

APPLICATION REPORT – 21/00966/FULMAJ

Validation Date: 6 August 2021

Ward: Croston, Mawdesley And Euxton South

Type of Application: Major Full Planning

Proposal: Change of use of agricultural field to football pitches (within Use Class F2 (c) outdoor sport or recreation (not involving motorised vehicles or firearms)), construction of new car park and associated footpath.

Location: Rectory Field School Lane Mawdesley Ormskirk L40 3TG

Case Officer: Amy Aspinall

Applicant: Mawdesley Football Club

Consultation expiry: 28 April 2022

Decision due by: 19 January 2023 (Extension of time agreed)

RECOMMENDATION

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

SITE DESCRIPTION

2. The site is located in the Green Belt and comprises two distinct parcels, one being the agricultural field to the east of the existing cricket pavilion building and the other being to the west of it on land towards the junction of School Lane, Jay Bank and High Street. There are residential properties along the southern side of School Lane, most of which front it. The western part of the site is an existing sport and recreational facility.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3. The application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of the agricultural field to a football pitch which is a recreational use. The proposal also includes the provision of a car park and a new footpath to link the car park to the proposed pitch.
4. The proposal would be utilised by Mawdesley Juniors Football Club and would be comprised of a single 11 a side pitch with a 9 a side pitch marked inside it.
5. The car park would be located partly on a grassed area and playing field. It would provide 31no. car parking spaces marked out using flat bay markers and it would be surfaced using a cellular grass grid system laid over gravel and a weed barrier. The first 5 metres extending from the access would be surfaced with permeable asphalt. The car park would be accessed via High Street where an existing gated entrance exists and would be improved as part of the application.

REPRESENTATIONS

6. 5no. objections have been received which are summarised as follows:
 - Overshadow properties within 3.5 metres from 1 School Lane.
 - The car park would be in close proximity to residential properties.

- The land levels mean the car park would create a privacy issue.
- The car park would not reduce congestion as claimed, on School Lane.
- Car park is too large / larger than cricket club car park.
- Increased noise, disturbance and pollution during unsociable operating hours.
- Noise during matches and from away supporters.
- Devalue properties.
- Severe visual impact and impact outlook / Change of view from green space to a car park.
- Urbanise the rural character of the area and overload local services.
- Increased drainage issues and risk of flooding / site has a significant role in drainage from several sources.
- A sustainable surface water management scheme has not been provided.
- The club are using purpose built underused facilities a short distance away.
- No justifiable need for the facilities has been demonstrated.
- Cause traffic issues along School Lane and highway safety concerns / accidents will occur if passed / School Lane too narrow / School Lane used as a rat run.
- Recreational use class is not specified and could open up the area to many different uses in the future.
- Insufficient information has been provided to be able to assess the proposals fully, including number, layout and size of pitches, number of matches to be played and operating times, plans, ecological survey, tree survey, transport statement, noise assessment, flood risk assessment etc.
- Given the size of the field involved for the change of use the operation could expand significantly leading to overspill parking.
- Loss of best and most versatile agricultural land.
- The site lies within an impact zone for a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Impact on mature conservation value including surrounding ponds and hedgerows.
- Significant works would be necessary to make the field suitable for football in accordance with Sport England standards.
- What controls will be employed during construction and operation of the site?
- The site is not easily accessible other than by private car.
- There is no need for this recreational facility here given others are available and more easily accessible nearby.
- Would the cricket club facilities be sufficient for the increase in numbers of people using the site?
- Contamination from the car park.
- Set a precedent.
- Does not conform with the Local Plan policy HW1 a, b and c.
- Hazardous to driveway of Jay Bank.

7. 22no. representations of support have been received which are summarised as follows:

- This will be a valuable asset for young people in Mawdesley.
- No better site for this as football has been played here since the 1970s and the ability to share facilities.
- Would enhance the usability of the site / natural expansion of the site.
- It is so important for children in the village to be able to access grass roots sport close to home.
- Improve sense of community.
- Would support the community club.
- Opportunity for children in the village to play within the village, rather than elsewhere.
- Improve health and well-being.
- This will provide an all-inclusive opportunity for children to engage in a community run sport in a safe environment, which should be encouraged.
- More accessible than using School Lane and would remove traffic from it.
- Within walking or cycling distance for most users.
- Natural extension to the cricket and football site.
- A grass style car park would be in keeping with the area.

- Eliminate numerous car journeys to neighbouring facilities.
- So many local facilities have been lost over time, this will ensure the football club can continue for many years to come.
- Would support young families moving into the village.
- Car park is not big enough to be an eyesore.

CONSULTATIONS

8. Mawdesley Parish Council: Support the application but raised queries which the applicant has sought to address. This included the applicant changing the proposed car park surface from aggregate to the cellular grass grid system.
9. Lancashire County Council Highways (LCC Highway Services): Advise that they have no objection in principle to the proposal but requested revised plans to show an improved site access arrangement and the route of a footpath from the car park to the football pitch. This has since been provided by the applicant.
10. Greater Manchester Ecology Unit: have responded with no objection to the proposal stating, amongst other things, that the site does not have any nature conservation designations, legal or otherwise, nor does it meet the description of proposed works for Natural England's Impact Risk Zone in relation to Wrightington Bar Pastures (SSSI) or Martin Mere (SSSI). The Unit have recommended a condition be attached relating to protecting nesting birds and an informative note with regards to other protected species.
11. Sport England: initially issued a holding objection until further information was provided by the applicant relating to the proposed use of the field and car park. They subsequently removed the objection and note that the application is supported by The Football Foundation.
12. United Utilities: have responded with no objection to the proposal and have issued their template letter which suggests conditions be attached to any grant of planning permission to secure sustainable drainage measures.
13. Tree Officer: has responded to suggest a condition be attached to ensure trees and hedges to be retained are protected during site works.
14. Lead Local Flood Authority: have responded with no objection to the proposal and have requested conditions be attached in relation to securing the implementation and future maintenance of the submitted drainage scheme and an informative note in relation to watercourse consent.
15. Environment Agency: have not responded on this occasion.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of the development in the Green Belt

16. The application site is located within the Green Belt, as defined by the Chorley Local Plan Policies Map.
17. Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) confirms that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
18. Development will only be permitted within the Green Belt, under certain exceptions in accordance with the Framework, except where very special circumstances can be demonstrated. The Framework confirms that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

19. Paragraphs 149 and 150 of the Framework sets out the types of development that are not inappropriate in the Green Belt.
20. Pertinent to this application are exceptions b and e of paragraph 150, provided that they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it:
 - b) engineering operations
 - e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds).
21. The purposes of including land in the Green Belt are set out at paragraph 138 of the Framework and are as follows:
 - a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
22. The proposed car park and associated footpath are considered to be an engineering operation and can, therefore, be considered under exception (b) of paragraph 150. The car park and footpath would be low-lying surface structures; however, they would occupy an undeveloped area of the site which is laid to grass and is part of a playing field. This built form, combined with the use for the parking of vehicles would have some impact on the openness of the Green Belt, although it is recognised that vehicles would not be parked there on a permanent basis and would only be used various times in association with football matches. When the car park is in use it would also have a greater visual impact compared to the existing situation. The identified impacts from the parking of vehicles would be transient but nonetheless, this results in harm to openness. Where harm to openness is identified, it cannot be said that openness is 'preserved'.
23. In terms of the purposes of the Green Belt as set out at paragraph 138 of the Framework, the proposed car park and footpath would result in encroachment into the countryside due to the development of this undeveloped area of land. It would not, however, conflict with the other purposes.
24. The proposed change of use the agricultural field to a football pitch is considered under exception (e) of paragraph 150 of the Framework.
25. The change of use of the field itself would not impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Paraphernalia such as football goals would be brought out for each match and would be removed afterwards. They would not be permanent structures and the hours of use of the field would be restricted, as would the use of the field for that of Mawdesley Juniors FC. Accordingly, the change of use is considered to preserve openness. The use would, however, result in encroachment of the countryside.
26. The proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Substantial weight is attached to the harm by reason of inappropriateness, failure to preserve openness and encroachment into the countryside. As it has been established that the development would result in definitional harm to the Green Belt, any 'other harm' caused by the development, in addition to the harm to openness and encroachment of the countryside, must also be considered and added to the harm identified above. This is assessed below.

Open Space and Sports Field

27. The part of the site where the car park and footpath are proposed forms part of an existing recreational facility and so policy HW2 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 applies. The policy reflects that of paragraph 99 of the Framework and Sport England policy and seeks

to protect existing open space, sport and recreational facilities, unless alternative provision is provided (criterion 'a' of the policy). As noted by Sport England who have no objection to the proposal, the car park takes up land on the playing field that forms part of the cricket outfield and has been marked out for a football pitch (circa 2019) but is proposed mainly for ancillary use supporting the use of the playing field. The proposal would involve the provision of a new recreational field adjacent the cricket club site which would provide alternative enhanced facilities, in accordance with policy HW2 of the Chorley Local Plan.

28. The change of use of the agricultural field to recreational use would be considered under Policy HW1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 which sets out criteria that should be met if new sport and recreational facilities are to be provided, as follows:
 - a) The development will not have an adverse impact on the local environment or visual character of the landscape;
 - b) The development will not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3);
 - c) The development will not cause harm to a site of nature conservation value;
 - d) The development will not harm the amenities of local residents;
 - e) 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.
29. In relation to the impact on the local environment or visual character of the landscape, it is not considered that a change of use of land from an agricultural field to a grass recreational field would be a dramatic alteration to the visual character of the field. At the time of the case officer's site visit it did not appear that the field was being actively farmed, rather it was covered in long grass. There would be little difference between this and a well-maintained field used for recreational purposes. Similarly, the use of part of the existing recreational field for car parking would not have an unacceptable impact upon the local environment or visual character of the landscape, given the low impact surfacing material and transient impact from parked cars.
30. In relation to the loss of agricultural land it is considered that this field would be a natural extension to the facilities at the cricket club site and the benefits of the change of use would carry substantial weight which would outweigh the requirement to retain the field in its current use. It is also likely to be the case that if the recreational use were to cease the land could be reverted to agricultural use relatively easily. Therefore, a reason for refusal on the basis of a loss of agricultural land would not be justified as part of this application.
31. Regarding harm to a site of nature conservation value, the Council's ecology advisors at Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) raise no objections to the proposals and confirm that it does not have any nature conservation designations, legal or otherwise, nor does it meet the description of proposed works for Natural England's Impact Risk Zone in relation to Wrightington Bar Pastures Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Martin Mere SSSI.
32. In relation to the amenity of local residents; the change of use of the field would be unlikely to cause harm to any neighbouring property by virtue of overlooking, overshadowing, or by creating an overbearing impact. This is because the nearest residential property close to the field, known as Woodbrook, is located on the opposite side of School Lane, approximately 19 metres from the site. This is the only residential property adjacent the proposed recreational field. The applicant has indicated that they intend to have one 11 a side pitch with one 9 a side pitch inside it, on the recreational field, details of which can be controlled by an appropriately worded condition. This means that only one pitch would be able to be used at any one time. Although there is likely to be some localised noise and disturbance as a result of the use of the field for recreational purposes, it is unlikely that the use of a football pitch would cause impacts that would be so severe as to warrant refusal of the application.
33. The Junior Football Club teams compete in winter leagues with no league matches played over the summer. The applicant has confirmed that whilst the majority of their matches occur on Sunday afternoon, sometimes they are played on a Saturday afternoon. In

addition, they have clarified that they may need to play matches postponed from a weekend on a mid-week evening; last season this was the case for three matches for their under 13 team. Therefore to allow the flexibility for the occasional match to be played on midweek evenings as well as the usual weekend use, an appropriately worded condition is recommended to restrict when sports matches can be played on the field to between 08.30 hours and 18.00 hours on Saturdays and Sundays and between 17.00 hours to 21.00 hours on Monday to Friday. This would appropriately limit potential issues from noise and disturbance, whilst allowing the use of the field for matches. Further, it is considered appropriate to limit the use of the field to that of Mawdesley Juniors Football Club to provide some assurance that the site will not be rented to other clubs which would represent a more intensive use of the site than proposed and assessed in this application. Overall, it is considered the change of use of the field to recreational use would not cause an unacceptable degree of noise disturbance to surrounding land uses.

34. In relation to accessibility and traffic generation, and as many of the representations supporting the proposal indicate, children could walk or cycle to the site, and a condition is recommended to ensure cycle parking is provided which would encourage the use of this means of healthy sustainable transport. LCC Highways have not raised objections to the proposal and it is considered that with the associated car park the proposals would not have a severe impact on the highway network.
35. Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal would be acceptable in relation to the requirements of policy HW1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026.
36. This part of Mawdesley is not specified as an area for growth within Central Lancashire Core Strategy Policy 1 and falls to be considered as an 'other place'. Criterion (f) of Core Strategy Policy 1 reads as follows:

"In other places – smaller villages, substantially built up frontages and Major Developed Sites – development will typically be small scale and limited to appropriate infilling, conversion of buildings and proposals to meet local need, unless there are exceptional reasons for larger scale redevelopment schemes."

37. The proposal constitutes a major development and, therefore, exceptional reasons are required to justify the proposal.

Design and impact on the character of the area

38. Policy BNE1 (Design Criteria for New Development) 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.
39. The proposed development of the car park is considered to be well designed utilising a geocell surface that would enable it to blend into its surroundings, so as to ensure that it would not appear as a prominent feature in the landscape. At times when the recreational field is in use there would be cars parked on the car park. However, cars already park in the wider area to the south of the cricket pitch on certain days during the year such as Mawdesley Walking Day and the annual classic car rally as well as when overflow car parking is required by the cricket club. Therefore, the formalisation of some car parking on part of the application site would not undermine the character and appearance of the site or local area.
40. The footpath link has been requested by LCC Highways and would be constructed from simple materials utilising self-bound gravel as a surface possibly with timber edging and

would be a minimum of 1.2 metres wide. This would be a pathway of a style often found in recreational spaces and is considered appropriate to its rural setting.

41. The change of use of the recreational field is a simple change of use and markings of a pitch or pitches would be required to make it useable formally for playing football matches. Goal posts would also be required, although these would be required to be temporary by planning condition, to only be used during the use of the field. Precise details of the goals could be appropriately conditioned. Such features are associated with recreational fields and it is not considered that these would be out of character on a site adjacent an existing cricket field (which contains cricket nets) or inappropriate to their overall rural setting.
42. The site is largely screened from views from the south west and east by boundary hedgerows. The proposed car park would be visible from the cricket pitch to the north but obscured in certain views by the existing cricket nets to the north of the site for the proposed car park. As the visibility splays for the car park would mean that part of the hedgerow along the western side of the site would need to be maintained at a height of no more than 1 metre, further landscaping around the site could be secured via an appropriately worded condition.
43. It is considered that the proposals would not appear overly prominent and would not be incongruous features given the existing screening and subject to the implementation of a suitable landscaping scheme. The footpath would be of a simple construction and would be relatively narrow, as such it would have little impact on the appearance of the site.
44. Overall, the impact of the development on the appearance of the wider site would be limited and is not considered that the proposals would be significantly detrimental to the character of the area.

Impact on the amenity of neighbours

45. Policy BNE1 (Design Criteria for New Development) 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.
46. The application proposes a football pitch with associated parking and ancillary works. The car park would be situated to the south west of the site adjacent to an existing pitch, with the proposed football pitch situated immediately to the east of the cricket club within the adjacent field. The cricket club itself is already an established sports ground and the proposal would entail an expansion of an existing sporting uses in the area. A new footpath to the southern periphery of the cricket ground would connect the proposed car park to the proposed football pitch, linking through the existing cricket club car park.
47. A number of residential properties are situated along School Lane, on the opposite side of the road from the application site. Neighbouring objections raise concerns that the proposed development would overshadow these properties, that it would be in close proximity to them and would result in increased noise, disturbance and pollution during unsociable operating hours. In addition, concern has been raised that there would be a severe visual impact as a result of the proposal, including impact on outlook.
48. The proposal does not include any structures or buildings which could give rise to overshadowing impacts to neighbouring residential properties or their private amenity space. In addition, the parking of vehicles in the proposed car park would not result in loss of light or overshadowing impacts.
49. The use of the car park would generate some level of noise due to the coming and goings of vehicles and the closing of car doors associated with the match day traffic. However, this

car park would be small-scale, accommodating 30 vehicles, and there is already a car park located at the cricket ground.

50. The path linking the proposed car park to the existing cricket club car park would be separated from the properties that lie on the south of School Lane by the lane itself which has a hedgerow on its northern side and the footpath would be more than 13 metres from the nearest residential properties, whose private rear gardens are further away from the site. The nature of the use of the proposed is that it would be used would not be used on a frequent basis, rather it would be used intermittently when people walk from their parked cars to the recreational field. Therefore, it is not considered that it would have serious implications in terms of impacts on the amenity of neighbours.
51. In terms of the use of the proposed car park this would be used by the football club when matches are to be played which would generally be on Sunday afternoons outwith the summer. It would be gated to prevent unauthorised use. Whilst there is usually some noise associated with car parks in terms of cars revving and doors closing, as well as noise associated with people coming and going, it is unlikely that such noise would be seriously detrimental to the amenity of residents who live in the properties to the south of School Lane given the separation to the nearest property is more than 17 metres. The proposals would not have a seriously detrimental impact on the outlook or privacy of occupiers of the residential properties near the site given their relationship with the site and separation from it. Nor would it cause a loss of light or overshadowing as suggested by objectors.
52. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would, by virtue of the location and design, not have an adverse impact on the amenity currently enjoyed by any residential properties.

Highway safety

53. Policy BNE1 (Design Criteria for New Development) 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 the residual cumulative highways impact of the development is not severe and it would not prejudice highway safety, pedestrian safety, the free flow of traffic, and would not reduce the number of on-site parking spaces to below the standards stated in Site Allocations Policy – Parking Standards, unless there are other material considerations which justify the reduction.
54. In terms of car parking provision there are no parking standards for the proposed use within Appendix A of the Chorley Local Plan. LCC Highway Services have not raised any issues in relation to the proposed provision and therefore, it is concluded that it is satisfactory. During the course of the application, LCC Highway Services requested improvements to the access and a proposed footpath link from the car park to the pitch to be properly demonstrated. This has now been included as part of the application in order to provide safe pedestrian and vehicular access for users.
55. The scale of the proposal does not warrant a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment and LCC do not raise any concerns in relation to traffic generation and impact on the surrounding highways network, nor do they raise any objections in relation to highways safety matters. On this basis it is considered that safe access to the site can be achieved and that the proposal would not prejudice highways safety. The proposal is, therefore, considered to be acceptable in highways safety terms and in accordance with Chorley Local Plan policies BNE1 (d)

Impact on ecological interests

56. Policy BNE9 (Biodiversity and Nature Conservation) 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.

57. The Council's ecological advisor's the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) have reviewed the application and raise no objections. They confirm that the site does not have any nature conservation designations, legal or otherwise, nor does it meet the description of proposed works for Natural England's Impact Risk Zone in relation to Wrightington Bar Pastures (SSSI) or Martin Mere (SSSI). Given the location and the characteristics of the site and its surroundings they do not consider that there would be a reasonable likelihood of protected species being present, and do not consider that any further surveys would be necessary.
58. Given that the nests of all wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended) they recommend that an appropriately worded condition limits the timing of any vegetation removal works to avoid the main bird nesting season. Trees and hedgerows to be retained could be protected during the construction phase by an appropriately worded condition.
59. Having regard to the above, it is not considered that the proposal would be detrimental to nature conservation interests and would accord with policy BNE9 of the Chorley Local Plan.

Drainage and flood risk

60. Policy 29 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy requires appraising, managing and reducing flood risk in all new developments, avoiding inappropriate development in flood risk areas.
61. A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Proposal Report (FRA) has been submitted in support of the proposed development prepared by CFA Civils Limited.
62. The site lies within Flood Zone 1, which is the lowest risk and the report assesses flood risk affecting the site overall to be negligible. The FRA confirms that as there is an existing traditional land drainage serving the recreational field, it is not proposed to make any changes to the sub-soil drainage systems as part of the proposals.
63. In relation to the proposed car park, this would have a grass reinforcement/cellular system laid on an appropriate membrane and granular layer over the existing field drainage system, and no changes to the sub-soil drainage is proposed.
64. Drainage of the access to the car park would drain into the existing field drainage system. The FRA recognises that the area where the proposed car park would be located (and the wider area to the south of the cricket pitch) has suffered from waterlogging, and this is the result of over-compaction of the turf layer due to it being used as an overspill car park at times, rather than as a result of the failure of the land drainage or excessively high groundwater levels. The areas within the site will remain as permeable surfaces and benefit from the existing sub-soil land drainage, and in the event of any extreme rainfall events overland flow routes would not be altered from the existing situation.
65. Both the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and United Utilities have assessed the application and raise no objections to the proposals. Various conditions are recommended.
66. Having regard to the above, it is not considered that the proposed development would increase flood risk elsewhere and is in accordance with policy 29 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy.

Green Belt balancing exercise

67. The proposal would give rise to definitional harm to the Green Belt from being inappropriate development, as well as other harm from the impact upon the openness of the Green Belt from the car park and encroachment of the countryside from both the car park and change in use of the field. There needs to be very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh this harm.

68. Currently teams from Mawdesley Junior Football Club play matches at facilities outside the village, which means that children are having to travel further than necessary to play in matches. Given the site's location, it is likely that children could walk or cycle to the site which would eliminate a number of less sustainable car journeys.
69. It is clear from the level of representations supporting the proposal that it would provide a valuable sports facility in the village that children would be able to use. It is also likely that the proposals would enable facilities used by the cricket club to be also used by the Junior Football Club, helping both to continue to prosper.
70. It is considered that the investment in new facilities would help to maintain the viability of a community football club that provides leisure activities for children. This proposal would provide a high quality space for sport and physical activity and significant weight can be afforded to this given that paragraph 98 of the Framework and Policy 24 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy recognise the importance of this in ensuring the health and well-being of communities.
71. The proposal is supported by paragraph 145 of the Framework which states that "Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.
72. It is considered that the benefits of the proposal as set out above would amount to significant weight such that, in this instance, it is considered to amount to the very special circumstances required to overcome and outweigh the definitional harm to the Green Belt, harm to openness and encroachment of the countryside. Further, it is considered that the above benefits amount to the exceptional reasons required to justify a larger scale of development in an area not identified for growth. The proposal therefore accords with Central Lancashire Core Strategy Policy 1.

Other matters raised in representations

73. The car park is not to be used for vehicle repairs where there could be spillage risks, therefore, the risk of contamination from vehicles parking on the proposed car park is not considered to be an issue that would warrant refusal of the application, given that no consultees have raised concerns in this regard.
74. The possible devaluation of properties is not a material planning consideration that can be taken into account in the determination of this application.
75. It is not considered that the proposals would overload local services, rather it would be providing a valuable local service/facility to the community.
76. Recreational use would be a use within Use Class F2 (c) which relate to outdoor sport or recreation which do not involve motorised vehicles or firearms. Such activity would require planning permission.
77. With regards to potential impacts upon amenity during construction work, this can be controlled by a planning condition requiring the development to be undertaken in accordance with the Chorley Council document "Code of Practice for Construction and Demolition".
78. With regards to the approval of the application setting a precedent, each application is considered on its own merits.

CONCLUSION

79. Whilst the proposal would be inappropriate development by definition in the Green Belt, there are very special circumstances that clearly outweigh the definitional harm caused to the Green Belt as a result of inappropriateness, harm to the openness of the Green Belt and harm caused by encroachment of the countryside. There are also exceptional reasons to justify the development in an area not identified for growth in the Central Lancashire Core Strategy. The proposal would not have any detrimental impacts on the character of the area, neighbour amenity, highway safety, nature conservation interests or flooding. It is, therefore, recommended that the application is approved.

RELEVANT HISTORY OF THE SITE

Ref: 19/00486/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 19 July 2019
Description: Erection of detached garage for the storage of sports equipment.

Ref: 19/00664/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 3 September 2019
Description: Erection of replacement cricket practice net facility.

Ref: 19/00936/FUL **Decision:** WDN **Decision Date:** 9 January 2020
Description: Change of use from agricultural land to playing pitches (Use Class D2) and associated car parking

Ref: 20/00991/FUL **Decision:** WDN **Decision Date:** 27 January 2021
Description: Change of use from agricultural land to playing pitches (Use Class E) and associated car parking

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

1. The proposed development must be begun not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans below:

Title	Plan Ref	Received On
Location Plan	002	22 June 2022
Visibility Splay and Site Layout	003	23 November 2021
Proposed Block Plan with Pathway	004	22 June 2022
11 a side pitch and 9 a side pitch	n/a	5 September 2022

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. Sports matches shall only be played on the recreational field between 17.00 hours and 21.00 hours on Monday to Friday and 08.30 hours and 18.00 hours on Saturdays and Sundays.

Reason: To protect the amenity of occupiers of nearby properties.

4. The pitches shall be implemented in complete accordance with the approved details shown on the approved drawings prior to the first use of the recreational field for any sports matches and retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that the recreational field is used in the manner applied for and in accordance with the approved details.

5. Prior to the first use of the site for recreational purposes, details of goal posts and their storage when the field is not in use, and any other associated equipment relating to the use of the recreational field, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Only the approved goal posts and equipment shall be installed at the site in accordance with the approved details and shall be fully removed from the pitch and stored elsewhere in accordance with the approved details when the field is not in use.

Reason: To ensure that only the equipment required to facilitate the use of the recreational field is erected on the site, to ensure it is visually appropriate to the locality and to limit impacts upon the Green Belt

6. No works to trees, shrubs or hedgerows or any vegetation clearance shall occur between the 1st March and 31st August in any year unless a detailed bird nest survey by a suitably experienced ecologist has been carried out immediately prior to clearance and that appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interests on site. Written confirmation of such shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: All British birds nests and eggs (with certain limited exceptions) are protected by Section 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

7. The works hereby permitted shall be undertaken in accordance with British Standard BS 5837:2012 or any subsequent amendment to the British Standards.

Reason: To safeguard the health and appearance of trees and hedgerows being retained.

8. The car park hereby approved shall be surfaced with a geocell structure and grass apart from the first 5 metres from the back of the footway that shall be surfaced with permeable asphalt, and the footpath shall be surfaced in bound gravel.

Reason: To ensure that the materials used are visually appropriate to the locality.

9. The car park and footpath hereby approved shall be implemented in complete accordance with the approved details prior to the first use of the recreational field.

Reason: To ensure that the car park and footpath are available for use prior to the first use of the recreational field.

10. Prior to the commencement of any works on the site details of cycle parking shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The cycle parking shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to the first use of the recreational field for any sports matches and retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that cycle parking is available for use prior to the first formal use of the recreational field.

11. The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into first use until the access as shown on drawing number 003 has been provided in full including the visibility splays, within which any hedgerows shall be maintained thereafter at a maximum of 1.0m high.

Reason: To ensure that the access and visibility is satisfactory in the interests of highway safety.

12. The drainage for the development hereby approved, shall be carried out in accordance with principles set out in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Proposal (Ref No. CFC21073, Dated January 2022) which was prepared by CFA Civils. No surface water will be permitted to drain directly or indirectly into the public sewer. The measures shall be fully implemented prior to the first use of the development and in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority, and shall be retained thereafter for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory form of development and to prevent an undue increase in surface water run-off and to reduce the risk of flooding.

13. The commencement of use of the development shall not be permitted until a site specific Operation and Maintenance Manual for the lifetime of the development, pertaining to the surface water drainage system and prepared by a suitably competent person, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The details of the manual to be submitted for approval shall include, as a minimum:

- a) Details of drainage components and connecting drainage structures, including watercourses and their ownership, and maintenance, operational and access requirement for each drainage component;
- b) Pro-forma to allow the recording of each inspection and maintenance activity, as well as allowing any faults to be recorded and actions taken to rectify issues;
- c) Details of whom to contact if pollution is seen in the system or if it is not working correctly; and
- d) Means of access for maintenance and easements. Thereafter the drainage system shall be retained, managed, and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that flood risks from development to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those risks to controlled waters, property, and ecological systems, and to ensure that the sustainable drainage system is subsequently maintained pursuant to the requirements of Paragraph 169 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

14. The use of the approved recreational field shall be for the sole use of Mawdesley Juniors Football Club and shall not be rented or used by others for organised sports matches or training.

Reason: To control the use of the site for the amenity of residents and to limit harm to the Green Belt.

15. A scheme for the landscaping of the development and its surroundings shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the first use of the approved recreational field. These details shall include the types and numbers of trees and shrubs to be planted, their distribution on site, those areas to be seeded, paved or hard landscaped; and detail any changes of ground level or landform. Landscaping proposals should comprise only native plant communities appropriate to the natural area. The content of the plan should include elements to mitigate for loss of trees shrubs and bird nesting habitat and provide a net gain in the biodiversity value of the site.

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details within the first planting and seeding seasons following the first use of the field or car park and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

Reason: To ensure that a satisfactory landscaping scheme for the development is carried out to mitigate the impact of the development and secure a high quality design.

16. The Chorley Council document "Code of Practice for Construction and Demolition" shall be adhered to throughout the construction period.

Reason: To protect the amenities of the nearby residents.