

**Item 3a**                                **14/00641/FULMAJ**

**Case Officer**                        **Nicola Hopkins**

**Ward**                                    **Chisnall**

**Proposal**                                **Development of a new football training facility for academy and professionals including the erection of a new detached building to accommodate the junior academy and indoor pitch, erection of a new building for the professionals (linked to the existing club house by a covered walkway), part change of use of (restaurant within) golf clubhouse to Class D2, car parking, artificial pitch, floodlighting of two pitches, fencing and use of land as football training centre.**

**Location**                                **Charnock Richard Golf Club, Preston Road, Charnock Richard**

**Applicant**                                **Wigan Athletic Football Club**

**Consultation expiry:**    **26<sup>th</sup> August 2014**

**Decision due by:**            **12<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

**Recommendation**

**Approve full planning permission subject to the derogation tests of the Habitats Directive being satisfied and following referral to the Secretary of State**

**Executive Summary**

**The proposals relate to the creation of a training facility and Academy for Wigan Athletic Football Club on the site of the former Charnock Richard Golf Club. The site is located within the Green Belt and part of the proposals fall to be considered inappropriate development. However it is considered that very special circumstances have been demonstrated which outweigh the harm will have on the Green Belt.**

## Representations

**Charnock Richard Parish Council** has no objections provided the proposals meet all relevant criteria for development in the Green Belt.

**Heskin Parish Council** have no objections to this planning application provided the ecological issues are satisfactorily resolved

**Cllr Paul Leadbetter has made the following comments:**

- I am not, in principle, opposed to the application to develop a Football facility especially as change of use from agricultural to what it is today went largely unopposed when the planning application for the Golf Course was approved.
- There are currently significant areas of natural wildlife habitat and also a landscape in keeping with the surrounding fields on the site.
- The proposed football academy involves the generation of a large area of uninterrupted, finely tended and drained, football pitches, which will not only be without any features but will also employ a grass not endemic to, or in keeping with, the surrounding area.
- The proposed changes would create a featureless, flat, uninterrupted expanse of unnatural grass and artificial turf.
- The proposed building alteration and the addition of a new indoor pitch, regardless of whether it is full size or not, result in a volume increase in excess of that suggested in planning policy, as it is volume that has an impact on openness of green belt not floor area.
- There is no doubt that the application, not only the existing building alteration and in-particular the indoor pitch, but also the significant change to the openness that would come about through removal of natural breaks in the landscape which feature throughout the surrounding area, is inappropriate in the green belt.
- Provision of outdoor sport may be considered a very special circumstance and we need to question whether an indoor pitch is essential for what is an outdoor sport, it might be good to have but is it essential?
- A vast expanse of uninterrupted playing fields and a large number of pitches simulating potential opposition grounds, enabled through the removal of natural breaks, may be good to have, but are they essential?
- Football is an outdoor sport, as is Golf, and whilst planning policy may have changed the need to protect green belt not only remains but is increasingly important.
- The land remains the same land, on which a temporary kiosk was refused, so must still be an area of special landscape, worthy of protection.
- It must also be possible to provide some community use or benefit, previously there was a restaurant, retail golf shop and a sporting facility, open to anyone who chose to join, or pay to play; this football academy proposal does nothing even similar.
- I have little doubt that with some modification to the plans, to provide community use or benefit, obviously respecting the need for privacy of the elite players, and to protect the area, as described by Chorley Council's Planning Officers as an area of special landscape, the application could become appropriate in the green belt.

**NOTE:** An application was refused at the site in 1995 for a temporary pay kiosk due to the fact that the site was located within an Area of Special Landscape. This reference dates back to a pre-landscape character assessment which was carried out by Lancashire County Council which had limited evidence to support it. Since then it is considered that the correct approach is to establish that all landscape has a value and the County Council have undertaken Landscape Character Assessments of the County. There is nothing within the Framework to support to original consideration of this site as an Area of Special

Landscape and as such this can be afforded no weight in decision making.

**Parish Cllr Ann Bishop has made the following comments:**

- The proposed stadium is of a size that is not acceptable within the greenbelt
- TPO's should be placed on all the ancient Oaks and other native trees and hedgerows within the site.
- The applicants should demolish the buildings already on the site and build their stadium within that area as the proposed development exceeds the allowed difference allowed within the greenbelt whilst leaving the original buildings in place.
- There has been a refusal in Cheshire (re the application fronted by Sir Steve Redgrave) for a Sports academy which was turned down by that council within the greenbelt
- The destruction of many trees and ancient hedgerows.
- Impact on wildlife.
- There are hundreds of wild flowers and plants within the 89 acres that should be preserved

**In total 18 representations have been received which are summarised below**

<b>Objection</b>	<b>Support</b>
Total No. received: 16	Total No. received: 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scale- very large development</li> <li>• Insufficient tree screening</li> <li>• Noise generation</li> <li>• Increased traffic generation</li> <li>• This proposal occupies a larger area than was first proposed - indeed, it appears to occupy twice the area - and, consequently, the buffer of land between the development and the village of Charnock Richard is considerably reduced compared to the original proposal.</li> <li>• Light pollution during evenings.</li> <li>• Increased noise/traffic on those Sundays when academy matches are played.</li> <li>• Long-term effect that this development may have on the green-belt status of the land.</li> <li>• Long-term intentions for the site as the developer has history of similar developments resulting in housing (ie Orrell Rugby Club);</li> <li>• Concern over the status of public footpaths</li> <li>• Impact on wildlife.</li> <li>• Will have a significant impact on the green belt area</li> <li>• This is a massive development in a small rural village, which has no</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A good asset to our village without detriment to general village life.</li> <li>• The proposed buildings are well away from local residential properties, the landscaping will keep the area clean and tidy and the unused areas of the development will provide an area for the natural habitat of wild flowers and animals.</li> <li>• Also some much needed local employment may be generated in the long term.</li> <li>• The proposed location is far away from the village to have any significant impact on the vast majority of the residents of Charnock Richard.</li> <li>• The previous status of this land as a golf course was uneconomically sustainable so we now have a large area of land on the outskirts of the village which has turned into a dog walkers paradise.</li> </ul>

significant special circumstances.

- Impacts on local drainage
- If special treatment is given to large business then this should be applied to all land owners in the Chorley district.
- Approving this type of development will open the floodgates for future inappropriate development in the area.
- It doesn't offer any benefit to the local area.
- It has an excessive number of football pitches greater than most premier league football clubs which is not required.
- A scaled down, smaller more appropriate development would be a compromise for all stakeholders providing this is appropriately positioned within the land.
- The size of the indoor pitch is unacceptable- will not preserve the openness of the Green Belt
- Pond pollution- impact on Great Crested Newt population
- Why is there need for raised seating stands?
- Excessive hardstanding for car park area
- Landscaping plan is vague- screen planting should be required.
- Who will enforce lights being switched off?
- Who will ensure chemicals do not pollute neighbouring land?
- Loss of privacy
- Increase trespass to site and neighbouring properties.
- Why it is not located in Wigan?
- Will exacerbate the highway safety issues in the area
- The property directly adjacent to the west of the existing clubhouse has no name and number is in fact Barkers farm. Barkers farm does not belong to Wigan athletic
- The neighbouring house is at a lower land level.
- Proposed fence will limit the ability to maintain the existing adjacent property.
- New water drains and electricity are required.
- The flood risk and assessment drainage strategy report is an unacceptable report that does not reflect the reality of the site during the wetter periods.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• www.ukgolfguide.com states: 'Would recommend not to go when it's been raining hard because it will be playable but there will quite a few puddles'</li> <li>• Increased drainage of water on to neighbouring land is not acceptable.</li> <li>• A substantial independent report should be carried out during the winter months to reflect reality</li> <li>• Neighbouring land owners need to be protected from the potential of having land and out buildings been flooded by the redirection of water onto neighbouring land.</li> <li>• Is Mr Whelan prepared to commit to the village? how will the football club repay the village for disrupting us?</li> </ul>	
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### **Consultees**

<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Summary of Comments received</b>
Sport England	The Golf Course has been bought by Wigan Athletic who plan to construct a Football Development Centre on the site. Sport England considers this to be an appropriate activity within the Green belt. Some conditions have been suggested in respect of the proposed pitches.
United Utilities	No objection subject to suitable conditions
LCC Ecology	Initially raised concerns about the lack of surveys. Following receipt of the requested information...
Environment Agency	Have no objection subject to conditions
Architectural Liaison Officer Lancashire Constabulary	Has commented that one of the principle concerns with this facility in respect of criminal activity is the potential risk of vehicle crime in the car parking areas. In this regard recommendations have been made in accordance with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act
LCC Highways	Have no objection in principle subject to the specific comments set out within the assessment
The Council's Sports Development Team (Head of Health, Environment and Neighbourhoods)	Have no objection to the proposals but have comments specifically on the community benefits elements of the proposal which is addressed in detail below.

**The following points have been forwarded by the applicants, Wigan Athletic, in support of the application:**

- There is a system of academies for professional football clubs which is supervised by the Premier League under the auspices of its Elite Player Performance Plan. Wigan Athletic has sought to achieve a Category 1 Academy status —this will enable us to attract a range of young players from age groups under 9 to under 16 from, the north-west area. We are in competition with major football clubs who operate in the north-west, most of whom have Category 1 status. In order for Wigan to have a realistic chance of attracting the better young players to develop we need to have comparable facilities with some of the larger clubs in this region in Manchester, Liverpool and other parts of Lancashire.

**OFFICER NOTE:** *The teams in the area with Category 1 status are Manchester United, Manchester City, Liverpool, Everton, Blackburn and Bolton. Burnley, who are ranked as competitors to Wigan, are not Category 1. Other major championship clubs not in the area but also Category 1 are Derby County, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Nottingham Forest.*

- Category 1 Academies exist in the majority of Premier League and Championship clubs. The provision of Category 1 facilities is not only in the interests of Wigan Athletic but also in the interests of training the new generation of professional footballers and also educating children and teenagers as part of that process.
- Currently, because of lack of facilities, Wigan only has a Category 3 Academy and although we have been endeavouring to find a site or sites to house the necessary facilities we have not been able to make much progress on this matter over the last two to three years. The Club had, because of the lack of availability of a suitable location for the academy and professionals on one site, made the decision to operate the academy and professional/development squad (our u18s to u21s) from separate sites. A planning application was made to develop the academy facilities at our Christopher Park site in Wigan (in the Green Belt). We looked at a number of other sites for the professionals. For various reasons we did not progress these separate sites, however opportunity arose last year with the auction held to sell the Charnock Richard Golf Club site for Wigan Athletic to acquire the land which is big enough for our combined training facilities.
- The new site will allow us to meet the Category 1 Academy requirements in the Elite Player Performance Plan and combine the academy with the professional/development squad. It is common place for the professionals to train on the same site as the academy as this provides the academy students with incentives to graduate to the professional ranks and also means a more efficient use of facilities and pitches. The Charnock Richard facility will allow us to compete on the same footing as other clubs in our region in terms of the attraction and development of young footballers.
- The achievement of the planning permission for the facility at Charnock Richard is vital to the future development of Wigan Athletic. The club has been successful over recent years partly because of the development of its own talent as well as the attraction of professionals from other clubs. As the standard of training facilities for academy and professionals rises elsewhere (in accordance with the Elite Player Performance Plan) Wigan cannot be left behind in this process. Our aspiration is clearly to return to the Premier League as soon as possible and the establishment of the training facility at Charnock Richard will again allow us to compete on the same basis as other similar clubs.
- We held a very successful consultation event about our proposals at Charnock Richard Football Club before the submission of the application. We were heartened by the levels of support for the proposals. The important thing to emphasise about the training ground facility is that it is an exclusive facility in training the most talented young footballers and professionals. The facilities will therefore be of a very high standard including the pitches themselves. Part of the attraction of the Charnock Richard site is the fact that it is secluded and that the training operations we carry out there do not have impacts on the surrounding area in terms of noise or high levels of

activity. Overall — through a combination of coaching staff, administrative staff, players, academy staff etc —there will be about 100 people employed at the site although not all of them will be on the site at the same time. The normal day to day operations on weekdays will commence about 8.30am and will be finished (the academy train in the early evening) at 9pm at the latest. The floodlights we are applying for on the artificial pitch and first team pitch will not be in operation after that time. There will be no paying spectators allowed onto the site. There will be academy matches and the occasional 'behind closed doors' reserve or u21 match. The only spectators that will be on the site are likely to be academy parents and coaching staff either from Wigan Athletic or our opponents. There is adequate capacity in terms of car parking to accommodate all those who will be on the site at that time.

**OFFICER NOTE:** *The agent has confirmed that virtually all the 100 people will be existing employees. There may be a very small number of additional jobs – possibly an extra grounds man and potentially a new member of the catering staff.*

*As noted later in the report it has been requested that the floodlights are illuminated until 9.30pm the half hour discrepancy set out above is to allow some slippage if training sessions start a bit later. The agent has confirmed that they normally do all finish by 9pm but occasionally they might go over to 9.10/9.15pm. Floodlights until 9.30pm allows for some light to be on the site while the equipment is tidied away and players dispersed back to the changing rooms etc.*

- We want to maintain good relations with our neighbours and the holding of our exhibition at Charnock Richard Football Club indicated our intentions in this regard. We are going to be using the site for our own academy and training purposes for seven days a week although it will be used less on Saturdays when the professionals are playing matches. We want to ensure there are good relations with the local community and we are happy to talk to the Council about allowing certain elements of the community to visit the site although at the moment it would be difficult for us to say that we can allow (on a regular basis) the use of the facilities for active recreational purposes. At Christopher Park we have a very good scheme with local schools that allow them to visit the site in the day time, meet the players and see how a major professional football team operates. That has proved very popular with schools in the Wigan area and we would be happy to have a similar scheme for schools in Chorley. There may be the opportunity for the occasional use of the facilities (eg the indoor pitch when we do not require it) and we are happy to speak informally to Charnock Richard Football Club if it is interested in doing that.
- We think that our proposals for Charnock Richard are well considered and fulfil our long term objective to provide for a Category 1 Academy. We are pleased we have managed to obtain a letter from the Premier League that confirms our proposals meet its requirements and we will get Academy 1 status if planning permission is granted and when the facilities are in operation. We need the facility to be in place as soon as possible. It does take several months to provide the level plateaus for the pitches and for the pitches to develop (they are seeded) to the high standard we require. As you will see from the application the pitch formation and drainage of them is a complex operation and all development in the Charnock Richard site has to bear in mind the ecological constraints.
- Overall, therefore, we wish to commend the proposals to the Council and to assure you that if the grant of planning permission on this site will allow us to have a Category 1 Academy that will, in turn, allow us to compete on a similar level of major football clubs in the northwest region. The opportunity to have an elite training facility in Chorley Borough would, we hope, be regarded as an asset to the prestige of the Council (as it has been for other Councils where such facilities are located) and we are happy to talk further about particularly the opportunity for schools to visit the site when it is established. We would be happy to answer any further queries you have in terms of the Club's use of the site and hope that planning permission can be granted for our application as soon as possible.

**NOTE:** Since writing this letter the Club has attended various Parish Council meetings where the Chief Executive confirmed verbally that they would give consideration to other users at the site and local schools visiting the site.

**The Football League have also provided a letter which includes the following points:**

- As Head of Youth Development at the Football League I write to provide additional information in regards to the planning application which has been submitted on behalf of Wigan Athletic Football Club for the development of a new training facility at Charnock Richard Golf Club.
- The Clubs intent behind the development is to establish facilities that will enable Wigan Athletic to realistically strive for Category 1 Academy status in accordance with the Elite Player Performance Plan. The Youth Development rules detail the facility requirements for each category of Academy which for category 1, as the highest level of Academy, are substantial. It is worthy of note that a stated vision of the EPPP is that Academies provide inspirational facilities.
- The Clubs intent is that the facilities in question provide the base for Academy, development squad and professionals alike and I can confirm that this is an approach utilised by a number of current category 1 Clubs.
- I am aware from discussions that the Club has had difficulties in finding a suitable site to align with its Academy aspirations and I am encouraged that the Club are stating its aspirations to achieve the highest possible status of Academy. I am hopeful that the Club are able to attain such status and will only have a realistic opportunity to do so with the provision of appropriate facilities

The letter is from the Head of Youth development, the Football League provide help and guidance to Clubs such as Wigan in achieving the relevant Categories. In order to secure Category 1 status an independent audit will be undertaken by a company called Doublepass who present their recommendation to the Professional Game Board. It is this board who issue the academy licences.



## **Assessment**

### **Planning Policy Background**

1. In accordance with s.38 (6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the application is to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
2. The development plan currently consists of the saved policies contained within the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review and the Adopted Central Lancashire Core Strategy.

### **Background Information**

3. The application site is currently occupied by a golf course which since its closure earlier this year has remained unused (the greens have subsequently become overgrown) although the site still has the appearance of a golf course. The site is very artificial in character which is resultant of changing former agricultural land to a golf course with its associated bunkers and tee areas.
4. The proposals have been submitted on behalf of Wigan Athletic Football Club to enable the club to attain Category 1 Football Academy status in accordance with the requirements of the Premier League (endorsed by the Football Association) in its Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP) for academies operated by leading professional football clubs. An Academy Player is defined as *a male player (other than an Amateur Player or a Trialist) who is in an age group between Under 9 to Under 21*. This will enable the Club to operate an academy from age groups 8 to 16 up to a capacity of 120 boys that would compete with other leading clubs in the north-west of England with a further 30 players between the ages of 6 – 21.
5. In order to achieve Category 1 status specific facilities in terms of quality and quantity need to be on a professional club football training ground and all of the required facilities are required to be provided at the Club's principal venue for coaching and education. The Club currently operates its training ground from Christopher Park in Wigan which is insufficient in terms of its size and facilities to provide both the Category 1 facilities for the range of academy age groups and for complimentary facilities for the professionals.
6. In 2013 the Club took the view that it would have to operate its junior academy age groups in new facilities at Christopher Park and then provide separate facilities on a different site for its professional squad and older age groups (18-21) (its development squad). This resulted in the Club submitting a planning application for new facilities at Christopher Park (including a new indoor pitch) and looking to advance separate proposals for the development squad and professionals on another site. Whilst planning permission was granted (8<sup>th</sup> October 2013) for the development of the academy facility at Christopher Park since purchasing this site, which is sufficiently large to accommodate all of the facilities required for it to achieve Category 1 status and complimentary facilities for the professionals/development squad on one site, the Club decided to progress proposals for an integrated facility at Charnock Richard and not to progress its academy in accordance with the planning permission at Christopher Park.
7. The permission at Wigan is still extant and in the event that this application is approved this would result in Wigan Athletic having 2 planning approvals for an indoor and artificial pitches. However it is assumed that in the event that this planning permission is granted the Club will not implement the planning approval at Christopher Park as it is not suitable for a combined facility, addressed further below.
8. The proposals involve:
  1. The retention and conversion of the existing golf clubhouse (including changing the use of the restaurant which covers 94 m<sup>2</sup>) for training and related purposes – including a gymnasium, medical facilities, administration, lounge and canteen etc. The clubhouse – including the restaurant – is 986 m<sup>2</sup> (GIA).

2. The construction of a new linked extension to the golf clubhouse for medical, changing and related facilities for the professionals and development squad – that has a GIA of 628 m<sup>2</sup> and is single storey with pitched roof.
  3. The construction of a new two storey building comprising academy changing rooms, education facilities, meeting room/parents lounge and supporting facilities linked to 4 below. This building has a footprint of 750 m<sup>2</sup> and a GIA floorspace of 1,386 m<sup>2</sup>
  4. An indoor pitch of some 70m by 50m to provide a facility for indoor training – with a GIA of 3,505 m<sup>2</sup> The building has a height of 12m to eaves level.
  5. The provision of an artificial pitch of 100m by 60m lying adjacent to the indoor pitch. This artificial pitch will be floodlit by six columns each 15m in height.
  6. The provision of floodlighting on the first team 'match' pitch (although this facility will be used for matches there will be no paying spectators allowed within the site) for training purposes close to the site entrance. Lit in the same way as 5 above.
  7. Small covered enclosures adjacent to the artificial pitch for up to 150 'spectators' at academy matches – these are restricted to parents, coaches and officials. No paying spectators would be allowed on site.
  8. The formation of level areas to allow the provision of the requisite number of pitches for training purposes for each academy age group and related use to meet Category 1 Academy requirements.
  9. Appropriate boundary landscaping and boundary treatment – includes a proposed 2.3m high green mesh fence around the training ground activities.
  10. The formation of ponds outside of the main training ground area but within land the Club controls for the purposes of the ecological mitigation of ponds lost on the site to accommodate the pitches and related development.
  11. Indicatively a total of some 14 grass pitches are proposed at various sizes and a full size outdoor artificial pitch
  12. The existing groundsman's building (which is 324 m<sup>2</sup> in area) used by the golf course green keeper is being retained for similar use in connection with the training ground.
  13. Car parking proposed for 190 cars
9. The application site comprises 18.5 hectares of land which comprises the former golf course, clubhouse and ancillary buildings. The course has a public footpath running through its northern part which will be retained as part of the proposals.

### **Principle of the Development**

10. The site is located within the Green Belt and as such Policy DC1 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review is applicable. Policy DC1 was saved by the Secretary of State in 2007 and under the provisions of Paragraph 215 of the Framework, as of 27 March 2013, due weight should be given to the relevant saved policies of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review (ACBLPR) according to their degree of consistency with the Framework.
11. Policy DC1 states:  
 In the Green Belt, as shown on the Proposals Map, planning permission will not be granted, except in very special circumstances, for development other than:
  - (a) agriculture and forestry;
  - (b) essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, for cemeteries or other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with its purposes;
  - (c) limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings providing it is in accordance with Policy DC8A;
  - (d) the re-use of existing buildings providing it is in accordance with Policy DC7A;

- (e) limited infilling in accordance with Policy DC4;
- (f) to provide affordable housing for local needs in accordance with Policy DC5;
- (g) the re-use, infilling or redevelopment of Major Developed Sites in accordance with policy DC6.

12. In the context of Paragraphs 14 and 215 of the Framework above the ACBLPR was originally adopted in 2003 and the majority of its policies were saved by the Secretary of State in September 2007 including Policy DC1. The objectives and purposes of Green Belt Policy has not changed significantly and as such it is considered that Policy DC1 as a whole is consistent within the Framework. However in respect of the current proposals the relevant part of Policy DC1 is not consistent with the Framework. The PPG2 test (reflected in Policy DC1) for outdoor sport and recreation related to essential facilities however the Framework test is appropriate facilities which is considered to be the appropriate test for this site.

13. Policy 1 of the Adopted Core Strategy, which was adopted post NPPF and as such is compliant with The Framework, states:

Focus growth and investment on well located brownfield sites and the Strategic Location of Central Preston, the Key Service Centres of Chorley and Leyland and the other main urban areas in South Ribble, whilst protecting the character of suburban and rural areas. Some Greenfield development will be required on the fringes of the main urban areas. To promote vibrant local communities and support services, an appropriate scale of growth and investment will be encouraged in identified Local Service Centres, providing it is in keeping with their local character and setting, and at certain other key locations outside the main urban areas.

Growth and investment will be concentrated in:

(a) The Preston/South Ribble Urban Area comprising:

- i. The Central Preston Strategic Location and adjacent inner city suburbs, focussing on regeneration opportunities in Inner East Preston, the Tithebarn Regeneration Area and the New Central Business District Area in particular.
- ii. The northern suburbs of Preston, focussing on Local Centres, with greenfield development within the Cottam Strategic Site and the North West Preston Strategic Location.
- iii. The settlements south of the River Ribble, comprising:
  - Penwortham, focussing on the regeneration of the District Centre, but with some greenfield development at the South of Penwortham and North of Farington Strategic Location.
  - Lostock Hall, focussing on the regeneration of brownfield sites.
  - Bamber Bridge, focussing on the regeneration of the District Centre and brownfield sites.
  - Walton-le-Dale, Higher Walton, focussing on brownfield sites.

(b) The Key Service Centres of:

- ii. Leyland / Farington, focussing on regeneration of Leyland Town Centre\* and brownfield sites.
- iii. Chorley Town, focussing on the regeneration of the Town Centre\* but with some greenfield development.
- iv. Longridge, where land within Central Lancashire may be required to support the development of this Key Service Centre in Ribble Valley.

(c) Strategic Sites allocated at:

- i. BAE Systems, Samlesbury – employment
- ii. Cuerden (Lancashire Central) – employment
- iii. Buckshaw Village – mixed use

(d) Some growth and investment will be encouraged at the following Urban Local Service Centres to help meet housing and employment needs:

- i. Adlington

- ii. Clayton Brook/Green
- iii. Clayton-le-Woods (Lancaster Lane)
- iv. Coppull
- v. Euxton
- vi. Whittle-le-Woods

(e) Limited growth and investment will be encouraged at the following Rural Local Service Centres to help meet local housing and employment needs and to support the provision of services to the wider area:

- i. Brinscall / Withnell
- ii. Ecclestone
- iii. Longton

(f) 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.

14. This part of the Borough is not identified for growth and although Policy 1 does allow for small scale development, limited to appropriate infilling, conversion of buildings and proposals to meet local need states, in other places such as Major Developed Sites, a large scale scheme as proposed will only be considered acceptable where there are exceptional reasons for a larger scale redevelopment scheme.
15. National guidance on Green Belt is contained in Chapter 9 of the Framework which states:

*79. 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.*

*80. Green Belt serves five purposes:*

- *to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

*87. As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.*

*88. 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.*

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

...

*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;*

*provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*

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

...

*the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;*

16. Paragraph 216 of the Framework states that, from the day of publication, decision-takers may also give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given).
17. The Inspector has issued her Partial Report on her findings into the soundness of the emerging Chorley Local Plan which is a material consideration in the assessment of any planning application.
18. In summary, the plan is considered to be legally compliant. In relation to soundness, the plan is considered sound, with the exception of matters relating to Gypsies & Travellers. The examination of the local plan remains open, and the Inspector will reconvene the examination later this year to consider Gypsy & Traveller Matters, which would enable adoption of the local plan, following a supplementary report.
19. Paragraph 18 of the Partial Report states: *“For the avoidance of doubt, the Plan may not be adopted until it has been changed in accordance with all of the main modifications set out in the Appendix to this partial report and any which may be specified in the Appendix of my forthcoming supplementary report. However, because of the very advanced stage in the examination process that the main modifications set out in the attached Appendix have reached, significant weight should be attached to all policies and proposals of the Plan that are amended accordingly, where necessary, except for matters relating to Gypsies and Travellers.”*
20. The Council accepted the Inspectors modifications for Development Control purposes at its Executive Committee on 21st November 2013 and as such the Policies can be afforded significant weight subject to the main modifications.
21. Policy HW2 of the emerging Local Plan seeks to protect existing open space, sport and recreational facilities and states:

Land and buildings currently or last used as, or ancillary to, open space or sports and recreational facilities will be protected unless:

  - a) Alternative facilities of an equivalent or enhanced standard are provided nearby before the existing facilities cease to be available; or
  - b) It can be demonstrated that the loss of site would not lead to a deficit of provision in the local area in terms of quantity and accessibility; and
  - c) The site is not identified as being of high quality and/or high value in the Open Space Study; and
  - d) It can be demonstrated that retention of the site is not required to satisfy a recreational need in the local area; and
  - e) The site does not make a significant contribution to the character of an area in terms of visual amenity.
22. Whilst golf courses did not form part of the Council’s evidence base in the form of the Open Space Study, which identified deficits within the Borough, it is considered that Policy HW2 is applicable due to the former use of the site. However as the proposals involve replacing a golf course with sports pitches it is considered that the open space element of the site is protected.

23. The construction of the new buildings will constitute inappropriate development unless one of the exceptions in the Framework is engaged. To benefit from the relevant exception in the case of this site, the applicant must demonstrate that the construction of the new buildings constitute:
- Provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries,
  - Which would preserve the “openness” of the Green Belt; and
  - Which does not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt
24. Whilst the test for sites such as this relates to preserving openness it is important to note that the Framework contains no specific definition of ‘openness’.
25. Use of the site for outdoor sport, including grass pitches and grass training pitches, falls to be considered appropriate development and as such these elements of the proposals accord with national and local planning policy. Additionally it is important to note that when planning permission was granted for the golf course this was not restricted by condition and as such the use of the site as a football training ground does not require planning permission (both fall within Use Class D2).
26. The conversion of the existing building is also not inappropriate development in accordance with the Framework as reuse preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt.
27. In respect of the proposals the main areas of consideration in respect of this green belt site, and require planning permission, are:
- The construction of a new linked extension to the golf clubhouse
  - The change of use of that part of the clubhouse which benefits from consent for a restaurant
  - The construction of a new two storey building
  - The provision of floodlighting
  - The provision of covered seating enclosures.
  - Car parking
  - The operations required to form new pitches
28. The supporting information considers that the proposals are appropriate development within the Green Belt as the requirements of the EPPP represent appropriate facilities for a Category 1 Academy and football training ground. The proposals are an appropriate scale (the proposals offer no more accommodation than is needed to meet the Category 1 requirements with the exception of the facilities for the first team squad) for a different type of sport and recreation use on this established sport site, have limited impact on the openness of the Green Belt and accords with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt (para 80 of the Framework).
29. The supporting information submitted with the application cites various examples of similar facilities which have been approved in Green Belt locations including Derby County, Chelsea and Everton.
30. There have been a number of planning applications and appeals relating to football academy development in the Green Belt over recent years as follows:
- i. Manchester United FC First Team Football Training Centre at Carrington, Trafford MBC. Planning permission was granted and on referral the Secretary of State declined to call-in the application. The decision was dated 7th November 1997.
  - ii. Arsenal FC First Team Training Centre at London Colney, Hertsmere DC. Planning permission was granted and on referral the Secretary of State declined to call-in the application. The decision was dated 7<sup>th</sup> July 1998.
  - iii. Sunderland AFC were refused permission by Tyneside MBC for a combined First Team Training Centre and Academy at Whitburn Moor Farm and following a

- Public Inquiry the Secretary of State granted planning permission. The decision was dated 2nd February 2000.
- iv. Derby County FC were granted planning permission by the Secretary of State on appeal for a Football Training Centre and Academy at Moor Farm, Erewash District Council. The decision was dated 13<sup>th</sup> August 2001.
  - v. Planning permission was refused in February 2003 by Epping Forest District Council for a football academy proposed by Tottenham Hotspur FC at Epping Lane, Theydon Mount. This decision was not the subject of an appeal.
  - vi. Chelsea FC were granted planning permission for a combined First Team Training Centre and Academy on the former Imperial College Sports Ground site at Stocke D'Aberon, Elmbridge BC. The application was dated 15th October 2004.
  - vii. Aston Villa FC planning permission was granted for a combined training centre in October 2005
  - viii. Chelsea FC were granted planning permission in 2013 for a new indoor pitch and Sports Research Centre (the building measured 100m by 60m externally within an 80m by 60m indoor pitch). The application was referred to the SoS who choose not to call it in.
  - ix. Wigan Athletic were granted permission in 2013 to erect a new building to provide an indoor football pitch and layout artificial football pitch with associated fencing and landscaping
31. The Derby County application was called in by the Secretary of State who agreed with the Inspector that *the urgent need for an academy to meet the FA and FA Premier League requirements and in the absence of any alternative solutions amounts to very special circumstances which outweigh the limits harm to the Green belt.*
  32. Although it is noted that this decision, and the above sites, predated the publication of the Framework subsequent decisions for similar facilities have been made post publication. One example is at Chelsea for an indoor pitch where the case officer considered that *given that the indoor pitch is necessary to ensure Chelsea FC continue to maintain Academy 1 status and produce young footballers in the interests of the national game it is considered reasonable to conclude that, in principle, the indoor pitch element represents appropriate development in the context of the NPPF.*
  33. As part of the Chelsea application, which proposed the construction of an indoor pitch and a High Performance Sports Research Centre, it was concluded that the pitch element of the development was appropriate development. As part of the assessment it was stated that the pitch element could be considered acceptable if it preserved the openness of the Green Belt and did not conflict with the purposes of including land in it. The assessment related to the scale of the footprint proposed in relation to the overall size of the wider Chelsea site and any appreciable harm in terms of a decrease in the openness of the Green Belt, the siting of the building to minimise its visual impact and whether the development constituted unrestricted sprawl or affect the ability of the Green Belt to restrict sprawl in the future.
  34. The whole premise of the assessment as part of the Chelsea application related to the consideration that a facility of the size proposed was required to ensure Chelsea complied with the Premier League's requirements for academies and elite player performance, and maintain its Category 1 Academy status.
  35. In order for Wigan to reach Category 1 Football Academy Status there is a requirement to accord with the Premier League's Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP) (for clarification the facility will include girls/ women's football opportunities). The requirements of the EPPP are as follows:
    - A sufficient number of grass pitches – that can allow use by eight academy age groups, the playing of academy matches and goalkeeper training.
    - One floodlit grass pitch – this is proposed which is enclosed with fencing – it can be used by the first team as well as the academy.

- One floodlit outdoor artificial surface pitch – this is proposed – in both cases the floodlights are 15m in height and the Club would be prepared to accept a condition on the operation of the floodlights as follows:
    - Artificial pitch – not beyond 9.30pm every day between the beginning of October and the end of March.
    - Grass pitch – not beyond 9.30pm and not at weekends during the same period of the year.
  - An indoor pitch – this is provided and is proposed to be some 70m by 50m. In this regard the minimum provision in the EPPP is to provide a pitch of 60 yards by 40 yards. However, the recommendation in Rule K15 is for an indoor pitch to be much larger at 105m by 68m (plus surrounds). Wigan Athletic has decided not to provide the full size pitch recommended by the EPPP and propose an indoor pitch of 70m by 50m.
 

**The Head of Youth development at the Football League has confirmed, verbally, that the size of pitch proposed although smaller than the EPPP requirements should not hinder the Club's ability to secure Category 1 status at the current time. Obviously the requirements can change however the Head of Youth development understands that the Club have factored this in as part of their considerations. Additionally other clubs, such as Chelsea, have applied for smaller pitches than the EPPP requirements.**
  - Changing Rooms- The changing rooms for academy students, coaches and officials has been provided in the new academy block adjacent to the indoor pitch. A separate linked extension to the clubhouse would be predominantly used by the professionals and development squad (18s to 21s). 10 changing rooms are proposed in the academy building which will house the age groups that will be using it on a regular basis together with the officials. It will also house the opposing academy teams changing when matches are played on the site. The professionals/development squad building has 6 changing rooms for the teams (including female changing) and officials/staff.
  - Team Meeting Room
  - Medical Facilities-are provided mainly in the converted clubhouse with limited facilities in the academy building. There is a gymnasium (often used for rehabilitation from injuries) in the converted clubhouse.
  - Administration office space -office space for those directly related to the academy, is partly provided within the academy building. Other administrative space for those involved with the academy (particularly medical staff), professionals and development squad is within the converted clubhouse. A total of approximately 100 staff (including professional players) will be using the facility on a day to day basis.
  - Academy accommodation- Whilst the EPPP identifies the need to provide residential accommodation for academy players and trialists under the age of 18 by football clubs, Wigan Athletic has taken the view that these requirements can be provided off-site rather than seek to provide a new accommodation block for academy students living on the Charnock Richard site. Certain clubs do provide such accommodation on-site, eg Blackburn, but Wigan Athletic has taken a decision not to progress with on-site accommodation.
 

**The EPPP guidelines state that such accommodation shall be located in as close proximity as is reasonable practicable to the Club's principal venue for the coaching and education of Academy Players. As such the lack of on-site accommodation will not hinder the Clubs ability to secure Category 1 status.**
  - Classrooms- a minimum of three classrooms is recommended – that number of classrooms is provided together with areas for welfare and staff support areas within the new academy building.
  - Parents' lounge- within the academy building.
36. There is also some accommodation to be dedicated for the professionals/development squad in addition to the academy use. The combination of new academy facilities with some facilities for professionals is common place on major football club academy sites. The dedicated professional's accommodation is proposed to be concentrated in the proposed new first and senior team extension to the existing club house including the dedicated first team squad changing rooms and the first team coaching staff (and certain



medical staff). Most of the shared facilities between the academy and professionals are in the converted clubhouse such as the large gymnasium and rehab gym, canteen etc.

37. Whilst the provision of on site facilities for the professional squad is not a requirement to obtain Category 1 status it is noted that Rule 69 (of the Premier League Handbook) states that each Club shall develop, implement and provide evidence of a procedure to enable the transition of Academy Players to its senior squad. The current training facilities are provided at Christopher Park however for the reasons set out below a combined facility at the current site has been discounted. A two centre site would result in the under 18s on one site and the development squad (18-21) and the professional squad on a separate site which would not enable a seamless transition of the academy players to the senior squad and would result in certain facilities, such as the gym facilities, being provided twice as the current combined facility allows for shared facilities. The provision of a combined facility also reflects what has been provided at other clubs in the country.
38. The test in respect of development for outdoor sport and recreation within Green Belt locations is as follows:
- Provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries,
  - Which would preserve the “openness” of the Green Belt; and
  - Which does not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt
39. Although the extent of new built development is substantial this directly relates to the Club’s aspirations to meet category 1 status and the requirements of achieving this standard. It is important to note that all of the pre-NPPF decisions were very special circumstances cases as the test in PPG2 related to *essential* facilities. The Framework test now relates to *appropriate* facilities. It is considered that given that the facilities are necessary to ensure Wigan Athletic achieve Academy 1 status and produce young footballers in the interests of the national game it is considered reasonable to conclude that, in principle, the proposals represent appropriate development in the context of the Framework.
40. In terms of the impact of the development on the openness it is important to note that the existing built development already has an impact on the openness of the area. The new buildings on the site (excluding the retention of the existing clubhouse and the groundsman’s building) comprise the new extension to the clubhouse; the indoor pitch and academy building. Together these add some 4,873 m<sup>2</sup> of development footprint to the site. The overall ‘red line’ site comprises 18.5 hectares so the overall built part of the site (including the clubhouse and groundsman’s building which in total are 1,310m<sup>2</sup> footprint) is only 3.3% of the application site.
41. It has been established in case law that openness and visual impact are different concepts in terms of Green Belt Policy. However they can relate to each other and as such the visual impact is a material consideration. In *Heath & Hampsted Society v LB of Camden* [2007] EWHC 977, the difference between openness and visual impact was explained as follows:

*21. Paragraph 3.6 is concerned with the size of the replacement dwelling, not with its visual impact. There are good reasons why the relevant test for replacement dwellings in the Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land is one of size rather than visual impact. The essential characteristic of Green Belts and Metropolitan Open Land is their openness ... The extent to which that openness is, or is not, visible from public vantage points and the extent to which a new building in the Green Belt would be visually intrusive are a separate issue...*

*The fact that a materially larger (in terms in footprint, floor space or building volume) replacement dwelling is more concealed from public view than a smaller but more prominent existing dwelling does not mean that the replacement dwelling is appropriate development in the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land.*

22. *The loss of openness (ie unbuilt on land) within the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land is of itself harmful to the underlying policy objective. If the replacement dwelling is more visually intrusive there will be further harm in addition to the harm by reason of inappropriateness, which will have to be outweighed by those special circumstances if planning permission is to be granted (paragraph 3.15 of PPG 2, above). If the materially larger replacement dwelling is less visually intrusive than the existing dwelling then that would be a factor which could be taken into consideration when deciding whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness was outweighed by very special circumstances.*

42. When interpreting paragraph 89 of the Framework the Judge in *Timmins v Gedling BC and Westerleigh Group Limited* [2014] analysed the relationship between openness and visual impact. He held inter alia:

***74. Any construction harms openness quite irrespective of its impact in terms of its obtrusiveness or its aesthetic attractions or qualities. A beautiful building is still an affront to openness, simply because it exists. The same applies to a building that is camouflaged or rendered unobtrusive by felicitous landscaping.***

43. In this case the Judge concluded that:

*78. In short it seems to me that there are three points which arise from the above analysis. First, there is a clear conceptual distinction between openness and visual impact. Secondly, it is therefore wrong in principle to arrive at a specific conclusion as to openness by reference to visual impact. Thirdly, when considering however whether a development in the Green Belt which adversely impacts upon openness can be justified by very special circumstances it is not wrong to take account of the visual impact of a development as one, inter alia, of the considerations that form part of the overall weighing exercise.*

44. The areas of the site proposed for new built development generally benefit from a high level of containment created by existing trees, hedgerows and woodland areas within the vicinity of the site. Although the proposals involve tree removal, as addressed below, replacement tree planting is proposed and the majority of the parts of the site where the new built development will be located is effectively 'screened' when viewed externally.
45. The most sensitive receptors visually in respect of this site are from the A49 and from the public footpath which runs along the northern boundary of the site. The site is relatively visible from the A49 to the south of the site however there are various mature trees on the southern part of the site which effectively screen the proposed development site. Although this land is within the applicants control it does not form part of the application site and as such no tree removal is proposed ensuring the screening still exists. This land is within the blue edge and as such can be controlled through condition in respect of future management and maintenance.
46. From the north of the site views can be afforded from the A49 and the public footpath. From the A49 the existing buildings are relatively visible in the distance and the new building will be visible from this direction. However the proposed landscape and ecological mitigation is within the northern part of the site which will ensure that the views from the footpath are not affected. The mitigation proposes replacement planting on a 2:1 ratio to mitigate for the tree removal across the site. Three of the proposed grass pitches will be sited in close proximity to the A49 boundary however the existing landscaping along the boundary will be maintained and protected by the TPO on this site and the landscaping scheme can enhance areas where there are gaps to mitigate the impact on the new built development when viewed from this direction.
47. As a result, the visual effects associated with the proposed development are relatively limited.

48. In relation to the 5 purposes of the Green Belt (para 80 of the Framework) it is considered:
- Purpose 1 (*to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas*). The use of the site for sport and recreation is considered to be an appropriate use of Green Belt land and the proposals will not result in the sprawl of built up areas.
  - Purpose 2 (*to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another*). Development of the site would not lead to the coalescence of neighbouring towns (Chorley and Standish).
  - Purpose 3 (*to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*). The development involves new built development and car parking on parts of the site which are currently free of development. Notwithstanding the fact that these are directly related to sport and recreation the encroachment occurs due to the presence of new built development in the case of this site.
  - Purpose 4 (*to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns*). This does not apply as the site is not located near a historical town
  - Purpose 5 (*to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land*). This site is Green Belt land which will not assist in urban regeneration.
49. It is considered that the proposals are appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation however the proposals, in particular the new indoor pitch and academy building, involve new large new built development further encroaching into previously undeveloped part of the site. Notwithstanding the fact that the new built development only occupies a small percentage of the wider site it is not considered that the proposals preserve the openness of the Green Belt and will encroach further into the Green Belt than the current developed area. As such the proposals are inappropriate development within the Green Belt which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.
50. However the following points have been submitted in support of the proposals:
- The general aim of promoting elite sport in the UK accords with more general Government objectives following the Olympic Games and the albeit unsuccessful World Cup bid.
  - The need for the Club to provide a Category 1 Academy
  - The provision of an academy to develop young footballers from age 8 upwards is a key part of the Elite Player Performance Plan which had its origins in the FA's Charter for Quality published in the early 1990s. The objectives for developing elite football training at each major football club is a matter which has strong support in terms of national sporting organisations – Sport England etc – and has been recognised as a valid and important aim in developing the national sport.
  - The north-west has a particular concentration of large football clubs both in the Premier League and the Championship and the aim of the Elite Player Performance Plan is for each of the major clubs to develop Category 1 Academies so they can draw in the most numbers of young players to hopefully develop them into professionals.
  - Wigan competes in this regard with the major Premier League clubs in the north-west in Manchester and Liverpool as well as other recent Premier League clubs now in the Championship in Bolton, Blackburn, Burnley etc. In order to be able to attract and develop young players in the north-west Wigan Athletic needs to have a Category 1 Academy facility that is now the norm with the Premier League clubs and the major Championship clubs.
  - The requirements for a Category 1 Academy are exacting and well-defined. In order to have a Category 1 status approved all of the relevant elements of the training centre in relation to facilities, staffing, numbers of academy students, how they are taught, coaching programmes etc are required.
  - The provision of facilities is the most important element to a club achieving Category 1 status and the Premier League has written in support of the application to confirm that the facilities proposed by Wigan Athletic would meet Category 1 status. These

are the minimum facilities required for Category 1 and the Club is providing for them and in addition a smaller element for the professionals and development squad.

- The overall scale of built development that is proposed for Wigan Athletics' facility comprises (excluding the retained grounds man's building and including the retained clubhouse) some 6,505 m<sup>2</sup>. This overall level of development is similar to other clubs who have achieved Category 1 status.
- As far as the indoor pitch is concerned, it will be noted from the requirements of the EPPP that the recommended size of an indoor pitch is for it to accommodate a playing area 106m x 64m. Wigan Athletic has decided in consultation with the Premier League it can operate on a smaller playing area within the indoor pitch – 70m x 50m – as some other clubs have done. Thus, it is not applying for the maximum recommended area of indoor pitch.

**OFFICER NOTE: Other similar facilities also have smaller than recommended indoor pitches including the pitch at Chelsea which is 70x50m (housed within a building which is 80x60m). Arsenal's indoor pitch measures 78x50m and Tottenham Hotspur's indoor pitch measures 78x50m.**

- As far as the area of the site required for pitches are concerned, it is normal for academy/professional training grounds to occupy an area of circa 20 – 30 hectares so that the commensurate number of pitches can be accommodated.
  - The size of the Charnock Richard Golf Club site that Wigan Athletic has applied to develop is some 18.5 hectares which is sufficient to provide the requisite number of pitches with the remaining area of the land either owned or leased not being required, hence the ability to have some of it used as an ecological mitigation area.
51. As established at other similar facilities within the country it is considered to be a benefit to provide opportunities for new facilities to meet current and future demands for sporting participation. The above points demonstrate that the facilities will assist in producing young footballers in the interests of the national game which is considered to be a very special circumstance in support of the proposals. As noted as part of the Derby County application the Secretary of State, who agreed with the Inspector, considered that in the absence of any alternative solutions amounts to very special circumstances which outweigh the limited harm to the Green belt. In this regard Wigan Athletic have considered alternative sites as follows.
52. Wigan Athletic has been looking for an appropriate site to house both its academy and professional training facility for a considerable time. In 2013 it came to the conclusion that there were no non-Green Belt sites available of a sufficient size for it to provide such a facility. At that time it was decided to retain and develop the Club's existing training ground site at Christopher Park in Wigan for the younger academy age groups and find a new site for the older academy/development squad and professionals to train.
53. A site was found for this split site option at Wrightington however this was not legally capable of being progressed when an application came to be made. The Wrightington site was just going to be for the professionals and development squad with the junior academy remaining at Christopher Park. The Wrightington site was not big enough to accommodate all the pitches needed for the fully combined academy and professional facility. The agreements for the acquisition of the land were not, it transpired, capable of being finalised as the Club had hoped so that application was not progressed.
54. The Club then looked at another site in West Lancashire (which was in the Green Belt) and spoke to planning officers in that authority about the potential to develop that site. This again was for just the professional and development squad as the site was not big enough for the combined facility. It was assessed in terms of highway and ecological issues and there was confidential pre-application correspondence which indicated that officers were likely to be supportive subject to the normal issues being addressed. Whilst a detailed scheme was being prepared for that site the opportunity arose for the Club to acquire Charnock Richard golf club. The football club concentrated on Charnock Richard because it is a big enough site to provide the combined facility.

55. The Club assessed the potential to extend its existing Christopher Park site to make it big enough for both the increased amount of pitches required to meet the Premier League regulations and accommodate the indoor pitch/artificial pitch requirements. Although initial discussions were held with the landowner, the land itself suffers from the following disadvantages:
1. The topography of the site is such that it is steeply sloping and it would be very difficult and expensive to viably construct new flat pitches that would be well drained to meet the overall requirements of the Premier League.
  2. The site is crossed by public rights of way which are difficult to accommodate in an elite training environment. There is no particular difficulty with a footpath that runs along the edge of a site where visibility can be restricted through the erection of landscaping/boundary treatment. However, on the land adjacent to Christopher Park there are public rights of way which go through the middle of the site and this would make it very difficult to establish an elite training environment which is not overlooked to an unacceptable degree.
  3. There are difficulties with disused mine shafts in the area. The earthworks that would be required to establish good quality pitches could well result in the disturbance of these mine shafts which would be likely to make this impractical and/or too expensive.
  4. The redevelopment of the Christopher Park built environment would need an enlarged car park. This could result in issues with the adjacent houses which are far closer to the training ground and indeed overlook it directly. This contrasts with the position at Charnock Richard. For these reasons the suitability and viability of extending Christopher Park was eliminated even though discussions with landowners did take place.
56. The Club then also looked at a number of other sites. What is required to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt is to look at and eliminate within the bounds of reasonableness more suitable alternatives if they are on non-Green Belt land.
57. Wigan Athletic did look at a number of Green Belt sites however, the only non-Green Belt site they were able to consider (after having discussed this with Wigan MBC officers) was to locate the new training ground at Lathwaite Park and to relocate the existing Wigan MBC owned playing fields and recreation equipment elsewhere. However, this site was eliminated for several reasons:
1. The lack of suitability of the Lathwaite Park site for an elite training environment- close to houses- security and privacy issues.
  2. Timescales- significant engineering operations would have been necessary to make the site suitable for a combined training facility (or even simply a first team and senior academy facility) and the environment that would be created would not have been high quality.
  3. Concerns about the relocation of public recreational facilities currently used by houses in the area by private facilities where there would be some limited community access.
  4. Whilst the facilities were Wigan Council owned and therefore technically 'available' there were issues of suitability and deliverability within the appropriate timescales.
  5. The Lathwaite Park site would not be large enough for a combined training facility.
58. As such it is considered that there are no non-Green Belt sites that are more suitable or available than the application site which can be delivered in a reasonable time frame to meet the Premier League EPPP requirements. Although there is no Policy requirement to carry out a sequential test in respect of sports facilities such as this the exercise has been undertaken by the applicants as alternative sites has been identified as a material consideration in other similar cases.
59. The alternative position is that Wigan Athletic do not provide a Category 1 Academy and as such will not achieve Category 1 status (currently it does not have that status because the Premier League has deemed that its current facilities (in the absence of planning permission for new ones) fails to meet the standards set out in the EPPP). This is

severely restricting Wigan Athletics' ability to attract new young players into its academy. If the Club do not provide suitable Category 1 training facilities it will not be able to develop young talent in the same way other clubs do and therefore its likely fortunes on the pitch will decline and its ability to generate revenue from the talent it develops will also decline.

#### Community Benefit

60. It is important to note that the proposed facility is a private one and will be used consistently on week days and weekends which restricts the potential for active 'community use' of the facilities. The supporting information does state that from time to time it may be permissible to allow use of the indoor pitch by other organisations through arrangements. The main areas of community use would be in the 'passive' use of it through the following programmes:

1. Arranging for local schools to visit the facility, meet the players and be given a tour of the site.
2. For the Club to develop its football in the community programme and to use some of the facilities as part of that programme – this is currently operated from the Christopher Park site in Wigan.
3. To particularly encourage use of the facilities in 1 and 2 above by local schools and organisations in Chorley rather than specifically in Wigan. Christopher Park is located in Wigan and therefore the usage of the facility and the football in the community programme is concentrated in that area. The movement of Wigan Athletic to Chorley will open up opportunities for schools and other organisations in Chorley to liaise with the football club's community programme that may not have existed previously.

61. To expand on this the agent for the application has confirmed that the Club would be happy to have a condition on any planning permission for the training ground that would require them to submit to the Council a Community Activities Programme prior to the occupation of the facility.

62. The activities which have been identified as being possible to include are:

1. The opportunity for local schools in Chorley to visit the training ground (normally one school per week) to meet the first team and watch the players train.
2. Under the Premier League funded school sports programme the opportunity for the football club's coaches to provide 25 hours free football and sports coaching for an agreed number of Chorley primary schools (between 18 and 24 schools being involved).
3. Under the same scheme, the offer of CPD training days for school PE teachers – held either at the training ground or in the school concerned.
4. The ability to provide a five week after school sports club based in local schools run by the football club's coaches (on a pay as you play basis).
5. The operation of a holiday soccer school at the training ground between May and July each year.
6. The potential to host the final of local school sports tournaments at the training ground subject to dates being convenient.
7. More generally the Community Trust run a series of courses relating to literacy and numeracy in co-operation with schools in Wigan and would be willing to do the same in schools in Chorley. There are also some adult orientated courses as well.

It is considered that others activities could include a workforce development plan with training at the facility by practitioners which are employed by Wigan Athletic.

63. The agent has expanded upon the community benefits of the scheme as follows. *Firstly, the important thing about putting forward a community activities programme for training grounds like this in my experience is the monitoring of it. This is because the detailed timetable for the use of the facilities by the academy, development squad and professionals will evolve over time. It will be a function of how many academy students actually are present on the site at any one time and that will depend upon the Club's*

*recruitment. The facility as I know you understand is a private and elite sports training facility. Wigan Athletic has made it clear that they may be able to allow use of certain parts of the facility when they are not using it. It is, though, difficult at this stage to agree precise hours when such use could take place until the complex is fully operational.*

64. The agent has confirmed that the Club would be prepared to consider:
1. The use of the indoor pitch and artificial pitch (booked through its Community Trust) by specific local male and female football clubs – Charnock Richard and Chorley would be the obvious candidates for both male and female teams.
  2. The potential use of one outdoor pitch by the specified local clubs. This would be subject to availability and again booked through the Club's Community Trust.
  3. The use of the education/training rooms within the academy building for coach education and/or adult education courses through the Club's Community Trust.
65. This will be implemented via the Communities Activities Plan which would evolve over time and be managed by the Club's Community Trust in conjunction with the Council. The agent considers that this can be addressed by condition.
66. The Council's Sports Development Team have made the following comments on the proposals. *Although the applicant has specified some volumes, for example, the number of hours coaching in a specified number of primary schools; the vast majority of the potential benefits to the wider community are not quantified. The applicant does make it clear that they may be able to allow use of certain parts of the facility when it is not being used by the Club. They do point out that it is difficult for them to agree specific hours of wider community use until the complex are finally operational.*
67. *Individually, each of the benefits has merit. However, without agreed hours, volumes and price information, it is impossible to quantify the benefits for the wider community. In addition, several of the initiatives are dependent on external funding. If this funding were to cease, the activity would be at risk.*
68. *The applicant has said that they would be happy with a condition that requires them to submit a Community Activities Programme prior to the occupation of the facility. They have also said that they would be willing to have meetings every six months to monitor the programme. While both would be useful, without agreed hours, volumes and price information the programme and subsequent monitoring would be difficult to manage in order to maximise the benefit for the wider community.*

#### **What Constitutes Very Special Circumstances (VSCs)**

69. Firstly the answer to the question will depend on the weight of each of the factors put forward and the degree of weight to be accorded to each is a matter for the decision taker, in this case the Planning Committee, acting within the "Wednesbury Principles". This stage will often be divided into two steps. The first is to determine whether any individual factor taken by itself outweighs the harm and the second is to determine whether some or all of the factors in combination outweigh the harm. There is case law that says that a number of factors, none of them "very special" when considered in isolation, may when combined together amount to very special circumstances and goes on to say that "there is no reason why a number or factors ordinary in themselves cannot combine to create something very special.
70. The weight to be given to any particular factor will be very much a matter of degree and planning judgement and something for the decision-taker.
71. There cannot be a formula for providing a ready answer to any development control question on the green belt. Neither is there any categorical way of deciding whether any particular factor is a 'very special circumstance' and the list is endless but the case must be decided on the planning balance qualitatively rather than quantitatively.

72. What is required of the decision taker above all, is a value judgement and inevitably decision takers are given wide latitude, as indeed is inherent in the entire development control regime.



### **Conclusion- Principle of the Development**

73. The starting point for consideration of the proposals is the development plan (Core Strategy & Adopted Local Plan), and then material considerations which include the Framework and the emerging (partially sound) local plan, and any other relevant material considerations, including the harm and the benefits that arise from the proposal.
74. The site is within the green belt and is designated as such in the adopted local plan (policy DC1) which permits certain types of development including essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, for cemeteries or other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with its purposes. It is this adopted policy that lends support to the principle of this type of development in terms of the development plan. However, this specific part of the policy is considered out of date under the Framework and therefore has limited weight.
75. The construction of the new buildings will constitute inappropriate development unless one of the exceptions in the Framework is engaged. To benefit from the relevant exception in the case of this site, the applicant must demonstrate that the construction of the new buildings constitute:
- Provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries,
  - Which would preserve the “openness” of the Green Belt; and
  - Which does not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt
76. The proposed facilities are considered to be appropriate development for outdoor sport and recreation, in the case due to the Club’s aspirations to secure Category 1 status which promotes sporting excellence, in principle. Sport England have been consulted on the application and their Planning Manager considers this to be an appropriate activity within the Green Belt.
77. However although the use is acceptable in principle it is not considered that the extent of new built development preserves the openness of the Green Belt and the new indoor pitch/academy building along with the associated parking areas results in encroachment into the countryside contrary to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. As such the proposals are inappropriate development where very special circumstances need to be demonstrated. In such cases the consideration relates to whether the potential harm to the green belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is outweighed by other considerations.
78. The Club’s aspirations to secure Category 1 status are acknowledged and it is considered that the facilities proposed are required to secure this status. Additionally it is evident that other sites have been considered for the provision of such facilities. It has been acknowledged at other such facilities around the country, in particular Derby County, that the need for an academy to meet the FA and FA Premier League requirements, which will ensure that the Club can produce young footballers in the interests of the national game, and in the absence of any alternative solutions amounts to very special circumstances which outweigh the limited harm to the Green Belt. This is considered to be material to the consideration of the current proposals. It is considered that the Club’s aspirations to achieve Category 1 status constitute very special circumstances.
79. The proposals include facilities for both the development squad and professional squad which, whilst not required to achieve academy status, will assist in enabling the transition of academy players to the senior squad which is a requirement of the Premier League Handbook. The majority of the facilities for the professional squad will be located within the converted golf club house which falls to be considered appropriate development in accordance with paragraph 90 of the Framework.
80. However the single storey extension to the club house will house some of the professional squad facilities (including changing rooms, kit stores and boot rooms). As already detailed the provision of pitches on this site falls to be considered appropriate

development within this Green Belt location and it is considered that the facilities located within the extension to existing club house for the professional team constitute appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation. The single storey extension is located within the vicinity of the existing built development ensuring that it is 'read' in conjunction with the other built development on the site and does not represent encroachment into the countryside. As such this element of the proposals represents appropriate development within this Green Belt location.

81. Although it has been established in case law that securing Category 1 status and ensuring excellence in the national game along with the lack of alternative facilities constitutes very special circumstances to outweigh the harm that proposals have Green belt locations the applicants have in addition offered community benefits in respect of the proposals.

82. The Council's Sports Development Team acknowledge the benefits put forward however in the absence of agreed hours, volumes and price information of the programme and subsequent monitoring it is difficult to quantify the benefit for the wider community. Given that at this stage the benefit cannot be quantified only limited weight can be afforded to the community benefit as a very special circumstance. Given that community benefit has been put forward as possible way forward by the applicant it is considered that a suitable condition could secure community use of the facilities as follows:

Prior to the commencement of the use of the facilities hereby approved a Communities Activities Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This Plan shall be produced in accordance with the submitted supporting information and shall demonstrate how and when the facilities shall be made available for use for specific local clubs.

The plan shall specify a number of hours per 6 month rolling period for use of the facilities (in particular the indoor pitch, artificial pitch, one outdoor pitch and the education/training rooms) by other local clubs to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

The plan shall be operated and managed by the Club's Community Trust in conjunction with the Local Authority and shall not exceed the usual arrangements applicable to other similar facilities (i.e. fees etc) operated by Chorley Council. The Plan shall be reviewed annually every 6 months in conjunction with the Local Authority.

83. No weight is afforded to the use of the facilities as a community benefit as part of the consideration of this application as the level of benefit is unknown at this time. However it is not considered that community benefit is necessary to make this development acceptable given that the accepted very special circumstances in respect of the proposals outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.

84. As with current and previous Green Belt Policy and reaffirmed within recent High Court decision on Redhill Aerodrome Ltd v SSCLG and others substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. However in this case it is considered that the very special circumstances in respect of the inappropriate parts of the development (the large academy building/ indoor pitch) outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and as such in principle, subject to the other consideration addressed below, the proposals are considered to be acceptable.

85. As set out within Policy 1 of the Core Strategy in other places, such as this site which isn't identified for growth, development will typically be small scale unless there are exceptional reasons for larger scale redevelopment schemes. In this case the need for a large flat site is acknowledged, the fact that the proposals will assist in promoting sporting excellence in the interest of the national game and the lack of alternative locations are considered to be exceptional circumstances to permit this large scale development.

## **Other Matters**

### **Highways and Transport**

86. The application is supported by a Transport Assessment which has been reviewed by the Highway Engineer at LCC. There are no highway objections to the proposed development in principle; however, there are issues which need addressing set out below.
87. The Highway Engineer holds the view that the major route between Wigan and the proposed site would be expected to be along the A49 Wigan Road. The site does not lie on any public transport routes from Wigan and is close to the M6 Charnock Richard Service Station currently used as an illegal access/egress to the M6 Motorway.
88. The Highway Engineer considers that the Highways Agency (HA) would be consulted on the application due to the unauthorised access to the motorway close to the site.
89. Following further consultation with the Highway Authority the Developer Support Manager has confirmed the use of Charnock Richard motorway services area by local drivers is as an unofficial (not illegal) access to/from the M6 motorway. The details of how this should be taken into account have very recently been advanced through LCCs investigations of the Camelot residential development proposal. LCC have concluded that management of this unauthorised access is a matter for the HA and the services operator. Therefore any unauthorised access through the services will be managed or controlled by these organisations. As long as traffic assessments for local development proposals are based on the formal situation of there being no local access available through the service area, and no severe impacts are identified by the Local Highway Authority, then LCC would raise no objection to the development proposals unless there were identifiably severe impacts arising for the local highway network.

### *Public Right of Way (PROW)*

90. PROW (FP 16) runs through the proposed site. The site plans acknowledge this and maintain the route of the PROW.

### *Transport Assessment (TA)*

91. The application submission includes a Transport Assessment (TA) which considers the transport implications of the proposed development.

### **Base Flows (2013 traffic counts)**

92. For the base flows, the applicant used traffic counts taken from the development proposal for the former Camelot Theme Park. These are acceptable as base figures. It should however be noted that for the distribution of traffic for the proposed Camelot development, the Highways Agency insisted that the trips were re-distributed to exclude any vehicles using the Charnock Richard Services to access/egress the M6 motorway.
93. The applicant's Transport Consultants have confirmed that the traffic flows do not include adjustments for the redevelopment of the Camelot theme park.
94. The Developer Support Manager at Lancashire County Council considers that whilst the Camelot site is not yet a committed development, it would have been reasonable for both developers to account for each other's proposals as a sensitivity test and as such without that information the submissions are missing a quantitative picture of a potential future scenario. Although Camelot was refused planning permission the applicants may choose to appeal the decision. However Lancashire County council have done a lot of work on the two developments in recent weeks which has provided assurances that that the peak traffic impacts for the two developments are very unlikely to overlap. As neither development introduce an unacceptable impact onto local roads, the risk of adverse impacts should both developments go ahead should not give rise to severe impacts of safety or congestion in the local highway network and on balance it is not necessary for the developer to submit an assessment of this scenario.

95. The baseline traffic flows submitted by this developer do not include Golf Club use of the site, and no assessment has yet been made to identify the differences between the former Golf Club traffic implications on the A49 and the proposed use as an Academy football training facility. However the Developer Support Manager is content that both the past and the proposed uses of the site have a relatively modest and completely manageable impact on local roads (with the exception of complex circumstances arising from occasional large events that cannot reasonably be anticipated or mitigated through the planning processes) and has confirmed that this issue does not need to be pursued for the highway authority's purposes.

#### Accident Data

96. The most up to date data shows two collisions at the A49 Preston Road/Mill Lane and a further 10 between Mill Lane and B5251 Spendmore Lane to the south. These collisions are along the expected route for traffic from Wigan and the Highway Engineer considers should be included in the TA. There are also several accident occurrences north of the site access on the A59 Preston Road. The Highway Engineer has confirmed that these should be reviewed with the view to proposing possible measures towards reduction of the accident rate.
97. In response the applicants transport consultants have stated that although the most recent accident data shows a number of accidents along Preston Road, these are over a reasonable length of road and are not clustered around a specific location. Therefore it is clear that there are no trends in these accidents or that they represent a location where road safety measures could have a material impact. Given that the application site has a historical use as a golf course, the predicted trip generation of the proposals do not result in a significant increase in daily traffic flows and is therefore unlikely to have a material impact on highway safety.
98. The Developer Support Manager at Lancashire County Council has considered this response and confirmed that she has investigated the police records available to the highway authority and can confirm that there are no identifiable patterns of safety problems relating to the use of the site, and no mitigation for safety is required as a consequence of the proposal.

#### Sustainable Transport Access

99. Paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8 of the TA refer to the site offering the opportunity for trips to be made to the site on foot/by cycle by those who live locally. As the football club is based in Wigan, it is expected that the majority of journeys will have an origin or destination there and the opportunity for local pedestrian/cycle journeys will be very low. The Highway Engineer has requested information on the percentage of journeys that would be made on foot (usually less than 1km) and by cycle (5km).
100. In response the applicants transport consultants have confirmed that given the location of staff, players and scholars as well as the requirements for evening training sessions when sustainable modes of transport are less prevalent the use of sustainable modes of travelling to and from the training facilities is unlikely to be an attractive option for the vast majority of users even in its current location at Christopher Park. The opportunities for walking and cycling will therefore on benefit those who already live within walking and cycling distance of the application site which is currently less than 5%
101. In response the Developer Support Manager has confirmed that sustainable travel and public transport issues have not been considered in appropriate depth by the developer. The Manager has commented that it is a common argument raised by developers that *'there is no point investing in measures to encourage greater take-up of non-car travel modes because no-one will use them in relation to this development'*. However this is an erroneous thought process given the range of visitors expected at this site, including local grounds staff, catering/cleaning staff and other visitors from across the North-West region (which inevitably includes local settlements) who may experience a limited choice of travel modes. Lancashire County Council maintains a long-running commitment to improving access to sustainable travel choices, and provision of two new

bus stops close to the site entrance to serve local communities in the Chorley and West Lancashire areas would be a modest yet effective investment in this process.

#### Public Transport

102. Neither of the two bus services which serve the site link directly with Wigan town centre, the closest bus stop serving Wigan is over 2km away. The closest bus stop to the proposed site is approximately 1km away, far beyond the recommended bus stop distances. It is therefore suggested that two new bus stops are considered at the end of Mill Lane, with the westbound stop taking advantage of an 'informal' layby just west of the mini-roundabout. The route from these stops would then incorporate the pedestrian refuge to the north of the mini-roundabout creating a safe pedestrian route. Approximate costs for these stops would be £8,000 for the eastbound site and £10,000 for the westbound site. These would be approximately 300m from the site and would be within recommended walk distances.
103. Only the Bus 337 service passes the front of the proposed site and this service only runs two hourly for part of the day. This cannot be described as a frequent service. Euxton Railway Station is approximately 4km from the proposed site, this has direct rail links to Wigan every hour.
104. The transport consultants consider that the suggested improvements to public transport are disproportionate to the proposals when the potential number of users is taken into account. The service that operates along Mill Lane does not serve Wigan town centre and therefore will only benefit those living in Chorley. As none of the local services operate in the evening this restricts the use of public transport to the daytime training sessions which comprise coaching staff and senior players, the majority of the latter living across the north west region. Academy scholars will already be using the football clubs dedicated minibus/ coach to be transported to and around the facility and child protection legislation requires them to be supervised.
105. The Developer Support Manager advises that the provision is a necessary and proportionate requirement generated by the proposed development of the site. The facilities should be delivered through an appropriate legal agreement with the County Council (S278 of the Highways Act 1980).
106. Whilst sustainable modes of transport would be considered to be a benefit to the proposed site it is considered that given the likely level of future usage of such measures the request does not fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. As such a request via a S106 Agreement would not meet the relevant tests. However as suggested by the Developer Support Manager such provision would be dealt with via a separate legal agreement with the Highway Authority if deemed necessary.

#### Car parking

107. The EPPP in addition to setting out the facilities also contains very detailed advice to football clubs about the level of staffing it should have to support academy uses. These guidelines have to be complied with for Category 1 status to be rewarded as well as a significant amount of regulation dealing with youth development, numbers of hours of training and contractual issues between academy students and the club. These are relevant to the planning application because the numbers of car parking spaces calculated allows for the numbers of staff the academy is recommended to have when applying the EPPP regulations.
108. There is an expected demand for a certain number of vehicles that would visit the site at any given time. The Engineer accepts that their arrival and departure times will not all correspond or occur at network peak times. A total of 190 car parking spaces are proposed although the Highway Engineer has noted that no provision is made for secure parking of bicycles and motorcycles and there are no provisions made for coach parking and its associated drop-off areas. This is raised as a concern as the TA states that up to 30 students will be transported regularly by coach to the site.

109. Car parking is proposed at two areas of the site; the area within the vicinity of the clubhouse where 80 spaces, including 6no disabled spaces, are proposed for staff, players and visitors and the area adjacent the academy and the indoor pitch where 100 spaces including 6no for the disabled are proposed for staff, visitors and parents of junior players.
110. The Highway Engineer has no issues with the layout of the parking spaces however is concerned that the parking provision may be under estimated as it only amounts to half the total required to accord with Policy ST4 of the Chorley Local Plan. Whilst a lower level of parking may be justified in sustainable locations in accordance with Policy ST4 and the Highway Engineer has no evidence before him of mitigating local circumstances in the area to justify a lower level of parking provision.
111. The Highway Engineer considers that following parking is required:
- Ordinary car parking spaces – 240no
  - Disabled car parking spaces – 14no
  - Covered and secure parking area for – 24 bicycles
  - Parking area for motorcycles with locking devices for – 10no motorcycles.
  - Coach parking spaces – 2no with drop off areas.
112. Clearly this shows that there is a deficit of parking spaces on the site when compared to the parking standards however the Highway Engineer has suggested a condition could be attached to any approval for submission of a Parking Management Plan prior to the development being brought into use to indicate how on-site parking would be controlled and monitored to ensure the development does not lead to disruption on the local highway network or to local residents and to safeguard local amenity.
113. At Chelsea's training ground permission was granted in 2006 for 230 parking spaces however the subsequent approval for the indoor pitch resulted in the loss of 89 of the 235 space (the report does not specify where the additional 5 spaces came from). 79 of the lost spaces were mitigated for on a reinforced grassed area. As such the facility at Chelsea has in the region of 225 car parking spaces. However Chelsea has a wider range of facilities including a two storey football academy building, a two storey pavilion building, a sports pavilion used as a community hub and an indoor pitch and sport research facility. As such it is clear that there is a wider range of facilities at the Chelsea site which are directly linked to the parking provision.
114. In response to the Highway Engineer comments the applicants transport consultants have confirmed that this is not a generic leisure facility open to the public. Academy scholars will be transported to the facility via minibus/ private car while the youth players attend evening training sessions. The facilities for senior and youth players are segregated due to their differing needs and as such the facilities are not in use at any one time reducing the need for car parking.
115. The opportunities for cycling are limited hence the reduced cycle parking provision however space can be increased if demand dictates. The proposed layout provides adequate space for coach to turn and park although minibuses are used predominantly as coaches usually drop off and depart the site.
116. Lancashire County Council's Developer Support Manager considers that there appears to be adequate space within the development proposals to accommodate over-spill parking at times of highest demand (for example during Academy tournaments). The Support Manager consider that conditional arrangements to establish a 'interim' Parking Management Plan to be used initially based on best estimates of likely use, to be revised, in consultation with the Local Highway Authority, as experience builds up and which would result in a complete Parking Management Plan within 12 months of opening the facilities to full use is a suitable and acceptable way forward. Such an on-going assessment may identify the need for appropriate surfacing to meet Green Belt protection

measures, to achieve sustainable drainage needs and to provide sufficiently convenient facilities so as to reduce the desire to park on the A49 or other local roads.

#### Traffic Impact

117. The Highway Engineer has raised concerns that no traffic generation figures have been produced for the proposed development and an assumption that they will be identical to that of a golf club cannot be fully accepted without evidence. The Engineer has requested a breakdown of expected trips by time and mode for the proposed development.
118. According to the TA, the existing access to the A49 Preston Road will be retained for use to access the proposed development. The Highway Engineer has no objections to the use of the existing access in principle and he does not anticipate the A49 Preston Road/Mill Lane suffering any loss of capacity during the peak hours due to this development, however, the Engineer does require a basic assessment of the access junction to the proposed site as majority of movements would be expected to be from the south and therefore right turns in to the proposed development site. An assessment should be made to see if the existing right turn is adequate for both capacity issues during the peak hours and highway safety issues for other times.
119. The submitted Transport Assessment includes a summary of activities that are expected at the proposed facility including typical arrival and departure times. Movements at weekends are significantly less than weekdays. The TA demonstrates that the proposals will not generate significant volumes of traffic and that the existing access will not suffer a loss of capacity or be inadequate in terms of highways safety. The applicants transport consultants consider that a right turning lane is typically required when the minor arm exceeds traffic movements of 500 per day. This figure is only marginally exceeded and therefore, according to the transport consultants, comfortably within design parameters.
120. In response to this the Developer Support Manager at LCC has confirmed that the developer's additional information on trip generation does demonstrate that a right turn lane in the A49 Wigan Road would be a disproportionate requirement.

#### Mitigation

121. The Highway Engineer considers that it is likely the Highways Agency might request some developer contribution to stop drivers using the Charnock Richard Services as an unauthorised junction, especially as most of the trips associated with this development are expected to come from the south and the motorway may be the obvious choice of route.
122. The Highways Agency has not been consulted as part of this application as it is not considered that the proposals will impact on the Strategic Road Network. Members will recall that the unauthorised access to the motorway was considered in detail as part of the application at Camelot with consultation with the Highway Agency. The Agency confirmed that there are written operating agreements in place placing restrictions on the maintenance and use of the access roads. Whilst the Agency can enforce access restrictions under the lease, this is a rarity. When considering such action, usually if access is a problem and there is no obvious solution, the MSA has an option to block the access altogether, which the Agency cannot ask them to do or prohibit. The Highways Agency had no objection to Camelot which would have generated significantly more traffic than the current proposals and if problems occur the Highways Agency have powers to close the access.
123. The Framework confirms that planning obligations, as suggested by the Highway Engineer, should only be sought where they meet all of the following tests:
- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
  - directly related to the development; and
  - fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

124. It is not considered that the closure of the unauthorised access is necessary to make this development acceptable in planning or is directly related to this development and as such fails the relevant tests. As such this obligation has not been attached.

#### Travel Plan

125. The proposed development exceeds the County Council's Travel Plan submission threshold. As such, a Framework Travel Plan covering all elements of the development will be required prior to any development commencing.

126. In response to this request the agent for the application has confirmed that *a travel plan in the conventional sense is not a practical proposition. The nature of the use proposed is a private sports facility in a location that has to be outside the built up area because of the need to find a relatively large site to accommodate pitches, the indoor pitch and related facilities. A high proportion of the users of the site are academy students who are below the age of 16 and come to the site in a combination of parents' cars and club mini buses. Child protection legislation and the locational requirements for the facility rule out public transport. Similarly, the professional players and development squad as you can imagine are not public transport users.*

127. For any such condition to be attached to a positive recommendation the Framework confirms that they should only be imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects. These tests are reinforced within the National Planning Practice guidance issues on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

128. The Developer Support Manager at LCC has commented that travel plan issues relate closely to the discussion generated by the developer's rejection of sustainable travel and public transport commitments. Uncontrolled use of private transport in rural areas is not sustainable. A functional Travel Plan for the training facilities should commit to and secure the maximum use of minibuses and car-sharing for visitors who are not served by public transport and other sustainable modes of travel, and should promote the use of local buses and cycling routes for those visitors who could take advantage of them. Therefore the Manager recommends that the requirement for a Travel Plan is necessary and proportionate. The County Council's Travel Plan team has experience of supporting developers with these issues in an effective and positive way.

129. The proposed site is situated within the Green Belt in a relatively isolated location between the villages of Charnock Richard to the east and Eccleston to the north west. The site is located well outside the built-up areas of the nearby villages. The proposed development would create a large scale training facility in the Green Belt and in accessibility terms, the current site is in a relatively isolated location divorced from the main urban areas. However in order to provide the facilities required a sufficient amount of land is required as demonstrated by the assessment of alternative sites above.

130. It is accepted that the type of facility proposed will be mainly accessed by car due to the nature of the proposals and the requirement for a large site however it is also considered that notwithstanding the agents comments on the requirement for a Travel Plan there are elements of a Travel Plan which could be introduced on this site including car sharing and travel to the facility by coach. As such in the interests of promoting sustainable transport a Travel Plan will be secured by condition.

#### Construction Traffic Management Plan

131. The Highway Engineer has confirmed that a Construction Traffic Management Plan will be required by condition prior to the commencement of the development. This should include methods and details of construction including vehicle routing to the site, construction traffic parking, deliveries and the proposed traffic management measures. No construction traffic or deliveries should enter/exit during traffic peak periods or to wait on the public highway.

#### Ecology



132. Given the nature of the site, although quite artificial due to its use as a golf club, there are possible ecological implications associated with the proposals. In this regard the application is supported by various surveys which have been reviewed by the Ecologist at Lancashire County Council.
133. Unfortunately the Ecologist has not had an opportunity to assess all of the submission documentation so the ecological impacts of the development will be assessed in full on the addendum.

### **Noise and Light**

134. Concerns have been raised that the proposed development will result in noise pollution from players/ spectators etc particularly as the proposals include new football pitches. The nearest neighbours to the site are as follows:
- Barkers Farm Bungalow- the nearest pitch is approximately 120m from the rear of this dwelling and the pitch to the north is approximately 160m away.
  - Barkers Farm- all the external areas are screened from this property by the existing buildings and the proposed extension
  - Whittle Bar Cottage- the nearest pitch is approximately 144m from the front of this dwelling across the A49.
  - Lancaster House Farm- the nearest pitch is approximately 140m from the front of this dwelling across the A49.
  - The Beeches, Preston Road- the nearest pitch is approximately 204m from the rear of this dwelling
  - 220 Chorley Lane- the nearest pitch is approximately 280m from the rear of this dwelling
  - Yew Tree Villas- the nearest pitch is approximately 100m from the front of this dwelling across the A49
  - Moss House Farm- the nearest pitch is approximately 40m from the front of this dwelling across the A49
  - Park View, Preston Road- the nearest pitch is approximately 96m from the side of this dwelling
135. As set out above the surrounding neighbours are sited a significant distance away from the proposed pitches which reduces the potential impact of the proposals in respect of noise. Additionally it is important to note that there are relatively high background noise levels within this area due to the proximity of the motorway and the A49 which is a busy well used road. As such although this is a rural area it is not considered that the introduction of the proposed facilities will adversely impact on the residents amenities through noise generation.
136. Additionally it is important to note that this is a predominantly private facility which will not be able to hire on an hourly basis unlike other facilities within the borough. The Club has a Code of Conduct which its players have to adhere to and parents are not allowed to shout when they are watching academy matches. As such it is not considered that the proposals will generate the same levels of noise which other outdoor sports facilities may generate.
137. As set out above the proposals involve the inclusion of 2 floodlit pitches. The floodlighting proposed comprises three 15m high galvanised silver grey columns to each side of the 2 pitches which equates to 12 floodlights in total. The floodlit pitches have been sited within the centre of the site.
138. The design includes a number of luminaries at the head of each column to provide strictly controlled lighting onto the playing surface only. This ensures that there is no measurable overspill much beyond 3-4 metres back from the touchlines.
139. To accord with the EPPP requirements for Category 1 status 1 floodlit artificial pitch and 1 floodlit grass pitch is required unless planning permission cannot be secured for the lighting and then this requirement will be waived. Therefore the floodlights are not essential to secure Category 1 status just desired by the Club.

140. The supporting Design and Access Statement cites other examples of facilities which have floodlit pitches and it is noted that floodlights have recently been approved at Chelsea's Training ground in Surrey. The floodlights in this case were considered to be appropriate development in respect of their link to outdoor sport and recreation. However this assessment relates to paragraph 89 of the Framework which is considered to be incorrect as paragraph 89 only relates to new buildings. Paragraph 90 of the Framework does allow for other forms of development and states: *Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. These are:*

- *mineral extraction;*
- *engineering operations;*
- *local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;*
- *the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; and*
- *development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order.*

141. However the definition of development within the Town and Country Planning Act is: „means the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land”

142. It is considered that the erection of floodlights falls within the other operations part of the definition which is not cited as an exception within the Framework. As such the floodlights are inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

143. It is noted that the Club currently does not have flood lit pitches and has to travel to train/ play matches for much of the football season (the winter months). The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness. The siting of the floodlights within the centre of the site and the design of the proposed columns (15m high narrow columns which will blend into the landscape) ensures that the openness of the Green belt is preserved. The suggested operational restrictions ensure that the floodlights will not adversely impact on the character of this rural area.

144. It is considered that the inclusion of floodlights will enable the effective operation of the site as a training facility and academy as they will enable the use of pitches during the winter months during the evening when the facility will be utilised by the academy. As such the proposed floodlights are considered to be acceptable in this situation.

145. Lighting is also proposed within the car parks and along the access roads. This will be in the form of 6m high estate style columns. Building mounted lights will be erected around the perimeter of the buildings at a height of 2.5 metres and CCTV will be mounted on the building eaves. Notwithstanding the submitted details it is considered that lighting which respects the rural character of the area could be accommodated at this site, such as columns along the access roads on sensors and lower bollard lights within the car parking, to minimise light pollution within the area and respect the character of the area. This can be controlled by condition along with a limit on the time the lights can be operational. Subject to these restrictions it is considered that an appropriate lighting solution for the site can be provided whilst respecting the rural character of the area.

### **Design and Appearance**

146. The Design and Access Statement set out the reasoning behind the design of the proposed development. The building will be constructed with brick elevations and a pitched roof including the following details:

- Steeper (40 degree pitch) dark finished pitched roofs, more akin to rural vernacular
- concealed gutters

- a general avoidance of large expanses of frameless glass, utilising small windows generally. Larger windows have more mullions to emphasise verticality.
- Use of timber plank over-cladding to the elevations of the indoor pitch barn. This will be randomly laid vertically in two bands, and with the columns expressed externally to articulate the barn appearance.
- The roof of the Indoor Pitch Hall is at a lower pitch, based on the fabric roof, and restricting this to an approximate 12m height at the ridge
- Ancillary non-habitable structures such as heated pitch boiler rooms, substations, switch rooms, gas meters and irrigation tanks, which by nature are utilitarian in appearance are located away from sensitive views and boundaries with adjoining owners. Screening will be provided by location near existing tree screens or new planting.

147. It is considered that the design solutions could go further than suggested such as including reflection free glass to further reduce the impact of the development on the Green Belt. It is acknowledged that the development will lead to further built development within this rural location however it is considered that the design of the buildings reflects the character of the area and the siting of both the new building and clubhouse extension minimises the visibility of the built form within the surrounding area.

### **Fencing**

148. As set out previously this will be a private facility with significant amounts of investment required to create a high quality facility. The pitches will be constructed to a high standard and will be maintained as professional pitches. No unauthorised access to these pitches will be permitted and as such the proposals incorporate the erection of a fence around the pitch area of the site. The fence is proposed to be a 2.3 m high green 'weld-mesh'paladin fencing.

149. This type of fencing allows views through but ensures it cannot be climbed similar to fencing erected at schools. The fencing will be set back away from key public boundaries such as the footpath and A49. As such the proposed fencing is considered to be acceptable taking into account the rural character of this area.

### **Landscaping**

150. Directly linked to the ecological mitigation in respect of this site a Landscape Mitigation Area is proposed to the north of the application site within the area of land under the control of the applicants. The public footpath accesses the Mitigation Area from the A49. It moves from west to east across the site towards Charter Lane, following boundary vegetation to the south of the Mitigation Area.

151. The intention of the Landscape Proposals is to mitigate for ponds, hedgerows and vegetation habitats that have been lost as part of the pitch proposals. The general philosophy has been to retain as a large an area as undisturbed as possible, hence proposals are concentrated to the west and within a 15m strip to the southern edge of the Mitigation Zone and parallel to the Public Footpath. This enables for instance residents along Charter Lane to experience little change and equally that existing ecology and landscape within the remainder of the site is unaffected.

152. Six new ponds are proposed to compensate for those lost (one is replaced on a 2:1 basis on account of its newt breeding pond status). Ponds are generally located in close proximity to each other or to existing ponds. A long length of existing ditch links two/three of the existing ponds close to the centre of the site. Ecological requirements have requested that new ditches do not link to ponds, hence ditch replacements are located in areas where movement routes may be desirable for the newts/ water voles etc. between ponds, but are independent of pond linkage.

153. Close to proposed ponds a series of 3 hibernacula would be provided per pond. These would create hibernation and refuge opportunities for newts. To enable material

from the site to be handled 'sustainably', surplus material is proposed for mounded areas within the Mitigation Area.

154. Two access points are feasible to the Mitigation Area. One is located to the far north(east) corner of the site. To utilise this would necessitate removal of existing vegetation in the north east corner, transportation over a large proportion of the 'undisturbed' areas of the site and the movement of construction vehicles opposite several residential properties. For these reasons it is considered more favourable to utilise the existing gateway in the far north (west) corner of the Zone 1 site for construction site access. This would necessitate crossing the Public Footpath, Health & Safety measures would be proposed to facilitate this option.
155. The Public Footpath is proposed for retention in its existing location. It would be contained within a 15m buffer from the remainder of the Mitigation Zone area. The extent of the buffer would be defined by a proposed hedgerow, of mixed native species in accordance with ecological recommendations.
156. Close to the footpath one of the replacement ponds is proposed, as an additional visual benefit along the route. Existing ponds (Numbers 14, 15, 16 and 21) would also be more visible than previously, with the proposed management of existing vegetation.
157. Existing retained and proposed reinstatement long grass would aim to be of an improved status than that existing, through an improved management regime and through additional grass species and wildflower integration. In addition an area of marshy grassland is proposed to an area to add additional habitat type. This variety of grass types i.e. long/marshy/ mown is recommended as desirable to meet wildlife requirements.
158. The Ecologists comments on the proposed ecological/ landscaping mitigation are awaited and will be reported on the addendum.

### **Flood Risk**

159. The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy. This has been reviewed by the Environment Agency who have confirmed that, in relation to the risk of flooding on and off-site, they are satisfied that the proposed development would not be at an unacceptable risk of flooding or exacerbate flood risk elsewhere, provided that any subsequent development proceeds in accordance with the recommendations outlined in the approved FRA. This can be secured by condition.
160. Concerns have been raised about flooding at the site particularly in respect of when play was halted at the former golf course due to areas of retained water. The supporting information confirms the concerns raised as it is acknowledged that on site water retention by irrigation tanks are required. This is based upon the sites geology and the fact that football pitches require more intensive watering/ irrigation than golf courses. Irrigation will be provided by irrigation tanks fed from boreholes.
161. The surface water discharge from the proposed development will mimic that from the existing site. There are a series of open ditches and ponds that served the former golf course and discharged to the ditch alongside Preston Road from the northern corner of the development site. The development will retain the existing ditch system and ponds for re-use. The submitted FRA demonstrates that the site can be developed without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
162. Attenuation will be included in the system in the form of basins (at the location of former ponds) and underground storage systems with flow controls. In an extreme flood event there would be some surface flooding within the development but this is restricted to a proposed grass pitch area. As such it is not considered that the proposals will result in surface water flooding to the detriment of the neighbours.

### **Trees**

163. There are numerous trees on the site and as such the application is supported by an Arboriculture Impact Assessment. In total 194 individual trees, 98 groups of trees and 19 hedgerows have been assessed.
164. Based on the proposed site layout, a total of 56 trees categorised as category B trees will require removal in order to facilitate the proposals. A total of 48 of these 56 trees are trees that were present in the previous dairy farming landscape and that were retained and incorporated into the golf course. They are mature trees, are all oak, alder or ash, and are all located internally to the site, in what are remnants of hedgerows on the banks of old, field boundary ditches.
165. The remaining 8 category B trees proposed for removal are silver birch trees and one maple, which have been planted as part of formal landscaping at the time of the golf course's establishment. They are all early mature trees that are of good condition.
166. 18 category C individual trees and 54 category C groups of trees also proposed for removal in order to facilitate the development proposals. The 18 trees are all semi-mature to early mature in age and of both native or non-native species. They have all been planted within the last 20 years as part of formal landscaping for the golf course and are situated internally to the site.
167. The 54 category C groups of trees are almost all exclusively semi to early mature pine trees planted at close spacing in dense groups as part of structural landscaping for the golf course, approximately 15-20 years ago. The groups range from some 150 trees in number, down to groups of 3 trees. Some of the groups of pines have an element of other semi to early mature, native and non-native species, such as silver birch and/or lime. In addition to the groups of pines there are a number of small groups of semi to early mature, native and non-native species, planted as part of formal landscaping for the golf course.
168. The submitted report recommends the removal of 54 category C groups of trees as they have very limited visual amenity value owing to their age and size and to the fact they are all located internally to the site. They also currently have only limited ecological value.
169. One tree, identified as T100, is recommended for removal, irrespective as to whether development progresses on site or not. T100 is a mature sycamore that is located on the boundary of the site, adjacent the A49 Preston Road. The tree was found to be in very poor condition and potentially hazardous. It has a very sparse canopy, dense ivy covering the main stem and a cavity at its base with decay present and signs of infection. Owing to the size, condition and location of the tree it can be considered to be hazardous and as such it is recommended that it is removed at the earliest possible opportunity.
170. In addition to the individual and groups of trees recommended for removal there are a number of hedgerow sections that will also require removal in order to facilitate development. In all, a total of 9 hedgerow sections will require removal. These hedgerow sections are remnants of the former agricultural landscape of the site, located on the banks of old, field boundary ditches. They consist predominantly of mature hawthorn and range from approximately 5m to 30m in length. These hedgerow sections offer clearly identifiable conservation and ecological value and as such they have been categorised as Category B.
171. The footprints of the proposed new clubhouse, car parking and football pitches are all outside of the root protection areas (RPA) of trees on site. The report considers that due to the size and nature of the site it would not be practical to erect tree protection barriers, for all retained trees on site. However, there are certain areas on site where appropriate tree protection barriers have been recommended.
172. There will be a requirement for a cut and fill exercise of the existing site levels to create level pitches and there is a potential for adverse impacts on retained trees from

these groundworks. The current site is essentially very artificial in nature due to the presence of a golf course with its associated tees and bunkers however the site is relatively flat for a golf course. Works will be required however to create large areas for flat football pitches which will be via a cut and fill exercise.

173. The mounds which were formed in the 1990s as part of the golf course will be levelled and used to fill in the bunkers. The levels of the existing site are between 71.000 and 72.000 OSBM which ensures that the cut and fill exercise to form the football pitches will be in the region of 1-1.5m as a maximum.
174. Where new pitches are proposed at the boundary of RPA of retained trees e.g. trees T27, T64-T76, G19-T88 and G66, tree protection barriers have been recommended. Although there will be a requirement for a relatively large amount of fencing, barriers have been recommended in these areas due to the proximity of development works to the trees, the potential for these works to have significant negative impacts on the trees, and the perceived conservation and ecological amenity value of the trees. Barriers erected prior to the start of site activities will ensure that potential adverse impacts of development on retained trees are minimised. Barriers have also been recommended for trees adjacent the proposed new car parking area in front of the club house, trees T5-T15 and T22, due to their proximity to proposed development works and their landscape and visual amenity value.
175. For the remainder of the trees and hedges to be retained, the report considers that it is neither practical nor cost effective to erect hundreds of metres of fencing to afford protection to RPA. Notwithstanding these comments at the time of writing this report no comments had been received from the Council's Tree Officer, as such it appears appropriate for the extent of the tree protection to be agreed on site between the Council's Tree Officer and the developer, this will be secured by condition.
176. From the tree survey carried out and the subsequent assessment of the potential impacts of the application proposal on trees on and adjacent site, there will be a potential overall moderate adverse impact from the proposal on the local arboricultural resource. However, the proposed landscaping scheme for the new development includes new tree and hedgerow planting in mitigation for those removed. It is proposed that significant planting of individual and groups/woodlands of trees, and hedgerows, of native species, will be planted in the northern part of the application site. New planting of trees and hedges of native species, including oak, birch, Scots pine and hawthorn, will over time provide a certain level of visual, conservation and ecological amenity value.
177. It is acknowledged that the conservation and ecological amenity value of the trees and hedges proposed for removal in order to facilitate development cannot be replaced like for like however approximately 2,925 structure trees/plants will be planted and approximately 4,860 structure trees/plants will be planted within the mitigation zone. Additionally 498m of replacement native hedgerow planting is proposed. This is considered to be adequate mitigation for the proposed loss of trees and hedges.
178. Although a large number of trees will be removed from the central part of the site a large number will be retained which assists in the landscape mitigation along with the replacement tree planting. The trees to be retained will be protected via a Tree Preservation Order.

### **Sustainability**

179. Due to the size of the new building and the extension to the club house the new development will be required to achieve BREEAM rating 'Very Good' in accordance with Policy 27 of the Core Strategy. This will be secured via condition.

Policy 27 also includes the following requirements:

Criteria (a) - Evidence is set out to demonstrate that the design, orientation and layout of the building minimises energy use, maximises energy efficiency and is flexible enough to withstand climate change;

Criteria (b) - Prior to the implementation of zero carbon building through the Code for Sustainable Homes for dwellings or BREEAM for other buildings, either additional building fabric insulation measures,

Or

appropriate decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy sources are installed and implemented to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions of predicted energy use by at least 15%;

Criteria (c) - Appropriate storage space is to be provided for recyclable waste materials and composting;

Criteria (d)- If the proposed development lies within a nationally designated area, such as a Conservation Area or affects a Listed Building, it will be expected to satisfy the requirements of the policy through sensitive design unless it can be demonstrated that complying with the criteria in the policy, and the specific requirements applying to the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM, would have an unacceptable adverse effect on the character or appearance of the historic or natural environment.

180. This part of the policy relates to a reduction in carbon emissions and can be secured via the submission of a Carbon Reduction Statement as part of a planning condition.

### Overall Conclusion

181. The application site is not identified as an area for growth within the Core Strategy however it is considered that exceptional circumstances have been presented to allow a large scale training facility for sport on this Green belt site. Policy HW2 of the emerging Local plan seeks to protect existing open space, sport and recreational facilities and as the proposals involve appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation it is considered that the land is protected in accordance with policy HW2.

182. For the reasons set out above the proposals are considered to be acceptable except for the ecological matters. As of 26th August 2014 the LCC Ecologist had been unable to provide her comments on the submitted information however she has confirmed that she will provide her comments prior to Committee. As such subject to the derogation tests of the Habitats Directive being satisfied the recommendation is that full planning permission should be granted subject to conditions.

183. If Members are minded to approve the application please note it is not open to Members to determine the application as it will have to be referred to the Secretary of State under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009 as the proposals constitute inappropriate development which would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The Secretary of State will then determine whether he wants to call in the application for determination or whether this can be determined at the local level.

### Planning 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 Borough Local Plan Review 2003 and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Consideration of the proposals has had regard to guidance contained with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the development plan and the emerging Local Plan 2012-2026. The specific policies/ guidance considerations are contained within the body of the report.

### Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Date
92/00936/FUL	Formation of 18 hole golf course practice ground and 80 space car park improvements to the A49 and access via the existing farm entrance	Approved	1994
94/00621/FUL	Retrospective application for	Refused	1994

	temporary siting of 3 portable buildings		
94/00691/FUL	Formation of new access to golf course	Approved	1994
95/00122/COU	Conversion of agricultural building to golf club house.	Approved	1996
95/00828/FUL	Erection of temporary pay kiosk adjacent 1st Tee.	Refused	1996
96/00170/COU	Conversion of existing agricultural building to golf practice building	Approved	1996
96/00214/FUL	Erection of golf clubhouse on site of existing farm building.	Approved	1996
97/00364/FUL	Construction of link between golf club and golf practice building	Approved	1997
97/00693/FUL	Extension to form link between golf club and golf practice building.	Approved	1997
98/00620/COU	Change of use of lounge bar area to restaurant with ancillary cloakrooms and construction of porch to east elevation.	Withdrawn	
98/00621/FUL	Modification to planning permission 9/97/00693 for alterations to west elevation and internal layout of golf club link building.	Approved	1998
00/00163/COU	Use of part of golf clubhouse as restaurant.	Approved	2000
00/00164/ADV	Retrospective application for two advertisement signs.	Approved	2000
01/00419/COU	Conversion of existing agricultural building to golf practice facility.	Approved	2001
01/00493/FUL	Earth works to form pond and mound to the south of the clubhouse (retrospective).	Approved	2001
04/00084/FUL	Creation of link between existing clubhouse and converted agricultural building.	Approved	2004
04/01370/ADV	Erection of a static illuminated sign at the entrance of the golf club.	Approved	2005
06/00213/FUL	Extensions to existing restaurant and pro-shop. Proposed play room to rear of changing room with corridor leading to entrance lobby.	Refused	2006
06/00819/FUL	Erection of new entrance to club house, extension to pro-shop and new lobby to rear of pro-shop.	Approved	2006

### **Suggested Conditions**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Condition</b>
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.	See below
3.	<p>Prior to the commencement of development samples of all external facing, roofing materials and windows materials (to incorporate non-reflective glazing) (notwithstanding any details shown on previously submitted plans and specification) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All works shall be undertaken strictly in accordance with the details as approved.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure that the materials used are visually appropriate to the locality.</p>
4.	<p>The parking and associated manoeuvring facilities shown on the plans hereby approved shall be surfaced or paved, drained and marked out and made available in accordance with the approved plan prior to the occupation of any of the buildings; such parking facilities shall thereafter be permanently retained for that purpose.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure provision of adequate off-street parking facilities within the site</p>
5.	<p>Prior to the commencement of the use of the facilities hereby approved a Travel Plan for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall include measures to reduce car journeys to the site including car sharing and use of minibuses/ coaches. The development thereafter shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.</p> <p>Reason: To reduce the number of car borne trips and to encourage the use of public transport</p>
6.	<p>A scheme for the landscaping of the development and its surroundings shall be submitted prior to the commencement of the development. These details shall include all existing trees and hedgerows on the land; detail any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development; indicate 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 and proposed finished levels. The scheme should include a landscaping/habitat creation and management plan which should aim to contribute to targets specified in the UK and Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plans. Landscaping proposals should comprise only native plant communities appropriate to the natural area. The landscape creation and management plan shall include the blue edged areas to the north and south of the application site.</p> <p>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 occupation of any buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, 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.</p> <p>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.</p>
7.	<p>No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors</li> <li>ii. hours of operation (including deliveries) during construction</li> <li>iii. loading and unloading of plant and materials</li> <li>iv. storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development</li> <li>v. wheel washing facilities</li> </ol>

	<p>vi. a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works</p> <p>Reason: in the interests of highway safety and to protect the amenities of the nearby residents.</p>
8.	<p>The permission hereby granted shall only ensure for the benefit of Wigan Athletic Football Club and may not be implemented or carried on by any other person, company or organisation</p> <p>Reason: The permission was granted having regard to the special circumstances advanced in support of the application, however the use would be inappropriate to the area unless only carried on by the applicant in the manner specified on the application</p>
9.	<p>Prior to the commencement of the development the following documents shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:</p> <p>(i) A detailed assessment of ground conditions (including drainage and topography) of the land proposed for the playing field which identifies constraints which could affect playing field quality; and</p> <p>(ii) Based on the results of the assessment to be carried out pursuant to (i) above, a detailed scheme which ensures that the playing field will be provided to an acceptable quality. The scheme shall include a written specification of soils structure, proposed drainage, cultivation and other operations associated with grass and sports turf establishment and a programme of implementation.</p> <p>The approved scheme shall be carried out in full and in accordance with the approved details. The land shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the scheme and made available for playing field use in accordance with the scheme.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure that the playing field is prepared to an adequate standard and is fit for purpose</p>
10.	<p>Prior to the commencement of the development details of the design and layout of Artificial Grass Pitches shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Artificial Grass Pitches shall not be constructed other than in accordance with the approved details.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure the development is fit for purpose and sustainable.</p>
11.	<p>Surface water must drain separate from the foul and no surface water will be permitted to discharge to the foul sewerage system.</p> <p>Reason: To secure proper drainage</p>
12.	<p>The development permitted by this planning permission shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved FRA (Ref: 30065/SRG, dated July 2014) and the following mitigation measures detailed within the FRA:</p> <p>1. Limiting the surface water run-off generated by the 1 in 100 year plus climate change critical storm so that it will not exceed the run-off from the undeveloped site and not increase the risk of flooding off-site. This will be achieved by limiting run-off to the existing QBAR rate of 97 litres per second.</p> <p>The mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently 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.</p> <p>REASON To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site.</p>
13.	<p>No development shall take place until a surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydrogeological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The drainage strategy should demonstrate the surface water run-off generated up to and including the 1 in 100 year plus climate change critical storm will not exceed the run-off from the undeveloped site following the corresponding rainfall event. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the</p>

	<p>development is completed. The scheme shall also include details of how the scheme shall be maintained and managed after completion.</p> <p>REASON To prevent the increased risk of flooding, both on and off site.</p>
14.	<p>If any plants listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) occur on the site, such as Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, rhododendron and giant hogweed, then they shall be eradicated from the site and working methods shall be adopted to prevent their Spread in accordance with Environment Agency guidance and codes of practice.</p> <p>Reason: to ensure the eradication and control of any invasive species which are found on the site</p>
15.	<p>Notwithstanding the details shown on the submitted plans, the access road/ car park areas shall be constructed using pervious paving subject to suitable ground conditions. Where ground conditions are not suitable for infiltration then under drained pervious paving shall be utilised. Prior to the commencement of the development full details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the scheme shall be constructed in accordance with the approved materials and maintained in perpetuity.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to prevent flooding</p>
16.	<p>The Academy/ Indoor Pitch building hereby permitted shall be constructed to achieve a minimum Building Research Establishment (BREEAM) standard of 'very good'. Within 6 months of occupation a 'Post Construction Stage' assessment and a Final Certificate shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority certifying that a BREEAM standard of 'very good' has been achieved.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of minimising the environmental impact of the development.</p>
17.	<p>Prior to the commencement of the Academy/ Indoor Pitch building a 'Design Stage' assessment and related certification shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out entirely in accordance with the approved assessment and certification.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of minimising the environmental impact of the development.</p>
18.	<p>Prior to the occupation of the academy/ indoor pitch building hereby permitted a letter of assurance; detailing how the building has achieved BREEAM has been issued by a licensed BREEAM Assessor/Auditor and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of minimising the environmental impact of the development.</p>
19.	<p>Prior to the commencement of the use of the facilities hereby approved a Communities Activities Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This Plan shall be produced in accordance with the submitted supporting information and shall demonstrate how and when the facilities shall be made available for use for specific local clubs.</p> <p>The plan shall specify a number of hours per 6 month rolling period for use of the facilities (in particular the indoor pitch, artificial pitch, one outdoor pitch and the education/training rooms) by other local clubs to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.</p> <p>The plan shall be operated and managed by the Club's Community Trust in conjunction with the Local Authority and shall not exceed the usual arrangements applicable to other similar facilities (i.e. fees etc) operated by Chorley Council. The Plan shall be reviewed annually every 6 months in conjunction with the Local Authority.</p> <p>Reason: taking into account the material considerations forwarded by the applicants and to secure some community benefit from the proposed development</p>
20.	<p>The floodlights for the artificial pitch hereby approved shall not be illuminated between the hours of 9.30pm and 8am from the beginning of October until the end of March inclusively.</p> <p>Reason: in the interest of protecting the rural character of the area and to reduce the potential for light pollution.</p>
21.	<p>The floodlights for the grass pitch hereby approved shall not be illuminated between the hours of 9.30pm and 8am from the beginning of October until the end</p>

	<p>of March inclusively. Reason: in the interest of protecting the rural character of the area and to reduce the potential for light pollution.</p>
22.	<p>The car park lights and the lighting columns along the access roads hereby approved shall not be illuminated between the hours of 9.30pm and 8am from the beginning of October until the end of March inclusively. Reason: in the interest of protecting the rural character of the area and to reduce the potential for light pollution.</p>
23.	<p>Notwithstanding the submitted details prior to the commencement of the development full details of the lighting for the access roads, car parks and external walls of the buildings/ extension shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local planning Authority. The development thereafter shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. Reason: in the interest of providing suitable levels of lighting for the future users whilst taking into account the rural location and character of the area. To reduce the proliferation of lighting columns at the site which would adversely impact on the character of this rural area. A mixture of columns and low level bollard lighting would provide an adequate level of lighting whilst reducing light pollution. Also taking into account the security needs of the site and the associated CCTV motion activated building lights would reduce light pollution.</p>
24.	<p>Prior to the commencement of the development an Interim Parking Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include details of the proposed coach parking. For the first 12 months of operation the parking situation at the site shall be monitored and a Parking Management Plan shall be produced based upon actual experiences at the site. Within 12 months of the facilities being opened the Parking Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall be implemented thereafter and reviewed where necessary in consultation with the Local Planning Authority. Reason: Based upon the parking provision at the site and in order for a plan to be developed which truly reflects the situation at the site. To identify the need for appropriate surfacing to meet Green Belt protection measures, to achieve sustainable drainage needs and to provide sufficiently convenient facilities so as to reduce the desire to park on the A49 or other local roads</p>
25.	<p>Notwithstanding the submitted details prior to the commencement of the development full details of the tree protection measures shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. During the construction period, trees to be retained shall be protected in accordance with British Standard BS 5837:2012 or any subsequent amendment to the British Standards. The development thereafter shall be carried out in accordance with the approved measures. Reason: the submitted information includes details of tree protection measures however in the absence of comments from the Council's Tree Officer it is considered necessary to agree a schedule of tree protection on site with the Tree Officer prior to the commencement of the works in order to safeguard the trees to be retained</p>
26.	<p>Before the development hereby permitted is first commenced full details of the proposed building finished floor levels, the proposed extension finished floor levels and the proposed finished floor levels of the pitches (all relative to ground levels adjoining the site) shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, notwithstanding any such detail shown on previously submitted plan(s). The development shall be carried out strictly in conformity with the approved details. Reason: To protect the appearance of the locality and to respect the character of the rural area.</p>
27.	<p>Prior to the commencement of the use of the facilities hereby approved all fences shown in the approved details shall be erected in conformity with the approved details. The fences shall be retained thereafter. Reason: To ensure a visually satisfactory form of development taking into account the rural character of the area</p>

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

Title	Drawing Reference	Received date
Former Golf club House INTERNAL REFURBISHMENT AND EXTENSION, PROPOSED ELEVATIONS	AE-20-01-001 Rev P2	10th June 2014
PROPOSED INDOOR PITCH AND JUNIOR ACADEMY INDICATIVE ELEVATIONS	AE-20-02-001 Rev P3	10th June 2014
EXISTING OS SITE PLAN	AL-01-002-Rev P3	18th July 2014
PROPOSED SITE MASTERPLAN	AL-01-003-Rev P3	18th July 2014
PROPOSED SITE PLAN INDICATIVE COLOUR RENDERED VERSION	AL-01-006-Rev P2	10th June 2014
PROPOSED SITE PLAN COLOUR RENDERED ENLARGED DETAIL SCALE	AL-01-007-Rev P2	10th June 2014
EXISTING TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY AREA 1	AL-01-011- Rev P2	10th June 2014
EXISTING TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY AREA 2	AL-01-012- Rev P2	10th June 2014
EXISTING TOPGRAPHIC SURVEY AREA 3	AL-01-013- Rev P3	18th July 2014
EXISTING TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY AREA 4	AL-01-014- Rev P3	18th July 2014
FORMER GOLF CLUB BUILDINGS AND CAR PARK EXISTING SITE PLAN	AL-01-020- Rev P2	10th June 2014
FORMER GOLF CLUB HOUSE AND STORAGE BARN. EXISTING BUILDING PLANS AND ELEVATIONS	AL-01-030- Rev P2	10th June 2014
EXISTING GOLF CLUB HOUSE Proposed Extension & Internal Refurbishment, Floor and Roof Plans	AL-20-01-001- Rev P2	10th June 2014
PROPOSED INDOOR PITCH AND JUNIOR ACADEMY, FLOOR PLANS	AL-20-02-001- Rev P2	10th June 2014

PROPOSED INDOOR PITCH AND JUNIOR ACADEMY, ROOF PLAN	AL-20-02-002- Rev P2	10th June 2014
TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY WITH PROPOSED NEW FOOTBALL PITCHES	AL-20-02-003- Rev P3	18th July 2014
FORMER GOLF CLUB AREA EXTENSION AND ALTERATIONS, EXTERNAL WORKS PLAN	AL-90-01-001- Rev P2	10th June 2014
PROPOSED INDOOR PITCH AND JUNIOR ACADEMY	AL-90-02-001- Rev P2	10th June 2014
GOLF CLUB HOUSE REFURBISHMENT AND SENIOR ACADEMY- FIRST TEAM, SECTIONS	AS-20-01-001- Rev P2	11th June 2014
PROPOSED INDOOR PITCH AND JUNIOR ACADEMY, INDICATIVE CROSS SECTIONS	AS-20-02-001- Rev P2	11th June 2014
TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY OVERALL PLAN	AL-01-010- Rev P3	18th July 2014
DEMOUNTABLE SEATED SPECTATOR COVERS INDICATIVE DETAILS	AL-20-03-001- Rev P3	10th June 2014
LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS MITIGATION ZONE (SOFTWORKS LAYOUT)	03 Rev A	7th August 2014
LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS (SOFTWORKS LAYOUT)	01 Rev C	18th July 2014
Proposed SW Strategy	213-237 D01	10th June 2014
Planting Philosophy	02	10th June 2014
Proposed Tree Removal- Site Plan	MPT036.03.14	27th August 2014

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