



Statement of Community Involvement

Bowlee Football & Community Wellbeing Hub

Client: Rochdale Borough Council & Rochdale AFC

10/08/2026



Contents

Executive Summary	5
1. Introduction	7
Rochdale Statement of Community Involvement (2021)	7
National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)	8
Project Team	8
2. Methodology	10
Community Engagement	10
3. Public Consultation	14
Promotion	14
In-Person Exhibition Event	15
Further Consultation post-event	16
Online Consultation	17
Middleton Arena	17
4. Public Responses	21
Quantitative Data	21
Interest in the Proposals	21
Need for Enhanced Community and Professional Football Training Facilities in Middleton	22
Appropriateness of Location	23
Views on Specific Aspects of the Proposals	25
Overall Views	28
Summary of Quantitative Findings	29
Qualitative Data	29
Main Themes and Project Team Response	31
Summary	40
5. Conclusion	43
Appendix 1 – Promotional Leaflet	45
Appendix 2 – Consultation Zone and Distribution Route	46
Appendix 3 – Email to Councillors	47
Appendix 4 – Promotion of Event	48
Appendix 5 – Exhibition Boards	49



Appendix 6 – Feedback Form	54
Appendix 7 – Post-event Consultation Websites and Comms	55

Document Issue Sheet

Issue Nr.	Document	Status	Issue Date	Parties Sent To	Prepared By	Reviewed By
1.0	July 2026	FINAL	12/08/2026	MCC	GB/AS/EH	KG



Executive Summary



Executive Summary

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the pre-application consultation undertaken by Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale AFC in relation to the proposed development of a Football and Community Wellbeing Hub at Bowlee Playing Fields in Middleton.

The consultation process was designed to provide local residents, elected representatives and other interested parties with an opportunity to understand the proposals, engage directly with the project team and provide feedback prior to the submission of the planning application. The engagement strategy comprised a public consultation event, a dedicated feedback questionnaire available in both paper and online formats, direct engagement with local councillors, widespread promotion through leaflet distribution and digital channels, and a further unstaffed public exhibition at Middleton Arena.

Attendance at the public consultation event was lower than anticipated, with approximately 15 members of the public attending in person. However, the wider consultation programme generated a total of 502 responses across the online consultation platforms, public consultation event and Middleton Arena exhibition. Analysis of the responses demonstrated that the majority of participants were local residents from Middleton and the wider Rochdale Borough area.

The consultation findings demonstrated a clear and consistent pattern of support for the proposals. Respondents frequently highlighted the potential community benefits of the scheme, the opportunity to improve existing sporting facilities, increased participation in sport and physical activity, and the role that Rochdale AFC could play in helping to secure long-term investment in the site. Supportive responses also recognised the potential health, wellbeing and community benefits for local residents, schools, grassroots sports clubs and community organisations.

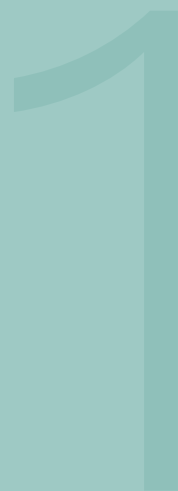
A minority of respondents expressed concerns or objections, most commonly relating to green space, wildlife and biodiversity, public access, affordability and accessibility of facilities, and traffic and parking arrangements. Some comments also reflected wider concerns regarding the cumulative effects of development and the perceived loss of open space within Middleton.

The feedback received was reviewed in detail by the project team and has informed the evolution of the proposals and the preparation of the supporting technical assessments submitted with the planning application. The consultation process has provided a detailed understanding of local views, identifying both the key benefits recognised by respondents and the principal issues requiring further consideration through the planning process.

This SCI demonstrates that the applicants have undertaken a comprehensive and proportionate programme of pre-application engagement, carefully considered the feedback received and used the consultation process to help inform the final proposals. The consultation exercise has provided valuable insight into local priorities and has contributed to a balanced understanding of both the benefits of the scheme and the concerns raised by local stakeholders.



Introduction





1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by Enabl on behalf of the applicants, Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale AFC. The statement accompanies a planning application for the redevelopment and enhancement of the existing sports and recreational facilities at Bowlee Playing Fields in Middleton to provide a Football and Community Wellbeing Hub.
- 1.2 The SCI has been produced to assist the applicant in its assessment of the application. It details the pre-application consultation activities that have been undertaken to inform the final scheme and should be read in conjunction with the other documents that have been submitted in support of the application.
- 1.3 The submitted planning application is seeking planning consent for:

Demolition and replacement of community centre to provide Community Sports and Wellbeing Hub (Hybrid Use Class F2/E(d)) comprising community sports and wellbeing facilities; football club training and community facilities; provision of artificial grass football pitches; enhancement and reprovision of existing grass football pitches; drainage and earthworks; provision of cricket nets; with associated hard and soft landscaping, parking, storage container, lighting, enclosures and boundary treatments.

- 1.4 This document highlights the applicant's commitment to pre-application community engagement and explains the consultation activities that have been undertaken.
- 1.5 The content of the SCI includes:
 - Methods of community involvement that were used;
 - Details of the feedback received;
 - Analysis and conclusions from the data; and
 - Responses to public comments.

Rochdale Statement of Community Involvement (2021)

- 1.6 Rochdale Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement (2021) sets out the council's intentions to involve all sectors of the community in the planning process.
- 1.7 The SCI encourages applicants — particularly for larger or more complex developments — to engage with local communities before submitting applications. The council's statement outlines that early consultation can help identify concerns and influence the design of proposals before formal submission. Consultation methods should be inclusive and provide all groups with an opportunity to participate.



- 1.8 Where a local community's suggestions can be taken into account in preparing a scheme, this can help to build local support, help address any early design and development issues, and help to ensure submission of a successful planning application.
- 1.9 The Council expects applicants to carry out their own pre-application consultation. The level of community consultation at this stage should be appropriate and proportionate to the scale of the application. Potential methods of pre-application consultation on proposals for major development could include public meetings and exhibitions, workshops, websites, leaflets, social and other media.
- 1.10 Any pre-application consultation undertaken should be documented in a "Statement of Community Involvement" to be submitted alongside a proposal.

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

- 1.11 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages pre-application consultation. Paragraph 40 states that "good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community."

Project Team

- 1.12 For the purpose of this SCI, the 'project team' comprises:

- Rochdale Borough Council (Applicant);
- Rochdale AFC (Applicant);
- Your Trust (Project Partner);
- Pozzoni (Lead Architect);
- FMG Consulting (Sports Planning Consultant);
- Enabl (Planning Consultant).



2

Methodology



2. Methodology

2.1 The applicant has demonstrated a commitment to engage with residents and interested groups in the immediate area surrounding the application site. The consultation process was guided by the following principles:

- Openness and transparency – ensuring information regarding the proposals was made publicly available and that stakeholders were provided with opportunities to review the proposals and submit feedback. This encourages a level of trust between the developer and the community.
- Inclusive engagement – providing a range of opportunities for participation through a combination of in-person and online consultation activities, enabling engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. The public consultation events were inclusive to ensure that no one group felt marginalised throughout the process.
- Meaningful engagement – Ensuring feedback received through the consultation process was reviewed by the project team and used to inform the development of the proposals and supporting planning application documentation. Significant efforts have been made to ensure community contact continues following the consultation events, rather than simply seeking input at key intervals that support the project team at the expense of the local community.

Community Engagement

2.2 The project team has been committed to ensuring that local residents, elected representatives and community stakeholders have had an opportunity to participate in discussions regarding the future of the site and contribute to the development of the proposals. The consultation programme was designed to provide local residents, elected members, community organisations and other interested stakeholders with an opportunity to review the emerging proposals, understand the rationale for the development and provide feedback prior to the submission of the planning application.

2.3 The consultation strategy was designed to ensure that stakeholders could engage with the proposals in a manner that was accessible and proportionate to the scale of the development. The approach combined face-to-face engagement with online consultation opportunities, enabling individuals to participate regardless of whether they were able to attend the public consultation event.

2.4 The principal element of the consultation programme was a public consultation event, where members of the public were able to review exhibition boards, discuss the proposals directly with members of the project team and provide feedback on the emerging scheme. The consultation materials were prepared to explain the need for improved and increased sports facilities, the proposed site layout, community facilities, sports provision, access arrangements and the planning process

2.5 Recognising that the proposed facilities would serve a wider catchment and that not all interested parties would be able to attend the event in person, an online version of the consultation materials and questionnaire



was also made available. Access was provided through a dedicated online survey and QR codes displayed on the consultation boards and associated publicity material. This ensured that the same information was available both in person and online, whilst providing a wider opportunity for participation from residents, sports clubs, community groups and other interested stakeholders. Feedback could be submitted through either paper or online questionnaires. The use of both formats was intended to maximise accessibility, capture a broad range of views and enable participation both during and after the consultation event. All responses were subsequently collated and reviewed by the project team as part of the preparation of the planning application and this Statement of Community Involvement.

2.6 The consultation strategy deliberately combined both in-person and online engagement. The public consultation event provided an opportunity for local residents and community stakeholders in the immediate vicinity of the site to discuss the proposals directly with the project team and provide feedback on matters of local importance. The online consultation complemented this approach by providing a wider opportunity for participation from interested residents, sports clubs, community organisations, supporters and other stakeholders with an interest in the future use of the site and proposed facilities.

2.7 This hybrid approach was deliberately adopted to ensure that the views of local residents and stakeholders in the immediate vicinity of the site could be heard through a more personalised, in-person consultation process, whilst recognising the wider public interest in the proposals arising from the Football and Community Wellbeing Hub and Rochdale AFC's involvement in the project. The online consultation therefore provided an opportunity for a broader range of residents, community groups, sports clubs, supporters and other interested stakeholders to review the proposals and provide feedback.

2.8 The consultation strategy sought to:

- Present clear and accessible information regarding the proposed development;
- Provide opportunities for stakeholders to discuss the proposals directly with members of the project team;
- Invite feedback on the principal planning considerations associated with the development;
- Capture both quantitative and qualitative feedback through structured questionnaires; and
- Inform the ongoing development of the planning application and accompanying technical assessments.

2.9 The consultation exercise comprised a number of complementary engagement activities, including:

- A public consultation event attended by representatives of the applicant and consultant team;
- Direct engagement with local elected members;
- Distribution of consultation leaflets to nearby residents and businesses;
- Exhibition boards describing the proposals, rationale and anticipated benefits of the development;



- An online consultation platform and questionnaire; and
- Paper feedback forms available both at the consultation event and alongside the online consultation material.

2.10 The consultation materials were prepared to provide a consistent source of information regardless of how stakeholders engaged with the process. The online consultation material and feedback questionnaire reflected the information presented at the public consultation event, ensuring respondents were able to provide comments based on the same information.

2.11 Feedback received through the consultation process was collated and reviewed by the project team. The findings of the consultation have informed the preparation of the planning application and are summarised within this Statement of Community Involvement.



3

Public Consultation

3. Public Consultation

Promotion

- 3.1 The public consultation events were promoted via leaflet drop to addresses in and around Middleton, using the site boundary as a guideline, focusing on the community and residents closest to the site. Approximately 500 A5 leaflets promoting the events (Appendix 1) were booked for distribution to households and businesses within the consultation zone (Appendix 2) by a third-party distribution company. The leaflet drop was booked for w/c 11th June, two weeks prior to the in-person event on 23rd June to give sufficient notice for residents to attend. Confirmation was received from the third-party distributor on 17th June that the leaflet drop was completed as booked in the week of 11th June.
- 3.2 The following delivery route was confirmed by the distributor:

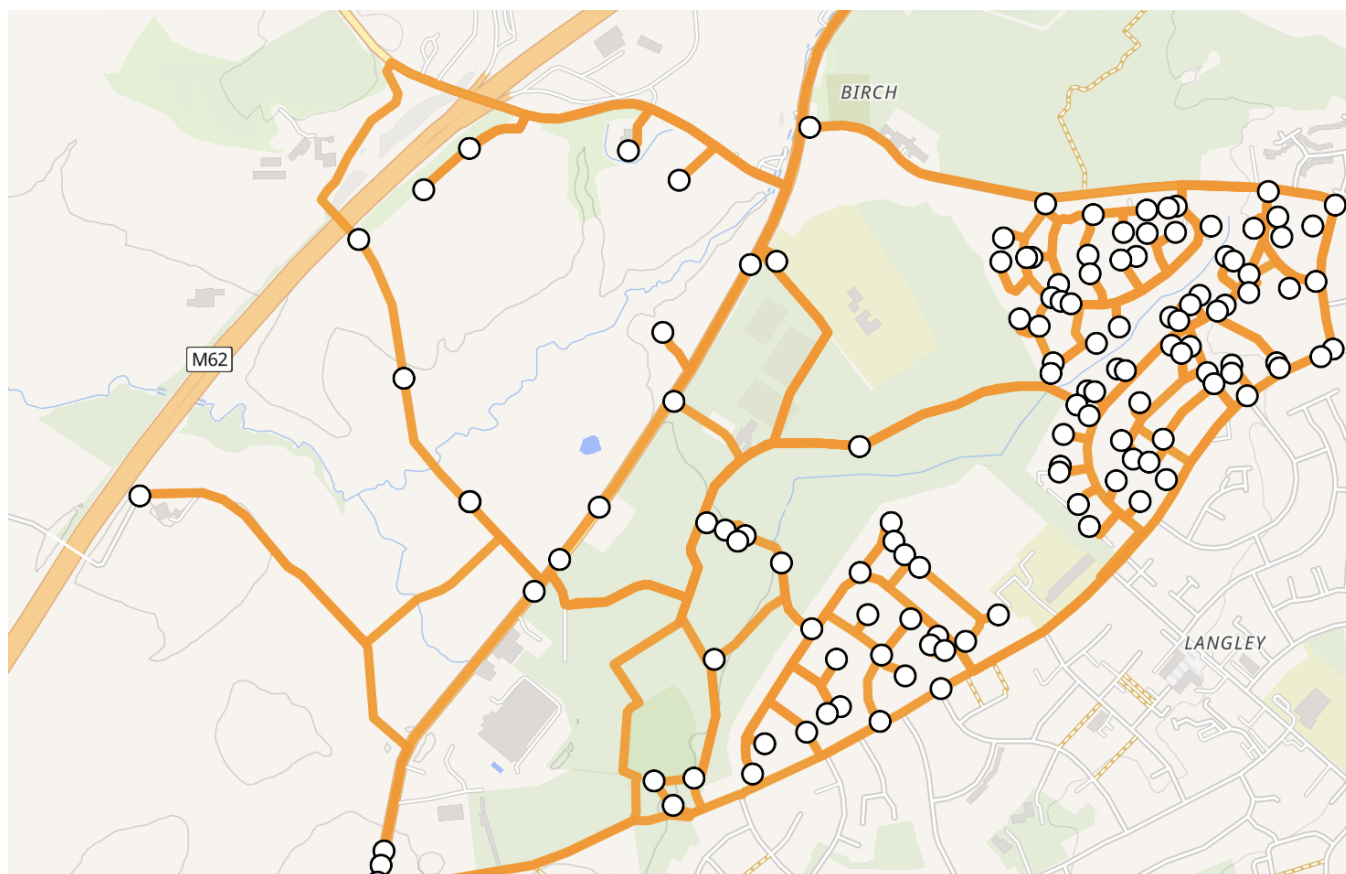


Figure 1: Confirmed distribution route

- 3.3 Invitations to attend the consultations were sent out personally by the project team via email (Appendix 3) to Councillors for Healey, South Middleton & West Middleton wards. Two Councillors responded via email, one of whom confirmed attendance, and the other who proposed a separate earlier meeting to the event due to schedule clashes on the proposed consultation date and time.



3.4 Councillors were also helpful in furthering the promotion of the event, with some sharing the Consultation Leaflet on social media channels. An example of this can be found in Appendix 4.

In-Person Exhibition Event

3.5 The event took place on Thursday 25th June 2026 at David Lloyd Manchester North, Heywood Old Road, Middleton, Manchester.

3.6 There was a one-hour slot (15:00 – 16:00) allocated for Councillors who were invited directly via email with the times advertised to members of the public as 16:00 – 19:00. Councillors were also advised that they could stay and attend the rest of the session following the allocated hour.

3.7 Staff from across the project team and applicant team attended the events to speak with attendees about the proposals and respond to any queries and concerns.

3.8 The project team prepared 6no. A0 exhibition boards showcasing various elements of the proposals (Appendix 5). The boards covered the following areas:

- Introduction to Applicant and Project Teams;
- Site Context, Constraints & Opportunities;
- The Scheme;
- Football Club Building and Facilities;
- Community Pavilion Design and Play Area; and
- Project Timeline.

3.9 The table below summarises the attendance at each event:

	Public*	Councillors
Thursday 25 th June	15	4

**Figures are approximate*

3.10 Depending on individual preference, attendees were able to either review the consultation boards at their own pace or be taken round by a member of the project team who guided them through each section.

3.11 Feedback forms (Appendix 6) were available to complete at the event. The questions were also made available via an online version of the same questionnaire via Microsoft Form, with QR codes available in the venue on the day. A separate QR code was created to capture the in-person event with its more local focus as a separate consultation stream to ensure local voices were clearly heard.



Figure 2: Images from the public consultation event

Further Consultation post-event

3.12 Following the public consultation event, attendance was lower than anticipated. The consultation took place during a period of exceptionally hot weather, which may have impacted attendance levels. During the event, a small number of attendees also indicated that they had not received a consultation leaflet. The project team took this feedback seriously and reviewed the issue with the third-party distribution company, which subsequently confirmed that the agreed leaflet distribution exercise had been completed and provided supporting tracking information (Appendix 2).

3.13 The consultation strategy had originally been designed to provide opportunities for participation beyond the in-person event, including online consultation materials, a dedicated feedback questionnaire, publication through Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale AFC communication channels, and wider promotion



through social media. Nevertheless, to provide a further opportunity for engagement, the consultation boards were subsequently displayed at Middleton Arena as a temporary public exhibition. This enabled members of the public to continue to view the consultation material and submit feedback through both physical and online response forms, helping to ensure that those who had been unable to attend the original consultation event still had an opportunity to participate in the consultation process.

Online Consultation

- 3.14 As originally envisaged, a wider online engagement exercise was undertaken to capture the anticipated broader public interest arising from Rochdale AFC's involvement in the proposals. A second Microsoft Forms survey was created using the same questions and format as the original local consultation questionnaire, and a separate QR code was generated and provided to Rochdale AFC to promote through its communications channels.
- 3.15 A parallel online consultation exercise was also undertaken by Rochdale Borough Council in its capacity as joint applicant. This was hosted on the Council's website. The Council consultation page included the project information, consultation materials and a link to submit feedback, using the same questions as the RAFC and previous in-person event.
- 3.16 Both online consultation platforms included digital copies of the consultation boards presented at the in-person event, ensuring respondents had access to the same project information when providing feedback.
- 3.17 The online consultation exercise closed on 17 July 2026, allowing over two weeks for additional responses to be received. In line with Rochdale Borough Council's own consultation procedures, the consultation hosted on the Council's website remained available for a longer period. However, for the purposes of this Statement of Community Involvement, only responses received up to and including 17 July 2026 have been included within the consultation analysis.
- 3.18 Examples of the website publicity and follow-up Frequently Asked Questions sheet in response to the initial public consultation can be viewed at Appendix 7.

Middleton Arena

- 3.19 Information regarding the Middleton Arena exhibition, together with details of how to access the online consultation material and feedback forms, was publicised through the project communication channels. The exhibition remained available for approximately two weeks and provided a further opportunity for members of the public to review the proposals and submit comments via online or paper feedback forms. While the exhibition was unstaffed, staff members at Middleton Arena were provided with FAQs and asked to direct visitors to complete the forms and submit any questions.

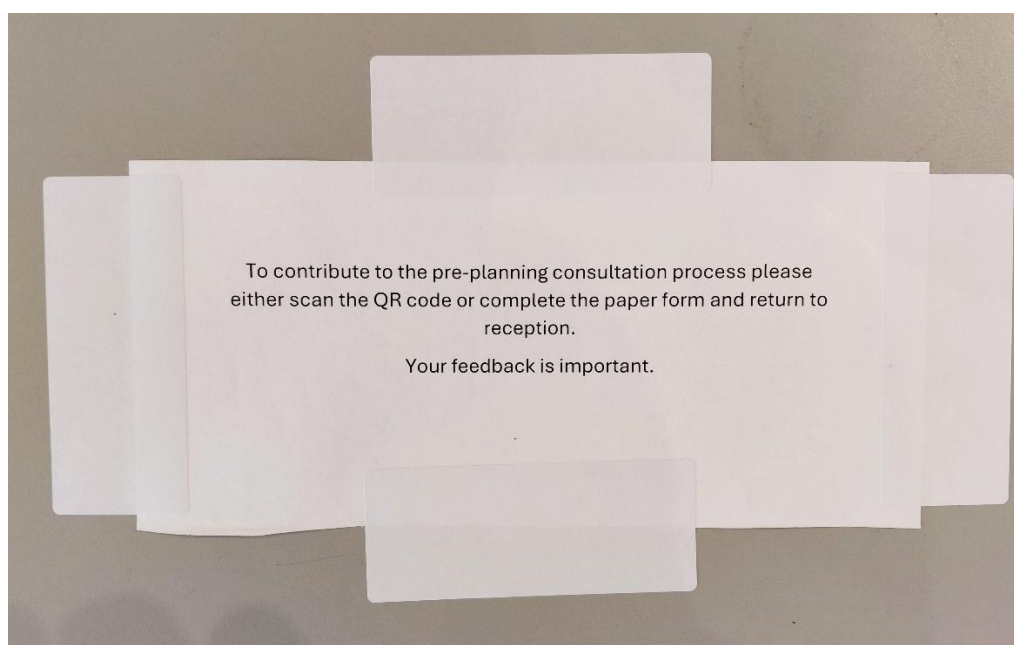
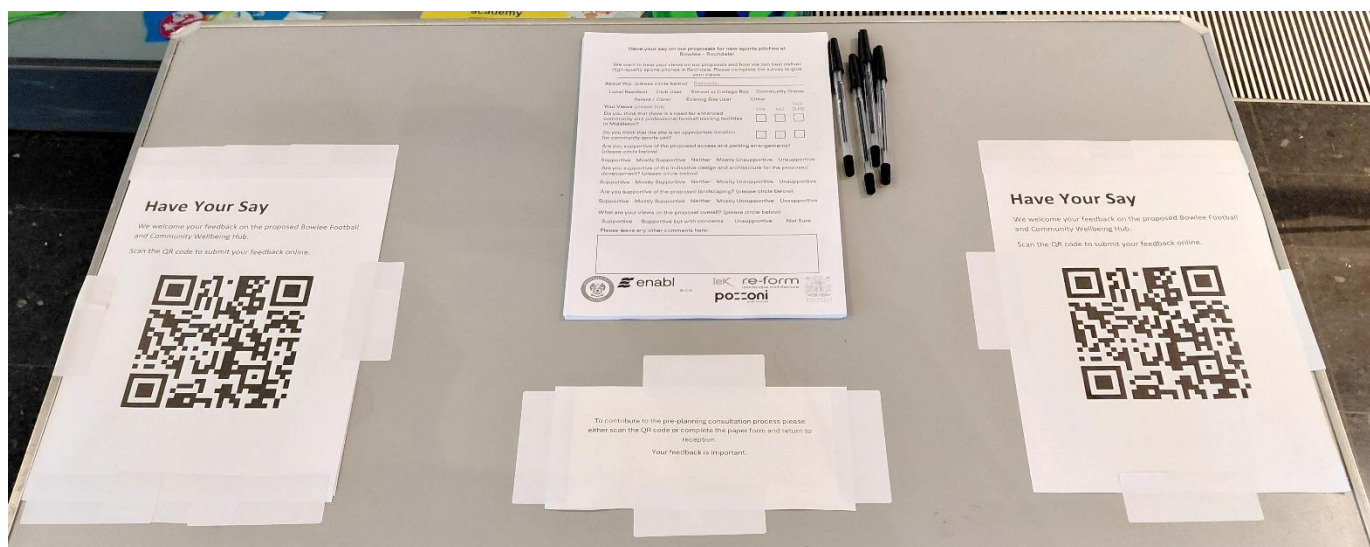




Figure 3: Images from the unstaffed consultation exhibition at Middleton Arena



4

Public Responses



4. Public Responses

4.1 A total of 502no. feedback forms were received during the consultation period. The questionnaire comprised one respondent classification question, six structured questions relating to the proposals, and one free-text comments section that enabled respondents to provide more detailed feedback and observations (Appendix 6).

4.2 Responses were received via the following channels:

- **Online Public Consultation** (via QR code shared by RAFC comms and general social media) – 467 responses
- **Online Public Consultation** (via Council website) – 10 responses
- **In-person public consultation** (via paper feedback forms and QR code) – 10 responses
- **Middleton Arena Consultation Exhibition** (via paper feedback forms) – 15 responses
- **Total responses received: 502**

Quantitative Data

Interest in the Proposals

4.3 Respondents were first asked, in the form of a multiple-choice question, about their interest in the proposals. From this, it was identified that 44.3% were local residents, 14.6% were supporters, 10% club users, 8.1% parent/carers, 3.5% existing site user, 2.2% Community Group and 1.2% school/College representative. 16.3% of respondents left it uncategorised.

4.4 In addition to this, respondents were asked for their postcode. 30.9% had an M24 postcode (the postcode for the Middleton area, which also covers the application site). 68.1% had Rochdale postcodes (OL11, OL12, OL10, OL16, OL15) as the development is intended to serve the wider Rochdale Borough. Only 1% are from other non-OL districts (BL, SK, WA).

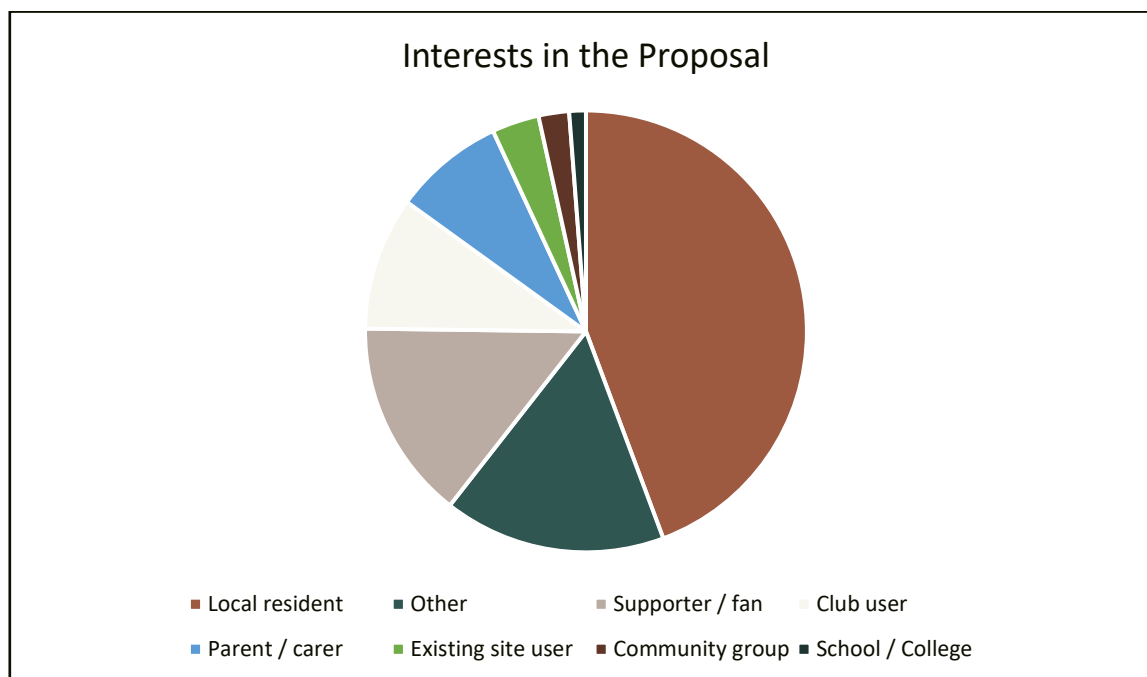


Figure 4: Interests in the Proposal

4.5 These results give a high level of confidence that the majority of respondents are local to the proposed development, so benefit from local knowledge and have an interest in how the local area develops.

4.6 The postcode data demonstrates that responses were predominantly received from residents within Middleton and the wider Rochdale Borough. This provides confidence that the consultation captured views from those most likely to experience the effects of the proposals and benefit from the facilities.

Need for Enhanced Community and Professional Football Training Facilities in Middleton

4.7 Respondents were asked whether they thought there was a need for improved community and professional football training facilities in Middleton. A resounding 85% considered that there is a need, 11.8% were opposed, and 2.6% were unsure.



Figure 5: Need for enhanced community and professional football training facilities

4.8 The survey results indicate a very strong perception that there is a need for improved community and professional football training facilities in Middleton. This represents a clear and consistent message from those who participated in the consultation.

4.9 Many of the respondents who are in favour of enhancing sport facilities in Middleton identified the following key reasons:

- Existing poor-quality and waterlogged pitches within the area.
- Lack of modern football pitches within Middleton.
- The need for a permanent training base for Rochdale AFC.
- The creation of opportunities for young people, grassroots football and community health initiatives.

4.10 Among those who were opposed, a recurring concern was that there are sufficient existing facilities elsewhere. Respondents also expressed concerns regarding the loss of green open space.

Appropriateness of Location

4.11 Respondents were asked if they thought that the proposed application site is an appropriate location for sports use. Following a similar pattern to the previous question on sporting facilities needs, 85.4 % said "Yes", 12.3 % responded "No", and only 1.8% of respondents were unsure.

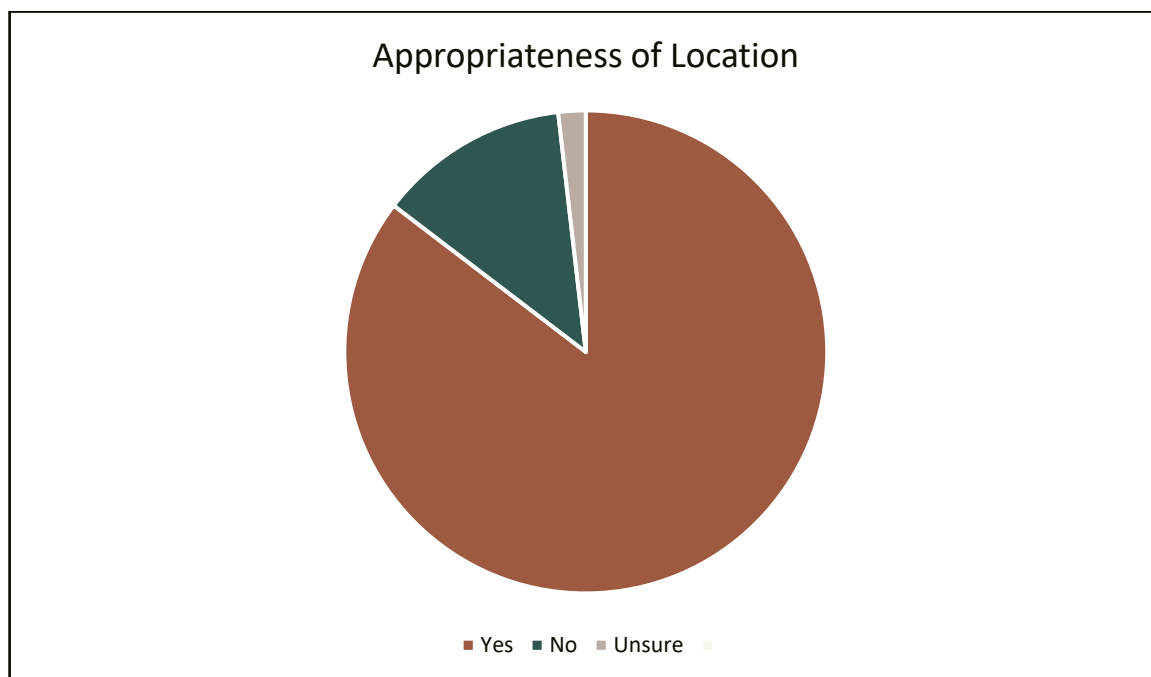


Figure 6: Appropriateness of Location

4.12 The results indicate an overwhelming level of support for the principle of development on the site, with almost 85% of respondents considering that it is an appropriate location for football pitches and a community wellbeing facility.

4.13 This was reaffirmed by some of the responses collected in the further comments text box at the end of the form, which noted:

- Best use of the existing site, which is the playing fields;
- The site consists of existing sporting heritage;
- Accessible pitches from across the borough and
- A good opportunity to improve an underutilised site.

4.14 Among those who were opposed to the suitability of the location for the proposed development, comments often focused on:

- The site's value as an open green space;
- Wildlife and ecological concerns;
- Existing recreational use, such as dog walking, and
- Perceived conflict between professional football use and public access.

4.15 The consultation identified a recurring concern relating to the perceived loss of open green space and informal recreational use of the site. It is important to note the area within the site boundary is comprised of existing



playing fields and the Pavilion community building, play area and car park, and the proposed uses are considered to be appropriate in this location in planning policy terms. The wider Bowlee Community Park does not form part of the application site and will not be developed, including the Site of Biological Importance. The project team acknowledges that the site is currently used for informal activities including walking, recreation and access through the wider Bowlee Community Park. These concerns have been considered

4.16 Whilst a proportion of respondents considered the site unsuitable for development, these views must be considered alongside the adopted planning policy framework and technical evidence submitted in support of the application.

4.17 The planning application is accompanied by a range of technical assessments, including ecology and arboricultural reports, which assess the likely effects of the proposals and identify mitigation where required. The planning process requires a balanced consideration of local concerns alongside wider social, environmental and community benefits.

Views on Specific Aspects of the Proposals

4.18 Respondents were then asked a series of questions on their views on specific aspects of the proposals, each on a scale of Supportive, Mostly Supportive, Neither, Mostly Unsupportive and Unsupportive.

- Are you supportive of the proposed access and parking arrangements?
- Are you supportive of the indicative design and architecture for the proposed development?
- Are you supportive of the proposed landscaping?

4.19 The pie charts below present the results from these questions.

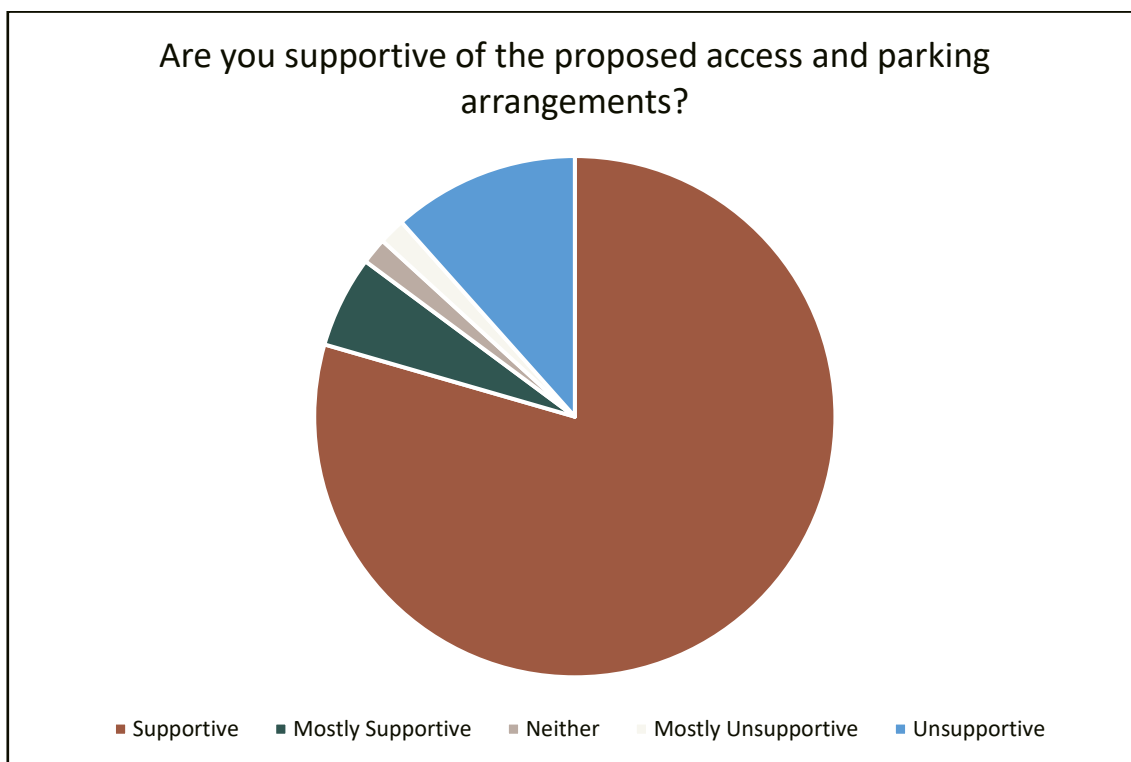


Figure 7: Are you supportive of the proposed access and parking arrangements?

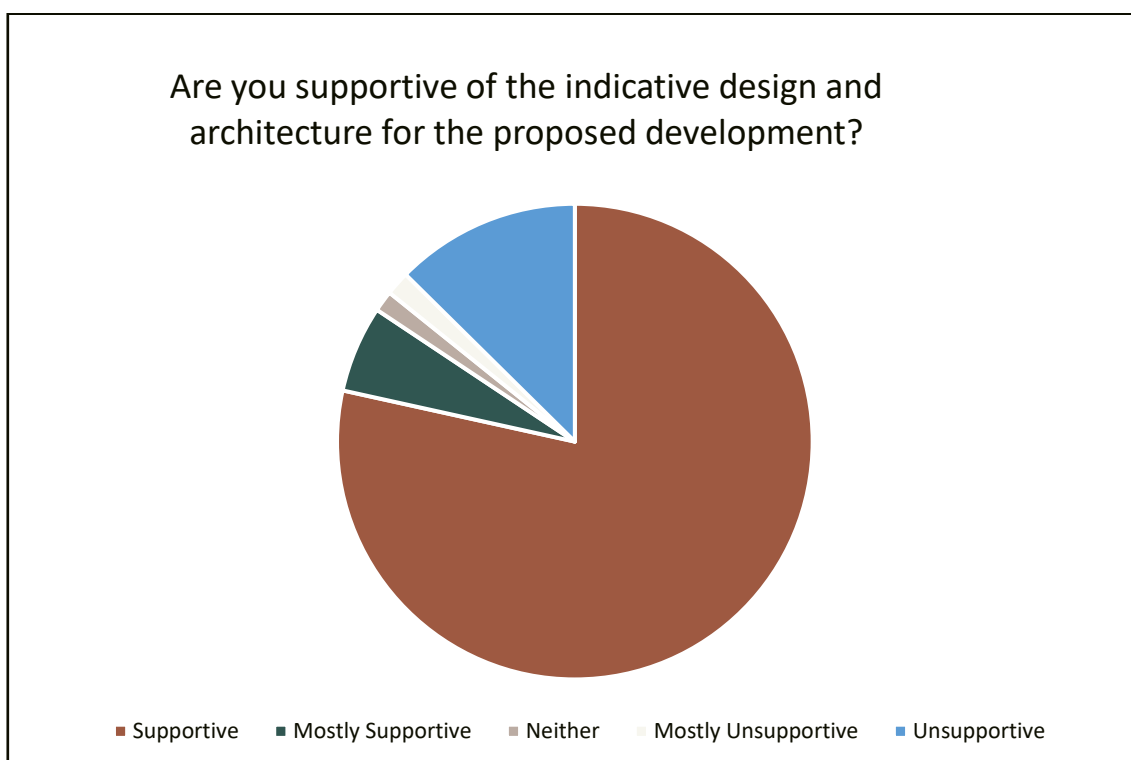


Figure 8: Are you supportive of the indicative design and architecture for the proposed development?

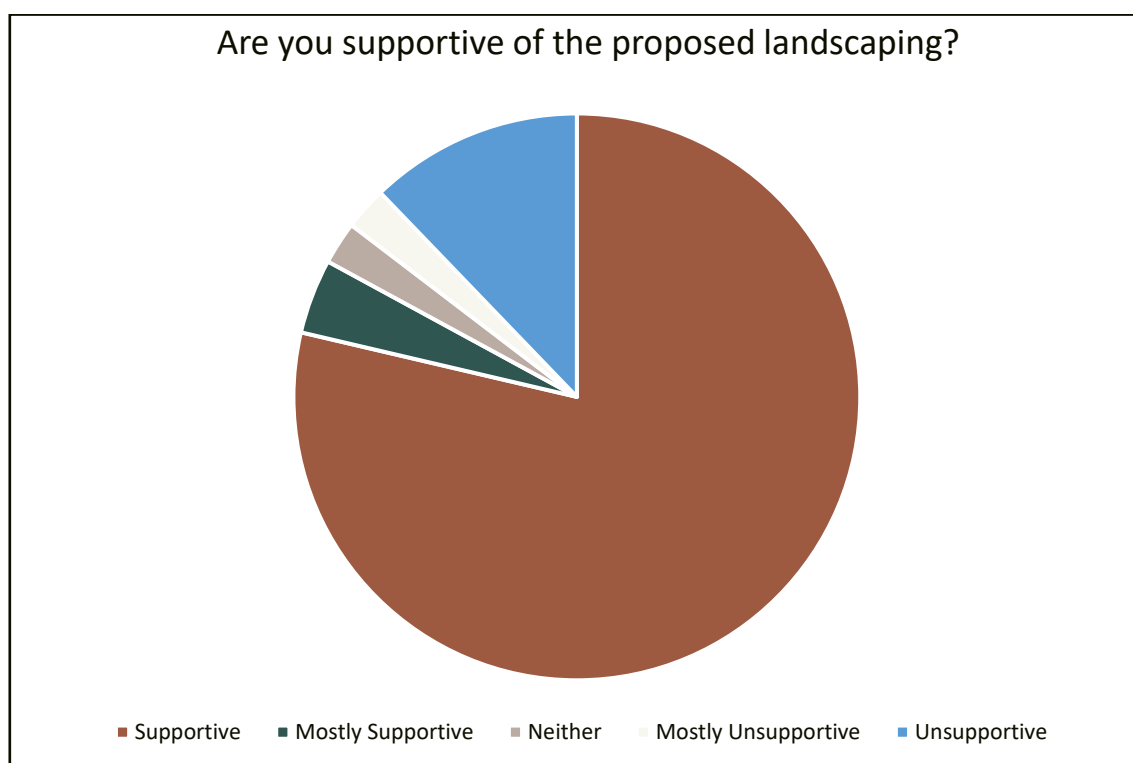


Figure 9: Are you supportive of the proposed landscaping?

4.20 The consultation responses demonstrate a consistently high level of support across all three aspects of the proposed development. In each case, the largest response category by a substantial margin was supportive with a small minority unsupportive.

4.21 Figure 7 highlights that more than 85% of respondents expressed either support or general support for the proposed access and parking arrangements. Those that were unsupportive, their concerns were raised in regard to the increase vehicle movement and worsening of existing congestion on Heywood Old Road. Additionally, respondents also addressed worries in relation to traffic generated by car boot sales and the over demand for parking which could result in overspill parking nearby residential streets.

4.22 In regard to the design and architecture of proposed development, 79% of respondents were supportive of the indicative designs with comments focussing on improvement of changing provisions and community hub facilities as well as the positive long-term investment the development has on local sports infrastructure.

4.23 Among those who were unsupportive (12.6%) and mostly unsupportive (1.6%), comments were raised in relation to the scale of development and the loss of informal public access. Additionally, some comments suggested that the site should become a broader leisure destination rather than a primarily a football complex.

4.24 The Figure 9 demonstrates a strong level of support for the proposed landscaping, with 79% of respondents were supportive of the proposals. Notwithstanding the support, around 14% of respondents were either mostly unsupportive or unsupportive of the landscaping proposals. Concerns were identified in the extra comments section. The most frequently recurring issues related to:

- Loss of biodiversity & trees
- Loss of nature green space due to new artificial grass pitches
- Introduction of flood lighting and car parking expansion.

4.25 Although a number of respondents expressed opposition to the proposals, there was a clear predominance of supportive responses overall. This strong level of support suggests that the local community recognise the need for the development and the potential long-term benefits it would deliver for the community.

Overall Views

4.26 Finally, respondents were asked “What are your views on the proposal overall?”, with a choice of four options: Supportive; Supportive but with concerns; Unsupportive; and Not Sure. On trend with the rest of the quantitative data, 80.7% of respondents were supportive of the proposals.

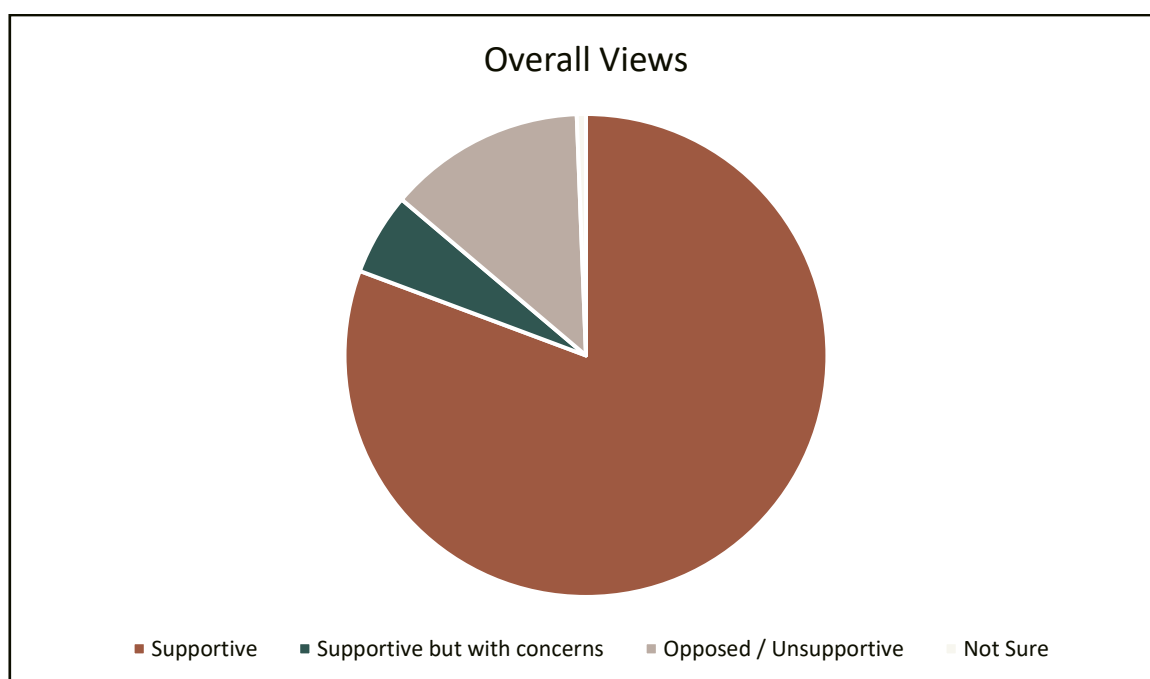


Figure 10: Overall Views

4.27 The responses to this question provide a clear overall indication of community sentiment towards the proposed development. The results show that the proposal attracted a lot of support amongst those who participated in the consultation.

4.28 These findings are broadly consistent with the responses recorded throughout the consultation exercise. Earlier questions identified support to both the principle of development on the site and the need for an upgrade in sporting facilities in Rochdale borough. Similarly, the detailed aspects of the proposal, including access and parking arrangements, design and architecture, and landscaping, all received predominantly supportive responses. The results of this concluding question therefore reflect a clear and consistent pattern across the survey as a whole.

4.29 Whilst the proposals received significant support overall, a number of respondents expressed concerns or opposition. The main issues raised related to the loss of green space, potential impacts on wildlife and biodiversity, and the extent of artificial grass pitches proposed on the site.

4.30 The results should therefore be understood as an expression of community opinion regarding the scheme as presented during the consultation period. They provide a useful measure of local sentiment but do not alter the planning policy context within which the application will be considered.

Summary of Quantitative Findings

4.31 Taken together, the quantitative survey results demonstrate a clear and consistent position amongst respondents:

- A substantial majority of respondents considered that Middleton does require new sporting facilities.
- A substantial majority considered that the application site is an appropriate location for the proposed development.
- The proposed access and parking arrangements, design and architecture, and landscaping proposals all received predominantly supportive responses.
- The proposal overall attracted very positive support, with 424 respondents expressing a supportive view.

4.32 The quantitative data therefore indicates a strong degree of support to the proposed development amongst those who chose to participate in the consultation exercise. This represents an important consultation outcome and provides valuable insight into local community views. The following sections of this Statement of Community Involvement consider the qualitative feedback received and the key themes arising from respondents' comments.

Qualitative Data

4.33 In addition to the structured questionnaire, respondents were invited to provide further comments through a free text question:

"Please leave any other comments here."

4.34 This question enabled respondents to explain their views in their own words and raise any issues which they considered relevant to the proposed development. Responses were received through both the online consultation portal and paper feedback forms.

4.35 The comments were reviewed in detail and categorised into a series of recurring themes. Many respondents referred to more than one issue within their comments and, accordingly, individual responses may contribute to more than one theme. The purpose of this analysis is not to present every individual comment, but to identify the principal matters raised during the consultation and provide an understanding of the issues most frequently highlighted by participants.

4.36 The themes identified through the qualitative review broadly mirror the findings of the quantitative survey results.

4.37 Comments were categorised by theme and further classified based on respondents' positions toward the proposal as 'positive', 'neutral', and 'negative.' This approach provided a more comprehensive understanding of the community's stance on specific aspects of the proposal.

4.38 The specific comments captured within the key themes featured in the bar charts have been summarised in the following table, which also includes the project team's response

4.39 For each theme, the SCI provides a response. Where possible, this includes demonstrating how the proposals have been revised in response to the comments.

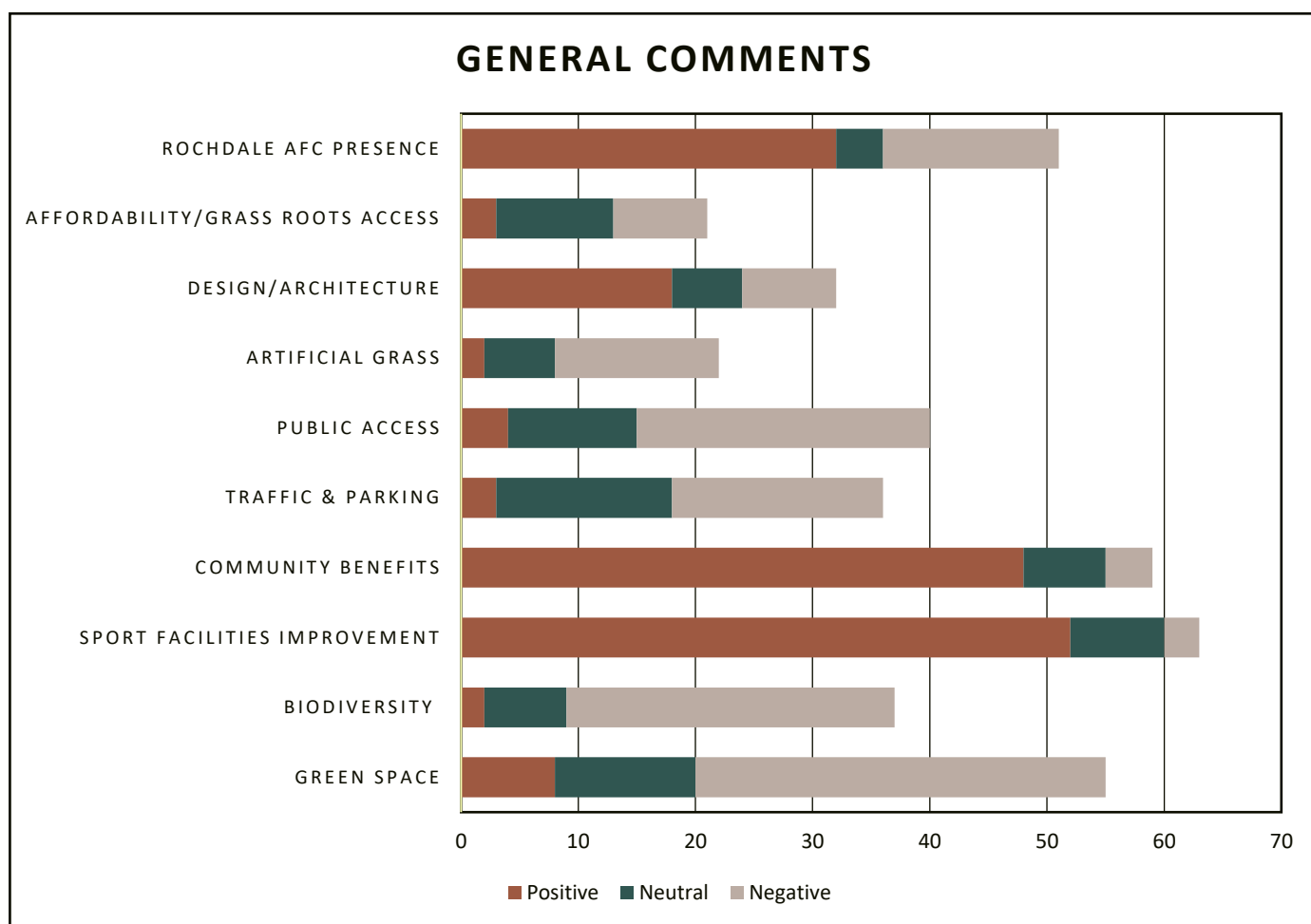


Figure 11: Summary of general comment themes

4.40 The themes identified through the qualitative review broadly reflect the matters raised through the quantitative survey responses. Whilst the majority of respondents expressed support for the proposals, a number of recurring themes were identified, including the need for enhanced sporting facilities, the role of the site as



open green space, ecology and biodiversity, traffic and parking, and ongoing public access. The following analysis and consultation response table summarise these issues and set out how they have been considered through the evolution of the proposals and accompanying planning submission.

Main Themes and Project Team Response

Theme	Summary
Rochdale AFC Presence	Around 32 respondents mentioned the positive presence of Rochdale AFC involvement in the proposals. This was expressed in comments such as: <i>"Rochdale desperately needs its own training ground to enhance the club further."</i> <i>"It puts Rochdale AFC back in the community."</i> <i>"The football club runs many community initiatives and this site will be a focus for many of these activities."</i> These comments outline how the club is an important community asset which will be capable of delivering wider community benefits as well as means of increasing participation in the sport. Many supportive comments also highlighted the importance of retaining professional sporting infrastructure within the borough and the role that Rochdale AFC can play in supporting wider community objectives. Respondents frequently referenced the club's existing community programmes, its connections to local schools and grassroots sport, and the opportunity to create a permanent training base capable of supporting both professional and community football activities. Several respondents considered that the proposals represented a long-term investment in local sporting facilities which would benefit future generations. While the majority of comments relating to Rochdale AFC were supportive, it's still important to acknowledge the concerns raised by a small number of respondents regarding the suitability of the site for the football club. For example, some comments stated: <i>"Rochdale AFC isn't a local club. Stay in Rochdale where they belong."</i> <i>"Have a Middleton FC ground instead. Rochdale not welcome in Middleton."</i> The comments also highlight differing views regarding the role of Rochdale AFC within the proposals. Whilst some respondents questioned whether the facilities should be associated with Rochdale AFC, others considered the Club's involvement to be a significant benefit, particularly in securing investment, improving facilities and supporting wider community activities. This reflects the broader balance the proposals seek to achieve between the operational requirements of Rochdale AFC and the delivery of community sports and wellbeing facilities. Whilst a small number of respondents questioned Rochdale AFC's involvement, the majority of comments were supportive of the Club's role in helping secure investment in the site. The comments also reflect differing views regarding the future role of the site.

Theme	Summary
	The proposals are being brought forward through a partnership between Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale AFC, combining the Club's operational requirements with wider community investment objectives. Rochdale AFC's Community Trust already delivers a wide range of programmes across the borough focused on community sport, education, employability, health and inclusion, and a number of consultation responses referenced these activities as a positive aspect of the proposals. The Sports Impact Statement also notes that Rochdale AFC currently trains outside of the borough and does not have a permanent training base within Rochdale. The proposals therefore provide an opportunity for both the Club and its community activities to return to the borough whilst supporting wider community use and participation in sport. It should be noted that the proposals have been informed by earlier feasibility and options appraisal work which identified Bowlee as one of the principal locations capable of accommodating a football and community wellbeing hub. The proposals seek to combine Rochdale AFC's requirements with wider community sports, health and wellbeing facilities, reflecting the aspiration for the site to serve both local residents and the wider borough.
Affordability & Grassroots Access	A small number of respondents raised concerns regarding the affordability and accessibility of the proposed facilities. While several comments were broadly supportive of the development, respondents emphasised the importance of ensuring that local grassroots clubs, community organisations and residents retain affordable access to facilities. Concerns were also expressed that hire charges could increase compared with existing arrangements and that Rochdale AFC or academy teams may receive priority access, potentially limiting availability for community users. Neutral: <i>"Supportive provided the facilities remain affordable and accessible."</i> <i>"I therefore support the development in principle, but would ask that existing grassroots clubs receive priority or protected access."</i> Negative: <i>"If facilities must now be hired, those costs will inevitably increase, making sport less accessible for families."</i> <i>"Artificial pitches usually have to be booked and paid for by the hour. For grassroots clubs operating numerous teams those costs can be substantial."</i> Overall, these comments reflect a desire for clear assurances that the facilities will remain accessible, affordable and available for both organised grassroots sport and wider community use.

Theme	Summary
	The concerns raised reflect the importance of community access to the long-term success of the project. The proposals have been developed as a football and community wellbeing hub rather than a private training facility, with significant community sports, health and wellbeing provision forming part of the development. The Sports Impact Statement confirms that Community Use Agreements are being prepared and that future programming, access arrangements and pricing considerations will form part of the site's operating model. The intention is therefore that the enhanced facilities continue to serve local clubs, community groups and residents alongside Rochdale AFC's requirements. The planning application itself seeks to secure enhanced community sports, health and wellbeing facilities, with the intention that the site continues to serve local residents, grassroots sport and community organisations alongside Rochdale AFC's requirements.
Design and Architecture	Many respondents provided positive comments on the design and architecture mentioning that it was appropriate and significant modern upgrade to the existing infrastructure: <i>"The proposal will build on the existing facilities and provide a modern facility for the local population."</i> <i>"This looks like a brilliant opportunity to vastly improve a tired old sports facility."</i> Of those that were more neutral, comments were less focussed on the architectural plans and more concentrated on how the development would serve the broader audience, which relates to previous comments raised about Rochdale AFC presence: <i>"Would be good to have other sports / activities on the site e.g. badminton courts plus inclusivity and accessibility for all."</i> <i>"The proposals are solely centred around a commercial entity Rochdale Football Club, to the detriment of all other activities."</i> These comments reflect a wider theme identified throughout the consultation, namely that respondents wished to see the site continue to serve a diverse range of users and activities. Whilst some respondents were concerned that the proposals could become overly focused on Rochdale AFC, others highlighted the opportunity for the development to provide enhanced facilities, increased participation in sport and wider community wellbeing benefits. As discussed elsewhere in this SCI, the proposals include a community wellbeing hub, community sports facilities and spaces intended to support a range of community activities in addition to football. In response, the proposals have been developed as a football and community wellbeing hub rather than a standalone football training facility. Alongside football provision, the application includes a community building incorporating a fitness gym, community space and café facilities intended to support wider community use. Whilst the detailed operation of the facilities sits outside the scope of the planning application, the wider project has consistently sought to balance Rochdale AFC's requirements with the delivery of community benefits, health and

Theme	Summary
	wellbeing opportunities, and improved access to sport and physical activity, reflected in the hybrid sport and community use sought.
Artificial Grass & 3G Pitches	Of the 22 people that made comments in regard to the 3G pitches, 14 expressed concerns or objections, primarily relating to environmental matters. The comments below provide examples of the concerns raised by respondents within this theme. <i>"The astroturf will be detrimental for wildlife and nature."</i> <i>"The plans to Astroturf 3 football fields is unnecessary destruction of green space."</i> <i>"Artificial lighting and material such as astroturf will have a devastating impact on biodiversity."</i> It is important to note that many people were not wholly opposed but rather questioned whether the quantity proposed was necessary. These respondents often advocated retaining a greater proportion of natural grass pitches whilst still delivering improved facilities <i>"Do all 3 fields really need to be astro turf? Or could one or even 2 be left green?"</i> <i>"I support the development but not all the artificial pitches."</i> The comments reflect the balance that has been sought between retaining natural grass surfaces and the need to provide reliable, year-round sports facilities capable of meeting current and future demand. The Sports Impact Statement identifies a significant shortfall in 3G pitch provision across Rochdale Borough and highlights the limitations of the existing facilities at Bowlee, where several grass pitches are affected by poor drainage and periods of non-use. The proposed 3G pitches have therefore been developed to improve playing capacity, provide all-weather facilities and increase opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity. The consultation responses also demonstrate that a number of respondents were not opposed to investment in the site or the provision of enhanced football facilities in principle, but instead questioned the extent of artificial pitch provision proposed. This reflects differing views regarding the most appropriate balance between grass and artificial playing surfaces. Ecological and biodiversity considerations have been assessed through the accompanying technical assessments submitted with the planning application. Whilst the proposals will alter the character of part of the site, the application includes landscaping, habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement measures. The biodiversity strategy seeks to deliver at least a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain and should therefore be considered alongside the wider sporting, community and wellbeing benefits of the scheme.

Theme	Summary
Public Access	This theme was one of the most prominent themes raised by respondents particularly amongst those who opposed the proposals in the multiple choice questions. A total of 25 respondents made negative comments which focussed on the current role of Bowlee as an open-access space used by a wide range of people. Concerns were raised that the development would reduce unrestricted access to parts of the site through fencing, managed pitches and increased formalisation of pitches. <i>"It is taking away community recreational land under the guise of it being a community hub."</i> <i>"The existing fields are open to everyone, every day, at no cost. Replacing them with enclosed football pitches is the privatisation of public open space."</i> <i>"Currently it's free for all to enjoy. This will take away the beauty and free access."</i> The comments highlight the value that many local residents place on Bowlee as an accessible space for informal recreation, walking and enjoyment of the wider parkland. This was a recurring theme throughout the consultation process, particularly amongst residents living closest to the site, and has been an important consideration in the evolution of the proposals. The project team recognises that the site currently performs a number of functions, including formal sports use, informal recreation and movement through the wider Bowlee Community Park and surrounding destinations. A key consideration during the design process has therefore been how the proposed development can deliver enhanced sports and wellbeing facilities whilst maintaining connections with the wider country park and local community. A number of respondents specifically highlighted the use of the site for walking and informal recreation. The wider Bowlee Country Park will not be affected and will continue to offer open space for dog walking and community enjoyment. The existing footpaths around the site boundary will be maintained along with a route through from Bowlee Country Park through the centre of the Hub site and connecting to Heywood Old Road. In addition, the proposals seek to maintain key walking and cycling connections and support sustainable access between the site, Middleton, Langley and surrounding neighbourhoods. Whilst parts of the site will become more formally managed as sports facilities, the proposals also include wider community benefits through investment in new sports provision, a community wellbeing hub, improved landscaping, play facilities and enhanced walking and cycling connections. The project team has therefore sought to balance the operational requirements of a modern sports hub with the continued accessibility and community value of the wider Bowlee area.
Traffic & Parking	This was another theme which emerged as a concern during the consultation which were expressed by both supporters and opponents of the scheme. While many respondents supported the principle of development, they sought reassurances that local roads, parking provision and access arrangements would be able to accommodate increased usage of the site.

Theme	Summary
	Many of the neutral comments supported the scheme however sought more parking or to understand more about the traffic plans: <i>"Would have concerns about traffic... Having said this I would generally support the project."</i> <i>"More parking would be needed in my opinion."</i> <i>"As long as the proposed site takes in the logistics of traffic flow in the area, there should not be a problem."</i> Amongst the opponents, comments frequently argued that the local highway network is already experiencing congestion and that the proposed development would exacerbate existing issues: <i>"The traffic will be an absolute nightmare for residents and anyone coming from outside of area."</i> <i>"Roads become congested and parking spreads into surrounding streets."</i> In response, concerns relating to parking and traffic have been assessed through the accompanying Transport Statement. The Transport Statement considers the accessibility of the site, anticipated travel demand, parking requirements and the potential effects on the local highway network. It also identifies opportunities to encourage sustainable travel, including walking, cycling and public transport use. The proposals have not been developed on the basis of maximising private vehicle parking provision. Instead, the scheme seeks to balance the need for sufficient parking to accommodate users of the facilities with the promotion of sustainable transport modes. The Transport Statement notes that the site already benefits from walking and cycling connections through Bowlee Community Park, links to surrounding residential areas and access to local bus services. The development also includes new cycle parking and measures intended to encourage travel by sustainable modes. The assessment undertaken concludes that the proposed parking provision has been informed by an analysis of anticipated demand and that parking capacity is sufficient to accommodate the development. The Transport Statement also concludes that the proposals would not significantly adversely change the characteristics of the local highway network. A number of respondents also raised concerns regarding activity associated with neighbouring uses. The Transport Statement considers anticipated vehicle movements and parking accumulation associated with the proposed development, including peak periods of use, to ensure that adequate parking and access arrangements are provided. Overall, the planning application seeks to support a community-focused sports and wellbeing hub whilst encouraging opportunities for walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport use wherever possible.
Community Benefits	This was one of the strongest and most consistently positive themes throughout the consultation. Many of the supporters frequently cited the health and wellbeing opportunities for young

Theme	Summary
	people, community cohesion, expanded sports participation and the wider influence of Rochdale AFC community trust. These were expressed in comments such as: <i>"This will be an excellent addition for many diverse groups throughout the borough."</i> <i>"This project will not only benefit the club but also the local area, residents and businesses."</i> <i>"This is a fantastic asset for the community and will benefit many disadvantaged groups, charities and local residents."</i> Even among some of the respondents that expressed concerns about other aspects of the scheme, many still acknowledged the potential benefits if access and affordability could still be maintained. <i>"Supportive provided the facilities remain affordable and accessible for local people."</i> <i>"I support as long as the local community can still use other parts of Bowlee and that locals can access some of the events and activities held there."</i> Out of the 59 mentions of the community benefits, only 4 expressed negative views. These comments were often linked to concerns regarding public access & recreation comments, with respondents questioning whether the proposal would sufficiently benefit those who currently use the site. These comments demonstrate that many respondents viewed the proposals as extending beyond the provision of football facilities alone. Support was frequently linked to perceived health and wellbeing benefits, opportunities for young people, increased participation in sport, improved community facilities and the wider activities of Rochdale AFC Community Trust. A recurring theme was that the proposals could provide benefits for a broad range of groups within the borough, particularly where access to the facilities remains inclusive and affordable. The community benefits associated with the scheme form a key part of the overall vision for the proposed Football and Community Wellbeing Hub. The proposals have been developed through a partnership between Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale AFC and seek to combine enhanced sports facilities with wider health, wellbeing and community opportunities. Rochdale AFC Community Trust already delivers a range of programmes across the borough focused on community sport, education and employability, and health and inclusion. Furthermore, Rochdale AFC currently trains outside of the borough and does not have a permanent training base. The proposals therefore provide an opportunity to accommodate the Club's football and community activities within Rochdale Borough whilst delivering improved facilities intended to benefit local residents, schools, grassroots sport and community organisations. The planning application also includes a community wellbeing hub, gym, café and community space which are intended to broaden the site's role beyond sport alone.



Theme	Summary
Sport Facilities Improvements	The improvement to sporting facilities was another strong common theme identified amongst the supportive responses. Respondents frequently referred to the poor condition of existing pitches, drainage issues, outdated changing facilities and the need for more accessible, year-round sporting provision. Therefore, many viewed the proposals as significant investment in community sport and good opportunity to modernise facilities. This was reaffirmed in the 52 positive comments focussing on this subject: <i>"Hopefully sort out the long standing flooding problems that can make the site unusable."</i> <i>"The facilities have hardly changed in years and the investments proposed will provide first class facilities."</i> <i>"The town is crying out for a facility like this."</i> Amongst the comments that were more neutral, respondents generally supported the sport facility improvements however would like to see a broader mix of activities provided within the proposals. In response, the comments reflect a broadly shared recognition that the existing sporting infrastructure at Bowlee would benefit from investment and modernisation. The Sports Impact Statement identifies a number of existing constraints, including poor pitch drainage, limited year-round usability and an ageing pavilion building that is no longer fit for purpose. The proposed development has therefore been designed to improve the quality, reliability and capacity of sports provision, whilst also introducing new community facilities including a wellbeing hub, gym and community space. The comments also demonstrate that many respondents view the proposals as an opportunity to address longstanding issues with the site's existing facilities and support increased participation in sport and physical activity. Whilst there were differing views regarding the precise mix of facilities proposed, there was broad recognition that investment in sports infrastructure at Bowlee could deliver benefits for both existing users and future generations. The proposed development seeks to respond to these aspirations by creating a modern sports and wellbeing hub capable of supporting community use throughout the year.
Biodiversity	Wildlife and biodiversity emerged as one of the strongest opposing themes within the consultation and was frequently linked to wider concerns regarding green space loss, artificial grass pitches, floodlighting and increased development pressures in Bowlee. These comments were often raised by local residents, park users and community groups, whom described the site as an important wildlife habitat and valued natural environment. <i>"Artificial lighting and material such as astroturf will have a devastating impact on biodiversity"</i>

Theme	Summary
	<i>"This will be a disaster for the local wildlife whose habitat is already decimated by greenbelt clearance."</i> <i>"The proposed development threatens to encroach upon the area's remaining natural habitats."</i> It's important to note that many of the respondents who are supportive of the overall development, still have concerns regarding wildlife and biodiversity. This was expressed in comments such as: <i>"I support the scheme but wildlife protection must remain a priority"</i> <i>"The wildlife is so important to us but we do know this would be great"</i> The comments relating to wildlife and biodiversity have been carefully considered throughout the evolution of the proposals. A programme of ecological surveys has been undertaken to assess the site's existing ecological value, including its potential to support protected species and other wildlife. The findings of these surveys have informed the design of the development and the preparation of mitigation and enhancement measures submitted as part of the planning application. The project team recognises that many respondents place significant value on the wildlife and natural environment associated with Bowlee, including those who are otherwise supportive of the proposals. It is also recognised that many consultation responses relate to perceptions of the wider Bowlee area rather than solely the application site itself. Ecological surveys undertaken to support the planning application identify the majority of the application site as modified grassland of low ecological distinctiveness. In addition, the designated Site of Biological Importance is not proposed for development and would be retained. The application has therefore sought to balance the delivery of enhanced sports and community facilities with ecological considerations. Whilst parts of the existing site will be redeveloped, the planning application includes new landscaping, habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement measures. The proposals also seek to deliver a measurable biodiversity net gain in excess of the statutory 10% requirement through a combination of on-site enhancements and off-site mitigation. The ecological effects of the development should therefore be considered alongside the wider package of mitigation, enhancement and long-term habitat management measures proposed as part of the scheme.
Green space	The comments raised in regard to Green space have a substantial overlap with the loss of Biodiversity. Many respondents discussed both issues within the same comments. Many comments regarding green space focussed on the importance of Bowlee as one of Middleton's remaining open space with respondents valuing the site for its natural character,

Theme	Summary
	visual appearance, recreational role and contribution to local identity. This was outlined in comments such as <i>"Bowlee is the last bit of green space we have left."</i> <i>"No more building on our green spaces in Middleton."</i> <i>"Bowlee should remain a community park for the community."</i> Concerning the more neutral comments, respondents accepted that improvements are needed but wished to see greater protection of existing landscape features. Many respondents sought reassurance that green areas, trees, footpaths and open recreational space would remain a significant part of the site. Whilst a number of respondents expressed concern regarding the impact of the proposals on wildlife and biodiversity, the ecological assessments identify the majority of the existing playing fields as modified grassland of low ecological distinctiveness. The designated Site of Biological Importance is not proposed for development and would be retained. The planning application has nevertheless been informed by ecological surveys and includes landscaping, habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement measures, alongside off-site mitigation, with the aim of delivering a Biodiversity Net Gain in excess of the statutory 10% requirement. The consultation responses also highlight a wider concern regarding the cumulative effects of development and the perceived loss of open space within Middleton. A number of comments suggested that concerns extended beyond the application site itself and reflected broader anxieties regarding growth and change across the area. The project team recognises the importance that local residents place on retaining accessible green spaces and recreational opportunities. The planning application should, however, be considered on its own merits and seeks to balance the provision of enhanced sporting, health and wellbeing facilities with the retention of access to the wider Bowlee area, landscaping enhancements and biodiversity improvements.

Summary

- 4.41 The qualitative analysis demonstrates that the consultation generated both strong support for the proposals and a number of recurring concerns amongst respondents.
- 4.42 The most consistently positive themes related to the potential community benefits of the scheme, improvements to sporting facilities, investment in the site and the opportunities arising from the partnership between Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale AFC. Respondents frequently highlighted the potential for enhanced sports participation, health and wellbeing outcomes, and wider benefits for local residents and community groups.



- 4.43 The most commonly identified concerns related to the loss of green space and biodiversity, traffic and parking impacts, public access, and the affordability and accessibility of the proposed facilities.
- 4.44 These matters have been carefully considered throughout the evolution of the proposals and the preparation of the planning application. The scheme has been informed by a range of technical assessments and supporting evidence, which have identified appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures where required.
- 4.45 The consultation responses demonstrate that, whilst views differ on certain aspects of the proposals, there is a broad recognition of the potential community, sporting and wellbeing benefits that the development could deliver. The consultation process has therefore provided valuable insight into local priorities and has helped inform the final proposals submitted for consideration.



5

Conclusion

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 This Statement of Community Involvement has demonstrated the comprehensive programme of pre-application engagement undertaken by the applicants in advance of the submission of this planning application.
- 5.2 The consultation process provided local residents, businesses, elected representatives and other interested parties with a meaningful opportunity to review the emerging proposals, engage with members of the project team and provide feedback through both face-to-face discussions and written responses. Approximately 15 members of the public and 4 councillors attended the public consultation event, whilst the wider consultation programme generated 502 responses through the public exhibition, online consultation and Middleton Arena exhibition.
- 5.3 The consultation findings demonstrate a clear and consistent pattern of support for the proposed development. A significant majority of respondents recognised the need for improved sporting facilities within Middleton and the wider Rochdale Borough and considered the application site to be an appropriate location for such investment. Strong levels of support were also expressed in relation to the role of Rochdale AFC, the proposed sporting improvements, community benefits and the overall contribution that the development could make to local health, wellbeing and sports participation.
- 5.4 Whilst the overall response was supportive, the consultation also identified a number of recurring concerns relating to green space and biodiversity, public access, affordability and accessibility of facilities, and the potential implications for local traffic and parking conditions. Some responses also reflected wider concerns regarding the cumulative effects of development and perceived loss of open space within Middleton.
- 5.5 The feedback received has been carefully reviewed and considered alongside the technical evidence prepared in support of the application. The planning submission includes a range of supporting assessments which have examined the key issues raised through the consultation process and identified mitigation and enhancement measures where appropriate. Where relevant, the consultation feedback has informed the ongoing evolution of the proposals and supporting planning documents.
- 5.6 The consultation process has therefore provided a meaningful and proportionate opportunity for the community to engage with the proposals and influence their development. The feedback received has helped shape the application and has contributed to a balanced understanding of both the benefits of the scheme and the concerns raised by local stakeholders.
- 5.7 The applicants consider that the consultation exercise has been proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposed development and has successfully achieved its objective of facilitating meaningful community engagement prior to the submission of the planning application. The feedback received has informed the evolution of the proposals and has helped identify the matters that will require consideration during the determination of the application.



Appendices

Appendix 1 – Promotional Leaflet

Proposal for Bowlee Football & Community Wellbeing Hub

Public Consultation Event



Prior to submission of the planning application, we would like to hear your views and offer the opportunity to provide feedback.

Event Location:
David Lloyd
Manchester North,
Heywood Old Road,
Middleton,
Manchester,
M24 4TH

When:
Thursday 25th June 2026
4:00pm - 7:00pm

Rochdale Borough Council is working with Rochdale AFC on plans to help create healthier, more active communities across the borough and provide an elite training facility for the borough's professional club.

Proposals are being developed for new and improved sports pitches, football training facilities and leisure spaces at a new Bowlee Football and Community Wellbeing Hub in Bowlee, Middleton. The plans also include parking and improvements to the surrounding area.

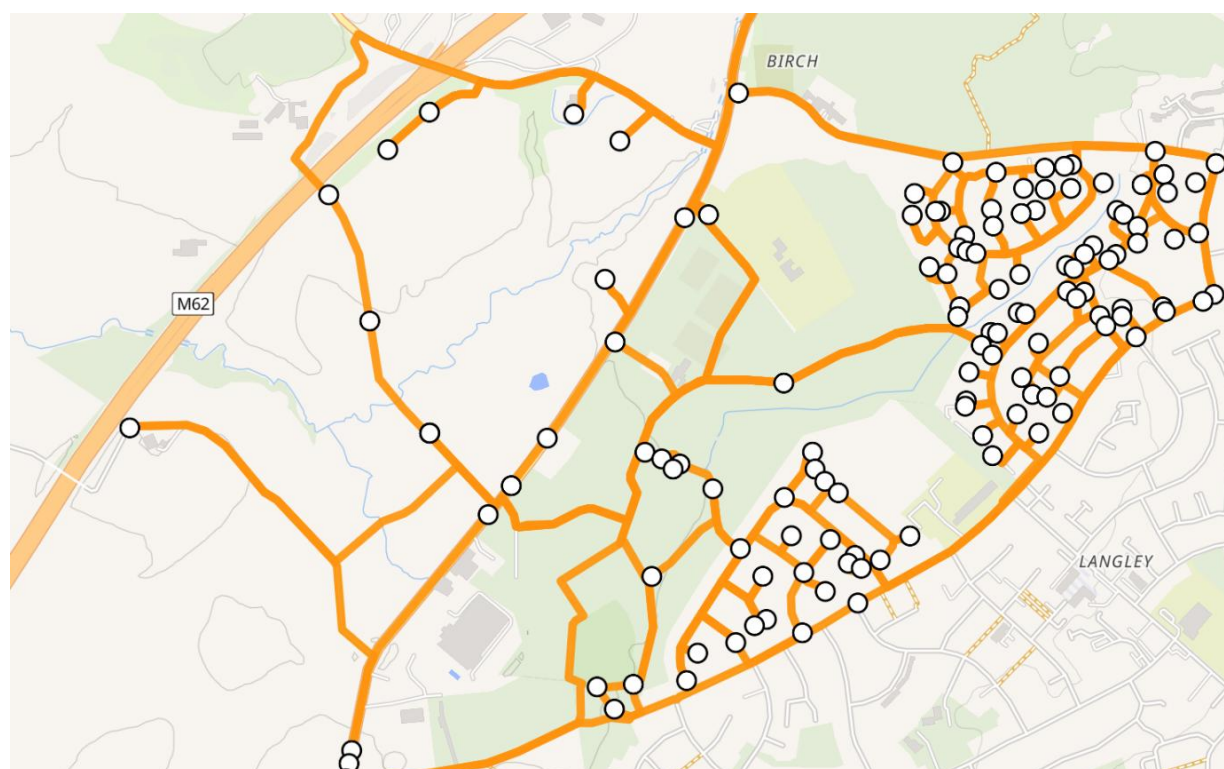
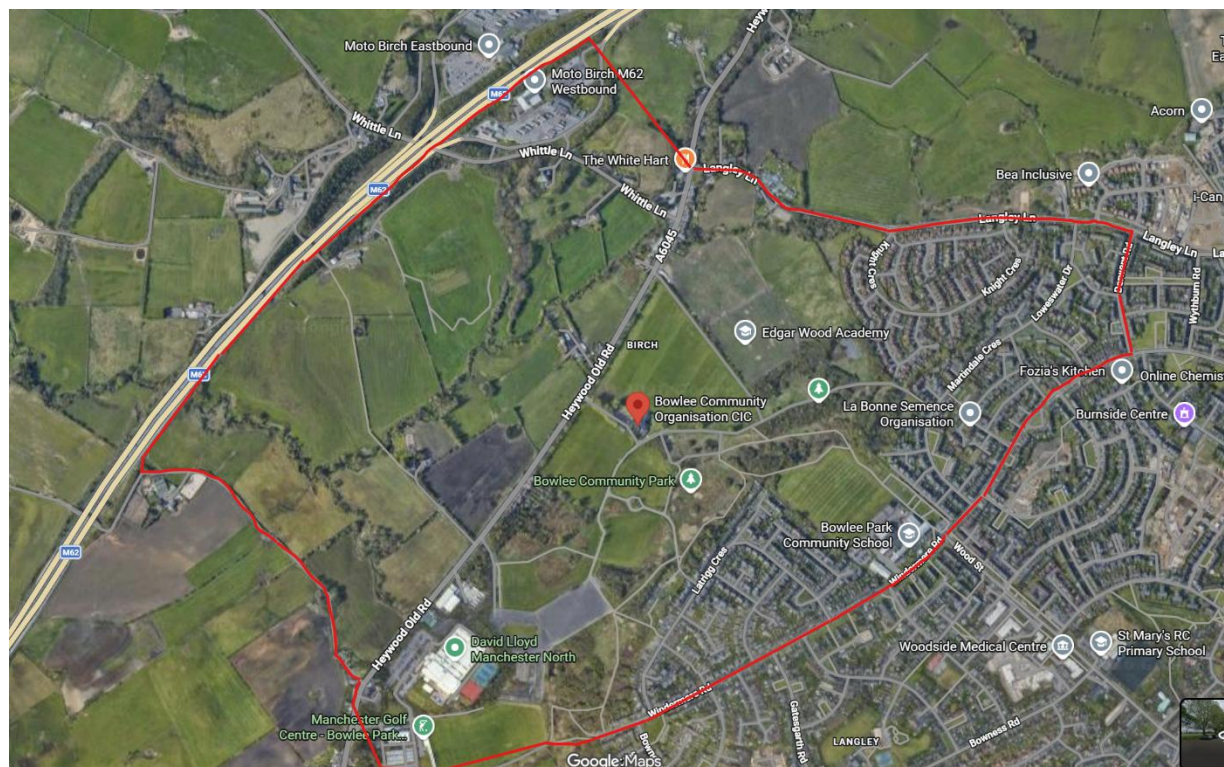
Before a full planning application is submitted, local people are being invited to share their views and feedback.

The consultation is a chance to take a look at the draft plans so far and speak directly with members of the design team.





Appendix 2 – Consultation Zone and Distribution Route





Appendix 3 – Email to Councillors

Subject: Proposed Development in Bowlee – Public Consultation

Dear Councillor [Name],

I am writing on behalf of Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale AFC to invite you to our public consultation event on a proposal for Bowlee Football and Community Wellbeing Hub in Bowlee, Middleton.

The proposals are for land just off Heywood Old Road at the Bowlee Community Organisation CIC. The development aims to deliver much-needed new and improved sports pitches, alongside football training facilities and leisure spaces, all contributing to local well-being in a connected location with direct vehicular access and existing footpaths, enhancing connectivity with the wider area.

The attached leaflet will be delivered to residents and businesses in the local area by the end of this week to inform them of the proposals and invite them to the upcoming public consultation event on Thursday 25th June 2026, 16:00 – 19:00 at David Lloyd Manchester North, Heywood Old Road, Middleton, M24 4TH.

As a key stakeholder, we would like to invite you to a preview session of the consultation event, 15:00 – 16:00 on Thursday 25th June. This will be an opportunity to meet the design team, view the proposals in more detail, ask any questions you may have and share your feedback. You are of course also more than welcome to drop-in during the public session, 16:00 – 19:00, if you would prefer.

If you are able to join us for the consultation, it would be greatly appreciated if you could confirm your attendance.

We look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to ask if you have any questions concerning the proposals or the consultation process.

Kind regards,

Appendix 4 – Promotion of Event


Councillor Matthew Pilkington · Follow

10 June at 00:12 · 🌐

📍 Public Consultation – Bowlee Football & Community Wellbeing Hub

Residents are invited to attend a public consultation event regarding proposals for the new Bowlee Football & Community Wellbeing Hub in Bowlee, being brought forward by Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale AFC.

The proposals relate to land off Heywood Old Road at Bowlee Community Organisation CIC and aim to deliver new and improved sports pitches, football training facilities and leisure spaces to support health, wellbeing and community activity in the area.

📅 Thursday 25 June 2026
 ⌚ 4:00pm – 7:00pm
 📍 David Lloyd Manchester North, Heywood Old Road, Middleton, M24 4TH

Leaflets providing further information will be delivered to local residents and businesses shortly. If you would like to learn more about the proposals and share your views, please come along to the consultation event.

Everyone is welcome.

Thankyou. [See less](#)

Proposal for Bowlee Football & Community Wellbeing Hub

Public Consultation Event



Prior to submission of the planning application, we would like to hear your views and offer the opportunity to provide feedback.

Event Location:
 David Lloyd

Rochdale Borough Council is working with Rochdale AFC on plans to help create healthier, more active communities across the borough and provide an elite training facility for the borough's professional club.

Appendix 5 – Exhibition Boards

The Scheme

The project is currently at the pre-planning consultation stage. Emerging proposals are being shared with local residents, sports clubs, community organisations, schools and other stakeholders to provide an opportunity for the public to understand the plans, ask questions and submit feedback ahead of a formal planning application.

Across the site as a whole, the development would deliver landscape and biodiversity improvements, improved access, parking and internal circulation, an outdoor play area along with improvements to shared outdoor spaces.

The aim not only to replace existing facilities but to significantly improve the quality, reliability and capacity of sports provision at Bowlee. Artificial grass pitches can be used much more intensively than grass pitches, including during evenings and periods of poor weather, helping to reduce cancellations and expand participation opportunities for children, young people, adults, women and girls, disability football, schools, clubs and community users.

The development would establish Bowlee as a more active and welcoming community destination. The site's dual approach would allow for both dedicated football provision and broader health and wellbeing activities.



Your Trust, a local charity delivering leisure, health and culture services across Rochdale borough, would operate the new pavilion, gym, café and community space, supporting a wider programme of health and wellbeing initiatives beyond organised football. This aligns with ongoing efforts from partners working across the borough to increase physical activity levels, reduce inequalities and create more accessible opportunities for residents to stay active.

For Rochdale AFC, the development would provide an opportunity to establish a long-term First Team training and community base within the borough, bringing elite and community operations together for the first time as part of the club's long-term sustainability strategy.

Rochdale AFC Community Trust would gain a permanent home for its teams and programmes, supporting established club-community teams such as Ladies and Walking Football while enabling further growth in Veterans (over 35s), Military Veterans, refugee support (Hope), Ability Counts (disability) and All Stars (Down syndrome) teams. The development is also expected to release additional pitch capacity across the borough for other grassroots teams.

For Rochdale Borough Council, the development represents a significant investment in community sports infrastructure. It would enhance an existing public facility, address known pitch quality and drainage issues, support grassroots football, retain cricket provision, and strengthen the long-term sporting and wellbeing offer for Middleton and the wider borough.



Rochdale AFC and Rochdale Borough Council are jointly developing proposals to create a new Football and Community Wellbeing Hub at Bowlee Playing Fields in Middleton.

The shared ambition of all partners is to deliver a high-quality, inclusive and sustainable facility that benefits local residents, grassroots clubs, schools, community groups, Rochdale AFC and future generations across the borough.



Rochdale AFC are the borough professional football team. Formed in 1907, the team spent 100 years in the English Football League (EFL) system before being relegated in 2023.

Playing home games at the Crown Oil Arena, the club has never had its own training facility in the borough and currently operates out of a university site in South Manchester.

Following a takeover by the Ogden Family in May 2024, the club has recently gained promotion back into the EFL and is looking to bring the first team back to Rochdale on a full-time, permanent basis by developing a high quality, best in class training facility that sits alongside a base for the clubs wider family of community teams and programmes.



As a registered charity, the Community Trust deliver all of the clubs community outreach across the borough with a mission 'To Make Rochdale a better place to Live, Work, and Play'.

With a 59 year history of delivering to schools, in community settings and at the Crown Oil Arena, the charity focuses on sport, health and employability outcomes as well as supporting many teams to pull on a Dale shirt through its Our Teams programme. Ladies, Walking Football, Veterans, Military Veterans, Disability (IPAN and Down Syndrome) and Refugee football teams currently train and play regularly under the clubs banner, managed and supported by Rochdale AFC Community Trust.

Bowlee will provide a home for these teams, providing a sustainable base from which to engage more people, as well as supporting wider grassroots football by freeing up pitch use across the borough.



Pozzoni Architecture Limited is a practice with a reputation for championing inclusive and engaging design approach.

The Pozzoni Architecture team is comprised of the industry's best design professionals, each hand picked for their specialist, multi-sector experience and proven forward thinking attitude. Pozzoni Architecture's deliver expertise in sports and leisure, healthcare, workplace and heritage design but they have also earned recognition for their innovative and sustainable projects in a range of sectors, including education, residents, later living and mixed-use.

Pozzoni Architecture Limited are a RIBA Chartered Architectural Practice and are ISO 9001 and 14001 accredited.



Re-form is a creative design consultancy specialising in landscape architecture and urban design.

We work in the space where nature and communities intersect. Everything we do aligns with our mission: to create meaningful relationships between nature, people and place by listening more and using less. Listening more because this creates strong partnerships and distinctive work, using less because it stimulates creativity and the future of the planet depends on it.

The company specialises in creating enduring, sustainable places which have a sense of identity, support the local economy and inspire communities.



Modulek is a specialist modular construction company delivering bespoke, high-quality buildings for sport, education and community use. Its proposal for Rochdale AFC sets out a modular High Performance Centre and Community Hub, designed to provide the club with professional training, recovery, analysis, catering, office and community spaces.

The company's approach combines traditional construction quality with the speed and flexibility of off-site modular build, with a Modulek system 75% faster and around 10% more cost effective than a traditional build. For Rochdale AFC, the building could be operational in just 15 weeks, reducing downtime and allowing the club to see an earlier return on investment.



Abacus is a professional consultancy practice that combines solid experience with an approach to Client service of which they are confident will bring significant project benefits.

Abacus aim to be proactive as well as professional and responsive, delivering value for money projects on time, within budget, and building long-term relationships in the process.

Crucially the Abacus service offering is designed around the needs of our Clients. Abacus are flexible enough to work independently as well as alongside your existing teams, facilitating solutions at every stage, focusing on the issues that matter and ensuring the quality of service you have a right to expect.

Abacus are based in the heart of Manchester however, they work throughout the UK and have successfully completed projects from Aberdeen to Southampton, as well as a number of projects overseas.

Now part of the Contalio Group, we contribute deep sector knowledge and project intelligence, shaping efficient, future ready buildings.



Your Trust are a local charity delivering leisure, health and culture services across Rochdale borough. Your Trust will operate the new pavilion, gym, café and community space, and support a wider programme of health and wellbeing initiatives beyond organised football.



We're a metropolitan borough council in Greater Manchester providing hundreds of services to more than 230,000 residents. Lying in the foothills of the south Pennines, the borough is formed by the townships of Rochdale North, Rochdale South, Middleton, Heywood and Pennines.



OBI are experienced in the design and delivery of high-quality sports pitches from professional to grassroots level and are providing specialist sports pitch design services for Rochdale AFC and Rochdale Borough Council community facilities.

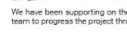
OBI's role includes delivering integrated pitch design, flood risk assessment and earthworks modelling across the development site, supporting the sustainable delivery of elite and community sports infrastructure within Rochdale and Middleton.

OBI are proud to contribute technical expertise to this strategic development for Rochdale AFC, Rochdale Borough Council and the wider community.



Enabl is a leading boutique consultancy reimagining the built environment. Planning consultancy, cost management and project management for front-end development support, done a little differently. We're a built environment consultancy that challenges the formulaic approach with collaborative advice.

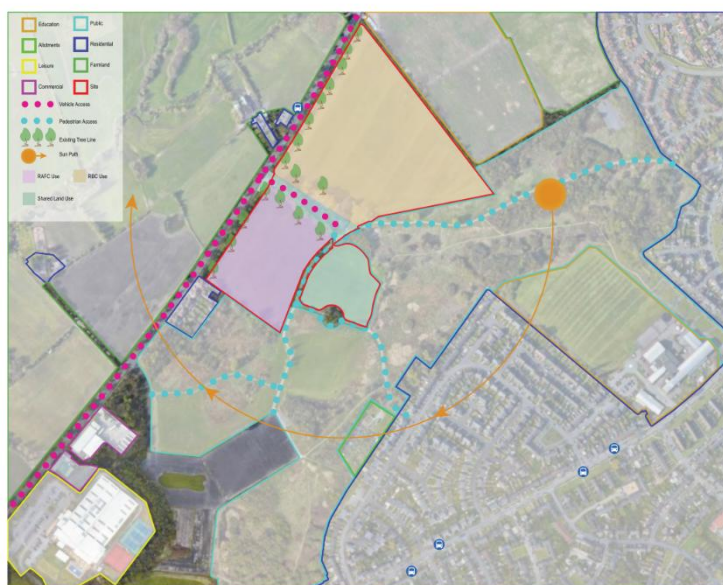
We have been supporting on the Rochdale providing early strategic advice and progressing through planning consultancy support working with the team to progress the project through planning submission and up to determination.



FMG Consulting is a specialist management consultancy company working in the sport, leisure, and culture sector. We work with public, third sector and private sector partners at all levels, including central government, national governing bodies of sport, private developers, leisure operators, local authorities, charitable trusts and local voluntary organisations.

FMG has supported Rochdale Council on the project from the outset, initially preparing a feasibility study for the proposed scheme. FMG is now working alongside the Council, Rochdale AFC and Your Trust to develop the sport and mitigation statement for the planning application and lead the Football Foundation capital funding applications for the community pitches and pavilion.





Site Context, Constraints & Opportunities

As an investment into the Borough and the local community of Bowlee, Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale AFC are aiming to establish the site as a wellbeing and community-based activity centre.

Centred around local facilities and supporting the community, the site looks to bring together training for RAFC and improved activity space on this well-established site.

The current facilities do a good job to support the community but do suffer from water logging of pitches and tired changing spaces. The existing community centre itself acts as a home for many local clubs and services. The project looks to build upon this by increasing the facilities on offer and providing a purposebuilt hub for these much-needed services.

The site will increase the number and quality of sports pitches available for community use, while also offering facilities for a wider variety of uses. The project also looks to support the local, recently promoted, professional football team by providing a new training and clubhouse venue, allowing the local community to see their local team and also train along side them.

The existing site entrance and infrastructure lends itself to retaining building mass at its centre. Accessed off Heywood Old Road, parking is then accommodated adjacent to the two buildings. The remaining land available to the north and south of this central service corridor, is split into private RAFC team training facilities to the south and publicly accessible playing and training spaces to the north. An existing pitch to the east gives opportunity to share facilities between professional and aspiring athletes.

The project aspires to use the facilities contained within it in such a way that the users and local community consider it to be an extension to the surrounding community park.

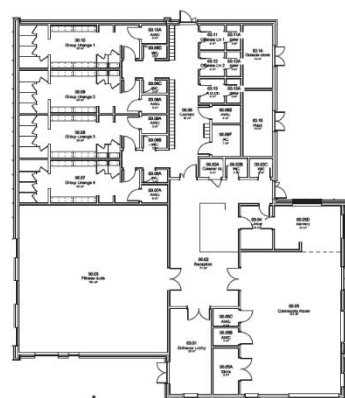




Community Pavilion design and play area

The remaining half of the site would be operated by Your Trust, with a focus on community wellbeing and wider sports provision. This would include:

- A new community sports pavilion.
- A 40-station health and fitness gym.
- A community room, cafe / social space and kitchen.
- Retained cricket provision through new cricket nets.
- Two full-size community 3G artificial grass pitches.
- Changing rooms and officials' facilities.

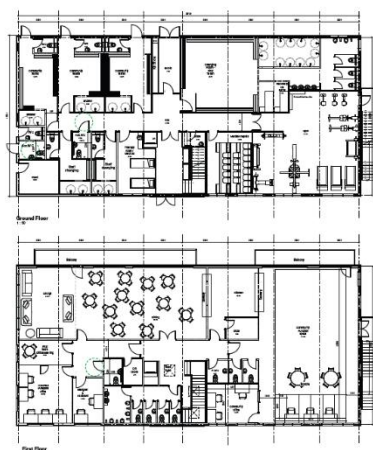


Football Club Building and Facilities

The proposals include a Football Hub on one half of the site which would host Rochdale AFC's First Team while also serving the wider community through Rochdale AFC Community Trust. Plans for this area include:

A two-storey building providing community offices, changing and social space, alongside first team and elite changing facilities, gym, media, offices and recreation facilities.

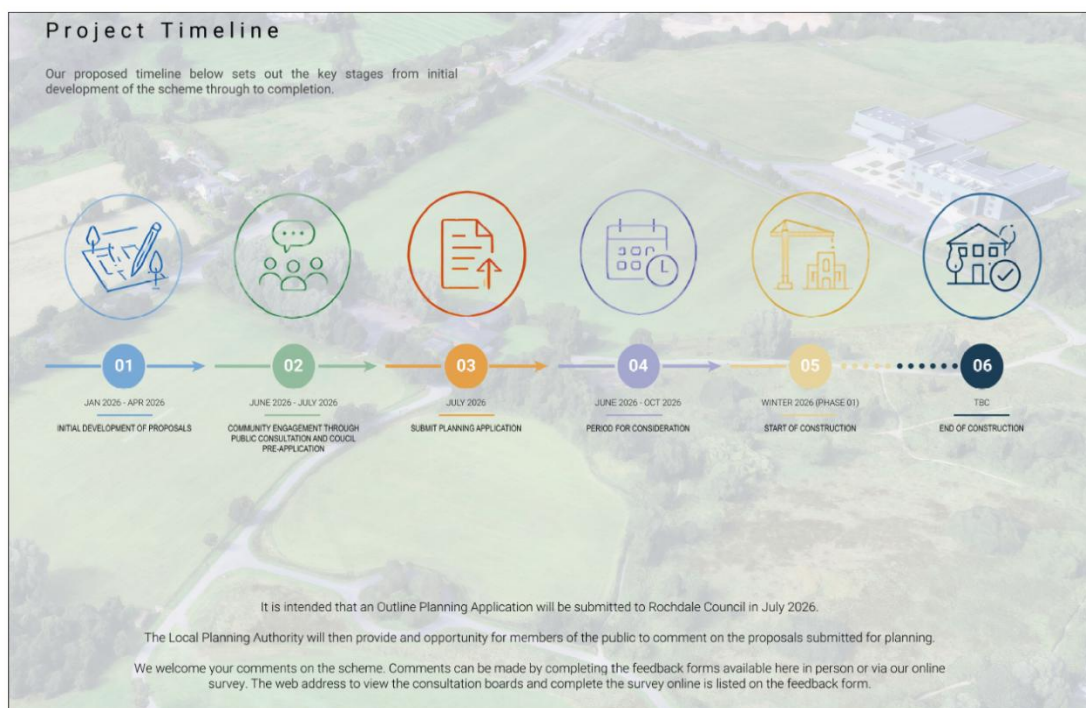
One full-size 3G artificial grass pitch for Rochdale AFC community Trust teams and programmes. A grass training area for Rochdale AFC elite use. A retained and improved community grass football pitch.



The proposed scheme includes first-team changing facilities, gym, recovery ice baths, media/analysis room, medical and therapy space, staff changing, offices, lounge, dining area, kitchen, community office and a large community function space.

Externally, the design includes Rochdale AFC branding, balconies and a mix of timber-style cladding, blue detailing and contemporary finishes. Modulek also highlights environmental benefits, with A+ EPC performance as standard and potential for net zero operational running costs through solar PV or renewable energy systems.







Appendix 6 – Feedback Form

Have your say on our proposals for new sports pitches at
Bowlee - Rochdale!

We want to hear your views on our proposals and how we can best deliver high-quality sports pitches in Rochdale. Please complete the survey to give your views.

About You (please circle below) Postcode: _____

Local Resident Club User School or College Rep Community Group
Parent / Carer Existing Site User Other

Your Views (please tick)

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Do you think that there is a need for enhanced community and professional football training facilities in Middleton?	☐	☐	☐

Do you think that the site is an appropriate location for community sports use?	☐	☐	☐
---	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Are you supportive of the proposed access and parking arrangements?
(please circle below)

Supportive Mostly Supportive Neither Mostly Unsupportive Unsupportive

Are you supportive of the indicative design and architecture for the proposed development? (please circle below)

Supportive Mostly Supportive Neither Mostly Unsupportive Unsupportive

Are you supportive of the proposed landscaping? (please circle below)

Supportive Mostly Supportive Neither Mostly Unsupportive Unsupportive

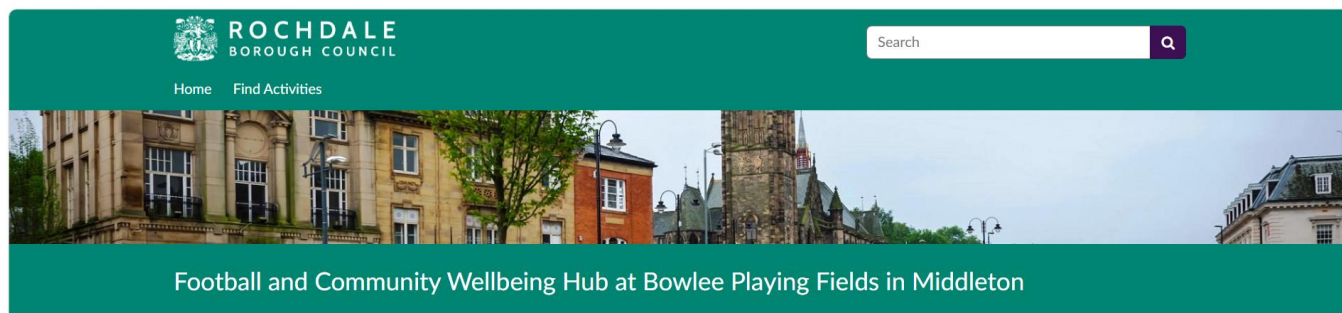
What are your views on the proposal overall? (please circle below)

Supportive Supportive but with concerns Unsupportive Not Sure

Please leave any other comments here:



Appendix 7 – Post-event Consultation Websites and Comms



Overview

The project is currently at the pre-planning consultation stage. Emerging proposals are being shared with local residents, sports clubs, community organisations, schools and other stakeholders to provide an opportunity for the public to understand the plans, ask questions and submit feedback ahead of a formal planning application.

Bowlee Playing Fields is an important community sports site, however it's existing infrastructure is limited. The site is affected by longstanding drainage issues, several grass pitches are not consistently usable, and the current pavilion no longer meets the scale or quality required to support modern community sport. At the same time, there is strong demand across Rochdale for higher-quality, year-round football facilities, more reliable training and match space, and enhanced opportunities to support community health and wellbeing.

Closes 14 Aug 2026
Opened 29 Jun 2026

Contact
(Planning Consultant)
Enabl
kate.goodwin@enabl.uk

Please scroll down and click **The proposed Bowlee Football and Community Wellbeing Hub** in the related documents section to view the details of the proposal before completing the survey.

Alternatively, hard copies of the proposals are available to view at **Middleton Arena**

LCpl Joel Halliwell VC Way
Middleton
Greater Manchester
M24 1AG

[View map and directions](#)

[Have Your Say >](#)

Related

[Proposed Bowlee Football and Community Wellbeing Hub](#)
65.0 KB (PDF document)

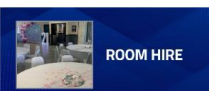
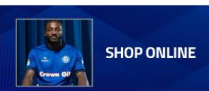
[Information about Partners delivering the project](#)
4.1 MB (PDF document)

[Site Context, Constraints & Opportunities](#)



Get Behind Our Bowlee Scheme

June 26, 2026 First Team



Dale fans, community participants and the wider public are invited to complete a public consultation survey, which will form part of the planning application.

As plans progress for the proposed Bowlee Football and Community Wellbeing Hub, consultation with local communities and stakeholders continues to play an important role in shaping the project.

Last week, RAFC Community Director Ryan Bradley met with committee members from across Our Teams during a walk around the site, discussing the proposals in detail and gathering valuable feedback that will help inform the final design.

The Club Advisory Board – established to represent a broad cross-section of supporters and provide guidance on key club initiatives – has also reviewed the plans and expressed its support.





At the moment, we have around 70

A public consultation event, organised by planning consultants Enabl, took place at David Lloyd Health Club on 25th June. The event was attended by local councillors and members of the public, providing an opportunity for people to ask questions, gain further information and share their views on the proposals.

Ryan Bradley, Community Director, commented:

"Ultimately, this project is about improving the existing playing fields and creating opportunities for more people in Middleton to take part in sport, physical activity and community wellbeing.

"The consultation has been extremely valuable. It has given us the opportunity to explain the proposals in more detail, clarify some misconceptions and, most importantly, listen to the concerns that have been raised by local residents.

"For example, some people were concerned that the football club would take over the entire site and restrict public access. That is not the case.

"The proposals are designed to enhance the facilities while ensuring the wider park remains accessible for the community to enjoy.

"We were also able to explain that the football club's facilities are being privately funded, without the use of external grant funding, which provided reassurance to a number of attendees."

One of the key topics raised during the consultation was parking and ensuring that people can continue to access the park for walking, cycling and informal recreation.

Ryan added:

"We have considered these issues from the outset.

"Our plans include maintaining parking provision for park users and ensuring the wider park continues to support activities such as walking, dog walking and informal sport, just as it does today.



maintaining parking provision for park users and ensuring the wider park continues to support activities such as walking and informal sport, just as it does today.

"We will make sure these commitments are clearly reflected within the planning submission.

"Residents also raised questions around drainage and transport. These are important considerations, and our specialist consultants are carrying out detailed surveys and assessments to ensure any potential impacts are properly understood and addressed.

"As part of the formal planning process, these reports will be publicly available for everyone to review."

Planning consultants Enabl are keen to hear from anyone with an interest in the proposals.

Members of the public are encouraged to complete the consultation survey, with responses forming part of the formal community consultation accompanying the planning application.

You can view the plans below, and we encourage you to complete the short survey [HERE](#).

Bowlee-Consultation-Boards.pdf

PDF reader has been disabled in Microsoft Edge

If you want to open the file instead of downloading it:
1. Go to **Settings > Site Permissions > PDF Documents**.
2. Turn off **Always download PDF files** and refresh this page.

Bowlee Football & Community Wellbeing Hub: Your questions answered.

Thank you to everyone who came along to the recent public consultation and shared their views, it genuinely makes a difference. We know a lot of you have questions about what is being proposed at Bowlee, so we've pulled together the ones we heard most often, with honest answers to each.

We want to be open about what this is, what stage it's at, and what it could mean for the area. If your question isn't covered here, please get in touch or leave your feedback through the survey (details at the end).

About the proposal

- What is being proposed at Bowlee?

The proposal is intended to serve both the wider community and the club, with a strong emphasis on developing grassroots and community sport while enhancing health and wellbeing across the area. It supports a broad and inclusive programme of activity, including women's and girls' football, disability football, youth participation, and local grassroots clubs, alongside wider initiatives that promote physical and mental wellbeing.

We are proposing investment into the Council's current Sports Hub at Bowlee that will create a football and community wellbeing hub, providing a training pitch for Rochdale AFC with a 3G pitch and grass pitch for Rochdale AFC Community Trust on one part of the site (circa 7 hectares), with two 3G pitches and three grass pitches alongside cricket provision, a children's playground and free parking for the wider community, managed by the Council's Leisure Trust, Your Trust, on the other half of the site (11 hectares). This is a partnership approach to managing the site going forward, with each half planned to have a separate building, replacing the existing pavilion on site.

Only four pitches are currently usable on the site, and the pitches require significant investment to bring them back into use. The improvement will be delivered through this scheme and the ongoing maintenance schedules once the site is opened.

- Who is behind the proposal?

This is a partnership between Rochdale Borough Council, Rochdale AFC, Rochdale AFC Community Trust and Your Trust. The aim is to provide community benefit, while also enabling Rochdale AFC to have a training facility within the borough, as the club currently trains outside the borough.

It isn't the club acting alone, the Council and Your Trust are involved precisely because the aim is community benefit, not just a facility for the football club.

- Is this a "done deal"?

No. We are at the pre-planning application stage and wanted comments from those members of the public who are most likely to be affected if these proposals go forward. No planning application has been submitted yet, and no planning permission has been granted. The purpose of the public consultation is to hear your views before the plans are finalised and give the community as much information as possible before an application is submitted. As part of the planning process, formal public consultation will take place.

- Where is the site?

The site we are looking at are the current designated playing fields within Bowlee Park.



The fields are currently used as playing fields and, as such, are subject to certain uses and covenants. We aren't looking to change any areas of the park into playing fields that aren't already designated sports pitches.

We appreciate some of these sports pitches aren't currently in use as sports pitches due to poor drainage and not fit for purpose buildings, but as one of the council's designated hub sites for sports facilities, we want to bring these areas back into use so we can meet local demand.

Open space and access

- Will I still be able to get to the country park?

We heard this loud and clear at the consultation, and it's one of the points we're looking at most closely. Yes. The proposal is to develop the existing sports pitches and buildings, with possible benefits being explored including the enhancement of the park, lighting to the routes through to the new pitches and potential BNG enhancement.

- The car park is used to reach the country park, what happens to it?

We understand the importance for the community to have access to the car park to provide access to the country park. We are currently working within the design to ensure this is maintained and there are no plans to close the public vehicular access, with parking being expanded to meet the additional demand.

The car park is set to expand and be improved, and the site will have little usage during the daytime – we envisage there being plenty of free parking spaces available for visitors to the wider park. How the car park is accessed and managed, along with signage and wayfinding, is one of the things we're actively working through.

- Will this become football-only, or paid access? Will the free, informal use of the land be lost?

We understand the concern that open land used informally today could become formal or paid space. The intended approach is to "add" facilities for the community, including for grassroots and informal use, rather than take away what's already there.

Furthermore, the improvement to the country park could help offset the potential loss of informal use of the fields, as its overall size would still be large enough to accommodate informal activities beyond the designated playing areas.

In terms of the hire charges for the new pitches, these are set in line with Football Foundation guidance, in line with the Council charging policy and Your Trust.

- What about the loss of open space, given the housing planned nearby?

Some residents have raised the nearby housing proposals to the south (around 1,500 homes) and the worry about open space being lost across the area. That's a separate scheme from ours, but we understand why people see the two together. We'd encourage everyone to look at our proposals on their own merits, and the wider picture is something the planning process will properly consider.

This plan regenerates existing playing fields retaining green space in an area under development.

The club's role

- Is the football club taking public land for commercial gain?



No trees with preservation orders are being removed. Very little tree removal is required, but any trees that are removed will be replaced on at least a two-for-one basis.

- Will this help with the problems with dog fouling on the site?

A few residents mentioned the current issues with dog mess on the land. A managed, well-maintained site would be expected to help reduce that, and the allocation of non-sport field spaces as dog-friendly fields will also ensure people have spaces to walk their dogs freely.

The consultation

- I didn't receive a leaflet, how were people told about this?

We're sorry if one didn't reach you. Leaflets were delivered by a trusted distribution company, following our standard process, on a scheduled date and we're checking the distribution records with them in response to this feedback. Sometimes a leaflet is missed or gets mistaken for junk mail.

Either way, we want as many people as possible to be able to take part in this pre application consultation.

The consultation boards from the event are available online, as is the feedback survey. <https://www.rochdaleafccommunity.org/bowlee-have-your-say/>

The boards are also available to view in person with hard copy feedback forms at Middleton Arena.

- Will there be another in-person event?

We are not holding a second event. Instead, the exhibition boards from the consultation are being put on display at Middleton Arena, so you can view them in your own time and feedback either there or online through the Council's consultation platform or the Rochdale AFC Community Trust website.

It is worth noting that this is a pre application consultation for feedback on the proposal – there is a formal consultation process that will be followed once a planning application has been submitted.

- How can I give my feedback now?

You can complete the questionnaire here:

<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=SIYyCicwMkuvD3e7zAwyqhXI8A00hwllvCv5hYCSVs9UQjzUIM2OTFZNURCNji4TUQyRTBwVzFQOC4u&origin=QRCode&route=shorturl>

- How long do I have? When does feedback close?

The online consultation and the exhibition will run for around two weeks, until 17 July.

- What happens to my feedback?

Everything we hear is logged and considered. It helps shape the proposals before we submit a planning application, and it will be set out in the Statement of Community Involvement that goes with the application, showing how we consulted and how we responded. We'll keep the community updated as things move forward.

Thank you again to everyone who has taken the time to share their views. We're listening, and it matters.





Reader Comments

To be clear, the £20m is for a fund that local business owners and...

Craig to create GM High Streets...

Well done Cllr Gardiner. When the Council loses control of its Planning function do...

Cheshire East's refusal of 200 residences...

Nimbyism is alive and well! People do not understand what green belt is do...

Cheshire East's refusal of 200 residences...

Here we have an example of what was talked about elsewhere. There aren't millions...

Cheshire East's refusal of 200 residences...

How this proposal got through without objections from the 'get it built' cheerleaders without...

Casey Group lands £6m Longford Park...

With the increase in business rates/council tax, increase in employment costs/NI, and



Artificial playing pitches, a community wellness hub, and a football training centre are all part of Rochdale Council and Rochdale AFC's plans for Bowlee Playing Fields. Credit: via Enabl

Football and wellbeing hub planned for Middleton

24 June 2026 11:30 • Julia Hatmaker • Comments (5)



SOLD OUT | Greater Manchester Development Update 2026

3 September 2026 , 8:00 - 12:00

South Yorkshire Development Update 2026

10 September 2026 , 8:00 - 12:00

MIPIM 2027 | North of England Update

15 September 2026 , 4:30 - 6:30

Energy & Power 2026

17 September 2026 , 8:00 - 12:00

Analysis

ANALYSIS

The big ask for Burnham

ANALYSIS - COMMENTARY

Manchester: A beeline for housing growth

ANALYSIS - COMMENTARY

VIDEO | SES Marketplace – connecting our supply chain for a better future

Rochdale Council and Rochdale AFC have partnered together to make over Bowlee Playing Fields, improving the 27-acre site's drainage issues and creating the infrastructure needed for community sport to thrive.

The project is currently undergoing public consultation, but features new and improved football pitches, club facilities, and a community sports pavilion.

Integral to the plans is a two-storey hub for Rochdale AFC. This 6,000 sq ft building will include changing facilities for the club, a gym, media area, offices, and recreation facilities. There will also be a changing and social space for the community and offices as well.

The hub includes a full-size 3G artificial grass pitch for the Rochdale AFC Community Trust, as well as a grass training area for the football club. An existing community grass football pitch will also be retained and upgraded as part of the proposals.

The community sports pavilion will be 7,200 sq ft and operated by Your Trust, a charity focussed on improving leisure and health provision in Rochdale. This portion of the project includes a 40-station health and fitness gym, changing rooms, and a community room with kitchen and social space.

New cricket nets will also be brought in and two full-size 3G artificial grass pitches created.

The proposals have been drawn up by Pozzoni, with Enabl leading the planning process. Abacus is the project manager, cost manager, and principal designer of the scheme. FMG is the consultant for sport and leisure. Re-form is leading on the landscape architecture.

Jobs

Project Manager

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
Liverpool City Region

Other News

Preston rubber-stamps 114 homes



Go-ahead secured for 94 Halton homes



Agha Group swoops for Chinatown asset



Eden Project Morecambe teases Realm of Moon



Cheshire East's refusal of 200 residences overturned



Clancy Consulting pursues pre-pack administration



BOOK NOW | Yorkshire Industrial & Logistics

