



Bowlee, Rochdale
Landscape DAS Appendix
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07.08.2026
P01

re-form
landscape architecture

Revision notes

Date	Author	Description	Revision	Approved
07.08.2026	DL	Planning Issue	P01	DL

Note

This landscape design statement has been collated to articulate the approach and response to the landscape design at Bowlee, Rochdale. The report should be read in conjunction with the following landscape drawings:

- 1341-RFM-XX-00-DR-L-0101 General Arrangement Plan
- 1341-RFM-XX-00-DR-L-0501-S2-P02 Planting Strategy

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01 Introduction

First Impressions

Overview

Bowlee Community Centre and associated fields occupies a prominent edge-of-settlement location between the residential neighbourhoods of Middleton and the wider Bowlee Community Park. The site is currently characterised by a collection of sports pitches, a central community building, parking area and open grassland, enclosed by a well-established framework of mature trees and woodland belts

Existing tree cover defines the site's boundaries, provides a strong visual connection to the surrounding country park and contributes significantly to its parkland character. Public footpaths and green corridors connect the site to the wider recreational network, while the open playing fields create long views across the landscape.

The site represents an important community asset, combining formal sports provision with informal recreation in a verdant setting that acts as a transition between the urban edge and the wider countryside.

Existing Tree Coverage

The existing tree cover is one of the site's defining landscape assets. The arboricultural survey identifies a diverse population of predominantly semi-mature and early mature trees, with the majority classified as BS5837 Category B and C, indicating that most specimens are in fair to good physiological and structural condition with an anticipated contribution of 20–30+ years. The tree stock is characterised by extensive boundary belts and woodland groups comprising willow, alder, oak, birch, maple, ash, sycamore and field maple, together with notable individual specimens including mature weeping willows and oaks around the existing car park. Only a very limited number of trees are identified as Category U, demonstrating that the overall quality of the tree resource is good and worthy of retention wherever practicable.

Collectively, these trees establish the site's verdant character and provide an important transition between the developed community facilities and the wider Bowlee Country Park. The mature boundary planting frames views into the site, softens the visual presence of the existing buildings and sports facilities, and reinforces the parkland setting that distinguishes Bowlee from its surrounding suburban context. Beyond their landscape value, the tree belts provide ecological connectivity, habitat opportunities, shelter and seasonal interest, contributing significantly to the experience of the wider country park.



Above: Vehicle entrance
Below: Existing changing & community facility



Above: Existing perimeter fencing to sports pitches
Below: Existing car parking and tree planting



Above: Fenced off pitch provision
Below: Existing artwork trail



Existing Site Aerial



02 Site Analysis

Site Constraints

Existing Site – Constraints and Opportunities

The existing Bowlee Community Centre benefits from a strong landscape framework that provides a positive setting for the existing sports facilities. Mature trees, woodland edges and established hedgerows define the site's boundaries, create an attractive frontage along Heywood Old Road and help embed the existing buildings within a natural parkland setting. Together these landscape features establish a strong sense of place, soften views of the built development and provide an important ecological framework that should, where possible be retained and enhanced as part of any future proposals.

The openness of the site is another defining characteristic, with views across the playing fields towards Bowlee Country Park reinforcing its relationship with the wider landscape. This visual connection creates an attractive recreational setting and offers opportunities to strengthen the site's identity as an extension of the surrounding country park.

Despite these positive qualities, pedestrian access into the park is currently constrained. Visitors approaching from Heywood Old Road are largely limited to sharing the main vehicular access route through the existing car park or using the footpath adjacent to Edgar Wood Academy. The lack of a dedicated pedestrian arrival route reduces legibility and creates unnecessary interaction between pedestrians and vehicles.

Operationally, the existing sports pitches also experience conflicts between formal sporting use and informal recreation. Although the pitches are fenced, numerous open access points allow unrestricted entry, resulting in regular use by dog walkers. This can lead to issues associated with dog fouling, affecting pitch quality, maintenance and the overall user experience for organised sport.

From an ecological perspective, the site already contains several valuable landscape assets. Mature trees, established hedgerows, areas of scrub vegetation and unmanaged grassland around the pitch margins provide habitat diversity and ecological connectivity across the site. These existing features present an excellent opportunity to enhance biodiversity through sensitive management, habitat creation and complementary planting while retaining the established green character that defines Bowlee Community Centre



LEGEND

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Red line Boundary | ★ Arts Trail Retained | → Vehicular route |
| Community Facility | Existing trees | Existing water course |
| Car Park | Existing Shrub Group | |
| Play Facility | → Pedestrian Route | |

03 Approach

Core Aims

A successful landscape is founded on a clear set of principles that respond to the unique opportunities and constraints of its setting. Following a detailed appraisal of the site, its landscape character, ecology, movement patterns and existing facilities, four overarching design aims have been established to guide the evolution of the proposals. Together, these principles provide a consistent framework for decision making, ensuring every element of the design contributes to a cohesive vision for Bowlee Community Centre.

The four themes have informed the landscape strategy at every scale, from the retention of mature trees and enhancement of biodiversity, to the creation of welcoming public spaces and improved pedestrian connections. Collectively, they respond directly to the site's existing qualities and challenges, providing a clear narrative that underpins the proposed landscape proposals and establishes a resilient, accessible and community-focused destination.

- Strengthening the Green Framework
- Enhance Nature & Biodiversity
- Improve Access and Connections for All
- Create a Welcoming Community Destination



Strengthen the Green Framework

Retain and enhance mature trees, hedgerows and habitats to reinforce Bowlee's landscape character and create a richer ecological network.



Enhance Nature and Biodiversity

Diversify habitats through new woodland planting, species-rich grassland, ecological bunds and sustainable drainage to deliver lasting biodiversity gains.



Improve Access and Connections

Create safe, direct and accessible pedestrian routes linking Heywood Old Road, the new facilities and Bowlee Country Park.



Create a Welcoming Community Destination

Establish an attractive landscape setting for new sports and community facilities, with high-quality public spaces that encourage activity, well-being and social interaction.

04 Landscape Proposals

Illustrative Masterplan

The proposed redevelopment of Bowlee Community Centre establishes a high-quality landscape framework that strengthens the relationship between sport, community and the wider community park. Rather than simply delivering new sports facilities, the proposals use landscape as the organising structure for movement, ecology, recreation and place making, creating an attractive and accessible destination that supports both everyday community use and elite sport.

The scheme retains the vast majority of the site's mature tree cover, recognising the important role existing trees play in defining the character of Bowlee and providing a strong landscape setting. New native and climate-resilient tree planting is proposed throughout the site to reinforce key boundaries, strengthen green corridors, frame new public spaces and increase long-term canopy cover. This additional planting enhances biodiversity, improves visual amenity and helps integrate the new development into the surrounding country park landscape.

Landscape-led ecological enhancements are incorporated throughout the proposals, including new ecological bunds, species-rich grassland and structural planting that create habitat opportunities while softening the interface between the sports facilities and surrounding open countryside. Together these measures strengthen ecological connectivity across the site and contribute to a measurable biodiversity net gain. A comprehensive reorganisation of the arrival experience creates significantly improved parking provision capable of supporting both community and club activities. Parking areas are designed as attractive landscaped spaces rather than conventional car parks, incorporating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) through rain gardens, tree planting and integrated surface water management features to improve water quality and reduce runoff.

The heart of the development becomes a new pedestrian-focused space linking the two pavilion buildings, sports facilities and outdoor activity spaces. High quality hard and soft landscape, seating and informal gathering areas create a welcoming environment that encourages social interaction before and after sporting activities while providing clear, accessible routes throughout the site. Recognising the different operational requirements of professional and community sport, new secure pitch enclosures are carefully integrated within the landscape. Fencing allows the management of elite training areas and helps prevent unauthorised use of artificial pitches, while maintaining an open, green character through sensitive positioning and landscape screening. The proposals retain public access across the site with a new dedicated pedestrian entrance from Heywood Old Road providing a clear, legible gateway into the sports hub whilst strengthening connections to the park beyond.



LEGEND

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Community Facility | 5. Cricket Nets | 9. Footpath access and visitor routes | 13. Attenuation basin |
| 2. Rochdale Association FC Facility | 6. Existing trees to be retained | 10. Earth bunding with ecologically rich grassland and wildflower | 14. RAFC storage facility |
| 3. 250no. car parking spaces with 15no. accessible bays | 7. 3G football pitches with fencing and lighting | 11. Existing footpath to community park maintained | 15. RAFC hybrid grass pitch |
| 4. Existing play facility and arts trail retained | 8. Grass football pitches | 12. Access to community park maintained | 16. RAFC 3G pitch |

04 Detailed Areas

Heart of the Campus

The two new pavilion buildings are positioned at the centre of the site to create a shared community hub that brings together elite sport, grassroots football and wider community activity. Located either side of a generous pedestrian-focused public space, the Rochdale AFC and community facilities enjoy a strong visual relationship while retaining their own distinct identities and operational requirements. The central landscape area provides an attractive setting for arrival, meeting and informal recreation, encouraging interaction between visitors, community groups and sports users.

A flexible parking arrangement sits between the two buildings, allowing spaces to be managed efficiently for both community and football club use while maintaining convenient access to each facility. Rather than functioning solely as a car park, the space is softened through tree planting, rain gardens and generous landscape buffers, creating an attractive arrival sequence and integrating sustainable drainage into the heart of the development.

The existing play provision is retained, enhanced and extended to form an active family-focused space adjacent to the community building, overlooking the public realm and benefiting from natural surveillance. Together with new seating, incidental planting and outdoor gathering spaces, this creates a welcoming destination that supports activity beyond organised sport.

Throughout the central campus, existing mature trees are retained wherever possible and complemented by substantial new tree and shrub planting. This green infrastructure establishes a parkland setting that helps embed both buildings within the wider landscape, reinforces the site's connection to Bowlee Country Park and creates a high-quality environment that feels more like a civic green space than a traditional sports complex.



Key Plan



Section A

04 Detailed Areas

Ecology Bunds

The formation of the 3G pitches requires the removal of topsoil from across the pitch areas to achieve the necessary construction build-up. Rather than exporting this material off site, an opportunity has been identified to reuse the arisings within the redline to create a series of landscape bunds in areas where the constraints of the site prevent further pitch provision. This approach avoids unnecessary waste and reduces the environmental and cost impact associated with off-site disposal, whilst transforming otherwise unusable pockets of the site into a positive landscape and ecological asset.

The bunds are proposed to be planted with native tree species and species rich grassland, consistent with the planting approach applied across the wider site. This consistency supports the overarching biodiversity net gain strategy, with the bunds forming an integral part of the habitat creation proposed for the development. In addition to their ecological function, the bunds introduce a degree of topographical interest to an otherwise flat site, with the potential to offer elevated views over the surrounding pitches.

The height of the bunding will not exceed 2m in height with a gradual profile to its banks, ensuring they remain sympathetic to the surrounding context.

At the base of the bunds, informal seating is proposed, with the landform providing an attractive and naturalistic backdrop. This creates an additional area of incidental amenity space within the site, offering spectators and visitors a place to pause and observe activity on the surrounding pitches.



Key Plan



04 Landscape Proposals

Materiality Strategy

The hard landscape has been designed around a simple palette of robust, durable and contextually appropriate materials that reflect the site's role as a well-used community sports destination while creating an attractive and welcoming public environment. Materials have been selected to withstand intensive daily use, minimise future maintenance requirements and provide a coherent landscape identity across the development.

Parking areas and access roads are formed using standard asphalt and porous asphalt surfacing, allowing rainfall to infiltrate naturally and contribute to the site's Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS). This approach reduces surface water runoff, improves resilience during periods of heavy rainfall and provides a practical, durable surface suited to the operational demands of the facility. Generous tree pits and planted islands break up the parking courts, soften the visual appearance of the car park and reinforce the site's green setting.

In contrast, the principal pedestrian routes, building entrances and social spaces are defined through a higher quality paved finish that reflects their civic role within the development. Warm, natural tones provide visual contrast to the parking areas and create a more welcoming setting around the two pavilion buildings. Product selection has been informed by long-term durability, ease of maintenance and the availability of replacement units, ensuring the public realm remains resilient throughout its lifecycle.

Level changes associated with the Rochdale AFC facility are carefully addressed through a combination of ramps and steps that provide fully accessible routes for all users. These will incorporate handrails, tactile paving, contrasting nosings and appropriate edge detailing where required to ensure compliance with current accessibility standards while maintaining a coherent design language.

Street furniture adopts the same robust design philosophy. Simple, contemporary elements including root-fixed metal benches, steel cycle hoops, bollards, litter bins and associated site furniture have been selected for their durability, ease of maintenance and ability to withstand intensive public use. Together, these elements create a practical, uncluttered public realm that supports the day-to-day operation of the facilities while complementing the surrounding landscape.



Robust and Durable block paving



Servicing and Maintenance



Colour difference marks key areas



Warmer tones around the main facilities



Stepped approach to RAFC facility



Simple & Durable for parking areas



Handrails and tactile used at steps



Bollards to control vehicle access



Metal benching to communal spaces



Natural play elements extending play areas

04 Landscape Proposals

Fencing & Boundary Treatments

The fencing strategy has been carefully developed to balance the operational and security requirements of both the community sports facilities and Rochdale AFC, while maintaining an open and welcoming character across the wider site. Fencing is focused around the formal sports areas, with access controlled through the respective pavilion buildings while retaining public connections to Bowlee Country Park.

Sports fencing, designed by OBI Sports and detailed on Drawing 161/105, includes 4.5m high twin-wire fencing around the 3G pitches and 2.0m high security fencing defining wider community and elite training areas, with ball-stop netting where required. This provides robust, secure sports infrastructure while maintaining the permeability and landscape character of the wider site.

ZONAL SECURITY PLAN



FENCE TYPE A- 1.2m Spectator Fence
8 BOWLEE, ROCHDALE



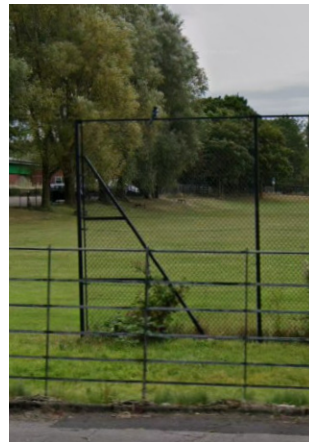
FENCE TYPE B- 2.0m Twin Perimeter Weldmesh Fence



FENCE TYPE C- 4.5m Weldmesh perimeter fence



FENCE TYPE D- 6.0m Weldmesh & netting fence



FENCE TYPE E- 1.2m Estate Railing



FENCE TYPE F- 3.0m Weldmesh fencing



FENCE TYPE G 4.0m ball stop fencing
re-formlandscape.com

04 Landscape Proposals

Planting Strategy

The planting strategy reinforces Bowlee's parkland character through a clear transition from formal planting around the buildings to more naturalistic landscapes across the wider site. Existing mature trees are retained wherever possible and complemented by 66 new trees, exceeding Rochdale Council's replacement guidance and strengthening the site's long-term green framework.

Around the two pavilion buildings, ornamental tree planting, grasses and perennial species create an attractive setting for arrival and social spaces. Integrated rain gardens manage surface water while providing seasonal interest using resilient species including Carex, Liriope, Sesleria, Astrantia and Iris sibirica.

Across the wider site, extensive areas of species-rich grassland, wildflower meadow, native scrub and new hedgerows enhance biodiversity, offset habitat losses and strengthen ecological connectivity.

New native hedgerows are proposed throughout the site to replace any sections removed during construction and to reinforce existing landscape patterns. Comprising a diverse mix of hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose, holly and hazel, these hedgerows define boundaries, strengthen green corridors and provide valuable habitat and foraging opportunities for birds and invertebrates while maintaining the site's rural parkland character.

The attenuation areas are similarly designed as ecological features rather than purely engineered drainage infrastructure. These areas incorporate marginal grassland and aquatic planting mixes, creating natural transitions between land and water using flood-tolerant species that improve water quality, support aquatic biodiversity and integrate the drainage features into the wider landscape.

Throughout the site, planting has been carefully arranged to support the long-term operation of the sports facilities. Defined landscape margins are maintained around all playing surfaces to minimise leaf fall, debris and maintenance requirements whilst preserving clear sightlines and protecting the quality of the playing surfaces. This balanced approach ensures that operational performance, biodiversity enhancement and landscape quality are delivered together, creating a resilient and enduring green setting that will mature over time and firmly establish the development within the wider Bowlee Country Park landscape.



Salix alba - White Willow



Alnus glutinosa - Common Alder



Betula pedula - Silver Birch



Betula nigra - River Birch / Black Birch



Crataegus monogyna - Common Hawthorn



Corylus avellana - Hazelnut



Fagus sylvatica - Common Beech



Sorbus aucuparia - Rowan



Deschampsia Cespitosa



Molinia



Species rich grassland



Salvia nemorosa

05 Conclusion

The landscape proposals for Bowlee Community Centre have been developed to create far more than a collection of new sports facilities. They establish a coherent and resilient landscape framework that responds to the site's existing character while supporting its long-term evolution as a destination for sport, health, recreation and community life.

The strategy builds upon the site's established green infrastructure, retaining and enhancing its most valuable landscape assets whilst introducing new opportunities for biodiversity, sustainable drainage, active travel and inclusive public spaces. Careful consideration has been given to balancing the operational requirements of elite and community sport with the wider aspirations of creating an attractive, accessible and ecologically rich environment that remains intrinsically connected to Bowlee Country Park.

By integrating high-quality public realm, robust landscape design and a comprehensive planting strategy, the proposals create a setting that is functional, resilient and enduring. The landscape will mature over time, strengthening the identity of the site and providing lasting environmental, social and community benefits that extend well beyond the boundaries of the development, ensuring Bowlee Community Centre becomes a valued green destination for Rochdale Borough for generations to come.



Landscape Masterplan



PIONEERING ENDURING DESIGN

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