



UNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL PLAYZONE

SPORTING BENEFITS SUPPORTING STATEMENT

December 2024

INTRODUCTION

This Sporting Benefits Supporting Statement is to articulate the sporting benefits of the PlayZone and to present evidence that the proposal 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 and paragraph 103 (iii) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

PlayZones are modern, safe, and engaging facilities that are designed to deliver recreational football / multi-sport participation growth. There are a range of facility types available to meet local sport specific priorities.

The PlayZones Programme is a Football Foundation Capital investment Programme, in partnership with the Premier League, the FA and the Government through Sport England. The PlayZones programme aim is to engage with local communities with the greatest need and create outstanding sport and activity spaces that tackle inequalities in participation. Manchester Active, as sport and leisure lead for Manchester City Council, have led Manchester's PlayZones Programme leading on stakeholder and community engagement stages to determine site identification and priority sites. This process ensured that engagement focused on the four priority groups facing the greatest barriers to participation:

- Lower socio-economic groups
- Women and girls (equal access)
- Disabled people and people with long-term health conditions
- Ethnically diverse communities

Unity Primary School is one of three sites identified citywide as Phase 1 'Test and Learn' PlayZone sites, with the other two sites being located in Manley Park (Whalley Range) and Procter's Pupil Referral Unit (Hulme), and the subject of separate planning applications.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is for the construction of a new build PlayZone (Multi-Use Games Area), predominately designed for Football, Basketball and Cricket at Unity Primary School, including a new sand dressed synthetic turf surface layer with fencing, LED floodlighting, and ancillary equipment. The project is delivered through the Football Foundation Capital Investment Programme.

PlayZone Sports

Community consultation identified unmet demand and preference for Basketball, Netball, and Football. The Manchester Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (2022) identified shortfalls in all three of these sports. Work will be undertaken throughout the construction period with the relevant NGBs and local community sport groups to activate the site in order to address those shortfalls and unmet demand. Site activation will be embedded within a Community Use Agreement overseen by Manchester Active.

The combination of sports required have informed the design of the PlayZone.

Technical Specification

The proposal is for a Football Foundation standard sized, 30m x 20m PlayZone, to include a 2m wide spectator area with benches to provide a safe standing/seating area for users. Gates and perimeter fencing will be installed to allow access from school and Allesley Drive, however positioned to ensure the school grounds always remain secure. The playing surface will consist of a sand dressed synthetic turf layer on top of a shockpad layer. A fence mounted LED floodlighting system will be installed to allow for community evening use.

Location of Proposed PlayZone



The PlayZone will be positioned on the playing field to the north of the site and on an area of land that accommodated a natural turf junior football pitch when the school was first built in 2015 but has never been used.

Historic Image of Playing Pitch



PLANNING POLICY

As the location of the PlayZone is on the playing field which results in the loss of natural turf playing field, the sporting benefits of the PlayZone need to be clearly set out. The relevant planning policies are:

Sport England Playing Fields Policy and Guidance (updated 2021)

Sport England will be a statutory consultee on this planning application as the proposal affects the playing field. The following details are provided to enable Sport England's informed assessment of whether the proposed PlayZone provide 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.

National Planning Policy Framework (Updated 2023)

The planning system encourages and promotes the retention of existing and the provision of additional, outdoor sports facilities, both public and private. Specifically, paragraph 103 (concerning open space, sport, and recreation) of the 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."*

Manchester Core Strategy

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.

Places for Everyone: A Joint Development Plan Document for 9 Greater Manchester Local Authorities (2024)

Places for Everyone Policy JP-P7 requires new development to provide new and/or improved existing sport and recreation facilities commensurate with the demand they would generate. The policy continues to state that this provision will be determined by individual local authorities through an evidence based approach.

STRATEGIC FIT

The PlayZones Programme has been developed in collaboration with 163 stakeholders and partners, and engagement with over 2,000 residents across all 32 wards and Manchester's 15 priority areas identified in the Making Manchester Fairer Plan.

A combination of stakeholder, community and site provider engagement identified three priority sites for Phase 1 investment as a test and learn approach. Factors such as site management, community support, NGB support and activation partners were the primary reasons behind the selection of the three Phase 1 sites.

The key drivers for developing Manchester PlayZones Programme include:

- Aims and objectives for improving health and well-being, tackling inequalities, and increasing participation in sport and physical activity.
- Prioritisation of internal capital and revenue investment – targeting resources into places / communities with the greatest need.
- Development and coordination of sports development and physical activity programmes in response to local need, in communities with the greatest need.
- Long-term sustainable facilities – development of the most efficient management and maintenance of PlayZones sites.

- Accessible outdoor sport facilities to support and encourage use of by disabled people and people with limited mobility.
- Safe, inclusive and welcoming community spaces for all priority groups.

The 2021 Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy and 2023 Annual Monitoring Report shows a deficiency of MUGA's to support Basketball, recreational football, netball and recreational cricket across the City. The deficiency is more prevalent in the North of the City where there is the highest rate of physical inactivity and participation in sport, but also the greatest unmet demand. This location of this PlayZone and site activation will help address some of that unmet demand and also create opportunities to make more people physically active.

The PlayZones investment programme is aligned to a number of key local plans in parks, sport and physical activity, as well as Manchester's overarching Our Manchester Strategy in contributing to more vibrant and active communities and neighbourhoods, designing facilities and activation programmes in collaboration with partners, stakeholders, and the community to ensure facilities and associated activation plans can respond to local interest and needs, with a core focus of tackling inequalities in participation in areas of greatest need. The programme aligns to Local Policy as follows:

- Health and social care – Manchester Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy; Manchester Health and Social Care Locality Plan; GM Population Health Plan.
- Transport – GM Transport Strategy 2040 and the GM walking and cycling ambitions.
- Planning – Local Development Framework
- Communities – Neighbourhood Focus Strategy; Place Plans for North, Central and South Manchester
- Environment – Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.
- Housing – Manchester Residential Growth Strategy
- Education
- People – Manchester Strategy for Aging
- Skills and employment – Manchester Work and Skills Strategy.
- Making Manchester Fairer Plan (2022)

SPORTING BENEFITS

Links to the Community

The need for and location of this PlayZone was informed by wide ranging citywide community consultation carried out throughout 2023.

Unity Primary School (Cheetham) is part of the Big Life Schools Academy Trust, a social enterprise which works in partnership with communities to build on local strengths, develop resilience and widen opportunities. The school is in the heart of the Community, and the PlayZone will be built within the unused playing field land within the school demise area. A new fence line will separate the school ground and PlayZone with an

access gate, which will control community access throughout the day, evening and weekends.

The school has strong links with other primary and secondary schools in North Manchester. The site was identified as part of community engagement stages which highlighted the lack of safe and suitable spaces for outdoor sports in Cheetham and Cheetham Hill, North Manchester. The space identified within the school grounds is currently unused and has never been used for football activity, despite being designated as such through the planning process.

Community Access

The site will widen access to community facilities and help to address the lack of play/recreational facilities in the locality. The site has an access gate to the roadside therefore access to the PlayZone will be independent from the school, supporting community access throughout the day and evenings. The site has existing cycle storage which can be extended to encourage active travel to the PlayZone.

Following community engagement each site has been designed to individual community sport and activity needs.

Activation programmes are being designed to meet the needs of each priority group and tailored to meet community interests. See Appendix A Site Business Plans.

Area Consortiums have been established for each PlayZone site to support with initial design, site activation and ongoing promotion. There is a broad range of representation for each area that includes public, voluntary and community sector groups. The North Area Consortium, which this site is located within, include:

- Youth providers – ACN, 4CT, Youth Zone manager and MCC youth lead.
- FC Utd.
- MCC Neighbourhood officers.
- Education partners,
- Greater Manchester Police.
- Manchester Active officer/s, including the Physical Activity Referral Service, and Winning Hearts and Minds team.

Site Activation

A pricing policy will be agreed on a site-by-site basis with local members, community and the site management team. See Appendix A (Pricing Policy). This will include a mix of charged low cost and free delivery to ensure priority groups are reached. This will be secured via a Community Use Agreement which will mobilised via a Management Committee comprising the school, Manchester Active, relevant NGBs and community organisation representatives.

National Governing Body and club bookings will be built into site activation plans with instructor led sessions charged at a low cost. See Appendix B – (Site Activation Plan). All income secured will be ringfenced into a sinking fund to be reinvested into the site to support the long-term sustainability of each site.

In addition, a new activation fund will be launched in January 2025 via GM Active – ‘GM moving activation fund’ targeting Football Foundation funded sites. PlayZone sites form part of the application criteria to support delivery of activation plans and facility sustainability.

PROJECT BENEFITS

Manchester PlayZone investment programme will deliver the following project benefits:

- Sustainable high-quality facilities delivering improved neighbourhood services, in communities of greatest need.
- Widening access to sport and physical activity.
- Growth in sport and physical activity participation.
- Creation of jobs, volunteering opportunities and activities for local people.
- Enabling voluntary organisations to deliver more accessible and community led services in accordance with local needs.
- Contribute to neighbourhood of choice and development of sustainable communities.
- Positive impact on civic pride.
- Providing opportunities for local groups to attract new funding and grants back into the community to generate growth.
- Creation of community collaboration and partnership.
- More Sustainable Built Environment – contributing to net zero target.

Table 1 – Sport England Playing Field Policy Exception E5 Justification

REQUIREMENT	DETAIL PROVIDED
Impact the proposed development would have on playing pitch provision including proposed summer / winter playing pitches	The area was prepared as part of the 2015 planning application to accommodate a football pitch. However, it was not marked out or used as such. Once the PlayZone is in situ there will be space to accommodate a 5v5 junior pitch which would be sufficient to meet the school's needs, and potential community use if required.
Existing community use	• Karate – Sunday – School Hall • After school clubs – multi sports – school hall • Abraham Moss Warriors – school hall and community room

	• Al Hilal – football for under 12 girls (School hall) • Yoga for adults – School community room All activities are using the school hall as the playing field is currently inaccessible due to the poor grounds and lack of lighting. The PlayZone will enable outdoor sports activities for both curriculum and community use.
Proposed community use	Activation plans are being drawn up with involvement from local community groups, NGBs for Football, Basketball and Cricket. An indicative activation plan for this site is provided in Appendix B.
Community access formally secured through a community use agreement	This can be secured via a planning condition prior to first use of the PlayZone and with Manchester Active's assistance. Community Use is also a requirement of Football Foundation Funding. Manchester Active will assist the school will preparing, activating and monitoring the CUA.
Sport related benefits of the proposed facility for the applicant and the community. This explanation should provide detail on the deficiencies of the existing facilities and set out how the new facilities will address such deficiencies and help with the delivery of sport and meet community facility needs. Furthermore, the explanation should provide details regarding which sports the new facility will accommodate.	The 2021 Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) and 2023 Annual Monitoring Report shows a deficiency of MUGA's to support Basketball, recreational football, netball and recreational cricket across the City. The deficiency is more prevalent in the North of the City where there is the highest rate of physical inactivity and participation in sport, but also the greatest unmet demand. This location of this Playzone and site activation will help address some of that unmet demand and also create opportunities to make more people physical active. The community consultation identified unmet demand for Basketball (5v5 and 3x3); Tag Rugby, recreational Cricket and Walking Football. The preferred sports identified by the community largely corroborate the findings of the PPOSS.

Explanation of which sports the new facility will accommodate	The PlayZone has been designed by the Football Foundation to accommodate football, basketball and netball.
Proposed surface type	Due to the sports to be played on site, a sand dressed synthetic turf surface layer will be installed on an in-situ shockpad layer. The surfacing system will be designed to meet EN-15330-1 requirements.
Sustainability	A pricing policy will be agreed on a site-by-site basis with local members, community and the site management team. This will include a mix of charged low cost and free delivery to ensure priority groups are reached. National Governing Body and club bookings will be built into site activation plans with instructor led sessions charged at a low cost. All income secured will be ringfenced into a sinking fund for reinvestment into the site to support the long-term sustainability of each site. In addition, a new activation fund will be launched in January 2025 via GM Active – ‘GM moving activation fund’ targeting Football Foundation funded sites. PlayZone sites form part of the application criteria to support delivery of activation plans and facility sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The evidence provided in this statement demonstrates the sporting benefits to the school, and potential community users are considerable and will help the school deliver their PE Curriculum, after school activities and community use.

The PlayZone will provide a sustainable sports facility which is supported by a Business Case and a Community Use Agreement supported by Manchester Active.

It is considered the proposed PlayZone meets the requirements of paragraph 103(c) of the NPPF, Sport England’s Playing Fields Policy Exception E5, Core Strategy Policy EN10 and Places for Everyone Policy JP-P7.

APPENDIX A

PRICING POLICY

Hire Type	Peak (40 weeks)
Partner	£24.00
Community	£0.00
Commercial	£30.00

The pricing policy is to be finalised prior to first use of the PlayZone, and in consultation with local members, the community and site management.

It is anticipated the Manchester Tennis model which is being used across the City at MCC park sites will be utilised on this site.

Currently the LTA and Manchester FA have agreed the following charges:

- Manchester Residents £4 per court (based on 2 people) during Peak Hours
- and £2 per court (based on 2 people) off peak hours.

Therefore, a PlayZone which could hold an average of 12 people for a coached session could be hired at a rate of approx. £24 during peak hours and £12 off peak hours – this would be the charge applied to the organisation/NGB.

For pay and play sessions we would look to make this affordable to residents and a £1 per person charge could be considered (this is based on the £2 per court charge applied by LTA/Manchester for the tennis courts based on 2 people playing).

APPENDIX B SITE ACTIVATION

Football

Day	Pitch	User/Cost	6am-7am	7am-8am	8am-9am	9am-10am	10am-11am	11am- 12pm	12pm - 1pm	1pm-2pm	2pm-3pm	3pm-4pm	4pm-5pm	5pm-6pm	6pm-7pm	7pm-8pm	8pm-9pm	9pm-10pm	Total
Monday	PlayZone	User Cost			Community 0							Community 0	Community 0	Cheetham Hill 12	Cheetham Hill 12				24
Total Income for Monday														12	12				24
Tuesday	PlayZone	User Cost			Community 0							Community 0	Community 0	Mad Theatre 12	Mad Theatre 12				24
Total Income for Tuesday														12	12				24
Wednesday	PlayZone	User Cost			Community 0			walking				Community 0	Community 0	Squash or Iziko 12	Squash or Iziko 12	Iziko Club 12			24
Total Income for Wednesday														12		12			24
Thursday	PlayZone	User Cost			Community 0							Community 0	Community 0	Cheetham Hill 12	Cheetham Hill 12			12	24
Total Income for Thursday														12	12				24
Friday	PlayZone	User Cost			Community 0			walking football				Community 0	Church of God 12	Church of God 12	Church of God 12			12	36
Total Income for Friday													12	12	12				36
Saturday	PlayZone	User Cost				football 12	community 0	community 0	Church of God 12	Church of God 12	Church of God 12	Basketball 3v3	Basketball 5v5	Man Utd girls (8- 0	Man Utd 0				48
Total Income for Saturday						12			12	12	12								48
Sunday	PlayZone	User Cost					Iziko Club 12	Iziko Club 12	community 0	Cricket women									24
Total Income for Sunday							12	12											24
Total Weekly Cost							12	12	12	12	12		12	60	48	12			204
Total Peak Cost (48 weeks)																			£8,160.00

Multi Sport

Squash - Cheetham Hill Squash Club would like to explore outside squash (could be inside or outside of PlayZone).

Young Manchester will assist with activation by signposting youth groups/organisations to the PlayZone.

Street Cricket and cricket development is in high demand in North Manchester and a PlayZone will allow for development pathways. The size of the Playzone wouldn't allow more that 14-15 young people at any one session. Cricket delivery would be for under 14's due to the size of PlayZone as safety would be a factor to the considered.

Basketball England have shared a letter of support for the PlayZone in Manchester. Using the information from the Community Engagement feedback Basketball England would design sessions to meet the community needs - these would range from fitness - walking basketball - women and girls - 3v3 / 5v5 and would be delivered for both male and female.

Manchester Young Lives work to promote the social and educational inclusion of children and young people, they have contacted various youth groups in North Manchester who have expressed an interest in booking PlayZone these include: Church of God Youth Club, Iziko Club, Cheetham Guidance Club and Mad Theatre Company.

RFU have expressed an interest in using the North area PlayZone – these sessions would be aimed at primary age children, tag rugby sessions for boys and girls (size of the Playzone will determine numbers but would – 14 players maximum at anyone time (7 per team) teams would be minimum of 2 girls per team.

Sport (Non-football)	Gender	Age Banding	Current Users	Year 5 Users
			2024/25	2029/30
Basketball 5x5	Male	Under 18	0	10
		Over 18		
	Female	Under 18		10
		Over 18		
Basketball 3x3	Male	Under 18	0	6
		Over 18		
	Female	Under 18	0	6
		Over 18		
Netball Now	Male	Under 18		
		Over 18		
	Female	Under 18		
		Over 18		
Tag Rugby	Male	Under 18	0	10
		Over 18		
	Female	Under 18	0	4
		Over 18		
Women and Girls Cricket	Male	Under 18	0	12
		Over 18		
	Female	Under 18		
		Over 18		
Street Cricket	Male	Under 18	0	12
		Over 18		
	Female	Under 18	0	
		Over 18		
Totals	Male	Under 18	0	50
		Over 18	0	0
	Female	Under 18	0	20
		Over 18	0	0