPTION**

2. The application site comprises grassed pasture land located in the settlement area of Croston within a central area of the village. There is residential development to the north, south and east, with existing sports pitches and supporting facilities to the west. The character of the area is generally of an urban setting, although the village is surrounded by agricultural land and is distinctly separate from other settlements, which are some distance away. The site itself is relatively bare and featureless other than some trees and hedges to the periphery of the site.

### **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

3. This application seeks outline planning permission for the construction of sports pitches and multi use games areas with all matters reserved. An indicative site plan has been submitted, which identifies four junior football pitches and four multi use games areas within the main body of the site, a car parking area to the south and a bowling green in the south east corner, with landscaping to the periphery, footpaths and an attenuation pond to the north. Such a layout and quantum of development is, however, only indicative at this stage.
4. It is noted that a separate outline planning application has been submitted for the erection of a community centre and changing facilities with all matters reserved on the same site.

### **REPRESENTATIONS**

5. 14no. representations in support have been received.
6. 5no. representations have been received citing the following grounds of objection:
  - Impact on highway safety
  - Impact on amenity through noise disturbance

- Impact on amenity through light pollution from any floodlighting that may be installed.
- Impact on privacy of existing residents.
- Support for the principle of development but concerns over the details.
- Concerns over the provision of a 4G floodlit pitch.
- A 4G floodlit pitch is not necessary.
- Is there a need for these facilities in Croston.
- Would prefer to see other sports represented other than football.

7. Cllr Paul Sloan has submitted a letter of support stating:

*I am emailing to voice my support for the above applications. The project which these applications relate to, Project Space, promise to bring wonderful facilities and opportunities to the village of Croston and the surrounding areas. The combination of the community centre in the project will encourage wider participation in sports from the community, encouraging old and young alike.*

*The project will bring much needed facilities (e.g. 7v7 football pitches), a shortfall of which has been highlighted in local plans, to the borough. The project has a strong emphasis on the physical and mental well-being of members of the community and I believe this project will do much for the overall health of the area.*

## **CONSULTATIONS**

8. Croston Parish Council: Have confirmed that they wish to offer its support for this application.
9. Greater Manchester Ecology Unit: Recommend conditions.
10. Waste & Contaminated Land: Have confirmed that they have no comments to make.
11. Lancashire Highway Services: Have no objection.
12. Lead Local Flood Authority: Have no objection subject to conditions.
13. Sport England: Have offered its support in principle for this this application subject to conditions.
14. United Utilities: Have no objection subject to conditions.
15. Environment Agency: Have no objection.

## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### Principle of the Development

16. 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.
17. Of particular relevance to the proposed development Paragraph 98 of Framework 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[...]”.
18. Policy 24 of The Central Lancashire Core Strategy, which covers sport and recreation, seeks to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access good sport, physical activity and recreation facilities (including children’s play) by d) identifying sites for major new facilities where providers have evidence of need.
19. The application site is located in the settlement area of Croston, and borders the Croston Conservation Area to the south east corner of the site. 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.

20. The site is allocated for New Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities under policy HW1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026. This states that proposals for the provision of new open space, sport and recreational facilities or extensions to existing facilities will be permitted if all criteria of the policy are met. These are set out and addressed as follows:
21. *The development will not have an adverse impact on the local environment or visual character of the landscape;*  
The site is well defined and contained between residential developments to the north and east, Westhead Road to the south, beyond which are dwellings and existing sports pitches to the west. The site is predominantly managed grassland with very few features other than some hedgerows and trees to the periphery, and is otherwise somewhat featureless. The site appears as a rather anomalous space within the centre of the village, where one might expect to find recreational land rather than agricultural pasture. The development of the land for a sport and recreational purpose would not, therefore, have any adverse impact on the visual character of the landscape. As the application is in outline only at this point it is not possible to assess the impact of any structures or features that might be proposed, however, it is considered that sports pitches and recreation facilities could be developed on the land without any adverse impact on the local environment or visual character of the landscape;.
22. *The development will not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3);*  
The soil type in the area is Grade 3 agricultural land but more detailed information as to whether it is 'best and most versatile' (i.e. whether it is Grade 3a or 3b) is not available, however, its isolation from other parcels of agricultural land and position within the centre of the village render the land to be of limited agricultural value.
23. *The development will not cause harm to a site of nature conservation value;*  
A number of surveys have been provided by the applicant, which have been assessed by Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, who confirm that the predominant habitat on the site is species poor modified grassland with limited ecological value. On the boundaries of the site more ecologically interesting habitats are present including hedgerows, ditches and a stream. Other than nesting birds, however, no protected species were considered likely to occur on the site and be impacted by the proposals. A more detailed assessment is carried out below.
24. *The development will not harm the amenities of local residents;*  
The proposal is for the redevelopment of the existing agricultural land to provide sports pitches and multi use games areas the details of which are not known at this stage. The development of such facilities would improve the quality of and access to sports provision in the area adding to the amenities available to local people. The impact of the development on the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers is assessed below.
25. *The site is accessible by a choice of means of transport other than the private car and the traffic generated would not have a severe impact on the highway network.*  
The site is within walking/cycling distance of residents of Croston village and the pedestrian and cycle links are good. There is public transport serving the village with a bus service and railway station to the northern end of Railway Road. As such the site is accessible by a choice of means of transport other than the private car. In terms of the impact on the local highway network it is not possible to carry out a full assessment of this impact without full details of the proposed development having first been provided.
26. Overall, it is considered that this proposal would improve access to high quality open space and opportunities for sport and physical activity through the comprehensive development of the land in line with the Framework, policy 24 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy and policy HW1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026 and is acceptable in principle.

#### Design and impact on the character of the area

27. Policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 -2026 stipulates that planning permission will be granted for new development, including extensions, conversions and free standing structures, provided the proposal does not have a significantly detrimental impact on the surrounding area by virtue of its density, siting, layout, building to plot ratio, height, scale and massing, design, orientation and use of materials; and that the layout, design and landscaping of all elements of the proposal, including any internal roads, car parking, footpaths and open spaces, are of a high quality and respect the character of the site and local area.
28. The application site is well contained by residential development to the north and east with existing sports fields to the west. There is a highway to south at Westhead Road that the site would front onto and which provides the main public vantage point. The site currently comprises a grassland pasture without any particular features or character other than to the periphery. The character of the site would remain that of open land, and although the development of the site for playing pitches is likely to result in the need to introduce buildings and structures, the application is in outline only and, therefore, no such details are known at this stage. The way in which the site may be developed and landscaped should be carefully considered in relation to the appearance when viewed from Westhead Road in particular, which would require an appropriate level of detail at reserved matters stage. It is considered that the development of the site to provide playing pitches would not be harmful to the character of the area subject to the consideration of full details at reserved matters stage.
29. The development is, therefore, considered to be in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026.

#### Impact on designated heritage asset

30. Policy BNE8 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026 seeks to protect and enhance designated Heritage Assets. The application site borders the Croston Conservation Area at the south east corner. Croston Conservation Area is a designated heritage asset and it is necessary to consider whether or not the character or appearance of this conservation area would be harmed by the proposed development.
31. The application site itself is open grassland, with a hedgerow running along the site frontage with Westhead Road. The proposed development would by its very nature retain a largely open area, although it is noted that an access would need to be constructed that would reduce the extent of the hedge along the frontage. It is considered that a carefully designed and laid out development could be provided at the application site, which would continue to preserve the appearance and character of the conservation area and that of nearby listed buildings, subject to appropriate landscape and access details.
32. As such it is considered that an application in outline only can be determined in this instance, given the position on the border of the conservation area. It is considered that the proposed development would have no material impact on either the appearance or setting of the Croston Conservation Area or the significance of this designated heritage asset at this stage, and is, therefore, considered to be in conformity with S.72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, policy 16 of the Core Strategy and policy BNE8 of the Adopted Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026.

#### Impact on residential amenity

33. Policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 -2026 stipulates that planning permission will be granted for new development, including extensions, conversions and free standing structures, provided that, where relevant to the development the proposal would not cause harm to any neighbouring property by virtue of overlooking, overshadowing, or by creating an overbearing impact; and that the proposal would not cause an unacceptable degree of noise disturbance to surrounding land uses.
34. The proposed development of the site to provide sports pitches and multi-use games areas would increase the intensity of the use of the land over and above that of agriculture. The

development of the site for such use would result in noise from players whilst pitches are in use. It is noted that the multi use games areas are likely to receive more intensive use than the grass pitches and the extent to which these can be used would depend on whether floodlighting was to be introduced. It is not known at this stage whether floodlighting would be introduced, however, if it were to be proposed at any stage the Local Planning Authority would have the opportunity to consider the impacts of such structures on light pollution and the ability to consider the imposition of hours of use upon such features.

35. In consideration of the use of the land as proposed and on the basis of limited detail at this stage it is not considered that the use of playing pitches or multi use games areas in and of themselves would prevent any undue neighbour amenity impacts through noise. It is common for sports playing fields and facilities to be located amongst residential development and is a complementary land use. The positioning of the multiuse games areas would require careful consideration at any reserved matters stage in relation to minimising the impact of noise and light on residential occupiers, given their more intensive use. The use of appropriate boundary treatment and landscaping would also require careful consideration in terms of protecting residential privacy and in relation to site security. Overall, however it is not considered that there would be any unacceptable impact on residential amenity through the use of the land for playing pitches and multi use games areas.
36. Aside from the provision of the sports facilities, on site parking and vehicular access would also be required. The movement of vehicles has the potential to disturb residential amenity and, therefore, the arrangement of access and parking requires careful consideration in order to avoid any adverse impact.
37. The development is, therefore, considered to be in accordance with policy BNE1 and policy HW1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026

#### Highway safety

38. The proposed development would result in the construction of sports pitches and multi use games areas, although no details of how this would take place are available at this stage, and no details of access and parking are applied for within this application, which is with all matters reserved. The main highway safety issues would be the site access, which is anticipated to be from Westhead Road, the level of car parking and potential for overspill car parking onto A581 Westhead Road or other adjacent roads. Where the site has a known parking issue for availability and access, visitors may look at parking off site as an alternative. It is accepted that this may only happen at certain times but once a car is parked the driver will not return to move the car when car parking spaces are made available within the site. As such an adequate provision of permanent, and possibly overspill car parking, would be required at the detailed matters stage.
39. LCC Highways have been consulted in relation to the impact on highway safety and have confirmed that they do not have any objections regarding the proposed outline application. The proposal is with all matters reserved and LCC Highways are satisfied that an appropriate means of access can be provided. At reserved matters stage the access, layout and scale would require consideration in detail.

#### Ecology

40. Policy BNE9 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026 stipulates that Biodiversity and Ecological Network resources will be protected, conserved, restored and enhanced; and that priority will be given to, among other things, protecting, safeguarding and enhancing habitats for European, nationally and locally important species.
41. 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 the predominant habitat on the site is species poor modified grassland with limited ecological value. On the boundaries of the site more ecologically interesting habitats are present including hedgerow, ditches and a stream.

42. Other than nesting birds no protected species were considered likely to occur on the site and be impacted by the proposals.
43. A section of hedgerow at the southern boundary would need to be removed to facilitate the proposal. This has been identified as a priority habitat and, therefore, compensation for its loss should be provided, and hedgerow replanting using locally native species, in keeping with the existing hedgerow will be required. Protection of the retained hedgerow on the site should also be secured, where relevant.
44. There is potential for nesting birds to be present within the hedgerow on the site and some (although lower potential) for presence in the grassland/field. The nests of all wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended). Work to remove the hedgerow and works to the field, should be timed to avoid the main bird nesting season (March – August inclusive) unless it can otherwise be demonstrated that no active bird nests are present.
45. The Framework recommends that gains for biodiversity are sought through the planning system. The indicative site plan indicates the creation of an attenuation pond and also tree and shrub planting on the boundaries of the site. In principle this would be a welcome inclusion in the scheme and should be designed to deliver maximum benefits for the wildlife. Further details to demonstrate biodiversity gain should be demonstrated through the detailed design stage.
46. Overall it is considered that the site could be developed for sports pitches and multi use games areas in line with policy BNE9 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026.

#### Drainage

47. The application site comprises pasture grassland and is undeveloped. Most of the site is included in Flood Zone 2 on the Environment Agency Flood Map indicating a moderate risk of flooding, with an area to the north included in Flood Zone 3 'liable to flooding' but having the benefit of flood defences. A small area along the southern boundary to Westhead Road is in Flood Zone 1 – not liable to flooding. This part of the site is some 7.8m above O.S. datum and the site slopes very gently to the northern boundary – the watercourse.
48. The proposed development would introduce porous surfaces, grass, gravel etc. and, therefore, the likelihood of surface water run off of rainwater from the site increasing from existing levels is considered to be minimal. It is indicated at this stage that surface water run-off from the new playing fields would be run through an attenuation pond on the northern side of the site, which would slow down the flow of rainwater into the northern boundary watercourse to approximately 5 litres/second and also to collect silt where it could be removed before it enters the watercourse. Environment Agency access to this watercourse would be retained as no development is proposed within an 8m zone of the watercourse bank top.
49. Although most of the site is including Flood Zone 2 the nature of the proposed use, playing fields and surfaces, are by their very nature not greatly affected by flooding. The Environment Agency have considered the proposal and are satisfied that the development would be safe without exacerbating flood risk elsewhere if the proposed flood risk mitigation measures indicated are implemented.

#### **CONCLUSION**

50. The proposed development would provide new sports facilities on the site to the benefit of the local community. It would not impact unacceptably on the overall appearance and character of the area, or the significance of the conservation area and there would be no harmful impact on neighbour amenity. 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 outline planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

Suggested conditions

51. To follow.

**RELEVANT HISTORY OF THE SITE**

**Ref:** 20/01390/OUT

**Decision:** PCO

**Decision Date:** Pending

**Description:** Outline application for the erection of a building comprising community facilities and a building to provide changing facilities with associated car parking and landscaping (all matters reserved)

**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.