MHSG – New Canopy

Design, Access and Heritage Impact Statement

App ref: 137727/FO/2023

Job No: 1307

31/10/2023

10architect

Revision P3

Rev	Date	Comments	Prep.by	Appr. by
P1	28/7/2023	i112 – Issue for Planning Application	ADS	AP
P2	27/8/2023	i114 – Updated with more information for Sport England	ADS	AP
P3	31/10/2023	i119 – Further Exception information 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. Planning for early enabling works is underway and the first external capital project is planned to be a new canopy and associated hard landscaping.

In line with the masterplan, a new 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,
- assemblies.

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in the need for creating wellbeing areas and encouraging students who have traditionally not been engaged with outdoor events and sports into a number of inclusive activities. Table Tennis in particular has proved to be much in demand, but with little opportunity to improve provision.

The school are very aware that green open space is a premium on the site, but the use of the grass area for sports and leisure is seriously limited (for a number of practical and educational reasons) 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 are pleased that the new canopy significantly enhances the overall sports offer providing students with new opportunities to engage in inclusive sports (especially during inclement weather) and as such Exception E5 applies. More information on this is provided later in the report (Page 15).

The School are also 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 School has taken advice from Greater Manchester Archaeology Advisory Service and Historic England and both have confirmed negligible impact and are supportive of the new Canopy and associated Access Way.

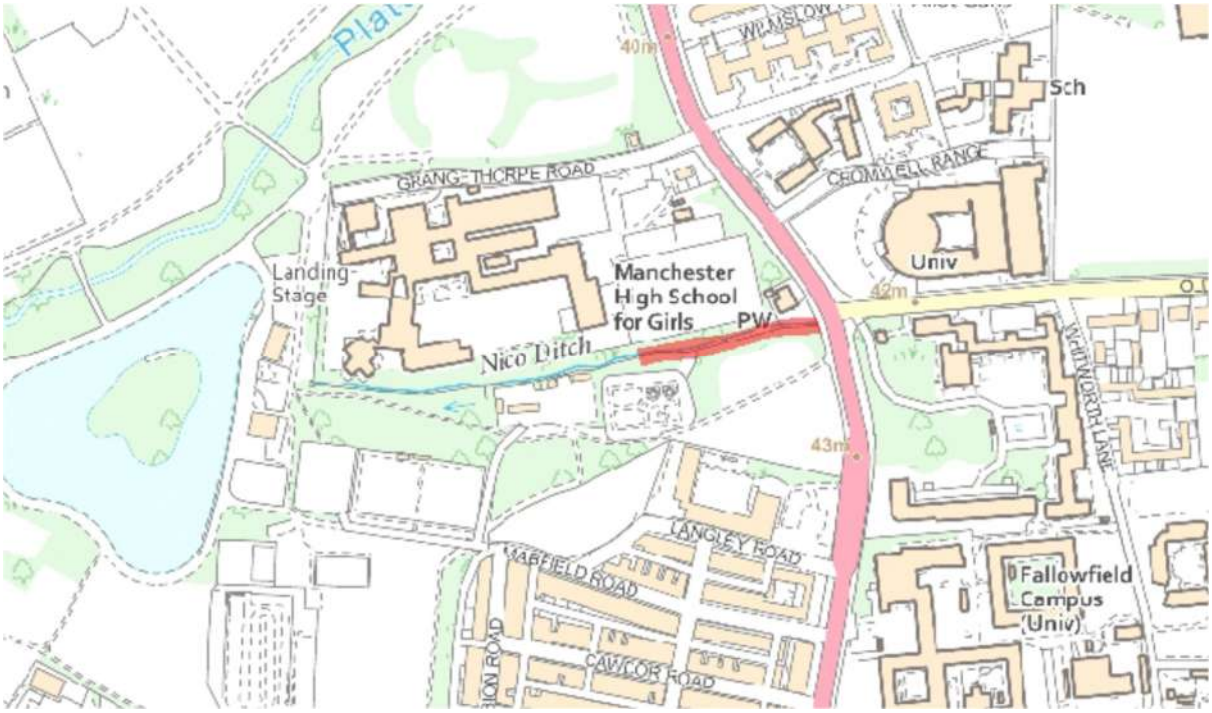
Site and Context

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

- The new enabling access way is indicated in yellow. (this is subject to a separate planning application)
- The location of new canopy works in red .
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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.



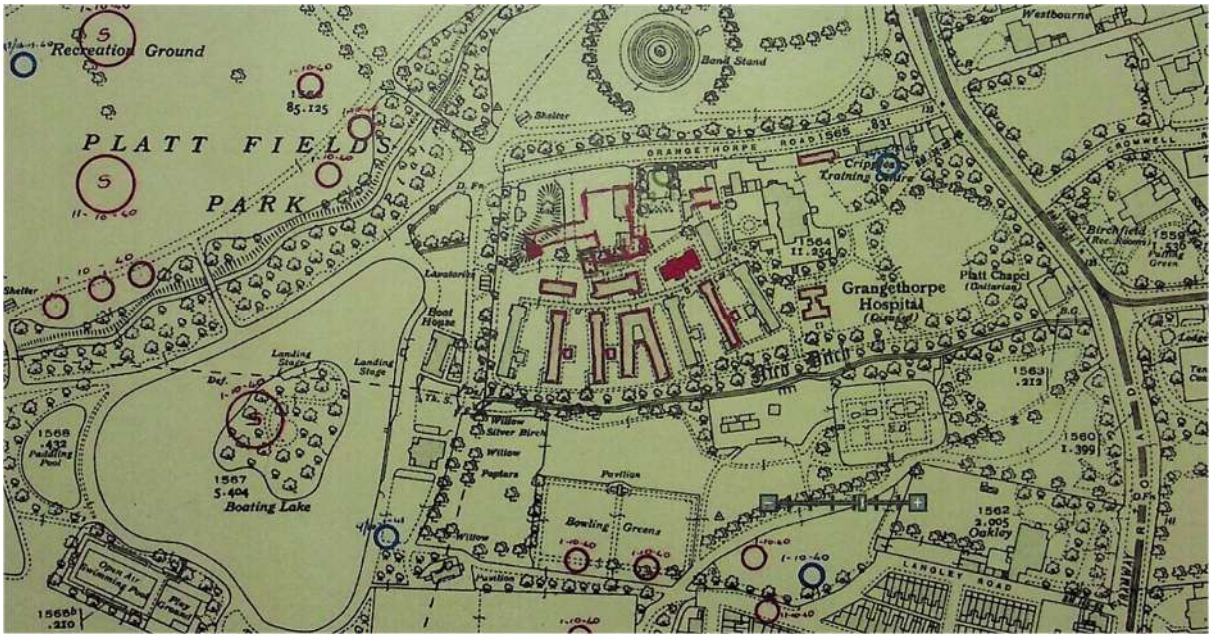
It is worth noting that the western end of the ditch (closest to the proposed new access way) is somewhat deeper than the listed area to the east noted above, and we are advised that this may be due to works undertaken at some point to improve drainage which has unfortunately compromised the original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

The School has increasingly reduced it's use of the grass area for competitive sports for 3 reasons:

1. The original foundation areas have been filled in and have a relatively shallow grass covering making it undulating and not particularly suitable for sports.
2. There are a number of live drains and manhole covers existing in the grass areas further limiting use for pitches.
3. The fact that teaching is disrupted due to noise as the grass area is overlook by a large number of naturally ventilated classrooms. Noise and disruption to these south facing classrooms that rely on opening windows for ventilation has led to virtually all sports being conducted on the artificial grass pitches and the hard tarmac areas away from the teaching areas.

In can also be noted that the grass area has in the past been used for temporary accommodation and remains of this can be seen on the plans.

Site Photographs



View from the corner of the main building looking south west towards the music block. This is the location of the proposed canopy area and the bulk of this area is part of the garden space with the Rose Garden and memorial trees to the right of this image.



View looking due south from the main building. This is the approx. location of the back of the canopy.



Drone view showing the area in context. This was taken in November 2021.

Detailed proposal

To ensure an appropriate level of accuracy, a topographical survey has been commissioned and the proposed hard landscaping and canopy has been overlaid on the existing terrain.

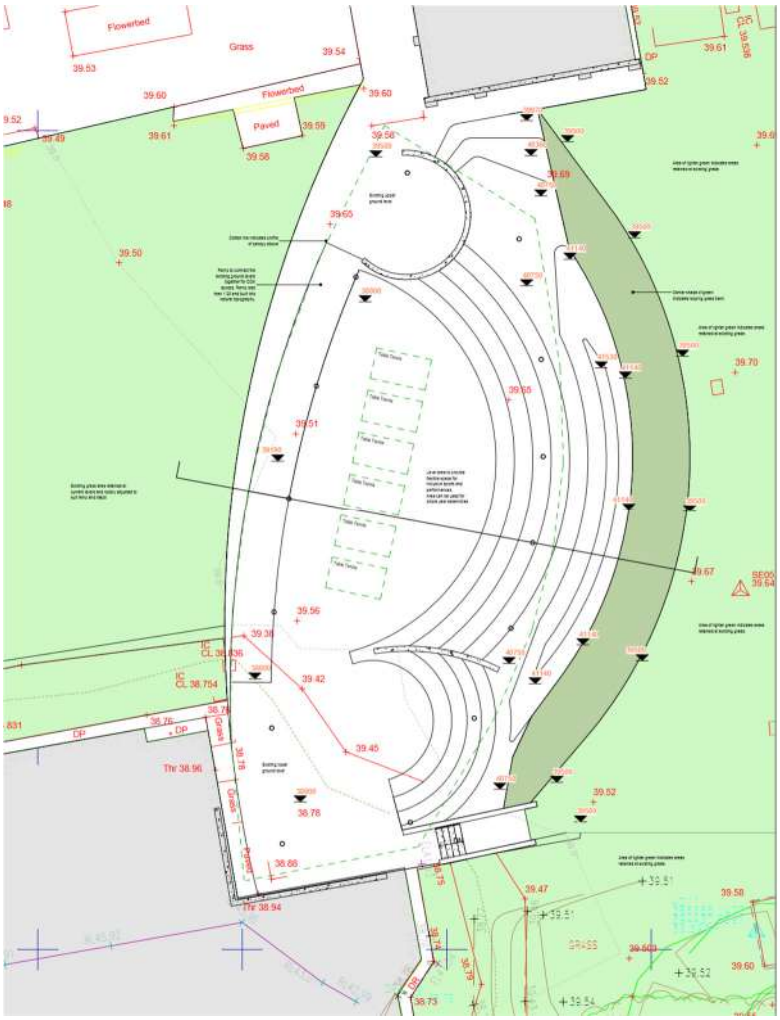
The landscape has an upper and a lower level (approx. 800mm difference in level) and the hard landscape uses these levels as a starting point. The lower level is extended from the music block ground floor and the earthworks arising from the dig will be used to create a bank that will further protect the canopy area and provide for tiered seating under the canopy.

The upper level of the green space that ties into the main body of the School will also remain and will be connected to the lower level with a DDA accessible ramp.

The canopy is large and can accommodate up to 400 students under the canopy area.

The lower ground level is opened up and a number of table tennis tables have been shown indicatively for scale. These can be used both informally, but also can be used for competitions where spectators can watch from the tiered seating areas.

The long jump pit referenced in earlier sections can be seen in the very bottom right indicating how far the canopy bank is from this area.



School's Sport Strategy

The School have an adopted Masterplan and Pedagogical (Teaching) Strategy. Part of this strategy refers to wellbeing, sport and improving access to sport. An extract of the strategy is below:

> "One of the aims of Manchester High School for Girls is to "provide a broad and diverse range of subjects and extra-curricular activities that offer each individual pupil the opportunity to develop their talents and flourish."
>
> We encourage an inclusive approach to learning and to extra-curricular participation, encouraging all to take part and to benefit from their involvement. In the light of this, one of our operating objectives is to ensure that our sporting provision is inclusive so that pupils can benefit from a range of sporting opportunities to improve health and wellbeing.
>
> The is one of the core values of our school."

In support of this application, the School have gone on to state:

> "The 'canopy' will help us to achieve our aim and to further embed our values by providing sports that all pupils can involve themselves in. Our pupil voice has seen increased requests for more inclusive sports such as table-tennis and the ability to provide table-tennis tables, under-cover, for access throughout the winter and summer months means that this will enable us, as a school, to achieve one of our major objectives for the coming years."

In the context of the Masterplan, the Canopy aims to add to the existing sports provision by creating complementary sports functions that that are more inclusive that currently do not exist.



Clearly the canopy is aiming to provide a lot of flexibility in use and is intended as an outdoor performance and social area as well as providing formal and informal access to inclusive sports on a year round basis and irrespective of inclement weather.

The re-purposing of part of the green space with a hard landscaped covered area is seen by the School as a significant benefit to the breadth and type of inclusive sports related provision that can be provided especially with the grass areas being under-used.

The School has also been clear in its intention since 2021 to no longer use the green space as a running track, and instead use the much more consistent artificial grass pitch for this purpose.

Existing Sports use for the green space

The green space has in the past been used for 4 specific sporting activities and these can be seen in the aerial photographs of the site:



The running track.

The School have confirmed that all sprint and running events will take place on the artificial grass pitch. The track has not been laid out since 2021 and the proposal is to not use the grass area for this purpose. However, if there was the intention to mark this out in the future, the canopy has been positioned such that the track can be moved 8m to the right and be clear of the bank of the canopy. If longer run-off spaces are required, it could be positioned on the diagonal.

The rounders pitch.

This is currently not marked out on the grass area as the School have opted to use the tarmac play areas for the reasons already described. However, if there is a desire to mark out the pitch again in the future it can be marked out as it was in 2016 in the central area of the green space.



April 2023 showing the rounders in the car park and the grass area not being used for sport.



April 2018 showing an alternative rounders location

Long Jump

This is to the south of the image and will remain unaffected by the canopy works. This end of the long jump pit can be seen in the bottom right hand corner of the detailed proposal plan and is demonstrated more clearly on the following pages.

Javelin

This is only undertaken infrequently and students line up against the building and aim towards the long jump pit. This can remain unaffected by the works.

Additional Information to support Planning Application and demonstrate Exception

The open space at the centre of the site is made up of 4 distinct areas:

1. The Rose Garden – This area is a memorial garden with various trees planted in memory of past students and staff. (Indicated as Area C)
2. The Main Garden – Adjacent to the Memorial Rose Garden and music block, this is a space used at break times for quiet play and social interaction. (Areas B and D)
3. The "Sports Field " area in light green
4. Junior Play area. Part of the Junior School and unaffected by any of the works. (Area G)

These are indicated on the attached plan and it can be noted that the area where sports activities can take place (including the long jump and rounders areas) is 0.28ha. (in light green)



The Sports Field has been used in the past for a 50m track, rounders, long jump and javelin. It is the intention that all these sports will still maintain the ability to be played after the canopy is installed thus satisfying one of the listed exceptions under Exception E5. Furthermore, the canopy will allow new sports to be played and also be used as a briefing/demonstration area in inclement weather.

As Sport England have noted, a 43x33 small football pitch could fit on the site. Although this is not something the girls have ever used in the past, success in the ladies game may change this in the future and maintaining this capability would be positive.

For more photographic detail, please refer to the Appendix.

On the following plan we have indicated the locations of all the existing sports facilities (50m track, rounders and long jump as well as indicating the potential football pitch suggested by Sport England (in orange). (It should be noted that historic drains and manholes run under the site and these limit to some extent alternative pitch configurations.)

The javelin is undertaken on the area indicated by the running track towards the trees for safety reasons. This will be maintained.

We have overlaid the CAD plans over a Google image to demonstrate more clearly the overall area. The two manholes in this area can be noted in yellow above and below the rounders area. More manholes from the original hospital are located in the garden area to the left hand side of the rounders area, but these are outside the sports area.



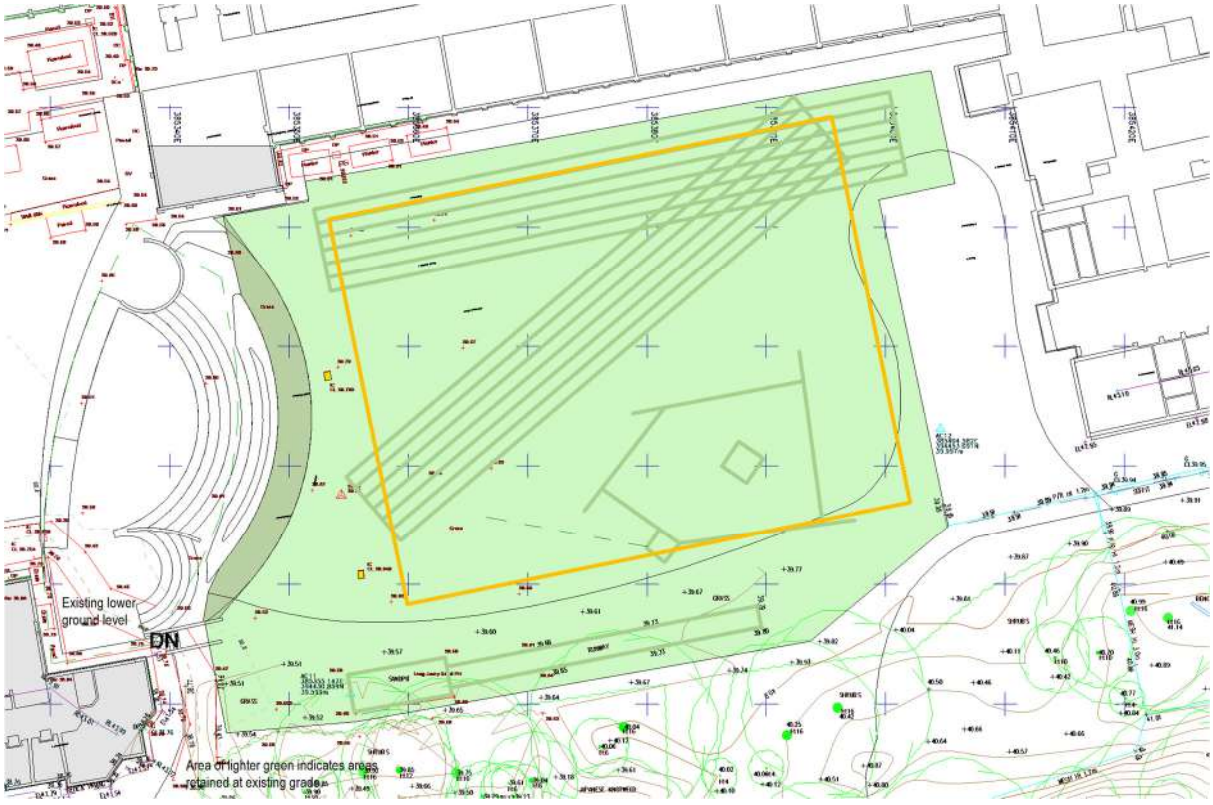
The proposed works intrude only slightly onto the sports area do not affect the playing of any of the sports within this area of the site.

In effect:

- By simply moving to the right or rotating the 50m running track it can continue to operate exactly as it has in the past,
- The long jump remains exactly as it is now,
- The rounder pitch moves which is a better location as it is away from the manholes and further away from teaching classrooms, (as it was in 2018)
- Javelin can continue in exactly the same way as now and aim from north to south towards the existing trees.

The area in light green in the retained play area and this is measured at 0.25ha. This is only a very modest decrease on the existing 0.28 ha and as has already been shown here, has no detrimental impact on the space.

The darker area is a gently sloping grass bank and can be used to provide seating to look over the green open space. (this is outside the area calculations to ensure a fair comparison to be made.



Sport England Exceptions E5

A number of meetings have taken place within the School and they do not believe that they can make a Community Use Agreement work in this instance.

Having discussed the current use and condition of the sports field and the potential sports uses going forward if the canopy was approved, we believe an excellent case for Exception E5 can be made. There are four important aspects to the design that are relevant to Exception E5:

1. None of the existing pitches are compromised with the canopy and they can continue to be arranged in various ways.
2. The canopy itself provides valuable ancillary space that supports sports use that currently does not exist, namely a covered area adjacent to the pitches that can be used for teaching sport in inclement weather and spectator view facilities to improve the view of the pitch areas.
3. The area of the canopy will provide space for sports such as table tennis which is inclusive, popular and currently not available.
4. The existing pitch areas are both undulating and prone to waterlogging. There may be a wider conversation about improving drainage and levelling if the canopy was approved thus improving the overall sporting provision.

Reviewing the Sport England Guidance that sits alongside the Exception E5, it is clear that there are many features of the development that support Exception E5 and we have tried to demonstrated below how the proposed canopy delivers enhanced sports opportunities and that the existing pitches are enhanced and not compromised by the canopy.

The guidance is very helpful and we have copied it below: (Microsoft Word - PDF 6 - Policy Exception 5v2.doc (sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com))

To demonstrate that the proposed development meets the requirements of Exception E5, we have listed against each of the Sport England Guidance point in red below how the development supports sports and how the benefits outweigh the loss of the Playing Field.

Policy Exception E5: 'The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields'.

When assessing an application against this policy exception Sport England is likely to require information which helps to answer the following questions:

♣ What is the impact on the existing playing field land in terms of the number of pitches the site can accommodate and their capacity? *In terms of what the school use the playing field for, and the football pitch spaces suggested by Sport England, these can continue to be played in various configurations with the canopy as designed. In effect, the development does not compromise or affect the playing of key sports.*
♣ Will all existing users of the playing field land still be adequately accommodated within the site? *Yes – because the pitches themselves are unaffected, the users are unaffected also. All the existing sports can continue to be played. In fact, having covered spaces allows for more sports use, not less, especially during inclement weather.*
♣ What is the view of the sports national governing bodies whose playing pitch provision may be adversely affected? *Rounders are the only listed pitch that is marked out and their playing area is can*

be located in a number of different locations on the Sports Field thus allowing the the pitch to continue un-affected.

♣ Is the playing field land proposed for development of a particularly high quality or of particular importance to the development of sport in the local area? *The playing pitch is particularly poor quality, one of the reasons it is not well used. It is undulating, waterlogged and suffers from manholes from historic drainage runs.*

♣ Is there evidence that the proposed facility has been carefully located to minimise any adverse impact on the playing field land? *Yes – the canopy is located at the edge of the pitches to provide a supporting space that minimises the negative impact of loss of playing field areas.* For example, has an assessment of alternative sites been undertaken? *The wider site is too constrained to provide on site alternatives and off-site alternatives are a safeguarding issue.*

♣ Will the proposed facility help to meet an identified sporting need i.e. as set out in a needs assessment or Playing Pitch/Sports Facility Strategy? *Yes – Table Tennis is an inclusive a popular sport for the cohort of girls. This will allow for greater participation and inclusion.*

♣ Does the proposed facility help to deliver the plans and strategies of the relevant sports national governing bodies and does the application have their support? *At this stage contact with Table Tennis England has not been made, but this is something that can be progressed if it is seen as being valuable.*

♣ Will the proposed facility duplicate any existing provision within the local catchment area? We believe that this provision is relatively unique and certainly within the school it will offer facilities that do not exist.

♣ Does the proposed facility meet with Sport England's and the relevant sports national governing body design guidance? *Yes it does. Refer to Outdoor-Table-Tennis-guide-June-2022.pdf (tabletennisengland.co.uk)*

♣ Will the proposed facility be available for use by the local community? *Probably not.* Will this use be secured and managed on a formal basis i.e. through the development and implementation of a community use agreement? *No, this is not currently the proposal. It is for school use.*

♣ Does the design of the proposed facility allow for adequate storage, changing provision and access to allow for community use? *n/a. Not designed for community use.*

♣ Is the proposed facility supported by the existing and potential future users of the site e.g. local sports clubs? *n/a. Not designed for community use.*

♣ Is there evidence that the proposed facility will be linked into the wider sports development network? Will a sports development plan be produced and implemented for the facility? *Not at present, but this can be explored.*

♣ Has the applicant consulted the County Sports Partnership, Community Sports Network and relevant sports national governing bodies in the preparation of the planning application? *Not at this stage.*

♣ For applications on school sites, is there evidence that the proposed facility will lead to an increase in PE in the curriculum and the development, or further development, of after school sports clubs and school club links? *Yes – this can be descrived and evidenced further by the school and is an important part of the School inclusion and wellbeing strategy.*

♣ Are appropriate arrangements proposed to ensure the long term maintenance of the facility? *Yes – this is a covered are in the heart of the School and as such will receive regular maintenance.*

♣ Is there evidence to suggest that the sporting benefits that will arise from the proposed development are unlikely to be obtained in any other way in the foreseeable future? *Yes – this is a unique facility on the site that will not be provided for in any other way in the 15 year Masterplan. If the Canopy does not go ahead, these facilities and the unique opportunities they bring will not be available to the girls.*

For the above reasons, we believe that Policy Exception E5 is satisfied by the Development.

As part of the fundraising we have prepared images of the canopy to show the space in use:





Note the long jump to the right hand side for scale – it is well away from any canopy works.

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.

<u>Responses from Historic England and GMAAS</u>

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

OP Owen, Pete <Pete.Owen@HistoricEnglan

To Alan Simpson

Cc Barlow, Peter; Kate Dickson

Reply | Reply All | Forward

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
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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

Conclusion

The new canopy has been carefully designed to maximise opportunities for the School to develop a much needed external covered area where performance and sports activities can take place whilst minimising any negative impacts on either local historic features or sporting activities.

We have demonstrated and had supporting letters from GMAAS and Historic England confirming that there is no impact on the heritage aspects.

With the enhancements to sports provision that the Canopy will bring, we believe that Exception E5 has been satisfied and the sporting benefits in terms of scope, capacity, frequency of use and participation outweighs the loss of part of the playing field area.

Appendix indicating in more detail the Sports Filed and adjacent non-sports areas.

On the following pages, we have defined the areas into the following classifications and then used a numbered system to cross reference to further supporting information.

- Existing Buildings
- Woodland
- Memorial Garden / Outdoor Play
- Garden
- Sloping / Unusable areas
- Playing Field

The attached plan has been coloured to show the different areas types across the site indicated on the above key.



Area A

This is consistent dense woodland, it is undulating and incorporates the protected medieval Nico Ditch. The density of the woodland is clearly visible in the background with the context of the long jump pit which is covered in blue tarpaulin. The bank and change in level is also visible to the right of the long jump pit adjacent to the music block.



View closer up showing the boundary of the playing field to the woodland just beyond the long jump.



Long Jump is completely un-affected by the works.

Area B

This area follows the edge of the music block and is a contoured area with a change in level of just under a metre. The line of the edge of the upper area is indicated in an orange dotted line. It can be seen in context on earlier photographs between the music block and the line of evergreen trees.



The photograph looking east from low level shows the extent of the bank to the right with the Music block. The buildings in the distance are the Junior School buildings at the far end of the Playing Field.



Area C
This is the Rose Memorial Garden. It is an important place of quiet contemplation and is planted with trees in memory of past girls. This area overlooks and opens onto the main garden area to the south.



Area D
This is the School Garden. It is a quiet area used for lunch times and break times. Due to it's use, is not used for sport and as demonstrated in the later historic photographs, this area has always been used as a garden space.

The following view looks over the Rose Garden towards the main garden area. The levels between the garden and playing field are visible here.



Areas E
These are the footprints of the existing buildings shown for context.

Area F
This is a maintenance zone together with planters, and trees that runs along the main edge of the teaching wing. This 3 storey building is most affected by noise from the playing field area and is one of the main reasons sports is played on the grass area very infrequently.



Area G
This is the Junior School playground. It is fenced off and separate from the Senior School.



Area H
This small area is re-enforced grass and currently forms the main access for maintenance vehicles through the Junior School play ground – It can be seen below the Junior School playground picture for Area G above.

Area J

This narrow area of land behind the music block is at a lower level to the central garden and is off limits to girls as supervision is problematic. This area is used visual amenity space for the music block only and is intended to provide future access routes for maintenance and Fire Service vehicles.



Sports Field

Once all of the above constraints and fixed limitations are taken into consideration, the remaining area indicated in light green represents the largest extents of the Sports Fields that could be utilised for playing sport and in effect this forms the Playing Fields boundary within which the various pitch configurations are contained.

We believe that this is a fair and logical interpretation of the Playing Fields definition described within the 2015 Order and NPPF upon which SE base their judgements over prejudicing sports activities.



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