MHSG – New Access Way to southern part of site

Design, Access and Heritage Impact Statement

App ref: 137600/FO/2023

Job No: 1307

26/10/2023

10architect

Revision P4

Rev	Date	Comments	Prep.by	Appr. by
P1	6/7/2023	i108 – Issue for consultation	ADS	AP
P2	18/7/2023	i109 – Planning Issue	ADS	AP
P3	24/10/2023	i117 – Photographic information added	ADS	AP
P4	26/10/2023	I118 – Long Jump Pit added	ADS	AP

Introduction

Manchester High School for Girls (MHSG) celebrates its 150th Anniversary next year and has recently adopted a new 10 year Estates Masterplan to make the current site, surrounded by Platt Fields Park in Rusholme, fit for the future.

The masterplan has numerous phases, working from the centre of the site outwards to redevelop the School over a number of years. Early enabling works are required to create an access route for construction vehicles and to provide better access for Fire Appliances and maintenance vehicles generally, to avoid them using the Junior School playground for access.

MHSG are looking to construct this access route towards the southern boundary of their site on Grangethorpe Road from their western car park.

To minimise impact, this route would be a permeable surface route that would be an internal 3.7m wide private way to cater for fire appliances. The access route would not be metalised and would remain free draining to minimise impact on drainage, trees and water tables locally.

There are three reasons that the route is needed:

1. To comply with the latest version of the Building Regulations and Fire Tender Access – there is currently no dedicated access to the rear of the site which restricts access for fire fighters.
2. To create an access way for the construction of a new external covered canopy.
3. To provide the maintenance team with improved access for their maintenance equipment without having to drive mowers and maintenance equipment through the playground areas.

The School are respectful and cognisant of the line of the Anglo-Saxon Nico Ditch that runs to the south of the site and the specific protections that are in place further down the ditch.

The team taken advice from Manchester City Council regarding the need for consent for two initial elements of the masterplan, and been advised (a) that planning consent is required and (b) that Historic England and GMAAS should be consulted, due to the proximity of the Nico Ditch, which is scheduled for part of its length further along the south boundary of the site (ref 1015132)

A briefing paper to discuss the possible impact of the works was shared with the relevant bodies prior to the preparation of this Design, Access and Heritage Impact Statement.

The two bodies who consulted were:

- Greater Manchester Archaeology Advisory Service
- Historic England

Both have confirmed negligible impact and are supportive of the new Access Way.

There are a number of trees affected by the works. Care is being taken to minimise impact, but some trees will need to be removed as part of the new access way. These are shown on the drawings.

Whilst part of the route is across a grassed area tht leads to sports pitches, the entirety of the area is outside the pitch areas and the proposals have no impact on the pitch areas. More information is provided on this later in the report.

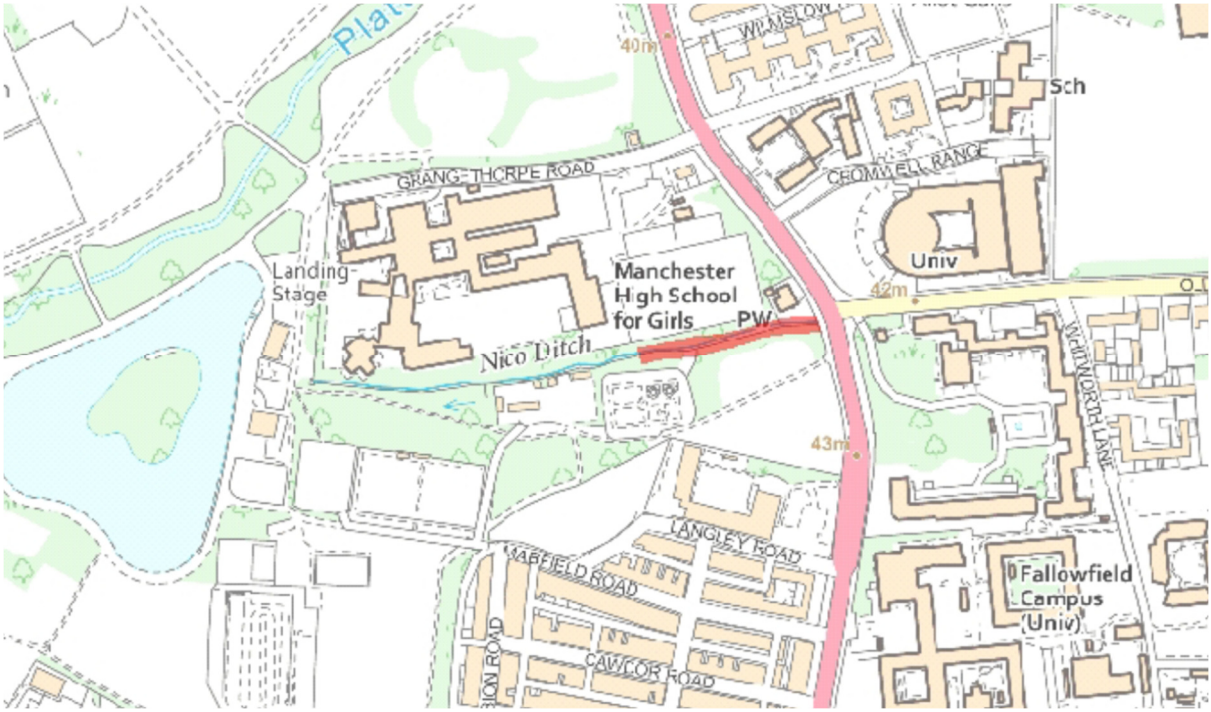
Site and Context

On the site plan below, two areas have been indicated:

- The new enabling access way is indicated in yellow
- The location of new canopy works in red that will be served by the access way (this is subject to a separate application)

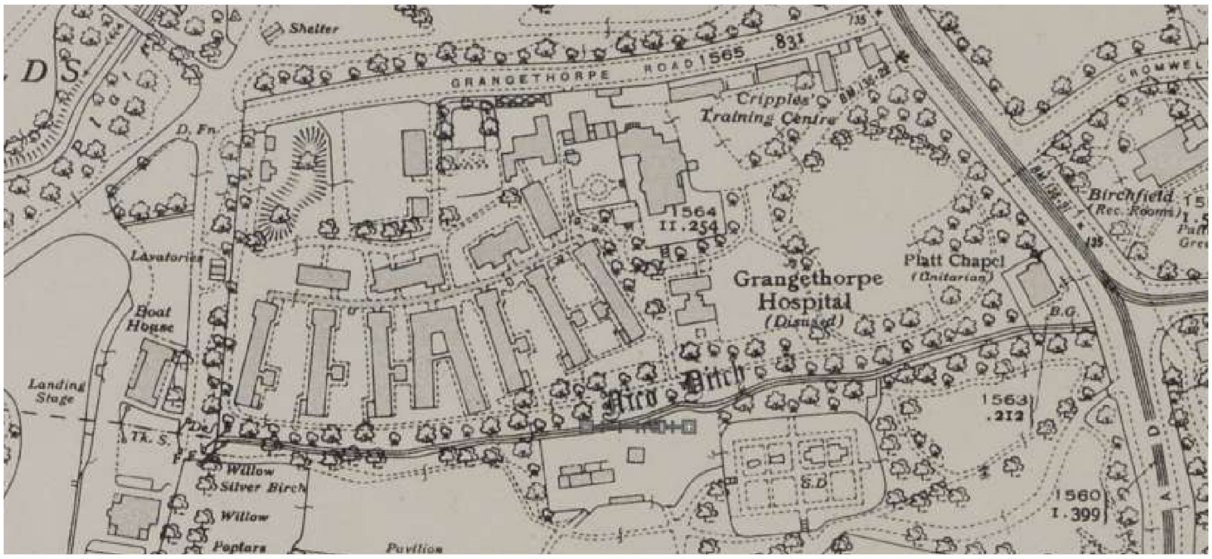


The right hand end of the access route (in yellow above) is approximately 150m from the scheduled section of the Nico Ditch as shown on in red on the attached List entry extract below.



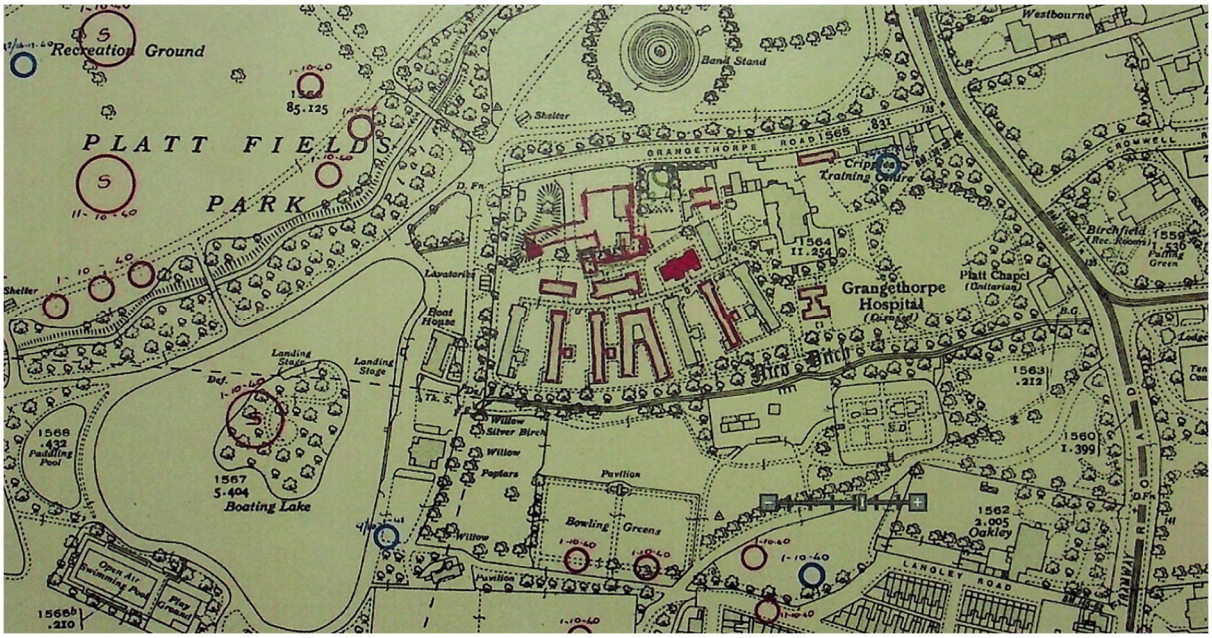
It is worth noting that the western end of the ditch (closest to the proposed new access way) is somewhat deeper than the listed area to the east noted above, and we are advised that this may be due to works undertaken at some point to improve drainage which has unfortunately compromised the original ditch profile.

It is also worth noting that the area where the new access way is located is broadly on the area of a previous access route that ran around the southern edge of the site when the site was originally a hospital. The map below is from 1922.



The hospital was closed and the site re-built as a School for MHSG which opened in September 1940.

Sadly a bombing raid in December reduced much of the site to rubble in December of the same year. The map below shows the buildings destroyed and affected by the bombing including those close to the areas of work proposed by the School now.

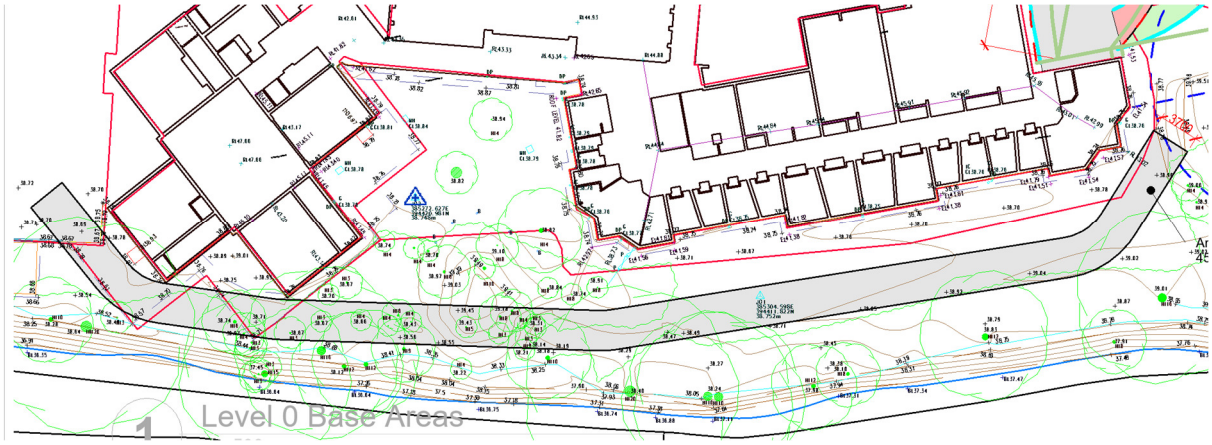




The above view is the end of the western most block looking south towards Nico Ditch which is indicated by the line of trees in the background.

Detailed proposal

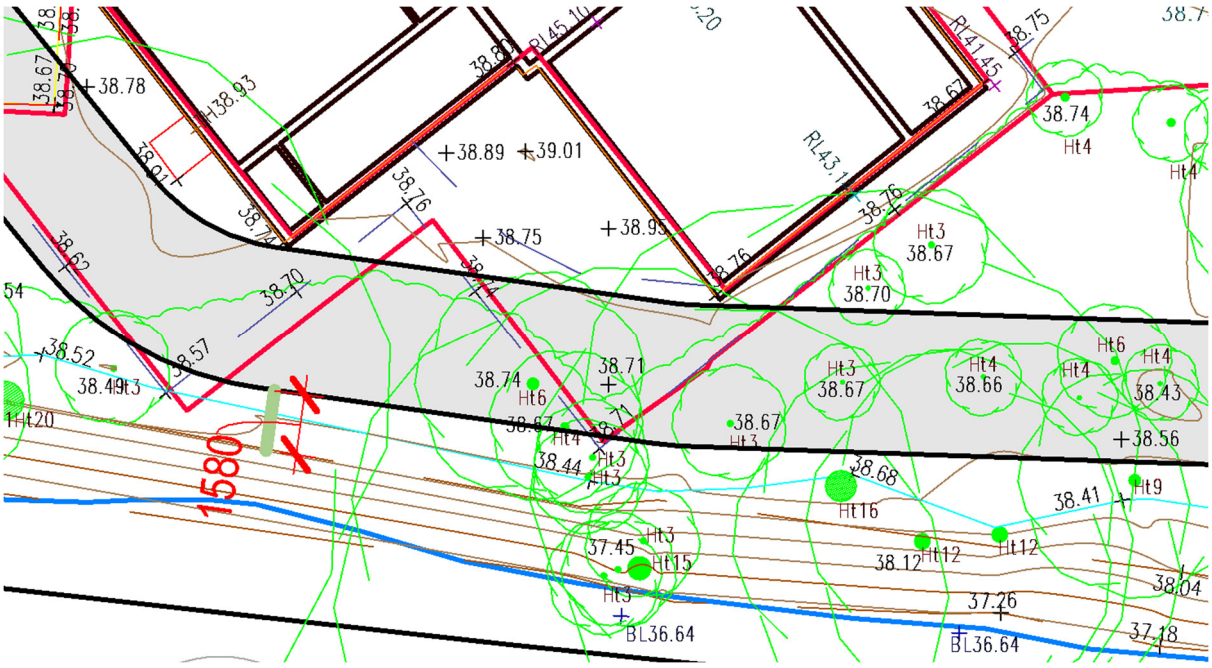
To ensure an appropriate level of accuracy, a topographical survey has been commissioned and the proposed route of the new permeable access way has been overlaid on the plan.



On the plan the 3.7m wide access route is indicated in grey. The centre of the ditch is in dark blue and the brown contours indicate the bank of the ditch on the School side.

Typically the edge of the access route is between 3.7 and 6m from the top edge of the ditch with a short section by the back of the existing building getting to 1.58m. (However, if necessary, this section of the route could have the width of the access way reduced to 3.1m which would increase the distance from the top edge of the bank to the edge of the permeable access route to 2.2m.

This area has been shown below in more detail. It is worth noting that the red lines of the existing hard paving actually encroach closer to the ditch as can be seen on the plan and all the works are within the existing fence boundary line indicated in cyan.



The design will use the best construction techniques to minimise impacts on root protection zones around the bases of the larger trees. In some areas, hard impermeable paving is being removed and replaced with permeable paving. In other areas the permeable access way is being installed to grass areas. The permeable access way will be installed above the level of the root zone. In the event of more consistent access traffic for construction, load spreading plates will need to be installed.

The smaller trees that are indicated to be removed are generally self-seeded and of little value. An arboricultural report has been included with the application.

Access Way Construction Buildup

The access way will be constructed so that it can provide a firm and level base for Fire Tender access. Once the top soil has been scraped back, (care being taken with the localised tree roots) a geotextile membrane will be installed prior to the laying down and compacting of the single sized stone to provide full drainage. The depth will be determined from the structural requirements. This will form the base for the permeable surface that will provide a suitable access route with minimum disruption to existing levels and tree roots.

Heritage Impact Consultation

Within the Heritage Impact Review, the proposals were explained in some detail so both GMAAS and Historic England could understand the proposals. Both parties have provided written documents in support of the proposals confirming that the new access way will have a negligible impact on the setting or physical condition of the Nico Ditch.

Furthermore, the School would be pleased to support efforts to promote a better understanding of this historic ditch and would be prepared to create and fund a small information panel that could be located just to the west of the site alongside the pavement where Nico Ditch has been culverted so that passers by could be made aware of this important local historic monument.

Responses from Historic England and GMAAS

RE: Manchester High School for Girls - work in vicinity of the Nico Ditch

Reply | Reply All | Forward

OP Owen, Pete <Pete.Owen@HistoricEnglan

To Alan Simpson

Cc Barlow, Peter; Kate Dickson

Wed 12/07/2023 14:53

You forwarded this message on 14/07/2023 15:42.

Alan

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the proposals to construct a new access route within the grounds of the Manchester High School for Girls

Based on the description of the proposed works given in the Heritage Impact Review document attached to your email of the 7th July, I do not have any concerns regarding potential impacts to the scheduled monument known as *Section of an early medieval boundary ditch known as the Nico Ditch in Platt Fields 480m SSE of Platt Hall* (list entry no. 1015132).

Unless the proposals change, you don't need to consult Historic England again and should continue to liaise with the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service.

Regards

Pete Owen
Inspector of Ancient Monuments
North Region
Historic England
Direct Dial: 0161 242 1418 Mobile: 07500 073808

GMAAS
Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service

Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service
School of Environment & Life Sciences
Room LG 20, Peel Building
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Salford M5 4WX

Mr A. Simpson
Director
10architect
12 Hilton Street
Manchester M1 1JF

Date: 14th July 2023

Dear Alan

RE: Manchester High School for Girls, Rusholme: Archaeology

Many thanks for consulting with the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS) at an early stage in the design process for the proposed new canopy works and access route at the Manchester High School for Girls in Rusholme. I am also grateful for sight of the detailed Heritage Impact Review that you have prepared, which usefully enables the potential impact of the proposed works on any archaeological remains to be assessed.

As you are clearly very aware, 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 and the proposed new access route, 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 around the school since the 19th century, and the extent and location of the works required to deliver the proposed access route and new canopy as set out in your Heritage Impact Review, GMAAS is satisfied that the works will not have any impact on below-ground archaeological remains. Whilst Historic England is best placed to comment on any potential harm to the Scheduled Monument and its setting, GMAAS is happy to advise that no further archaeological study to support a planning application is merited.

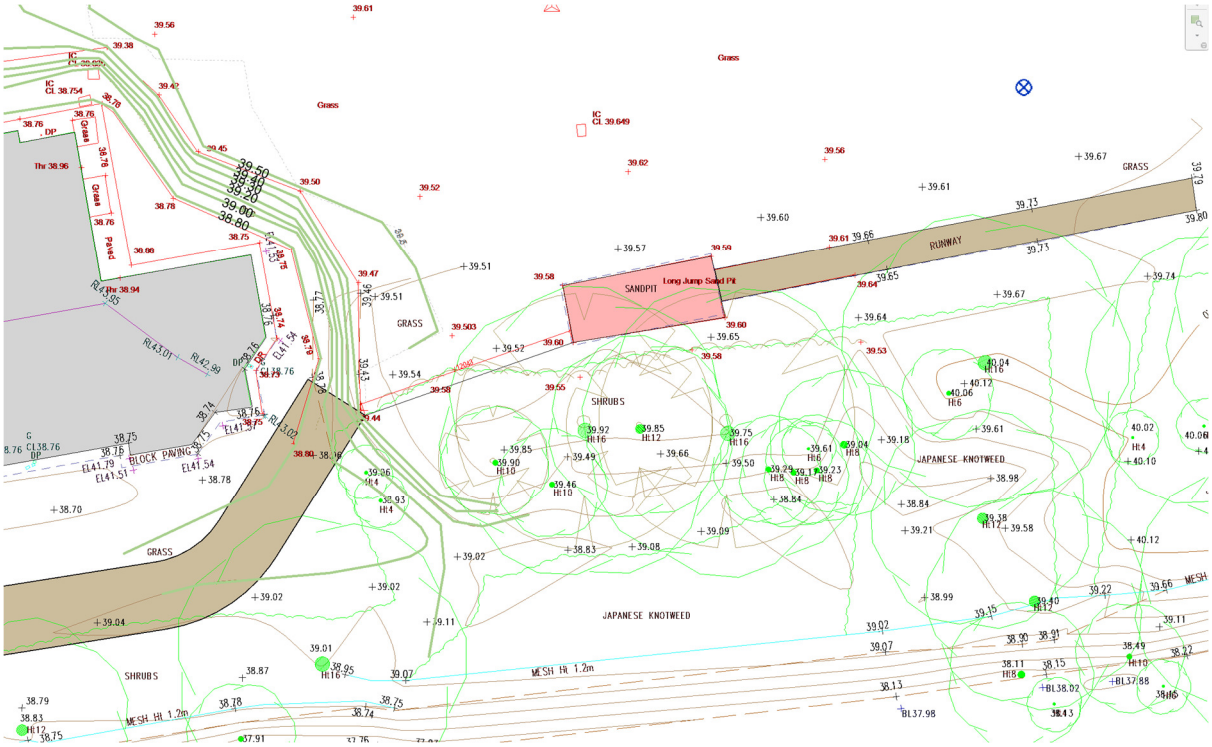
Yours sincerely

Ian Miller
Heritage Management Director
Tel: 0161 295 4467 / 07533 252 442

Photographic evidence to demonstrate no impact on pitch areas.

The purpose of this section is to provide photographic evidence of the changes in level around the existing music block that illustrates that this area cannot be usefully used for sports activities.

The contour plan below indicates the change in level in 100mm increments based on the detailed topographical surveys. The overall change in level is circa 750mm from +38.75m to +39.50m.



As noted the Access Way to the bottom left stops in line with the bank to ensure it does not encroach on any of the wider Playing Field Area.

It can also be noted that the long jump pit (indicated in pink) and the runway (in light brown to the top right) are more than 12m away from the end of the Access Way and therefore completely unaffected by the Access Way.

The Access Way has been designed to stay away from any Playing Fields which are all located to the upper right above the location of the long jump. The new Access Way has no detrimental impact on any of the Playing Field area.

Photographs illustrating changes in level





View near the corner of the garden area looking south (playing field to the left)





View in corner looking south. (playing field to the left)





View of bank to the rear of the music block near where the access way terminates





View of bank looking North East towards sports field. The Access Way stops at the bottom of this bank.





Views of bank looking north west.

Sport England Exceptions

Due to the existing banking to the south of the playing fields and the fact that the Access Way stops well away from the area that could reasonably used for sports use, we believe that Exception E3 is satisfied.

Within the photographic evidence and the further details below, we have provided information to demonstrate that the use of the playing field is not compromised.

The evidence shows the physical definition of the land with as photographs of the gradient of the land, including human scale comparisons, which demonstrates that the area of land is not in use as a functioning sports facility and does not have any capacity to be used for functioning sports facilities.

The specific responses to each exception are noted in red italic below.

<u>Exception E3</u>

The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

▪ reduce the size of any playing pitch;
All the playing pitches are located at the upper level and well away from the bank. It can be seen that the change in level is significant and the Access Way is entirely at the bottom so no pitches are affected or reduced by the works.

▪ result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas)
The banking as shown in the photographs defines the edge of what could be used for safety margins and run-off areas and the Access Way occupies the space at the bottom of this bank and does not encroach on safety or run-off areas and on that basis does not affect any safety or run-off areas.

▪ reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
The pitches and the associated playing field areas occupy the upper area of the bank and as noted already, the Access Way is at the bottom of the bank and away from the playing field. This means that pitches can be re-configured and the Access Way does not have any impact on the flexibility of re-configuration.

▪ result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site
There is no other sporting provision associated with the southern area of the site behind the music block (and never has been) therefore the proposals will not result in any loss.

▪ prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.
The new Access Way sits at the bottom of the slope and is away from the playing field areas. For this reason, it will not prejudice the use of any of the Playing Field areas for pitches or other ancillary uses.



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