
Application Number	Date of Appln	Committee Date	Ward
144717/JO/2025	28 Jan 2026	9 April 2026	Didsbury East

Proposal Variation of Condition 2 attached to Planning Permission 136137/FO/2023 to allow for amendments to the siting and design of the previously approved fencing.

Location Parrs Wood High School, Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 5PG

Applicant Mrs Lindsey Moore, Parrs Wood High School

Agent Mr Liam Denby, Stratus9 Consulting Ltd

Executive Summary

This application was placed before the Committee on 12 March 2026, but determination was deferred in order to allow the Committee to undertake a site visit and view the context and nature of the open space impacted by the proposed development.

The applicant is seeking consent to amend the wording of condition no. 2 (approved drawings) attached to planning permission 136137/FO/2023, in order to allow for amendments to the siting of 2.4 metres high weld mesh fencing around a school playing field.

Letters of objection have been received from seven households. The main concerns raised are that the fence would again obstruct the natural flow of floodwater and debris on the River Mersey's functional floodplain, increasing flood risk to neighbouring homes while offering no justified operational or safeguarding need. Furthermore, its height and design would harm the riverside environment and public amenity, creating visual intrusion, reducing safety and natural surveillance along a well-used community path.

Description

This application relates to the school playing fields associated with Parrs Wood High School. They are situated to the south of the main school complex and are bounded by Wilmslow Road to the west, the River Mersey to the south, the school and an access road to the north and a golf course to the east. As can be seen in the images below, the perimeter of the playing fields consists of a mature tree line.

The applicant obtained planning permission in April 2024 (reference 136137/FO/2023) to erect 2.4 metres high green weld mesh fencing around the perimeter of the school playing fields for the purpose of safeguarding the children attending Parrs Wood High School and other users of the playing fields. Over the past few years, the applicant has stated that there have been a number of incidents that pose potential risks to student safety and wellbeing (outlined below) and because of these they feel it is now appropriate to secure the perimeter:

- Repeated instances of travellers trespassing and setting up temporary sites on the school field, often leaving behind litter and, in some cases, lighting fires.
- An incident last summer in which a student was bitten by a dog on the premises.
- Motorbikes being ridden across the school field, creating a significant hazard for pupils and staff.
- Individuals setting up camp on school grounds without permission.
- General unauthorised access from dog walkers while the school are undertaking sports classes.

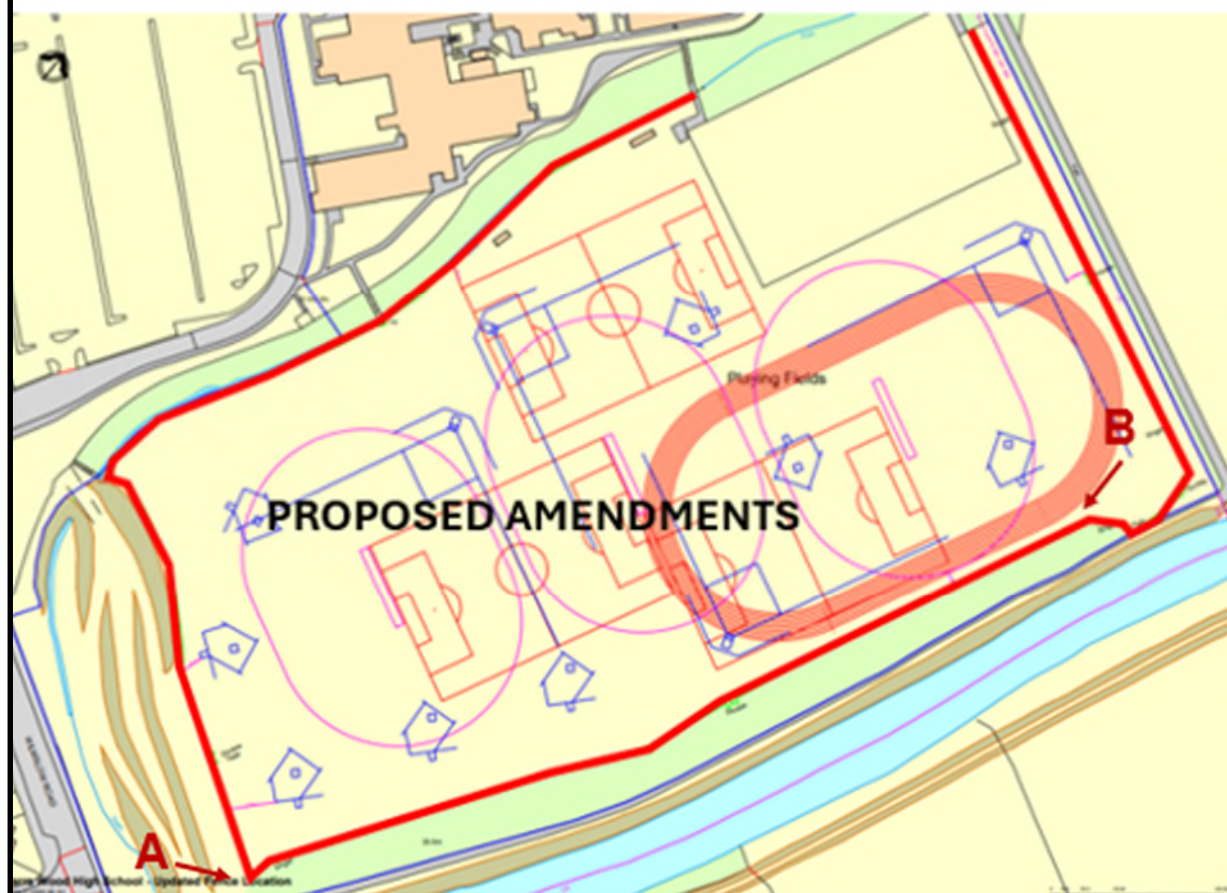
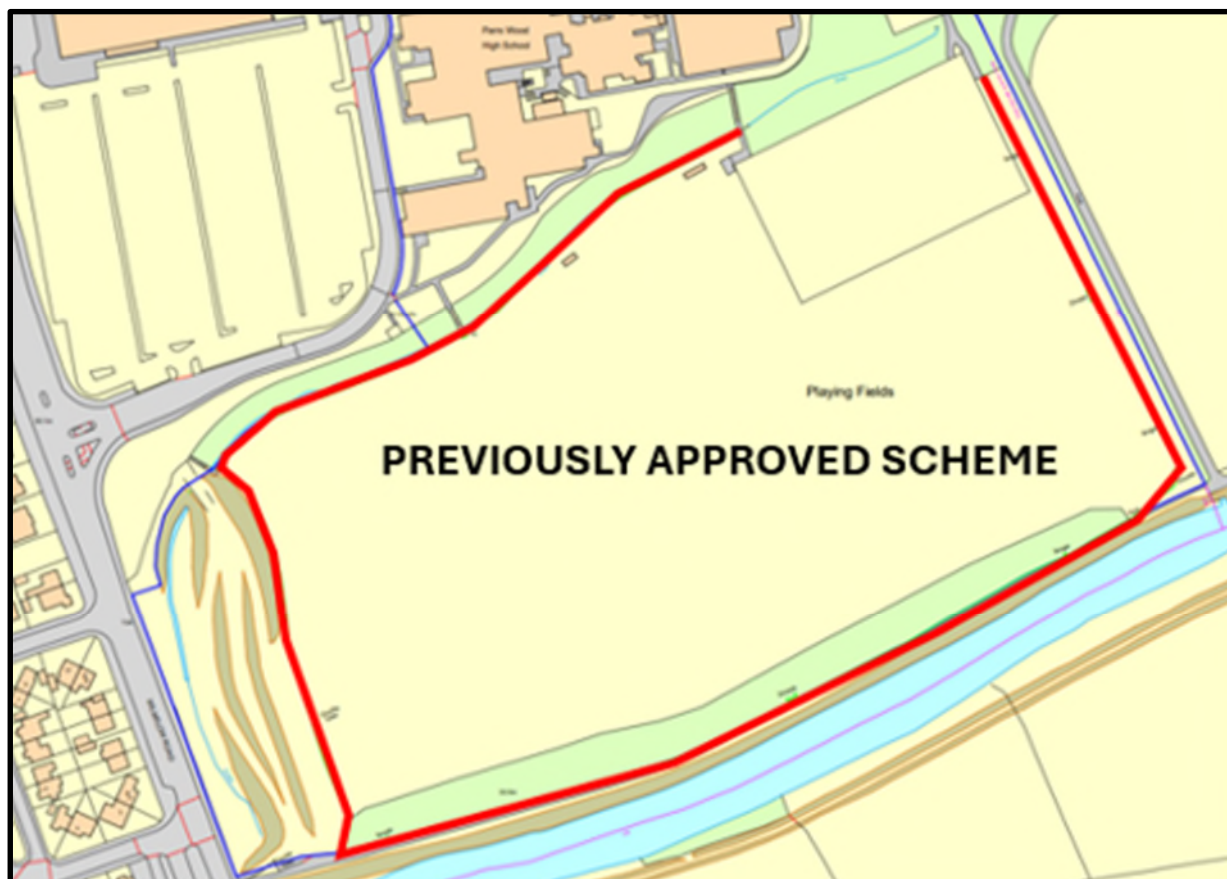
This fencing was erected towards the end of 2024 and before it could be completed it was partially damaged in the floods that occurred on 1 January 2025. A photograph of the undamaged fencing is shown below:



The applicant is now applying to vary condition no. 2 attached to planning permission 136137/FO/2023 in order to allow for amendments to the siting of the fencing, i.e. setting it back further from the footpath that runs to the north of the River Mersey and change its design, by increasing the size of the apertures in the fencing to allow waster to pass more freely. The red line in the image below denotes the location of the proposed fencing, with the yellow line indicating the route of the Trans Pennine Trail/National Cycle Network.



A more detailed image showing the difference between the approved and proposed fence lines is shown below, with the main difference being between points A and B:



A number of trees would be felled to facilitate the installation of the fencing by they are of poor quality, e.g. decay etc, and it is the case that the City Arborist has no objection to the loss.

Consultations

Local Residents/Members of the Public – Seven letters have been received from local residents and members of the public, one in support, five objection and one making representations. The comments are summarised as follows:

- The previous plan would have severely detracted from the natural view along the river, this new position behind the trees maintains that view.
- The school playing fields form part of the functional floodplain of the River Mersey and highlight that the previously installed 2.4 m fence was damaged during the severe flooding on 1 January 2025. the fencing trapped debris and obstructed the natural conveyance of flood water, preventing the river from promptly or safely spreading into the fields, and instead initially forcing flood water around the obstruction and towards nearby residential properties. This resulted in a clear increase in flood risk to neighbouring homes and placed residents in danger.
- Re-erecting fencing of the same height and nature, even with a marginal setback of a few metres, fails to address this fundamental issue. The proposal continues to obstruct flood flow and debris movement and therefore directly conflicts with the National Planning Policy Framework, which requires that development must not increase flood risk elsewhere and must be informed by the best available evidence.
- No convincing justification has been provided to demonstrate why such extensive fencing is necessary on land that has long been safely used and respected by the community. In the absence of any clear operational or safeguarding necessity, the proposal represents a disproportionate and unnecessary form of development that causes identifiable harm without corresponding planning benefit.
- The fences will detract from the beauty of the natural environment in this stretch of the river Mersey, particularly in relation to the row of trees from near Cheadle Bridge to the end of the school playing field.
- Whilst the right of the school to protect their land is understood the fence is visually intrusive, not reflecting the natural environment adjacent to the River Mersey and adjacent paths. Furthermore, there are issues created for public safety reducing natural surveillance for those using the path - creating a dark 'tunnel' especially during periods of darkness.
- The proposal will affect local users, both pedestrian and equestrian, the proposed fence line could restrict access in the event of another flood, which is likely, and this washing away the riverbank path. This is a recognised route to link for the users to the Trans Pennine Trail and it is believed that the fence should be adjusted back to allow for this.

- The riverside path is heavily used by the community for recreation, wellbeing, and family activities and the previously erected 2.4-metre fence made the area feel enclosed, “prison-like” and less safe. When the river flooded in January of last year, the 2.4m fence effectively served as a barrier to the dangerously rising waters as it caught so much debris. The revised plans do not appear materially different to the original plans, so it seems almost inevitable that exactly the same thing would happen again, were the river to flood again; which feels equally inevitable, given that it has every year for the past 5 years now.

Ward Councillors – Cllr Simcock has made the following comments:

- The previously approved fencing began installation in December 2024; however, significant flooding of the River Mersey over New Year 2025 caused extensive damage to the newly erected sections. The affected playing fields at Parrs Wood High School are designed to flood when river levels rise, placing any fencing within this area at repeated risk of damage.
- It is requested that the Planning Committee undertake a site visit prior to determining the application.

Highway Services – Have no objections to the variation proposed and have made the following comments:

- It should be ensured that any structures are not located where they restrict access or impinge visibility splays of pedestrians and vehicles.
- Plans confirm that the proposals will not have an impact on the public footpath, Public Right of Way, which is to the South of the site, adjacent to the school field and the River Mersey.
- For the avoidance of doubt, all external entrance doors/gates (with the exception of fire doors) should be inwardly opening in order to prevent obstruction on the adjacent footway.

Neighbourhood Officer (Arboriculture) – Have made the following comments:

- No objection is raised to the proposed tree works involving 3-metre reductions to the trees impacting the fenceline only, provided the works are carried out in accordance with best practice and in line with BS:3998.
- No objection is also raised to the felling of the trees, as they form part of a larger group, exhibit significant decay, or have failed previously, and have low amenity value, lacking the individual or group merit required for TPO designation.
- No objection is likewise raised to the felling of the trees identified in the AIA, as they too form part of a larger group, display significant decay or evidence of past failure, and possess low amenity value insufficient to warrant TPO protection.
- When installing the new fence line, it is essential that contractors allow sufficient flexibility in the positioning of fence posts. If any significant roots are encountered during installation, posts should be repositioned to avoid severing major roots, in line with best practice and to prevent unnecessary harm to retained trees.

Flood Risk Management Team – The proposed development is situated within Flood Zone 2 and 3 and recent updates to the GIS database indicate that the site is at risk of river flooding. Therefore, it is recommended that the Local Planning Authority consult with the Environment Agency for further guidance on this planning application.

Trans Pennine Trail – Have made the following comments:

- It is noted that the section adjoining the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT)/National Cycle Network (NCN) alignment is located on the school side of the trees so there will be no impact on the TPT/NCN but the School and Developer are asked to note that the TPT/NCN must not be impacted in any way during works and the route should not be used for storage of materials or contractor vehicles.
- For those residents wishing to access the network by the link to the south of the site, it would be preferred if the proposed fence alignment didn't go direct up to the path at the side of the River Mersey.

Greater Manchester Police – No objections to the proposal.

Environment Agency – Updated comments have been received which state:-

- The revised fence alignment increases the distance from the main river and our assets and uses a more open mesh. This is an improvement when compared with the previously approved fence line. This Variation of Condition application therefore presents a more favourable option in flood risk and better aligns with the NPPF in terms of avoiding increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Sport England – No objection to the proposal as there is sufficient information to demonstrate that the proposal will not result in the loss of the use of the existing playing field used for sport, as such it is considered that the development currently accords with its Playing Fields Policy, in particularly Exception 3 and NPPF paragraph 104.

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit – Have made the following comments:

- Under the Habitat Regulation it is an offence to disturb, harm or kill bats. In order to ensure that no roosts are destroyed as a result of the works, it is suggested that a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) is carried out on the trees to be felled and pruned.
- A Preliminary Ecological Assessment of the works and their potential to negatively affect protected and priority species should also be undertaken. Otter has been previously recorded along this section of the Mersey. There is also a watercourse that runs along the northern section of the field and should be considered as part of the assessment.
- Any such scheme is expected to include measures to enhance biodiversity at the site and to provide a net gain for biodiversity, in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council – No objections to the proposal.

Health and Safety Executive (Consultation Distance of Major Hazard Sites/ pipelines) – No objection to the proposal from a safety perspective.

Policies

Draft National Planning Policy Framework (December 2025) – The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. A draft revised NPPF was published for consultation on 16 December 2025. The consultation period runs for 12 weeks and will close on 10 March 2026.

The draft NPPF proposes significant changes to the structure and content of national policy. These include a move to Local Plan-style policy sections, a clearer distinction between plan-making and decision-making policies, and the reintroduction of strategic planning through Spatial Development Strategies. Other notable changes include an expanded presumption in favour of sustainable development, policies promoting higher densities around transport hubs, and support for small and medium-scale housing schemes through a new "medium development" category. The draft also integrates National Development Management Policies, strengthens climate change and biodiversity policies, and introduces measures to encourage clean energy and critical minerals development.

Once adopted, the revised NPPF will replace the current framework and form a key part of national planning policy. At this stage, as the document is subject to consultation and has not yet been finalised, while still a material consideration, it can only be afforded limited weight in the determination of planning applications. In this instance, the relevant sections are outlined below:

Policy DM3 (*Determining development proposals*) – This policy states that when considering development proposals, local planning authorities should:

- a) Work with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner, where necessary seeking solutions to problems arising from initial proposals, to enable a timely decision;
- b) Take a proportionate approach to the consideration of the planning matters raised by the proposals, in a way that reflects their scale, complexity and potential impact;
- c) Take account of planning matters raised during any pre-application engagement, including any positive responses to this engagement, as well as representations on the proposals;
- d) Consult statutory or internal consultees only where it is necessary to do so. Decisions on development proposals should not be delayed in order to secure advice from a statutory or internal consultee beyond their statutory deadlines unless there is insufficient information to make the decision or more detailed advice may enable an approval rather than a refusal;
- e) Consider whether otherwise unacceptable development proposals could be made acceptable through the use of planning conditions or planning obligations; and

- f) Not refuse applications for development which should clearly be approved, having regard to its accordance with the development plan, the policies in this Framework and any other material considerations.

Policy F7 in Section 18 (*Managing flood risk and coastal change*) – This policy states that development proposals should not present a risk from flooding to potential occupiers, users, or visitors, and should not increase flood risk elsewhere. It states further that where development is proposed in a location known to be at risk from any form of flooding, now or in the future, it should be refused unless:

- Any residual risk can be safely managed, and safe access and escape routes are included where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan.
- The development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient such that, in the event of a flood, it could be quickly brought back into use without significant refurbishment.
- It can be demonstrated that flood risk will not be increased elsewhere.

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) – The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, i.e. the Core Strategy Development Plan Document and accompanying policies, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Paragraph 11 states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which for decision-taking means:

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

Paragraph 12 states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. 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.

In addition to the above, Sections 8 (*Promoting healthy and safe communities*), 14 (*Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change*) and 15 (*Conserving and enhancing the natural environment*) are of relevance:

Paragraph 103 in Section 8 states that access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. It states further that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision.

Paragraph 104 states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

Paragraph 170 in Section 12 states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Paragraph 181 states that when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment and development should only be allowed in areas at risk of flooding where, in the light of this assessment it can be demonstrated that:

- the development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient such that, in the event of a flood, it could be quickly brought back into use without significant refurbishment;
- any residual risk can be safely managed; and
- safe access and escape routes are included where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan.

Paragraph 187 in Section 15 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

Paragraph 193 states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.
- development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused.
- development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported.

The Places for Everyone Plan – This plan was adopted on 21 March 2024, as such 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. The relevant policy is set out below:

Policy JP-Strat9 (Southern Areas) – This policy states that the economic competitiveness, distinctive local neighbourhood character and environmental attractiveness of the southern areas will be protected and enhanced. There will be a strong emphasis on making as much use as possible of suitable previously developed (brownfield) land and promoting the roles of the areas' town centres and its other key assets.

Policy JP-G7: Trees and Woodland – This policy states that the member authorities will work to deliver the aims and objectives of the Greater Manchester Tree and Woodland Strategy, aiming to significantly increase tree cover, protect and enhance woodland, and connect people to the trees and woodland around them. This will be done through local planning and a number of associated activities, but in the case of development as follows:

- Where development would result in the loss of existing trees, requiring replacement on the basis of two new trees for each tree lost, or other measures that would also result in a net enhancement in the character and quality of the treescape and biodiversity value in the local area, with a preference for on-site provision; and
- Protecting trees and woodland during the construction phase of development.

Policy JP-G8: A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity – This policy states that through local planning and associated activities a net enhancement of biodiversity resources will be sought. It states further than in relation to development, proposals would be expected to:

- a) Follow the mitigation hierarchy of:

- i. Avoiding significant harm to biodiversity, particularly where it is irreplaceable, through consideration of alternative sites with less harmful impacts, then
 - ii. Adequately mitigating any harm to biodiversity, then
 - iii. Adequately compensating for any remaining harm to biodiversity
- b) Avoid fragmenting or severing connectivity between habitats;
- c) Achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity of no less than 10%
- d) Make appropriate provision for long-term management of habitats and geological features connected to the development;
- e) Where appropriate, development should: mitigate air pollution impacts on Manchester Mosses SAC; mitigate urban edge, functionally linked land and recreation disturbance impacts on the South Pennine Moors SAC/SPAs; and assess and potentially mitigate boat movement, water pollution, and light spillage and shading impacts on the Rochdale Canal SAC; and
- f) Development proposals should be informed by the findings and recommendations of the appropriate biodiversity/ecological assessment(s) in the PfE evidence base and/or any updated or appropriate biodiversity/ecological assessments submitted as part of the planning application process.

Policy JP-S4: Flood Risk and the Water Environment – This policy states that an integrated catchment-based approach will be taken to protect the quantity and quality of water bodies with reference to the North West River Basin Management Plan and managing flood risk, by:

- 1) Returning rivers to a more natural state, where practicable;
- 2) Working with natural processes and adopting a natural flood management approach to slow the speed of water drainage and intercept water pollutants;
- 3) Locating and designing development so as to minimise the impacts of current and future flood risk, including retrofitting or relocating existing developments, infrastructure and places to increase resilience to flooding;
- 4) Expecting developments to manage surface water runoff through sustainable drainage systems and as close to source as possible.
- 5) Ensuring that sustainable drainage systems deliver multiple benefits, protect water quality, be planned cohesively across sites (including phased schemes), and include long-term management to ensure they function effectively throughout the development's lifetime.
- 6) Securing the remediation of contaminated land and the careful design of developments to minimise the potential for urban diffuse pollution to affect the water environment;

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 SP1, *Spatial Principles*, - Development in all parts of the City should make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods of choice including creating well designed places that enhance or create character and protect and enhance the built and natural environment.

Policy DM1, *Development Management* – This policy states that all development should have regard to a number of specific issues, of which the following are of most relevance:-

- Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail.
- Impact on the surrounding areas in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development. Development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area.
- Effects on amenity, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality, odours, litter, vermin, birds, road safety and traffic generation. This could also include proposals which would be sensitive to existing environmental conditions, such as noise.
- Community safety and crime prevention.
- Design for health.
- Vehicular access and car parking.
- Effects relating to biodiversity, landscape, archaeological or built heritage.
- Green Infrastructure including open space, both public and private
- Flood risk and drainage.

Policy EN10, *Safeguarding Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities* – This policy states that the Council will seek to retain and improve existing open spaces, sport and recreation facilities to the standards set out above and provide a network of diverse, multi-functional open spaces. Proposals will be supported that:

- improve the quality and quantity of accessible open space, sport and recreation in the local area
- provide innovative solutions to improving the network of existing open spaces, increase accessibility to green corridors, and enhance biodiversity
- improve access to open space for disabled people

Proposals on existing open spaces and sport and recreation facilities will only be permitted where:

- Equivalent or better replacement open space, sport or recreation facilities will be provided in the local area;

or

- The site has been demonstrated to be surplus for its current open space, sport or recreation function and the City wide standards set out above are maintained, and

a) it could not fulfil other unsatisfied open space, sport or recreation needs, and

b) a proposed replacement will remedy a deficiency in another type of open space, sport or recreation facility in the local area;

or

- The development will be ancillary to the open space, sport or recreation facility and complement the use or character.

Policy EN15, *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation* – This policy states that the Council will seek to maintain or enhance sites of biodiversity and geological value throughout the City. It states further that developers will be expected to identify and implement reasonable opportunities to enhance, restore or create new biodiversity. Finally, it states that any adverse impacts on biodiversity will need to be justified against the wider benefits of the proposal, assessed against other core strategy policies and where adverse impacts are unavoidable, developers will be required to provide appropriate mitigation.

Issues

Principle of the Proposal – The principle of installing a security fence around the playing fields has already been established through the previously approved application (ref. 136137/FO/2023), granted in April 2024. This earlier consent confirmed that the introduction of fencing in this location was acceptable in land-use terms and aligned with the established use and function of the site. The fact that planning permission has previously been granted and is still capable of being implemented is a material consideration that must carry substantial weight in the decision-making process.

However, the revised scheme requires a fresh assessment of any potential implications arising from amendments to the fence alignment, particularly where it adjoins the public footpath running alongside the River Mersey. In this context, it is necessary to consider whether the proposed changes would give rise to any material effects on the visual character of the area. Additionally, as the site lies within Flood Zone 3, it is essential to evaluate whether the repositioned fencing could impede the site's capacity to manage and convey floodwater during extreme events. This includes consideration of recent flood episodes, such as the significant event recorded in January 2025, and whether the proposal maintains the site's resilience and does not exacerbate flood risk on-site or elsewhere.

Siting of the Proposed Fencing – As stated earlier in this report, the location of the fencing along sections A, B and D, as annotated below, would remain the same as under the original planning permission. The fencing along sections A and D would still be located behind the existing treeline, while that along section B, some of which remains in-situ from the original installation, would still be located on the western edge of the playing field.



The main difference in the fence's location would be along section C. The original planning permission allowed for the erection of fencing in the position of the red dotted line below and as shown in the photograph following that which was taken in January 2025.

Upon further assessment by the applicant, following concerns raised by the public and the damage caused to the previously approved fencing by the January 2025 floods, it is now proposed to locate it behind the tree line, annotated by the yellow dotted line. This will ensure that it can withstand similar flood events without incurring the same damage as the existing landscaping would help trap floating debris and vegetation, while changes to the design of the fencing would also allow water to pass through it more freely



A number of residents have expressed concerns that the proposed fencing along section C would appear visually intrusive and create an undue sense of enclosure, leaving them feeling increasingly hemmed in. Although the previously approved alignment was considered acceptable, it is acknowledged that repositioning the fence further into the site, set back behind the existing tree line, would significantly reduce its perceived dominance. This adjustment would help maintain a greater sense of openness and offer a more sympathetic relationship with the established landscaping.

Overall, it is considered that relocating the fencing behind the existing treeline, where it adjoins the River Mersey, would improve its flood resilience and improve the sense of openness of users of the footpath.

However, it must be noted that a fence restricted to 2m in height could be erected at this location under permitted development rights without the need for planning permission and this fall-back position must also be given weight in the decision-making process.

Impact on the Trans Pennine Trail – The proposed fencing along Section D would remain positioned behind the existing treeline (indicated by the red dotted line) and therefore would not encroach upon the Trans Pennine Trail (shown by the yellow arrow).



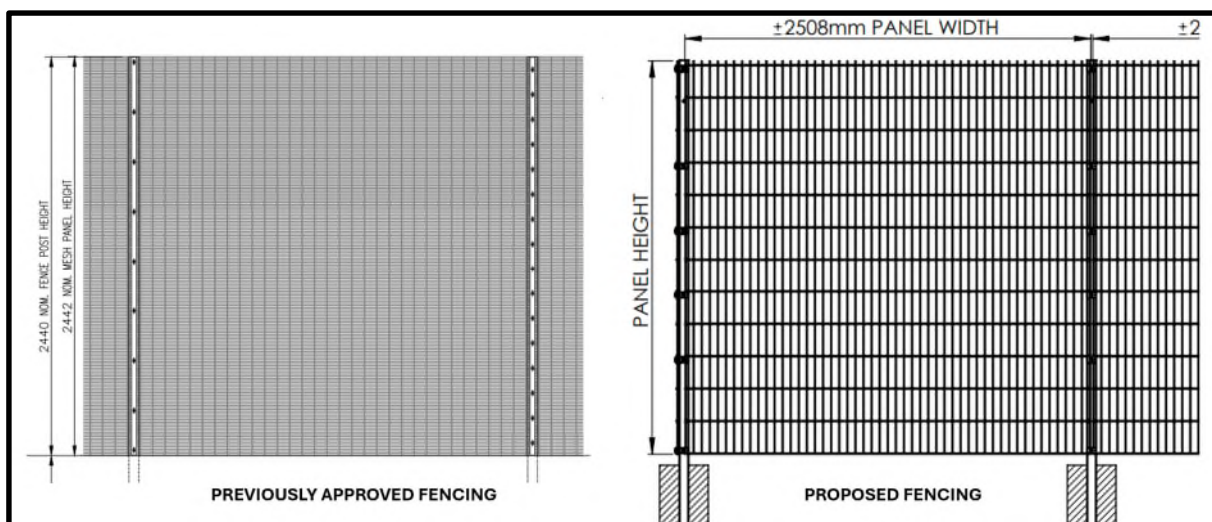
The Trans Pennine Trail team has confirmed that they have no objection to the proposal. However, they have requested that a specific section, located near the point where the trail turns towards Stockport, be set further back, in line with the dotted line shown below. The applicant has been asked to explore the feasibility of realigning this part of the fencing, but a decision is required to be made on the proposal as shown on the submitted drawings and the impacts are considered acceptable and this is in line with the approval previously granted.



Design of the Proposed Fencing – The previously approved fencing (see below) was of a weld-mesh design with small apertures and it was these small apertures that trapped vegetation, leading to a build-up of water pressure which ultimately led to it being damaged.



To prevent this issue from occurring again, the applicant now proposes an amended fencing design incorporating wider apertures. The differences between the existing approved fence type and the proposed type are illustrated below.



As the revised fencing would remain a green weld-mesh design and would be visually similar in appearance, the proposed change is considered acceptable.

Flood Risk – The site has experienced several significant flood events in recent years, most notably in January 2021, February 2022 and January 2025, during which the playing fields were entirely inundated. The photograph below, taken following the January 2025 event, illustrates the extent of flooding, with the red line identifying the position of the fencing now proposed.



The fencing approved under the earlier consent was constructed with a tighter mesh. During the 2025 flood event, this design trapped substantial debris and vegetation. As floodwaters exerted pressure against the accumulated material, sections of the fence were severely damaged, as shown in the images below.



Members of the public have raised concerns that relocating the fencing to its proposed position may restrict the natural movement of floodwater onto the playing fields. The fear expressed is that debris could again become trapped, diverting water towards residential properties on the western side of Wilmslow Road.

These concerns are understandable given the site's flooding history. However, the revised design, positioned further within the site and incorporating a wider-aperture mesh, reduces the likelihood of debris accumulation and therefore the risk of deflecting floodwater. On this basis, it is not considered that the proposal would increase flood risk to nearby residential properties.

The Environment Agency has been consulted and raised no objection to the scheme, acknowledging that the application "*presents a more favourable option in flood risk and better aligns with the NPPF in terms of avoiding increasing flood risk elsewhere.*"

Given the above, it is not considered that relocating the fencing further into the site or changing its design to one with wider apertures would impede flood flows or compromise the operation of existing flood-management infrastructure. Again, it must be noted that a fence of 2m in height could be erected without any control by the Local Planning Authority.

Residential Amenity – The nearest residential properties are located approximately 65 metres to the west, on the opposite side of Wilmslow Road. Given this separation distance, together with the screening provided by existing vegetation, it is not considered that the proposed fencing would result in any undue harm to the residential amenity of these occupants.

Visual Amenity – Given design of the proposed fencing, the fact it would be colour coat green and sited further into the site behind the existing treeline, it is not considered that the proposal would have an unduly detrimental impact upon the levels of visual amenity enjoyed by users of the footpath that runs along the top of the riverbank. It is acknowledged that a number of other sites that adjoin the River Mersey have also used the type of fencing proposed in this instance.

Overall, given its siting and design, the proposed fencing is considered to have an appropriate appearance within the landscape character of the River Mersey valley.

Pedestrian and Highway Safety – Given its location and design, the proposed fencing and associated gates do not raise any concerns in respect of pedestrian and highway safety.

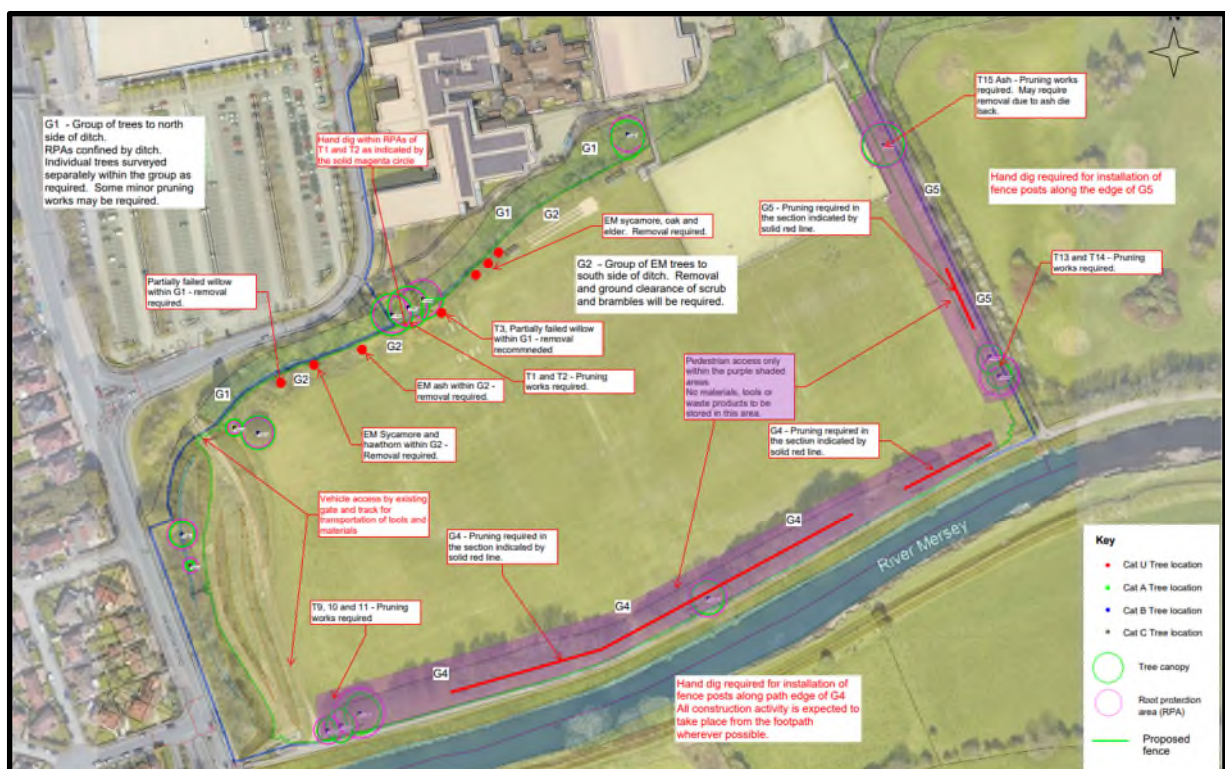
Crime and Security – The proposal does not raise any crime or security concerns. Greater Manchester Police were consulted, and they have confirmed they have no objections to the proposed fencing. In this context, and given the nature of the works, the development is considered acceptable in respect of crime prevention and community safety.

Ecological Impacts – Given the location of the proposed fencing it is not anticipated that the amendments now proposed would have a detrimental impact upon any known protected species. Notwithstanding this, the comments of GMEU are noted and to ensure that any impact upon bats is minimised a condition is suggested (condition no. 7) which would require the applicant to undertake a Ground Level Tree Assessment for the presence of bats before any of the fencing is erected.

This approach is considered acceptable in this instance.

Trees – To facilitate the installation of the proposed fencing, a number of trees would require removal. As illustrated in the image below, the trees identified for felling (marked with red dots) are located along the northern edge of the pitches and fall within Category U. These trees are either dead, in immediate and irreversible decline, or exhibit serious, irremediable structural defects that render them unsuitable for retention.

In addition, several other trees would require pruning to accommodate the fencing. Due to the presence of Ash Dieback, there is also a possibility that tree T15 (Category C) may need to be removed; however, this can only be properly assessed once the tree is in full leaf later in the growing season.



As noted in the consultation responses, the Neighbourhood Officer (Arboriculture) raises no objections to the proposed tree works, provided that all operations are undertaken in accordance with the relevant British Standard, BS 3998 – Tree Work: Recommendations.

To mitigate the loss of any trees removed as part of the proposal, the inclusion of a tree replacement condition is recommended.

Biodiversity Enhancements – Although the proposal is not expected to have any undue adverse impact on known ecological features, it is considered appropriate to require the incorporation of biodiversity enhancements as part of the scheme. Measures such as the installation of bat boxes, bird boxes, or similar ecological features would contribute positively to local biodiversity.

When combined with the proposed replacement tree planting, these enhancements would help to ensure that any ecological impact arising from the development is suitably minimised and that overall biodiversity value is maintained or improved.

Sport Pitches – It is recognised that the proposed development would not give rise to any impacts on the availability, function, or usage of existing sport pitch provision.

Conclusion

The principle of installing security fencing around the playing fields has already been established through the granting of the previous planning permission and it is acknowledged that the fallback position afforded by Permitted Development Rights would allow the school to erect a 2 metres high fence should they wish.

Re-aligning the fencing behind the existing tree line, particularly along Section C, would reduce its visual prominence, maintain a greater sense of openness for users of the riverside footpath and improve its resilience to future flood events. The revised mesh design, incorporating wider apertures, lessens the likelihood of debris accumulation and therefore avoids exacerbating flood risk. The Environment Agency has raised no objection to these changes and the fencing would remain sufficiently distant from flood management infrastructure.

No concerns have been identified regarding residential amenity, pedestrian or highway safety, or crime and security, and neither the Trans Pennine Trail team nor Greater Manchester Police object to the proposal. While the works require the removal of several Category U trees and pruning of others, these impacts are considered acceptable, subject to adherence to BS 3998 and a condition requiring replacement tree planting.

Finally, incorporating biodiversity enhancements, such as bird or bat boxes, will help offset any ecological impact and ensure that the scheme delivers a net positive contribution where feasible.

It is also the case that there are significant public benefits in relation to the erection of the fencing to protect children using the playing fields and to also protect the playing pitches themselves from damage.

For these reasons, the revised fencing proposal is acceptable.

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

Officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to issues arising from the consideration of this application.

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval

1) The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of planning permission reference 136137/FO/2023, that date being 19 April 2024.

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:

- Tree Age and Condition Survey, received on 4 December 2025

- Design and Access Statement, received on 4 December 2025
- Fence location plan, drawing no. S9-10434-P-09-A1, received on 19 January 2026
- Fence Drawing, drawing no. 900.039, received on 19 January 2026
- Flood Risk Assessment, received on 19 January 2026

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

3) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in full accordance with the compound location details approved under application CDN/24/0405.

Reason - To safeguard residential and visual amenity and to protect the playing field from damage, loss or reduced availability of use, in accordance with Policies DM1 and EN10 of the Manchester Core Strategy.

4) All work within the Root Protection Areas of the retained trees should be carried out by a competent contractor in accordance with British Standard BS 3998 "Recommendations for Tree Work" and the recommendations of the Tree Age and Condition Survey/Arboricultural Impact Assessment, received on 4 December 2025.

Reason - In order avoid damage to trees/shrubs adjacent to and within the site which are of important amenity value to the area and in order to protect the character of the area, in accordance with Policies EN9 and EN15 of the Manchester Core Strategy.

5) No development shall commence until a tree replacement plan in line with the Manchester Tree Strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented not later than 12 months from the date the installation of the fencing has been completed. If within a period of 5 years from the date of the planting of any tree, that tree or any tree planted in replacement for it, is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, or becomes, in the opinion of the local planning authority, seriously damaged or defective, another tree of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place.

Reason - To ensure that a satisfactory landscaping scheme for the development is carried out that respects the character and visual amenities of the area, in accordance with Policies SP1, EN9 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy.

6) Above grounds works shall not commence until details of on-site biodiversity enhancements (e.g. bird and bat boxes), including a timetable for their installation and maintenance regime, have been submitted to and been approved by the City Council as local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason - To ensure the protection of habitat of species that are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 or as subsequently amended in order to comply with Policy EN15 of the Manchester Core Strategy.

7) No fencing shall be erected until a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) for the presence of bats has been undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist and submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as Local Planning Authority.

The development shall thereafter be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved GLTA and any mitigation, licensing, supervision, and timing restrictions specified. No works to trees (including pruning, felling, drilling, coring, or fixing to trunks/limbs) and no ground works within root protection areas shall take place until the Local Planning Authority has confirmed in writing that the submitted GLTA is satisfactory and, where required, that any further survey/mitigation/licensing has been completed.

Reason – To ensure that legally protected species are not harmed and that their roosting sites and foraging/commuting habitats are safeguarded during installation of the fence, pursuant to Policy EN15 in the Manchester Core Strategy, Policies JP-G7 and JP-G8 in The Places for Everyone Plan, the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and the requirements of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 or as subsequently amended.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

The documents referred to in the course of this report are either contained in the file(s) relating to application ref: 144717/JO/2025 held by planning or are City Council planning policies, the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester, national planning guidance documents, or relevant decisions on other applications or appeals, copies of which are held by the Planning Division.

The following residents, businesses and other third parties in the area were consulted/notified on the application:

Highway Services
Neighbourhood Team Leader (Arboriculture)
MCC Flood Risk Management
Greater Manchester Police
Environment Agency
Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
Didsbury Civic Society
Sport England
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Cadent Gas Ltd

A map showing the neighbours notified of the application is attached at the end of the report.

Representations were received from the following third parties:

Highway Services
Greater Manchester Police
Environment Agency
Greater Manchester Ecology Unit

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Relevant Contact Officer : David Lawless
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