

## **ITEM 2**

<b>Application Reference</b>	DC/089162
<b>Location:</b>	Stockport School Mile End Lane Great Moor Stockport SK2 6BW
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Detailed application for the provision of an artificial grass pitch, floodlighting and associated works.
<b>Type Of Application:</b>	Full Planning Application (Public Service Infrastructure Development)
<b>Registration Date:</b>	04.08.2023
<b>Expiry Date:</b>	Extension of Time to 21.12.2023
<b>Case Officer:</b>	Helen Hodgett
<b>Applicant:</b>	Stockport School, Mile End Lane, Great Moor, Stockport SK2 6BW
<b>Agent:</b>	Grass Roots Planning Ltd.

### **DELEGATION/COMMITTEE STATUS**

This application is before Stepping Hill Area Committee, as representations of objection have been received from the occupiers of more than 4 properties, which are contrary to the recommendation to grant planning permission.

Stepping Hill Area Committee can make a decision upon this planning application.

### **DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT**

This application proposes the provision of an artificial grass pitch (AGP), floodlighting and associated works. The AGP would be located upon the site of an existing winter, 9 v 9 (11 v 11 youth) participant, natural grass surfaced pitch, at Stockport School, within the south eastern portion of the school site, adjacent to Buxton Road / the A6 and Lake Street.

The area of the proposed AGP is also currently marked and used as a 300m running track and rounders pitch in the summer. Rugby pitch markings are also overlaid the football pitch markings in the winter.

The AGP would be a 3G pitch (third generation synthetic turf, sand infill and rubber infill pitch), and would measure 97 metres by 61 metres (5,917 square metres). As show within the submitted documents, the AGP would be marked out for uses including, one 11 v 11 game; one 9 v 9 game; two 7 v 7 games; four 5 a-side games; 4 training areas. Along with football use, the proposed AGP would be specifically suitable for rugby training.

The AGP would be bounded by 4.5 metre high, green colour, (ref. RAL BS EN 13438 2005), specialist sports mesh fencing, with padlock access gates. The fencing, as shown within the submitted documents, incorporates 'rebound panels.' It is proposed that a pitch supervisor, employed by the school, would be responsible for management of the hires, including opening and securing the AGP.

A scheme to floodlight the AGP has been professionally designed for this specific site, with accompanying technical illuminance plots submitted to illustrate light spill. Six 15 metre high floodlighting columns with LED lighting are proposed to be sited around the pitch.

A fenced spectator standing area would be located to the southeast side of the pitch, along with an associated detached storage unit, which would measure 6.06 metres in length by 2.44 metres in width and 2.59 metres in height.

As can be seen within the submitted proposed site plan, the proposed siting of the AGP allows for a second natural grass pitch to be retained adjacent to the proposed AGP, and also for the alternate summer provisions of a six lane sprint track and three lane 150m oval loop track, together with a rounders pitch. The two existing long-jumps would be relocated north of their current location behind the existing MUGA.

The Planning Statement advises there is currently no community use of the playing fields, despite demand, due to the pitch surface. Natural grass surfaces by nature have a limited level of usage before they become churned up and unusable, with periods of wet weather restricting any usage. There are a number of established local sports clubs that have been identified as partner clubs for the proposed AGP, including football, rugby, lacrosse and cricket clubs.

It is proposed that the AGP would be used by the school's pupils during the school day during school term time, and for community use at other times. The proposed hours of use are from 8:00am to 22:00pm Monday to Friday and from 8:00am to 18:00pm at the weekend.

Pedestrian and cyclist access to the proposed AGP would be via the existing pedestrian access only on Mile End Lane opposite Seymour Road. It is proposed that 12 covered and secure cycle parking spaces would be provided in association with the use. This would be in addition to the 60 cycle spaces already available.

New parking spaces for 48 cars, including 3 accessible spaces, would be created within the site in association with the proposed use. The proposed parking spaces would be located, as shown within the proposed plans, adjacent to 12 existing car parking spaces, which are located around the central crescent shaped section of the entrance plaza. Electric Vehicle (EV) charging provision within 6 of the 48 new car parking spaces would be included.

Access for cars would be segregated from the access for cyclists and pedestrians. Access for cars would be via the existing vehicle access on Mile End Lane, adjacent to Granby Road. The access point would, however, be enlarged in width to allow space for 2 cars to pass in the area of the junction of the access with Mile End Lane. An additional passing place would additionally be provided along the route of the existing access route within the site.

It is confirmed that the proposed community use of the AGP would not include the use of the existing vehicle parking area via Sandhurst Road, with this area of the site

specifically excluded from the application site edged in red. The community use proposal would also not include the use of the existing controlled pedestrian access on Lake Street.

It is not proposed to fell any trees as part of the proposed development, with existing trees to be protected. It is proposed to plant 5 additional trees within the site, as shown within the submitted plans.

The application is accompanied by the following documents:

Planning, Design and Access Statement, including details of public consultation carried out prior to the submission of the application.

Transport Technical Note

Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy

Ecological Appraisal Report

Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA)

Floodlighting proposal illuminance plots

Noise Technical Note

Crime Impact Statement

## **SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

This application relates to part of the existing grass playing field of Stockport School, within the southeastern portion of the school site, adjacent to Buxton Road / the A6 and Lake Street. The boundary of the school site and these highways is bounded with mesh security fencing.

Stockport School is a Stockport MBC Secondary School, bounded by Buxton Road/A6, Mile End Lane, Sandhurst Road and Lake Street. The school is located within a Predominantly Residential Area, as regards allocation within the Council's development plan, with the playing field allocated as Local Open Space. The majority of this application site is located within land designated as Local Open Space.

The historic school building is a locally listed building (a non-designated heritage asset). The setting of the locally listed building includes the open space upon part of which it is proposed to develop the AGP.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 of the Environment Agency's mapping (low risk) and is within a Coal Authority low risk area. Sections of the adjacent A6 / Buxton Road are located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQA).

Residential properties surround the perimeter of the whole school site on Mile End Lane, Sandhurst Road, Lake Street and Buxton Road. There are also non-residential properties located on Lake Street, including a vehicle MOT and service garage, and a day nursery, with a business park off Sandhurst Road. Stockport Grammar School is also located upon the opposite side of the A6 / Buxton Road.

The proposed AGP would be located adjacent to the existing mature trees and mesh security fencing to Buxton Road. The proposed AGP, including associated floodlights and fencing, would be located approximately 50 metres from the front elevations of the nearest residential properties on Lake Street. As can be seen within the proposed site plan, there is located an existing day nursery building, the school's existing multi-use games area (MUGA) and school buildings between the site of the proposed AGP and houses on Lake Street.

Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs)/parking restrictions are in place on Lake Street, where residents park vehicles on-street, as properties do not include off-street parking. Parking/servicing restrictions on Lake Street include resident parking areas, school keep clear areas and double yellow restrictions, together with traffic calming measures.

Mile End Lane also includes TROs, including, double-yellow lines, school keep clear markings, with railings, together with traffic calming measures, including cushions, within the carriageway. TROs prohibit stopping/parking in the area of the existing pedestrian/cyclist or vehicle accesses for the school site on Mile End Lane.

The site is located within a sustainable location in terms of travel, with the site surrounded by a sizeable local population within walking distance of the site. The site is also accessible by public transport, including bus routes along the A6/Buxton Road, and there is covered and secure cycle parking available on site.

As can be seen from the submitted location plan, with the application site edged in red, and other land within the same ownership edged in blue, Stockport School includes buildings, and an extensive external curtilage, which includes playing fields, games courts, parking, servicing and vehicle and pedestrian circulation spaces.

Existing sports provision at the school site is stated to include:

- 4-court sports hall with changing rooms;
- Gymnasium
- 5x unlit netball courts overlaid with 6 tennis courts
- 2 long-jumps
- Grass playing fields (used as a running track and rounders pitch in the summer and 2 football pitches overlaid with rugby lines in the winter)
- 1 unlit sand AGP
- 1 MUGA with basket ball goals.

The school has a capacity of approximately 1,300 students aged between 11 and 16 years. The school's timetabled hours of operation for Tutor/Registration time and daily lessons are: 8.40am – 3.00pm (Mon/Tues/Wed/Fri) and 8.40am – 3.50pm (Thurs).

The majority of the school site is not subject to planning conditions controlling hours of use. From the below planning history, it is the sports hall and also the games court to the rear of the sports hall, adjacent to Sandhurst Road, that are restricted in terms of use and associated hours of operation.

The only regular letting of the school premises that the school currently has is with the Pauline Quirke Academy – Drama and Performing Arts. They use the dining room, drama studio and up to two classrooms on Saturdays, with access via Sandhurst Road. Students attend for one of two sessions, either AM or PM. Parents do not stay on site therefore, if students arrive/depart by car they are dropped off/picked up. The community use of the sports hall, which was recently granted consent under planning ref. DC/085815, has not, yet, commenced.

## **POLICY BACKGROUND**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (“PCPA 2004”) requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **The Development Plan includes-**

- Policies set out in the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review adopted 31<sup>st</sup> May 2006 which have been saved by direction under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; &
- Policies set out in the Stockport Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document adopted 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

### **Saved policies of the SUDP Review**

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/current-planning-policies>

EP1.7 Development and Flood Risk

EP1.9 Safeguarding of Aerodromes and Air Navigation Facilities

UOS1.3 Protection of Local Open Space

L1.1 Land for Active Recreation

L1.2 Children’s Play

CTF1.1 Development of Community Services and Facilities

CDH1.2 Non Residential Development in Residential Areas

CDH1.9 Community Facilities in Predominantly Residential Areas

### **LDF Core Strategy/Development Management policies**

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/current-planning-policies>

CS1: OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

SD-1: Creating Sustainable Communities

SD-6: Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change

CS:5: ACCESS TO SERVICES

AS-2: Improving Indoor Sports, Community and Education Facilities and their Accessibility

CS8: SAFEGUARDING AND IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT

SIE-1: Quality Places

SIE-2: Provision of Recreation and Amenity Open Space in New Developments

SIE-3: Protecting, Safeguarding and Enhancing the Environment

CS9: TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

CS10: AN EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT NETWORK

T-1: Transport and Development

T-2: Parking in Developments

T-3: Safety and Capacity on the Highway Network

## **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

Supplementary Planning Guidance does not form part of the Statutory Development Plan; nevertheless it does provide non-statutory Council approved guidance that is a material consideration when determining planning applications.

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/topic/current-planning-policies>

## **National Planning Policy Framework**

The NPPF (2021) sets out the Government's position on the role of the planning system in both plan-making and decision-taking. It states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, in economic, social and environmental terms, and it states that there should be "presumption in favour of sustainable development" and sets out what this means for decision taking.

The NPPF (2021) confirms the plan-led approach to the planning system and that decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Relevant paragraphs within the NPPF include:-

[National Planning Policy Framework.](#)

Para. 1-2: Introduction

Para. 7-12: Achieving Sustainable Development

Para. 38, 39, 47, 55-58: Decision Making

Para. 92, 93, 95, 96: Promoting Healthy & Safe Communities

Para. 98-99, 101-103: Open space and recreation

Para. 104, 105, 110 – 113: Promoting Sustainable Transport

Para. 119, 120, 123, 124: Making Effective Use of Land

Para. 126, 130, 131, 134: Achieving Well Designed Places

Para; 152, 154, 157, 159, 167, 169: Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding & Coastal Change

Para. 174, 180, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Para. 189, 194, 195, 197, 199, 203: Proposals affecting heritage assets and considering potential impacts

Para. 218, 219: Implementation

## **Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)**

The PPG is a web-based resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place (launched in March 2014) and coincided with the cancelling of the majority of Government Circulars which had previously given guidance on many aspects of planning.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

## **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

DC/085815 – Type: MMA, Address: Stockport School, Mile End Lane, Great Moor, Stockport SK2 6BW. Decision: Granted. Decision Date: 30-MAR-23, Proposal: This

MMA consent removed Condition 2, (to now consent community use of the sports hall) and varied Condition 3 (regarding hours of use), of planning approval DC/004252, which granted planning permission for the “New sports hall and changing rooms.”

DC/050890 – Resurfacing and edging existing overflow car park (adjacent to sports hall) (Retrospective). Granted 15/11/2012

DC/051027 – Erection of a 3 metre high fence with gates around a playing /games surface (adjacent to Lake Street on site of former swimming pool). Granted 28/11/2012

DC/049418 – Demolish redundant school swimming pool. Granted 16/4/2012

DC/048665 – Erection of two no. single storey extensions to form three no. additional classrooms and a drama studio. (additions to sports hall building). Granted 29/2/2012

DC/043247 - Erection of extension to sports hall to accommodate two number classrooms and multi use area for creative media diploma. Granted 18/1/2010

DC/026550 – Removal of condition 2 & variation of Condition 3 of Consent DC004252 relating to the sports hall, to increase hours of use and allow use by the wider community together with new vehicular access from Mile End Lane. Refused 19.07.2007

DC/020761 - Type: FUL, Address: Stockport School, Mile End Lane, Stockport SK2 6BW. Decision: Granted. Decision Date: 26-OCT-05, Proposal: Erection of 2.4 metre high green-coloured mesh fencing & associated gates around the school perimeter.

DC/013135 – Construction of artificial turf pitch and associated fencing and landscaping – located between sports hall and Sandhurst Road (Retrospective application) – Granted 18.12.2003.

DC/012041 – Removal of condition No. 2 & variation of condition No.3 of planning permission DC004252, to allow for extended hours of use of the school sports hall and its use by the general community – Refused 09.06.2004

DC/004252 – New sports hall and changing rooms – Granted 20.08.2001

## **CONSULTATION**

In order to publicise the application, the occupiers of 100 neighbouring properties were notified of this planning application by letter.

Site notices were also posted adjacent to the application site on 25/8/23, and a notice was published in the Stockport Express, to give publicity to the application. The application is publically available via the Council's website.

The Council has received representations from 12 contributors objecting to the application.

## **The representations of objection can be summarised as follows:**

### **Amenity:**

- Support the all-weather pitch provision, however, cannot support the proposed out of hours usage, due to the impact upon the residential amenities of the occupiers of houses in close proximity, including within Lake Street.
- Accept noise from the school during the daytime and during term time.
- This proposal introduces noise, disturbance and lighting outside of term time and outside of the school day into the evening and weekends, which will be to the detriment of residential amenity.
- Proposal will severely impact upon the life quality of residents of the neighbouring roads, particularly Lake Street.
- Noise levels from a football game (shouting from players and spectators, whistling from referee and the ball continually banging against a metal fence), are going to disturb the bit of peace residents have when the school finishes for the day until late into the evening. This will be worse in the summer when windows are open and residents are sitting in gardens. Use will be audible above the T.V.
- The impact statement references noise reduction, specifically ball impact noise on fences and efforts to reduce this. It is noise from players that is of more concern, as regards impact upon amenity, including the language likely to be used at times.
- Noise nuisance will be caused by vehicles and people within residential streets beyond 10pm at night, as people leave the facility. Noise from cars moving, car doors banging and from people. Cars will inevitably park on residential streets, including Lake Street, Mile End Lane and Granby Road.
- There will be disturbance and light pollution from the floodlighting, causing annoyance and disamenity within properties, including within front rooms and bedrooms, especially in the winter.
- The design and visual impact needs to be considered, along with loss of privacy and pollution, including smell.
- Proposed evening use should instead cease at 9pm, with Saturday and Sunday mornings to instead start at 9am at the earliest. Otherwise, residents of the 12 houses in lower Lake Street would not be able to sleep before 10pm or longer than 8am on Saturday and Sunday. People want to relax free of the floodlighting and the school noise experienced Monday to Friday.



- The existing houses are not acoustically insulated or designed to be able to stop the noise and lighting from detrimentally impacting upon amenity. Doubt the Council will pay for triple glazing and block out curtains.
- People, including children need to sleep within bedrooms close to the proposed floodlighting.
- When the school gates open on Mile End Lane, annoying, very bright flashing lights operate. It would not be acceptable for this to occur in connection with the proposed use.
- Proposed use is suited to a commercial/industrial locality, rather than a residential area, including at a leisure centre, due to the noise and traffic it will generate.

#### Highways:

- There are already traffic/parking issues and high footfall on Lake Street and Mile End Lane. The proposal will make existing issues worse. It is very difficult to park on Lake Street now.
- People will park in designated residents only parking areas, as they do during school hours.
- The proposal will add another reason for people to use Lake Street as a cut through, especially if Mile End is congested. Proposal will add extra traffic to Mile End Lane, which is already busy.
- Lake Street is a relatively narrow residential street, which has parking to both sides and is already unacceptably congested. There is not capacity for more traffic and parking associated with the proposed use until 10pm. Lake Street already has the following additional traffic and parking demand from: the trading estate, including large and sometimes articulated lorries from 6am to 10pm; the garage, which uses Lake Street as a forecourt; and the nursery, which is adjacent to an access into and out of the school site, where parents already cause traffic chaos until 7pm.
- Should be a plan for a single-yellow line TRO on Lake Street to stop continual and non-stop parking.
- Floodlighting may prove a dangerous distraction to vehicles passing on Buxton Road and Mile End Lane.

#### Ecology:

- Object to the proposed artificial grass, as it is not environmentally friendly, with a large carbon footprint, and including large volumes of plastic.

- Residue and surface water run-off from the artificial grass will contaminate and pollute soils and watercourses with micro-plastics.
- The field is used by wildlife, including birds and squirrels. Wildlife, including birds will be unable to continue to feed upon/ utilise the area.

#### Drainage:

- The land drains should instead be renewed/ a new drainage system installed for the existing grass surface, and then more usage could be gained from the existing grass pitches. This would stop the current run-off from the playing fields flooding surrounding areas and the A6. An artificial surface could make flooding worse.

#### Other matters:

- Funding should come from Council/Education budgets rather than from commercial enterprise.
- If funded, could then be used by school students within regular school term hours, which would be acceptable.
- There are enough floodlit pitches in this area already, which questions the need for this facility.
- According to SchoolHire.co.uk there are already currently 117 artificial grass playing pitches available for hire in Greater Manchester.
- The proposed artificial surface will disintegrate over a relatively short period in comparison to natural grass. Maintenance of the artificial surface can arguably cost equal to or more than real turf.
- In hot weather, the surface of an artificial pitch can become unusable, due to heat build-up in the plastic within the surface.
- Microplastics will contaminate the surrounding environment and can also be ingested by users.
- Concern regarding management of out of hour's provision, including the behaviour of customers, including not using the adjacent grass playing fields, also the upkeep and cleaning.
- There is no mention of provision of toilets, washing or changing facilities. Have read of similar developments where residents have suffered with people using gardens and doorways as toilet facilities, due to a lack of provision.
- Other previously consented uses have resulted in additional parking on roads including Mile End Lane, when assurances were given that the uses would be sustainable.

- Proposal will delete the existing circular athletics running track.
- Approval should not be given for the proposed artificial pitch provision, with the resultant associated negative impacts, as the pitch provision is already provided for the benefit of the children at the school in a natural form.
- The proposal will not benefit Stockport School and residents. This is a replacement for the Dialstone Centre, which closed in January 2022.
- There is no real opportunity for residents to influence this proposal, which will impact unacceptably upon residents, leaving residents living with the artificial grass, artificial light and loud noise 24/7.

### **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which details the public consultation that was carried out by the applicant ahead of submitting a full application for the development proposed is included in the submission. This is an important element of the planning process and the determination of this application. Early public engagement as well as that with statutory and non statutory consultees is not only encouraged by this Planning Authority but also by the Government through the NPPF (para's 39 to 42).

The Statement advises that:-

An on-line public consultation on proposals for an AGP was conducted in March 2023 by Grass Roots Planning. The consultation responses resulted in a number of amendments to the development proposal being made before submission to Stockport Council Local Planning Authority.

#### **The following key points were made by participants:**

- More car parking;
- New parking spaces for parents' evening;
- Remove grass areas from north and east elevations of the pitch;
- Extra playground space;
- Floodlighting too bright and too high;
- Long Jump on eastern side of the pitch with run-ups in existing tarmac areas;
- Provide changing facilities (stand-alone facility for community use);
- Fencing - distasteful;
- Concerns over anti-social behaviour - noise generated by the teams. Not suitable for a residential area;
- 10 pm finish not appropriate nor weekend use;
- Incorporation of single yellow lines in the surrounding area.

#### **The following actions/ changes were taken/made to the proposals as a result of the feedback provided by local residents:**

- Reduction of the pitch size to allow for the provision of extensive new parking area to the front of the school, which creates an additional 48 spaces;
- Lighting Scheme informed by a Lighting Impact Assessment and has incorporated cowls and shields to the backs of the lights to reduce spill as far as possible;

- A Parking Management Plan will be considered as part of the application if deemed required;
- A new passing place has been incorporated onto the access road to improve vehicular movements and traffic flows; and
- A Noise Impact Assessment has been undertaken to ensure that residents would not be adversely affected by noise. Whilst no mitigation is required in the form of fencing, a Noise Management Plan can be secured by condition, with a series of measures to ensure good behaviour on site.

## **CONSULTEE RESPONSES**

**SMBC Highways** – No objections, subject to conditions.

Recommend conditions regarding:

- Submission and agreement of final details of proposed widened access off Mile End Lane to allow for two-way vehicle movements (4.5 metres in width);
- Submission and agreement of a Construction Method Statement;
- Access to AGP for pedestrians and cyclists to be via existing pedestrian access off Mile End Lane, opposite Seymour Road;
- Submission and agreement of construction of car parking areas and the continued provision of car parking areas for users of the approved AGP.
- Submission and agreement of details of provision and management of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging for 6 spaces;
- Submission and agreement of details of proposed additional 12 cycle capacity covered and secure cycle storage;
- Submission and agreement of updated Travel Plan or addendum to the Travel Plan to include users of the AGP, to encourage sustainable travel.

It is recommended that all of the footpath through the car park should be separated by a fence, rather than a small section being left unfenced. The applicant has outlined that they do not consider that this is required. Whilst still of the view that extending the fence would be beneficial from a safety perspective, do not raise an objection to the scheme if the fence is not extended, but recommend that the school monitor car park safety if the scheme is approved and implemented and review this issue if safety issues arise.

**SMBC Environmental Health Officer (EHO) - Noise** – No objections, subject to conditions.

Recommended conditions including:

- Development shall operate in accordance with the submitted Noise Impact Assessment (NIA).
- Prior to the first use of the development, a Noise Management Plan shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for approval in writing.
- Anti-vibration neoprene washers shall be used at the fixings of the fence to the posts.
- The external lighting scheme shall be installed and thereafter operated and maintained throughout the use of the development in accordance with the illumination assessment: Halliday Lighting, Stockport School Football Club, Proposed Floodlighting, 02/06/23, Drawing No: HLS4433
- Lighting Condition; External Lighting - Permitted Hours. The lighting scheme shall not be in operation outside the hours of 08:00 -22:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 - 18:00 on weekends.

- Measures to ensure no illumination outside these hours, shall be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, prior to the use of the lighting commencing and retained thereafter.

Recommend informatives including:

- Construction hours.

**SMBC EHO – Air Quality** – No objection.

**SMBC EHO – Land Contamination** – The proposed development site has not been identified as potentially contaminated under the Council's review of potentially contaminated land sites.

The developer will need to keep a watching brief for any unexpected contamination when breaking ground for the new artificial grass pitch, floodlights and associated works and if any is found or suspected, this must be reported to the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Recommend an informative be included within the Decision Notice regarding reporting of unexpected contamination.

**SMBC Heritage Conservation Officer** – Stockport School is a locally listed building of local architectural and historic interest – for further information see the list entry at : [Stockport Historic Environment Database](#)

Immediately adjacent to the south east corner of the school site is the former United Reform Church & Sunday School, also listed for its local architectural and historic interest - for further information see the list entry at : [Stockport Historic Environment Database](#)

The Stockport School site lies opposite Stockport Grammar School and associated buildings, also listed for their local architectural and historic interest - for further information see the list entry at : [Stockport Historic Environment Database](#)

The character, amenity and appearance of the street scene along Buxton Road in the vicinity of the school frontage is largely defined by the visual relationships between these buildings, the open nature of the spaces between them and the contribution of mature trees. The playing fields provide clear views of the school from Buxton Road and Mile End Lane and they make a significant contribution to the quality and character of the school's setting, contributing to its identity as a local landmark.

No heritage assessment has been prepared in support of the current application. A heritage assessment was previously prepared in 2020 and submitted in support of DC/076471 (Full planning permission for the demolition of the existing temporary classrooms and external lift, and the development of a permanent two-storey teaching block with link bridges). The assessment states that 'the playing fields contribute considerably to the setting of the building and the greening of the wider area' and the conclusions of the assessment set out at section 4.2 are concurred with (see pages 30/31).

Fig 2.5 of the previously submitted heritage assessment indicates the original proposed layout of the playing fields, consisting of a 2 football pitches, a hockey pitch and a further football pitch to the north east of the site. The existing playing fields are currently shared between 2 natural grass football pitch and, during summer, are used as an athletics field. The original open layout has been progressively eroded over time through the introduction of 3 hard surfaced playing

pitches along the perimeters of the playing fields adjacent to Mile End Lane and Lake Street.

The current application sets out proposals for an artificial grass football pitch, six 15m tall floodlighting columns, 4.5m fencing enclosing the new pitch and associated works including remodelling of the grass slopes in the front of the school to accommodate extensions to car parking areas which would require the construction of a retaining wall.

Cumulatively these works would have a detrimental impact upon the immediate setting and views of the school, resulting in a loss of the sense of space and openness provided by the existing playing fields. They would have a similarly detrimental impact upon the setting of the former United Reform Church & Sunday School and character, amenity and appearance of the street scene. The increased sense of enclosure, addition of visual clutter, loss of natural grass and the impact of artificial lighting would significantly change the special qualities that make up the special character of the space during both day time and night time and they would reduce the prominence and identity of the school building.

For the purposes of planning policy, the proposals represent a level of harm that is 'less than substantial'. Para 199 of the NPPF states that 'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.'

Para 203 states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Para 195 states that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Para 197 is also relevant: In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The submitted planning statement acknowledges that the proposals will result in a level of harm to heritage assets (see para 6.59), but is silent in considering alternative options or measures that could be put in place to avoid or minimise that level of harm.

The proposals are in conflict with Development Management Policy SIE-3 (Protecting, safeguarding and enhancing the environment) of the adopted Stockport Core Strategy because they fail to preserve or enhance the special architectural, artistic, historic or archaeological significance of the heritage assets affected. It is recommended that the nature and scope of the proposals are reviewed with a view to avoiding harm to the setting of the locally listed buildings and the character, appearance and amenity of the street scene.

The proposed minor adjustments to the scheme would not reduce the overall level of harm involved with the current proposal: it is the principle of the proposed scheme, involving the loss of the existing playing fields and the impact that would have upon the character of the space, its openness, associated visual relationships and views, that contributes most significantly to the level of harm rather than the detail. Whilst there would not be objection to the proposed addition of trees along the southeast side of the pitch in order to provide a level of containment in this area, this measure would have a neutral impact upon the setting of heritage assets.

**SMBC Ecology** – The site has no nature conservation designations, legal or otherwise as listed in Stockport's current Local Plan (e.g. Site of Biological Importance, Local Nature Reserve, Green Chain).

It has, however, been identified as an opportunity area within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) pilot study for Greater Manchester. This is not necessarily a barrier to development and does not confer protection or prevention of land uses, but shows that such areas have been prioritised for restoring and linking up habitats.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was submitted by SEED Arboriculture Ltd on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 2023 (Associated with Collington Winter Environmental Ltd).

A Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancements Plan report has been submitted by SEED Arboriculture on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

Bats: are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. The latter implements the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora. Bats are included in Schedule 2 of the Regulations as 'European Protected Species of animals' (EPS).

Under the Regulations it is an offence to:

- 1) Deliberately capture or kill a wild EPS
- 2) Deliberately disturb a wild EPS in such a way that significantly affects:
  - a) the ability of a significant group to survive, breed, rear or nurture young.
  - b) the local distribution of that species.
- 3) Damage or destroy a breeding place or resting site of such an animal.

No buildings are impacted by the proposals. There are a number of semi-mature trees within the site boundary and therefore all trees on site have undergone a bat potential roost assessment during the 2023 SEED survey. All trees within and adjacent to the site boundary were assessed as having negligible potential. The site itself was providing some foraging and commuting potential due to the presence of the treelines. A bat roost was recorded within the school buildings in 2020 (common pipistrelle).

Great-crested Newts (GCN): are afforded the same legal protection as bats (detailed above).

There are no ponds on site or within 250m of the site. The surrounding area is dominated by residential housing and mains roads that present significant barriers to dispersal. Habitats on the site are of low quality for both GCN and other common amphibians, therefore further surveys have been reasonably discounted from further surveys and no further recommendations are made.

Badgers: are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act, 1992. This makes it an offence to kill or injure a badger or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to a sett. It is also an offence to disturb a badger while it is in a sett.

Badgers are widespread throughout the area, however no suitable sett building is available on-site and potential foraging habitat is largely inaccessible. Given the urban character of the surrounding areas badgers have been reasonably discounted from further surveys and no further recommendations are made.

Nesting Birds: The nests of all wild birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended).

Trees and other vegetation on-site have the potential to support nesting birds.

Hedgehog: populations are declining rapidly in the UK and are identified as a UKBAP Species and Species of Principle Importance under the NERC Act 2006. Hedgehog are also protected from capture and killing under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Schedule 6.

Habitats on site have low the potential to support hedgehog.

Reptiles: (grass snake, adder, common lizard and slow worm) are protected from killing and injury under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. All native species of reptiles in the UK are considered rare and most threatened under the NERC Act 2006 meaning they must be considered within the planning decision.

There are no reptile records within the local area and very limited habitat potential on-site. Reasonably discounted from further surveys and no further recommendations are made.

No invasive non-native plant species (INNS) were recorded on-site during the 2023 surveys.

#### Recommendations:

A sufficient level of ecological survey has now been undertaken and the following comments apply;

#### Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancements Plan (LBEP):

Although the development is classed as a major planning application, the proposals are small scale and only affect intensively managed grassland with scattered trees and shrubs and therefore a biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessment has not been requested this time. However, biodiversity enhancements are also expected as part of developments in line with local (paragraph 3.345 of the LDF) and national planning policy (NPPF). Given the sites existing low biodiversity value there is opportunity to make significant improvements and therefore a Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancements Plan was requested and has been submitted to the LPA for review.



- The LBEP report details provision of 3 bird boxes (2no. starling nest box (Schwegler 3S) and 1no. sparrow nest box (Schwegler 1B)) along with installation and maintenance details. The LBEP report details provision of 3 bat boxes (3no. Schwegler 2F) with appropriate installation and maintenance details.
- The 5 no. trees are proposed for the southern and eastern boundaries. This is appropriate given the space available.
- A wildlife area is proposed for the south-eastern corner of the site comprising a variety of appropriate native shrub species. In addition, wildlife refugia are proposed for this area.
- The LBEP report details provision of “hedgehog highways” (suitably small gaps in the fencing) to facilitate movement between the site and adjacent areas. There is also a hedgehog house included within the aforementioned wildlife area.
- The LBEP report details the provision of a “universal hibernacula” utilising existing logs, branches, soil and/or stones or rubble to benefit a range of invertebrates. The wildlife area recommended above would be an ideal place to include this.

These measures are welcomed and can be conditioned.

#### Lighting:

The proposed lighting should be sensitively designed so as to minimise impacts on wildlife associated with light disturbance (following the principles outlined in Bat Conservation Trust guidance: <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting> (note update August 2023) and following the guidance in the PEA report). The largest impacts have been seen on slow-flying bat species such as those in the *Myotis* group. Significant effects on the movements of these species has been observed as low as 3.6 lux. These species are known to exist in the area in small numbers but the pipistrelle species, in particular common pipistrelle *pipistrellus pipistrellus*, are far more common (a roost was recorded within the school buildings in 2020). As one of the faster-flying species pipistrelles are less impacted by artificial lighting. The site is also subject to significant existing artificial light levels. A lighting contour plan has now been submitted that shows contours at 0.2, 0.5, 1.0, 5 and 10 Lux. The light spill onto the tree line is still between 1 and 50 Lux and proposed wildlife area is 5 – 10 Lux which could cause disturbance to wildlife using these habitats.

As the best practice guidance for lighting and bats states “the illuminance contour plots should be accompanied by an explanatory note from the lighting professional to list where, in their opinion, sources of glare acting upon the key habitats and features may occur, and what has been done/can be done to reduce their impacts” Key habitats in this case refer to the tree line along the southern and south eastern edges and wildlife area in the SE corner of the site.

Please provide a lighting strategy which adequately addresses the potential disturbance to bats and other nocturnal wildlife including a lighting contour plan directing lighting away from wildlife area and tree lines.

#### Nesting Birds:

In relation to breeding birds, vegetation clearance should be timed to avoid the bird nesting season where possible (which is March-August inclusive). If this is not possible a breeding bird survey will be required by a suitably experienced person no more than 48 hours in advance of works to confirm presence/absence of nesting birds and confirm that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate

measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site (e.g. implementation of appropriate buffer zones to prevent disturbance).

Ecology survey shelf-life:

Ecological conditions can change over time. In the event that works have not commenced within two years of the 2023 survey (i.e. by August 2025) it is advised that update survey work is undertaken by a suitably experienced ecologist to ensure that the ecological impact assessment and protection measures are based on sufficiently up to date survey data and so that any required amendments to proposed mitigation can be identified and incorporated into the scheme. This can be secured by condition.

**SMBC Arborist** – There is no legally protected tree within this site or affected by this development. The proposed development, in relation to the construction of the artificial pitch to the education property site, will not have a negative impact on trees located on or adjacent site. All remaining trees on site are to be retained, so, in line with council policy, and further enhancements can easily be achieved through landscaping planting, as well as tree protection through root protection fencing.

No objections, subject to conditions including:

- Tree Protection
- Details of proposed planting of trees.

**LLFA** – A final detailed proposed sustainable surface water drainage strategy for the development, with adherence to the drainage hierarchy, including maintenance proposals, is required in accordance with local and national policy.

**Sport England** – Having assessed the proposals against Sport England Policy Exceptions 3 and 5, Sport England is of the view that the proposal broadly meets their requirements. It has been demonstrated that the proposed car parking does not adversely affect playing pitch provision and the proposed AGP would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the harm resulting from the loss of playing field. As such it broadly meets the requirements of the Playing Field Policy Exceptions 3 and 5 respectively and paragraph 99 of the NPPF, and Sport England therefore, **withdraws its objection** to the proposed development, **subject** to conditions, regarding the following:

- Continuity of Sports provision for athletics and rounders upon the site;
- Submission of Community Use Agreement (CUA), including changing and toilet facilities, access, hours of use, with the proposal to include floodlighting, which will facilitate evening use of the facility and maximise the opportunity for wider community use, management responsibilities and mechanism for review;
- Implementation of technical details of AGP in accordance with FA (Football Association) and WR22 (Rugby).

The Football Foundation in their comments to Sport England have confirmed that there remains a shortfall of 3G facilities in Stockport. Stockport's 2020 Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) and last Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) identified a shortfall of 8 full size AGP's.

Sport England consider the existing PPS evidence and the support from the Football Foundation as sufficient to demonstrate the need and benefits of the proposed 3G pitch in this location.

The Football Foundation (FF) have confirmed that proposal has been developed through the FF 3G pitch framework and in consultation with FF technical colleagues and area content that the proposals meet technical guidance.

The pitch will be WR22 (Rugby) compliant and available for use locally as a training only facility for rugby.

The applicant has stated that the new AGP will allow the school to progress with their aspirations to further increase the level of football and community use taking place on the site, by increasing the level of playing time available throughout the year.

As part of the proposal additional cycle storage (already 60 spaces on site) will be provided and the site is well located with access to bus and rail connections in the area.

**SMBC Active Stockport Manager** – Facilitating communities to be active is the primary objective of the boroughs ONE Stockport Active Communities Strategy 2022 – 2030.

Providing high quality sport and recreational facilities is fundamental to this and artificial pitches have the ability to host a broad range of sporting activities for all age group and abilities and have an extremely high carrying capacity compared to grass pitches.

Our most recent Playing Pitch Strategy demonstrated a shortfall of artificial pitches in the borough. In addition to this, it also demonstrated that the east of the borough is disadvantaged, suffering from an under supply of these popular facilities. The School wish to work with the Council and Cheshire Football Association to deliver the installation of this much needed pitch.

Club affiliation in football continues to grow in Stockport and it is encouraging to see more women and girls playing the sport. Intelligence from the Cheshire Football Association indicates that this is not seen to the same degree in the east of the borough, however, with clubs noting the lack of training facilities as the cause.

Am hugely encouraged and excited to hear of the plans to develop Stockport School as a hub for women and girls football; this cohort should be afforded the same opportunities as their male counterparts. The recent success of the Lionesses has no doubt inspired a generation of young girls into the game and it is expected that participation will continue to increase.

Am also encouraged to see aspirations for the pitch to be used by a broader audience, including recreational groups and rugby. Artificial rugby pitches are few and far between and this will be an important asset for the borough.

It is therefore, clearly evidenced that developing an artificial pitch at Stockport School has strategic importance.

Not only does the site have excellent active travel and public transport links, it is noted that there are plans to increase the parking provision on site too. This application aligns with national recommendations to increase community access at school sites as is successfully done across the vast majority of other local schools in the area.

## **SMBC Public Health Strategic Lead – Physical Activity & Healthy Weight –**

Tackling physical inactivity is both pivotal and catalytic to addressing many of the local health, social, regeneration, transport, environmental and educational inequalities and priorities.

Developing this facility for wider community use would directly support the key priorities outlined in the ONE Stockport Active Communities Strategy 2022-2030 and support Stockport to be 'More Active, More Often';

[www.stockport.gov.uk/showcase/stockport-moving-together](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/showcase/stockport-moving-together)

Ensuring that communities have easy, affordable access to sports and fitness facilities within their locality is fundamental to achieving these goals. This is especially true for the priority and underrepresented groups outlined in the strategy.

Evidence that physical activity and movement are good for us, both physically and mentally, is undisputed. However, the factors that currently result in a more sedentary and less active lifestyle are complex. Opening a new 3G ATP for wider community use would significantly contribute to a reduction of those complexities in a neighbourhood with limited publically accessible ATP provision facility provision.

Stockport Council's ambition within the ONE Stockport Borough Plan is to ensure that; 'Stockport's neighbourhoods, local and district centres are exciting places to live, where people are active and celebrate culture'

To achieve this ambition, and in developing '15 minute neighbourhoods' across the town, support for residents to access sport and leisure must be considered.

The new facility would sit on a site with excellent walking and cycling options for new users, with the school currently enhancing its secure cycle storage to further promote the use of active transport. The school also sits in the A6 corridor with excellent public transport links.

A local community facility that promotes and facilitates both active and public transport options can undoubtedly contribute to other Stockport ambitions for cleaner air and reduced motorised vehicle traffic (especially targeting shorter journeys under 1 mile).

In addition, this planning application not only supports local strategic ambitions but also national policy to open schools for community use;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/schools-encouraged-to-open-up-sports-facilities-all-year-round>

<https://www.sportengland.org/funds-and-campaigns/use-our-school>

Opening school facilities for community use can play a significant role in supporting a number of strategic priorities in Stockport, with this application being no exception.

Maximising physical community assets, engaging local communities, promoting health and wellbeing, facilitating social cohesion, supporting active and public transport ambitions and positively impacting on environmental challenges are all strong arguments in support of this application.

**Cheshire County FA** – Stockport has shortfalls of artificial pitches with a lot of clubs struggling to get access to suitable training and match play facilities. New provision

of a high-quality football facility will have a profound effect on local teams, clubs and leagues helping to grow both the affiliated game and recreational opportunities to participate.

One of our priorities is women & girls' participation which has been growing rapidly and we expect to see even further growth of the game following successful Lionesses performances. Female participation in Stockport overall is growing, however, part of building a proposed programme of use we identified that the Eastern part of the borough have very limited women & girls' participation with majority of girls teams being part of the clubs in either Reddish or Cheadle areas. This can be contributed to limited facilities offer in that area of the borough, therefore the clubs that already exist don't have capacity to increase teams to start some new female teams.

A new facility at Stockport School would help to meet the demand and support the growth of participation as well as having the opportunity to provide a recreational offer which is currently limited in the area due to lack of available facilities. A new facility will also provide opportunities for more inclusion sessions in the area.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Policy principles**

#### **Sports Provision:**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides in para. 92 that Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places, which promote social interaction and enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs, for example, through the provision of safe and accessible sports facilities.

The NPPF explains in para. 93 that to provide the social, recreational, and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should

- a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
- b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;
- c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
- d) ensure that established ... facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and
- e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

Para. 98 of the NPPF regarding 'Open space and recreation' provides 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."

Stockport's Core Strategy policy CS5, regarding access to services, states "The Core Strategy will promote and safeguard a broad range and distribution of accessible, quality indoor sports facilities and community uses across the borough. The Core Strategy will seek to enable adequate provision to be made for these uses to meet the

needs of the borough's population through the plan period. Improvements are sought to the condition and modernisation of secondary schools in the borough.”

“Indoor sports, community and education facilities will provide sustainably accessible services to relevant communities that respect residential amenity with regard to their scale, character and intensity of development.”

“Indoor sport, community and education facilities will provide integrated service delivery and / or be co-located with associated facilities where possible and appropriate in order to encourage linked trips, reduce the need to travel and facilitate comprehensive and efficient service delivery. The Core Strategy will seek to explore and capitalise on any community development to ensure the potential for the widest possible community use.”

Stockport's Development Management Policy AS2 regarding 'Improving Indoor Sports, Community and Education Facilities and their Accessibility', states Stockport are going to do or require sufficient indoor sports, community and education facilities to provide measures including, community facilities that are well located to serve the relevant population, including indoor sports development connected to educational establishments, providing dual-use facilities, especially where the proposal would help to address inequalities.

Stockport School is located within an urban residential area, with a substantial local population accordingly located in close proximity. Pursuant to the above policies of the NPPF and Stockport's development plan, it is considered that the proposed Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) would provide accessible and integrated sports facilities to both school pupils and members of the community, in an area with local health and well-being needs, to enable and support access to sport and healthy lifestyles.

The area has an identified need for AGP provision. As outlined in the above Consultation responses section, the Council's most recent Playing Pitch Strategy demonstrated a shortfall of artificial pitches in the borough. In addition to this, it also demonstrated that the east of the borough is disadvantaged, suffering from an under supply of these popular facilities.

Facilitating communities to be active is the primary objective of the boroughs ONE Stockport Active Communities Strategy 2022 – 2030. Providing high quality sport and recreational facilities is fundamental to this and artificial pitches have the ability to host a broad range of sporting activities for all age group and abilities and have an extremely high carrying capacity compared to grass pitches.

As outlined above, the proposal is supported by Sport England, who are a statutory Consultee, and supported by the Cheshire Football Association. Conditions would be required, pursuant to the above policies, as advocated by Sport England, regarding the following matters, to, for example, ensure a range of sports are maintained; the community use is well managed and available; and that the proposed AGP is fit for purpose.

- Continuity of Sports provision for athletics and rounders upon the site;
- Submission of Community Use Agreement (CUA), including changing and toilet facilities, access, hours of use, with the proposal to include floodlighting, which will facilitate evening use of the facility and maximise the opportunity for wider community use, management responsibilities and mechanism for review;

- Implementation of technical details of AGP in accordance with FA (Football Association) and WR22 (Rugby).

### Local Open Space:

This proposal is sited on land that is designated as Local Open Space under 'saved' Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Review policy UOS1.3 "Protection of Local Open Space." UOS1.3 sets out that within areas of Local Open Space development will not be permitted unless:

- i. It is clearly needed in connection with the outdoor recreational use of the land or is otherwise appropriate to the maintenance of the open nature of the land, and it would clearly enhance the overall quality of Local Open Space provision in the area; or
- ii. It can be demonstrated that there is an adequate provision of open space in the local area and that the loss of the site would not be detrimental to the well being of the local community or the amenities of the area; or
- iii. the open space that would be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced by open space of equivalent or better quantity, quality, usefulness, and attractiveness, in a location at least as accessible to current and potential users.

Because of the age of the UDP Review, it is necessary to read and apply its provisions in the context of the relevant paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework. Firstly it is important to note paragraph 219 which states, amongst other things, that

"Due weight should be given to them [existing policies which predate the NPPF], according to their degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)."

The key part of the NPPF is paragraph 99 which states that

"Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, 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."

Whilst worded differently and giving a degree of more locally specific detail, point i. of UOS1.3 is broadly consistent with point c) of NPPF paragraph 99, point ii. is broadly consistent with point a) and point iii. with point b). The principal difference between the two is, however, that the NPPF should be applied to not just open space but also to the specific sports and recreational use of that space. It is considered that, following the approach given in NPPF paragraph 219, there should be no reduction in weight given in the application of UOS1.3.

It is considered that as the proposal amounts to provision of alternative sports and recreational facilities, with clear evidence outlined to show the benefits that would

arise, the proposal complies with NPPF paragraph 99 criteria c). The proposed development is also clearly needed in connection with the (continued) outdoor recreational use of the land and, whilst changing the nature of the open space, it would be enhancing the sports and recreational offer provided in the local area.

As such, it is considered that the proposal also complies with UOS1.3. It is important to note that UOS1.3 and NPPF paragraph 99 each only require compliance with one of their specified criteria. As such, it is considered there should be no objection to this proposal from the perspective of either 'saved' UDP Review policy UOS1.3 "Protection of Local Open Space" or NPPF paragraph 99.

It is considered that Sport England's above recommended conditions are necessary to ensure that the benefits of the scheme are realised and that there is no short term harm to the retained facilities during construction.

Also locally relevant is 'saved' UDP Review policy L1.1 "Land for active recreation" which also has some overlap with NPPF paragraph 99. L1.1 sets out that

"Proposals which involve the loss of public or private sports grounds or other land currently or last used for active recreation will not be permitted except where the proposed development would provide facilities of sufficient benefit to sport and recreation to outweigh the loss."

and that

Development of land currently or last used as playing fields will not be permitted unless:

- (i) The proposed development is ancillary to the use of the site as a playing field (e.g. new changing rooms) and does not adversely affect the quantity or quality of pitches and their use;
- (ii) The proposed development only affects land which is incapable of forming a playing pitch (or part of one) and results in the retention and enhancement of pitches;
- (iii) The playing fields that would be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced by a playing field or fields of equivalent or better quantity, quality, usefulness and attractiveness in a location at least as accessible to current and potential users;
- (iv) the proposed development is for an outdoor or indoor sports facility of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the loss of the playing field.

As already concluded above, it is considered that the new facilities are, clearly, either for an active recreation purpose or ancillary to that purpose. The sport and recreation benefits of the proposal have been clearly shown to outweigh the loss of the existing facility. As such it is concluded that there is no conflict with 'saved' UDP Review policy L1.1.

### **Amenity**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides in Para 130. "Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;



- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Para. 185 of the NPPF confirms that “Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;”

Stockport’s saved UDP policies CTF1.1 ‘Development of Community Services and Facilities’, CDH1.2 ‘Non Residential Development in Residential Areas’ and CDH1.9 ‘Community Facilities in Predominantly Residential Areas’ confirm that proposals for the provision of additional community services and facilities within residential areas will be permitted provided they are sustainably located, have satisfactory access and parking, would not prejudice highway safety, and there would not be resultant harm to the living conditions of neighbouring residents or the residential area as a whole. Residential amenity including in terms of noise, traffic generation, parking, hours of operation, proximity to dwellings, the scale of the proposal and conformity with the character of the area.

Stockport’s Development Management Policy SIE-1 regarding Quality Places provides that specific account should be had of:

- “4. Provision, maintenance and enhancement (where suitable) of satisfactory levels of access, privacy and amenity for future, existing and neighbouring users and residents;
- 5. The potential for a mixture of compatible uses to attract people to live, work and play in the same area, facilitating and encouraging sustainable, balanced communities;”

The proposed artificial grass pitch (AGP) would be located adjacent to the existing mature trees and mesh security fencing to Buxton Road. The proposed AGP, including associated floodlights and fencing, would be located approximately 50 metres from the front elevations of the nearest residential properties on Lake Street. As can be seen within the proposed site plan, there is located an existing day nurse building, the school’s existing multi-use games area (MUGA) and school buildings between the site of the proposed AGP and houses on Lake Street. There would be no access to the AGP via Lake Street, with access for all users provided via Mile End Lane.

As noted above, Stockport School has capacity for approximately 1,300 students aged between 11 and 16 years. The location of the proposed AGP could theoretically be used for sports without restriction now by the school and by community users. The proposed AGP would of course, however, due to the proposed all weather surface, perimeter fencing and lighting, increase the usage and the character of the usage of the area.

The proposed community use of the AGP would be in marked contrast to the usual term time daily use of the school site, as a whole. The number of participants would be commensurate with the provision within the AGP, as detailed above.

The proposal has been assessed in relation to impact upon quality of life for the occupiers of adjacent homes. Noise and intrusive light assessments have been submitted in support of the application and have been assessed by the Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO).

The EHO advises that there is no specific government guidance in relation to noise from sports pitches; Sports England have suggested a noise level limit in their document 'Artificial Grass Pitch Acoustics – Planning Implications' (AGPA), August 2015; suggests an ambient noise level limit of 50dBLAeq,1h outside nearby noise sensitive window during the daytime, (daytime is between 07:00am and 23:00pm).

The nearest noise sensitive properties to the AGP are the houses on Lake Street and Buxton Road, which are approximately 50m to the south/southeast, and Mile End Lane which are approximately 110m to the northwest. It is considered that the noise climate in the area is dominated by road traffic on the A6 Buxton Road [Extrium > England Noise and Air Quality Viewer](#)

The submitted AEC noise assessment calculated the ambient noise level due to on-pitch activities and maximum noise levels due to players shouting and balls impacting on the perimeter fence, as well as distance attenuation at Table 5.1.

The AEC report concludes that noise level from on-pitch activities should be acceptable external to all the properties with the exception of ball impact noise at Lake Street. AEC notes that the assessment of ball impacting on the perimeter fence is a worst-case scenario and that if required, mitigation can be provided in the form of neoprene washers that can be used at the fixings of the fence to the post. Fence panels should be securely clamped together and to supporting posts with resilient fixings to minimise rattling noises from ball impacts.

With suitable noise mitigation measures, it is considered that acceptable noise levels can be achieved without adversely affecting neighbouring residential properties at this location where the existing soundscape is dominated by road traffic noise. The EHO accepts the NIA methodology, conclusion and recommendations.

It is recommended that pursuant to amenity policies, the following measures shall be conditions of approval.

- Noise management plan to be submitted and maintained.
- Prior to first use of the AGP, anti-vibration neoprene washers shall be used at the fixings of the fence to the post and be so maintained.
- Permitted Hours – The AGP shall not be in operation outside the hours of 08:00 -22:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 - 18:00 on weekends. The AGP shall be closed and the gates locked out of use outside of these hours.

An illumination assessment has been submitted in support of the application.

The following table details the Institute of Lighting Professionals, Guidance Note 01/21, The Reduction of Obtrusive Light, and recommended Maximum Values of Light Parameters for the Control of Obtrusive Light – Light intrusion/ nuisance. The maximum value of vertical illuminance on premises (Table 3):

<b>Light technical parameter</b>	<b>Application Conditions</b>	<b>E3 Environmental Zone Ix</b>
<i>Illuminance in the vertical Plane</i>	<i>Pre-curfew*</i>	10
	<i>Post-curfew*</i>	2

Limits apply to nearby dwellings / premises or potential dwellings / premises and specifically windows. The values are the summation of all lighting installations.

\* Curfew: The time after which stricter requirements (for the control of obtrusive light) will apply; often a condition of use of lighting applied the local planning department. Depending upon application curfew times often commence between 21:00 to 23:00 and may run until 07:00. However, exact curfew hours should be carefully applied to ensure the reduction of obtrusive light is prioritised within the immediate environment and towards sensitive human as well as fauna and flora receptors.

This area is an E3 Environmental Zone: Suburban Surrounding, a Medium district brightness lighting environment – examples are: Well inhabited rural and urban settlements, small town centres of suburban locations.

The outcome of the submitted ‘predictive illumination spillage assessment’, is that light spillage from the AGP, shall not impact windows of nearby dwellings. The EHO accepts the outcome of the ‘external illumination-spillage assessment’.

The proposed external lighting/ illumination scheme, complies with the Institute of Lighting Professionals, Guidance Note 01/21, The Reduction of Obtrusive Light. The Lux levels are in compliance with the lighting design guidance for an E3 environmental zone.

It is recommended that pursuant to amenity policies, the following measures shall be conditions of approval.

- The external lighting scheme shall be installed and thereafter operated and maintained throughout the use of the development in accordance with the illumination assessment: Halliday Lighting, Stockport School Football Club, Proposed Floodlighting, 02/06/23, Drawing No: HLS4433
- Lighting Condition; External Lighting - Permitted Hours  
The lighting scheme shall not be in operation outside the hours of 08:00 - 22:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 - 18:00 on weekends.
- Measures to ensure no illumination outside these hours, shall be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, prior to the use of the lighting commencing and retained thereafter.

In similarity to the recent approval of community use of the school’s sports hall, a condition would also be required to require the submission of an operational method statement to outline and agree what activities could take place at any one time, including for example, PQA drama and performing arts, concerts and parents evenings etc... This in the interests of amenity and to ensure that the proposed development does not result in a parking demand or a level of vehicle movements to / from the site greater than the level considered as part of the planning application, having regard to saved UDP policies and Policies SIE-1 ‘Quality Places’, T-1 ‘Transport and Development’, T-2 ‘Parking in Developments’ and T-3 ‘Safety and Capacity on the Highway Network’ of the Stockport Core Strategy DPD.

Given the design, scale and location of the proposed AGP, the proposed use of the AGP, and the wider use of the school site, the findings of the Noise Assessment and lighting assessment, and the proposed mitigation, it is considered that the proposed use would be acceptable in terms of residential amenity, pursuant to saved UDP policies and Core Strategy policies, together with policies of the NPPF.

As advised above, there would be 48 new parking spaces available within the school site to accommodate maximum parking demand, accessed off Mile End Lane only. The sustainable location of the site and cycle parking provision would also result in participants travelling by means other than a car. It is accordingly not considered that the proposed AGP would result in people parking cars/dropping off from cars on residential streets, with resultant amenity impacts from noise and disturbance from comings and goings.

It is specifically also not considered that the proposed use of the accesses off Mile End Lane, including by vehicles associated with community usage, would be unduly harmful to the residential amenities of the occupiers of adjacent residential properties. This given Mile End Lane is an existing road route off the A6, and the accesses are existing, with the existing vehicle access to be widened in the interests of improving operational efficiency.

The findings of the Crime Impact Statement (CIS), compiled to support the application, are noted. Regarding the recommendations within the CIS to improve safety and security, it is considered that the recommended security features, such as highly rated padlocks, should be incorporated. Measures such as the proposed management of external AGP use by school personnel, and the restriction of access to the wider school site and non-designated access points by users of the AGP, is already proposed.

The site is already bounded by perimeter security fencing, has CCTV coverage, and the boundary fencing to the proposed AGP would be 4.5 metres in height. It is suggested that any arising security issues be monitored to ascertain any requirements for future further security fencing and measures.

It is not considered that the suggested closure of the facility by 21:00, in the interests of amenity, would be warranted, given the above conclusions regarding amenity, which support use until 22:00, as applied for. A condition regarding the inclusion of agreed safety and security measures should be imposed, pursuant to policies including Core Strategy policy SIE-1 'Quality Places' and policies of the NPPF.

No objections have been raised by the EHO as regards the impact of the proposal upon the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Pursuant to Core Strategy policy SIE-3, the proposal should not exacerbate the existing air quality levels.

### **Highways**

Para 111. of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states "Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe."

Policy CS9 of the core strategy states that the Council will require that development is located in locations that are accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Policy T1 reiterates this requirement, with this policy setting out minimum cycle parking and disabled parking standards.

Policy T2 of the core strategy states that developments shall provide car parking in accordance with maximum car parking standards for each type of development as set out in the existing adopted parking standards, stating that developers will need to demonstrate that developments will avoid resulting in inappropriate on street parking that has a detrimental impact upon highway safety or a negative impact upon the availability of public car parking.

Policy T3 of the core strategy states that development which will have an adverse impact on the safety and/or capacity of the highway network will only be permitted if mitigation measures are provided to sufficiently address such issues. It also advises that new developments should be of a safe and practical design, with safe and well-designed access arrangements, internal layouts, parking and servicing facilities.

The application site is suitably accessible and, as such, subject to the proposed provision of sufficient cycle parking to meet the expected demand of the pitch and existing demand, and a suitable pedestrian and cycle access into and out of the site, the site is considered suitable for an artificial grass pitch (AGP) available for community use.

It is concluded that the proposal should not have a material impact on the wider highway network. There is, however, a need to ensure that the site access on Mile End Lane would be able to accommodate vehicle movements, which would be naturally concentrated at the start and end of hire periods.

In respect to this, whilst the provision of an additional passing place should ensure that vehicles will be able to pass on the section of access drive adjacent to the tennis courts, vehicles will not be able to pass at the existing site access on Mile End Lane, which could adversely affect the operation of the site access, as well as highway safety, or on the curved section of driveway, which would affect the operation of this section of driveway.

These issues would be addressed by the now proposed widening of the existing access / gateway on Mile End Lane, and by providing an additional passing place on the access drive and making the south-eastern end of the access drive one way, details of which are annotated upon the submitted proposed site plan. Conditions would need to be imposed, pursuant to Highways policies, to ensure that prior to the first use of the AGP by the community, the vehicle access on Mile End Lane is acceptably widened, the additional passing place provided within the site and the one-way system within the site is implemented.

The floodlighting plan shows any lighting that will overspill onto the public highway should be minimal and therefore, the proposed floodlighting is considered to be acceptable. Lighting of the car park and amended access drive would need to be reviewed and agreed by condition.

The estimated vehicle parking demand figure, as submitted within the submitted Transport Technical Note, is considered to be accurate. It is accordingly concluded that the two new proposed car parking areas, to provide an additional 48 parking spaces, would be able to meet the demand of the development. Whilst it could be argued that figures suggest that not all spaces would be required, a slight over-provision would unlikely encourage car use to the site. As such, there is no objection to the proposed level of parking on highway grounds.

The proposal includes acceptable provision for parking, with 3 accessible spaces designed and designated as recommended. The provision of 6 spaces with EV

charging accords with the Council's standards for occupation in 2024. The provision of 12 additional covered and cycle parking spaces also accords with Council policy. A Travel Plan to include the proposed use would be required in the interests of encouraging sustainable travel.

Given the location of the site and nature of the proposal, details to appropriately manage the construction phase would need to be submitted and agreed, pursuant to highways and amenity policies.

Conditions are required, pursuant to highways policies, in mitigation regarding:

- Submission and agreement of final details of proposed widened access off Mile End Lane to allow for two-way vehicle movements (4.5 metres in width);
- Submission and agreement of a Construction Method Statement;
- Access to AGP for pedestrians and cyclists to be via existing pedestrian access off Mile End Lane, opposite Seymour Road;
- Submission and agreement of construction of car parking areas and the continued provision of car parking areas for users of the approved AGP;
- Submission and agreement of details of provision and management of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging for 6 spaces;
- Submission and agreement of details of proposed additional 12 cycle capacity covered and secure cycle storage;
- Submission and agreement of updated Travel Plan or addendum to the Travel Plan to include users of the AGP, to encourage sustainable travel.

Given the scale and nature of the proposed community use and wider use of the school site, the submitted Transport Technical Note, and the proposed controls, it is considered that the proposed use would be acceptable in terms of travel and impacts upon the highway, pursuant to saved UDP policies and Core Strategy policies, together with policies of the NPPF.

### **Heritage**

Stockport School is a locally listed building of local architectural and historic interest – for further information see the list entry at : [Stockport Historic Environment Database](#)

A locally listed building is a 'non-designated heritage asset' for the purposes of planning policies, including the NPPF.

Immediately adjacent to the south east corner of the school site is the former United Reform Church & Sunday School, also listed for its local architectural and historic interest - for further information see the list entry at : [Stockport Historic Environment Database](#)

The Stockport School site lies opposite Stockport Grammar School and associated buildings, also locally listed for their local architectural and historic interest - for further information see the list entry at : [Stockport Historic Environment Database](#)

The character, amenity and appearance of the street scene along Buxton Road in the vicinity of the school frontage is largely defined by the visual relationships between these buildings, the open nature of the spaces between them and the contribution of mature trees. The playing fields provide clear views of the school from between the trees from Buxton Road and from Mile End Lane, and the playing fields make a significant contribution to the quality and character of the school's setting, contributing to the school's identity as a local landmark.

No heritage assessment has been prepared in support of the current application. A heritage assessment was previously prepared in 2020 and submitted in support of DC/076471 (Full planning permission for the demolition of the existing temporary classrooms and external lift, and the development of a permanent two-storey teaching block with link bridges). The assessment states that 'the playing fields contribute considerably to the setting of the building and the greening of the wider area' and the conclusions of the assessment set out at section 4.2 are concurred with (see pages 30/31).

Fig 2.5 of the previously submitted heritage assessment indicates the original proposed layout of the playing fields, consisting of a 2 football pitches, a hockey pitch and a further football pitch to the north east of the site. The existing playing fields are currently shared between 2 natural grass football pitch and, during summer, are used as an athletics field. The original open layout has been progressively eroded over time through the introduction of 3 hard surfaced playing pitches along the perimeters of the playing fields adjacent to Mile End Lane and Lake Street.

The current application sets out proposals for an artificial grass football pitch, six 15m tall floodlighting columns, 4.5m fencing enclosing the new pitch and associated works including remodelling of the grass slopes in the front of the school to accommodate extensions to car parking areas which would require the construction of a retaining wall.

Cumulatively these works would have a detrimental impact upon the immediate setting and views of the school, resulting in a loss of the sense of space and openness provided by the existing playing fields. They would have a similarly detrimental impact upon the setting of the former United Reform Church & Sunday School and character, amenity and appearance of the street scene. The increased sense of enclosure, addition of visual clutter, loss of natural grass and the impact of artificial lighting would significantly change the special qualities that make up the special character of the space during both day time and night time and they would reduce the prominence and identity of the school building.

For the purposes of planning policy, the Conservation Officer assesses that the proposals represent a level of harm that is 'less than substantial'. Para 199 of the NPPF states that 'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.'

Para 195 states that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Para 197 is also relevant: In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The submitted planning statement acknowledges that the proposals will result in a level of harm to heritage assets (see para 6.59), but is silent in considering alternative options or measures that could be put in place to avoid or minimise that level of harm.

The agent has separately additionally advised that a number of options were considered for the pitch layout during the preparation of the application and this included re-orientating the pitch in a number of different ways; originally the pitch was also much larger.

It is explained that unfortunately there are regulations associated with the ancillary facilities that are required – i.e. fencing, floodlighting, and the storage container (FA requirements), however, the following options could be explored:

- Reduce the height of the fencing where possible;
- Reduce the height of the floodlighting (albeit please note that this can increase light spill);
- Incorporate tree planting along the eastern boundary of the pitch and new planting to break up the mass of parking; and
- Move the storage container to an alternative location.

It is not considered that the proposed minor adjustments to the scheme would reduce the overall level of harm involved with the current proposal: it is the principle of the proposed scheme, involving the loss of the existing playing fields and the impact that would have upon the character of the space, its openness, associated visual relationships and views, that contributes most significantly to the level of harm rather than the detail. Whilst there would not be objection to the proposed addition of trees along the southeast side of the pitch in order to provide a level of containment in this area, this measure would have a neutral impact upon the setting of heritage assets.

The proposals are in conflict with Development Management Policy SIE-3 (Protecting, safeguarding and enhancing the environment) of the adopted Stockport Core Strategy because they fail to preserve or enhance the special architectural, artistic, historic or archaeological significance of the heritage assets affected.

Para 203 of the NPPF states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

It is not considered that the effect of the application on the significance of the locally listed school precludes planning permission being granted, on balance. As advised, the proposals represent a level of harm to the locally listed building that is 'less than substantial.' The setting of the locally listed school building, which is part of the significance of the building, would be detrimentally affected by the loss of the open character of the playing field. The actual listed building itself would not be lost, along with other areas of significance, including architectural interest and historic interest, including the school community use associated with the asset, with significant public benefits from the proposal, as regards access to sports for the local community, to the benefit of health and wellbeing.

### **Ecology and Landscaping**

Policy SIE-3, which relates to protecting, safeguarding and enhancing the environment, states that the Borough's biodiversity shall be maintained and enhanced, with planning applications being required to keep disturbance to a



minimum and where required identify mitigation measures and provide alternative habitats to sustain at least the current level of population.

It is assessed that the proposed development would accord with policy SIE-3 and relevant policies of the NPPF, provided mitigation measures, as outlined below, are imposed by condition and appropriately satisfied.

Although the development is classed as a major planning application, the proposals are small scale and only affect intensively managed grassland with scattered trees and shrubs and therefore a biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessment has not been requested this time. However, biodiversity enhancements are also expected as part of developments in line with local (paragraph 3.345 of the LDF) and national planning policy (NPPF). Given the site's existing low biodiversity value, there is opportunity to make significant improvements and therefore, a Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancements Plan was requested and has been submitted to the LPA for review.

- The LBEP report details provision of 3 bird boxes (2no. starling nest box (Schwegler 3S) and 1no. sparrow nest box (Schwegler 1B)) along with installation and maintenance details. The LBEP report details provision of 3 bat boxes (3no. Schwegler 2F) with appropriate installation and maintenance details.
- The 5 no. trees are proposed for the southern and eastern boundaries. This is appropriate given the space available.
- A wildlife area is proposed for the south-eastern corner of the site comprising a variety of appropriate native shrub species. In addition, wildlife refugia are proposed for this area.
- The LBEP report details provision of "hedgehog highways" (suitably small gaps in the fencing) to facilitate movement between the site and adjacent areas. There is also a hedgehog house included within the aforementioned wildlife area.
- The LBEP report details the provision of a "universal hibernacula" utilising existing logs, branches, soil and/or stones or rubble to benefit a range of invertebrates. The wildlife area recommended above would be an ideal place to include this.

These measures are welcomed and should be conditioned, pursuant to Ecology policies.

The proposed lighting should be sensitively designed so as to minimise impacts on wildlife associated with light disturbance (following the principles outlined in Bat Conservation Trust guidance: <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting> (note update August 2023) and following the guidance in the PEA report). The largest impacts have been seen on slow-flying bat species such as those in the *Myotis* group. Significant effects on the movements of these species has been observed as low as 3.6 lux. These species are known to exist in the area in small numbers but the pipistrelle species, in particular common pipistrelle *pipistrellus pipistrellus*, are far more common (a roost was recorded within the school buildings in 2020). As one of the faster-flying species pipistrelles are less impacted by artificial lighting. The site is also subject to significant existing artificial light levels. A lighting contour plan has now been submitted that shows contours at 0.2, 0.5, 1.0, 5 and 10 Lux. The light spill onto the tree line is still between 1 and 50 Lux and proposed wildlife area is 5 – 10 Lux which could cause disturbance to wildlife using these habitats.

As the best practice guidance for lighting and bats states “the illuminance contour plots should be accompanied by an explanatory note from the lighting professional to list where, in their opinion, sources of glare acting upon the key habitats and features may occur, and what has been done/can be done to reduce their impacts” Key habitats in this case refer to the tree line along the southern and south eastern edges and wildlife area in the SE corner of the site.

A condition should be imposed, pursuant to Ecology policies, to require a lighting strategy to be submitted, which adequately addresses the potential disturbance to bats and other nocturnal wildlife, including a lighting contour plan.

In relation to breeding birds, a condition is required, pursuant to Ecology policies, to confirm that vegetation clearance should be timed to avoid the bird nesting season where possible (which is March-August inclusive). If this is not possible, a breeding bird survey will be required by a suitably experienced person no more than 48 hours in advance of works to confirm presence/absence of nesting birds and confirm that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site (e.g. implementation of appropriate buffer zones to prevent disturbance).

Ecological conditions can change over time. A condition is required to be imposed, pursuant to Ecology policies, regarding in the event that works have not commenced within two years of the 2023 survey (i.e. by August 2025), update survey work shall be undertaken by a suitably experienced ecologist, to ensure that the ecological impact assessment and protection measures are based on sufficiently up to date survey data and so that any required amendments to proposed mitigation can be identified and incorporated into the scheme.

There is no legally protected tree within this site or affected by this development. The proposed AGP would not have a negative impact on trees located on or adjacent to the site. Conditions are required, pursuant to Ecology and amenity policies, to ensure the provision of appropriate tree protection, and for the agreement of the proposed details of and planting of agreed trees.

### **Airport Safeguarding**

It is assessed that the proposal accords with airport safeguarding considerations, pursuant to policies including EP1.9 – Safeguarding of Aerodromes and Air Navigation Facilities and SIE-5: Aviation Facilities, Telecommunications and other Broadcast Infrastructure, due to the design, scale and siting of the development.

### **Drainage**

Whilst located in Flood Zone 1, which is low risk for flooding from rivers, the development would need to incorporate appropriate surface water management. A Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy has been submitted for the site, however, the details of the Strategy are not agreed with the LLFA to date.

Policy SD-6 of the Core Strategy states that all development will be required to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), so as to manage the run off of water from the development.

In order to ensure compliance with the policy, along with saved UDP policy EP1.7 – ‘Development and Flood Risk,’ and relevant policies of the NPPF, a condition is required to be imposed, requiring the submission and approval of an appropriate detailed surface water drainage system, to be then implemented and maintained.

### **Land conditions**

The proposed development site has not been identified as potentially contaminated and it would appear from the supporting documents that there would be minimal/no breaking of ground. An informative regarding the unexpected discovery of land contamination should be applied. This pursuant to Core Strategy policy SIE-3 and the NPPF.

The site is located within a Coal Authority low risk area. An informative regarding this matter would accordingly be included within the decision notice, as specified by the Coal Authority.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Stockport School is a community school for circa 1,300 students, located within an urban, predominantly residential area. The school pupils and the community surrounding the school have a need for access to appropriate sports provision, to be active for good health and wellbeing, and for sporting achievements.

The proposed artificial grass pitch (AGP), including the controlled proposed use by members of the community outside of the usual school days, and for the hours sought, would serve to provide the school and community with dual access to a reliable and purpose built AGP for a range of sports and recreation, to the benefit of the school and community.

The proposed controls over the hours of use, and management of the site, together with the provision of the use of the new 48 space car park and access works, availability of accessible parking and covered and secure cycle parking, would serve to ensure that the proposed use of the AGP would not result in unacceptable impacts upon the highways or unduly harmful impacts upon the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Overall, the proposal is considered to comply with the Council's development plan and the NPPF, for the reasons set out within the report, and therefore, the NPPF requires the development to be approved without delay.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Grant; subject to conditions.