

WYTHENSHAWE PARK SPORT, HEALTH AND WELLBEING HUB

Playing Field Statement

SUMMARY

Playing Field Statement in support of proposed Wythenshawe Park sport, health and well-being hub to include reconfiguration of existing playing field and recreational facilities to provide 2x AGPs, 1x MUGA; construction of a pavilion (use class E(b)(d)(e)) comprising shower and change facilities, a café, cycle hub, and a GP clinic with Innerva Suite and community rooms; widening of vehicular access and creation of pedestrian access; demolition of the existing weightlifting facility and reconfiguration of the existing car parking area to provide a total of 168 vehicular parking spaces; erection of new fencing and floodlighting; landscaping and BNG provision; a substation; and, other associated works

**Paul Butler Associates and
Manchester Active**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.0 This Playing Field Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for development proposals at Wythenshawe Park. The proposals are for:

“Reconfiguration of existing playing field and recreational facilities to provide 2x AGPs, 1x MUGA, 1x 9v9 football pitch, 1x baseball pitch, and retention of the existing Pump Track and Learn2Ride area; construction of a pavilion (use class E(b)(d)(e)) comprising shower and change facilities, a café, cycle hub, and a GP clinic with Innerva Suite and community rooms; widening of vehicular access and creation of pedestrian access; demolition of the existing weightlifting facility and reconfiguration of the existing car parking area to provide a total of 159 vehicular parking spaces; erection of new fencing and floodlighting; landscaping, tiered spectator seating and BNG provision; a substation; and, other associated works”.

- 1.2 This Statement explains the aspirations for the project and provides the evidence and justification illustrating the need for the new sports facilities, reconfiguration of the existing playing pitches, provision of a new pavilion building and other associated works to comply with Sport England Playing Fields Policy Exception E2, E3 and E5 and paragraph 104(c) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.0 Project Background

- 2.1 Manchester Active, as the Sport and Leisure Delivery arm of Manchester City Council plan for wider development of the site, including investment into sports facilities to benefit several sports based onsite. The proposal intends to create a sports and health and well being hub with the inclusion of a GP Clinic in addition to the new and reconfigured sports facilities.
- 2.2 Wythenshawe Park site has been identified as a Football Foundation (FF) Football Hub investment site, due to its scale, location, and existing community football, and multi-sport user base. The site presents a significant opportunity to drive growth in local football and multi-sport participation, and delivery of wider social, education, and health outcomes for Wythenshawe communities and the neighbouring conurbation.

- 2.3 Football Hub sites typically include a mix of 3G and grass sport pitches, serviced by a multi-purpose building that accommodates changing, community/education space, café, and car parking. Hub sites can also include PlayZone facilities, (multi use areas for sport and recreation) and other community facilities such as Gyms, Health Services, Play and Recreational spaces.
- 2.4 In 2022, Manchester City Council (MCC) and Trafford Council submitted a successful joint Expression of Interest to the FF Football Hubs Grant Programme, identifying Wythenshawe Park, as a priority site to address 3G and Grass pitch shortfalls in Wythenshawe and North Trafford areas.
- 2.5 To aid Wythenshawe Parks development opportunity, FF directly commissioned FMG Consulting to undertake community and site stakeholder engagement, supported by Manchester Active. This included park user groups, grassroots football clubs, MU Foundation, City in the Community, education providers, and community groups to inform the outline business case, potential facility mix and long-term financial viability of a Football Hub at Wythenshawe Park site.
- 2.6 The final report was issued to the FF in May 2023 seeking a recommendation to proceed the Wythenshawe Park Football Hub project to main application stage. The report also recommended wider community and stakeholder consultation to inform the project buildability, scope, and outline cost plan prior to application submission.
- 2.7 In the last 12-month period, Manchester Active have led wider stakeholder and community engagement with community partners, Wythenshawe housing trust, GPs, care navigation, neighbourhood health teams, physical activity providers, mental health workers, Council colleagues and Local Councillors.
- 2.8 This process has gathered a local picture of sport, physical activity, and community health-based service needs, identifying that existing facilities are not sufficient to meet current and / or future projected demands from Wythenshawe communities.
- 2.9 Wythenshawe Park Hub proposals have been developed to respond to local needs and aspirations for growth as set out in section 5.

3.0 APPLICATION DETAILS

Development Location	Wythenshawe Park Sport, Health and Wellbeing Hub
Applicant	Manchester City Council

Planning Agent	Paul Butler Associates
Proposal Description	<p>Application for planning permission for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reconfiguration of the existing playing field to provide 2x new full size AGPs with sports lighting, 1x new MUGA (PlayZone), and a skatepark. ▪ Relocation of the existing storage containers and construction of a single storey pavilion (use class E(b)(e)) comprising shower and change facilities, a café, cycle hub, and a GP clinic with Innerva Suite and community rooms; ▪ Resurfacing of athletics track and removal of the long throws and pole vault facilities; relocation of the small throws and jumps area within the perimeter of the track, relocation of lighting columns. ▪ Demolition of the existing weightlifting facility and reconfiguration of the existing car parking area to provide 167 car parking spaces; ▪ Widening of vehicular access and creation of separate pedestrian access; ▪ Erection of new ball stop fencing, sports floodlighting and landscaping; ▪ A new GRP substation located adjacent to the car park; and, ▪ Creation of a BNG area.

Map 1 – Proposed Location of Development



Application Site

- 2.1 The application site is located within the western portion of Wythenshawe Park, and is split into two areas including the existing playing field to the north of Baguley Brook which is bounded by woodland to the north, east and west, residential development to the west, and by existing baseball pitches to the south. A separate roughly triangular parcel of land is included within the application site to the south of Baguley Brook. The overall site area is 6.06 hectares in area.
- 2.2 The land to the north is occupied by athletics track, a tarmac car park with a single storey building that is used as a weightlifting facility, and two recently constructed cycle tracks – a pump track and a learn to ride area, and areas of amenity grassland. Located centrally between the athletics track and the cycling facilities is a single storey modular changing block, and a series of storage containers. The parcel of land to the south of the brook comprises disused sports pitches and are now typically used by dog walkers or other informal recreational visitors to the park.

- 2.3 Access to the playing field to the north is via a single-way vehicle route from the north off Wythenshawe Road. Access to the southern parcel of land is via various entry points from within the park or access points on Bideford Drive.
- 3.1 The site is set within a wider area of open parkland comprising woodlands, open grasslands and meadows. To the east of the site is Wythenshawe Park and Gardens which is Grade II listed. There are four Grade II listed buildings within the park (Wythenshawe Hall, the north lodge to the Hall, a former Stables block, and Oliver Cromwell statue). The adjoining areas of woodland (Gib Lane and Nan Nook Woods) are designated as areas of Special Biological Interest. The site is within Flood Zone 1, however land immediately adjacent to Baguley Brook bordering the site to the south is in flood zone 3.

Map 2 – Current Location of Sports Facilities



Map 3 – Proposed Sports Facility Configuration





- 3.2 The above images provide the proposed site layout showing the reconfiguration of the sports facility, and the proposed floorplans for the new pavilion building. Please refer to the submitted architectural drawings and Design and Access Statement prepared by NPS for further details.

Site Suitability

- 3.3 In March 2023 FMG were commissioned to carry out a site assessment that included:
- Background information about the proposed site;
 - SWOT analysis of the site; and
 - Soiltechnics report.
- 3.4 Wythenshawe Park is an MCC owned and managed site with excellent transport links and existing sporting use. There is a designated area of park for sport and recreational facilities, including athletics, bowling, cycling, tennis, softball / baseball, and football.
- 3.5 The Park site has been identified as a potential location to provide new 3G AGP provision due to its physical size, existing facility mix, and the location on the Trafford boundary
- 3.6 The Park is home to a wide range of sport groups and users including athletics clubs, disability cycling club, Nacro outdoor learning, baseball and softball club, tennis club and user groups, weightlifting club, walking, and running groups, health and fitness activity, as well as large community recreational cycling programme. The site is also used by schools and is a focal point of the community to engage in sport, play and recreational activities.

- 3.7 The Park also has huge potential to support growth in sport and physical activity participation. At present the condition of existing ancillary facilities is poor resulting in a poor-quality experience for sport users and impacting on participation growth.
- 3.8 Early engagement with Planners and Site Stakeholders has identified areas of development potential with opportunities to better connect and build on existing sports zones, creating shared services that can accommodate and drive a sustainable multi-sport offer.

Access and Highways

- 3.9 It is currently proposed that access would continue to be provided through the current access road from Wythenshawe Road. This currently provides access to the car park area. The access road will be widened to enable two-way traffic, and a separate pedestrian access is proposed from Wythenshawe Road.

Current Facilities at the Park

- 3.12 There is a 400m synthetic athletics track and portacabin with changing rooms next to the track for usage by the existing clubs.
- 3.14 Located in the car park area, the current changing room building is used by Wythenshawe Weightlifting Club. The facility was built in the 1960's and it is close to being condemned.
- 3.15 To the south of the track, there is a baseball / softball diamonds used by Manchester Baseball Club. They have developed their own facilities, and they book the site from June to September.
- 3.16 Football pitches are located to the south of the development site. In the 2024/25 season, there are five pitches in use, but there is space for seven or eight pitches of various sizes.
- 3.17 There are also other non-sporting recreational facilities located in the Park, such as walking routes, Bee Club, talks, live music events and festivals

4.0 Project and Sporting Benefits

Project Benefits

- 4.1 Wythenshawe Park Sport, Health and Wellbeing Hub will provide a sustainable platform for growth of sport, physical activity participation and delivery of wider social, educational and health outcomes. The high-level project benefits are set out below:
- Sustainable facilities delivering improved neighbourhood services.
 - Widening access to sport, physical activity and healthy recreation, projecting to reach c.13,900 weekly users.
 - Creation of jobs, volunteering, and activities for local people.
 - High quality training and education hub – building capacity and skills – connecting employment, skills, and training opportunities to Manchester residents.
 - More Active residents – new physical activity referral pathways contributing to improved health and well-being.
 - Provide a home to local community clubs, groups, education partners, and leagues supporting huge growth with over 120 new community football teams generated from junior to adults, including women and girls and disability football.
 - Weightlifting Club relocated to Wythenshawe Sports Ground to create a new Regional Talent Centre for Weightlifting, supporting local pathways into regional, performance and elite squads.
 - Integrated Clinical GP and Health related services delivering to Baguley and Brookland population.
 - Contribute to neighbourhood of choice and development of sustainable communities.
 - Positive impact on civic pride.
 - Sustainable Built Environment – contributing to net zero target.

Sporting Benefits

Football Demand

- 4.2 In 2022, FMG Consulting were commissioned by The FF to undertake initial consultation and engagement with site sports groups and users, community football clubs, leagues, County Football Associations, MU Foundation, City in the Community, Education Providers, Other National Governing Bodies of Sport, Manchester Active, MCC and Trafford Council.
- 4.3 Findings identified there are 6 focus community football clubs that require access to training and match play facilities to meet current and future projected growth. Collectively clubs have a baseline of 134 teams of which 27 are mini soccer, 74 are male, 13 are female, no disability and 20 classed as other (although mainly cover youth male provision).
- 4.4 In terms of growth, Table 1 below details club development plan aspirations if they can access appropriate facilities

Clubs	Mini	Male		Female		Disability	Other	Total	Current Teams	Total Projected	% Change
		Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult						
Wythenshawe Town FC	3	4	0	1	1	3	0	12	8	20	150%
Woodhouse Park JFC	4	3	3	0	0	0	1	11	6	17	183%
Wythenshawe Celtic FC	9	1	0	0	0	0	3	13	17	30	76%
Sale Communities JFC	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6	20	26	30%
Brooklands Dragons JFC	17	20	1	1	1	0	7	47	23	70	204%
Wythenshawe Amateurs FC	3	10	2	13	1	11	0	40	60	100	67%
Total	36	38	6	15	3	14	17	129	134	263	96%

- 4.5 Community Clubs are expected to increase their number of teams by 129 from 134 teams to 263 teams. This includes 36 teams in the mini age group and 53 in the youth age group, including 13 youth girls' teams at Wythenshawe Amateurs FC, Wythenshawe Town FC, and Brooklands Dragons FC.
- 4.6 In terms of clubs, the core growth is projected from Brooklands Dragons FC with an increase of 47 teams to 70 teams in total; and Wythenshawe Amateurs FC projecting to grow from 60 teams to 100 teams.
- 4.7 The table details significant growth in the women's and girls' football from 5 teams currently to 19 teams, a 280% increase (excluding disability female teams). Most of the growth is at Wythenshawe Amateurs FC (13 youth and one adult team) as well as growth in the disability game (9 teams in total, 6 youth and 3 adult including 2 disability youth female, 1 disability female and 1 futsal female).

- 4.8 Consultation with 3 junior football leagues identified needs and demands from Timperley & District Junior League who are currently at capacity across all central venues, limiting opportunity to deliver growth.
- 4.9 MU Foundation and City in the Community have both identified demand for 3G AGPs to deliver a range of targeted programmes for young people, women and girls, and disability groups, with current facilities full at peak times and limited access to deliver community programmes.

Other Sport Demand

- 4.10 Engagement with athletics clubs, England Athletics, and site user groups, identified there is sufficient provision of athletics tracks in Wythenshawe, but there are quality issues at the Park's 400m track. Three throwing cages were installed as training facilities to support the 2002 Commonwealth Games, and only one remains. There has been no demand for their use in recent years as all throws activity is undertaken at the Regional Athletics Arena. The track is currently only used as a training venue due to poor quality with a need to improve track quality to meet current standards.
- 4.11 The Park has recently secured investment to provide Manchester's first recreational cycling hub as part of a long-term cycling facility investment strategy with British Cycling. The business case evidenced the need to undertake a 2-phased development, with first stage focusing on delivery of the outdoor environment that now includes, cycling recreational trails, walk run cycling routes, and learn to ride areas. The proposals are to deliver ancillary spaces as part of MCC Football Hub proposals, with an integrated cycling offer to be met within the Hub, to service cycling and multi-sport users on site. This includes bike hire, bike maintenance and community / cafe spaces to widen access to cycling for children and families.
- 4.12 Engagement with Wythenshawe Weightlifting Club and British Weightlifting have identified the Wythenshawe Area as a potential new regional talent centre to support local sport pathways into performance weightlifting. Wythenshawe Sports Ground is being developed as a Football Hub in parallel with Wythenshawe Park Hub and the current weightlifting facility at Wythenshawe Park will be relocated to a purpose built facility as part of the Wythenshawe Sports Ground development. The new weightlifting facility will provide a performance strength and conditioning gym within Wythenshawe that would provide flexibility of use for club, performance programmes, other sports groups and users, and the community.

Wider Community Demand

- 4.13 Over the last 12 months, Manchester Active have held wider community and stakeholder consultation with Brooklands and Northenden Primary Care Network (PCN), Manchester Health and Care Commissioning (MHCC), GPs, neighbourhood services, MCC Colleagues and Ward Councillors to understand the wider area population health needs and opportunities.
- 4.14 During this period, MHCC commissioned Estate Plans for all 13 Primary Care Networks to inform priorities for new and enhanced provision across Manchester's Health Estate.
- 4.15 When overlaying the strategy findings with local stakeholder consultation, Wythenshawe Park has been identified as a priority site to provide new integrated health, and wellbeing services. This would include full relocation and expansion of Northern Moor Practice (NMP) into the park to meet projected population needs.
- 4.16 NMP is currently operating out of a converted house on Wythenshawe Road, adjacent to Wythenshawe Park site. The property has been remodelled several times to create additional clinical / consultation spaces to meet growing patient needs. The building has now above national average occupancy, with 6 small clinical rooms available. Whilst in the short term functional and in good location strategically, converted houses do not have the flexibility to deliver modern primary care for the future.
- 4.17 NMP is now facing significant challenges to meet patient needs, with current premises not fit for purpose and in sufficient spaces to meet demand. The Hub would provide a centralised PCN offer with 2 of 11 clinical / consultation spaces proposed for shared wellbeing spaces for physician associates, care coordinators, mental health workers, nutritionists, physios, and physical activity referral team/s. This offer would enable bespoke referral pathways into physical activity and wellbeing services, with in-house social prescribing and preventative measures and interventions, to drive improved health outcomes for local people.
- 4.18 In addition, health partners would seek to use community / education spaces within the Hub to hold GP and student training, as a central education and training offer for the area.

Education

- 4.19 Leisure United (FF Hub Operator) have profiled the hub will deliver new BTEC / Football Academy programme on site from year 1. Engagement with local

education partners and football clubs have identified a need and interest in development of new football academies and BTEC programmes to service Wythenshawe area. If a partner cannot be sought, Leisure United will establish through national education partners following similar models on FF hub sites. Students will be linked to partner clubs on site to support workforce development, training and volunteer opportunities and pathways into coaching and club administration roles.

- 4.20 Wythenshawe Park has been identified as a potential location to provide new 3G AGP provision due to its physical size, existing facility mix, and location. The Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy 2022-2031 ('PPOSS') has identified significant capacity issues on existing 3G AGP sites in Manchester (Wythenshawe area), with high imported demand equating to an additional 126 teams from Trafford based clubs. MCC and Trafford Council agreed to develop a joint plan for 3G AGP development to address shortfalls in provision in Wythenshawe and North Trafford.
- 4.21 In 2022, the combined shortfall of Manchester and Trafford was estimated at 5 Full Size 3G Pitches. Based on annual monitoring and 2023/24 affiliated data compiled by County Football Associations, this position has worsened with a current projected shortfall of 13 Full Size 3G AGPs. This is largely driven by Trafford 3G AGP shortfalls, which is having a significant impact on access to Wythenshawe 3G AGP Supply. All available AGPs are primarily on School Sites, with no Local Authority managed facilities in the area.
- 4.22 MCC and Trafford Council have established a Football Consortium to guide the strategic investment priorities for Manchester and Trafford, underpinned by LA Football Facility Investment Plans signed off by FF and the FA. Wythenshawe Park has been identified as a priority site by both LAs to address unmet football demand. On this basis, MCC and Trafford Council submitted a joint EOI to the FF Football Hubs Programme identifying Wythenshawe Park as a priority site for new 3G AGP provision, to drive growth in football and multi-sport participation across Wythenshawe and North Trafford.

Summary Position

- 4.23 Wythenshawe Park is an MCC owned and managed site with excellent links and existing multi-sport use and club base. There is a designated area of the park for sport and recreational facilities, including athletics, cycling, and grass sport pitches currently made up of baseball/softball and football. Sport areas are currently serviced by 1960's changing facilities and new Accessible Changing Facilities that primarily service athletics and disability cycling on site.

- 4.24 The existing changing facility has long passed its build lifespan, is in very poor condition and does not meet modern standards. The building is operationally inefficient and has no carbon measures in place. The main user is Wythenshawe weightlifting club who have supported to convert spaces to deliver training needs and national performance athletes. The building is not fit for purpose for the current level of activities and presents a poor training environment, with significant limitations for growth and targeted sessions for women and girls, and disabled groups.
- 4.25 Extensive background research, partner, stakeholder, and community engagement has been undertaken to inform the facility mix and programme opportunity within Wythenshawe Park Sport and Recreation area.

LINKS TO NATIONAL AND LOCAL STRATEGIES

Manchester Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (2022)

- 5.1 In December 2017, the council adopted Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy (2017–2021) which set out the framework for investment into playing pitch and outdoor facility improvements. The updated Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy 2022–2031 (PPOSS) builds upon the preceding strategy and provides the evidence to help inform planning, investment, and sport development initiatives.
- 5.2 Since 2022 Annual Monitoring Reports have been prepared which tracks the change in teams and pitches across each season. The 2024 Annual Monitoring Report shows there was a 9% increase in the number of football teams across Manchester since 2023, which compares to a 10% increase between 2022/23. Wythenshawe has experienced the largest increase of teams from 151 to 206 (36%).
- 5.3 In terms of multi sport the PPOSS shows increasing shortfalls in recreational football, basketball and netball with the majority of MUGAs across Manchester providing the facilities to meet this need being poor quality This position prompted the need to create a MUGA Investment Plan alongside the Football Foundations PlayZone Programme. Wide ranging community consultation identified Wythenshawe Park as the preferred site for a PlayZone within Wythenshawe Park, and a new PlayZone has been included as part of the overall facility mix.
- 5.4 Manchester Harriers and Athletics Club use Wythenshawe Park athletics track as their home venue. Between 2021 and 2023 the club saw an increase in affiliated members from 250 to 496, representing a 50% increase.

Manchester Outdoor Action Sport Assessment Report (2023)

- 5.5 The assessment provided a demand and supply analysis of wheeled action sports in Manchester including BMX, Skateboarding, Scootering and in-line Skating. The

Report findings identify that the supply of existing high-quality facilities is insufficient to meet current and future demand in terms of quality, quantity, and accessibility. Engagement with British Cycling, Skateboard GB and the local skateboard and BMX communities identified Wythenshawe Park as a preferred option for a new wheeled sport facility to meet unmet demand in the area.

Manchester Local Football Facility Plan (2023)

- 5.6 Every local authority area in the Country has a Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) to enable investment in football facilities to be accurately targeted. Facility investment is not static and the plans are periodically updated to reflect changes and to ensure the right projects are prioritised. The national funding partners have significantly increased investment to accelerate efforts to deliver more and better football facilities for the grassroots game. The purpose of this plan is to identify the priority projects for potential investment in this area.
- 5.7 The priority projects for potential investment identified in the LFFP will help develop a sustainable network of quality facilities to drive participation across all parts of the game. Central to this are five key success factors: quality, inclusivity, sustainability, engagement and usage. Each identified project takes account of these factors.
- 5.8 The LFFP has identified the investment priorities for:
- Nine AGP's including Wythenshawe Park
 - Twenty grass pitch sites to be improved including Wythenshawe Park
 - Fourteen ancillary provision improvements including Wythenshawe Park
 - Fifteen small sided facilities to be delivered through the PlayZones Programme including Wythenshawe Park
- 5.9 The Manchester LFFP has identified Wythenshawe Park as a priority site for investment across all four project types (AGP's; grass pitch improvements; ancillary facilities; and small sided facilities.)

6.0 PLANNING POLICY

Sport England Playing Fields Policy and Guidance (Updated 2021)

- 6.1 Sport England will be a statutory consultee on this planning application as the proposal affects a playing field. The following details are provided to enable Sport England's informed assessment of whether the proposed new sports facilities, reconfiguration of some of the existing sports facilities, and construction of a pavilion, provides 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 to satisfy Exception E5 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and Guidance.

- 6.2 Policy Exception E5 requires the proposed development for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, to be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields'. The statement defines in planning terms what is considered a 'playing field', which is; the whole of a site that encompasses at least one playing pitch. A playing pitch is a delineated area, which together with any run off is of 0.2 hectares or more. Playing pitches may have a grass surface or an artificial one. The aim of the policy is to ensure that there is an adequate supply of quality pitches to satisfy the current and estimated future demands of the pitch sports.
- 6.3 The proposal includes the provision of ancillary facilities to support the sports hub. These facilities are a new pavilion with changing, toilets, cafe and community rooms and car parking. It is anticipated these facilities will meet Sport England Playing Fields Policy Exception E2 which states: *"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."*

National Planning Policy Framework (Updated 2024)

- 6.4 The planning system encourages and promotes the retention of existing and the provision of additional, outdoor sports facilities, both public and private. Specifically, paragraph 104 (concerning open space, sport and recreation) of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states:
- Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:
- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings, or land to be surplus to requirements; or
 - b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
 - c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.
- 6.5 As the proposal involves the loss of natural turf playing field to another sport, evidence to justify the proposals compliance against NPPF paragraph 104(c) is provided in this statement.
- Also, NPPF paragraph 103 recommends that:
- 6.6 Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the

need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision.

- 6.7 Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy (2022–2031) is the relevant Needs Assessment, as referenced in paragraph 103 of the NPPF, and this has been used to help inform the requirements at Wythenshawe Park Sports Hub.

Manchester Core Strategy

- 6.8 Core Strategy policy EN10 (Safeguarding Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities) reflects the objectives of the NPPF and Sport England Playing Fields Policy at a local level. The policy seeks to protect and enhance existing open space, sport and recreation facilities and contains a clause that “The development will be ancillary to the open space, sport or recreation facility and complement the use or character.”

Places for Everyone – Greater Manchester Joint Development Plan (2024)

- 6.9 Places for Everyone is the Joint Development Plan for Greater Manchester and was adopted by Manchester City Council March 2024. Places for Everyone is one of a suite of documents that forms Manchester’s Local Development Plan. The policy of relevance to sport and recreation is JP-P7 which seeks to create “A network of high quality and accessible sports and recreation facilities will be protected and enhanced, supporting greater levels of activity for all ages,” and “The provision of sports facilities will be determined by individual local authorities through an evidence based approach”.

7.0 LOCAL STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

- 7.1 To aid Wythenshawe Parks development opportunity, FF directly commissioned FMG Consulting to undertake community and site stakeholder engagement, supported by Manchester Active. This included park user groups, grassroots football clubs, MU Foundation, City in the Community, education providers, and community groups to inform the outline business case, potential facility mix and long-term financial viability of a Football Hub at Wythenshawe Park site.
- 7.2 The final report was issued to The FF in May 2023 seeking recommendation to proceed Wythenshawe Park Football Hub project to main application. The report also recommended wider community and stakeholder consultation to inform the project buildability, scope, and outline cost plan prior to application submission. See Appendix A – FMG Business Case.

- 7.3 In the last 12-month period, Manchester Active have led wider stakeholder and community engagement with 120 community partners, Wythenshawe housing trust, GPs, care navigation, neighbourhood health teams, physical activity providers, mental health workers, Council colleagues and Local Councillors across 44 events. These were a combination of workshops, face to face meetings, on line meetings and email communication.
- 7.4 This process has gathered a local picture of sport, physical activity, and community health-based service needs, identifying that existing facilities are not sufficient to meet current and / or future projected demands from Wythenshawe communities.

8.0 ANALYSIS

Current and Proposed Site Usage

- 8.1 The table below shows the current number of clubs and teams who use Wythenshawe Park sports facilities mapped against the predicted usage based on local sport club and NGB consultation.

Table 1: Current and Proposed Site Usage

Sport	Current Clubs	Current Teams/ Members	Proposed Clubs	Proposed Teams/ Members	% Growth
Football	6	79	6	175	121
Baseball	1	5	1	5	0
Weightlifting	N/A	146	N/A	400	170
Athletics	3	140	6	210	50
Places to Ride	N/A	46,936	N/A	65,304	40
Cycling	N/A	28,800	N/A	31,680	10

Quantum of Provision

- 8.2 An analysis of the quantum of provision has been presented in an 'overall scorecard' in respect of potential gains and losses for sports pitch provision table 2.

Table 2: Overall Score Card: Quantum of Provision

Pitch Type	Existing	Proposed	Net Loss / Gain
Grass Pitches	3 x baseball	¹ 1 youth 9v9 football ² 2 baseball (1 full size and 1 junior)	Gain 1 youth 9v9 2 x baseball diamonds retained and 1 new full size re-provided on area to the south.
Artificial Grass Pitches	0		Gain 2 x full size 3G AGPs Gain 1 x PlayZone
Athletics Track	1	1	Retained
Cycle/ Pump Track	1	1	Retained
Weightlifting	1	0	Relocated to Wythenshawe Sports Ground
Ancillary Facilities	0.12ha Changing and toilets	0.16ha	Gain of 0.04 ha Changing; toilets; café; community rooms; GP Clinic
Total Playing Field Area (all areas inc. run off m²)	6.2ha	2.56ha grass pitch provision 1.35 ha artificial surfaced outdoor sport 1.3ha Biodiversity Net Gain (outside red line boundary)	Loss of 1.35 ha natural turf playing field to artificial surface outdoor sport

¹ Created adjacent to the proposed AGPs but outside the red line boundary.

² Additional full size baseball diamond to be created outside of the red line boundary.

- 8.3 Table 2 identifies that there will be an overall loss of one baseball diamond as a result of the proposed developments at Wythenshawe park. However, this will be replaced on land to the south of the development area on playing field that is underused. The retained playing field area to the south will benefit from drainage and will be reconfigured to meet the needs of football and baseball clubs. The new sports facilities will not only accommodate existing sports teams but allow growth of clubs and teams and create new opportunities for the local community to take part in sport and physical activity on site.
- 8.4 Manchester Active will prepare a Community Use Agreement (CUA) in partnership with the NGBs and local sports clubs to ensure the site is properly activated and mobilised. The CUA will be prepared in accordance with Sport England's guidance on preparing CUAs. The CUA will be managed via a Local Advisory Board Group who will also monitor the success of the operations and delivery of project outputs. The Board would include representation from MCC, Manchester Active, Premier League Sport Foundations (MU Foundation and City in the Community), The FA, County Football Association, Trafford Council, and any wider Key Stakeholder / Community Partner Organisations.
- 8.6 Based on the above justification, we consider the proposals would give rise to a considerable benefit to the wider community through the provision of an enhanced playing facility. Given the above details, we believe the proposed development meets the requirements of Sport England Policy Exception E5 – The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport and physical activity, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport and physical activity as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field; and paragraph 99(c) of the NPPF.

9.0 POLICY APPRAISAL

- 9.1 The design of the Sports Hub is being overseen by the Football Foundation and their Framework Contractors. All aspects of the design will be in accordance with FA design guidance, and this will be clearly demonstrated through the plans submitted with the planning application.

Sport England Playing Field Policy

- 9.2 The following section appraises the various works that impact the playing field, and provide a justification against Sport England's playing pitch policy:
- Reconfiguration of the pitches: The proposals involve the reconfiguration of an area of unmarked playing field to provide 2no. AGPs, a PlayZone, and skatepark. The proposed new pitches will provide significant benefits by providing an enhanced playing pitch provision which responds to the identified needs of local

sports clubs and provides year round facilities. The proposed reconfiguration will result in some impact upon the 3no. existing baseball pitches immediately south of the site. Following engagement with baseball teams, the proposals will retain 2no. baseball diamonds in the current location (a full size and a junior). As mitigation, a third full size baseball pitch will be re-provided on land to the south of Baguley Brook. The existing Baseball diamonds, and the playing field to the south of Baguley Brook will be improved through additional drainage. These works are beyond the scope of this application and would form part of a separate planning application if planning permission is required. The proposals are acceptable under Exceptions 4 and 5 as the sporting benefits of the new facilities outweigh the loss of playing field and the Baseball Diamond will be replaced.

- Construction of the pavilion: The pavilion will be constructed on land immediately east of the existing athletics track. The building will occupy land that currently comprises hardstanding occupied by a series of shipping containers and a modular building, together with an area of grassland. To the south is the long/triple jump and throw facility, the pavilion will partially overlap this facility. The small throws area and jump facility is to be relocated within the track perimeter, and this has been agreed with England Athletics. Meetings have been held with Ed Hunt of England Athletics and Manchester Active's athletics lead. These have resulted in proposals to resurface the existing track and potentially some adaptations to the infield (subject to design development). The existing athletics changing facility will be relocated to an agreed position within the athletics facility demise. The proposed pavilion will provide facilities that are ancillary to the purpose of the area as a sports facility, namely shower and change, a bike rental hub and café. The proposed GP surgery and health hub will result in significant benefits for community health and will offer an opportunity for a symbiotic relationship with the sport use of the site. This element of the proposals is deemed acceptable under Exception 2 as the pavilion is ancillary to the main function of the playing field.

- Reconfiguration of the car park: The existing car park will be reconfigured to rationalise the existing layout. The existing weightlifting facility is currently located in the centre of the car park, this facility is to be relocated to the Wythenshawe Sports Ground (approximately 1km from the existing site) prior to demolition of the building. It is the intention to commence works to the Sports Ground to convert the existing maintenance building to a new Weightlifting Gym in early 2026. A Grampian style condition will be secured to link the relocation of the weightlifting facility to Wythenshawe Sports Ground to this application. This will be completed and users will occupy the new facility ahead of demolition of the existing building at Wythenshawe Park. This is in line with Exception 4 of Sport England's Playing Field Policy. The proposed car park will be extended slightly in the north west corner of the existing car park, onto a small wedge of peripheral land which doesn't form

part of a playing pitch and is not sufficient for informal games. The car park is acceptable under Exceptions 2 and 3 of Sport England's Playing Field Policy.

- Landscaping and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG): The proposals include some peripheral areas of landscaping and tree planting within the site boundary on the parcel of land to the north of Baguley Brook, however it has not been possible to achieve the 10% BNG required by legislation within this area. Therefore, a parcel of land to the south of Baguley Brook has been included within the development to provide an area of landscaping that will off-set the BNG shortfall. This area comprises disused football pitches; it originally used as 3 football pitches until the 1990's when they were taken out of use due to poor drainage. They were briefly back in use in the late 2000's but quickly fell out of use again for the same reason. Since then, the site has had little formal use, it's a popular cut through for local people and is often used by dog walkers. The site remains very wet, in 2024 a raised stone path and new bridge entrance was installed to improve year-round access to the park entrance nearest to the tram stop, in keeping with the Traffic and Transport plan for the park. Without this addition, this area of the park is frequently inaccessible after heavy rain due to amount of standing water.

Bringing this part of the site back into use as a formal playing pitch is constrained by drainage and viability issues. An agronomy report undertaken by STRI in 2021 to assess the viability of bringing the area back into use demonstrates significant cut, fill and drainage works are required to bring this land into functional use as playing field. Therefore, given the substantial works required the focus has been directed to enhancing the sports facilities to the north. This land is therefore considered to be the most appropriate area of the provision of BNG within the park when considering the types of habitats required to off-set the shortfall resulting from the development proposals. The creation of a BNG area on the disused football pitches is considered to be acceptable since this land has not been used for formal sports for a considerable period of time. This element of the proposals is deemed acceptable under Exception 3 of Sport England's Playing Field Policy.

Manchester Core Strategy, Policy EN10

- 9.3 The proposals are deemed to be in accordance with Policy EN10. This policy supports proposals which improve the quality of accessible sport and recreation and enhance biodiversity in the local area. For proposals which relate to existing recreation facilities, these will be permitted where the development is ancillary to the sport or recreation facility and complements the use. The proposed pavilion, car parking and landscaping provides a function ancillary to the sports use of the site.

NPPF, paragraph 104

- 9.4 This policy advises that Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless certain policy criteria apply. The proposed pavilion is regarded to meet criterion part (c) which states that the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use. While the proposed GP facility does not strictly fall under 'sport and recreation' it is linked with the wider health objectives for the sport and recreational use of the site, and there is a clear synergy between the two uses. The relocation of the existing weightlifting facility and athletics throw and jump facility is in accordance with criterion part (b) which states that the loss resulting from a proposed development will be replaced by an equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location. The weightlifting facility is to be relocated to Wythenshawe Sports Ground which is local to the existing site. The athletics throw and jump facility will be relocated within the existing track perimeter.
- 9.5 Overall, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable when considered against local and national policies relating to playing fields and sport / recreational uses.

10.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1 Having explained and proven the merits of this proposal in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Sport England Playing Fields Policy and Manchester's Local Development Plan policies including relevant material planning considerations, we request this proposal is accepted for the following reasons:
- The proposal would deliver an enhanced sports facility, with better quality facilities, in a suitable location.
 - The proposal would give rise to a considerable benefit to the wider community through the provision of an enhanced sports facility and the opportunity for usage throughout the year, in accordance with Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities (open space and recreation) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).
 - The proposal provides adequate on-site parking and necessary traffic management to meet the needs of the development and would not result in any harm to the safety of the surrounding public highway network.

- The proposal will complement the Playing Field surroundings and will not appear inappropriate to any view looking into the site, in accordance with Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).
- The proposal would ensure that surface water run-off is effectively managed and does not increase flood risk elsewhere, in accordance with Section 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).
- The proposal would ensure that performance of the proposed artificial lighting (floodlighting) system complies with an Environmental Zone E2 (ILP), in accordance with Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).
- The proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact to any residential amenity or have a detrimental impact on the private amenity of the residents due to excessive impacts from noise, in accordance with Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).
- Equally, the proposal satisfies relevant sections of Manchester City Council planning policies.
- The proposal satisfies Sport England’s Exceptions to policy E2 and E5 – The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport and physical activity, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport and physical activity as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.
- The sports facilities will be designed and constructed to a quality and standard that meets NGB requirements.