

APPLICATION REPORT – 22/01230/FULMAJ

Validation Date: 29 November 2022

Ward: Euxton

Type of Application: Major Full Planning

Proposal: Construction of 3G synthetic grass pitch in place of existing grass pitch with fencing, erection of extension to pavilion and highway junction improvements

Location: Euxton Villa Football Club Jim Fowler Memorial Playing Fields Runshaw Hall Lane Euxton Chorley PR7 6HQ

Case Officer: Mr Iain Crossland

Applicant: Mr Graham Keyte Euxton Villa Football Club

Agent: Mr Steve Wells Steve Wells Associates Ltd

Consultation expiry: 23 December 2022

Decision due by: 28 February 2023

RECOMMENDATION

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

SITE DESCRIPTION

2. The application site is located in the Green Belt a rural part of Euxton. The site is a football club complex comprising a railed first team adult pitch with club house and changing facilities, training pitches and a loose surfaced car parking area. The first team pitch is located to the west side of the site and benefits from floodlighting, spectator stands, fencing and other paraphernalia. The training pitches are to the east of the site and are more open.
3. The site is enclosed by fencing to the perimeter and is surrounded by agricultural land to the north, east and south, whilst there is a residential development at Runshaw Hall, which lies to the west on the opposite side of Runshaw Hall Lane. There is also a fishing pond and equestrian centre to the south west.
4. The character of the area is of rural agricultural nature, interspersed with other uses. A feature of the immediate area is the mature trees that enclose the site to the south and west and run alongside Runshaw Hall Lane.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5. This application seeks planning permission for the construction of a 3G synthetic grass pitch in place of existing first team grass pitch with new fencing to the periphery. The existing dug outs would be replaced and an existing spectator stand moved slightly, whilst a steel storage container would also be installed at the northern end of the football pitch. It is also proposed to erect an extension to the pavilion and to carry out highway junction improvements to the existing site access, whilst 9no. 7m high lighting columns would be added to the car park.

REPRESENTATIONS

6. No representations have been received.

CONSULTATIONS

7. Euxton Parish Council: No comments have been received.
8. Greater Manchester Ecology Unit: Have no objections subject to conditions.
9. Lancashire County Council Highway Services: Have no objections subject to conditions.
10. Sport England: Have raised no objection to this application which is considered to meet Exceptions 2 and 5 of their adopted Playing Fields Policy and Guidance, subject to a condition relating to the submission of further details of the design of the 3G Football Turf Pitch (FTP).
11. United Utilities: Have no objection subject to condition.
12. Lead Local Flood Authority: Have no objection subject to conditions.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of the development

13. 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.
14. 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[...].”
15. The site is located in the Green Belt at Euxton, and is previously developed land, being an existing football club facility. National guidance on Green Belt is contained in Chapter 13 of the Framework, which states:

137. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. 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.

138. Green Belt serves five purposes:

- 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.*

147. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

148. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘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.

149. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- a) *buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
- b) *the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- c) *the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
- d) *the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- e) *limited infilling in villages;*
- f) *limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and*
- g) *limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*

– not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or

– not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

150. Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

- a) *mineral extraction;*
- b) *engineering operations;*
- c) *local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;*
- d) *the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;*
- e) *material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and*
- f) *development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.”*

16. In considering first the proposed structures, the proposed extension to the pavilion facility has the potential to engage with paragraph 149.c), which allows for the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. The proposed extension is modest in scale and would be significantly less than a 50% increase in the volume of the original building. As such it is not considered to be a disproportionate addition.
17. The proposed fences, lighting and storage container have the potential to engage with paragraph 149.b) of the Framework, as they would support the operation of a well established football club that has used the site since the late 1980s and therefore fall to be considered as facilities for outdoor sport and recreation. However, paragraph 149.b) states that such facilities are not inappropriate only where they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
18. The existing dug outs would be replaced and an existing spectator stand moved. The impact on openness would be neutral as no additional volume would result, whilst the positioning would remain similar and within the developed area. It is noted that the proposed timber fence to the west side of the ground would replace a steel fence of similar positioning and scale, therefore the visual impact on openness would be similar to the existing situation. The internal fences would be well screened from views by the boundary fencing and would be viewed in the context of the buildings and structures on the site at present. The ball stop fence to the southern end of the pitch would be approximately 4.5m high and would therefore be more visible, however the use of a green weld mesh fence would provide a high degree of intervisibility resulting in an unobtrusive feature. The storage container would be

situated to the north end of the pitch and would be screened from view by the boundary fence and surrounding structures. As such there would be a limited visual impact on openness. There would be some spatial impact, however, from the volume provided by the container and therefore a degree of harm to openness. As such this element of the development would not comply with any of the exceptions to inappropriate development.

19. The proposed lighting columns would be installed around the car park. There would be 9no. lighting columns in total, which are essentially tubular steel monopoles at a height of 7m. Views towards the site from public areas are from the highway at Runshaw Hall Lane and are well filtered to by the existing boundary hedges and trees. The slender profile of the monopoles is such that their visual prominence in the landscape would be limited, particularly in the context of the backdrop of surrounding trees. The floodlight columns would not have any impact on openness as a result, and therefore meet with the exception set out at paragraph 149.b) of the Framework
20. As it has been established, that there would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which results in definitional harm to the Green Belt, any other harm caused by the development must also be considered and added to the definitional harm.
21. The proposed construction of a 3G synthetic grass pitch and improvements to the access and car parking area could both be considered as engineering operations in line with paragraph 150, whilst the 3G synthetic grass pitch could be considered against the provisions of paragraph 149.b) as it is a facility for outdoor sport. In either case an assessment must be carried out in consideration of the impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it.
22. It is important to note that the Framework contains no specific definition of 'openness'. It is noted that the 3G pitch, access and car park are low lying surface structures, and in this respect would not have a physical impact on openness due to their two dimensional nature. Vehicles passing between the site and highway would be similar to the present situation with car passing back and forth and parking within the car park. As such there would be no appreciable impact on openness over and above the present situation through these elements of the proposal.
23. Considering the impact of the overall development against each of the five purposes in turn:
 - Purpose 1 (to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas)*
 - 24. The application site is located in a rural area isolated from the nearby developed areas. It is not considered the application proposal represents unrestricted urban sprawl of a large built-up area.
 - Purpose 2 (to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another)*
 - 25. The development of the site would not result in neighbouring towns merging into one another.
 - Purpose 3 (to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment)*
 - 26. The development would be contained within the football club complex and would not extend or encroach onto other land outside of the established site boundary.
 - Purpose 4 (preserve the setting and special character of historic towns)*
 - 27. The site is not located within or near to a historic town, and the proposed building would not be located within the setting of any listed buildings.
 - Purpose 5 (to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land)*
 - 28. This purpose does not apply as the site is already in use as a football club complex.
 - 29. On the basis of the above it is considered that there is no other harm to the Green Belt.

30. As the proposed development would result in definitional harm to the Green Belt there would have to be very special circumstances to justify the grant of planning permission that would outweigh this harm. It is, however, noted that only a small element of the overall proposal falls to be considered inappropriate development, this being the storage container and 4.5m high fencing.
31. The Central Lancashire Core Strategy contains policy 24, which 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.
32. Policy HW1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026 relates to open space, sport and recreational facilities. This sets out that ancillary development for an existing open space, sport or recreational facility will be permitted if all of the following criteria are met, which are addressed in turn:
- i. It is in connection with and will enhance the recreational and/or amenity value of the open space.*
33. The proposed development would extend the use of the main first team pitch to provide a facility on all but the most inclement of weathers, meaning other age groups can make use of the pitch other than the adult teams. New fencing would better secure the facility and prevent ball loss, whilst alterations to access and the pavilion would improve access to the site and facilities.
- ii. It is of a size and scale which does not detract from the character of the open space.*
34. The proposed development would be contained within the existing site and when viewed from public vantage points would have little impact over and above the present situation. The 4.5m high ball stop fence would be the most visible feature, however, the use of a green powered coated weld mesh material would help this feature to blend into the tree line, whilst the lighting columns would be slender profile that would have limited visibility. Furthermore it would not be an unexpected feature in the context of the football grounds.
- iii. It will not have a detrimental effect on any site of nature conservation value.*
35. There would be no adverse impact on nature conservation value subject to the provision of a construction environmental management plan and a scheme for Biodiversity Enhancement Measures, further details of which would be secured by condition.
- iv. It does not result in the loss of any other sporting facility on the site*
36. No sporting facilities would be lost as a result of the proposal, although it is noted that the grass playing field would be replaced by an artificial grass pitch. Sport England have considered the impact of the proposal and consider that it constitutes the development of an outdoor sports facility where the benefits to sport outweigh the loss of playing field. As a result they raise no objection.
37. The proposed development is considered to comply with policy 24 of the Core Strategy and HW1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026.

Impact on designated heritage assets

38. The application site comprises an existing football club complex located to the east of Runshaw Hall Lane and south of Leyland. To the west of the site on the opposite side of the highway is Runshaw Hall, which is a grade II listed building.
39. The principle statutory duty under the P(LBCA) Act 1990 is to preserve the special character of heritage assets, which includes their setting. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should in coming to decisions consider the principle act which states the following;
40. Listed Buildings - Section 66(1) in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

41. In determining planning applications LPAs should take account of;
 - a. The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - b. The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
 - c. The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
42. P.193 states that when considering the impact of proposals on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be applied. This is irrespective of whether any harm is identified as being substantial, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
43. P.194 states that any harm or loss of significance to a designated heritage asset (from alteration or destruction or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification.
44. P.196 states that where a development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
45. The Central Lancashire Core Strategy policy 16 and Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 policy BNE8 reflect this approach and support the protection of designated heritage assets.
46. The application relates to the construction of a 3G synthetic grass pitch in place of an existing grass pitch with fencing, erection of extension to pavilion and highway junction improvements.
47. The key heritage issue for the LPA to consider, in relation to proposed development is the impact of the proposal on the significance of the setting to the nearby designated heritage assets.
48. Historic England's advice on setting issues is contained in its Planning Note 3 (second edition) entitled The Setting of Heritage Assets. This describes the setting as being the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced and explains that this may be more extensive than its immediate curtilage and need not be confined to areas which have public access. Whilst setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations it is also influenced by the historic relationships between buildings and places and how views allow the significance of the asset to be appreciated.
49. It is important to stress that the setting to a heritage asset is not a designation in its own right. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate the assets significance.
50. In relation to Runshaw Hall the site is separated by a substantial woodland belt, which runs either side of the highway along Runshaw Hall Lane, which divides the application site from the grounds associated with Runshaw Hall.
51. The application site lies to the east of Runshaw Hall Lane and is most visible on approaching the site from the north heading southwards along Runshaw Hall Lane. The pitch, fences, extension and storage containers would be low level structures of modest scale, whilst the 4.5m high ball stop fence and car park lighting columns would be largely obscured and heavily filtered by the surrounding trees and vegetation. Even during winter, with the absence of leaves on the trees, the extent of the woodland provides dense cover between the site and Runshaw Hall effectively dividing the two and preventing intervisibility.
52. Runshaw Hall lies within fairly extensive grounds that are distinctly separate from the land to the east of the highway that incorporates the application site. The application site does not

therefore appear to have any historic relevance nor adds any significance to the qualities of the setting of Runshaw Hall. In this respect it is not considered that the proposal would affect how the Hall, would be experienced. The proposal is not therefore considered to harm the contribution made by the setting to the significance of this heritage asset.

53. Whilst the proposed structures would be glimpsed at through the trees when walking along Runshaw Hall Lane, and to a lesser extent from the driveway to the Hall, these views would be heavily filtered and would not detract from the significance of the Hall. It is also noted that the setting of the Hall has been altered significantly over time through the addition of new build housing units and the alteration of the access drive from the main highway. It is therefore concluded that the proposal would cause no discernible harm on the setting to the Historic Park and Garden.
54. The Framework at paragraph 193 states that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets. The more important the asset the greater weight should be applied.
55. It is concluded that the proposed development by reason of the fact that the application site is clearly visibly divorced from Runshaw Hall and has no associated historic significance would not cause any identifiable harm to the significance provided by the setting to Runshaw Hall.
56. In this regard the proposed scheme would meet the duty to 'preserve' as laid down by s.66 of the P(LBCA) Act 1990 and meet the objectives of Chapter 16 of the Framework and Policy 16 of the Lancashire Core Strategy and Policy BNE8 of the Local Plan.

Impact on character and appearance of the locality

57. The application site is a well established football club facility located in a rural area to the south of Leyland. The site is enclosed by mesh fencing and hedges, whilst there is also a steel fence to the west side of the main football pitch. The site is located to the east of Runshaw Lane, which is characterised by mature trees and woodland. Beyond the site is open agricultural land, and a small woodland and fishing lodge. The nearest public vantage points are the highway to the west and public a right of way to the north. The site is largely enclosed by mature trees and hedges, which obscures views from the highway, although views of the eastern part of the site are somewhat clearer from the public right of way.
58. The proposed replacement artificial grass pitch, fencing, pavilion extension, lighting and other structures would be located to the western part of the site, where tree cover is most dense and mature. The pitch, fences, extension and storage containers would be low level and of modest scale, whilst the lighting columns would be slender monopoles. Views of these would be heavily filtered due to the presence of trees. The steel boundary fence to the west side would be replaced with a timber panel fence. This would improve the appearance of the site and provide a more natural finish than the present fence, which has a rather industrial character. Notwithstanding this the proposed structures would be of an appearance to be expected at a sports facility of this type and are appropriate in this context.
59. The 4.5m high ball stop fence would be positioned at the southern end of the main football pitch and would be the most visible feature, however, the use of a green powder coated weld mesh material would help this feature to blend into the tree line. The lighting columns would be within the existing car park area and would have a slender profile that would have limited visibility, and viewed in the context of other lighting columns on the site. Furthermore, it would not be an unexpected feature in the context of the football grounds.
60. The development would have the greatest visual impact when the lighting is in operation. When in use sky glow would be visible from the public vantage points. This would, however, be seen in the context of existing floodlighting at the ground and would be contained to some extent due to the presence of surrounding mature trees. In addition to this the impact of any sky glow would be limited to the hours of operation, which would reflect the football season and match times therefore such an impact would be sporadic.

61. On this basis, it is considered that the proposed development would not have an unacceptably detrimental impact on the character of the locality.

Impact on neighbour amenity

62. The application site is located over 80m to the east of the nearest dwellings at Runshaw Hall and The Stables, whilst other properties are a good deal further away. It is noted that there are intervening mature trees and vegetation between the application site and the nearby dwellings. These would filter views of the site and the light that is generated by the floodlights themselves.
63. The proposed artificial pitch, which would benefit from existing floodlighting, would be used more extensively than at present. The site itself is already in use for playing fields with floodlighting and therefore already has some impact through noise and disturbance on nearby properties. It is recognised that the intensity of the use would increase as a result of the introduction of an artificial pitch that can be used more extensively. It is noted, however, that the artificial pitch facility itself would be located some distance from the nearest dwellings and is not therefore considered to present a harmful impact through noise and disturbance.
64. The proposed pavilion extension, fences, structures and storage container would be positioned a significant distance from the nearest dwelling and are of such modest scale that there would be no impact on any residential occupiers from these features.
65. On the basis of the above it is not considered that there would be any adverse impact on the amenity of residential occupiers.

Ecology

66. The application includes a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). This has been reviewed by the Council's ecology advisors, the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit. The PEA found that the site had some ecological value, mostly associated with habitats along the boundaries and adjacent to the site.
67. There are a number of ponds adjacent to the site, with the access road running very close to the ponds to the north of the site. The PEA states that the scheme will enter the District Level Licensing (DLL) scheme. The applicant has submitted a signed certificate indicating that they will enter the development scheme into DLL. As this is a form of licensing it is recommended that a condition be attached to any grant of planning permission requiring details of the licence that is issued or a statement in writing from the relevant licensing body or LPA to the effect that it does not consider that the specified development will require a licence.
68. Notwithstanding the above, should the application go ahead measures would need to be put into place to prevent amphibians being harmed during the constructions works. The PEA recommends that reasonable avoidance measures are used and it is therefore recommended that these measures be included within a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for Biodiversity that is secured by a condition attached to any grant of planning permission.
69. The proposals involve the loss of trees and scrub that may be used by nesting birds. As all wild birds, their nest and eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) any removal/clearance should avoid the main bird breeding season. This requirement should be incorporated into the CEMP.
70. A landscaping and biodiversity enhancement scheme for the site would be expected to include measures to enhance biodiversity at the site and to provide a net gain for biodiversity, in line with the requirements of the Framework. While the PEA makes reference to the erection of bat and bird boxes, these do not appear to be shown any submitted plan. It is therefore recommended that a condition be attached to any grant of planning permission requiring a scheme for the Biodiversity Enhancement Measures.

Highway safety

71. The proposed development seeks to utilise an existing site access (with proposed improvements) for the existing grass football pitches located on Runshaw Hall Lane. Runshaw Hall Lane has a speed limit of 40 mph and is part of the adopted highway, with a fenced highway verge south of the existing site access.
72. There is an existing pedestrian footway on the western side of Runshaw Hall Lane, which appears to be less than the recommended 2 metre width for pedestrian footways, however, it may be that the existing vegetation has overgrown the adopted highway. No pedestrian access is currently available at the existing site access.
73. There are existing bus stops within the vicinity of the existing site access, one on the western side of Runshaw Hall Lane (with a flag post bus sign) and another marked on LCC's internal mapping system "Mapzone" as being in the verge south of the existing access (without a bus sign). These bus stops are currently serving a school bus service (No. 409) and as such would not be available to use by users of the proposal.
74. The existing junction visibility splays are below the minimum required for a speed limit of 40 mph. The collision history within the vicinity of the site access was analysed using Crashmap and LCC's internal mapping system "Mapzone". Two collisions were recorded south of the existing south access, both resulting in slight injuries. It is LCC Highway Services' opinion that due to the current access having substandard visibility splays any intensification without improvements would be objected to.
75. The existing football pitches have car parking provision, however, they are not formalised nor is there a clear path for pedestrians to safely navigate the car park. The site is not in a sustainable location in LCC Highway Services' opinion and as such is deemed to be mostly car based. There is an existing footway on the western side of Runshaw Hall Lane, which whilst not an attractive pedestrian route does allow for potential sustainable transport to the site.
76. Revised plans were received as part of the email correspondence on 13 January 2023, which addressed LCC Highway Services' concerns in their response dated 29 December 2022. From assessment of the proposed development, it is LCC Highway Services' opinion that the proposals would not fall within any specific class use as set out in Chorley's Local Plan. LCC Highway Services accepts the parking accumulation and trip figures submitted as part of the submitted Transport Statement.
77. The amended proposed site plan [DWG No: 205-088-1005 Rev: A] proposes a total of 107 marked parking bays (104 regular spaces, 3 disabled spaces). This is less than the total stated within the Transport Statement site capability of 150+ car parking spaces. The parking accumulation contained within the Transport Statement demonstrated that in typical conditions the 107 marked spaces would be more than sufficient. Therefore, LCC Highway Services can accept the proposed car parking.
78. The amended proposed site plan does not show how the proposed overflow car parking area would be accessed. It is requested that this is shown to satisfy LCC Highway Services that the area can be used. The proposed pedestrian access from the junction through the site is in LCC Highway Services' opinion acceptable.
79. It is recommended that the overflow parking area is made of appropriate materials so that vehicles can enter and exit the area regardless of the weather conditions. Were this area to directly connected to the adopted highway this would be conditioned, however, as it does not LCC Highway Services only recommends that this is done rather than requiring it.
80. The proposed improvements to the existing junction as shown on the amended plan "junction access feasibility" [DWG No: 22055-LE-ZZ-ZZ-DR-D-0001 Rev: P02] are in LCC Highway Services' opinion acceptable. As part of the improvements a new footway would be introduced south of the site access with a bus stop flag post sign. It is noted that the proposed visibility splays in the amended plan above are below the required visibility splays.

The visibility splays shown on the amended plan are an improvement on the existing site access and as such LCC Highway Services find the proposed visibility splays to be acceptable.

81. LCC Highway Services does not have any objections regarding the proposed construction of the 3G synthetic grass pitch in place of existing grass pitch with fencing, erection of extension to pavilion and highway junction improvements and are of the opinion that the proposed development would not have a significant impact on highway safety, capacity or amenity in the immediate vicinity of the site.

Drainage

82. A site-specific flood risk assessment and surface water sustainable drainage strategy has been submitted in support of the proposed development. The document correctly identifies that the site is located wholly within zone 1 of the Environment Agency Flood map which is defined as land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1000 years annual probability of river or sea flooding in any one year. The site is at very low risk from surface water flooding and the risks would not alter as a result of the proposed development.
83. The sustainable drainage strategy philosophy for the site is the promotion of source control and site control techniques to reduce the risk of both site and downstream flooding. Excess surface water flow would be contained within the artificial grass pitch, which would provide sub surface water storage capacity. The surface water would then discharge into the existing drainage ditch to the west of the site at a restricted flow rate of 6.2 litres per second.
84. The Lead Local Flood Authority have reviewed the flood risk assessment and surface water sustainable drainage strategy and are satisfied with this approach subject to conditions requiring a drainage strategy, construction surface water management plan, sustainable drainage system operation and maintenance manual and a verification report to be provided.

Green Belt balancing exercise

85. It has been established that there is definitional harm to the Green Belt as a small element of the proposal, comprising the fencing and storage container would result in inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
86. Euxton Villa Football Club has been established at the site for over 30 years and has developed a successful local football club with extensive community links making provision for local children and adults across Chorley. The 2018 Central Lancashire Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) confirms the need for need for five full size 3G Football Turf Pitches within Chorley, against a supply at the time of one pitch, therefore there is a shortfall of four full size 3G pitches. In responding to the application Sport England sought the views of the Football Foundation (FF), who act as Sport England's technical advisors for football. The Football Foundation confirmed that a pitch has since been FF funded and built at Westway Sports Hub, which opened in 2021, though a shortfall of at least three full size pitches remains. The FF have also confirmed that the application site is identified in the 2019 Chorley LFFP as being a priority project for potential FF investment to develop a new 3G FTP. Therefore, the strategic need for a 3G FTP facility in Chorley appears to be established.
87. The Design and Access Statement (DAS) includes evidence of the identified need and community use of the proposed FTP detailing how 'the purpose of this development is to provide first class, floodlit, secure, all weather opportunities for weekday training and weekend match-play for Euxton Villa FC, its women's, girls' and junior sections and other local amateur football clubs.' The proposed 3G FTP would replace an existing defined adult 11V11 football pitch area which has no other sports taking place or the capacity to accommodate other sports on the pitch area. Additional upgrades to the site including storage and ball stop fencing is a necessity of meeting the standards required by the Football Foundation.
88. In order to progress the standard of football and coaching and extend the capacity of the club to work with young people there is a need to upgrade the facilities of the football ground

in order to meet a higher FA standard, and this cannot be done anywhere else other than at the existing facility. There is clear involvement across a wide catchment of the community, who would benefit from improved facilities at the site and a subsequent increase in the capacity of the club to work with young players and to a higher standard. This would have significant benefits to the local community and is therefore considered to carry significant weight.

89. The visual harm of the proposed development upon the openness of the Green Belt is of limited magnitude given the scale of the proposed storage and fencing, and degree of enclosure presented by the surrounding woodland and structures. There is also some spatial harm to openness from the addition of the new container and, therefore, the development cannot be considered to preserve the openness of the Green Belt without any harm and must be considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt to which substantial weight must be attached. It is, however, considered that the matters set out above when taken together amount to the very special circumstances required to overcome the definitional harm to the Green Belt, which must be accorded substantial weight in line with the Framework.

CONCLUSION

90. The principle of providing the artificial grass pitch, pavilion extension, access upgrade, lighting, replacement of dug outs, and repositioning of an existing spectator stand to support outdoor sport and recreation is an acceptable one as there would be no harm the openness of the Green Belt. The development is not considered to have any harmful impact on the significance of Runshaw Hall or landscape character and there is a suitable distance between the site and residential properties to ensure that living conditions would not suffer detrimental harm. Furthermore, no unacceptable ecological harm would arise.
91. The proposed storage container and fencing are inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The design and scale of these structures is appropriate, and would not be harmful to the character of the area. It is, however, considered that in this instance there are very special circumstances to overcome the definitional harm to the Green Belt. It is, therefore, recommended that the application be approved subject to conditions.

RELEVANT HISTORY OF THE SITE

Ref: 85/00284/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 5 November 1985

Description: Change of use of agricultural land to playing fields and with changing facilities (cabin or similar) land opposite

Ref: 02/00973/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 19 November 2002

Description: Extension to changing rooms and formation of pitched roofs,

Ref: 03/00952/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 21 November 2003

Description: Erection of new changing rooms/pavilion and demolition of existing

Ref: 06/00876/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 21 November 2006

Description: Removal of condition no. 5 of planning approval 03/00952/FUL,

Ref: 20/01038/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 9 April 2021

Description: Erection of 1no. covered terrace, 1no. covered terrace with disabled viewing area, 1no. covered seating area and installation of 14no. flood light columns

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

To follow.