

MILLER HOMES

MANCHESTER COLLEGE PLAYING FIELD MITIGATION

JUNE 2021

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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1: INTRODUCTION

This report, commissioned by Miller Homes and produced by Knight, Kavanagh & Page, considers the options to mitigate the proposed loss of playing field associated with Manchester College Northenden Campus (Sale Road, M23 0DD), as part of plans for residential development of the wider site.

The solution needs to be sound in relation to Sport England Playing Field Policy and this report is a preliminary look at the options to make this possible.

Key drivers are to:

- ✦ Determine the impact of loss of playing field provision.
- ✦ Explore options to mitigate the proposed loss of playing field provision relative to Sport England Playing Field Policy.
- ✦ Determine the impact of resulting residential growth generated by the development on playing field provision.

Consultation was undertaken with MCRAActive, the not for profit organisation established and overseen by Manchester City Council (MCC), responsible for driving sport and physical activity across Manchester. Information provided by the MCRAActive Capital and Facilities Strategy Manager helped to inform this report.

Consultation was also undertaken with the MCC officer responsible for direct management of local authority managed sites in the locality, as well as with the Sport England Planning Manager for the region.

Background context

The disposal of Manchester College Northenden Campus forms part of the College's wider Estate Strategy approved by the College Governing Body in September 2016 and later endorsed by the Council Executive on 15th November 2017. The Strategy consolidates the Manchester College estate from seven existing sites to five in total.

The Northenden Campus is located off Sale Road adjacent to Princess Parkway, approximately half a mile east of Northenden district centre. Manchester City Centre is four miles to the north. The sports pitch and buildings at Northenden were previously part of the City College estate. City College and Manchester College of Arts & Technology (MANCAT) merged in 2008 to form Manchester College.

Miller Homes plans to develop the site for residential use and due to loss of playing field land as part of the site masterplan, is required to consider and propose suitable mitigation which is able to meet Sport England Playing Field Policy.

Planning context

Sport England Playing Field Policy

To help protect the spaces where people get active, local planning authorities are required by law to consult Sport England on planning applications they receive which affect playing fields. Sport England's Playing Field Policy¹ helps it to assess and respond to these applications. Sport England also provides publicly available guidance alongside its Playing Fields Policy to give clarity and advice to external parties on how we make individual assessments.

¹ <https://bit.ly/31wFkWJ>

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As the proposed development of the Northenden Campus includes the loss of playing field land which previously contained one adult football pitch and one hard surface Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), Sport England is a statutory consultee and will object to the development unless one of the following five exceptions is met:

- ◀ **Exception 1 (E1): Excess of provision**
 - ◀ A robust and up-to-date assessment has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of Sport England, that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, which will remain the case should the development be permitted, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.
- ◀ **Exception 2 (E2): Ancillary development**
 - ◀ The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field, and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.
- ◀ **Exception 3 (E3): Land incapable of forming part of a pitch**
 - ◀ The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:
 - reduce the size of any playing pitch;
 - result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
 - reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
 - result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; or
 - prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.
- ◀ **Exception 4 (E4): Replacement provision of equivalent or better quality and quantity**
 - ◀ The area of playing field to be lost as a result of the proposed development will be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new area of playing field:
 - of equivalent or better quality, and
 - of equivalent or greater quantity, and
 - in a suitable location, and
 - subject to equivalent or better accessibility and management arrangements.
- ◀ **Exception 5 (E5): New sports provision benefit outweighs the loss of the playing field.**
 - ◀ The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.

The full explanation and conditions of each exception is available via the link below:
<https://www.sportengland.org/media/3690/document-5-a-sporting-future-for-the-playing-fields-of-england-planning-policy-statement.pdf>

Part 3 of this paper will consider how identified mitigating solutions may be able to best meet one or more of the five exceptions.

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Local planning policy

MCC's Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy (adopted 2012) and the remaining saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP, adopted 1995).

There are no relevant policies to playing pitches/open space in the UDP.

Policy EN10 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will seek to retain and improve existing open spaces, sport and recreation facilities to the below standards:

Policy EN10 goes on to state that proposals on existing open spaces and sport and recreation facilities will only be permitted where:

- ◀ Equivalent or better replacement open space, sport or recreation facilities will be provided in the local area;
Or
- ◀ The site has been demonstrated to be surplus for its current open space, sport or recreation function and the City-wide standards above are maintained, and
 - ◀ It could not fulfil other unsatisfied open space, sport or recreation needs, and
 - ◀ A proposed replacement will remedy a deficiency in another type of open space, sport or recreation facility in the local area;Or
- ◀ The development will be ancillary to the open space, sport or recreation facility and complement the use or character.

Strategic context

The 2017 Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) evidences shortfalls in capacity for community football as well as other sports including rugby union, hockey and cricket. Manchester College Northenden Campus is located in what the PPS defines as the South sub-area.

The Council produced an Action Plan in November 2018 by way of an update to the PPS.

Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy

Within the South sub-area, the 2017 PPS identifies future shortfalls for mini 5v5 format football.

Nationally there is a strategic focus on the development of full size 3G pitches for football identified through the FA National Football Facilities Strategy. There is a strategic focus to relocate the majority of mini soccer demand and youth 9v9 football where possible to play matches on 3G pitches. The PPS identified that supply and level of access to 3G pitches in the City can sufficiently meet demand.

There has since been some reported change to the 2017 position, identified by MCRAActive through the PPS update process. This includes growth in demand in the South sub-area, around Wythenshawe specifically, meaning there is demand to require an additional 3G pitch in the area in future.

Furthermore, there is current uncertainty as to whether the 3G pitch at Newall Green High School will remain operational and accessible to external users to the same extent in future, with the School planned to close in August 2021. This would accelerate the pressures on 3G pitch provision and could create an increase in the shortfall of provision.

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MCC commissioned the development of a new Playing Pitch Strategy in March 2021. This will renew and update the supply and demand position for formal sports provision for the City.

Manchester Local Football Facility Plan

To support delivery of the National Football Facilities Strategy, The FA commissioned a national project to produce a Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) for every local authority across England. Each plan is unique to its area as well as being diverse in its representation, including currently underrepresented communities.

Identifying strategic priorities for football facilities across the formal, recreational and informal game, LFFPs establish a ten-year vision for football facilities that aims to transform the playing pitch stock in a sustainable way. They identify key projects to be delivered and act as an investment portfolio for projects that require funding. An LFFP is an investment portfolio of priority projects for potential investment - it is not a detailed supply and demand analysis of all pitch provision in a local area. Therefore, it cannot be used as a replacement for a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and it will not be accepted as an evidence base for site change of use or disposal.

The Manchester LFFP was published in November 2020 and identifies a number of priority projects in the south locality as being important sites for football. Sites local to Northenden Campus include resurfacing of the 3G pitch at Newall Green High School and improvement of grass pitches at Wythenshawe Park, Manchester Health Academy and Hollyedge Park.

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2: MANCHESTER COLLEGE - NORTHENDEN CAMPUS

The site is 18.2 acres (7.35 hectares) in size and comprises a single large college building constructed in 2003 together with two associated outbuildings. Just under half of the site is associated playing fields. The site is in a predominantly residential area and is within walking distance of Wythenshawe Park to the south.

The total area of playing field is 1.93 hectares dating back to at least 2003 which comprises c1.48 hectares of previously used area maintained for college use, including the multi-use games area (MUGA) which is situated within the field, as well as c0.45 hectares adjacent field not previously used for college sport and cut as open space.

Dating back to 2000, a further area of the playing field (in the north west corner) was turned into car parking and is now overgrown with established trees on it (0.77 hectares).

The playing field is not directly serviced by onsite changing and toilet provision, with students previously accessing this within the main college building.

Figure 1.1: Area of the Manchester College Northenden Campus playing field



Manchester College reports that the playing field has not been used for any teaching or curriculum use since the college merger in 2008 and has no record of the pitch being used by any community users since its formal records have been maintained. The field and general green field land around the site is used for occasional ad hoc student social/enrichment, with some informal play by students but no structured or organised sports activity. The grass is cut as part of general site maintenance on a regular basis.

Staff who have been on site since 2013 advise that they have no knowledge of community use since they have been at the College. To further support this, the changing rooms within the main college building have been used as general storage areas since 2013.

There was a request for use of the pitch in July 2019 from a local club which arranged for the pitch to be cut and marked out, however, this was unable to be progressed due to insurance issues and the pitch remained unused.

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The College has received other occasional requests for use of the pitch but no agreement for use has been granted, the last being an informal request in November 2020 by Baguley Athletic Football Club.

The Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy (2017) identified the site as having one adult football pitch which was (and remains) unavailable for community use.

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3: LOCAL STRATEGIC POSITION

Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy

The Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS, 2017) identifies shortfalls of playing pitch capacity at a Citywide level for football, rugby union, artificial grass pitches for hockey, tennis and softball. Consequently, the case cannot be made that there is a surplus of provision.

At a local level, the PPS divides the City into more local sub-areas, referred to as analysis areas, which allows for analysis of the position at a community level based on the catchments within which sports clubs are likely to access facilities. Manchester College Northenden Campus is located within the South Analysis Area.

Table 3.1: Summary of capacity balance position for pitch sports within the PPS South Analysis Area.

Sport	2017 position	Future position (2021)
Football (grass pitches)	<i>Actual spare capacity:</i> 21.5 adult match equivalent sessions per week available at peak time. 1.5 youth 11v11 match equivalent sessions per week available at peak time. Four youth 9v9 match equivalent sessions per week available at peak time. Four mini 7v7 match equivalent sessions per week at peak time. <i>Mini 5v5 capacity is balanced</i>	<i>Actual spare capacity:</i> 16 adult match equivalent sessions per week available at peak time. Two youth 9v9 match equivalent sessions per week available at peak time. Three mini 7v7 match equivalent sessions per week at peak time. <i>Youth 11v11 capacity is balanced</i> Shortfalls: Ten mini 5v5 match equivalent sessions per week.
Rugby union (grass pitches)	Shortfall of eight senior match equivalent sessions per week.	Shortfall of 16.25 senior match equivalent sessions per week.
Rugby league	Demand can be met - on the basis that the majority facility preference continues to be 3G pitches.	Demand can be met with maintained or increased level of access to 3G pitch capacity - on the basis that the majority facility preference continues to be 3G pitches.
Cricket	Demand is met	Demand can be met – though increased capacity may be required across Didsbury CC/Didsbury Sports Ground to facilitate future growth.
Hockey (Sand/water AGPs)	Increased access to capacity required for training.	Increased access to capacity required at peak and non-peak times – timing requirements to be reviewed based on rate of growth across varied participation formats.
Lacrosse	Demand is met.	Demand can be met.
Softball	Demand is met – on the basis the level of access to existing provision is maintained or increased.	Increased capacity required to further facilitate growth – either through increased access to existing facilities on additional days or through creation of new provision.
Baseball	Demand is met - qualitative improvements to ancillary provision required.	Desire to generate increased demand and create new club – increased capacity required to do so.

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The PPS evidenced a future 2021 position of identified shortfalls for mini soccer 5v5 format, rugby union pitches and full size artificial grass pitches for hockey. Shortfalls were also identified for softball and baseball, subject to achievement of growth aspirations amongst leagues/clubs.

As part of PPS Stage E monitoring, evaluation and updating the PPS, MCRAActive carried out consultation in 2020 with local football clubs in the South Area to understand their current needs for match pitches and training facilities as well as any plans for growth.

From this consultation, amongst other responses the following clubs in the Wythenshawe area particularly noted significant growth plans and the following future needs:

- ✦ **Wythenshawe Amateurs** - football development plan up to 2026/27 sees an increase in girls football to around 65 club teams in total. This represents growth of 25 teams in the next 5-6 year period. This will present additional needs for training, equivalent of approximately 12 hour slots on a full size 3G pitch. Requirement for match pitches would increase from 12 pitches to 25 pitches.
- ✦ **Wythenshawe Celtic** - 3G pitch access required to accommodate for growth of four more junior teams. The Clubs wants a venue to become a central hub for training as it is currently operating over four different venues with no opportunity for growth.
- ✦ **Wythenshawe Town** - 3G facilities required to service its new football academy programme (ages 16-18) from 2022/23 and growth in junior teams from U10s-U16s over the next 3-5 years. Potentially developing a senior adult disability team.
- ✦ **Baguley Athletic** – the Club requires better facilities to train on, artificial grass and grass ideally with changing facilities and space for parents to get refreshments which is a must. The Club has plans and demand to develop new teams. Currently turning teams down and children away due to lack of facilities to accommodate. Wythenshawe Park identified as an ideal location for members.

Growth in the number of teams at these local clubs would reduce previously identified capacity at youth 9v9 and mini 7v7 formats of football. Based on the reported levels of growth, it is likely that the position would in future be one of shortfalls at youth 9v9, youth 11v11 and mini 7v7 formats, as well as exacerbation of the existing shortfall at mini 5v5 format.

The new Manchester PPS to be developed in 2021 will fully establish the supply and demand position for grass pitch sports in the City, including a full consultation process to establish current and future requirements for different sports.

Not including education sites, notable playing field sites in the direct Northenden/Wythenshawe locality within a two mile radius include:

- ✦ Wythenshawe Park – managed by Manchester City Council
- ✦ Wythenshawe Sports Ground – managed by University of Manchester
- ✦ Wythenshawe Cricket & Sports Club – managed by sports club of the same name
- ✦ Ericstan Park – managed by Wythenshawe Town Football Club
- ✦ Merseybank Playing Fields – managed by Manchester City Council
- ✦ Old Bedians Sports Centre – managed by Bedians AFC
- ✦ Didsbury Sports Ground – managed by Didsbury Playing Field Association

4: OPTIONS FOR MITIGATION

Sport England Playing Field Policy

There is a requirement for the proposed mitigation solution to meet one or more of the five Sport England exceptions within its Playing Field Policy in order to be permissible for potential loss of playing field.

The Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy identifies capacity shortfalls for several sports across the City. Consequently, Exception E1 of Sport England Playing Field Policy is unable to be met i.e. the playing field is surplus to both current and future sporting needs.

It is also not possible for the proposal to meet exceptions E2 nor E3, as it is not for the partial loss of playing field land at the Northenden Campus to develop built ancillary provision to support retained playing field land, as no land will be retained within the proposal. Exception E3 suggests that the land to be lost would be incapable of forming a pitch, however, this is not the case as the playing field can and previously did accommodate at least one adult football pitch without having been affected since, thus this case cannot be argued.

There is not a strong case to pursue exception E5 which concerns the loss of playing field land for development of an indoor or outdoor facility able to meet a sporting need which outweighs the relative loss of playing field land. This is typically the case for high cost facilities and centres such as sports halls, swimming pools and artificial grass pitches, facilities which are in effect relatively expensive built infrastructure projects.

Consequently, the ability to meet one or more of the five exceptions therefore exists only through E4, reprovision of equivalent playing field land. It is through presenting a case to meet E4 that there is the greatest opportunity for the proposal to be agreeable when adjudged against Sport England Playing Field Policy.

To meet E4, the playing field needs to be replaced within the locality. Replacement must represent a genuine replacement i.e. creation of a new playing field. Improvements alone to existing playing field do not represent a genuine replacement because the quantity element of the exception has not been addressed only the quality element. The quantity element can be addressed by bringing into use areas of an existing playing field that are currently incapable of supporting a pitch or pitches without significant works or creating new playing field on land that is not currently playing field.

Following consultation with MCRAActive, MCC and Sport England, two options have been explored within the locality to replace playing field land as detailed below.

Option 1 – acquisition of new land to develop playing field provision

The responsibility for reprovision of playing field land lies with the prospective developer and whilst working with the local authority and partners is advised, in order to deliver a sustainable and strategically valuable reprovision, purchase of land and development of a new playing field site as replacement is an option.

New playing field land could be created as an extension to an existing playing field site. This would allow for reprovision to complement existing playing field operational models, provide growth capacity for resident clubs and groups and to be serviced by supporting infrastructure which may already be onsite or planned, representing a greater level of deliverability and sustainability.

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In terms of creating a standalone new playing field site, it is worthy of note that development and bedding in of the playing field itself and established pitches can take between 12 to 24 months. New provision must also be fully operational before any loss of existing provision can be made.

Following consultation with MCRAActive no sites were identified as providing opportunity for development of adjacent land to form extensions to existing playing field sites.

Further, MCC has not identified or allocated any sites for development of new playing field provision within its Development Plan, consequently there is no opportunity to supplement identified projects for new provision.

In terms of creating a new standalone site, with no existing user group based at a new site, there would be no identified or established operational model or case to sustain the asset long-term, as Miller Homes would not be open to operating and managing the asset in future.

MCRAActive has confirmed that although it would be willing to take on the management/maintenance of new playing field sites as an extension to existing sites, it is not able to take on responsibility for a new standalone site for sustainability reasons.

Although there would be potential for management by another group or sports club under the guidance of their NGB, this comes with the risk of challenge to the wider strategic vision for the development of sports facilities in the area and longer term sustainability may be an issue.

Option 2 – qualitative improvements to a lapsed playing field part of Wythenshawe Park

This option provides the same benefits as in Option 1 in terms of extending existing playing field land whereby complementing existing playing field operational models, providing growth capacity for resident clubs and groups and to be serviced by supporting infrastructure which may already be onsite or planned.

Following consultation with MCRAActive, an area to the west of existing pitches at Wythenshawe Park are identified as having possible scope to meet the mitigation requirement. Though this parcel of land is designated playing field, it now lies unused for sport having previously been used as pitches several years ago and never formally established as playing field with dedicated drainage installed.

According to MCRAActive, this area of land became unplayable in 2015 due to poor ground conditions. The lack of drainage on this part of the playing field resulted in matches being cancelled and extended periods of the winter when it was unusable.

Though already designated in planning terms as existing playing field, Sport England states that it would be open to consider reinstatement of this land as net reprovision for the playing field to be lost at Northenden Campus if works to the area are proven to be substantial i.e. constitute engineering works which would normally constitute levelling and regrading works.

MCRAActive has confirmed that it would be willing to take on the management/maintenance of pitches developed on this area of Wythenshawe Park on behalf of MCC.

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Summary of options

Given that there is a greater deliverability and sustainability benefit to pursuing qualitative improvements to the lapsed playing field forming part of Wythenshawe Park (Option 2), in that development of this area would be able to amalgamate with the existing operational models and be serviced by supporting infrastructure, this is deemed to be the option with greatest long term benefits for replacement.

Further, MCRAActive has confirmed that it would be willing to take on the management/maintenance of pitches developed on this area of Wythenshawe Park on behalf of MCC.

Therefore, it is concluded that Option 2 is the best option for accommodating the additional demand for sport arising from the development of the current site.

Sport England has also confirmed that the quantity element can be addressed by bringing into use areas of an existing playing field that are currently incapable of supporting a pitch or pitches without significant works or creating new playing field on land that is not currently playing field. However, these areas must be assessed by a suitably qualified sports turf specialist/agronomist to provide the evidence required to show these areas will represent a genuine replacement of playing field. The following section of the report provides further detail on Wythenshawe Park and the findings of the Agronomy report commissioned.

5: WYTHENSHAW PARK

Current facilities and use

MCC and MCRAActive identify Wythenshawe Park and Gardens as a key priority site for the City, both in terms of the South Manchester area and the immediate locality. The site is a hub for the area, located just four minutes' drive (0.9 miles) from the Northenden Campus site and incorporates a mix of public open space, a café, public toilet provision, buildings from which Council grounds staff are based and a mix of sports provision.

Sports facilities onsite include tennis courts (see Figure 4.1 – 5), bowling greens (5), athletics track and adjacent field throwing area (4), softball pitches (3) and grass football pitches (2). Sports provision is situated predominantly within the western and southern areas of the site. Changing rooms and toilets are available within the pavilion building near to the athletics facilities.

MCC and MCRAActive plan to improve the quality of facilities across the site, including the heritage aspects within the site and also the sports facility provision. There is a vision to improve the facilities for existing sporting users by developing new pavilion facilities, improvement of existing playing pitches and spaces and to introduce new sports to this area of the site such as routes and facilities for cycling. A masterplan for the site is under development and is expected to be pursued within the next two to three years.

As indicated earlier, MCRAActive states that the Council would be supportive of improvement of the lapsed playing field provision at Wythenshawe Park to meet new demand arising in the area.

Figure 5.1: Aerial imagery of Wythenshawe Park sports facilities (2019)



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Existing playing pitches

The existing playing field used for football (1) has four adult football pitches marked. Maintenance is undertaken by the Council grounds team and is considered to be of a basic standard, receiving grass cutting on a 10 to 15 day cycle with the surrounding open space areas cut on a less frequent 21 to 26 day cycle.

There are four adult football pitches marked on this area of playing field, though it has in the past accommodated as many as eight adult pitches. Despite a reduction in the number of pitches currently marked from previous years, MCRAActive reports that it receives reports of demand for increased use of the site from local football clubs.

Consultation with MCRAActive highlights that some drainage works were undertaken to this section of playing field c2004, with a dedicated drainage system installed where the existing pitches are located, draining into Baguley Brook to the north which separates the football pitches (1) and softball field (3).

The Manchester PPS (2017) recommends that these four pitches be improved to improve quality which will increase capacity to help reduce shortfalls for football in the area. The Manchester PPS recommends that the existing pitches are improved in the first instance and for the additional pitches to be brought into use in line with increases in demand. It also recommends that building provision is improved to better support and service the range of sports users across the site.

The PPS identifies the site as an important hub for sport including for football, likewise the Manchester LFFP also identifies a need to improve the quality of grass pitch provision and to improve the quality and provision of supporting building provision for football users.

Lapsed playing field

There is a section of open space to the west of the existing pitches behind the hedge line which was marked with as many as three adult football pitches in the past. The last record of a pitch marked on this section visible from aerial imagery was in March 2016, when an adult pitch running north to south behind the hedge line is visible with goalposts in place. Another adult pitch with goalposts is visible in 2009 imagery, running east to west.

As indicated earlier, this area of land became unplayable and fell out of use in 2015 due to poor ground conditions and waterlogging. As confirmed by MCRAActive, the lack of drainage on this part of the playing field resulted in matches being cancelled and extended periods of the winter when it was unusable.

Like the other football pitches on the adjacent parcel of land, the previous pitches marked on the western field were serviced by the changing pavilion by the athletics track. The existing pitches continue to be serviced by the same pavilion and new pitches would be too if reinstated. The pavilion is a poor quality 1960s style facility from which teams then walk approximately 400m to access the football pitches by Baguley Brook.

The area is accessed mainly by surrounding residents for dog walking or to cut through the site from Altrincham Road to the south, through the park to get to Wythenshawe Road to the north entrance. The western parcel of land is accessible to Bideford Drive from the North West and South West corners and is marked by Baguley Brook which runs along the western and northern perimeters.

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Members of the public accessing the western playing field from the south western entrance typically walk (or potentially cycle) directly from south west corner to north east to where a footbridge crosses Baguley Brook onto the softball field. This has left a noticeable trail and the way in which public access is enacted on this field should be considered within any proposal for re-establishing sports pitches on it.

Figure 5.2: historic imagery (2013) of last recorded sporting use of the western playing field



As well as improvements to the existing football pitches (1), the PPS also recommends that the area to the west (2) should be established for formal sports provision in line with increases in demand to meet capacity shortfalls.

KKP commissioned leading sports turf consultancy STRI to undertake an agronomy assessment on the western playing field to provide greater understanding of whether the area is suitable to be established and used as sports pitches.

Agromony report

STRI carried out an agronomy assessment of the western playing field on Monday 22nd March 2021, assisted by KKP and the local grounds staff from Manchester City Council.

The full report sits alongside this report as evidence, the headline findings are:

Site assessment

- ✦ There is a visible continuous slope across the site predominantly from the South to North with surface undulations widespread over the area.
- ✦ A thorough assessment of the ground conditions was undertaken with two trial pits dug – one in each of the Northern and Southern sectors, together with regular core inspections. Soil samples were harvested and sent away to STRI laboratories for analysis to determine the textural classification of the site soils
- ✦ There was no evidence of services or utilities traversing the site nor any indicator markers found around the boundary. A linear formation was noted in the north west corner traversing in a north easterly direction towards the brook, which upon further investigation could not be formally identified nor any purpose found.

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- ◀ Currently there appears to be no formal drainage infrastructure in place. A thorough investigation of the site revealed no evidence of outlets or inspection chambers. The conclusion was drawn that the existing slope within the site sustains gravitational movement of water through the profile towards Baguley Brook.
- ◀ Inspection of the brook embankments showed seepage evidence, but not of sufficient discharge quantities to warrant further investigation. This was supported by the large area within the northern sector that remained saturated with standing surface water present. Soil conditions and structural integrity were compromised as illustrated by the grounds maintenance equipment causing significant and widespread damage to the site during mowing operations.
- ◀ The primary limiting factor to effective drainage is the site topsoil, which laboratory analysis has confirmed is a Sandy Loam with a high percentage of fine particles. It can be anticipated that the site topsoil will have very poor drainage characteristics, which may be exacerbated by maintenance and play.
- ◀ Installing a primary pipe drainage network would allow for surface water to be removed from site effectively and is a proven method of improving playing surfaces. Subject to design requirements the site at Wythenshawe Park benefits from a natural slope across the site which should be utilised when considering investment into drainage.
- ◀ The most cost effective solution would be to drain the entire site in order to allow for uniformity and consistency of surfaces. Having outlets on the western and northern boundaries into the brook would help fulfil discharge requirements, as these are currently water courses with continuous flow. Additional works may be required on the western brook to ensure vegetation and leaf debris do not inhibit future drainage.
- ◀ The scope of works required and associated costs would depend on the final number of pitches. A guideline cost framework suggests that a site of this size and considering the nature of the site soils that mobilisation of contractors and subject to design specifications, an estimated investment of approximately £90-150k would be required. This is based on previous projects of a similar scale that STRI have been involved with. These figures are subject to further investigation and discussion, which STRI would be happy to assist with.
- ◀ It is important to note that ongoing maintenance will be required going forward to retain the performance integrity of any new drainage installations. Regular aeration will be required as reduced inputs of cultural practices will accelerate a reduction in drainage performance.
- ◀ Currently the site is not used as playing fields with no historic evidence of markings found. Under present conditions the site is unusable for pitches mainly due to the unsuitable ground conditions.
- ◀ Despite a recent period of dry weather, there were many areas that remained saturated with evidence of standing surface water. This would likely render them unplayable for significant periods of the playing season.
- ◀ The new site could potentially accommodate two full size football pitches and a smaller U12/13 pitch within the site footprint. Figure 5.3 shows the STRI proposed layout which aims to maximise the available space whilst providing an increased amount of playing fields.

Summary findings

- ◀ At present the proposed site at Wythenshawe Park is unusable as sports pitches due to the prolonged waterlogging in the northern sector.
- ◀ The site area of c.2.5 hectares provides sufficient area to bring unusable land back into play with enhanced benefits of drainage to restore playability and performance.
- ◀ Wythenshawe Park would be suitable for the relocation of playing pitches. Currently unusable land for sport, this site appears to show all the characteristics required to allow for the provision of facilities with enhanced performance characteristics, namely via the installation of drainage into the site.

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- ✦ The proposed site could potentially offer multiple pitch layouts, however, Figure 5.3 illustrates what is believed to be the best solution and provision, either as two 11v11 pitches and a youth soccer pitch, or configured solely for junior formats for as many as five pitches.
- ✦ With the installation of pipe drainage, the potential for sports pitch development is great, added to which Bagley Brook offers a positive drainage discharge mechanism, the precedent for which has already been set by surrounding sports pitches on the field adjacent already draining into it.
- ✦ The area of the proposed western field site shows an increased offering from where playing field land is to be lost (Manchester College Northenden Campus) thereby indicating a net gain for sports.
- ✦ Subject to approval, any drainage design and specification that would be required prior to any commencement of earthworks on the site STRI would be able to assist if required.

Following consultation with Sport England, additional topographical works were commissioned to identify the extent to which the undulations on the site require levelling works so that a judgement can be made if this constitutes bringing into use areas of an existing playing field that is currently incapable of supporting a pitch or pitches without significant works to enable Sport England's E4 policy to be met. The full report sits alongside this report as further evidence, the headline findings are:

- ✦ Topographical surveying supports the visual findings of the continuous slopes. It shows the contours of the site with an elevation change of 2 metres between the South-eastern corner (highest) and North-western corner (lowest). The Northern sector is noticeably flatter terrain with wider contours. This may account for the water retention seen during the inspection within this area.
- ✦ A thorough investigation of the site revealed no evidence of outlets or inspection chambers. The conclusion was drawn that the existing slope within the site sustains gravitational movement of water through the profile towards Baguley Brook.
- ✦ Inspection of the brook embankments showed seepage evidence, but not of sufficient discharge quantities to warrant further investigation. This was supported by the large area within the Northern sector that remained saturated with standing surface water present.
- ✦ STRI has undertaken a desktop analysis and calculation exercise to determine quantities and volumes of earthworks and drainage requirements given the existing site grade/levels do not allow for a uniform surface to be created.
- ✦ The new site could potentially accommodate two full size football pitches and a smaller U12/13 pitch within the site footprint.
- ✦ Indicative costings and have allowed for the regrading works on the three pitch areas as well as drainage of the entire playing field area (i.e., both primary and secondary drainage) at 5 and 0.5 metre centres, respectively. The total figure is approximately £230K plus VAT, and allowing for a 10% contingency sum on top of this, would increase the total to £253K plus VAT.
- ✦ With the installation of pipe drainage, the potential for sports pitch development is great, added to which Baguley Brook offers a positive drainage discharge mechanism, the precedent for which has already been set by surrounding sports pitches already draining into it.
- ✦ The area of the proposed site shows an increased offering from where the pitches are to be relocated from thereby indicating a net gain for sports. Subject to approval, the drainage design and specification that would be required prior to any commencement of earthworks on the site STRI would be able to assist if required.
- ✦ By draining the entire site, the possibilities to utilise all available space in the future exists. Limiting drainage to the playing pitches only severely restricts the options.

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Figure 5.3: Possible pitch layout at Wythenshawe Park western field



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Summary

On the basis that the Agronomy Report identifies that works are required to bring the western field into use as suitably usable and functioning playing field, specifically the need for a dedicated drainage system there is case to pursue this as a mitigation solution for the loss of the playing field at Northenden Campus on the basis that this represents a requirement to establish the area as new playing field land (as indicated would need to be the case by Sport England).

The advantages of delivering a mitigation solution at Wythenshawe Park are:

- ◀ As net reprovision of playing field land it represents a gain in area (1.92 hectares lost, 2.5 hectares usable playing field at Wythenshawe Park).
- ◀ The site has an existing operational model and maintenance regime in place which, as part of an existing strategically important site, the City Council already takes responsibility for and is willing to continue to do so in the future.
- ◀ The site is identified in the Manchester PPS as being a key hub for sport.
- ◀ Improvements to playing field provision aligns with the City Council's future vision for the site and its ability to service sport in the locality in future.
- ◀ There is an existing user base for football onsite which is able to grow with access to increased capacity, whilst there is also known demand for increased use of the site reported by MCRAActive which is not able to be met by existing provision.
- ◀ There is existing infrastructure servicing the site, including pavilion provision where there are toilets and changing rooms able to service additional pitches marked (albeit quality improvements required).

The considerations that should be accounted for are:

- ◀ It is recommended that future use should be for football given the shortfalls in the area evidenced by the 2017 PPS and increased demand reported by MCRAActive. Dependent on the type of users, there may also be a need for this to inform Council plans to redevelop ancillary facilities servicing the pitches.
 - ◀ If the field is to be used for junior football then suitable safeguarding measures should be put in place and access to welfare provision, specifically toilets, should be prioritised within design.
 - ◀ If used for adult football then a greater number of changing rooms may be required within the building redevelopment or a storage solution which allows teams to stagger kick offs and use of changing rooms.
- ◀ The western field should continue to facilitate public access and serve as space for public exercise and recreation. Configuration of pitches should co-exist with public access and layout should encourage throughfare routes around pitches rather than across them.

6: NEW DEMAND FROM RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Manchester PPS provides an estimate of demand for pitch sport based on population forecasts and club consultation to 2021. This future demand is translated into teams likely to be generated, rather than actual pitch provision required.

The Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator (PPC) adds to this, updating the likely demand generated for pitch sports based on housing increases and converts the demand into match equivalent sessions and the number of pitches required. This is achieved via team generation rates from the PPS to determine how many new teams would be generated from an increase in population derived from housing growth and gives the associated costs of supplying the increased pitch provision.

The calculator outputs below show the additional demand for pitch sports generated as a direct result of residential development at the Northenden Campus site. The demand is shown in match equivalent sessions per week for the majority of sports, with the exception of cricket, where match equivalent sessions are by season. Training demand is expressed in either hours or match equivalent sessions. Where expressed in hours, it is expected that demand will be to either a third generation artificial grass pitch (to accommodate football demand) or an artificial grass pitch (to accommodate hockey demand). Where expressed in match equivalent sessions, it is expected training will take place on floodlit grass pitches.

The indicative figures assume that population growth will average 2.3 per dwelling (based on the national average occupancy rate). It is expected that population growth generated from the development will equate to an additional population increase of 525.

The number of pitches required in the following tables has been rounded up or down accordingly, however, capital and revenue costs are based on indicative pitch costs, proportionate to the total match equivalent sessions required rather than just whole pitches required. Though increases in match sessions for all pitch sports are not sufficient to warrant the creation of new pitches, the associated costs have been incorporated and investment into alternative sites could instead be considered to increase capacity to accommodate this new demand.

Manchester College Northenden Campus – up to 228 forecasted dwellings

The estimated additional population derived from the development is 525 (based on 228 dwellings being delivered). This population increase equates to 0.12 match equivalent sessions of demand per week for grass pitch sports, 0.01 match equivalent sessions of demand per week on artificial grass pitch for hockey and 0.19 match equivalent sessions of demand per season for cricket.

Training demand equates to 0.23 hours of use per week for football on third generation artificial grass pitches and hockey equates to 0.04 hours of use per week on artificial grass pitches. There are 0.01 match equivalent sessions per week of training for rugby union on a floodlit grass pitch and no match equivalent sessions per week of training for rugby league on a grass pitch.

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Table 6.1: Likely demand for grass pitch sports generated from 228 forecasted dwellings

Pitch sport	Estimated demand by sport	
	Match demand (MES) per week ²	Training demand ³
Adult football	0.04	0.23 hours
Youth football	0.03	
Mini soccer	0.04	
Rugby union	0.01	0.01
Rugby league	0	0
Adult hockey	0.01	0.04 hours
Junior & mixed hockey	0	0 hours
Cricket	0.19	-

The table below translates estimated demand into new pitch provision with associated capital and lifecycle costs. The PPC estimates the total capital cost for the anticipated growth across all pitch types would be £18,749 which would require an annual lifecycle cost of £2,456 per annum.

Table 6.2: Estimated demand and costs for new pitch provision

Pitch type	Estimated demand and costs for new provision				
	Number of pitches to meet demand	Capital cost ⁴	Lifecycle Cost (per annum) ⁵	Changing rooms (numbers)	Changing rooms (capital cost)
Adult football	0 (0.04)	£4,212	£889	0 (0.09)	£14,533
Youth football	0 (0.03)	£2,587	£543	0 (0.03)	£5,717
Mini soccer	0 (0.04)	£873	£183	0	£0
Rugby union	0 (0.01)	£1,167	£250	0 (0.02)	£2,876
Rugby league	0	£155	£34	0	£465
Cricket	0	£1,249	£252	0 (0.01)	£1,461
Sand based artificial grass pitches	0	£2,775	£86	0 (0.01)	£1,154
Third generation artificial grass pitches	0 (0.01)	£5,729	£252	0 (0.01)	£1,986

The calculator also estimates that there will be a need to provide 0.17 changing rooms to support the new pitch provision identified in the table above. The total capital cost to deliver this level of provision is estimated to be £28,191.

² As per the Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance, demand for cricket is considered in terms of match equivalent sessions per season rather than per week.

³ Hours equate to access to a full size floodlit third generation artificial grass pitch or hockey suitable artificial grass pitch

⁴ Sport England Facilities Costs Second Quarter 2019 – (<https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/cost-guidance/>)

⁵ Lifecycle costs are based on the % of the total project cost per annum as set out in Sport England's Life Cycle Costs Natural Turf Pitches and Artificial Surfaces documents (2012)

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Summary

Based on the PPC outputs above, the tables show that through housing growth, some additional demand will be generated for football, rugby union, hockey and cricket, though to a minimal extent given the relative size of the proposed residential development.

There is no requirement for new provision based on the increases in demand from the proposed development alone. Instead, as the demand generated from the housing growth does not equate to a whole pitch for any of these sports, contributions would be better focused on improving existing sites in the area to increase capacity to an appropriate level. Given the relatively low level of housing growth, it is more appropriate for contributions to be directed towards improvements at existing sites rather than new provision.

This is notwithstanding the need to mitigate existing provision lost to facilitate the development but is additional, due to nature of alternative use for residential development.

Where demand does not warrant new pitch provision, contributions should be used to enhance existing provision in the locality through, for example, improving quality or providing new or improved ancillary provision.

The PPS Action Plan, as well as consultation with appropriate National Governing Bodies of Sport, should be used to assist in the selection of suitable sites and suitable enhancements. The PPS Action Plan identifies Wythenshawe Park as the key strategic sporting hub for the area and like the prospect of mitigating the loss of playing field land at this site, it may be considered a good site at which to invest developer contributions to support the Council's wider vision for improving facilities for sport.

7: RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the need deliver a mitigation solution which is able to meet Sport England Playing Field Policy and the need to meet obligations by way of contributions from subsequent development of the Northenden Campus site for residential purposes, the following recommendations are suggested:

Recommendations:

- ▶ The playing field land to be lost at Manchester College Northenden Campus is re-provided by undertaking significant improvement works to the western field at Wythenshawe Park and fully establishing the area as playing pitches. This is on the basis that the extent of works required is significant enough to represent net new playing field, thus meeting exception E4 of Sport England's Playing Field Policy.
- ▶ As per the recommendations of the STRI Agronomy Report, it is recommended Miller Homes proposes to install a dedicated drainage system under the western field at Wythenshawe Park in order to help resolve key drainage issues critically affecting its potential for use as playing fields.
- ▶ Miller Homes should account for at least £150,000 in costs to deliver a drainage installation and playing field improvement scheme for the western playing field.
- ▶ Through pursuing a mitigation at Wythenshawe Park, Miller Homes should account for at least £50,000 in costs for the improvement of pavilion provision onsite to improve quality and potentially quantity of provision to service additional pitches created. This should be informed by the Council's development plans for the improvement of this facility.
- ▶ In acknowledgement of the increased demand for playing pitch provision that is likely to be created from residential development of the Northenden Campus site, Miller Homes should put forward a developer contribution of no less than £51,130 to the local planning authority. This is separate and additional to the costs associated with the mitigating solution.