

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.	CASE OFFICER	DATE
24/01117/FUL	Nick Brookman	09 January 2025

DETERMINATION DATE (EXTENSION OF TIME)

17 January 2025

Address: South Street / Bulwer Street Playground, Rochdale, OL16 2ER**Proposal:** Installation of a playzone facility on an existing MUGA pitch together with associated fencing, ball stop and flood lighting.

PUBLICITY	Weekly list expired?	Y	Site notice expired?	Y
	Neighbour letters expired?	Y	Press Notice expired?	N/A

DELEGATION	Significant departure from local plan?	N	Contrary to national policy?	N
	Applicant a Council Member or officer?	N	Contrary to previous decision?	N
	Major with 10 or more objections and recommending approval?	N	Called in or Planning Panel objection?	N

COMMENTS	Planning Panel comments received?	N/A
	Neighbour comments received?	Y

EIA	Screening opinion completed and saved to Onbase?	N/A
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CONDITIONS	Pre-commencement conditions proposed?	N
	Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)?	N/A

RECOMMENDATION	GRANT SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS
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CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: LA DATE: 09.01.25

SITE

The application site relates to South Street / Bulwer Street playground which is nestled between Oswald Street in the north and east and Bulwer Street, South Street and Edward Street to the south and west. The Bilal Masjid lies directly to the south of the application site.

The surrounding area is predominantly residential with the playground centred in the middle of the aforementioned residential streets.

As shown by the photograph below, the application site is an existing macadam surface multi use games area (MUGA).



The existing site is surrounded by ball stop fencing around its entire perimeter with the larger fencing sited at the east and west facing 'goal' ends. Two floodlights provide floodlighting for the existing development.

The rest of the park is comprised of a basketball cage to the south and an equipped play area to the west.

The application site is located within the Urban Area and is defined as existing recreational open space.

PROPOSAL

The applications seeks full planning permission for the construction of a football and cricket play zone including the provision of a synthetic turf surface, an upgrade of fencing to twin bar panel fencing, the upgrading of external lighting to LED floodlighting and ancillary equipment.

The fencing would be 3m high and the floodlighting would be 6m high and fixed to the boundary fencing. The lighting will come on when the facility is in use after dusk and would have an automatic cut off switch at 10pm every night.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – December 2024
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Local

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

SD1	Delivering sustainable development
DM1	General development requirements
SO2	Creating successful and healthy communities
C8	Improving community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities
SO3	Improving design, image and quality of place
P3	Improving design of new development
SO5	Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport
T2	Improving accessibility

Saved Policies of the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1	Defined Urban Area
G/3	Protection of Existing Recreational Open Space
G/8	Green Space Corridors

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE)

The Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan was adopted and became part of the statutory development plan for each of the 9 authorities covered by the plan on 21st March 2024. The following policies are relevant:

JP-S1	Sustainable Development
JP-P7	Sport and Recreation

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

None relevant.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways and Engineering

Highways have no objection to the proposed development.

Environmental Health (Noise)

Environmental Health have no objection to the proposed development.

Environmental Management

Environmental Management have no objection to the proposed development.

Sport England

The proposed development does not fall within the remit of Sport England.

REPRESENTATIONS

Letters of notification were sent to surrounding neighbours and a site notice was posted immediately adjacent to the existing play area on 26 November 2024 and two objections were received in response to the proposed development.

These objections raised concerns that the development is a pay to play facility which would therefore disadvantage a lot of nearby residents and families who wouldn't be able to afford to pay to access the area.

Planning Officers can confirm that the facility is a pay to play facility but whether or not the facility is a pay to play facility is not an outright material planning consideration that would carry any weight in the determination of this application.

In responding to the comments received, Officers can confirm that the PlayZones are to be installed for standard Football Foundation use. Their research has indicated that to reach the targeted priority groups, the PlayZones must be bookable, as some users feel this is safer than just turning up to play. Like the majority of PlayZones, there can be an element of open use, however, bookable time slots are the focus.

PlayZones are also to be subject to an activation plan that looks to include programmed delivery of activities.

By proposing the use of a smart access gate, with programming system, it allows the PlayZone to be used in a flexible manner, in several setups that best suit the local communities.

ANALYSIS

Principle of Development

The principle of the proposed development subject to this application has already been established through the existing MUGA.

The application site is located within the defined urban area and is designated as existing recreational open space which Policy G/3 of the UDP seeks to protect.

Core Strategy Policy C8 (Improving community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities) confirms that improving such facilities will help improve residents health and quality of life and make the borough a more desirable place to live, work and visit.

PfE Policy JP-P7 (Sport and Recreation) confirms that a network of high quality and accessible sports and recreation facilities will be protected and enhanced, supporting greater levels of activity for all ages including by *creating public realm that provides frequent opportunities for play and that all ages can enjoy together*.

From a National Policy perspective, NPPF Paragraph 96 sets out that:

'Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places and beautiful buildings which:

- a) promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy*

pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;

- b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas; and*
- c) enable and support healthy lives, through both promoting good health and preventing ill-health, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs and reduce health inequalities between the most and least deprived communities – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.*

Paragraph 98 also sets out 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 (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) 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 shops, 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.*
- e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.*

NPPF Paragraph 103 states that *‘Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate’.*

NPPF Paragraph 104 sets out 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’.*

In this instance the proposed development has been subject to a thorough consultation exercise and the application site was chosen as a site that would benefit from the construction of a PlayZone facility.

The PlayZone Programme has been developed to tackle inequalities in physical activity and access to high quality facilities in targeted areas by the Football Foundation providing funding towards community led spaces. The purpose of the PlayZone scheme is to invest in areas with the greatest need, with the aim of encouraging specific priority groups to be more active.

The proposed development is entirely aligned with the NPPF with particular reference to the provision of a better and more modern facility and playing surface which would promote social interaction, boost community participation in sport and ensure the existing recreational space is retained and protected for the benefit of the wider community.

The proposed development would provide a high quality space for sport and physical activity in the area and the project is driven by the Football Foundation under the Government’s Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

In summation, the proposed PlayZone is a safe, inclusive and accessible outdoor facility that would bring the community together through recreational forms of football and other sports and physical activities which is aligned with the purpose of sustainable development.

Accordingly, proposed development would comply with PfE, Policy the relevant Policies of the Rochdale Core Strategy, Saved Policy G/3 of the UDP, and the NPPF.

Design

Policies DM1 and P3 of the Council’s adopted Core Strategy requires development to adhere to high quality design and enhance the borough’s identity and sense of place, by respecting context where it is positive and having regard to the scale, density, massing, height, layout, landscape, materials and access of surrounding buildings and areas in general. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that “*the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve*”. Paragraph 135 goes on to state that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.

The proposed development would effectively sit on top of the existing tarmacadam surface and the development would be in keeping with the character of the existing MUGA. The modernisation of the existing recreational facility will produce a high

quality sustainable construction that would be much more visually attractive and would be of a design that is entirely appropriate for this location.

The proposed fencing would be of a similar appearance to the existing fencing and the proposed floodlighting would sit lower than the current existing infrastructure which is considered to be a design betterment of the scheme.

Overall, subject to the condition, the proposed development accords with the requirements of Policy DM1 and P3 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.

Drainage

Policy G8 requires that new development does not lead to any increased form of flooding locally or further downstream, does not impede natural water and flood risk management, is not detrimental to existing or potential flood storage areas, contributes where possible to alleviating existing flood risk and is itself well protected from flood risk and ensures prudent use of water resources.

Policy JP-S4 (Flood Risk and the Water Environment) of PfE expects developments to manage surface water runoff through sustainable drainage systems and development should achieve greenfield run-off rates unless it is demonstrated to be impracticable.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1, having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of flooding.

The proposed development would not disturb the existing drainage of the site and for that reason the proposed development is acceptable and would be in accordance with Policy G8 of the Core Strategy and Policies JP-S4 of PfE and the NPPF.

Highways and Access

Highways were consulted as part of this application and the proposed development scheme is not considered to have an adverse impact on highway safety, nor would it require additional car parking or generate a level of additional traffic which would have a detrimental impact on the safe and efficient operation of the immediate local highway network. Highways Services have raised no objections and the proposals comply with the requirements of CS Policies T1 and T2, Policy JP-C8 of PfE and the NPPF.

Residential and Neighbouring Amenity

Policy DM1 of the adopted Core Strategy requires that all development proposals are compatible with surrounding land uses, both in terms of its impact upon those uses and the impact of the surrounding land uses upon the amenities of future residents.

Development should not affect the amenity of residents or users through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy and development should mitigate against any impacts due to noise, dust, light and odour pollution. Policy G9 also requires that sensitive new development such as housing, are not adversely affected by existing sources of pollution such as roads and certain types of industry.

The proposed development is a re-development of an existing recreational open space / sports facility which would not give rise to any existing privacy concerns owing to the distance between the proposed development and any nearby residential receptors. The development would not be being moved or re-located closer to any existing residential development.

The proposed floodlighting would be 6m tall with an average Lux of 200. The floodlighting design meets the requirements for light spillage detailed in the Institute of Lighting Professional's document Guidance Note 01/20 – Guidance note for the reduction of obtrusive Light, For the environmental zone in which the facility is located, in respect of Maximum Values of Vertical Illuminance on properties, the limits for the luminous intensity of bright luminaires, the Maximum values of upward light ratio, and maximum values of upward flux ratio of installation. The design of the floodlighting system has been undertaken with due consideration of the details contained in the Institute of Lighting Professional's document Guidance Note 08/18 – Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK. Which include:

- ☐ Avoidance of lighting on key bat habitats or features present.
- ☐ Apply mitigation methods to reduce lighting to agreed limits in other sensitive locations (section 3 of the ILP document).
- ☐ Where particular sites are identified as having features which may be used by bats then consideration has been given to reducing the colour temperature of the luminaires to 3000 Kelvin as recommended in the ILP Guidance Note.

The floodlighting system will have the following switching features:

- ☐ The lighting will come on when the facility is in use after dusk.
- ☐ The lighting will have an automatic cut off switch at 10pm every night.

Environmental Health were consulted on the application and have not raised any objection. Subject to condition, the scheme is considered acceptable in terms of amenity in accordance with Policy G9 and DM1.

Ecology, Biodiversity and Trees

Core Strategy Policy G7 sets out that it is expected that development proposals will protect and include existing biodiversity and take opportunities to promote biodiversity and create new habitats using landscaping and building and construction features wherever possible. CS Policy G7 requires that no development should result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity.

PfE Policy JP-G9 seeks to deliver a net enhancement of biodiversity resources through a collective of measures which are broadly aligned with the approach to BNG outlined within the Environment Act (2021), the NPPF and supporting guidance documents. The provisions of the Environment Act in respect of BNG are now a statutory requirement for planning applications but given the urban and built environment on and around the application site, it is acknowledged that this site does not impact any biodiversity and the site has a completely sealed surface and therefore has a biodiversity value of **zero**.

Accordingly, it is not considered that the statutory requirement to provide 10% BNG is applicable here.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT, with conditions as set out below:

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

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. This permission relates to the following plans and documents:

- Location Plan 24-0569 01P Version 01
- Site Plan 24-0569 02P Version 01
- Development Layout 24-0569 03P Version 01
- Elevations 24-0579 04P Version 01
- Proposed Floodlighting Page 1: Pitch Levels Drawing HLS9401
- Proposed Floodlighting Page 2: Obtrusive Light Drawing HLS9401
- Design and Access Statement V1 dated 01/11/2024

and the development shall be carried out in accordance with these details hereby approved unless otherwise required by condition below.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the policies contained within the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, the saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. The proposed floodlighting shall be implemented precisely in accordance with the approved drawings and details set out within Proposed Floodlighting Page 1: Pitch Levels Drawing HLS9401 and Proposed Floodlighting Page 2: Obtrusive Light Drawing HLS9401. The floodlighting hereby approved shall be operational no later than 10pm or 22:00 hours Monday-Sunday.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the area and to minimise the possibility of inconvenience to nearby residents.

Procedure Statement

The proposal complies with the development plan and would improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. It therefore comprises sustainable development and the Local Planning Authority worked proactively to issue the decision without delay.

Report Author Nick Brookman