Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no.	137727/FO/2023
Date registered valid:	31 July 2023
Proposal:	New external canopy and external landscaping.
Address:	Manchester High School For Girls , Grangethorpe Road, Manchester, M14 6HS
Ward(s):	Fallowfield Ward
Applicant:	Mrs Helen Jeys
Agent (if any):	Mrs Melissa Murphy 10architect Ltd
Case officer:	Robert Griffin Tel: 0161 234 4527 Email: robert.griffin@manchester.gov.uk
Recommendation:	Refuse
Date of recommendation:	**8.02.2024**

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 29th August 2023

Standard consultations:
Printed: 14 August 2023 Expired: 4 September 2023

Neighbour notifications
No neighbour notifications have been printed and sent.

Site notice
Posted: 29 August 2023 Expired: 19 September 2023

Press advert
No press advert had been published

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

Description of area

The site that this proposal relates to is the Manchester High School for Girls and comprises school buildings, external car parking and amenity areas together with an area of playing field. The school is Grangethorpe Road in Fallowfield with the grounds of the school extending from Wilmslow Road in the east along Grangethorpe Road with Platt Fields Park bordering the school to the north, west and south.

To the south of the site is located Nico ditch, a section of which approximately 150m to the east of the school site is a designated as a Scheduled Monument. It sits between the boundary of Platt Fields Park and the iron railings at the back of Manchester High School for Girls.

To the far east of the site are Manchester University buildings and student residential accommodation with the remainder of the immediate area comprising Platt Fields Park including the boating lake and Shakespeare gardens.

Description of development

The proposals seek planning permission for the erection of an external canopy and associated landscaping within the playing fields serving the school. The canopy is proposed for the centre of the site to improve the use of the external spaces, connect the main building to the Music

block and a future Concert Hall and provide much needed external covered space during inclement weather. The canopy will be multi-functional and provide space for:
• social gatherings and wellbeing,
• inclusive sports such as table tennis
• sports briefings and training in inclement weather
• formal and informal performances, and
• assemblies.

The site levels have an approximately 800mm difference in level as a result the proposed canopy would provide an accessible ramp between the main school buildings and the music block together with a tiered seating area on its eastern side. The canopy is expected to be large enough to accommodate 400 pupils. The proposed materials for the canopy are indicated as steel columns, timber structure and fabric/glass roof.

The submitted information provided by the school indicates the use of the grass area for sports and leisure is seriously limited and with the use of the artificial pitch and hard play areas, most sports have long ceased on the grass area. Those sports activities that do currently take place on the grass area are proposed to continue unaffected.

The school site historically housed a hospital and associated buildings, this was closed, and the site re-built to provide a school in 1940. The supporting statement from the applicant that the area of playing fields previously contained buildings and former foundations and building waste are believed to be below ground level and affect the use of the grass playing fields.

Consultations & Notification Responses

In this instance the application was subject of a site notice posted at the site for public interest reasons. No responses were received to this notification.

Consultees

Sport England - Sport England objects to this application as it is not considered to meet any of the exceptions to our Playing Fields Policy or to accord with paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The applicant has not provided any amendment or reprovision of lost playing field and Sport England considered that the proposal will result in a compromise of the flexibility of the playing field to provide a variety of pitch sports. The proposal cannot be considered under Exception 5 as it is not a sporting facility in itself and the lost playing field has not been re-provided on or off the site. Given the above, Sport England maintains a statutory objection to the application because it is not considered to accord with any of the Exceptions to
our Playing Fields Policy or paragraph 99 of the NPPF.

Manchester Active - Manchester Active has no objection to this proposal subject to a Community Use Agreement, secured via condition, for the outdoor sports facilities to mitigate the loss of 625m2 of natural turf playing field.

MCC Environmental Health - Recommend conditions relating to submission and approval of: a schedule of days and hours of operation.

MCC Highways - Raise no highway or pedestrian safety or network capacity issues with the proposal.

Greater Manchester Archaeology Advisory Service - - The applicant also consulted GMAAS at an early stage in the design process and the following is drawn largely from the advice that was provided.

The southern boundary of the school is marked by the Nico Ditch, a linear earthwork that encircles Manchester to the south and east. This notable historic feature has been variously ascribed to the Anglo-Saxons and is first mentioned as 'Mykel Diche' in the Audenshaw deeds of c.1200. It is referred to subsequently as 'Milk Wall' in the Slade deeds of 1270, as 'Murchil Diche' in 1322, and as 'Nekel Dyche' and 'Miche Wall-diche' in Rusholme deeds of 1317 and 1484 respectively, although the name used most widely in recent times is 'Nico Ditch'.

The national importance of the best-preserved section of the ditch, lying c. 150m to the east of the Manchester High School for Girls, is reflected in its designation as a Scheduled Monument (List Entry No 1015132). This section of the Nico Ditch was investigated archaeologically in 1997 in advance of a proposed extension to the school's playing fields, when a trench was opened across the ditch immediately west of Platt Fields Chapel. Six phases of activity were revealed, beginning with a broad U-shaped, flared ditch 4.5m wide and 1.4m deep, with gradual silting ultimately rendering it as a shallow earthwork; no traces of a contemporary bank found. The feature had evidently been truncated during 19th-century landscaping work then re-cut three times and a rubble bank created on the north side. The course of the ditch is a more distinctive landscape feature to the west of the Scheduled Monument, and adjacent to the proposed access route, although it has been re-cut here to facilitate the flow of drainage water, which has destroyed the profile of the original work (hence its omission from the scheduled area).

In view of the landscaping works that have been carried out across the school site since the 19th century, including those necessitated in the wake of bombing damage during the Second World War, GMAAS is satisfied that constructing the proposed new external canopy and associated landscaping will not have any impact on below-ground archaeological remains. GMAAS advise that no further investigation of below-ground archaeological remains is required.

Policies

The following policy and guidance is considered relevant to the consideration of this application:
- Saved policy DC26 of the Unitary Development Plan;
- Policies DM1, SP1, EN3, and EN10 of the Manchester Core Strategy;
- National Planning Policy Framework sections 8 'Promoting healthy and safe communities' and 16 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'.

The Places for Everyone Plan is a Joint Development Plan Document, providing a strategic plan and policies, for nine of the 10 boroughs which make up Greater Manchester. Once the Places for Everyone Plan is adopted it will form part of Manchester's development plan. To date, five consultations have taken place in relation to the Plan. The Examination of the Plan, following its submission in February 2022, began in November 2022. Following the completion of the Examination of the Plan, main modifications have now been proposed which will now become subject of further public consultation. The City Council's Executive agreed the Main Modification on 4 October 2023 and endorsed an 8 week period of public consultation on the Main Modifications commencing no earlier than 9 October 2023. Any representations will be forwarded to the Examination team managing the Plan. The Inspectors will consider all representations on the proposed Modifications before finalising the examination report. Given the stage the Plan has reached, and level of public consultation and scrutiny it has received, the Plan and its policies are now a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Plan and its policies must therefore be given significant weight in the planning balance.

Issues

Principle – The general principle of providing additional school facilities within school grounds is acceptable. In this instance given the location of the canopy on playing field further consideration is required against adopted Core Strategy policies and national policy contained in the NPPF. Additional consideration of the residential and visual amenity impacts are also required and these are set out below.

Residential Amenity – The closest residential properties are a pair of two storey semi-detached properties located on the corner of Grangethorp Road and Wilmslow Road. These properties were constructed following approval in 2009 and it is understood these properties are occupied by caretakers of the school. These properties lie approximately 165m to the north east of the application site and would be separated from the application site by school buildings which are 2 and 3 storeys in height. There are buildings within Platt Fields park 40m to the south of the application proposals although these are appear residential in character it is not believed that they are occupied as residences.

The proposed canopy is not considered to give rise to unacceptable impacts on residential amenity given its siting within the school grounds and the positioning of school buildings around the site. Environmental Health have requested a condition be attached to any approval for a schedule of days and hours of use to be submitted for approval given the potential capacity of the structure and that amplified sound and noises may be used as part of the use of the proposals. In this instance the imposition of such a condition is considered to be acceptable and necessary to ensure the use would not give rise to wider impacts.

Visual Amenity – The application submission does provide some visualisations of how the canopy may look within the site. The design and scale of the structure are considered to be acceptable and could be of high quality subject to a full understanding of proposed materials, details of the materials to be used are limited to those set out on the application form. A condition for the submission and approval of all external materials would be necessary in this instance.

Loss of Playing Field – The proposals are objected to by Sport England who are a statutory consultee for applications affecting playing fields. The applicant sort to address the objection of Sport England and in particular to demonstrate a case on the basis of Exception 5 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy. Sport England have maintained their objection to the proposals.

The proposals would result in the direct loss of part of the existing playing field (the application documents indicate the site area as 600sqm). The application proposals do not provide reprovision of lost playing field and Sport England indicate that the proposals would compromise the flexibility of the playing field to provide a variety of pitch sports. Whilst Sport England indicated potential measures to overcome their objection the applicant has not provided further amendments to the proposals or a commitment to a Community Use Agreement.

As such the proposals are considered to be contrary to NPPF paragraph 103 and policy EN10 of the Core Strategy.

Other Legislative Requirements
Equality Act 2010
Section 149 (Public Sector Equality Duty) of the Equality Act 2010 requires due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct

prohibited by the Act and; Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves consciously thinking about the aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations
This application needs to be considered against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Under Article 6, the applicants (and those third parties, including local residents, who have made representations) have a right to a fair hearing and to this end the local planning authority must give full consideration to their comments.

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person's home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved polices of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the recommendation given is proportionate to the wider benefits of and that such a decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

Recommendation: Refuse

Article 35 Declaration

The application has been determined in a positive and proactive manner. In this instance discussions were held with the applicant to try and resolve concerns with the proposals and loss of playing field, unfortunately a positive resolution could not be found.

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval OR Reasons for recommendation to refuse

1) The application proposals would result in the loss of existing playing field and it has not been demonstrated that the proposed development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use of the existing playing field contrary to paragraph 108 of the NPPF and policy EN10 of the Core Strategy.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Highway Services
Environmental Health
Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service
MCR Active
Sport England

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4
Aircraft Safeguarding Zone - Aircraft Safeguarding Zone - All Exceeding 90M
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -
Area Team Boundary - Name: SOUTH AREA