

BOWLEE FOOTBALL AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING HUB

Sports Impact Statement supporting a
Planning Application



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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This Sports Impact Statement ('Sports statement') supports the proposed development of the Bowlee Football and Community Wellbeing Hub, located at Bowlee Playing Fields in the West Middleton ward of Rochdale.
- 1.2 This document has been prepared to support the Planning Application in August 2026.
- 1.3 The project represents a strategic partnership between Rochdale Borough Council ('Rochdale BC') and Rochdale Association Football Club ('Rochdale AFC') and will transform the existing playing fields into a modern sports and wellbeing hub capable of supporting community participation, club development and elite football pathways.
- 1.4 The development will provide the following:
 - Two full-size community floodlit 3G Artificial Grass Pitches;
 - One 3G Artificial Grass Pitch for Rochdale AFC community programmes;
 - One 11v11 grass and goalkeeper training pitch for Rochdale AFC (private use);
 - Retained community grass football pitches (four pitches);
 - Two bay Non-Turf Pitch ('NTP') enclosed cricket practice net;
 - Additional car parking
 - A new community sports pavilion and changing facilities, which includes:
 - Four team changing rooms and officials changing;
 - A 40-station health and fitness gym;
 - Community room and café; and
 - A Rochdale AFC building.
- 1.5 Third Generation Artificial Pitches ('3G pitches') provide substantially greater usage capacity compared with natural grass surfaces and enable year-round football activity. Alongside the development of the 3G pitches, there will also be enhancement of the grass pitches and the indoor facilities for the community, therefore the overall development delivers enhanced sports provision because of the proposed partnership with Rochdale AFC.
- 1.6 The Bowlee Football and Community Wellbeing Hub will transform the existing playing fields into a modern sports and wellbeing hub serving Rochdale Borough and beyond and provides a major strategic investment into sports and leisure infrastructure.
- 1.7 The development combines community sports infrastructure with Rochdale AFC training facilities, ensuring sustainable usage and increased participation opportunities.

1.8 Key elements include:

- High-quality community 3G and grass pitches;
- Community sports pavilion including fitness and wellbeing facilities;
- Retention of football and cricket provision;
- Wider informal health and wellbeing opportunities; and
- Rochdale AFC club training facilities;

1.9 The project will also:

- Address the shortage of 3G pitches in Rochdale;
- Improve sports infrastructure quality;
- Support football participation growth in Rochdale and the North West;
- Deliver community health and wellbeing facilities; and
- Retain recreational cricket provision.

1.10 The development therefore delivers enhanced sporting provision and long-term community benefit for residents of Rochdale.





2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 This Sports Statement accompanies the planning application for the Bowlee Football and Community Wellbeing Hub and has been prepared on behalf of Rochdale BC and Rochdale AFC to support a planning application for new and improved sports and leisure provision.
- 2.2 This Sports Statement sets out the proposals for mitigation and additional community benefits because of the proposed development.

Bowlee Playing Fields at Bowlee Community Park

- 2.3 Bowlee Playing Fields (Windermere Road, Middleton, M24 4LA) is managed and operated by Rochdale BC. The playing fields are set within 40 hectares of land of Bowlee Community Park.
- 2.4 The Park is a former RAF barrage balloon centre that was set up in October 1939 and was active until 1944. The Park is now a community facility that is accessible via Windermere Road and with links to local housing estates via pathways and cycleways. There is also the monthly Bowlee Car Boot Sale held monthly during the summer.
- 2.5 Table 2.1 sets out the current existing facilities within the Playing Fields.

Table 2.1 - Existing Facilities at Bowlee Playing Fields

Existing Facilities	Information
Grass football pitches	7 (Various Sizes)
NTP cricket wicket	1
Pavilion building	1
Car Park	Yes

- 2.6 Figure 2.1 shows an aerial overview of the overall site, including Playing Fields, Community Park and Boot Fair. The aerial has been labelled as follows:
- 1) Playing Fields;
 - 2) Pavilion and car park;
 - 3) NTP cricket wicket;
 - 4) Community Park;
 - 5) Car Boot sale designated area;
 - 6) 'Fenced Pitch' playing field.

Figure 2.1 – Bowlee Community Park Aerial Overview



- 2.7 Figure 2.2 below details the current area of interest for this proposed development/Sports Statement for the purpose of the planning application. This is indicated with a red line boundary of the planning application.

Figure 2.2 – Red Line Boundary



Existing Constraints

- 2.8 Bowlee Playing Fields offer a range of facilities for the community. However, over the years, various constraints have limited the extent to which the site can be used to its full potential. A summary of the existing constraints has been set out in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2 – Existing Site Constraints

Issue	Impact
All grass pitches have longstanding drainage problems	Three pitches are currently out of use due to drainage and condition of the pitches, whilst a fourth has only recently been reused following improved weather. Two are located on the south of the site (proposed Rochdale AFC area), and one on the north of the site. The 'Fenced Pitch' playing area has not previously been formally identified as a pitch but has had some usage in the last year. Historically, it was used by Rochdale AFC as a training pitch (and was excluded from the Playing Pitch Strategy in 2020), but usage was very short due to the poor condition and drainage.
Only three grass pitches are currently usable	Restricts match and training capacity of the site, as well as overall site sustainability. The usable pitches also have limited reliability in poor weather, which increases the risk of cancellations.
Pavilion	Ageing pavilion that requires replacement. Currently not fit for purpose to serve the community.

The Partnership – Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale AFC

- 2.9 The proposed partnership is an exciting collaboration between Rochdale BC and Rochdale AFC.
- 2.10 Rochdale BC is the local authority and is a member of the Greater Manchester combined Authority. The proposal is that a community organisation will be the operator of the site. Currently, Your Trust operate various Council leisure assets across the Borough. They are a charity and operate eight facilities on behalf of Rochdale BC, including Heywood Sports Village, Hollingworth Lake Adventure & Water Activity Centre, Littleborough Sports Centre, Middleton Arena, Rochdale Leisure Centre, Arts & Heritage Resource Centre, Heywood Civic Centre, Local Studies centre and Touchstones Rochdale.
- 2.11 Rochdale AFC are the Borough's largest football club who are in League Two, following promotion from the National League in 2025/26. The Club have played home matches at Spotland Stadium since 1920, but they current do not have a permanent training ground or facility for their community activities, operated by Rochdale AFC Community Trust.
- 2.12 They are currently required to train outside of the Borough and both Rochdale AFC and Rochdale AFC Community Trust want to keep their usage within the borough, and this partnership creates an opportunity to develop a partnership with Rochdale BC.

Rochdale AFC Community Trust

- 2.13 Rochdale AFC Community Trust, an official charity (registration number 1121850) set up by Rochdale AFC to carry out community work and charitable projects across the Borough of Rochdale. They share the vision of making Rochdale one of the best places in the world to live, work and play – a place where ALL voices are heard.
- 2.14 Rochdale AFC Community Trust use the power of football and their community standing to raise aspirations and transform lives. The key areas of work are:
- Community Sport – With links to Rochdale AFC, they provide opportunities for people of all ages to participate in sport and put in place pathways that will raise aspiration and help them achieve.
 - Education & Employability - An alternative approach in the area and their inspiring facilities can have a positive impact and they are committed to supporting people of all ages to develop new skills, confidence and help them to raise and fulfil their ambitions.
 - Health & Inclusion – The Community Trust are proud of Rochdale and the skills, energy and passion of everyone who lives here. They understand the positive role that Rochdale AFC can play in the community and want to do more to bring people of all ages together and improve cultural awareness and understanding. They provide leadership, direction and new opportunities that provide positive alternatives to drugs and crime and help to develop a shared civic pride in all that is good about Rochdale.

Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF')

- 2.15 The project is in line with the NPPF which supports development where sports provision is replaced by equivalent or improved facilities.

Sport England Playing Fields Policy

- 2.16 Sport England's Playing Fields Policy sets out five exceptions (E1–E5) where development affecting playing fields may be acceptable. These exceptions are used within the planning system to assess proposals involving loss or alteration of playing field land and identify appropriate mitigation measures.
- 2.17 Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of: all or any part of a playing field, or land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or land allocated for use as a playing field unless, in the judgement of Sport England, the development as a whole meets with one or more of five specific exceptions.
- 2.18 The Sports Statement sets out how the proposed Bowlee development aims to meet the following Exceptions through a hybrid approach:
- **E2 – Ancillary Development Supporting Sport** - The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.
 - **E3 – Replacement with Equivalent or Better Provision** – The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:
 - reduce the size of any playing pitch;
 - result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
 - reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
 - result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site;
 - or prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.
 - **E5 – Alternative Sports Provision of Equal or Greater Benefit** - The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.

Local Sports Strategy

- 2.19 The development supports Rochdale priorities to:
- Increase participation in sport and physical activity
 - Improve sports infrastructure quality
 - Address shortages of football training facilities.

Work Undertaken to Date

- 2.20 This project has been in development since 2023 and has undergone various work streams and progress has been fully supported by the Council's Members. Figure 2.3 below outlines the various work completed to date.

Figure 2.3 – Work Undertaken to Date



BOWLEE FOOTBALL AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING HUB

Work Undertaken to Date



2023 FEASIBILITY STUDY

- A feasibility study was undertaken to assess potential development options across three sites in Rochdale, including Bowlee.
- The study recommended the development of a football hub comprising two full-size 3G pitches and associated ancillary facilities.



2024–2025 SCHEME REFINEMENT

- Addendum reports considered a range of options based on the available capital budget.
- It was agreed that the preferred affordable option would comprise two full-size 3G pitches, grass pitches and a pavilion incorporating a 40-station health and fitness gym.



2025 ROCHDALE AFC PARTNERSHIP

- Rochdale AFC and Rochdale Borough Council began discussions regarding a partnership approach to the development of Bowlee.
- These discussions resulted in the agreement of draft Heads of Terms for part of the site.



2025–2026 DESIGN AND PLANNING APPLICATION

- Work is ongoing to complete the design to RIBA Stage 2 in preparation for the submission of a planning application.



2026 FOOTBALL FOUNDATION FUNDING APPLICATION

- Rochdale Borough Council has been invited to submit a funding application to the Football Foundation in October 2026 for the proposed community facilities.
- Preparatory work on the application is ongoing.

3. Needs Assessment

Introduction

- 3.1 This section sets out the Needs Assessment for the proposed Bowlee Football and Community Wellbeing Hub, which forms a key evidence base for this Sports Statement.
- 3.2 It draws on the Rochdale Football Feasibility Study prepared by FMG Consulting in 2023, subsequent Option Appraisal testing and addendum work and consultation with Rochdale BC, Your Trust, Rochdale AFC, the Football Foundation, County FA representatives, local clubs, local leagues and other key stakeholders.

Strategic Context

- 3.3 The 2023 Rochdale Football Feasibility Study identified Bowlee as one of the principal sites capable of accommodating new 3G provision and wider hub development. The study considered local football supply and demand, stakeholder support and the potential for new facilities to deliver wider community and health outcomes.
- 3.4 The report identified need for improvements to facilities at Bowlee and the proposals followed Sport England and Football Foundation principles by enhancing an existing sports site, protecting and improving sports provision where demand exists, and delivering modern facilities that can meet current and future participation needs through effective management, programming and partnership working.
- 3.5 The June 2025 addendum reports assessed various options for the site based on various capital budgets available. A facility mix was agreed which included two full size 3G pitches, grass pitches and a pavilion that incorporated a 40-station health and fitness suite. The Council confirmed that Bowlee would continue to progress to design stages, with the project evolving as a strategic football and community hub rather than a stand-alone pitch scheme.
- 3.6 Following the completion of these reports, a partnership with Rochdale AFC was agreed and this resulted in an additional 3G pitch to be proposed, which would be available for community usage, alongside training and clubhouse facilities.
- 3.7 The aim of the proposed development demonstrates that it will:
 - Enhance sports provision within Rochdale Borough;
 - Respond to identified demand for football facilities;
 - Provide mitigation for existing sports provision;
 - Align with national planning and sports policy; and
 - Supports wider community wellbeing objectives.

Evidence of Need

Existing Provision at Bowlee

- 3.8 Bowlee Playing Fields is an existing sports site with strategic potential, but it currently underperforms in terms of maximising usage for football and other sports and leisure activities.
- 3.9 The site includes seven grass football pitches, a NTP cricket wicket and an existing pavilion. In practice, only four grass pitches are in regular use because three are affected by drainage problems, whilst the remaining pitches suffer from issues in poor weather, resulting in cancellations of matches.
- 3.10 The proposed development would address these weaknesses by replacing unreliable and constrained provision with a managed, higher-capacity football hub supported by modern ancillary and community facilities.

Need for Additional 3G Capacity in Rochdale

- 3.11 The need for additional 3G provision at Bowlee is not simply about replacing grass pitches with 3G pitches. It is driven by the need for reliable, year-round, higher-capacity football facilities that can support training, match play and growth across the Borough.

Rochdale BC Football Feasibility Study March 2023

- 3.12 The FMG Feasibility Study outlined that there was significant demand for a 3G pitches that has increased to a shortfall of 3-4 full size 3G AGP's due to the impact of the restricted community access to school sites due to management, ownership, and quality.
- 3.13 There were only five pitches which had confirmed community access (from eight pitches in the previous PPS and only four pitches on the FA register. This impacted on all four analysis areas of Rochdale. The closed or reduced access sites were at St Mary's RC Primary School (poor quality and no operator so no community access), St Cuthbert's College (no community access) and Holy Family RC School (limited access for clubs). In addition, there was a shortfall of pitches in neighbouring authorities including 5-6 full size pitches in Bury, 2-2.5 full size in Rossendale and two pitches in Calderdale.
- 3.14 The Feasibility Study identified a clear need for improved football infrastructure in Rochdale. The Feasibility study considered the wider strategic context in Rochdale, including the current supply and demand of facilities, and undertook consultation with key stakeholders including Lancashire FA, key clubs and leagues. Some key findings included:
- Consultation responses represented around 194 existing teams, with potential growth to approximately 392 teams. This would represent a 102% increase, mainly across mini and youth football, with future growth also expected in women's, girls' and disability football.
 - The consultation also identified existing unmet demand. Thirteen clubs reported unmet need, mainly due to shortages of suitable training pitches, limited peak-time availability, poor-quality surfaces, cancellations and cost pressures. Fourteen clubs reported that players already travel 15 minutes or more to train.
 - At Council venues, 12 clubs wanted to increase 3G training use and 11 wanted to increase 3G match use. This shows that current supply does not fully meet existing demand and is unlikely to support projected growth without new or improved provision.

- 3.15 The Feasibility Study also found that pitches at Bowlee are uneven, vary significantly in quality and require investment. The existing pavilion is also limited and requires significant updating or replacement. These constraints reduce the site's reliability, capacity and attractiveness to clubs, despite its scale and location.

Local Football Facilities Plan (LFFP)

- 3.16 The LFFP was published in January 2025 and was developed alongside key stakeholders including the Council, Lancashire FA and the Football Foundation. A LFFP builds on available / existing local evidence and strategic plans, plus local consultation has taken place as part of the LFFP steering group and a local club survey.
- 3.17 Overall, there were 462 affiliated teams in Rochdale comprising of the following team types:
- 113 adult male;
 - 4 adult female;
 - 160 youth male;
 - 30 youth female;
 - 8 disability; and,
 - 155 mini soccer.
- 3.18 The LFFP identifies that there are nine existing full size 3G pitches, and five small sided 3G pitches. Of the nine full size 3G pitches, eight are now available for the community, with St Anne's Academy the only pitch not available to the community. In addition, only four are available on the 3G pitch match play register.
- 3.19 The Rochdale PPS is now regarded as out of date (published in 2020); therefore, demand was calculated using the FA training model (1 full size pitch to 38 teams). This resulted in the following shortfall:
- Heywood – shortfall of three full size pitches;
 - Middleton – supply and demand balance;
 - Pennines – shortfall of three full size pitches; and
 - Rochdale – shortfall of one full size pitch.
- 3.20 This details a shortfall of seven full size pitches, a significant increase from the findings from the feasibility study (3-4 pitches).
- 3.21 Priority projects have been identified in the LFFP, although the document states that projects can be listed in an area where there is not a shortfall, and it is expected that teams in neighbouring areas (where there is a shortfall), will travel there. For example, the Council has plans at Bowlee to install two 11v11 3G pitches in the Middleton area, with the expectation this would absorb demand from the Heywood areas.

- 3.22 In addition, four of the full size 3G pitches also require a new surface, three of which were part of the Building Schools for the Future Programme and are therefore eligible for FF funding, but one site is not as was originally FF funded and therefore would not be eligible.

Current Supply and Demand

- 3.23 Current supply and demand of 3G pitches has not changed since the LFFP, with nine full size pitches of which one is not available to the community. Therefore, shortfall is still expected to be seven full size pitches.
- 3.24 There have also been no 3G pitch carpet refurbishments.
- 3.25 It should be noted that Rochdale BC are planning to replace the carpet on the full-size pitch at Heywood Sports Village and develop an additional full size 3G pitch.
- 3.26 Therefore, the shortfall with this project and Heywood Sports Village would reduce the shortfall to three full size pitches.

Football Foundation Application

- 3.27 Rochdale BC have been invited to undertake a Football Foundation funding application for the proposed two new 3G pitches and clubhouse. Rochdale BC has been allocated a funding application deadline of October 2026.
- 3.28 Therefore, to support this funding application, consultation is being revisited and updated to develop a detailed Programme of Use for the proposed projects. This will form part of the funding application and will need to meet the needs of underrepresented groups in the Borough including:
- Women and girls – a need for at least 20% of peak time slots (Mon-Fri 5-9pm) to be for dedicated women and girl's activities e.g. girls affiliated football teams, recreational sessions, walking football etc.
 - People with disabilities or long-term health conditions;
 - Culturally diverse communities; and
 - People from low socio-economic groups.
- 3.29 A consultation plan has been developed to support the ongoing process. This plan sets out the targeted football club and league, multi-sport, priority community organisations, access barriers, and community outcome consultation that runs alongside to complement Rochdale BC's wider pre-planning and planning consultation plan. It focuses on confirming realistic demand, preferred use, programme requirements and access considerations for the proposed community 3G pitches at Bowlee.
- 3.30 The proposed tasks are as follows in Table 3.1 below.

Tabel 3.1 – Consultation for Football Foundation Funding Application

Consultation Strand	Purpose
Wider pre-planning consultation	Led by the Council and project partners including Enabl. Designed to inform residents, ward members, schools, community organisations, sports bodies and other local stakeholders about the overall proposal and gather planning-related feedback.
Targeted football user consultation	Led by FMG Consulting on behalf of the partners. Designed to confirm who may realistically use the Bowlee community football facilities, what they need, when they need it and what outcomes the facility could support. Feedback from clubs and leagues will inform the draft Programme of Use, management planning, pricing/access discussions, Football Foundation evidence and, where relevant, the final design and planning submission.
Targeted community and multi-sport engagement	Led by FMG Consulting with support from the partners. Designed to test how the Bowlee Hub can support various underrepresented groups in line with the Football Foundation outcomes. These include women and girls, people with disabilities and long-term health conditions, low socio-economic groups and culturally diverse communities. There will also be engagement with National Governing Bodies such as RFU and RFL for multi-sport opportunities.
Community inclusion	Feedback will inform access principles, affordability considerations, inclusive programming, daytime/community room opportunities, health and wellbeing links and any practical design or management issues that affect priority groups.

3.31 The funding application will consider whether requested use supports the overall project outcomes, provides appropriate access for existing and future local users, and strengthens the Football Foundation case for investment. Particular attention will be paid to:

- women and girls' football, including dedicated female teams. There is a minimum requirement from the Football Foundation that funded pitches have 20% of slots for dedicated women and girls' activity Monday to Friday 5-9pm. Where possible, there will be aspirations to work towards 40%, which would create a Football Foundation flagship facility.
- disability and inclusive football, including Ability Counts, All Stars, walking football and veterans' activity;
- grassroots clubs with multiple teams and clear development pathways. England Affiliated 2* clubs will have a women and girls' pathway, with 3* clubs having a disability pathway;
- clubs serving Middleton, Rochdale Borough and communities close to Bowlee;
- programmes that engage women and girls, people with disabilities and long-term health conditions, culturally diverse communities and people from low socio-economic backgrounds.

- multi-sport partners, including RFU and RFL. A minimum of eight quarter pitch slots is required in peak periods to provide an evidence base for a World Rugby compliant 3G pitch.
- schools, education and daytime use that can improve utilisation outside evening peak periods;
- league central venue use, especially where it creates efficient weekend programming;
- financial sustainability for the future operator and long-term replacement of the 3G surface.

3.32 Engagement has been undertaken with both Lancashire CFA and Manchester FA (teams located in the catchment can be affiliated with either organisation) and has identified the following clubs to be engaged in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 – Key stakeholders Identified for Football Foundation Funding Application

Potential User	Reason for Inclusion in Engagement	Source
Get Together After Serving	Women and girls / disability outcomes	Lancashire CFA
Prestwich Marauders FC	Affiliated club, possible women and girls' outcomes	Lancashire CFA
Prestwich Allstars	Affiliated club, possible women and girls' outcomes	Lancashire CFA
Prestwich FC / Prestwich	Affiliated club, possible women and girls' outcomes	Lancashire CFA
Westbury Sports Club	Affiliated club, possible women and girls' outcomes	Lancashire CFA
Pennine Juniors	Affiliated club, current user of the site and previously engaged in feasibility study. Deficit of pitches in Pennine area so could support need.	Lancashire CFA
Rochdalians	Affiliated club and previously engaged in feasibility study.	Lancashire CFA
Ballers Coaching	Affiliated club and current user of the site.	Lancashire CFA
Athletico Middleton	Affiliated club, possible women and girls' outcomes	Manchester FA
Middleton Lads and Girls	Affiliated club	Manchester FA
Strike JFC	Affiliated club, possible women and girls' outcomes	Manchester FA
B Pro	Affiliated club and current user of the site, possible women and girls' outcomes	Manchester FA
Middletonians FC	Current users of the site, can re-provide their current usage on proposed development.	Current user
Millburn FC		Current user

Norford United / Norford Utd FC		Current user
Alliance FC		Current user
Irwell Town FC		Current user
North Manchester Girls League	League	Manchester FA
Manchester Grassroots Sunday Football League	League	Manchester FA

- 3.33 Further to this, various Locally Trusted Organisations will be engaged to identify potential usage for the site. Examples include community groups and charities, faith groups,

Rochdale AFC Community Trust

- 3.34 Rochdale AFC will be developing a community 3G pitch that will be principally to deliver their various community programmes, as well as be available to the community to hire at a pricing policy in line with the Council 3G pitches.
- 3.35 Rochdale AFC have developed an indicative programme of use for the 3G pitch which has been set out in Figure 3.1 below. This details the winter programme of use (September to April) for the proposed 3G pitch.
- 3.36 Table 3.3 sets out the activities in the programme of use.

Figure 3.1 – Indicative Winter Programme of Use (September to April)

Day	Pitch	User/Cost	9am-10am	10am-11am	11am- 12pm	12pm - 1pm	1pm-2pm	2pm-3pm	3pm-4pm	4pm-5pm	5pm-6pm	6pm-7pm	7pm-8pm	8pm-9pm	9pm-10pm
Monday	Pitch 1 (Quarter Pitch)	User	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Walking Football		Maintenance	Maintenance	PLPS	PLPS	Rochdale Schools	Hope Football	Military Veterans	RAFC Veterans 30's	Combined Colleges	
	Pitch 2 (Quarter Pitch)	User	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Walking Football		Maintenance	Maintenance	PLPS	PLPS	Rochdale Schools	Hope Football	Military Veterans	RAFC Veterans 30's	Combined Colleges	
	Pitch 3 (Quarter Pitch)	User	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Walking Football		Maintenance	Maintenance	PLPS	PLPS	Rochdale Schools	Hope Football	Dale Fit Club Men	RAFC Veterans 45's	RAFC Supporters Team	
	Pitch 4 (Quarter Pitch)	User	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Walking Football		Maintenance	Maintenance	PLPS	PLPS	Rochdale Schools	Hope Football	Dale Fit Club Women	RAFC Veterans 45's	RAFC Supporters Team	
Tuesday	Pitch 1 (Quarter Pitch)	User						AP/VRU	AP/VRU	Desmond Dragons	All Stars	PDC Boys U8-10	RAFC Women	RAFC Women	
	Pitch 2 (Quarter Pitch)	User						AP/VRU	AP/VRU	Desmond Dragons	All Stars	PDC Boys U11/12	RAFC Women	RAFC Women	
	Pitch 3 (Quarter Pitch)	User								RAFC Wildcats	RAFC Comets Disability Football	PDC Girls U8-10	RAFC Women	RAFC Women	
	Pitch 4 (Quarter Pitch)	User								RAFC Wildcats	RAFC Comets Disability Football	PDC Girls U11/12	RAFC Women	RAFC Women	
Wednesday	Pitch 1 (Quarter Pitch)	User	Altus	Altus	Altus	Altus	Altus	Changing Lives	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Girls U8	RAFC Girls U12	RAFC Girls U13	RAFC Girls U15	
	Pitch 2 (Quarter Pitch)	User	Altus	Altus	Altus	Altus	Altus	Changing Lives	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Girls U9	RAFC Girls U12	RAFC Girls U13	RAFC Girls U15	
	Pitch 3 (Quarter Pitch)	User	Altus	Altus	Altus	Altus	Altus		RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Girls U10	RAFC Girls U11	RAFC Girls U14	RAFC Girls U16	
	Pitch 4 (Quarter Pitch)	User	Altus	Altus	Altus	Altus	Altus		RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Girls U10	RAFC Girls U11	RAFC Girls U14	RAFC Girls U16	
Thursday	Pitch 1 (Quarter Pitch)	User						PLPS	PLPS	PDC Boys U13	PDC Boys U15	SA DC U8-10	RAFC Women	RAFC Women	
	Pitch 2 (Quarter Pitch)	User						PLPS	PLPS	PDC Boys U14	PDC Boys U16	SA DC U12	RAFC Women	RAFC Women	
	Pitch 3 (Quarter Pitch)	User						PLPS	PLPS	PDC Girls U13	PDC Girls U15	SA DC U14	RAFC Women	RAFC Women	
	Pitch 4 (Quarter Pitch)	User						PLPS	PLPS	PDC Girls U14	PDC Girls U16	SA DC U16	RAFC Women	RAFC Women	
Friday	Pitch 1 (Quarter Pitch)	User	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Walking Football		Maintenance	Maintenance	AP/VRU	AP/VRU	Desmonds	AC Juniors	RAFC Ability Counts Disability	PL Kicks	PL Kicks	
	Pitch 2 (Quarter Pitch)	User	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Walking Football		Maintenance	Maintenance	AP/VRU	AP/VRU	Desmonds	AC Juniors	RAFC Ability Counts Disability	PL Kicks	PL Kicks	
	Pitch 3 (Quarter Pitch)	User	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Walking Football		Maintenance	Maintenance			RAFC Wildcats	RAFC FA Squad Girls	Football for Mental Health	PL Kicks	PL Kicks	
	Pitch 4 (Quarter Pitch)	User	RAFC Walking Football	RAFC Walking Football		Maintenance	Maintenance			RAFC Wildcats	RAFC FA Squad Girls	Football for Mental Health	PL Kicks	PL Kicks	
Saturday	Pitch 1 (Quarter Pitch)	User	3v3 Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	RAFC Supporters Matches	RAFC Supporters Matches							
	Pitch 2 (Quarter Pitch)	User	3v3 Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	RAFC Supporters Matches	RAFC Supporters Matches							
	Pitch 3 (Quarter Pitch)	User	3v3 Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	SA DC	SA DC							
	Pitch 4 (Quarter Pitch)	User	3v3 Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	SA DC	SA DC							
Sunday	Pitch 1 (Quarter Pitch)	User	3v3 Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Hope	RAFC Women / Veterans Matches	RAFC Women / Veterans Matches						
	Pitch 2 (Quarter Pitch)	User	3v3 Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Hope	RAFC Women / Veterans Matches	RAFC Women / Veterans Matches						
	Pitch 3 (Quarter Pitch)	User	3v3 Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Mental Health	RAFC Women / Veterans Matches	RAFC Women / Veterans Matches						
	Pitch 4 (Quarter Pitch)	User	3v3 Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Women and Girls Matches	Mental Health	RAFC Women / Veterans Matches	RAFC Women / Veterans Matches						

Table 3.3 – Description of Activities

Activity	Details
RAFC Walking Football	Walking football is a slower-paced version of football in which players must walk rather than run. It is designed to make the game more accessible to older adults, people returning to exercise, and those with reduced mobility or recovering from injury. This is both match play and training.
PLPS	Premier League Primary Stars is a Premier League funded project where the Community Trust will create healthier and positive futures for children through the delivery of interventions that focus on Maths, English, PSHE and high quality PE. They also deliver various activations, such as inter school competitions and drop down days focussed on topics – No Room for Racism, World Book Day etc.
Rochdale Schools	A session focused on Secondary School 'District' football. Regular coaching sessions for boys and girls
Hope Football	This session is a free session that provides free services and food. Hope Football focuses on refugees or those new to the country, providing a safe space to play football, socialise and receive wrap around support.
Military Veterans	Former army, navy and RAF personnel make up the Rochdale AFC Military Veterans team, who play 11 a side friendly fixtures on a regular basis against other veterans' teams as well as representing the Dale in regional/national 5/6/7 a side tournaments. The Rochdale AFC Military Veterans team is part of the wider MVP – Military Veterans Programme, which is to support former services personnel live a happy, fuller life after leaving the military.
Dale Fit Club	Dale Fit Club is a health programme for men and women aged 16+ who are looking to lose weight, get fitter and lead a more active life.
RAFC Veterans Football	Rochdale AFC Veterans is a welcoming and competitive Sunday football team, bringing together experienced players who share a passion for the game.
Combined Colleges	A team for young people who have played football at College but find themselves without a team due to the drop off rates at this age group.
RAFC Supporters Team	A team of Rochdale AFC Supporters who come together to play other supporters teams ahead of their parent clubs playing fixtures. Friendlies and league fixtures.
AP/VRU	Alternative Provision/Violence Reduction Unit – Sessions for children who are at risk of school exclusion, wither through behavioural pattern or SEMH/SEND needs, or those at risk of youth violence, who require an alternative approach to education or engagement in order to meet needs and change behavioural patterns.
Desmond Dragons	Desmond's Dragons provides the perfect introduction to football for young children.
RAFC Wildcats	FA programme which focusses on non-competitive football for girls aged 5-11 years old.

All Stars	All Stars is the Community Trust's Down Syndrome football team, supporting young people and adults.
RAFC Comets Disability Football	FA programme which provides a recreational, pan-disability football programme for disabled boys and girls aged between 5 and 11. I
PDC	Player Development Centre provides a player development pathway for those wanting to push themselves towards their maximum potential.
Affiliated Team Usage	RAFC women and girls' community teams that will use the site for training and matches. Rochdale AFC Ladies are a grassroots club with its own committee, elected from the players parents, coaches and other community members interested in supporting girl's football.
Altus	Altus multi-academy trust which has allocated space as they are a major partner with the Community Trust so this session is to support football delivery across their partner schools.
Changing Lives	A partnership with Petrus Housing, this is a football initiative designed to support people experiencing homelessness or living in supported accommodation.
SA DC	South Asian Development Centre session as there is a lack of representation from South Asian communities across football club academies. Rochdale has a large population of people from South Asian backgrounds, so this programme looks to identify and support talented players and bridge the gap between grassroots and academy football.
AC Juniors	This is the Community Trust's junior PAN disability team.
RAFC Ability Counts Disability	Inclusive disability football run for adults, providing both training and match play opportunities.
RAFC Squad Girls	FA programme for fun, social football for teenage girls aged 11 to 16 years old. A fun, non-competitive way to play football.
Football for Mental Health	Recreational football sessions dedicated to improving mental wellbeing of participants.
PL Kicks	Premier League Kicks is a free programme, funded by the Premier League Foundation and The National Lottery Community Fund, PL Kicks uses the reach and appeal of the Premier League and network of professional football clubs to regularly engage children and young people of all backgrounds and abilities in football, aged 8-18 years old.

4. Proposed Development

Introduction

- 4.1 The proposed development at Bowlee is a Football and Community Wellbeing Hub designed to improve the quality, capacity and year-round availability of sports provision at the site. The scheme is intended to serve both community football and Rochdale AFC activities, while also supporting wider health, fitness and community use.
- 4.2 The development replaces a site that is currently constrained by poor-quality and poorly drained grass pitches, limited supporting infrastructure and a derelict pavilion building. In its place, the proposal creates a modern, shared sports hub with significantly improved playing capacity and better ancillary facilities.

Existing Provision at Bowlee

- 4.3 The existing Bowlee provision includes a range of outdoor sports facilities as shown in Table 4.1 and outlined in Figure 4.1 below.
- 4.4 In practice, however, poor drainage affects several pitches and limits the amount of provision that is regularly usable as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.1 - Existing Facilities at Bowlee

Existing Facilities	Information
Grass football pitches	7 (Various Sizes)
Non-turf cricket wicket	1
Pavilion building	1
Car Park	Yes

Table 4.2 – Existing Site Constraints

Issue	Effect
All grass pitches have longstanding drainage problems	Three pitches are currently out of use due to drainage and condition of the pitches, whilst a fourth has only recently been reused following improved weather. Two are located on the south of the site (proposed Rochdale AFC area), and one on the north of the site. The 'Fenced Pitch' playing area has not previously been formally identified as a pitch but has had some usage in the last year.

Issue	Effect
	Historically, it was used by Rochdale AFC as a training pitch (and was excluded from the Playing Pitch Strategy in 2020), but usage was very short due to the poor condition and drainage.
Only three grass pitches are currently usable	Restricts match and training capacity of the site, as well as overall site sustainability. The usable pitches also have limited reliability in poor weather, which increases the risk of cancellations.
Pavilion	Ageing pavilion that requires replacement. Currently not fit for purpose to serve the community.

Figure 4.1 – Current Facility and Pitch Layout



Current Usage

4.5 The current hire of Bowlee consists of the following identified in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 – Current Usage at Bowlee

Facility	Usage	Match Equivalent Sessions Per Week
Grass Pitch 1	• Not in use	0
Grass Pitch 2	• Saturday - B Pro Coaching U13' & U 14's (Alternate) • Sunday - Irwell Town FC & Alliance FC (Alternate)	2
Grass Pitch 3	• Saturday - B Pro Coaching U13' & U 14's (Alternate) • Sunday - Middletonians FC Firsts & Reserves (Alternate)	2
Grass Pitch 4	• Not in use	0
Grass Pitch 5	• Saturday - Pennine Juniors U17 & U18 (Alternate) • Sunday - Milburn FC & Norford FC (Alternate)	2
Grass Pitch 6	• Not in use	0
Grass Pitch 7 (Fenced Pitch)	• Saturday - Ballers Coaching U13's & U14's • Midweek - Ballers Coaching U13's & U14's	1.5
Cricket	• No bookings	
Pavilion	• No bookings	

4.6 As a result of the existing football capacity, there is average usage of 13 hours a week across four pitches. This equates to 7.5 Match Equivalent Sessions (MES) per week (assuming midweek training is equivalent of 0.5 MES).

4.7 Based on a Standard pitch rating which would have capacity of 2 MES per week, this means the four pitches in use are almost at capacity.

4.8 For cricket, there is no formal usage of the NTP wicket despite the development only being undertaken three years ago.

Proposed Development at Bowlee Playing Fields

4.9 The proposed development at Bowlee includes:

- two full-size community 3G pitches;
- one Rochdale AFC community 3G pitch;

- one Rochdale AFC grass training pitch;
 - retained community grass football pitches;
 - a new community pavilion building;
 - a separate Rochdale AFC pavilion/changing facility;
 - reconfigured and extended car parking and access infrastructure;
 - demolition of the existing pavilion;
 - play area; and
 - relocation of the existing NTP wicket through two bay cricket nets.
- 4.10 The development is intended to provide a combination of community-use facilities and club-specific training provision, while retaining football use on the site and increasing overall playing and training capacity.

The Benefit of 3G AGPs compared to Grass Pitches

- 4.11 A joint statement from Sport England, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), sportscotland, Sport Wales, the Grounds Management Association, Football Foundation, The Football Association, Cymru Football Foundation, Welsh Rugby Union, Rugby Football League, Sports and Play Construction Association and England Rugby identified the benefits of AGP's.
- 4.12 AGPs provide high-quality surfaces that are an integral part of modern community sport. Recognised as durable, safe, year-round playing surfaces, they're able to withstand intensive use and all kinds of weather. A properly maintained AGP can sustain up to 80 hours of use a week, providing an average of around 1,400 playing opportunities. This compares favourably to a good quality grass pitch, which can sustain just six hours a week, accommodating an average of around 100 playing opportunities.
- 4.13 This means many people are able to engage in sport and physical activity regardless of the weather when otherwise matches would be cancelled. AGPs therefore enable more people to experience the benefits of being active, such as improved physical health and mental wellbeing and improved confidence. They're used for playing many different sports and provide safe spaces for people to come together and connect, helping unite communities.

Proposed Facility Development

Split of Facilities

- 4.14 The site will include the following split of facilities for Rochdale BC and Rochdale AFC as shown in Table 4.4 below.
- 4.15 Figure 4.2 sets out the Rochdale BC, Rochdale AFC and shared areas.

Table 4.4 – Split of Facilities

Rochdale Borough Council	Rochdale AFC
Community building including four team changing rooms, toilets, gym, community room, café / kitchen and accessible changing and toilets.	Rochdale AFC pavilion – use for club and community activities.
Three community grass football pitches (two 11v11 and one 5v5), improved to a good quality standard.	Rochdale AFC Elite grass training pitch (private use)
Two full size community 3G artificial grass pitches.	Full size Rochdale AFC 3G artificial grass pitch (community use)
Two bay cricket net.	One Youth 11v11 grass pitch (community use), improve to a high-quality standard and fenced off to prevent misuse.
Shared car park and access infrastructure	Shared car park and access infrastructure
Outdoor play area.	

- 4.16 The Proposed Development would create a more intensive and reliable sports Hub by introducing new 3G provision, retained community grass pitches, club training space, a new pavilion with health and fitness and relocated cricket provision as shown in Table 4.5.

Figure 4.2 – Allocation of Land

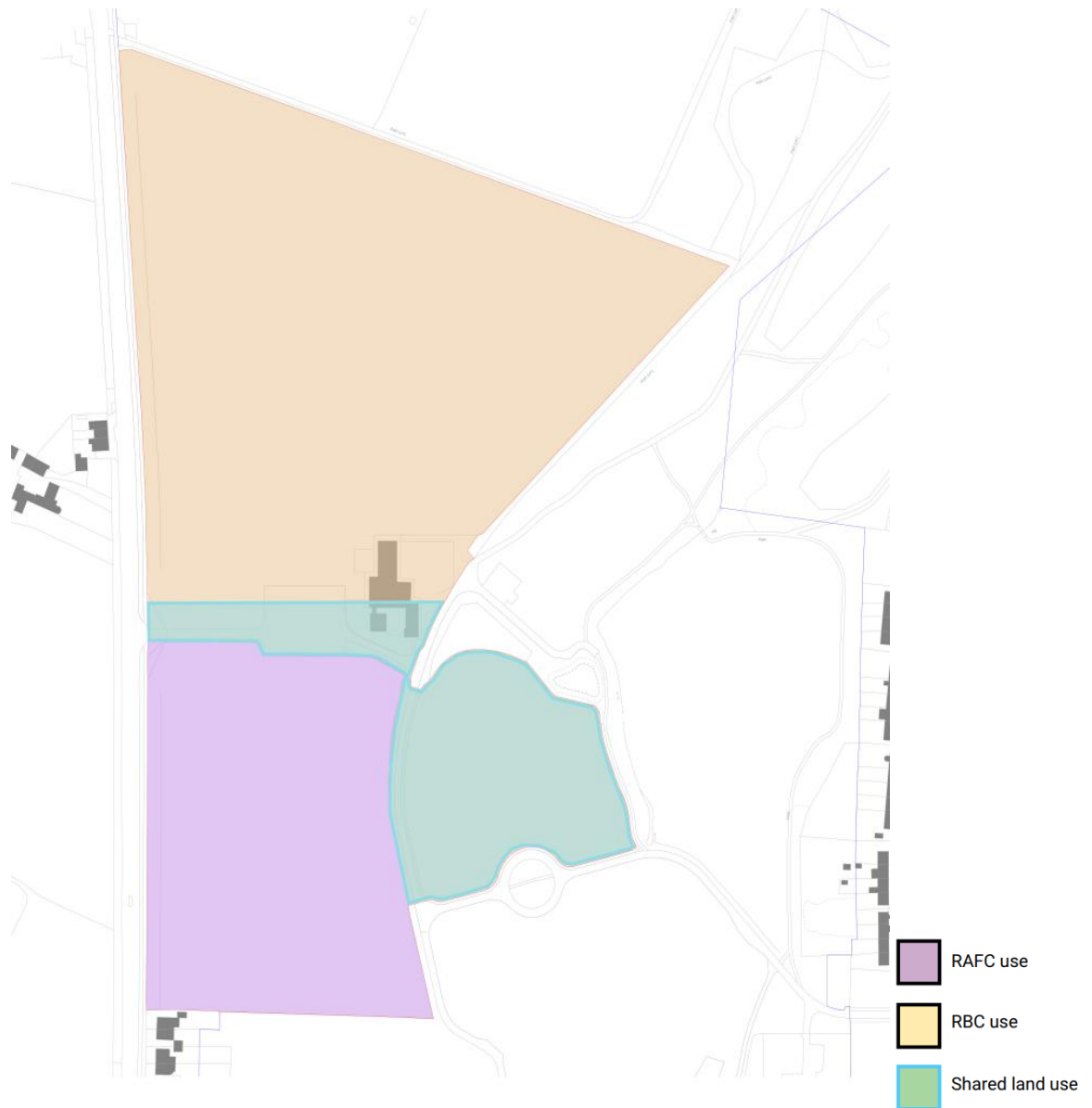


Table 4.5 - Proposed facilities

Proposed facility	Quantity	Notes
Community full-size 3G pitches	2	Two 91m x 55m 3G pitches. Available for community football use.
Rochdale AFC 3G pitch	1	100m x 64m 11v11 3G pitch. Available for community football use and club usage.
Rochdale AFC grass training pitch	1	Club training provision – 11v11 full size pitch
Community grass pitches	4	Community football use retained on site – three 11v11 and one 5v5. Two 11v11 and one 5v5 pitch will be improved to a good quality PQS rating. Pitch 7 (Fenced Off Pitch) will be improved above a good quality rating. This will be protected by fencing and will allow for a high-quality community pitch. This will be operated by Rochdale AFC.
New community pavilion	1	New ancillary accommodation includes four team changing rooms, two officials' rooms, accessible changing and toilet facilities, community room, café and kitchen and 40 station health and fitness suite.
Cricket Nets	1	Removal of the cricket Non-Turf Pitch. Cricket retained on site through two bay NTP cricket net.

Proposed Site Masterplan

- 4.17 The proposed Site Masterplan can be seen below in Figure 4.3 and further details are included in RIBA Stage 2 report.
- 4.18 The Bowlee Site Masterplan shows a comprehensive reconfiguration of the existing playing fields to create a more efficient and higher-capacity sports Hub. In summary, the proposed site plan includes two full-size community 3G pitches as the main community football provision, together with retained grass football pitches and new cricket nets.
- 4.19 In addition, Rochdale AFC's facilities are shown as a separate but connected part of the site, comprising one dedicated 3G pitch, one grass training pitch and an associated pavilion building.
- 4.20 The Site Masterplan also shows the demolition of the existing pavilion, extension and resurfacing of the car parking area, and improved internal circulation and access arrangements. A new community pavilion is included to serve the wider hub, and the non-turf cricket wicket is to be relocated within Bowlee as cricket nets so that cricket provision remains on site.
- 4.21 Overall, the site plan reflects a shared hub model: community-use facilities are provided alongside Rochdale AFC facilities, with supporting buildings, access and parking designed to enable the site to operate as a single coordinated sports destination.

Figure 4.3 - Proposed Development (Site Masterplan)



Site Spatial Calculations

Existing Playing Field Areas

- 4.22 The following spatial calculations have been prepared in support of this Sports Statement in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6 – Existing Playing Field Area

Item	Calculation
Total red line site area (see Figure 2.2)	10.8ha / 107,600m ²
Land not forming usable playing field (i.e. car parking and buildings)	0.7ha / 7,100m ²
Total playing field land within red line	10.1ha / 100,500m²
Amount of used playing pitch space (including out of use pitches) - Five Adult 11v11 (106m x 70m with run offs), one Youth 11v11 (97m x 61m), one 9v9 (79 x 52m)	4.7ha / 47,125m²
Land not used for playing field	5.3ha / 53,200m ²

- 4.23 Overall, around 4.75ha of the land is used for playing fields, with circa 5.3ha used as open recreational land.

Future Playing Field Areas

- 4.24 The following spatial calculations have been prepared in support of this Sports Statement in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7 – Future Playing Field Area

Item	Calculation
Total playing field land within red line	9.3ha / 93,400m²
3G Pitches – Two 112m x 76m	1.7ha / 17,024m ²
3G Pitch – One 112m x 76m	0.9ha / 8,512m ²
Playing field to be used for formal grass pitches - Two Adult 11v11 (106m x 70m with run offs), one Youth 11v11 (92m x 55m) and One 5v5 (46m x 36m)	2.8ha / 22,828m ²
Amount of usable playing pitch space	5.4ha / 54,000m²
Land not forming usable playing field	3.0ha / 39,000m ²
Rochdale AFC Training Area (121m x 74m)	0.9ha / 8,954m ²

- 4.25 Overall, whilst the amount of overall playing field has reduced by 0.8ha due to the developments such as the car parking and access, the amount of usable playing field space has increased due to design of the site to include grass pitches and 3G pitches.
- 4.26 This increases from 4.7ha currently to 5.4ha, as currently there is significant amount of playing field that is not used for pitches due to the shape, size and location.
- 4.27 Whilst the Rochdale AFC training area will not be available for the community, other land that is playing field but not usable playing field totals 3ha in the future plans, a reduction from 5.3ha in the current plans due to inefficiencies in the layout of the playing fields.

Pitch Capacity Comparison

- 4.28 Whilst reducing grass pitches can reduce the number of games kicking off at the same time, a 3G pitch provides substantially greater playing capacity than natural grass pitches and can be used more reliably throughout the year, including evenings and periods of poor weather. Table 4.8 below shows a typical weekly pitch capacity for both grass and artificial 3G pitch surfaces.

Table 4.8 - Typical Weekly Pitch Capacity

Pitch Type	Typical Weekly Capacity
Grass pitch (11v11)	6-8 hours per week (Good PQS)
3G Pitch	40-60 hours per week

- 4.29 Further the proposed development will significantly increase capacity for use on the site as shown in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9 – Capacity of Pitch Facilities

Proposed Provision of Pitches	Number	Assumed Capacity per Pitch (Hours)	Total Weekly Capacity
Community 3G pitches	2	50 hours per week	100 hours per week
Rochdale AFC 3G pitch	1	50 hours per week	50 hours per week
Retained grass pitches	4	2 hours per week	8 hours per week

- 4.30 Table 4.10 below summarises the existing usable pitch provision compared to the proposed development which increases access from circa 24 hours per week to 158 hours per week.

Table 4.10 - Capacity summary comparison

Measure	Existing	Proposed
Usable grass pitches	2 x Adult 11v11 1 x Youth 11v11 1 x Youth 9v9	2 x Adult 11v11 1 x Youth 11v11 1 x Mini 5v5 (All increased to a Good PQS)
Community 3G pitches	0	3
Estimated football capacity	24 hours per week	158 hours per week

PQS Feasibility Study

- 4.31 Rochdale BC appointed OBi Sports to undertake a RIBA Stage 2 – Concept Design Report - Flood Risk Assessment, Earthworks & Pitch Construction. The full report can be found in the RIBA Stage 2 Report.
- 4.32 The purpose of this report is to:
- Summarise site constraints and flood risk considerations;
 - Present the concept-level earthworks and pitch construction strategy;
 - Demonstrate compliance with national and local planning policy; and
 - Inform the planning application and ongoing technical design development
- 4.33 The report concluded that the proposed earthworks, flood risk mitigation and pitch construction strategy can be delivered in a manner that is policy compliant, does not increase flood risk on or off site and provides good quality, sustainable sports facilities.
- 4.34 At RIBA Stage 3, the proposal is to expand the design to include:
- Detailed Flood Risk Assessment calculations;
 - Hydraulic modelling (if required);
 - Detailed drainage design;
 - Detailed site drainage outlet design;
 - Pitch specification and performance criteria; and
 - Coordination with planning and statutory consultees.

Cricket Non-Turf Pitch Mitigation

- 4.35 The existing NTP wicket is impacted by the proposed reconfiguration of the site and the Rochdale AFC development.
- 4.36 This Sports Statement proposes a mitigation as a result of:
- Review of current usage;
 - Alternative site assessment; and
 - Consultation with Lancashire Cricket Board

Review of Current Usage

- 4.37 There is currently no booked usage of the NTP wicket. In addition, there is no known casual recreational usage of the pitch.

Alternative Sites Assessment

- 4.38 All Rochdale BC land assets in Middleton were mapped. These were then assessed against a standard set of criteria based on the ECB / PPOSS conditions plus an additional set of criteria chosen to ensure any replacement facility fulfils its desired function to the best outcomes. The results of this assessment are as follows:
- 4.39 Sites failing fundamental parts of the assessment and therefore discounted:
- Bowlee Park meadow: Used as part of the park which cannot be repurposed. Biodiversity impact of changing usage too.
 - Bowlee 'Fenced Pitch' area (Pitch 7): Concerns around ECB ball strike area within this space, other parts of playing fields also not suitable.
 - Alkrington Hall meadow: Too steep for cricket usage and a Biodiversity impact.
 - Hopwood Nature reserve: Significantly smaller than ECB ball strike area: 60m wide. Also, a Biodiversity impact.
 - Kinder Way Rec: Significantly smaller than ECB ball strike area: 70m. Used as public park and path would be where strip would be located. Multiple trees also to be felled and a proximity to houses.
 - Kirkway / St Dominics Way meadow: Significantly smaller than ECB ball strike area: 60m wide. Biodiversity impact and proximity to houses.
 - Alkrington Meadow: Biodiversity impact, key habitat site for the Borough
- 4.40 Therefore, it was identified that there are limited suitable alternatives. The best option was Pitch 7 'Fenced Pitch' but after undertaking technical work on the site, it was deemed that the area would not be larger enough for the ball strike assessment.

Consultation with Lancashire Cricket Board

- 4.41 ECB have been consulted regarding the proposed development. They welcomed the improvements to the site but stated that a community net offering would be preferable at four bays. In addition, the location needs to be correct for cricket usage as a community facility. Alternatively, it maybe more beneficial to provide an NTP at a club site with a Community Use Agreement.
- 4.42 ECB are happy to continue discussions regarding proposals at Bowlee or offsite.

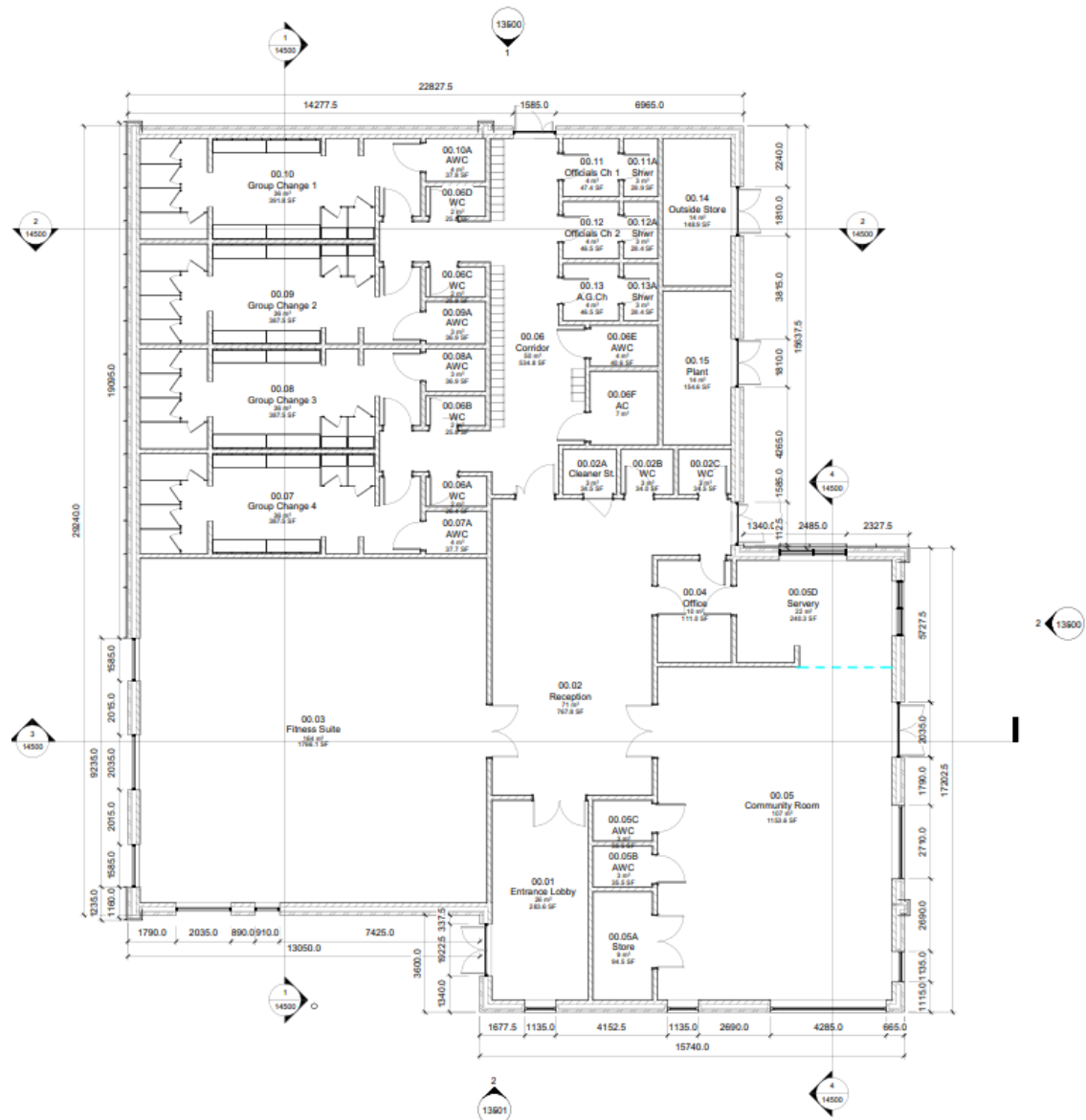
Proposed Cricket Mitigation

- 4.43 For the purpose of the planning application, Rochdale AFC and Rochdale BC are proposing to relocate this wicket within Bowlee Playing Fields, rather than remove it from the area. This will support the multi-sport drive of the site. This will be through provision of a two bay NTP cricket net, fully enclosed and available for the community to use. The construction of the nets will be in line with the ECB's 'Performance Standards for Non-Turf Cricket Pitches Intended for Outdoor Use'.
- 4.44 The appraisal work to date identifies an alternative solution for cricket with the introduction of dedicated cricket nets. This proposal retains cricket provision within Middleton Township and ensures that cricket remains available locally and accessible through more effective promotion as part of the wider site programme.
- 4.45 However. Rochdale AFC and Rochdale BC will continue to engage with the ECB to provide an appropriate facility at the site and would be open to extending the facility to a four bay net if external funding was available. However, as a minimum commitment, proposed mitigation would be a two bay NTP cricket net, or relocation of an NTP to a club site.

Proposed Pavilion Development

- 4.46 The current pavilion building is ageing and not fit for purpose. As a result of the wider development, the Rochdale BC are proposing a significant improvement to the pavilion to increase the long-term sustainability of the site and complement the proposed facilities. More information can be found in the RIBA Stage 2 report.
- 4.47 Figure 4.4 below sets out the pavilion design. The proposed pavilion includes:
- Four team changing rooms, Sport England and Football Foundation compliant;
 - Two officials changing, Sport England and Football Foundation complaint;
 - Two accessible changing rooms, one with shower;
 - Spectators' toilets, including Accessible WCs;
 - 40 station health and fitness suite (160m²);
 - Multi-purpose community room / café (107m²);
 - Kitchen servery;
 - Office and reception area; and
 - Storage.

Figure 4.4 – Proposed Pavilion Building Design



- 4.48 The plan has been designed to highlight the building's function from the outside for maximum active frontage and impact. The entrance is clearly defined with a covered walkway, whilst the fitness suite and café / community rooms are clearly visible from the street, car park and play areas via large floor to ceiling glazing.
- 4.49 A generous draft lobby leads to a central reception area, from which point visitors can pivot towards all key spaces. Changing areas and fitness suite users are looked over by reception for safety and security (each door with access control), whilst all guests have access to the pitches and café / community spaces and public toilets.
- 4.50 The kitchen has three service points: café, spectator servery (behind the secure line) and play area server (in front of the secure line), allowing for maximum income generation. On quieter days, reception staff can have access to the kitchen via the office.

- 4.51 The fitness suite is 160sq.m in size and can accommodate up to 40 stations.



Ownership, Management and Delivery

- 4.52 The Bowlee Hub is proposed to be delivered and operated through a partnership between Rochdale BC, Rochdale AFC and Your Trust. An Operational Agreement has been drafted between all partners.
- 4.53 Rochdale BC will have the strategic and land ownership role. Rochdale AFC will use part of the site for its football development, community and training activities. Your Trust, as the Council's leisure operating partner, is expected to manage the community-facing elements of the facility.
- 4.54 The purpose of the Operational Agreement is to:
- establish how the partners will work together to promote and develop football and community use at Bowlee;
 - define access arrangements for the different parts of the site;
 - agree how facility hire, pricing and maintenance will be managed; and
 - ensure the site is operated efficiently, sustainably and for maximum community benefit.
- 4.55 This structure is intended to secure both long-term community access and effective day-to-day operation of the hub.
- 4.56 Rochdale BC and Rochdale AFC have agreed the lease arrangements for the site and draft Heads of Terms have been agreed. It has been agreed that Rochdale AFC would manage their facilities (one community 3G pitch and training pitch) as well as Pitch 7 'Fenced Pitch'.
- 4.57 The Council's preferred operator, a charitable organisation, will be responsible for the remaining community facilities including:

- Two community 3G pitches;
- Three community grass pitches (two 11v11 and one 5v5);
- Pavilion building;
- Wider site landscaping;
- Shared areas such as car parking and pathways.

- 4.58 An Operational Agreement to maximise efficiency and partnership working on site has been developed. This includes areas such as shared pricing policies, booking priorities including access to the Rochdale AFC 3G pitch when not in use for their community activities and responsibilities for areas of the site.
- 4.59 There will also be an agreed service charge for shared areas payable from Rochdale AFC to Rochdale BC / Rochdale BC's operator.

Community Use Agreements

- 4.60 Community Use Agreements (CUA) are being drafted for the planning application for Rochdale AFC and Rochdale BC. This will include commitment to opening hours, pricing policies and community access.
- 4.61 Rochdale AFC's CUA will be for the community 3G pitch and Pitch 7 'Fenced Pitch' to ensure community access. This ensures the grass pitch can be used by local community teams at weekends for matches.

Existing Users

- 4.62 There are a range of existing users currently using Bowlee as set out in Table 4.3.
- 4.63 It is proposed that these users will continue to maintain access to the site if they would like to use the facility on the grass pitches as a minimum.

Displacement During Construction

- 4.64 It is likely that construction of the Rochdale BC facilities may result in users being unable to access facilities at Bowlee Playing Fields for at least one season.
- 4.65 Therefore, current plans are being developed to identify alternative venues for their provision. This includes Heywood Sports Village that will include additional 3G pitch developments if funding and planning is achieved.
- 4.66 A full displacement plan will be developed once the construction programme has been developed for Bowlee, and for Heywood.

Grounds Maintenance Approach at Bowlee

- 4.67 It has been agreed that Rochdale AFC will be responsible for all grass pitch maintenance on site, including the community grass pitches on behalf of Rochdale BC.
- 4.68 Rochdale AFC have an experienced grounds team who are responsible for the pitch at the Crown Oil Arena.

- 4.69 They will undertake all basic (cutting, line marking and mowing) and enhanced maintenance tasks in house where possible (seeding, fertiliser, weed killing, Verti draining, scarifying and goal mouth repairs). If external support is required, appropriately qualified external contractors will be engaged by Rochdale AFC.
- 4.70 The pitches will be maintained to a good quality PQS, and initial capital works will be undertaken as part of this development as informed by Obi Sports RIBA stage 3 work.

Further Consultation and Football Foundation Funding Application

- 4.71 Further consultation is being undertaken as part of the Football Foundation funding application. The purpose is to confirm demand, refine the operating model and ensure the final proposals respond to the needs of clubs, leagues, community users and strategic stakeholders.
- 4.72 Additional consultation with clubs and user groups is planned between July and October 2026. This will include workshops, surveys and direct meetings with major clubs, leagues and community users. Feedback will inform the final facility design, access arrangements, programme, pricing approach and community use commitments.
- 4.73 The consultation will focus on the overall vision for the hub, the proposed 3G and grass pitch provision, community facilities, Rochdale AFC and community access arrangements, affordability, transport and parking, and opportunities to support health, wellbeing and social inclusion

Summary of the Proposed Development

- 4.74 Whilst there has been a reduction in overall grass pitch space available by one full size grass pitch, there would be a significant improvement to community facilities at Bowlee, outdoors but also indoors through the development of the gym and pavilion.
- 4.75 Currently, the Bowlee facility has various unusable pitches, and the current site is constrained by poor drainage and limited usable grass pitch stock, whereas the proposed development would create a modern year-round hub with substantially greater capacity, improved reliability and retained cricket provision. The development will support the improvement of grass pitches at the site and allow the site to return to increased capacity.
- 4.76 Although the layout of the site would change, the proposed development would significantly enhance the sporting value of Bowlee.

Why Bowlee is the right location?

- 4.77 Bowlee is identified as the Hub site for Middleton Township. It is a large and flexible site with the physical capacity to accommodate a multi-pitch layout, supporting facilities and wider community uses. It also has links to the wider park, cycling routes and the adjacent school, which strengthens its role as a community destination.
- 4.78 FMG's catchment analysis found that Bowlee has the largest catchment of the three principal Rochdale sites assessed, with approximately 956,000 people within a 20-minute drive time and around 262,000 within 10 minutes. The site is accessible to Rochdale residents and to communities in Bury, north Manchester, Oldham, Salford and Tameside.
- 4.79 Bowlee is therefore well placed to meet both local and wider sub-regional need. This is particularly important where clubs already travel to access suitable 3G training and match facilities. Bowlee therefore provides an opportunity to secure accessible, programmed and long-term community 3G provision under a coordinated management model.

Need for a Managed Hub Model

- 4.80 The evidence supports a managed Hub model rather than isolated pitch provision. The proposed facility mix would allow Bowlee to support football participation, education, health and wellbeing activity, inclusive programming and long-term operational sustainability.
- 4.81 There is an opportunity for two full-size community 3G pitches, supporting grass pitches, changing accommodation, a health and fitness offer, community rooms and complementary activity linked to the wider park. These elements are part of the need case because they help the site operate as a sustainable community facility.
- 4.82 This approach is also relevant to Rochdale's wider health and inclusion priorities. The Borough includes areas of high deprivation, low activity and communities that are under-represented in sport, including women and girls, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions and ethnically diverse communities. The hub model can help remove barriers and widen participation.

Rochdale AFC and Partnership Delivery

- 4.83 Recent work on the Bowlee scheme has identified an additional source of need through Rochdale AFC's requirement for a permanent training base and facilities to support its player pathway and community programmes.
- 4.84 Consultation with the Club has identified that they have lacked a permanent training ground (required to move outside of the borough) and requires better facilities for community activities that aim to improve participation in young people, women's and girls', disability programmes and community delivery. From previous work undertaken, Bowlee is considered the best strategic fit for these requirements.
- 4.85 It also confirms that Rochdale AFC provision can be accommodated without displacing the community facilities previously identified through FMG's work.
- 4.86 The proposed partnership between Rochdale BC and Rochdale AFC strengthens the delivery case. It provides a clear basis for coordinated programming, community access, operational management and long-term use.

Sports Planning Mitigation Strategy

- 4.87 The mitigation strategy for Bowlee is focused on four main elements:
1. Retaining football provision on site;
 2. Increasing playing capacity through provision of 3G pitches and improved grass pitches;
 3. Ensuring cricket provision remains at Bowlee; and
 4. Widening the health and wellbeing opportunities through the introduction of a new health and wellbeing community hub building, including a 40-station fitness gym.

Football Pitch Mitigation

- 4.88 Football mitigation at Bowlee is provided through:
- two new community 3G pitches to replace and enhance existing match and training capacity;

- Retained and improved community grass pitches to a Good PQS, including an enhanced fenced off pitch;
 - Improving day to day maintenance through Rochdale AFC's grounds maintenance team; and
 - a dedicated Rochdale AFC 3G pitch to accommodate the club's community use without displacing community provision.
- 4.89 The project will provide enhanced provision of all retained playing pitches; this includes a grassed area at the rear of the site which was not identified as a playing pitch in the previous PPS due to poor drainage. The site was previously used for a month by Rochdale AFC, but due to the poor quality, they left the site. The pitch is currently being used by local teams, but this is due to other pitches not being available, rather than the quality of the pitch being appropriate. This pitch will be reintroduced for community use by improving drainage and providing significant improvements to the surface.
- 4.90 This approach not only replaces existing use, but materially improves the quantity, quality and reliability of provision at the site.
- 4.91 In overall terms, the Bowlee mitigation strategy ensures that:
- football remains a key primary use of the site;
 - capacity is significantly increased through 3G provision;
 - community access is retained and strengthened through the creation of a new community health and wellbeing hub;
 - Rochdale AFC's investment and requirements are accommodated within the same hub; and
 - cricket provision is retained on site through relocation within Bowlee Park.

5. Summary and Conclusion

Introduction

- 5.1 This section sets out the sports planning case for the proposed Bowlee Football and Community Wellbeing Hub.
- 5.2 It draws on the Rochdale Football Feasibility Study prepared by FMG Consulting, subsequent Bowlee option testing and addendum work, a draft pre-application sports statement, and consultation with Rochdale BC, Your Trust, Rochdale AFC, the Football Foundation, County FA representatives, ECB and local clubs and leagues.
- 5.3 The evidence shows that Bowlee is an appropriate and justified location for investment. The proposals would improve the quality, capacity, reliability and accessibility of existing sports provision, while responding to identified needs for year-round football training, match play, youth growth, women's and girls' football, disability football and wider community wellbeing provision.
- 5.4 This closing section confirms the strategic intent behind the Bowlee Football and Community Wellbeing Hub, the process being followed to refine and deliver the project, and the reasons why the proposal should be supported in sports planning terms. It should be read alongside the preceding evidence on need, capacity, consultation and site suitability.

Operational Sustainability and Community Access

- **Strategic intent:** The proposal is intended to create a long-term, managed football and community wellbeing hub, not a stand-alone pitch development. The aim is to secure high-quality, year-round sports provision that increases participation, improves reliability and supports wider health, wellbeing and inclusion outcomes.
- **Operating model:** The hub will be delivered through a partnership approach involving Rochdale BC (and their operating partner) and Rochdale AFC (and Rochdale AFC Community Trust). This model provides clear roles for ownership, programming, community use and day-to-day management, helping to reduce operational risk and support long-term sustainability.
- **Community access:** Community access will remain central to the scheme. The Council's charitable operator, likely to be Your Trust, will manage community pitch bookings and wider access arrangements, with provision focused on evenings, weekends and other available community-use periods. The model will also support use by local clubs, leagues, schools and community groups.
- **Rochdale AFC use:** Rochdale AFC will have dedicated training access as part of the overall programme. In addition, there will be a community 3G pitch, and this will support the Club's pathway, women's and girls' football, disability football and community delivery, while allowing the wider hub to remain available for grassroots and community use.
- **Affordability and inclusion:** Pricing, programming and access arrangements will be developed to support grassroots football and priority groups, including women and girls, disabled players, young people, inactive residents and communities facing barriers to participation.

Strategic Intent and Delivery Process

- **Why Bowlee?** Bowlee is an established playing field site with strategic scale, a large catchment and the ability to accommodate a managed multi-pitch hub. The proposal responds to known pitch quality issues, drainage constraints, unmet training demand and the need for reliable community 3G capacity.
- **What is being delivered?** The development will retain sport on the site while substantially improving quality, capacity and resilience. The 3G pitches retained and improved grass pitch provision, cricket re-provision and supporting pavilion facilities will together provide a stronger and more flexible community sports offer.
- **How will the project be refined?** The design, programme and operating model will continue to be tested through the planning process and the Football Foundation funding application. This includes ongoing engagement with Sport England, the Football Foundation, County FA representatives, clubs, schools and community users.
- **Ongoing consultation:** Further consultation is ongoing as part of the Football Foundation funding application. Additional engagement with clubs and user groups is planned between July and October 2026 to test demand, refine access arrangements, inform programming and confirm how the hub can best meet local need.

Sport England Policy Compliance

- **Policy position:** The proposal has been developed to meet Sport England's playing fields policy objectives by protecting sport on the site, improving the quality of provision and delivering a net increase in usable playing capacity.
- The proposed facility aims to meet a hybrid of the Sport England Playing Field Policy Exemptions in the following way:

Sport England Exemptions	Proposed Mitigation
E2 – Ancillary Development Supporting Sport - The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.	• New pavilion building and car park required to service the grass and 3G pitches. • This does not currently remove any serviceable playing field area, but areas that are not used as formal playing field.
E3 – Replacement with Equivalent or Better Provision – The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not: • reduce the size of any playing pitch; • result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas); • reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or	• Grass pitches will be improved to a Good PQS or a 3G pitch surface, which increases the capacity and sustainability of the site. • Pitch 7 'Fenced Pitch' area will provide a high-quality grass pitch protected from informal usage.

reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality; • result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; • or prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.	
E5 – Alternative Sports Provision of Equal or Greater Benefit - The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.	• Whilst one grass Adult 11v11 pitch will become private usage of Rochdale AFC, three 3G pitches will be available to the community on the site to provide a significantly enhanced football and multi-sport offer. This is in addition to four good quality grass pitches maintained by an experienced grounds maintenance team at Rochdale AFC. • In addition, the new pavilion will include a 40-station health and fitness gym that will generate 145,000 additional visitors per annum. • Community room area will also be used for health and wellbeing activities such as fitness classes.

Overall Planning Conclusion

- 5.5 The Bowlee Football and Community Wellbeing Hub is a justified response to identified local and strategic need. It will improve the quality, capacity and reliability of sports provision on an established playing field site, while retaining the site's core sporting function.
- 5.6 The proposal will also provide a stronger and more sustainable delivery model, combining community access, grassroots football development, Rochdale AFC use, school links and wider health and wellbeing activity within one coordinated hub.
- 5.7 On this basis, the development aims to meet Sport England's key planning tests. It protects and enhances sports provision, avoids a net loss of sporting opportunity, increases usable playing capacity, retains cricket provision, and provides a clear process for ongoing consultation, refinement and delivery.
- 5.8 Further consultation will continue through the Football Foundation funding application, including planned engagement with clubs and user groups between July and October 2026. The outcomes of that process will be used to refine the final access, programming and operational arrangements before delivery.
- 5.9 The proposed development should therefore be supported as a positive, evidence-led and deliverable investment in community sport infrastructure for Bowlee, Middleton Township and the wider Rochdale catchment.

5.10 In summary, considering the conclusions of the Needs Assessment, the Site Proposals comprise of the following:

1. Mitigation for the loss of grass pitch provision by Rochdale BC:

- Two full size 11v11 3G pitches for the community. The details include:
 - Minimum of 97m x 61m (91m x 55m Adult 11v11 pitch plus 3m run-off) that can be split into four quarters per pitch;
 - One pitch can be 100m x 60m pitches if demand is identified in the Football Foundation funding application;
 - Spectator areas;
 - New secure replacement fencing;
 - New sports lighting;
- A new sports pavilion with accessible changing rooms for four teams plus officials with toilets;
 - 40 station health and fitness gym;
 - Four team changing;
 - Two officials changing rooms;
 - Café / social room;
 - Kitchen.

2. Mitigation for the loss of grass pitch provision by Rochdale AFC:

- One full size 11v11 3G pitch operated by Rochdale AFC, available for their community programmes. The details include:
 - Minimum of 106m x 66m (100m x 60m Adult 11v11 pitch plus 3m run-off) that can be split into four quarters per pitch;
 - Spectator areas;
 - New secure replacement fencing;
 - New sports lighting;

3. Additional Community Benefits:

- Enhanced biodiversity areas across the site;
- Improved car parking for users of the site, with 250 spaces;
- Informal outdoor recreation activities including pathways and play area;
- New accessible parking bay, two EV charging spaces, and improved cycle storage; and

- Improvements to landscaping.

5.11 Table 5.1 compares the current provision and proposed Site Proposals at Bowlee.

Table 5.1 – Comparison of Former Usage and Proposals

Sport / Activity	Former Sports Provision	Site Proposals
Football	Equivalent to seven grass football pitches. • Despite space for up to seven grass football pitches, currently only four pitches are usable due to issues with drainage and quality – Two Adult 11v11, one Youth 11v11 and one 9v9. • A standard quality Adult 11v11, Youth 11v11 or Youth 9v9 pitch can accommodate two Match Equivalent Sessions (MES) per week, with four MES per week on Mini 7v7 and Mini 5v5 pitches. This means there was a total of 8 MES per week, of which 7.5 are being used.	Three full size 3G pitches (minimum of 91m x 55m). • Matches can be played back-to-back when flexibility is provided by leagues on kick off times. All pitch sizes can be accommodated on each 3G pitch – Adult 11v11, Youth 11v11, Youth 9v9, Mini 7v7 and Mini 5v5. • At any one time, four 5v5 matches or two 7v7 MES per week could be taking place on each pitch (eight 5v5 and four 7v7 MES per week across two 3G AGP's) • Overall, a properly maintained AGP can sustain up to 80 hours of use a week, providing an average of around 1,400 playing opportunities. Two Adult 11v11 grass pitches, one Youth 11v11 and one Mini 5v5. • Improved to a Good PQS, with appropriate maintenance regime in place to ensure longevity, undertaken by Rochdale AFC's grounds maintenance team. • Fenced off pitch will provide high-quality pitch for the community.
	Changing rooms within the pavilion building are old and need replacement.	New sports pavilion including: • Four team changing rooms; • Two officials changing rooms; • Accessible changing; • Social room / café; and • Hot & Cold servery.

Sport / Activity	Former Sports Provision	Site Proposals
Health and Fitness Gym	No provision	A 40-station health and fitness gym included within the pavilion building to be operated by a charitable organisation likely to be Your Trust, the Council's current leisure operator. This will increase the overall sustainability and operation of the site. Current expectation is circa 800 members. This would equate to visits of 145,000 per annum (based on 3.5 visits per week per member)