

## Planning

## Growth & Development

### Delegated officer report for planning application

**Application no.** 138671/FO/2023

**Date registered valid:** 22 December 2023

**Proposal:** Installation of 2 no. Gaelic football pitches with associated 1m high spectator fencing and two retractable ball stop nets of 16m in height and 42m length located behind the two northern western goals.

**Address:** Grass Pitches To The West Of Houghend Crescent, Hough End Playing Fields, Manchester,

**Ward(s):** Chorlton Park Ward

**Applicant:** Mr Fergal Kiernan Lancashire County Board of the Gaelic Athletic Association

**Agent (if any):** Mr Paul Harrison Just-H Architects

**Case officer:** Robert Griffin  
Tel: 0161 234 4527  
Email: [robert.griffin@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:robert.griffin@manchester.gov.uk)

**Recommendation:** Approve

**Date of recommendation:** 14.02.2024

## Application details

**Type of application:** Full Application Consent

**Development type:** Minor Other

**Date of site visit:** 14.02.2024

### Standard consultations:

Printed: 2 January 2024    Expired: 23 January 2024

### Neighbour notifications

Printed: 2 January 2024    Expired: 23 January 2024

### Site notice

Posted: 10.01.2024    Expired: 31.01.2024

### 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

Hough End Playing Fields is one of the largest areas comprising outdoor sports facilities in the City that is well used by the community for sport, leisure, and recreational activities.

The application site lies to the western side of the playing fields adjacent to Houghend Crescent which provides access to Mauldeth Road to the north. Houghend Clough lies to the north west of the site and is an area that is identified as an area for protection and enhancement of the wildlife habitat. There are buildings to the west and south -west of the site including Chorlton High School, Greater Manchester Police and the Broughton Rugby Club.

The site currently comprises grassland formerly used as rugby pitches which have already been relocated as part of the wider Hough End masterplan.



*Site location plan*

## **Description of development**

The proposals are for the installation of 2 no. Gaelic football pitches which would measure 138m x 90m together with associated 1m high spectator fencing and two retractable ball stop nets of 16m in height and 42m length located behind the two northern western goals.

The pitches are being located from elsewhere at Hough End (the northern field) which have been used for Gaelic games for over 60 years, the current pitches are not fit for purpose due to:

- No changing facilities
- No toilet facilities
- Cannot develop underage offerings in both Gaelic football, Hurling and Camogie because of the safeguarding issues at the site.
- The pitch dimensions do not meet minimum standard
- The encroachment from the trees on both sides of the main pitch renders our main pitch unplayable without cutting the trees back from the pitch
- There is no room for spectators to watch the games in a safe environment.

## **Planning History**

062568/MO/SOUTH1/01 - RESERVED MATTERS APPLICATION - Details of design, external appearance and landscaping (ref. 060032/00/SOUTH1/01 - for Centre of Excellence comprising clubhouse, floodlit competition pitch, 4 training pitches (1 with dismountable floodlights), two all weather training areas, car and coach park and associated landscaping. Approved 18.10.2001

060032/00/SOUTH1/00 - Outline application for the siting and means of access for Centre of Excellence comprising clubhouse, floodlit competition pitch, 4 training pitches (1 with dismountable floodlights), two all weather training areas, car & coach park and associated landscaping. Approved 03.10.2001

## **Consultations & Notification Responses**

The application was subject of neighbour notification and site notice posted at the site, 9 responses were received, a summary of comments received is set out below:

- Application privatises formerly free to access Hough End Fields.
- There is no benefit to local people
- Will result in increased traffic
- Impacts on wildlife
- This is a rare green space used by the residents primarily from the neighbouring ward, in an area of intense air pollution building and restriction of access for free by the public is unnecessary and counter productive to support broader public benefit.
- Model Aircraft Flying is considered a "sport" and our club of 50 plus members been active and established at Hough End since 1986. Proposed development /location/size/fencing and usage will effect our club flying operations at field.
- There has been a considerable change to the area as new development faces inwards with 2 pitches very much larger than a rugby pitch fenced in with rigid fencing
- This will be end of Hough End model aircraft club if this goes ahead
- Concerned that the netting proposed is not adequate to prevent damage to our property to injuries to our scouts - we would prefer the pitches to be oriented 90° to this plan so that there aren't buildings in the way of potentially high speed balls.
- The 1m fencing all the way around the pitches will restrict access across the fields
- The disturbance and long term impact on the actual land and very nearby ancient woodland and brook have not been properly considered in this application or any of the others relating to the 'development' of Hough End.
- Where is the evidence of the need for Gaelic football pitches

Sport England – Sport England raises no objection subject to conditions to this application as it is considered to meet Exception 5 of our adopted Playing Fields Policy and NPPF Para. 103. Recommended conditions relate to:

1. Construction Management Plan
2. Pitches to be provided in line with Natural Turf for Sport guidance
3. Maintenance and Management Plan for pitches and ball stop fencing

MCR Active - Manchester Active are supportive of the proposal subject to a Community Use Agreement secured via condition. The proposal to relocate the two Gaelic Football Pitches from the north of the site to adjacent to the Broughton Park RUFC rugby club is in line with the 2022 Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy recommendations for this site.

## **Policy**

Core Strategy Development Plan Document - The Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012 -2027 ("the Core Strategy") was adopted by the City Council on 11th July 2012. It is the key document in Manchester's Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy replaces significant elements of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as the document that sets out the long term strategic planning policies for Manchester's future development. A number of UDP policies have been saved until replaced by further development plan documents to accompany the Core Strategy. Planning applications in Manchester must be decided in accordance with the Core Strategy, saved UDP policies and other Local Development Documents. Relevant policies in the Core Strategy are detailed below:

Policy SP 1 Spatial Principles -The proposal are considered to accord with this policy through its contribution towards the improvement and enhancement of recreational and leisure facilities and making a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of residents.

Policy T2 Accessible Areas of Opportunity and Need – The proposed development is in a sustainable location in relation to pedestrian and cycle networks and offers good levels of multi-modal accessibility.

Policy EN10 Safeguarding Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities – The proposals seek to improve the quality of sport and recreational facilities at an existing playing fields.

Policy EN11 Quantity of Open Space, Sport and Recreation – The proposals would improve gaelic football facilities in the city inline with recommendations within the City's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy 2022.

Policy EN12 Area Priorities for Open Space, Sport and Recreation – The proposals seek to enhance sports facility provision and address deficiencies identified through the Playing Pitch Strategy.

Policy EN14 Flood Risk – The site falls within Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk of flooding

Policy EN15 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – The proposals would improve existing pitches and would have a neutral impact on biodiversity.

Policy DM 1 Development Management – This policy sets out the requirements for developments and outlines a range of general issues that all development should have regard to including: -appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail; - design for health; - impact on the surrounding areas in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development; - that development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area; - effects on amenity

#### *Relevant Saved Unitary Development Plan Policies*

Policy CB2 'Hough End Clough protection' - The proposals lie outside of this area and are not anticipated to impact on its existing condition.

Policy CB11 'Leisure and Recreation' retention of the open character of Hough End Fields - The proposals seek to improve the quality of recreational facilities available at Hough End Playing Fields.

Policy DC26 'Development and Noise' – The proposals would reuse existing grass pitches which is a long established use of the site.

#### *Relevant National Policy*

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023) sets out Government planning policies for England and how these are expected to apply. The NPPF seeks to achieve sustainable development and states that sustainable development has an economic, social and environmental role. The NPPF outlines a "presumption in favour of sustainable development". This means approving development, without delay, where it accords with the development plan and where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed. The following specific section is considered to be particularly relevant to the proposed development: Section 8 (Promoting healthy and safe communities).

#### *Other Material Considerations*

Manchester Playing Pitch Strategy 2022 – This identifies a deficiency from a quantitative perspective of Gaelic sports pitches to meet current and anticipated future demand and there are issues with quality, pitch specification and compliancy which require addressing in order to meet current, future and presently exported demand. It is recommended that there are suitable levels of quality and quantity of this type of provision in Manchester.

The PPS identifies Hough End as a strategic hub site and identifies that two poor quality Gaelic Sports Pitches are present at the site. It identifies the relocation of pitches from the north field to the relocation and to replace two disused senior grass rugby union pitches.

### *Other legislative requirements*

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 provides that in the exercise of all its functions the Council must have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between person who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. This includes taking steps to minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a protect characteristic and to encourage that group to participate in public life. Disability is a protected characteristic.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 provides that in the exercise of its planning functions the Council shall have regard to the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder.

## **Issues**

### *Principle*

The principle of the provision of facilities for, and to support sport and outdoor recreation on an existing site for sports and recreation is considered acceptable. In this instance further consideration is required of the potential impacts arising from the proposals on residential and visual amenity, highways, and impact on the playing fields.

### *Open Space and provision*

The application is supported by a playing field statement which sets out the project together with evidence and justification for the need to relocate two Gaelic football pitches to comply with Sport England's Playing Fields policy.

Hough End Playing Fields have been in use as playing fields for a considerable period of time, ordnance survey plans from the 1950s identify the land subject to the application as being in such use. The proposals seek the retention and improvement of Gaelic sports pitches at Hough End including improvements to the pitch condition. Alongside these improvements the area currently used for Gaelic sports is to be retained as recreational open space for community use which has been confirmed in the response from the relevant part of the Council.

As such the proposed improvements are considered acceptable and result in the improvement to outdoor playing pitches at Hough End in line with the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy. The retention of existing pitches for open recreational use is also considered a benefit of the proposals.

### *Residential Amenity*

The site is long established as a provider of outdoor sports facilities with associated comings and goings associated with the activity that takes place. The sports pitches are located approximately 130m from the nearest residential properties. No lighting is proposed as part of

the scheme and given intervening landscaping, trees and roads it is not considered that there would be significant impacts on residential amenity as a result of the proposals.

### *Visual Amenity*

The inclusion of permanent barrier fencing around the pitches would be a visual change to this part of Hough End. The barriers would be of a weld mesh finish and together with the 1m proposed height would provide some visual permeability, this type of fencing is widely used across the city around sports pitches and other sites.

In addition to the fencing around the pitches it is also proposed to install fold up netting type ball stop fences between the two north-western goals on the two pitches. These two goals face towards the access road. The fence would be secured by way of 16m high posts and would extend 42m across the goal end of the two pitches and would be extended whilst the pitches were in use.

The ball stop netting would be visually permeable although it is noted that the addition of the poles and netting would be visible on the site and across the playing fields. Given the boundary trees, rugby posts and other infrastructure it is not considered that the introduction of these features would give rise to significant visual impacts. The ball stop netting is capable of being folded up and would reduce visual impacts when the pitches are not in use. A suitably worded condition is proposed to ensure this fence is only extended whilst the pitches are in use.

### *Transport*

The site is in a sustainable urban location and is accessible via active travel modes as well as public transport including bus and Metrolink services. As such users of the facility have opportunities to travel to and from the site by other modes of transport other than private motor car.

The proposals are on land previously used as grass pitches and are being relocated from elsewhere in Hough End with the existing Gaelic pitches reverting back to open access amenity land that would not have formal pitches on them. As such whilst the improved facilities may lead to an increase in usage it is not considered that such an increase would be so significant to give rise to unacceptable or severe cumulative impacts on the highway as to warrant refusal of the proposals. The site would continue to be accessed via existing access points on Mauldeth Road for vehicles pedestrian and cyclists.

### *Rights of Way*

Whilst there do not appear to be laid out routes and paths across the playing fields it is possible that such routes have been taken by members of the public using the playing fields. Whilst the proposals include an element of fencing off an area of the playing fields there would still remain routes across and around the playing fields which are considered as acceptable convenient alternative routes.

### *Ball Strike*

The application is supported by a ball strike assessment. This recommends a mitigation height of ball stop fencing of 16.5m which may not stop all shots from landing beyond the site boundary but would significantly reduce their frequency. It is noted that example ball trajectory modelling within the assessment indicate that 2 of the 3 example trajectories would be stopped by a 16m high fence whilst only a proportion of 45° degree trajectories would be stopped, it is of note that the mitigation fence would need to be just below 30 metres in height to stop all balls on this example trajectory. It is noted that the current Gaelic sports pitches do not have any ball stop fencing or structures in situ and these lie in close proximity to paths and roads.

Comments have been made with regards to reorientating the pitches to reduce the risk of ball strikes. The submitted Pitch Feasibility report indicates that the pitches have been orientated in accordance with Sport England guidance for optimum orientation.

It is considered that whilst the proposals would install a 16m high ball stop fence this is a reasonable proposal to reduce the potential for ball strikes but it is acknowledged it may not prevent all balls from leaving the site towards the access road. On balance the proposed fencing is considered an acceptable solution.

#### *Other matters*

Concerns have been raised regarding other users using the playing fields and impacts on them. The proposals have been designed to improve existing facilities at Hough End for existing users of the wider playing fields. These improvements involve the installation of spectator boundary fencing and ball stop infrastructure. Whilst it is noted that this may impact on other users of the playing fields, these would still remain open for use and the existing Gaelic sports pitches would revert to amenity use by other users not requiring a formal pitch. Whilst there may be some impacts on existing users the benefits derived from the improved sports pitches is considered to outweigh these impacts. The ability to ensure the ball stop fencing is lowered when not in use would still allow wider use of the site as well as reduce visual impacts.

#### *Conclusion*

The application proposals provide an enhanced provision of facilities at an existing and well-established outdoor sports facility. The site is in a sustainable urban location and as set out in this report the form, scope and design of the development is considered acceptable for the site.

Overall, this proposal would enhance a strategically important site that has provided and will continue to provide outdoor sports facilities for the city and in particular residents in south Manchester. It has been acknowledged that the facilities are in need of improvement and work is required to meet current standards; this will ensure the facilities are sustained into the future and provide wide ranging health and well being benefits. It is also recognised concerns have been raised about aspects of the proposal which have been balanced against the benefits that would be delivered.

### **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 policies 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:** Approve

### **Article 35 Declaration**

The application has been considered in a positive and proactive manner as required by The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

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

1) The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents:

Proposed pitch dimensions drawing reference LCB01/C; Proposed fencing plan drawing reference AL.02; Proposed net details drawing reference AD.01; Design and Access Statement Rev D; Proposed site plan drawing reference AL.01; Feasibility report for the relocation and improvement of natural turf sports pitches reference O-001\_BPRUFC\_1802\_R\_2023 07 06; All as received by the City Council as local planning authority on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans. Pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy.

3) The hereby approved fencing shall be installed in accordance with approved drawing references AL.02, AD.01 and the fence type finishes as set out in sections 2.2 and 2.5 of the Design and Access Statement and shall be retained in situ thereafter.

Reason – In the interests of the visual appearance of the site and area in which the site is located, pursuant to policy DM1 of the Core Strategy.

4) The ball catcher netting as set out on the approved drawings and documents shall only be extended to its full height whilst the pitches are in use. At all other times when the pitches are not in use the netting shall be lowered to a height no higher than 2 metres.

Reason - In the interests of the visual appearance of the site and area in which the site is located, pursuant to policy DM1 of the Core Strategy.

5) Prior to first use of the Gaelic Football Pitches a community use agreement, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agreement shall apply to the Gaelic Football Pitches and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by

local community users, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review. The development shall not be used otherwise than in strict compliance with the approved agreement and for the duration of the development.

Reason - To secure well managed safe community access to the sports facility/facilities, to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport and to accord with Core Strategy policies EN10 and EN11.

Informative: Guidance on preparing Community Use Agreements with a template agreement is available from Sport England.

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planningfor-sport/community-use-agreements>

## **Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified**

Parks & Events  
Sport England  
MCR Active

Chorlton Scouts Activity Centre, 1 Houghend Crescent, Manchester, M21 7TL  
382 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
376 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
370 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
364 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
358 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
354 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
348 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
386 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
384 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
380 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
378 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
164 Alexandra Road South, Manchester, M21 7TD  
374 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
372 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
368 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
366 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
362 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
360 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
356 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
352 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
350 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
346 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RB  
166 Alexandra Road South, Manchester, M21 7TD  
Mauldeth Road Service Station, Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RF  
296 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RF  
290 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RF  
310 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RF  
308 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RF  
306 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RF  
304 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RF  
302 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RF  
300 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RF  
298 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RF  
294 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RF  
292 Mauldeth Road West, Manchester, M21 7RF

## **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) -  
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -  
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -  
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -  
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -

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