

for football training (Heaton Mersey Vipers FC). Specific to the BCC site, the 2022 PPOSS recommends that;

'Work with the Club to bring the site back into sporting use that meets an identified need with sports facilities that comply with the relevant NGB guidance.'

- 1.5 Strategic Recommendation (a) protection of sites notes that;

'Disused sites will also be considered in accordance with Sport England's policy exceptions. They provide a potential solution to reducing any identified shortfalls.'

- 1.6 The previous uses for both football and cricket means that policy relating to playing fields will apply. It is therefore necessary to consider how national policy criteria (*Paragraph 104 of the NPPF and Sport England Playing Field policy, alongside Manchester City Council policy*) can potentially be met. We understand that this policy applies regardless of whether the site is disused or not.

- 1.7 Manchester Active is the not-for-profit organisation established and overseen by MCC, which is responsible for driving sport and physical activity across Manchester and are the key consultee regarding playing fields across the city.

- 1.8 An initial advice note was provided to VIEWS by Manchester Active (summarised below);

'Playing field land is required to meet the needs of a wide range of pitch sport types and sizes not just cricket, therefore, given the deficiencies a full quantitative replacement of playing field land is required. Manchester Active can assist the applicant with preparing an acceptable mitigation plan that meets all planning policy requirements and strategic sports objectives, if required.'

- 1.9 It is therefore understood that mitigation will be required for the loss of BCC, and that any mitigation strategy will need to address the relevant policies set out in para 1.6 of this note, plus MCC, Lancashire Cricket Foundation (LCF) and England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) priorities and technical requirements.

- 1.10 Given the initial advice received (set out in 1.8), throughout the process and in arriving at the proposed solution VIEWS and SPC have sought to work proactively with Manchester Active and the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to identify a mitigation solution, which is supported by all partners.

- 1.11 The mitigation strategy seeks to address the relevant policies and this report sets out how the proposals will deliver a sustainable solution, which meets local needs and the priorities of the Manchester City Council Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS), and wider MCC policies. As stated, the sports mitigation package has been prepared following extensive discussion and consultation with Manchester Active and the NGBs.

- 1.12 **Manchester Active have provided comments on the draft report, these were received on 11th February 2025 and have been incorporated into this final report and the overall mitigation strategy, which is set out in section 4.**

- 1.13 The first step in the creation of a mitigation strategy is the analysis of the relevant policy context, including the Manchester City Council PPOSS. This is set out in the next section.

2.0 Planning Policy Framework

Introduction

- 2.1 This section considers the key policies that have been considered in the preparation of the mitigation strategy for the proposed loss of playing fields. It also evaluates the implications of the evidence base in Manchester for the proposed mitigation strategy.

Policy Requirements

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 2.2 National Planning Policy Guidance Paragraph seeks to protect existing playing fields and indoor sports facilities. Paragraph 104 states that;

'Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
- 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*
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.'*

The designation of this site as playing fields means that it falls under the above policy and one of the above exception criteria must therefore be met.

Sport England Policy

- 2.3 Sport England has a statutory responsibility for planning applications involving playing fields. As the site is a former playing field that has been not been used within the last five years, Sport England will be a non-statutory consultee on any proposals affecting or prejudicing the site and will seek to protect all facilities on site unless one of the above exception criteria is met. Regardless Sport England will oppose any proposals that will result in the loss of playing fields unless one of 5 specific exceptions apply. A summary of the 5 exceptions is set out below;

- Exception 1** - 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** - 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** - The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch.
- Exception 4** - 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** - 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.

Places for Everyone: A Joint Development Plan for 9 Greater Manchester Local Authorities (2022-2039)

- 2.4 Places for Everyone now forms part of the Council's Development Plan. *Policy JP-P7: Sport and Recreation*, sets out 7 principles by which a network of high quality and accessible sport and recreation facilities will be protected and enhanced to support greater levels of activity for all ages.

Manchester City Council Local Plan Policy

- 2.4 The Manchester City Local Plan is currently under review, although this is at very early stages. The Core Strategy (2012 – 2027) therefore continues to set the strategic framework for development in Manchester. The policies which are of particular relevance to playing fields are Core Strategy Policies EN9, EN10, EN11 and EN12. While Policy EN9 provides the overarching approach to green infrastructure in all its types and functions, Policy EN10 looks at how the city's open spaces should be safeguarded. Policy EN11 refers to how opportunities for new open space provision will be considered, and EN12 sets out priorities for improving quality across the city. Policy EN10 is the key policy that impacts on the proposed loss of BCC. Specifically it notes that;

'Proposals will be supported that:

- *improve the quality and quantity of accessible open space, sport and recreation in the local area*
- *provide innovative solutions to improving the network of existing open spaces, increase accessibility to green corridors,*
- *and enhance biodiversity improve access to open space for disabled people*

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 set out 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.'*

- 2.5 This policy therefore again seeks to protect existing provision, ensuring that playing fields are only lost where they are surplus to requirements or where replacement is provided. The above policies therefore all have a similar focus, and the mitigation strategy for the site must respond to these.
- 2.6 The key evidence base in evaluating how proposals can meet the policy exceptions is Manchester City Council's Playing Pitch Strategy 2022 (PPOSS). This document provides an understanding of the balance between the local supply of, and demand for, playing pitches. The PPOSS can be used to understand the current role of the proposed development site and consequently, to determine any mitigation that is required. The PPOSS can also be used to evaluate potential opportunities that can be considered as part of any mitigation strategy.
- 2.7 Sport England typically require a playing pitch strategy to be updated every 3 – 5 years, depending upon the level of monitoring of the strategy that has been undertaken. MCC's current PPS was published in June 2022, meaning that it represents an up to date picture of the adequacy of provision to meet current and projected future demand and therefore robust evidence to support decision making.
- 2.8 Added to this, the City Council undertake regular monitoring and updating, of the implementation of the strategy evaluating both changes to supply and changes to demand, and the potential implications of these changes for the strategic priorities of the document. This means that the PPOSS, alongside the annual monitoring report, remains representative of the needs of the sporting community of Manchester.

Manchester City Council Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) (2022)

- 2.9 The 2022 PPOSS seeks to deliver the following vision;
- 'To be a City recognised for its high quality of life, with a network of quality, accessible and sustainable green spaces and world-class sports, leisure and playing pitch facilities, which offer inclusive services to all and capable of supporting sport, health and wellbeing of all residents across their life course; enabling the inactive to become active and more residents to fulfil their potential by participating in sport and physical activity, thus improving their long-term health and well-being.'*
- 2.10 It sets 3 aims, namely;
- **Aim 1**
To **protect** the existing supply of outdoor sports facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future need
 - **Aim 2**
To **enhance** outdoor sports facilities and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites
 - **Aim 3**
To **provide** new outdoor sports facilities where there is current or future demand to do so
- 2.11 The PPOSS splits the city into distinct analysis areas (North, Central, South and Wythenshawe). The assessment presents a picture of adequacy in each of the four parts of the city as well as site-by-site action plans for each area. The proposed development site, is situated in the South sub area.
- 2.12 The PPOSS concludes that from a quantitative perspective, the existing position for all pitch sports is either that demand is currently being met or there is a shortfall. The future position

shows the creation of some shortfalls where demand is currently met, and existing shortfalls exacerbated in some areas.

- 2.13 For football there are current shortfalls of grass pitches, and some additional capacity shortfalls that will be evident in future years. There are also deficiencies of full size 3G AGP in the South and Wythenshawe areas. Some unmet demand for rugby union is also identified, although opportunities for 3G AGP (alongside improvements to maintenance and drainage and removal of rugby league demand) are demonstrated to primarily address these issues. There is an overall shortage of hockey provision, as well as a need to increase capacity for cricket.
- 2.14 On the whole, scenario modelling records that the shortfalls identified can be addressed through qualitative improvements. Some new provision, as well as alternative strategies (*for example creation of hybrid wickets / NTPs for cricket*) will however be required for some sports.

Key findings of the PPOSS in relation to Cricket

- 2.15 Analysis of the Manchester City Council PPOSS suggests that the stock of active facilities for cricket is limited;
- There are 9 grass wickets across eight sites, of which seven are available for community use. There are 4 NTPS on these grass squares
 - The double pitch site at Manchester Grammar School is not available for the community
 - The South area, in which the proposed development site is located has the largest number of cricket grounds (4)
 - In addition to the four active sites in the south area, Didsbury Sports Ground has previously accommodated a grass square with seven wickets. This is now used for short format leagues (contains two NTPs) – Greater Manchester Amateur League. This requires use of grass squares for the first division and AGPs for all other
 - There are an additional 28 standalone NTPs across Manchester, 15 of which are in the south and it is anticipated that further facilities will now have been delivered (2 at Hough End playing fields)
 - There is a second disused pitch identified – the former Levenshulme Cricket Club (cricket square until 2000). The PPOSS notes that the site is being considered for alternative use
 - Within the south area, the quality of facilities at Alexandra Park is standard (issues with maintenance / public park location) , whilst quality at South West Manchester CC, Whalley Range Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club and Didsbury Cricket Club are good (although there is a need for improved drainage at Whalley Range). Blackley CC and Wythenshawe Cricket and Sports Club are standard. Newton Heath Cricket Club in the north is the only site that is poor quality
 - Ancillary facilities are predominantly good (standard at Alexandra Park and Whalley Range). Whalley Range CC are looking to redevelop their changing rooms (applying for funding) and there is an aspiration for improved facilities at Alexandra Park to support the needs of women and girls cricket
 - Some quality issues have arisen with the NTPs that have been installed on parks sites, predominantly due to damage / public misuse
 - Didsbury CC and Whalley Range CC have good access to training nets. There are no fixed nets for South West Manchester CC or Alexandra Park
 - Three urban cricket centres are planned, providing indoor nets. One of these facilities has now been delivered at Abraham Moss
 - There are 45 teams in the south areas (83% of total). Other than Friends United CC (play at Alexandra Park) all four other clubs in the area have both senior and junior teams. South West Manchester CC has 4 senior teams, Disbury CC has 5 and Whalley Range CC has 6. Didsbury CC is also the women and girls hub
 - There is also strong participation in short format cricket – Manchester Professionals (variety of sites), Greater Manchester Amateur (Didsbury). Participants of the T25 and T35 cricket leagues currently travel out of the city to play due to a lack of effective provision within the city

- Didsbury CC exports two home teams to Mere Cricket Club and Flixton CC, as well as junior teams to Stretford CC – the club are seeking additional land
 - Population change alone will have limited impact on projected participation, but growth likely to develop from participation increases
 - There is overplay on most sites, but spare capacity at South West Manchester Cricket Club, one pitch at Whalley Range, across the season – no actual spare capacity on a Saturday or Sunday on any site, some spare capacity at South West Manchester and Whalley Range to accommodate additional midweek activity (senior pitches)
 - Picture of overplay evident in the south
 - Some potential for qualitative improvements at natural turf sites to improve capacity, but need to increase use of NTP.
- 2.16 As a disused playing field, it is important to note that BCC does not contribute any capacity to the calculations in the strategy to reach this position. **The loss of this site would therefore not result in a reduction in the capacity that is recorded as being available.**
- 2.17 As set out previously, BCC is included in the action plan, with the recommended action being;
- 'Work with the Club to bring the site back into sporting use that meets an identified need with sports facilities that comply with the relevant NGB guidance.'*
- 2.18 The above therefore presents a picture of unmet demand across the city for cricket. This means that a policy compliant approach would require *replacement*. This mirrors the pre-application guidance provided by Manchester Active. There is some evidence available to challenge this recommendation, as set out, scenario modelling records that the shortfalls identified can be addressed through qualitative improvements. Some new provision, as well as alternative strategies (*for example creation of hybrid wickets / NTPs for cricket*) will however be required for some sports. The PPOSS also promotes a flexible approach in regards to policy, as set out later.
- 2.19 This initial review has focused on cricket, as this was the main function of the site. With deficiencies in cricket (as well as other sports), the guidance received by Manchester Active is therefore considered to be accurate and the focus of mitigation should be on cricket.
- 2.20 The PPOSS sets out how the above issues can be addressed. Analysis of the strategy document is therefore essential in finding a way forward. The key issues and recommendations raised in the strategy document for cricket are;
- The strategy seeks to protect the existing quantity of cricket squares
 - Focus on qualitative improvements – all sites to be good - Scenario testing demonstrates that improvements to square at Alexandra Park would reduce overplay to sustainable level
 - Sustain provision of community NTPS
 - Investigate installation of hybrid wickets - these extend playing time. It is known that Didsbury CC have recently installed 2 new hybrid wickets (which will have impacted positively on capacity issues) – scenario testing suggests that these could potentially alleviate all overplay
 - Improve ancillary provision where required
 - Support training facility improvement.
- 2.21 Whilst it is clear the need to protect existing cricket squares, BCC is not an existing square as it is not included in the supply. There are no recommendations for new provision, but a focus on qualitative improvements as noted in para 2.23 of this note.
- 2.22 On a site specific note, the key priorities of the PPOSS are to;
- Alexandra Park – improve square quality (maintenance), lease for club, improved ancillary facilities to support women and girls cricket

- NTP improvements – Chorlton Park, Fog Lane Park, Merseybank Playing Fields, Platt Fields Park,
 - Didsbury Sports Ground – improve quality (NTP site), Hough End,
 - South West Manchester CC – fixed training nets
 - Whalley Range CC – hybrid cricket wicket, drainage installation, ancillary provision.
- 2.23 There are also several other disused sites in the area, all of which are also identified as being potentially required to meet demand. These may provide an opportunity for mitigation (albeit not policy compliant);
- Potential disused pitches at Fletcher Moss Park Mersey Bank Playing Fields (South) – area of disused playing fields to south of existing site which includes NTP. Potential to create linked facility
 - Brooms Edge – adjacent to Didsbury Sports Ground (Key site for cricket). Previously accommodated rugby union, potential to reinstate for pitch sports. Action plan notes that significant investment is required.
- 2.24 The annual monitoring review of the PPOSS (December 2023), sets out the following update for cricket;
- Increase of 25 teams from 54 to 79
 - Overall supply has increased due to the increase of 9 Non Turf Pitches (NTP)
 - Shortfalls have increased from 28 to 86 match equivalent sessions per season
 - The combination of the increase in the number of teams, deterioration in the quality or disuse of NTPs and coming out of the negative impacts of the pandemic account for the increased shortfalls between 2021 and 2022
 - New pitches and NTPs are required in addition to pitch improvements.
 - Establish Task and Finish Group to;
 - a) Explore the feasibility of installing hybrid wickets on sites which are overplayed particularly at Didsbury Cricket Club and Whalley Range Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club
 - b) Explore sites for new cricket grounds**
 - c) Explore opportunity to replace poor quality NTPs and provide new to address unmet recreational demand citywide
 - d) Seek to activate new/existing NTPs citywide to address unmet recreational demand Citywide.
- 2.25 *Exploring sites for new cricket grounds* is a key priority, which the BCC mitigation proposal will deliver.
- 2.26 As a result of the findings of the assessment, the PPOSS concludes that there is a need to protect all existing playing pitch provision and that there are no surplus playing fields.
- 2.27 The BCC site is not however listed in the 2023 Action Plan of the Annual Monitoring Report and is not a listed site. The previous site specific recommendation is therefore not in the updated strategy. Reference to the STRI Agronomy Report indicates how the BCC site is not *fit for purpose* for cricket and could not be brought back into use.
- 2.28 Furthermore the PPOSS does not clearly identify any opportunities to replace provision on new playing field land and therefore **there is no clear policy compliant approach.**

Implications of the PPOSS for the loss of BCC

- 2.29 In view of both the messages set out in the PPOSS, and the recent update, we therefore accept that it is unlikely that the proposals for residential development at BCC can be justified against criteria (a) of NPPF Paragraph 104 or the second bullet of Policy EN 10 because the findings of the PPOSS do not demonstrate an excess, or *surplus* of playing pitches in Manchester.
- 2.30 **Criteria (b) of NPPF Paragraph 104 and the first bullet of Policy EN 10 therefore require the loss resulting from the proposals to be replaced with equivalent or better provision to be provided in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location. Policy EN 10 requires this to be in the local area. It is these policies, which the mitigation strategy delivers on.**
- 2.31 Given the deficiencies identified in pitch provision across Manchester, in terms of Sport England policy, we therefore recognise the need to accord with these and Sport England policy exception E4, namely;
- ‘Exception 4 - 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.’*
- 2.32 It is important that facilities are provided that directly benefit the local community that are impacted by proposals at BCC and that any replacement facilities support the delivery of increased community participation, with clear sporting benefits.
- 2.33 The subsequent sections of this report therefore outline the work that has been undertaken in the preparation of a mitigation strategy and the resulting benefits that will be delivered. It outlines the work that was undertaken to identify an appropriate replacement site and summarises the proposed mitigation strategy and outlines how this responds to delivering priorities for sport and local need.

Mitigation Context

- 2.34 As set out above, NPPF Paragraph 104 requires that;
- ‘Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:*
- An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
- 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*
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.’*
- 2.35 The Manchester City Council Local Plan, through Policy EN10 sets out the same requirements.
- 2.36 The PPOSS analysis demonstrates that there remain pressures on existing pitches across Manchester. As a consequence, exception criteria a (or EN10 b) could not apply – there is no surplus provision. Similarly, criteria c is not relevant – as the development is not for alternative sports and recreational provision.

- 2.37 This section therefore explores the opportunities to replace the cricket facilities at BCC (*compliance with NPPF paragraph 104b and EN10 first bullet point*). EN10, which seeks to deliver local benefit, and therefore ensure that any replacement provision is located in the local area.
- 2.38 We understand that in strict policy terms, the requirement for replacement relates to new pitches on land that has never previously been used for sport. The characteristics of the city environment however mean that land availability is limited and there are many competing demands for any land that is available. There are no sites allocated in the Manchester Development Plan for new playing fields and therefore no clear opportunities to provide new playing field land. This is a critical issue, which has shaped the mitigation approach.
- 2.44 Within the PPOSS there is flexibility which confirms that direct replacement is not always required or the right solution. Paragraph 19 of the most recent relevant decision (7th December 2025 (APP/C4235/W/24/3349825), Gatley Golf Club, Styal Road, Gatley Cheadle) confirms that;
- ‘Case Law has determined that equivalent or better provision referred to in Paragraph 104b) is more open than the Council suggest and does not require a like for like replacement both in terms of sporting activities.....or the amount of land....’*
-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’; shall be judged in terms of both quantity and quality.’*
- 2.45 Recent planning applications on sites at Northenden College (*planning permission reference 131147/FO/2021*) and Harry Dalton Playing Fields (*planning permission reference, 135604/FO/2022*) also sought to adopt these principles.
- 2.46 On both sites a quantitative replacement occurred, where areas of existing sites that were not currently functional playing fields were brought into use. It was accepted that the provision of a new site in Manchester for playing fields was not deliverable. Agronomy Reports evidenced that there was a genuine creation of new functional playing field land.
- 2.47 Overall, the PPOSS promotes a flexible approach to meeting policy, suggesting that proposals will be assessed on a case by case basis. This recognises the Manchester context specifically and that there is no land for replacement, but that investment into sport from disposal of some sites might still be of overall sporting benefit.
- 2.48 Reflecting this, Paragraph 9.5 of the PPOSS committee report promotes the notion of flexibility;
- ‘All proposed developments for alternative use of playing field land would need to refer to the PPOSS to help determine what impact the development will have on the current supply and demand of playing field facilities in the area.*
- The PPOSS outlines the need to protect, enhance or provide playing field facilities to address current and future demand. If alternative plans are to be brought forward a mitigation plan will need to be agreed and signed off by Sport England and relevant NGB’s as statutory consultees for replacement of loss of recreational green space and / or playing field land. In this case, a sum will be agreed to re-provide and /or improve sport facilities in the locality area.’*
- 2.49 This is a key point, it confirms that there is flexibility and that direct replacement is not necessarily required or always the right solution. So whilst replacement may be needed to meet policy in the strictest terms, in terms of the solution, things should be considered on a case by case basis with a degree of flexibility to ensure that the proposed mitigation delivers genuine sporting benefits, in-line with the priorities of the PPOSS.

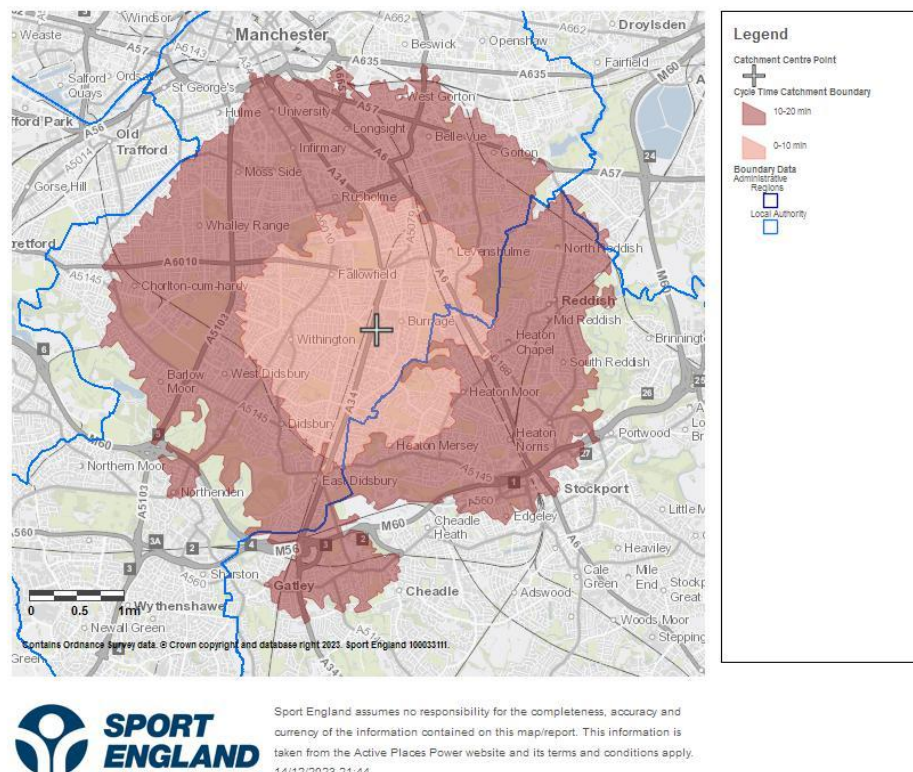
- 2.50 Bringing the site back into use (*see STRI Agronomy Report*) and replacing on non-playing field land are therefore not deliverable mitigation solutions in the context of BCC and the city. This has been accepted by partners as part of the mitigation discussions, as set out in the next section.

3.0 Mitigation Solution

Introduction

- 3.1 Initial discussions were held by SPC, with Manchester Active, Lancashire Cricket Foundation (LCF) and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to explore views on BCC and potential mitigation solutions, in order to achieve an outcome acceptable to all partners. A meeting was held in December 2023, attended by Manchester Active (Capital Development Manager, Cricket Development Manager) as well as representatives of the LCF and the ECB. The mitigation approach has therefore been over a year in development, involving key partners throughout.
- 3.2 Whilst a direct replacement of BCC was recognised as the ideal solution, the lack of non-sport sites was understood. It was also acknowledged that BCC is not *fit for purpose* and unlikely to be brought back into use as a cricket field, (*which has now been confirmed by the STRI Report*) and therefore there was a desire to be pragmatic and support a solution. The PPOSS promotes a flexible approach to development considerations. The PPOSS suggests that proposals will be assessed on a case by case basis, which recognises the Manchester context specifically, particularly that land for replacement may be difficult to deliver, and investment into sport from disposal might be of benefit.
- 3.3 The deficiencies in the area for cricket were acknowledged and a strong mitigation strategy was expected, if replacement could not be delivered.
- 3.4 The potential lack of land was accepted, and it was agreed that alternative solutions would be considered positively by Manchester Active and other key partners. The key requirement will be that it can be clearly demonstrated that any proposed solution will deliver increased participation for cricket.
- 3.5 It was also confirmed by Manchester Active that they expect any mitigation strategy to focus on cricket (as opposed to football), not just because the site was previously cricket, but also because the greatest needs in the city are for cricket.
- 3.6 The recommended options to emerge from the initial meeting were;
- Re-provision of a new grass square. It is accepted that this might not be deliverable on a non-sport site, given the lack of sites, a replacement for the loss of Burnage may therefore have to look at other sites within the 20-minute cycle catchment of the Burnage CC site. See map overleaf.

Map 3.1 – Catchment search area



- Opportunities to provide a new grass cricket square (and associated facilities) at Burnage Academy for Boys. This is a cricket school with an existing NTP. The school have good relationships with the LCF and have community use of other facilities. There is potential that they would be receptive to hosting new facilities, including the provision of a grass square, which they currently do not have.
- Opportunities at other school sites within the catchment area. Schools should have either existing CUA or be on the list of schools that are currently applying for funding for community use alongside Manchester Active (Manchester Active to provide list).
- Opportunity to lay out a new fine turf pitch at park sites within the catchment – using existing NTP location as a base. These pitches meet minimum size guideline threshold – grass square to be laid out on NTP site.
- Alternative package to support cricket development – ancillary facilities at Alexandra Park, training nets at other sites. This option should be informed by the PPOSS update but may include ancillary / training. There was less support for this option (and others need to be discounted first), given the deficiencies in fine-turf pitches.
- Potential installation of hybrid wickets.

3.7 Manchester Active confirmed that none of the sites that are identified as disused playing fields in the PPOSS are suitable replacement opportunities as all are earmarked for other things. Consideration of school and park sites therefore emerged as the most likely solutions.

- 3.8 The initial priority to explore in respect of mitigation, recommended by partners, was to investigate opportunities to provide enhanced facilities for cricket at Burnage Academy for Boys. It was considered that investment on the site had potential to deliver significant benefits for cricket.

Burnage Academy for Boys

- 3.9 Burnage Academy for Boys is a Lancashire Cricket Development Centre. It is identified in the *Lancashire Cricket Foundation Facility Strategy* as a priority project.
- 3.10 The strategy recognises that there are limited opportunities to play cricket at state secondary schools in the area, due to a lack of facilities and few cricket champions within the teaching staff. It recognises that Burnage Academy for Boys have already teamed up with Levenshulme High School for Girls to develop a cricket academy for state secondary school children, and are already delivering *Chance To Shine and other street programs*.
- 3.11 Detailed discussions took place with the LCF, Greg Morrison, Associate Assistant Headteacher and Adrian Trainor, Head of Sport at Burnage Academy, to understand the potential facility investment opportunities on-site. The key priority was seen as the development of a fine turf cricket square on the existing grass field, improving the existing grass outfield, to deliver increased capacity to cope with the increased usage and increasing the size of the outfield playing area in order to host to both mini/junior cricket and senior cricket throughout the cricket season.
- 3.12 Detailed feasibility work was undertaken by VIEWS into increasing the outfield size, at the same time the School were working with the ECB on the development of outdoor nets. Despite a lot of work it was not possible to find a solution, which would deliver both the cricket nets and new fine turf facilities at Burnage Academy, as the two would encroach on one another. Delivery of the cricket nets at the school was viewed as the priority project by both the ECB and the school.
- 3.13 In discussion with partners, Cringle Fields was identified as an alternative potential site for the delivery of new fine turf cricket provision to replace BCC, in-line with the priorities agreed with partners set out in 3.6.

Cringle Fields

- 3.14 Cringle Fields is an existing playing field site located on Erwood Road, Manchester M19 1HS. The site currently hosts football and Gaelic football, plus 3 NTPs. The site is owned by Manchester City Council and key user groups include – *Kingsway Athletic Football Club and St Mary's Lancashire Gaelic Football*. There is no fine turf cricket provision on the site, but significant demand in the area, the mitigation will create a new cricket square and outfield to meet this demand.

Figure 3.1 – Aerial photo of Cringle Fields



- 3.15 VIEWS undertook detailed consultation and initial feasibility work with key partners to establish the potential of developing a new fine turf cricket wicket and outfield on Cringle Fields to replace BCC. Partners involved in discussions included;
- Heath Cole – Manchester Active
 - Kingsway Athletic Football Club, Chairman – Nathan McDonald
 - Kingsway Athletic Football Club, Secretary – David Scott
 - St Mary's Lancashire, Chairperson – Conor Colbert
 - Lancashire Cricket Foundation, Cricket Development Manager - Ian Shaw
 - England and Wales Cricket Board, Facilities Planning Manager, Richard Dixon
 - Manchester FA, Facility Development Officer - Georgie Oliver.
- 3.16 It was established that Cringle Fields represented an opportunity to deliver a replacement fine turf cricket square and outfield to mitigate for the loss of BCC, and that this could be accommodated without impacting on existing users. On this basis STRI were commissioned to undertake a detailed feasibility report in-line with the *Sport England E4 Equivalence Test*. The full report can be read alongside this report.

Feasibility Study Findings

- 3.17 The agronomy report sets out the current condition of BCC and notes the significant dilapidation on the site, to the extent that the cricket square is no longer discernible and bringing back cricket to the site would no longer be achievable. The original PPOSS site recommendation is therefore no longer practicable or deliverable at BCC.
- 3.18 Moreover if the site could be brought back into use it is no longer *fit for purpose* for cricket and would not be cost effective or sensible in respect of the delivery of cricket outputs. Use would be limited and compromised. The boundary sizes would only incorporate junior cricket, limiting the use. The square orientation does not meet technical guidelines, there is no pavilion access and the proximity to the main road would mean significant mitigation would be required in respect of ball-strike.
- 3.19 In contrast the agronomy reports sets out how a new fine turf cricket square and outfield could be developed at Cringle Fields, which would meet all technical requirements in terms of *square quality, boundary size and alignment*.
- 3.20 Whilst an existing playing field site, the proposed work would create a fine-turf cricket wicket where one does currently not exist and create a functional cricket facility where there isn't one. Creating a fine-turf cricket wicket at Cringle Fields will require significant work and is not simply routine grounds maintenance.
- 3.21 The figures over the page illustrate the current pitch layout and proposed future pitch layout at Cringle Fields. As indicated the future layout has been arrived at following discussions with current user groups to reflect the optimum configuration. The cost of the work required to deliver the replacement pitch at Cringle Fields has been estimated by STRI at £65,000, which includes a new NTP located alongside the new square and initial maintenance costs.

Figure 3.2 – Existing pitch layout at Cringle Fields

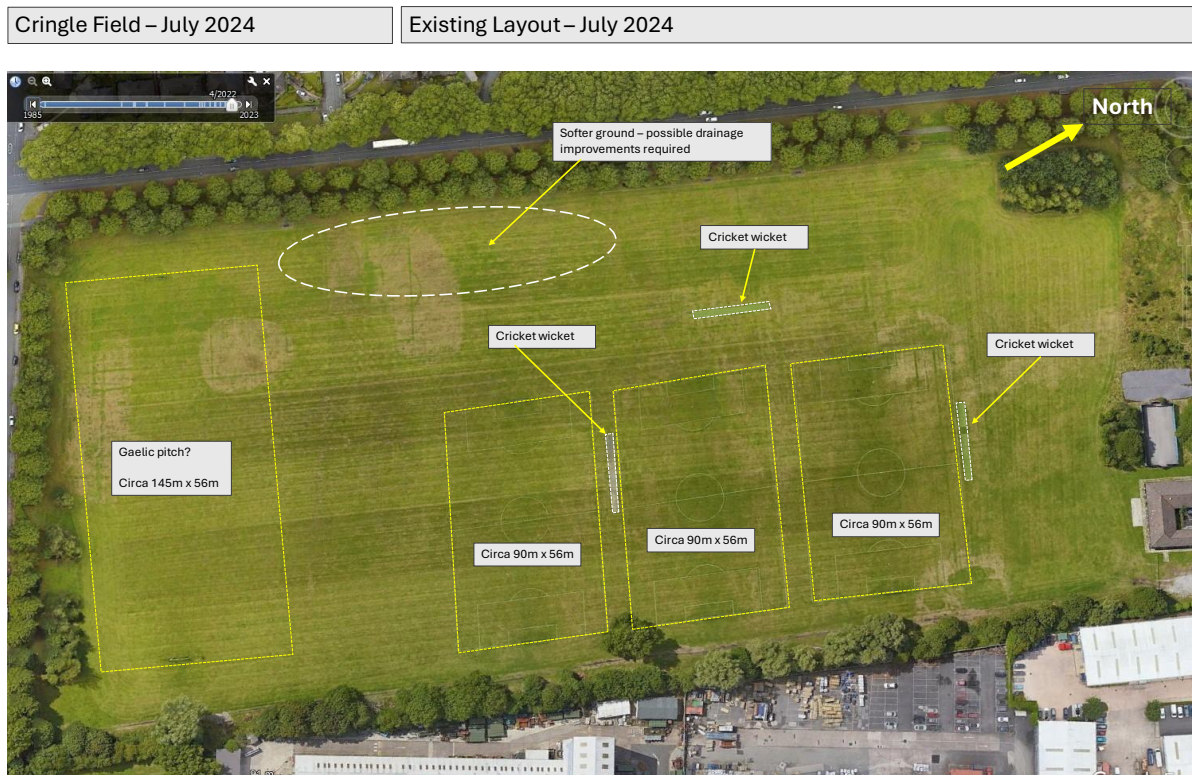


Figure 3.3 – Proposed pitch layout incorporating new fine turf cricket square and outfield



Sporting Benefits

- 3.22 The Lancashire Cricket Foundation Facility Strategy recognises that there is a need to provide additional fine turf cricket pitches across Manchester, in order to accommodate both current and projected future demand. It states that;
- 'Inner City Manchester has some challenges with space to play on grass wickets*
- This has a knock-on effect for our Chance To Shine primary school programs in the area. Due to the lack of Clubs in the area transition rates are almost non-existent.*
- This is further exacerbated by the fact that there are few opportunities to play Cricket at state Secondary School in the area, due to a lack of facilities and having a Cricket Champion amongst the staff.'*
- 3.23 This is in-line with the PPOSS findings and the 2023 monitoring report recommendations, to 'explore sites for new cricket grounds' as a key priority, which the BCC mitigation proposal will deliver
- 3.24 There is significant cricket activity in the area, which the new cricket provision at Cringle Fields can help to deliver. The Lancashire Cricket Foundation are in discussions with Burnage Academy for Boys who have teamed up with Levenshulme High School for Girls to develop a *Cricket Academy* for State Secondary School Children. There are five local primary schools feeding into both schools that are already running *Chance To Shine Programs* and there are Street programs in operation at Burnage Academy for Boys and Girls.
- 3.25 Discussions have focussed on how LCF can support the project providing coaching support for boys and girls and Burnage Academy, as set out previously, have already been nominated as the beneficiaries of funding to provide nets. Facilities, and access to fine turf pitches will however quickly become a barrier to growth and this is where the proposed development at Cringle Fields has a critical role to play. Located in the catchment of activity and less than half a mile from Burnage Academy.
- 3.26 Ian Shaw from Lancashire Cricket Foundation notes that;
- 'Facilities to play the game are a challenge that we will need to address along with creating Cricket Champions supported by our coaches. We have had initial interest from a LCCC partner in supporting Coaches and providing Dynamo bursary places to take place at Burnage and Levenshulme.'*
- 3.27 It is clear therefore that are significant targeted plans that will result in growth in cricket participation in the Burnage area. The lack of grass squares is however a key barrier to this success.
- 3.28 As set put, the opportunity to provide a grass cricket square at Burnage Academy for Boys to respond directly to this unmet demand was explored. Detailed agronomy works however demonstrated that the site was unsuitable for the provision of a facility of the required specification.
- 3.29 Cringle Fields, also located in Burnage (and less than half a mile from the former Burnage Cricket Ground) currently provides three non turf cricket wickets, which are dotted across the site on the outfields of football and Gaelic football pitches. These none turf pitches are underused and in declining condition. Cringle Fields has therefore been identified by LCF as offering a significant opportunity to provide a fine turf cricket pitch, helping to deliver cricket priorities for the area.

- 3.30 It is proposed that the new provision would directly link with proposals at Burnage Academy and would deliver new capacity in an area identified by the Lancashire Cricket Foundation as a priority growth area for cricket.
- 3.31 The new cricket square would therefore facilitate the delivery of additional participation, as well as meet demand that already exists. The new cricket facility could have usage 7 days a week all year round as per the demand in the local area. LCF Urban Cricket Manager, Ammar Ashraf who works locally has spent many hours consulting with the local community and is in no doubt that this facility would deliver a massive increase in activity and participation.
- 3.32 The exact usage programme for the new facility will be defined, as the project develops over the next year, taking into account the impact that the installation of the cricket development manager has had on cricket in Burnage and will be tailored to meet the new demand that has been created, alongside the delivery of existing needs. Furthermore it is acknowledged that needs of the clubs will change whilst proposals are finalised, it is envisaged that engagement with interested clubs will continue throughout the planning process and subsequent construction works.
- 3.33 Discussions with the LCF suggest that the new pitch will accommodate both senior and junior activity. It is anticipated that the likely usage of the site will focus around;
- **Home matches for Burnage Academy School teams**
 - **Home ground for new club created through the new focus on cricket in Burnage**
 - **Delivery of LCF / Manchester Cricket development sessions and match play**
 - **Use of facility as satellite ground for community clubs that are currently travelling out of the area. Didsbury CC and Whalley Range CC (currently travelling into Cheshire and Bolton respectively) are identified as clubs currently looking for facilities for both senior and junior teams**
 - **Use by other Greater Manchester Amateur Cricket League teams**
 - **Hosting weekend and midweek T20 / T35 games**
 - **Potential second venue for North Bangladesh Cricket Association**
 - **Venue for girls cricket matches for Levenshulme High School**
 - **Delivery of participation schemes including All-Stars/Dynamos sessions.**
- 3.34 The above therefore demonstrates a variety of known demand can be accommodated by the delivery of a new cricket pitch at Cringle Fields, with the site supporting the drive to increase participation in the area as well as meeting existing needs.
- 3.35 Introduction of the new cricket pitch would benefit the local community which includes a large number of people of South Asian heritage, who have a very strong interest in the sport. It will also help to address the GMACL league's home ground shortage and support participation in cricket for local youth and young adults.
- 3.36 Heath Cole at Manchester Active confirms the view of the LCF. He considers the potential of the proposed development at Cringle Fields to be, *'massive - there are more nomadic teams that play in the local leagues than there are teams with home grounds. LCF have reached out to the leagues to gauge and evidence demand.'*

- 3.37 The consultation with Manchester Active and LCF has therefore clearly demonstrated a high level of interest in the site, and a commitment to use the site to support cricket development as well as growth in participation. It is a priority area for cricket development. The new grass square and outfield, which will be of a higher quality, will meet an identified local need and will be created with the support and engagement of the LCF, local clubs and partners.
- 3.38 The proposed new facility will significantly increase the amount of cricket that can be played that at BCC.
- BCC was a standard quality wicket with 4 strips. A standard cricket wicket can sustain 4 senior matches, multiplied by 4 wickets means BCC would have offered capacity for 16 senior matches per season
 - Cringle Fields will have 8 **good** quality grass wickets. A good quality wicket can sustain 5 matches per season, giving the new replacement facility a capacity of 40 matches per season. This is significant betterment over BCC of 24 matches
 - This will contribute significantly to the city-wide shortfalls of 86 matches per season identified in the PPOSS monitoring report. As BCC is not included in the PPOSS, the new Cringle Fields development will contribute 40 new additional match sessions, nearly 50% of the identified city-wide shortfall for cricket. A significant impact and benefit
 - The NTP also offers capacity for a further 60 matches, if as proposed a new one will be located on the square, this can be used for match play. If not used for match play, the NTP can be used for training, which will reduce training demand on the square.
- 3.39 The new fine-turf square and outfield at Cringle Fields will have a significant impact and benefit for cricket in a key priority area for LCF, delivering nearly 50% of the identified city-wide shortfalls in fine turf pitch match equivalents.
- 3.40 Beyond cricket, it would enhance overall health and well-being, crucial in combating issues such as Type 2 diabetes (which is prevalent in the local area). By fostering an active lifestyle and offering equal opportunities, investment would not only strengthen the cricket culture but also contribute significantly to holistic community health and social inclusivity
- 3.41 Alongside the cricket proposals investment into Cringle Fields is also coming in the shape of Football Foundation support to upgrade the changing rooms and pavilion on-site. This will provide an added benefit to cricket in terms of the use of the facility, the new pitch has been sited with this in mind, but the presence of cricket on-site will also enable year round use of Cringle Fields and support the sustainability of the new changing rooms and pavilion. This will therefore provide significant additional benefits, delivering a multi-sport site and ensuring the year round sustainability of the Cringle Fields site.

Management and Maintenance

- 3.42 MCC will remain responsible for the site, including grounds maintenance of the pitches, which will extend to cricket. Once exact usage is confirmed and if an anchor cricket club emerges it is anticipated that the club may play a role in terms wicket maintenance and preparation, depending on individual club capacity.
- 3.43 Kingsway Athletic Football Club, will be granted a lease for the operation of the changing rooms and pavilion. Cricket usage and access will be recognised as a key element within the lease, which is currently under negotiation and terms and conditions and pricing will be in-line with the current arrangements at other MCC cricket sites, e.g. Alexandra Park.

- 3.44 As the scheme progresses the cricket booking arrangements and maintenance of the cricket pitch, not just the budget, will be clarified in discussions between Manchester Active and LCF. In terms of costs Manchester Active anticipate £15 for changing room and the average cost of pitch hire for other Council run sites of £70 per match adults and £60 per match for juniors.
- 3.45 A management and cost solution, which will work for all parties and ensure the facility is used to the maximum will be sought.

4.0 Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

- 4.1 This proposed mitigation strategy has been derived through engagement with Manchester Active and the LCF and other key partners over a 12-month period and is supported by the Council and NGBs. It meets the priorities of the PPOSS, particularly the updated 2023 objective of *exploring sites for new cricket grounds*.
- 4.2 The proposal set out in the STRI Agronomy Report will see £65,000 investment into the creation of a new fine-turf cricket square and outfield, plus a new NTP on Cringle Fields. Other elements of the mitigation strategy include a 10-year maintenance contribution, water supply to the square, utility search and professional fees. A ball strike assessment has been commissioned by LABOSPORT and the findings of this will be implemented as part of the overall strategy and costs allocated to deliver the recommended approach.

Table 4.1 – Mitigation Package

Item	Cost
Natural turf Cricket wicket construction (including irrigation)	£38,000
Non-turf cricket wicket (artificial)	£10,000
12 month maintenance period	£17,000
Water supply to the square	tbc
Utility Search	tbc
Ball Strike Mitigation	tbc
Professional Fees (planning; project management etc) @	12.5% of sub-total
*Total	
10 year maintenance contribution	tbc

****Full and final cost can be viewed in an addendum to this report.***

- 4.3 The proposal will replace the disused cricket facilities at BCC, which are not fit for purpose and cannot be returned for cricket use. In contrast the new fine turf cricket square and outfield at Cringle Fields, will meet all technical requirements in terms of *square quality, boundary size and alignment*.
- 4.4 The new fine-turf square and outfield at Cringle Fields will have a significant impact and benefit for cricket in a key priority area for LCF, delivering nearly 50% of the identified city-wide shortfalls in fine turf pitch match equivalents. The presence of cricket on-site will also enable year round use of Cringle Fields and support the sustainability of the new changing rooms and pavilion, which are planned. This will provide significant additional benefits, delivering a multi-sport site and ensuring the year round sustainability of the Cringle Fields site.
- 4.4 The STRI agronomy report sets out the current condition of BCC and notes the significant dilapidation on the site, to the extent that the cricket square is no longer discernible and bringing back cricket to the site would no longer be achievable. The original PPOSS site recommendation is therefore no longer practicable or deliverable at BCC.
- 4.5 Moreover if the site could be brought back into use it is no longer *fit for purpose* for cricket and would not be cost effective or sensible in respect of the delivery of cricket outputs. Use would be limited and compromised. The boundary sizes would only incorporate junior cricket, limiting the use. The square orientation does not meet technical guidelines, there is no pavilion access and the proximity to the main road would mean significant mitigation would be required in respect of ball-strike.

- 4.5 In contrast the STRI agronomy report sets out how a new fine turf cricket square and outfield could be developed at Cringle Fields, which would meet all technical requirements in terms of square quality, boundary size and alignment.
- 4.6 Whilst an existing playing field site, the proposed work would create a fine-turf cricket wicket where one does currently not exist and create a functional cricket facility where there isn't one. Creating a fine-turf cricket wicket at Cringle Fields will require significant work and is not simply routine grounds maintenance. Whilst it is acknowledged that the replacement site is on an existing playing field, it is clear that significant work is required to create a fine-turf square and outfield.
- 4.7 Importantly, the new site will deliver playing fields that are significantly higher quality than the existing land at BCC. The site is located within the catchment of the proposed development site and therefore serve the same residents that will be impacted by the loss of BCC.
- 4.9 We understand that in strict policy terms, the requirement for replacement relates to new pitches on land that has never previously been used for sport. The characteristics of the city environment however mean that land availability is limited and there are many competing demands for any land that is available.
- 4.10 Reflecting this, in the recent cases of Northenden College (planning permission reference 131147/FO/2021) and Harry Dalton Playing Fields (planning permission reference, 135604/FO/2022) it was accepted that the provision of a new site in Manchester for playing fields was not deliverable. This remains the case.
- 4.11 Overall, the PPOSS promotes a flexible approach to meeting policy, suggesting that proposals will be assessed on a case by case basis. This recognises the Manchester context specifically and that there is no land for replacement, but that investment into sport from disposal of some sites might still be of overall sporting benefit.
- 4.12 This is a key point, it confirms that there is flexibility and that direct replacement is not necessarily required or always the right solution. So whilst replacement may be needed to meet policy in the strictest terms, in terms of the solution, things should be considered on a case by case basis with a degree of flexibility to ensure that the proposed mitigation delivers genuine sporting benefits.
- 4.13 Importantly, as a disused site, the loss of the playing fields at BCC will not impact on the capacity calculations in the PPOSS. The creation of new playing fields, even at an alternative playing field site, will add capacity to the existing infrastructure and deliver wide ranging sporting benefits. A solution is therefore proposed that will deliver significant sporting benefit to the local community and significantly increase the capacity for cricket in this part of Manchester.
- 4.14 The new fine-turf square and outfield at Cringle Fields will have a significant impact and benefit for cricket in a key priority area for LCF, delivering nearly 50% of the identified city-wide shortfalls in fine turf pitch match equivalents. This represents significant sporting benefits and impacts.

Policy Compliance

- 4.15 In policy terms, criteria (b) of NPPF Paragraph 104 and the first bullet of Policy EN 10 therefore require *the loss resulting from the proposals to be replaced with equivalent or better provision to be provided in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location*. Policy EN 10 requires this to be in the local area. It is these policies, which believe the mitigation strategy delivers on, as set out in table 4.2 below.
- 4.16 Paragraph 19 of the most recent relevant decision (7th December 2025 (APP/C4235/W/24/3349825), Gatley Golf Club, Styal Road, Gatley Cheadle) confirms that;
- 'Case Law has determined that equivalent or better provision referred to in Paragraph 104b) is more open than the Council suggest and does not require a like for like replacement both in terms of sporting activities.....or the amount of land....'*
- 4.17 Where open space is proposed to be lost it is a planning judgement which determines whether proposals are either equivalent or better provision. The approach to applying Paragraph 104 is therefore to have regard to both quantity and quality, but to allow for one to be set of against the other using planning judgement.

Table 4.2 – Meeting policy requirements

Criteria	BCC	Cringle Fields	Equivalent of Better
Area	0.88ha playing field area will be lost at BCC	The proposed cricket square and outfield at CF will measure 1.12ha	Better
Square Orientation	Non-compliant	Will meet ECB and Sport England technical guidance	Better
Boundary Size	Will only enable junior play	Will allow all levels of play including senior men and women	Better
Number of Wickets / Match Equivalents	16 match sessions per season	40 match sessions per season - Contributing nearly 50% of the city-wide shortfall	Better
Changing Provision	No pavilion	- Newly refurbished pavilion and changing for cricket use - Will support all-year round sustainability	Better
Location	-	- Cringle Fields is less than half a mile from BCC and well placed to serve needs of Burnage HS and Levenshulme - In heart of key priority area for LCC - Existing, sustainable, multi-sport site	Better

- 4.18 As set out in table 4.2 above, the proposed mitigation strategy for BCC meets and exceeds all requirements to meet the policy tests of NPPF 104 (b) and Policy EN 10.

Conclusion

- 4.19 This report therefore sets out the mitigation strategy for the loss of playing fields at BCC. The proposed loss of playing fields equates to 0.88ha of playing field land.
- 4.20 This proposed mitigation package to mitigate for this loss has been derived through engagement with Manchester Active and the LCF and other key partners over a 12-month period. It meets the priorities of the PPOSS, particularly the updated 2023 objective of exploring sites for new cricket grounds.
- 4.21 The proposal set out in the STRI Agronomy Report will see £65,000 investment into the creation of a new fine-turf cricket square and outfield, plus a new NTP on Cringle Fields. This will require significant work. The proposal will replace the disused cricket facilities at BCC. Included in the mitigation package is 10-year maintenance, plus professional fees and water and utilities searches. The final costs are set out under separate cover.
- 4.22 The new fine-turf square and outfield at Cringle Fields will have a significant impact and benefit for cricket in a key priority area for LCF, delivering nearly 50% of the identified city-wide shortfalls in fine turf pitch match equivalents. This represents significant sporting benefits and impacts
- 4.23 With Cringle Fields being an existing playing field, it is accepted the mitigation strategy does not directly meet Sport England Playing Field policy. The Manchester City Council PPOSS however demonstrates the need for flexibility given the lack of availability of sites, particularly where significant works are required to reinstate former playing field land.
- 4.24 **The proposed mitigation strategy for BCC meets and exceeds all requirements to meet the policy tests of NPPF 104 (b) and Policy EN 10.**