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Montgomery Academy, Blackpool

Planning Statement

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Cassidy + Ashton has prepared this Planning Statement in support of a full planning application for a new 3G playing pitch facility with associated fencing and field improvement works at Montgomery Academy, All Hallows Road in Blackpool.
- 1.2 The site is currently in use as playing fields associated with the school. The field is marked out for the required number of pitches each year. Through the provision of a 3G pitch, this would allow for outdoor sports use all year round and the remaining playing field would continue to be marked out for grass pitches as required. Due to the location of the site, on an existing playing field, consideration of Sport England guidance alongside associated national and local planning policy is required and this is set out within later chapters of this statement.
- 1.3 This statement describes the site and its surroundings before setting out the development proposals and the planning policy context under which the application should be considered. The planning merits are then examined and the conclusion is reached that the development conforms to planning policy, and that there are no material considerations indicating that planning permission should not be granted.
- 1.4 In order to fully satisfy the requirements of planning policy and Blackpool Council's own specific validation requirements, the application is also accompanied by the following documents:
- Application Form and Certificates
 - Dwg ref: 11167-L01 Location Plan
 - Dwg ref: 11167-L02 Site Plan as Existing
 - Dwg ref: 11167-L03 Site Plan as Proposed
 - Dwg ref: 11167-L04 Fencing Detail
 - Dwg ref: 11167-L05 Proposed Elevations
- 1.5 This Planning Statement is to be read in conjunction with all other supporting documentation submitted alongside the application.

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 This site consists of an irregular shaped parcel of land comprising playing fields at Montgomery Academy on All Hallows Road.
- 2.2 Figure 1 demonstrates the locational context of the site, situated in the north of Blackpool. The playing fields are located to the rear of the school buildings, bound by properties along Cranbrook Avenue, Ashfield Road, Crofton Avenue and Codale Avenue.



Figure 1. Site Location (source: Google Maps)

- 2.3 The school is a co-educational secondary school with capacity for 1,250 pupils aged between 11 and 16 years old.
- 2.4 The site currently forms part of the existing school grounds; grassed playing fields which are marked out each year dependent on the requirements of the school. The development of this site would not result in any loss of playing pitch provision, instead the proposed 3G pitch represents an additional facility for the school which will allow for outdoor sports use all year round. This is considered to represent a betterment in the existing playing pitch provision at the school as the existing pitches can

become waterlogged and therefore unable to be used in later parts of the year. The remainder of the grass field would be retained and could then be marked out for additional pitches as required.

- 2.5 The surrounding area is predominantly characterised by residential properties within the area of Bispham. There are other community facilities, such as a public house, church and primary school located on the eastern side of All Hallows Road.

PLANNING CONTEXT

- 2.6 Currently, site allocations and designations for the Borough are set out within the Blackpool Local Plan 2001/2016, which is a statutory document within the Development Plan Framework. As shown on the extract below, the application site is designated 'Playing Fields and Sports Grounds' under Policy BH7. The designation extends across the entirety of the school site, including the school buildings and associated areas of hardstanding. The Local Plan Part 2 document is currently subject to examination, within the policy map associated with this document the designation of the site is retained, defined as 'Green Infrastructure' and subject to Policy CS6 of the Core Strategy.



Figure 2. Local Plan Policies Map [Source: Blackpool Council]

- 2.7 There are no listed buildings or scheduled monuments in close proximity to the site.
- 2.8 The local planning policies associated with this application site and the proposed development will be set out within Chapter 4.0 and assessed in respect of the proposed development within Chapter 5.0 of this statement.

3.0 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The development proposals seek to enhance the schools outdoor sporting provision, through the construction of a new 3G pitch for all year-round usage.
- 3.2 The application proposal consists of the following:

The construction of a new 3G MUGA pitch at Montgomery Academy alongside associated fencing works and drainage improvement works to wider field for reversion of grass pitches



Figure 3. Plan identifying proposed location of 3G pitch and retained grass pitches

- 3.3 The proposals are set out on the drawing extract provided in Figure 3.
- 3.4 These works are not associated with any planned expansion of the school and therefore would not result in an increase in pupil numbers.

- 3.5 Fencing will demarcate the extent of the MUGA to ensure that there is no conflict between activities taking place on the MUGA and the remainder of the playing field. It is intended that should planning permission be approved, the remaining playing field land would be demarcated for further playing pitches as required by the school.
- 3.6 The MUGA would bring a range of benefits to the school; namely, providing an all-weather surface for use by students in a range of activities, improvement to students physical and mental wellbeing and further opportunity for team sports to promote teamworking.
- 3.7 Montgomery Academy is the only secondary school within Blackpool that does not have a multi-purpose sports facility and as the largest secondary school in the Borough would benefit from the opportunity of regular use of a 3G pitch to incorporate into its sports curriculum. The existing field can get waterlogged due to poor drainage and the 3G would ensure the opportunity for outdoor sports provision throughout the year. Wider drainage improvement works to the field are also proposed as part of the development to improve the quality of the existing grass pitch provision.
- 3.8 The current pitches are not available for community use outside of school hours. With consideration to the amenity of local residents whose properties back onto the site and the lack of provision for a secure access in and out of the school grounds outside of its opening hours, it has been concluded that the 3G pitch would also not be available for community usage. On this basis, floodlighting does not comprise part of these development proposals. However, it is expected that the pitch would be made available to local primary schools where possible during the daytime, to allow them the opportunity to utilise this resource.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations of which the NPPF, together with emerging Development Plans are the most significant, indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 With respect to this application, the Development Plan is comprised of the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016 (adopted 2006) and the Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (adopted 2016). The Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document is currently being examined and whilst not yet adopted has been reviewed for policies relevant to educational facilities and new recreational facilities. There are considered to be no policies of relevance to this planning application within the document.
- 4.3 Other planning policies and guidance which are material considerations in the discussion of this proposal are:
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
 - National Design Guide

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), as revised in July 2021, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The policies relevant to this application are set out below.
- 4.5 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 10), which should be seen as the golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking (paragraph 11). Paragraph 8 sets out and defines the three overarching objectives towards achieving sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The planning system is expected to perform economic, social and environmental roles, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.
- 4.6 Paragraph 20 states that Local Planning Authorities should make sufficient provision for community facilities, including educational facilities.
- 4.7 Paragraph 95 states that LPAs should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meet the needs of existing and new communities, by placing great weight on the need to create, expand or alter schools.

- 4.8 Paragraph 99 states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:
- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
 - b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
 - c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.
- 4.9 Paragraph 123 encourages proposals to make more effective use of sites that provide community services, such as schools, to meet identified development needs. Paragraph 124 also requires planning policies and decisions to support development that makes efficient use of land.
- 4.10 Paragraph 126 states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Under paragraph 130, policies should ensure that developments:
- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
 - d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
 - e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
 - f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users⁴⁶; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

NATIONAL DESIGN GUIDE

- 4.11 The National Design Guide was published in September 2019. This document states that the long-standing fundamental principles for good design are that it is: fit for purpose, durable and brings delight.
- 4.12 The guide goes on to outline and illustrate the Government's priorities for well-designed places in the form of 10 characteristics: context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources and lifespan.

SPORT ENGLAND GUIDANCE

- 4.13 It is the position of Sport England to 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.
- 4.14 The exception to this is where a development meets one or more of the following five criteria:
- **Exception 1** – a robust and up-to-date assessment has been demonstrated, to the satisfaction of Sport England, that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, which will remain the case should the development be permitted, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport
 - **Exception 2** - 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
 - **Exception 3** – 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
 - **Exception 4** – the area of playing field to be lost as a result of the proposed development will be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new area of playing field:
 - Of equivalent or better quality, and
 - Of equivalent or greater quantity; and

- In a suitable location, and
- Subject to equivalent or better accessibility and management arrangements
- **Exception 5** - 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

BLACKPOOL LOCAL PLAN 2001-2016

- 4.15 The relevant policies to the application set out within this document are as follows:
- 4.16 Policy LQ1 Lifting the Quality of Design – states that all new development will be expected to be of a high standard of design and to make a positive contribution to the quality of its surrounding environment.
- 4.17 Policy LQ2 Site Context – states that the design of new development proposals will be considered in relation to the character and setting of the surrounding area.
- 4.18 Policy BH7 Playing Fields and Sports Grounds – development that would result in the loss of existing playing fields and sports grounds, including school playing fields and playgrounds, will not be permitted unless:
- a) It is ancillary to such use and does not adversely affect the quantity or quality of pitches and their use;
 - b) It only affects land which is incapable of forming a playing pitch (or part of one);
 - c) The playing fields or sport ground that would be lost would be replaced by equivalent or better quantity and quality of provision in a suitable location
 - d) It is for an outdoor or indoor sports facility of sufficient benefit to outweigh the loss of the playing field or sports ground; or
 - e) In the case of school playing fields or playgrounds:
 - The land is needed for the expansion of school facilities, and
 - A sufficient area of playing fields / playground is retained to meet existing and future school needs, and
 - The land is not required to meet other existing or potential future community needs and its development is supported by the wider community

LOCAL PLAN PART 1: CORE STRATEGY

- 4.19 The relevant policies of the Core Strategy, in relation to this application, are set out below.
- 4.20 CS6 Green Infrastructure – this policy looks to protect existing green infrastructure within the Borough, including sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields.

- 4.21 CS7 Quality of Design – requires new development in Blackpool to be well designed and enhance the character and appearance of the local area.
- 4.22 CS15 Health and Education – states that development will be supported that encourages healthy and active lifestyles and addresses the Council’s health priorities. Development will also be supported which enables the provision of high quality new and improved education facilities, including, the expansion, modernisation and enhancement of higher and further education facilities and the remodelling, extension or rebuilding of schools in Blackpool.

PLANNING POLICY SUMMARY

- 4.23 The NPPF states that local planning authorities should place great weight on the need to create, expand and alter schools, with the authority proactive in supporting development which can encourage healthy and active lifestyles. As such, the principle of providing a new facility, of benefit to the school and its pupils, should be considered acceptable. Due to the existing designation of the site and the type of development proposed it is acknowledged that the development will need to be assessed against Paragraph 99 of the NPPF and Policy BH7 of the Local Plan, alongside Sport England guidance. An assessment of these policies will be considered further within the following chapter of this statement.

5.0 PLANNING APPRAISAL

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the starting point for planning applications is the Development Plan. Applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 In accordance with Section 38(6), the main issues of relevance to this application are as follows:

- Principle of Development – Development on Playing Fields
- Design and Residential Amenity
- Sustainability

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

5.3 The provision of new educational facilities is overwhelmingly supported under both national and local planning policy. Paragraph 95 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools. Whilst CS15 of the Core Strategy supports improvements to schools within Blackpool and development which encourages healthy and active lifestyles.

5.4 The proposal would secure a new outdoor sports facility for the school which can be utilised all year round and as such, aid in providing a rounded physical education curriculum for the benefit of its students.

5.5 Currently the school's sporting facilities comprise its playing field, which is marked out as pitches in a configuration dependent on the requirements of the school each year. There is also an indoor gymnasium but this is considered to be outdated. The existing playing field extends to 29,055.3sqm, with the Playing Pitch Strategy for Blackpool stating that the site currently comprises;

One adult and one youth 9v9 pitch, both available for community use and of standard quality but not currently used beyond Academy activity. Existing capacity = 4 MEA per week. Spare capacity exists on site but tenure unsecure.

5.6 The senior pitch is currently laid out south-east – north-west across the central part of the site with the 9 v 9 pitch east-west on the southern boundary. The size of these pitches, at measured on site are, 100m x 64m (senior pitch) and 73m x 46m (junior pitch). Whilst other smaller training pitches may be marked out this is subject to the needs and requirements of the school each year.

5.7 The provision of the 3G pitch, would see a reduction in the available playing field area of 5,005sqm, totalling only 17.2% of the total field size. However, it is considered that the existing pitches can be reprovided elsewhere on the field at the same size and therefore the change in the number of pitches

is zero. The associated drainage improvements to the field would also improve the quality of these pitches.

- 5.8 Montgomery Academy is understood to be the largest secondary school in Blackpool and yet it is the only one without enhanced sports facilities. With an outdated sixty-year-old gymnasium and poor drainage restricting use of the existing grass field during parts of the year, the new 3G pitch would provide an alternative facility on which to provide sports and exercise for students.
- 5.9 The proposals represent a betterment in sporting provision for the site with it acknowledged that 3G pitches allow for greater use due to their artificial, multi-purpose surface, whilst still enabling the remaining grass playing field to be marked out and utilised as pitches.
- 5.10 The provision of the 3G pitch will provide further opportunity for students to access methods of physical exercise at the school. It has been identified that access to opportunities for exercise can have both physical and mental health benefits by lessening stress and providing focus. The associated health benefits of this proposal are considered to be key positives when viewed against the ONS's recent findings that Blackpool scored as the unhealthiest area of England. Improved provision for exercise at school age will aid individuals in retaining a healthy lifestyle in later life.
- 5.11 In light of the above, it is therefore considered that the principle of new sporting facilities in association with an existing educational site is acceptable, subject to all other material considerations.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPEN SPACE

- 5.12 The loss of the small amount of playing field associated with this proposal is not considered to be detrimental to the recreational resource of the pupils and the overall setting of the area. The 3G pitch would be bound by fencing of a type and height appropriate to its educational setting.
- 5.13 The construction of the 3G will not prevent or restrict use of the remaining playing field within the school site. As shown on the supporting drawings, as existing the field accommodates two pitches (one of senior size and the other of junior size) and these pitches can still be provided on the field should the 3G pitch be constructed.
- 5.14 Making more effective and practical use of the entire school site, beginning with the provision of much needed supplementary physical education facilities, complies with Paragraph 123 and 124 of the NPPF, which seek to make efficient use of available land.
- 5.15 Due to the existing designation of the site, this submission must be assessed in light of Paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), BH7 of the Local Plan and Sport England's Playing Field Policy within the 'Playing Fields Policy and Guidance Document'.

5.16 Sport England's policy is to 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,

5.17 Unless the development meets one or more of the following five exceptions:

E1 - A carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.

E2 - The proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use.

E3 - The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins), a reduction in the size of the playing areas of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting/ancillary facilities on the site.

E4 - The playing field or playing fields, which would be lost as a result of the proposed development, would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development.

E5 - The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.

5.18 Paragraph 99 of the NPPF states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing field, should not be built upon unless:

- a) An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

5.19 Policy BH7 Playing Fields and Sports Grounds broadly aligns with Paragraph 99, stating that development resulting in the loss of playing fields and sports grounds will not be permitted unless:

- a) It is ancillary to such use and does not adversely affect the quantity or quality of pitches and their use;
- b) It only affects land which is incapable of forming a playing pitch (or part of one);
- c) The playing fields or sport ground that would be lost would be replaced by equivalent or better quantity and quality of provision in a suitable location;
- d) It is for an outdoor or indoor sports facility of sufficient benefit to outweigh the loss of the playing field or sports ground; or
- e) In the case of school playing fields or playgrounds:
 - The land is needed for the expansion of school facilities, and
 - A sufficient area of playing fields / playground is retained to meet existing and future school needs, and
 - The land is not required to meet other existing or potential future community needs and its development is supported by the wider community

5.20 The definition of a playing field as set out in the Glossary of the NPPF is ‘the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch’. The playing field for Montgomery Academy is located to the rear of the existing school buildings encompassing an area of 29,055.3sqm and as identified within Blackpool’s Playing Pitch Strategy provides two pitches, one adult pitch and a youth pitch.

5.21 The school has the funds in place through their own budget to facilitate this development in the short-term, subject to receiving the appropriate planning approval.

5.22 A comparison of the existing proposed provision is set out in the table below:

Table 1: Comparison of Existing and Proposed Outdoor Sports Provision at the school

	Current Pitch Provision	Details	Proposed Pitch Provision	Details
Playing Field Area		29,055.3sqm		24,050.3sqm
Playing Pitches	1 no. senior pitch (100m x 64m)	No floodlighting Standard quality No community use	1 no. senior pitch (100m x 64m)	No floodlighting Improved quality due to drainage works No community use
	1 no. junior pitch (73m x 46m)	No floodlighting Standard quality No community use	1 no. junior pitch (73m x 46m)	No floodlighting Improved quality due to drainage works No community use
3G Pitch	n/a	n/a	1 no. 3G (91m x 55m)	No flooding lighting All round usage possible No community use

- 5.23 The 3G pitch, alongside the retained grass playing field and pitches would be for the use of the school only. This is in accordance with the current usage, with no community use available. Whilst out of hours use has been considered it has been deemed inappropriate due to the need for floodlighting which would be a nuisance to neighbours, as well as the associated noise. There would also be a requirement for suitable access to secure the wider school site and management and surveillance which would result in an associated cost to the school which would be prohibitive.
- 5.24 It is noted that the grass pitches shown as retained alongside the 3G pitch, do not meet FA standard sizes. However, as they are for use by the school only and are the same dimensions as the existing grass pitches marked out on site it is considered that the proposals allow for an equivalent provision of grass pitches at the school. The size and location of the proposed 3G pitch has been led by the requirement to ensure the existing pitches can be sufficiently accommodated.
- 5.25 No floodlighting is available on the existing field and therefore the proposals do not seek to provide this. As the 3G pitch would only be utilised during school hours, artificial lighting is not considered necessary.
- 5.26 The school has suggested that there may be potential to provide access to local primary schools during school hours so that they can make use of the facilities. The school also has existing links with community sports organisations and the facilities and wider improvements will enable extended coaching across the year which had not previously been possible due to the poor drainage of the existing field.
- 5.27 Changing and storage facilities associated with use of the pitches would remain within the school buildings and no additional facilities would be required. The pitches would retain the same access and management as previously.
- 5.28 The provision of the new facility is considered to be of benefit to the remaining playing field land in that it will reduce its over use, ensuring its longevity.
- 5.29 In addition to the introduction of a new 3G pitch, drainage works are proposed to improve the quality of the remaining field. This will result in an increase in the quality of the pitches to be demarcated on this area and allow for additional use throughout the year, when previously the pitches would have been waterlogged. This will result in a betterment in the quality of provision, gaining the maximum usage from the pitches available and allowing the wider field to be used for other recreational activities. It is possible for the works to the playing field to take place in the first instance so that no loss in pitches at the site is felt.
- 5.30 The Playing Pitch Strategy looks to protect and enhance the existing playing pitch provision at this site. It states that pitch quality should be improved through increased maintenance in order to increase

capacity, with an improvement in quality from 'standard' to 'good' understood to increase capacity by + 3 MES per week. As such the drainage works seek to facilitate the improvement in quality of the existing pitches and wider field. It is also requested through the Playing Pitch Strategy that the potential to secure the pitches for community use be explored, however, the school considers this to be inappropriate for the reasons set out above.

5.31 It is understood that the Playing Pitch Strategy does not include this site as one it is pursuing as a location for a new 3G pitch. However, as the pitch is not proposed for community use, it is considered that this will not impact upon the outcomes of this document.

5.32 Therefore, it is considered that the proposals meet the criteria set out under part e) of Policy BH7 and Part c) of Paragraph 99 of the NPPF. The land is required for the expansion of school facilities associated with their physical education curriculum and it is considered that this will support the wider educational achievement of pupils. A sufficient area of playing fields is retained to accommodate the same number of pitches as identified within the relevant Playing Pitch Strategy and associated drainage works will improve the quality of the remaining field. The proposed development would not be open to community use, consistent with its existing usage although use by local primary schools during school hours will be facilitated and the proposals would bring a myriad of benefits to the school and its pupils.

5.33 The proposed scheme would positively impact the resource available to the school's children and would not result in the loss of any sporting/ancillary facilities on the site. Whilst it is noted that a small portion of the playing field would be developed upon, this would be for an alternative recreational use to be used alongside the wider field and the opportunity for providing further grass pitches at the site can still be facilitated. Accordingly, the proposed development would meet Exception E5.

DESIGN AND RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

5.34 The proposed 3G pitch will have a functional design suitable to its activity and usage. The pitch will be contained by fencing to all sides for matters of health and safety.

5.35 As such, the design of the proposed development is considered to be wholly appropriate in this location, meeting the requirements of national and local policy.

5.36 A key element of local planning policy is to ensure that new developments are not detrimental to residential amenity. The school is located within an existing built-up area and bound to the east, south and west by residential development. It is not anticipated that the development would result in additional noise impacts for the neighbouring residential properties, above the existing levels, as the site is already used for outdoor sports and recreational use during the school day. No community or out of hours use is proposed which could have increased potential noise impacts.

- 5.37 As such, it is considered that the proposals would have no detrimental impact upon residential amenity, due to the nature of the existing and proposed development.

SUSTAINABILITY

- 5.38 Under the NPPF, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. There are three overarching objectives; economic, social and environmental, of which each is to now be considered.
- 5.39 Economically, the proposals will support the enhancement of facilities available at the school and illustrates their ongoing commitment to improve the school for its pupils.
- 5.40 Socially, the proposed development seeks to provide additional sports facilities to improve provision at the school. This will provide students with a suitable facility for all year-round usage, improving their physical and mental wellbeing.
- 5.41 Environmentally, the application site comprises the existing school field the quality of which will be improved through the provision of new drainage. It is not considered that the works will have a detrimental impact upon biodiversity.
- 5.42 The proposed development has already been demonstrated to represent sustainable development for which there is a presumption in favour of.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The proposals seek the construction of a new 3G pitch on the rear playing field associated with Montgomery Academy.
- 6.2 The facility will provide the school and its pupils with an outdoor pitch which can be utilised all year round, supporting the aims of the school in supporting pupils achieve healthy lifestyles with opportunities for exercise. The remainder of the playing field will remain available for marking out as pitches subject to the schools' requirements.
- 6.3 Consideration has been given within this document to the principle of development and the benefits of the proposal. It is considered that the proposed development would constitute sustainable development and not impact upon other matters of material significance.
- 6.4 It is therefore understood that the development complies with the relevant national and local planning policies, and as such, planning permission should be granted.

APPENDIX CA1 – LETTER FROM MONTGOMERY ACADEMY HEADMASTER

Letter of justification for planning permission for a 3G pitch at Montgomery Academy

To whom it may concern,

This letter outlines our reasons for applying for planning permission for a new 3G sports pitch at Montgomery Academy on our existing grassed field at the rear of our site.

We are hopefully entering the recovery phase of the nation's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It has hit both the nation and Blackpool hard, including the students at Montgomery. As students returned in firstly September 2020 and then March 2021 following the third national lockdown, it was clear the impact that periods of self-isolation had had on our youngsters and their families. Students had spent long periods without physical exercise and been tied to their computers completing their remote learning and many playing their console games for long hours at a time. The impact of Covid-19 upon the Mental Health of our students should not be under-estimated as we are seeing significantly more students with anxiety issues and displaying extreme behaviours, such as physical aggression, following periods out of the structured school day.

Due to covid-secure guidelines the PE curriculum has been compromised, as students have not been able to share equipment without significant cleaning in between. Contact sports such as football and rugby and the running of extracurricular sporting clubs were not within guidelines for the first 12 months on the pandemic. As we approach the new academic year, we must re-engage our youngsters fully in to sporting activity to promote their positive mental and physical wellbeing. This will mean encouraging back those that were active pre-March 2020 as well as inspiring new participants.

The health concerns of the population of Blackpool are well publicised. The Office for National Statistics' new national health index placed the town 149th out of 149 local authority areas, as the unhealthiest place in England with a significant margin to the 148th placed authority. These figures were produced even before the pandemic and gaps are likely to have worsened further still. For example, it was estimated recently that the average weight gain nationally during the pandemic has been half a stone.

This year's annual report by Chief Medical Officer, Chris Whitty, highlights that, *"despite the significant efforts of local leaders, coastal communities continue to have a high burden of health challenges across a range of physical and mental health conditions, often with lower life expectancy and higher rates of many major diseases."* and *"If we do not tackle the health problems of coastal communities vigorously and systematically there will be a long tail of preventable ill health which will get worse as current populations age."*

The link between physical exercise and positive mental and physical wellbeing is also well publicised. The Mental Health Foundation writes that, *"Physical activity is not only good for your body, it's also great for your mind. Being active releases chemicals in your brain that make you feel good - boosting your self-esteem and helping you concentrate as well as sleep well and feel better."* It lists the other benefits as:

Other benefits include:

- less tension, stress and mental fatigue
- a natural energy boost
- a sense of achievement
- more focus and motivation

- feeling less angry or frustrated
- a healthy appetite
- having fun

Team sports promote working together, camaraderie and a feeling of belonging.

The academic performance of our young people is a high priority for all of us within Blackpool. It has been shown that moderate intensity exercise is related to increased performance in working memory and cognition, whereas high-intensity exercise improves the speed of information processing. There is a clear academic benefit to regular participation in sporting activity.

The above not only gives a clear rationale for promoting generational change in the young people of Blackpool in tackling many of its current and future health needs, but also how the pandemic will have widened the gap between those that live in more affluent areas of the country and those that inhabit the more disadvantaged areas of our town.

Montgomery Academy is the only one of the eight secondary schools in Blackpool that does not have an all-weather sports facility. The Montgomery site is the oldest undeveloped site in the town with some outdated buildings such as the 60-year old gymnasium. We are the largest 11-16 secondary meaning that almost 1200 students a year would benefit from a regularly used 3G pitch 5 days a week. Our academy does benefit from a large grassed sports field, though poor drainage can mean that a large proportion of it is unusable for several months of the year. The proposed 90m by 45m 3G pitch would only reduce the current grassed area by approximately 15%. However, despite our lack of modern facilities, Montgomery does have a strong tradition of sporting success supported by excellent PE staff. Sporting achievement and engagement would be catapulted even further with a fantastic new all-weather facility.

Through frugal financial management over the last 5 years we have taken the Academy from being in debt to a financially sound institution that has been able to invest in its facilities such as a £600,000 refurbishment of our 1959 original science laboratories, a new lecture theatre as well as the renovation of some of the oldest parts of the buildings. This exciting 3G pitch project would give our 1200 students and 150 staff an all-year round outdoor facility. We already have the money in place within our budget for this project. We just need the planning permission to make this a reality.

We are deliberately applying for planning permission that does not include out of hours community use. This is because we are not, initially, looking to add floodlighting due to cost and the impact on our neighbouring residents. We will however, provide in-school hours provision free of charge for some local primary schools where possible to expand the number of people who will benefit, without adding extra maintenance, lighting and staffing costs that out of hours use would bring.

We also have good links with local community sporting organisations that would be able to coach our students as extracurricular sessions and generate further engagement in local sporting clubs. We have good community club links with Blackpool FC, Fleetwood Town FC and Fylde Rugby FC, who provide in lesson as well as extracurricular provision to our students. This all-weather facility will enable coaches to provide all year-round opportunities to our young people on a continuous basis, which has not been possible previously due to adverse weather and then moving sessions indoors, which then have to be adapted to suit the modified facility. Furthermore, this continuity will also positively impact on student/coach relationships as well as out of school physical engagement and students pursuing a

hobby in a sporting activity they may have not engaged with, without this community club link provision.

We have been told that funding streams that would potentially part-fund the pitch would not be open to us, due to the number of community pitches already available in the area. We estimate that students using the pitch throughout the school day and for extra-curricular clubs would mean that each week it would be used for 3400 student hours.

Please let us know if you require any more details that would assist the planning application.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Careless

Headteacher representing the 1200 students of Montgomery Academy

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