SPORTING BENEFITS SUPPORTING STATEMENT
Planning Application 138336/FO/2023

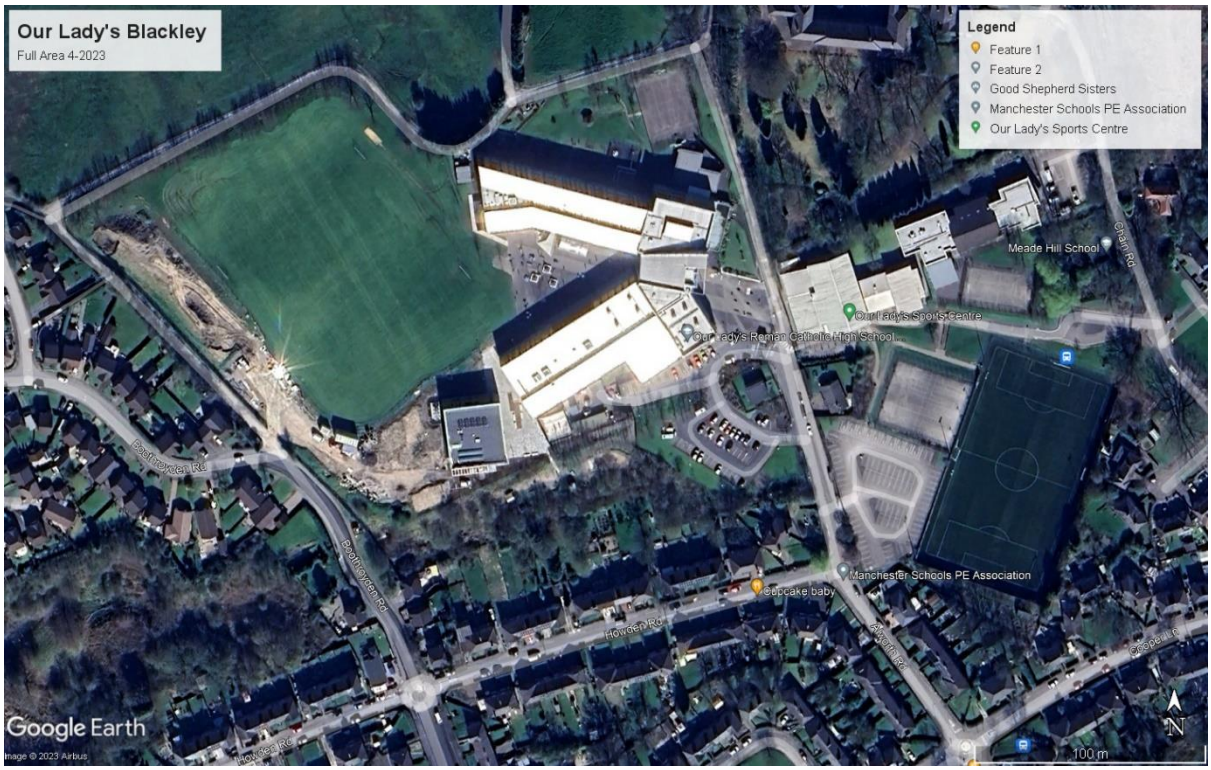
DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is for the construction of an artificial grass pitch (AGP) of 106 x 70m (100 x 64m plus 3-metre margin) with a needle-punch type of sand-dressed carpet, marked-out permanently or temporarily for the following sports:

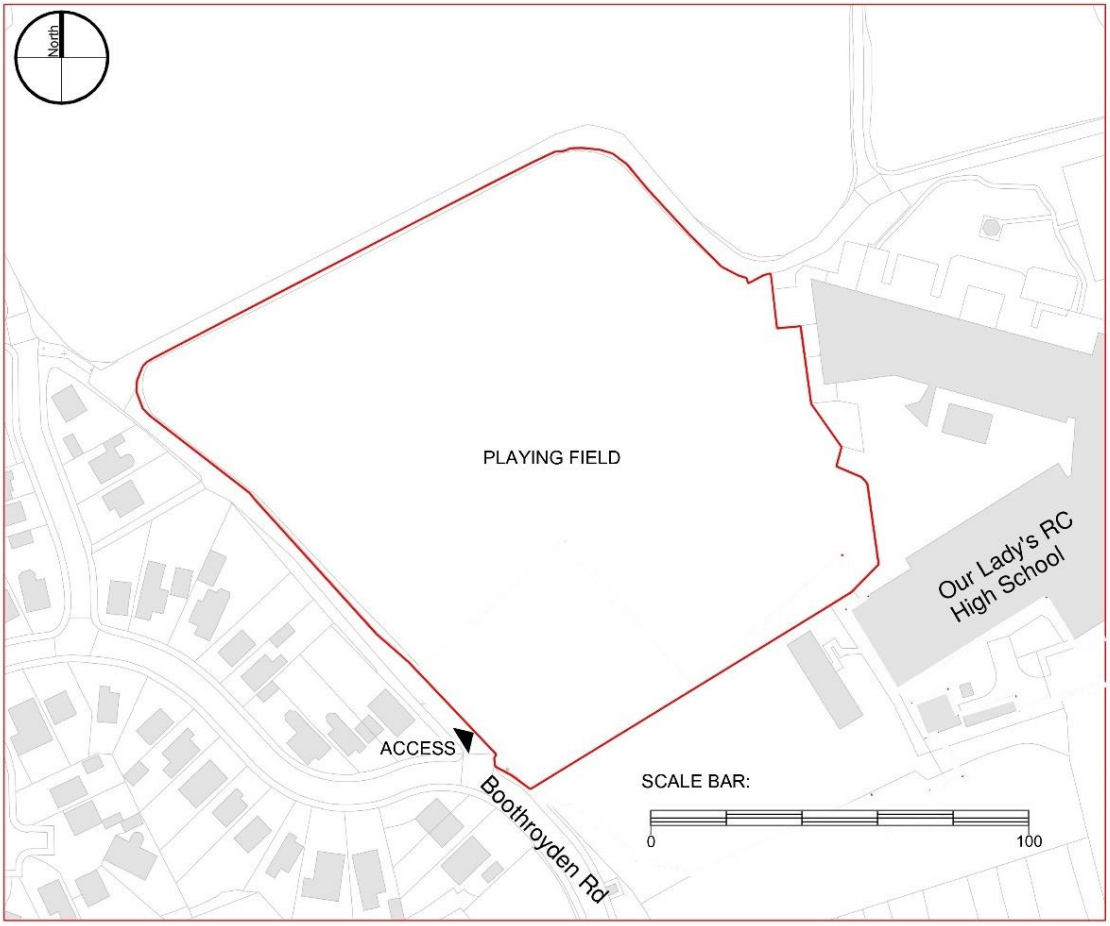
- Hockey
- Netball
- Tennis
- Badminton
- Cricket practice
- Soccer
- Rugby training
- Athletics (sprint track)
- Pickleball, Korfball, etc.

The AGP is located at Our Lady's RC High School, Alworth Road, Manchester, M9 0RP.

The school site incorporates an existing 3G pitch of approximately 94 x 54m plus 3-metre margins, which is linked to this application in terms of school and community use.



Above – Google Earth image of the site during the recent construction of a classroom extension and spoil mound on the playing field.



Red-line boundary of the playing field to the west of the school buildings

The AGP will be positioned on the northern section of the grassed playing field site and on an area of land that has historically accommodated two soccer pitches and athletics (short oval running track, jump pits, field athletics).

PLANNING POLICY

As the location of the new AGP is on the playing field which results in the loss of natural turf playing field, the sporting benefits of the AGP 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 AGP 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.

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.

SPORTING BENEFITS

The new AGP will extend the number of sports available for the school curriculum and to local schools:

- School activities will be extended from the current seasonal soccer and athletics include:
    - Hockey
    - Netball
    - Tennis
    - Soccer
    - Badminton
    - Cricket practice
    - Rugby practice

- Athletics – sprint track
- Pickleball, Korfball, etc.

These activities will be available throughout daylight hours annually for school lessons, breakfast, lunchtime and after school activity clubs.

The renovated grass pitch will continue to provide:

- Soccer
- Cricket practice
- Rugby practice
- Athletics – short oval track, jump pits, some field athletics

- Community use will be extended from the current situation in two ways:

1) **Use of the new AGP by local schools** – As per the BB103 several of the partner schools do not have adequate soft outdoor PE requirements. This facility would allow them to meet this statutory obligation. The school also shares the building complex with North Ridge High School, a special school which also does not meet the BB103 requirements; this additional pitch would allow their students to have a more suitable offer for physical education.

   Our Lady's RC High School have contacted local schools and have received letters of interest from:

   - St Malachy's Primary
   - St Edmunds Primary
   - St Patrick's Primary

2) **Community Use of the new AGP** - The school is part of the Manchester Active programme which is an organisation that supports children in the city to be healthier and more active. As a partner in the programme, the school site is often used at evenings and weekends to facilitate several sports. Currently this primarily takes place in the summer months due to the usability of the grass fields. The AGP would allow us to be a stronger partner in the Manchester Active programme and offer the use of the AGP throughout the whole year.

3) The school are in discussion with the Manchester FA, Georgie Oliver on the use of outdoor facilities, and have also agreed to let Middleton Lads & Girls Football Club use the AGP for their training and competitive games after school hours and at weekends. The club is currently thriving but is struggling to meet demand due to the lack of playing facilities.

4) The school have also contacted Ed Hunt of England Athletics to examine the options made available for a sprint track, for example, on the new AGP and retained field sports on the grass pitch. Use of the Boggart Hole athletics facilities is also to be discussed. (Awaiting a reply as of 24/7/24).

5) **The existing 3G AGP** – The problems that the school have experienced with community use of their existing 3G has led to the pitch being used only by the school in recent years. However, the school is prepared to reassess community use of this pitch once more following improvements made to the lighting system, management set-up, etc.

Table 1 – Exception E5 Justification

REQUIREMENT	DETAIL PROVIDED
Impact the proposed development would have on playing pitch provision including proposed summer / winter playing pitches	The existing grass playing field area has been reduced in size due to the construction of a new classroom building and deposition of spoil in a large mound. It does not have a working drainage system and is not used between November and April, sometimes October to May. The new AGP will provide a much wider range of sports for the school and community, all-year round, with the grass pitch area being drained and extended in area with removal of a spoil mound to allow up to 6 hours senior equivalent use per week, through the year.
Existing community use	None
Proposed community use	Other school use, local clubs, opening-up of the existing 3G to community use as part of the outdoor sports strategy.
Community access formally secured through a community use agreement	Manchester Active assistance requested on this point
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	The range of sports made available by both the new AGP and upgraded grass pitch is considerably extended in type of sport and year-round use capability. Floodlighting is not currently part of the scheme, but ducting and infrastructure for a future upgrade with lighting is intended as part of the installation works. Dependent on

regarding which sports the new facility will accommodate.	funding and a planning-based lighting assessment and effect on neighbours.
Explanation of which sports the new facility will accommodate	○ Hockey ○ Netball ○ Tennis ○ Soccer ○ Badminton ○ Cricket practice ○ Rugby practice ○ Athletics – sprint track ○ Pickleball, Korfball, etc. The renovated grass pitch will provide: ○ Soccer ○ Cricket practice ○ Rugby practice ○ Athletics – short oval track, jump pits, some field athletics
Proposed surface type	Playrite Matchwinner needle-punched carpet proposed. Test results to EN 15330-2: 2008 by Labosport are available, together with manufacturers specification and maintenance recommendations.
Sustainability	Comment from the school – “basically we put away £10,000 each year for the current 3G AGP, which allows us to resurface it around every 10 years. We plan to do the same for the new AGP, putting away £20,000 each year to cover the resurface at approximately every 10 years, as per the recommend lifespan of the carpets. The money would be coming from the funding we receive from Manchester City Council due to the increased number of students on-roll”.

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 and after school activities.

The AGP will provide a sustainable sports facility which will be supported by a Business Plan for the replacement of the carpet at the end of the lifecycle and a Community Use Agreement supported by Manchester Active.

It is considered the proposed AGP meets the requirements of paragraph 103(c) of the NPPF, Sport England's Playing Fields Policy Exception E5 and Core Strategy Policy EN10.

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