

RECOMMENDATION FOR PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

DEFER AND DELEGATE

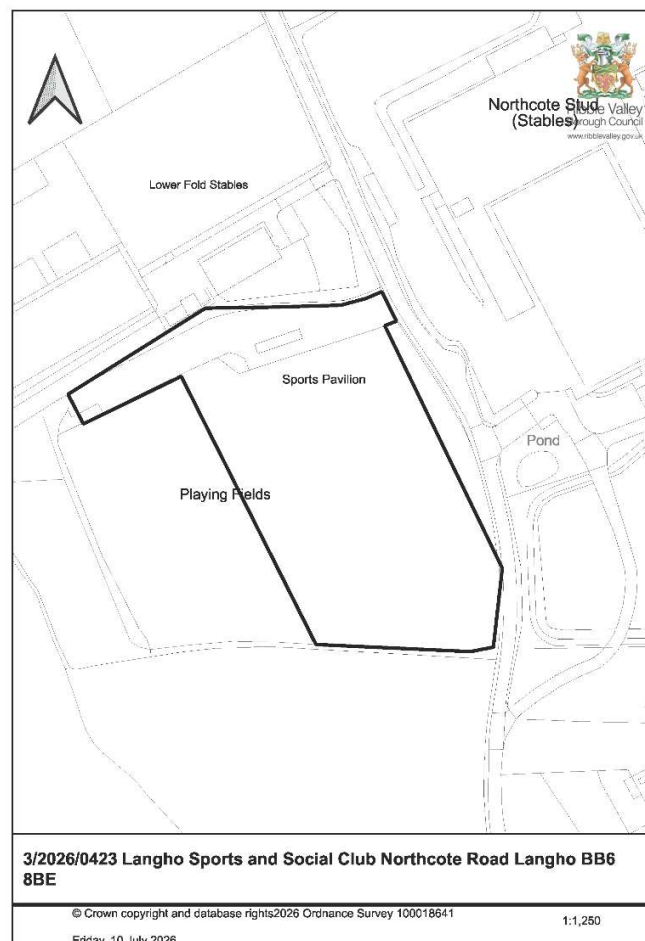
DATE: 23 July 2026
REF: LW
CHECKED BY: LH

APPLICATION REF: 3/2026/0423

GRID REF: SD

DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:

PROPOSED CREATION OF A SYNTHETIC TURF PITCH WITH FENCING, FLOODLIGHTING, ACCESS PATH, CHANGING BLOCK, AND THE EXTENSION AND FORMALISATION OF THE EXISTING CAR PARK AND ANCILLARY EQUIPMENT AT LANGHO SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB, NORTHCOTE ROAD, LANGHO BB6 8BE



CONSULTEE RESPONSES/ REPRESENTATIONS MADE:

PARISH COUNCIL:

Billington and Langho Parish Council were consulted on the application; however, no comments have been received.

LOCAL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY:

Lancashire County Council, acting as the Local Highway Authority, does not raise an objection regarding the proposed development and are of the opinion that the proposed development is unlikely to have a significant impact on highway safety, capacity or amenity in the immediate vicinity of the site. They have requested a number of conditions and informatives be applied to any planning approval.

RVBC COUNTRYSIDE OFFICER:

The Countryside Officer has recommended a number of planning conditions to ensure the protection of ecological interests during the construction phase of the development. These include the implementation of tree protection measures and precautionary working methods to avoid harm to nesting birds, amphibians, otters, water voles, badgers and hedgehogs. A further condition is recommended requiring the installation of two bird nesting boxes at a height of approximately 3 metres above ground level, in locations that are sheltered from prevailing wind, rain and excessive sunlight.

The Countryside Officer has also reviewed the submitted lighting assessment and is satisfied that the proposed floodlighting has been designed to direct light onto the playing area and away from adjacent tree-lined foraging corridors. They recommend a planning condition requiring the lighting scheme to be installed and operated in accordance with the submitted details.

In addition, the Countryside Officer advises that, in the unlikely event that a protected species is encountered during construction, all works in the affected area must cease immediately and a suitably qualified ecologist must be consulted to provide appropriate advice before works recommence.

RVBC ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER:

The Environmental Health Officer has requested a noise assessment which assesses the potential for noise affecting nearby sensitive receptors, namely a nearby residential property at Northcote Stud and the Northcote Hotel. They have also requested further details relating to the proposed lighting scheme relating to the methodology used in the submitted lighting report, the diameter of the proposed luminaries to enable a maximum luminous intensity assessment to be undertaken, confirmation of the main beam angle and aiming arrangement, and clarification of the proposed hours and operation of the floodlights.

SPORT ENGLAND:

Sport England raises no objection, as the scheme is considered to accord with exceptions 2 and 5 of their Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 104 of the NPPF, subject to the inclusion of a condition stating that the use of the development shall not commence until: (a) certification that the Artificial Grass Pitch hereby permitted has met FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf – FIFA

Quality or equivalent International Artificial Turf Standard (IMS) and (b) confirmation that the facility has been registered on the Football Association's Register of Football Turf Pitches have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

ADDITIONAL REPRESENTATIONS:

No third party representations received.

1. Site Description and Surrounding Area

- 1.1 Members will note that the application is being brought before Committee due to the application being made on behalf of Ribble Valley Borough Council, with the land to which the application relates also falling within the ownership of the authority.
- 1.2 The application site relates to an existing sports playing field accessed off Northcote Road and located within the Open Countryside, approximately 250m north of the defined settlement area of Langho. The surrounding area comprises predominantly agricultural fields. Lower Fold Stables borders the site directly to the north, while the Northcote Stud equestrian centre is sited to the east of the site as well as Northcote Hotel to the south-east, on the opposite side of Northcote Road.

2. Proposed Development for which consent is sought

- 2.1 The application seeks consent for the creation of a synthetic turf pitch with fencing, floodlighting, access path, changing block, and the extension and formalisation of the existing car park and ancillary equipment.

3. Relevant Planning History

3/2023/0372: Erection of replacement changing rooms (Approved).

3/1990/0501: Erection of changing rooms for the use of players and officials (Approved).

3/1986/0519: Development of playing field to include changing facilities and car parking area (Approved).

4. Relevant Policies

Ribble Valley Core Strategy

Key Statement DS1 – Development Strategy
Key Statement DS2 – Sustainable Development
Key Statement EN4 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Key Statement DMI2 – Transport Considerations

Policy DMG1 – General Considerations
Policy DMG2 – Strategic Considerations
Policy DMB3 – Recreation and Tourism Development
Policy DMB4 – Open Space Provision
Policy DMG3 – Transport & Mobility
Policy DME1 – Protecting Trees and Woodlands

Policy DME3 – Site and Species Protection and Conservation
Policy DME6 – Water Management

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5. **Assessment of Proposed Development**

5.1 **Principle of Development:**

- 5.1.1 The proposed development comprises the construction of a new external synthetic turf pitch (STP), together with associated works including perimeter fencing, floodlighting, ancillary equipment, a changing block and an extension to the existing car park. The STP would be located on an existing playing field and would result in the displacement of an existing natural grass football pitch.
- 5.1.2 Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy states that development proposals should not result in the net loss of important open space, including public and private playing fields, unless a robust assessment demonstrates that the site is surplus to requirements. In assessing such proposals, regard must be had to the level and quality of public open space provision within the locality, the importance of the playing field and the contribution the open space makes to the landscape or townscape of the area.
- 5.1.3 Paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, 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 recreation provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current of former use.*
- 5.1.4 The proposal seeks to provide alternative sports and recreational facilities through the replacement of an existing grass football pitch with a synthetic turf pitch and associated infrastructure. Consequently, consideration must be given to whether the benefits arising from the proposed facility are sufficient to outweigh the loss of, or prejudice to, the existing playing field in accordance with paragraph 104(c) of the NPPF.
- 5.1.5 The Council has an up-to-date Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS, 2024) which identifies a shortfall in accessible 3G artificial turf pitch provision across the Borough. The PPS identifies 232 affiliated football teams during the 2023/24 season, generating a requirement for six full-size 11v11 3G pitches. At present, the Borough contained only three full-size 3G pitches and five smaller size facilities.
- 5.1.6 Sport England has been consulted on the application and notes advice from the Football Foundation that access to the existing provisions of 3G facilities is

constrained. Two of the full-size pitches are unavailable for community use, while one of the smaller size pitches is not floodlit, thereby limiting availability during peak periods and throughout the winter months. As a consequence, effective community access to 3G provision within the Borough is significantly restricted. Of the existing full-size facilities, the pitch at Edisford Sports Complex is currently the only one available for community football and is operating at full capacity.

- 5.1.7 The PPS also identifies geographical deficiencies in provision across the Borough, including Clitheroe (1.0 pitch equivalent), Longridge (0.5), the Northern Parishes (0.75), the Southern Parishes (2.75), and Whalley (0.25). Langho is identified as a priority location for the delivery of additional 3G provision to help address both local and Borough-wide deficiencies.
- 5.1.8 Sport England further advises that the proposed 3G pitch would enable a year-round use of the site and significantly increase its capacity due to the durability of the artificial surface and the provision of floodlighting. The facility would provide a range of pitches and training opportunities within a single enclosed area, supporting the continued development of grassroots football. Limited access to 3G facilities has been identified as a key constraint to participation and growth within the sport.
- 5.1.9 In light of the identified quantitative and qualitative need for additional 3G provision, and having regard to the conclusions of the PPS, Football Foundation and Sport England, it is considered that the proposed synthetic turf pitch would deliver substantial community and sporting benefits. The development would make a significant contribution towards addressing an established deficiency in facilities and provide an all-weather, year-round sporting resource. These benefits are considered to clearly outweigh the harm arising from the displacement of the existing grass football pitch.
- 5.1.10 The proposed changing room facilities and car park extension are ancillary developments necessary to support the use and operation of the sporting facility. Owing to their scale and siting, they would not materially reduce the quantity or quality of planning pitch provision, nor would they adversely affect the continued use of the wider playing field.
- 5.1.11 For the reasons set out above, it is concluded that the proposal constitutes alternative sports and recreational provision whose benefits clearly outweigh the loss of the existing playing field. The development is therefore considered to accord with Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 5.1.12 In addition to the above considerations, the application site lies outside any defined settlement boundary and within the Open Countryside. Accordingly, Policy DMG2 of the Core Strategy is relevant in assessing the principle of development in this location.
- 5.1.13 Policy DMG2 seeks to direct development towards the Borough's Principal and Tier 1 settlements. The policy states that development within the Open Countryside will only be supported where it accords with at least one of the following criteria:

1. *The development should be essential to the local economy or social wellbeing of the area;*
2. *The development is needed for the purposes of forestry or agriculture;*
3. *The development is for local needs housing which meets an identified need and is secured as such;*
4. *The development is for small scale tourism or recreational developments appropriate to a rural area;*
5. *The development is for small scale uses appropriate to a rural area where a local need or benefit can be demonstrated;*
6. *The development is compatible with the enterprise zone designation.*

5.1.14 As set out above, the Council's PPS identify a shortfall in accessible 3G pitch provision across the Borough. The proposed development would make a meaningful contribution towards addressing this deficiency and would provide enhanced opportunities for sports participation, physical activity and community engagement. The proposal is therefore considered to make an important contribution to the social wellbeing of the area and, as such, satisfies criterion 1 of Policy DMG2.

5.1.15 Furthermore, the proposal comprises the improvement and enhancement of an existing recreational facility through the provision of a synthetic turf pitch and associated infrastructure. Given its recreational nature, its location within an established playing field, and its scale relative to the existing use of the land, the development is considered to represent a small-scale recreational facility appropriate to a rural area. The proposal therefore also accords with criterion 4 of Policy DMG2.

5.1.16 For these reasons, it is considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of Policy DMG2 of the Core Strategy.

5.1.17 Moreover, whilst the proposed facility is intended primarily to serve the local residents, it is likely to attract users from surrounding villages and towns, including visiting teams and sports clubs. As such, Policy DMB3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy is relevant. The policy supports proposals that extend the range of tourism and visitor facilities within the Borough, provided that a number of criteria are satisfied. These are as follows:

1. *The proposal must not conflict with other policies of this plan;*
2. *The proposal must be physically well related to an existing main settlement or village or to an existing group of buildings, except where the proposed facilities are required in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction and there are no suitable existing buildings or developed sites available;*
3. *The development should not undermine the character, quality or visual amenities of the plan area by virtue of its scale, siting, materials or design;*
4. *The proposals should be well related to the existing highway network. It should not generate additional traffic movements of a scale and type likely to cause undue problems or disturbance. Where possible the proposals should be well related to the public transport network;*
5. *The site should be large enough to accommodate the necessary car parking, service areas and appropriate landscaped areas; and*

6. *The proposal must take into account any nature conservation impacts using suitable survey information and where possible seek to incorporate any important existing associations within the development. Failing this then adequate mitigation will be sought*

5.1.18 In respect of criterion 1, the proposal is not considered to conflict with any other policies of the Development Plan. As set out above, the development is considered acceptable in principle having regard to Policies DMG1 and DMG2 of the Core Strategy, relating to playing field provision and development within the Open Countryside.

5.1.19 With regard to criterion 2, whilst the site is not located within or immediately adjoining a defined settlement, it forms part of an established recreational facility and is situated in close proximity to existing development, including Northcote Stud and Lower Fold Stables. The proposal would therefore not appear as an isolated or incongruous form of development within the wider countryside and is considered to be appropriately related to existing built form.

5.1.20 Criteria 3 to 6 of Policy DMB3 relate to matters including visual impact, highway safety and accessibility, parking provision, landscaping and ecological impacts. These matters are assessed in detail elsewhere within this report and, subject to the recommended conditions, no unacceptable impacts have been identified. Accordingly, the proposal is considered to comply with the requirements of Policy DMB3.

5.1.21 Having regard to the above, the development is considered acceptable in principle.

5.2 Impact upon Residential Amenity:

5.2.1 Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy stipulates that development must be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature and not adversely affect the amenities of the surrounding area.

5.2.2 Paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF also states that planning policies and decisions should ensure the developments:

‘create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and wellbeing, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience’.

5.2.3 The nearest residential receptor is the manager’s accommodation at Northcote Stud, located on the opposite side of Northcote Road. Given the separation distance between the proposed development and this residential unit, it is not considered that the proposal would appear overbearing or result in any unacceptable loss of outlook or daylight to the occupiers of the property. Accordingly, the development is not considered to give rise to any significant adverse impacts on residential amenity in these respects.

- 5.2.4 With regard to potential noise impacts, the Council's Environmental Health Officer has requested a Noise Assessment given the nature of the proposed use and the proximity of neighbouring sensitive receptors. This will enable to identify any mitigation that is needed to be secured in the planning application.
- 5.2.5 In respect of the proposed floodlighting, the submitted Lighting Impact Assessment confirms that the scheme has been designed using Philips Asymmetric OptiVision LED GEN 3.5 A35 Floodlights. A total of 12 luminaires would be installed to achieve an average illumination level of 200 lux across the pitch. The floodlights would be mounted on six 15-metre-high columns and fitted with integral low glare (maximum cut-off) louvres to minimise light spill and glare beyond the site boundaries.
- 5.2.6 The Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the submitted lighting information and identified a number of matters requiring further clarification before a full assessment can be undertaken. Specifically, further details have been requested regarding the methodology used within the Lighting Impact Assessment, the diameter of the proposed luminaires to enable a maximum luminous intensity assessment to be carried out, confirmation of the main beam angle and aiming arrangement, and clarification of the proposed hours of operation and use of the floodlights.
- 5.2.7 In response, the agent has advised that the proposed facility would operate between 08:00 and 22:00 (18:00 on Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays), with the floodlights only being used when the pitch is in operation and when natural daylight levels are insufficient. The floodlights would be switched off no later than fifteen minutes after the permitted hours. The agent has also confirmed that the lighting system incorporates dimming controls and part-pitch operational capability, meaning that full illumination levels would not be required for all training sessions or activities. Furthermore, the agent has advised that supplementary information has been requested from Signify to provide details of vertical illuminance levels at the nearest dwelling and to address the additional technical information sought by the Environmental Health Officer. Again, this clarification will help to identify any technical detail / mitigation that is needed to be secured in the planning application / through planning conditions.
- 5.2.8 Subject to the submission and acceptance of a Noise Assessment and the outstanding lighting information, together with the implementation of any mitigation measures recommended therein, it is considered that the potential effects of the development on neighbouring residential amenity could be made acceptable through the use of planning conditions. Whilst lighting is expected to be dealt with as a Late Item to committee, noise may take longer to resolve as such Committee are requested to defer the application and delegate authority to officers to determine the application following the satisfactory conclusion on this matter.

5.3 Visual Amenity/External Appearance

- 5.3.1 Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy provides general design guidance as follows:

'All development must be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing and style...particular

emphasis will be placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character’.

- 5.3.2 Policy DMG2 further requires that development within the Open Countryside is in keeping with the character of the landscape and respects the area’s special qualities through its scale, design, siting, landscaping and use of materials.
- 5.3.3 Similarly, paragraph 135(c) of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should ensure developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.
- 5.3.4 The proposed development would introduce a number of structures and associated features into an area that is currently characterised by the open nature of the existing playing field. The synthetic turf pitch, perimeter fencing, floodlighting, storage container, changing facilities and associated infrastructure would inevitably alter appearance of this part of the site. The submitted plans indicate that the pitch would be located towards the eastern side of the playing field adjacent to Northcote Road, and elements of the development, particularly the fencing and floodlighting columns, would be visible from the public highway.
- 5.3.5 In terms of scale and design, the perimeter fencing would be of notable height (4.5 metres) and would introduce a more formal and engineering appearance to the existing grassed playing field. However, the fencing is required to meet relevant sporting standards and has been designed with visual permeability to reduce its prominence. Furthermore, the use of a dark green finish would assist in assimilating the development into its surroundings and less its visual impact when viewed from nearby public vantage points.
- 5.3.6 The proposed storage container would be modest in scale, measuring approximately 2.5 metres in height with a flat roof design. Whilst positioned adjacent to the highway boundary, the container would be located within the enclosed facility and partially screened by the perimeter fencing. Similarly, the proposed changing block would be of a modest scale and sited adjacent to the existing changing block on the site, thereby limiting visual prominence. The extension to the existing car park would also integrate with the established layout of the site and would not appear unduly intrusive within the wider landscape.
- 5.3.7 It is acknowledged that the proposal would result in some loss of openness and introduce a more urbanising feature into the playing field. Nevertheless, the site is already established as a recreational facility and the proposed synthetic turf pitch, together with its associated infrastructure, is characteristic of modern sports provision. Whilst the proposed floodlighting would likely be visible in longer-distance views, there is existing street lighting along Northcote Road which contributes to the existing visual context of the area. On balance, it is not considered that the resulting visual impact of the floodlighting would be of such significance as to warrant the refusal of planning permission in this instance, subject to the outstanding lighting issues being satisfactorily resolved and controlled by suitable conditions.
- 5.3.8 Having regard to the existing use of the site and the functional requirements of the development, it is not considered that the proposal would appear overtly

incongruous or out of keeping within the character of the area, particularly when viewed in context with the adjacent built development at Northcote Stud and Lower Fold Stables. On balance, the visual impact of the development is considered acceptable, and the proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policies DMG1 and DMG2 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 135(c) of the NPPF.

5.4 Landscape and Ecology:

5.4.1 Policy DME1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy seeks to ensure that development proposals appropriately protect existing trees and tree cover.

5.4.2 In support of the application, a Tree Survey and Tree Constraints Plan have been submitted. The submitted information demonstrates that no tree removal or pruning works are required to facilitate the proposed development. Furthermore, the proposed synthetic turf pitch, associated infrastructure and ancillary works have been designed to avoid direct impacts upon existing trees both within and adjacent to the site.

5.4.3 Having regard to the submitted arboricultural information, it is not anticipated that the development would result in any significant adverse effects on existing trees or tree cover. Subject to the imposition of a planning condition requiring the implementation and retention of appropriate tree protection measures throughout the construction phase, the proposal is considered unlikely to result in either direct or indirect harm to retained trees.

5.4.4 Policy DME3 also states that:

‘Development proposals that are likely to adversely affect the following.... ‘Wildlife species protected by law’ will not be granted planning permission. exceptions will only be made where it can clearly be demonstrated that the benefits of a development at a site outweigh both the local and the wider impacts. Planning conditions or agreements will be used to secure protection or, in the case of any exceptional development as defined above, to mitigate any harm, unless arrangements can be made through planning conditions or agreements to secure their protection’.

5.4.5 The application has been accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. The proposed development would result in the loss of around 0.65 hectares of modified grassland; however, this is likely to have a minimal impact on biodiversity due to the low ecological value of these habitats. No direct impacts to any notable habitats will occur as a result of the proposed development, although due to the proximity of the development site to the ditch which connects to Bushburn Brook, indirect effects could occur during construction. As such, best practice measures should be implemented during construction to minimise the possibility of pollution affecting the nearby ditch.

5.4.6 Precautionary working measures should also be followed to ensure that nesting birds and other species are not harmed by the works. In the unlikely event that a protected animal is found during construction, all works must stop and a suitably qualified ecologist must be contacted. The ecology recommends the installation of bird boxes on mature trees around the site ownership boundary and other working

methods for badgers, riparian animals and hedgehogs are recommended and can be secured by way of a suitably worded planning condition.

- 5.4.7 With respect to bats, the existing structures on site are to be retained and given the low value of the modified grassland and the presence of more extensive areas of foraging and commuting habitat in the locality, the loss of a small area of this grassland is considered to be inconsequential for bats. The proposed development may lead to an increase in the amount of current lighting of surrounding habitats or the retained building without mitigation which may disturb commuting bats. As such, it is recommended that a low impact lighting strategy be adopted post-development which outlines the areas of the site that will be retained as dark corridors. However, the Council's Countryside Officer is satisfied with the submitted lighting scheme and considers that the lighting has been designed so that it shines away from the habitat, towards the pitch. As such, it would be reasonable to condition that the floodlighting is implemented in accordance with the submitted details and any changes to the proposed lighting scheme would require details to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for assessment.
- 5.4.8 With regards to Great Crested Newts (GCN), the report notes that Environmental DNA (eDNA) surveys would be required of any ponds within 250m of the site (pond 1 and 5) (where accessible) to determine the presence or absence of great crested newts. Alternatively, a district level licence (DLL) could be obtained and the applicant has confirmed that a DLL will be sought which can be secured by condition. As such the Authority is required to consider if the development satisfies the following tests:-
- 'favourable conservation status' (FCS) test - The site is located within Natural England's amber zone (moderate risk of harm to GCN) as such survey information and mitigation measures should be supplied if a valid Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate (IACPC) is not provided with an application in order for the LPA to apply this test properly. This has been requested.
 - 'no satisfactory alternative' test – in light of the need for artificial 3G playing pitch provision in Langho and the extent of the Council's ownership, the development cannot reasonably be located elsewhere and so the development satisfies the 'no satisfactory alternative' test
 - 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI) test – in light of the need for artificial 3G playing pitch provision in Langho and the significant community benefits / sporting opportunities this facility will provide, the development satisfies the 'overriding public interest' test.
- 5.4.9 Subject to the submission of satisfactory information, it is considered that the 'favourable conservation status' (FCS) test could be satisfied. Members are therefore requested to delegate authority to Officers to resolve this matter before issuing a decision.
- 5.4.10 A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Statement has been submitted which states that in order to achieve a +10% biodiversity net gain for area-based habitats, a minimum area-based unit of 3.32 will need to be achieved. At present, there is a unit deficit of 1.60 units.

5.4.11 The application originally proposed to secure the 10% net gain through the purchase of off-site biodiversity units rather than through on-site habitat creation or enhancement. This approach was put forward having regard to the constraints of the site and the need to minimise any further loss of playing pitch provision, which would likely result in an objection from Sport England. However, the Council has requested that opportunities for delivering the required BNG on-site be explored in the first instance. The Applicant has confirmed that discussions are ongoing and that an amended BNG strategy is currently being prepared. The outcome of this work, and any revised biodiversity proposals, will be reported in an update to Committee.

5.5 Highway Safety and Accessibility:

5.5.1 Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that “Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios”.

5.5.2 With regards to parking, Policy DMG3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy states that:

“All development proposals will be required to provide adequate car parking and servicing space in line with currently approved standards”.

5.5.3 Policy DMG1 also states that development must:

1. *Consider the potential traffic and car parking implications.*
2. *Ensure safe access can be provided which is suitable to accommodate the scale and type of traffic likely to be generated.*

5.5.4 The Local Highway Authority (LHA) has been consulted and raises no objection to the proposal. The LHA notes that the development includes the widening of the existing vehicular access onto Northcote Road to enable two-way vehicle movements within the site entrance, thereby reducing the likelihood of vehicles waiting on Northcote Road. The access alterations will be required to be delivered under a Section 278 Agreement with Lancashire County Council. The LHA also recommends a planning condition requiring the access improvement works to be completed in accordance with a scheme first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the first use of the development.

5.5.5 A Transport Assessment (TA) has been submitted in support of the application. The TA considers the anticipated usage of the improved pitch, projected parking demand, forecast vehicle trip generation and opportunities for travel by means other than the private car.

5.5.6 Notwithstanding the findings of the TA, the LHA considers it highly likely that the majority of users of the proposed pitch will travel by car. In this respect, the LHA notes that the site currently benefits from 34 parking spaces, which would continue to be available, with the proposal also including the extension of the existing parking area to the west. This would provide an additional 17 parking spaces,

together with three disabled parking bays adjacent to the eastern side of the existing building. This would result in a total of 54 parking spaces. However, the LHA notes that parking bays 35 and 36 do not achieve the recommended 6-metre manoeuvring distance for perpendicular parking bays, providing only 5 metres of manoeuvring space. As a result, the LHA considered that only 52 spaces should be counted. Nevertheless, having assessed the likely parking demand associated with the proposed development, the LHA is satisfied that sufficient parking provision would remain available within the site.

- 5.5.7 The TA states that parking spaces will be delineated; however, details of how this will be achieved have not been provided, particularly given the unbound surface of the existing car park. An informal turning area is also proposed adjacent to bays 34 and 35. The LHA advises that this area should be appropriately signed to ensure it remains unobstructed and available for vehicle manoeuvring at all times. Accordingly, the LHA recommends a condition requiring the parking and manoeuvring areas to be laid out, marked and signed in accordance with a scheme first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- 5.5.8 The LHA also recommends conditions requiring the submission and approval of a Construction Method Statement and details of secure, covered cycle storage for a minimum of five bicycles. In addition, a condition is recommended to ensure that any external lighting associated with the development is appropriately screened to prevent glare or distraction to drivers using Northcote Road.
- 5.5.9 Having regard to the above considerations, the LHA is satisfied that the proposed development would not result in a severe impact on highway safety, capacity or the operation of the local highway network. Subject to the imposition of the recommended planning conditions, the proposal is therefore considered to comply with Paragraph 116 of the NPPF and Policies DMG1 and DMG3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

5.6 Drainage:

- 5.6.1 Policy DME6 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy states that:

“Development will not be permitted where the proposal would be at an unacceptable risk of flooding or exacerbate flooding elsewhere.

Applications for development should include appropriate measures for the conservation, protection and management of water such that development contributes to:

- 1. Preventing pollution of surface and / or groundwater*
- 2. Reducing water consumption*
- 3. Reducing the risk of surface water flooding (for example the use of sustainable Drainage systems (SuDS))*

As a part of the consideration of water management issues, and in parallel with flood management objectives, the authority will also seek the protection of the borough's water courses for their biodiversity value.

All applications for planning permission should include details for surface water drainage and means of disposal based on sustainable drainage principles. The use of the public sewerage system is the least sustainable form of surface water drainage and therefore development proposals will be expected to investigate and identify more sustainable alternatives to help reduce the risk of surface water flooding and environmental impact."

- 5.6.2 The application is supported by a Drainage Strategy which confirms that surface water from the development would discharge to the existing ditch located to the west of the site. The strategy has been designed to restrict surface water runoff to rates as close to greenfield conditions as practicable.
- 5.6.3 The proposed artificial grass pitch would comprise a synthetic playing surface over a porous shockpad, porous macadam layer and a 250mm permeable Type 3 subbase. The pitch would be constructed with a gradient of 1:275 falling from south to north, allowing surface water to infiltrate through the pitch construction and drain into a series of lateral collector drains. Surface water would then be conveyed to a HydroBrake flow control device, restricting discharge to 8.0 litres per second, with attenuation provided within the pitch subbase before discharging to the existing ditch to the west of the site.
- 5.6.4 Drainage calculations demonstrate that, during the 1 in 100-year storm event including a 50% allowance for climate change, a maximum flood volume of 101.35 m³ could occur. The submitted report notes that such exceedance flooding is acceptable where it can be safely contained on-site without affecting buildings or neighbouring land. To achieve this, a 125mm raised kerb is proposed around the pitch perimeter, allowing temporary storage of excess water within the pitch area. Based on the proposed gradient, a maximum water depth of approximately 110mm would be expected during such an event.
- 5.6.5 The report further confirms that surface water runoff from the 3G pitch would pass through the permeable subbase, which functions in a similar manner to permeable paving and provides. It is therefore concluded that the proposed drainage arrangement would provide adequate treatment for the site's surface water.
- 5.6.6 On the basis that the submitted Drainage Strategy and supporting calculations, it is considered that the proposed development would not increase flood risk either on-site or elsewhere, subject to implementation of the approved drainage measures. The proposal therefore accords with the requirements of Policy DME6 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the flood risk objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

5.7 Other Matters

- 5.7.1 A Desk Study Report has been completed for the site, together with a Ground Investigation Report. Due to the presence of low strength Devensian Till below depths of 0.8m below ground level across the site, it is advised that verification testing (boreholes with SPTs/ dynamic probing) be completed at each floodlight position prior to design and construction to confirm required foundation depths. This can be added on as an informative to any subsequent planning approval.

6. **Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion**

- 6.1 For the reasons outlined above the application is recommended to be deferred and delegated to officers for approval following the satisfactory conclusion of noise and ecology (Great Crested Newt) issues insofar that the proposal will not result in any significant adverse impacts, nor will the proposal result in significant measurable conflicts with the aims and objectives of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy that would warrant the refusal to grant planning permission in this instance.

RECOMMENDATION: That the application be DEFERRED AND DELEGATED to officers for approval following the satisfactory conclusion of noise and ecology issues subject to the following conditions (with subsequent conditions on lighting to be added as a Late Item and with subsequent conditions on outstanding noise and ecology matters to be added by officers as appropriate):

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

REASON: Required to be imposed by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in conformity with the following submitted plans therein received by the Local Planning Authority unless prohibited by any other condition.

Location Plan (dwg no. 25-0632 (G-234210) 01 Rev 01)

Site Plan (dwg no. 25-0632 (G-234210) 02 Rev 01)

STP Layout (dwg no. 25-0632 (G-234210) 03 Rev 01)

Sporting Provision Layout (25-0632 (G-234210) 06 Rev 01)

APEX Modular 2 Team Changing Pavilion C/W Spectator Toilets Elevations (dwg no. CR1065)

APEX Modular 2 Team Changing Pavilion C/W Spectator Toilets Plan View (dwg no. CR1065)

Elevations 1:200 (dwg no. 25-0632 (G-234210) 05 Rev 01)

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and to clarify which plans are relevant to the consent.

3. Prior to commencement of development, a Biodiversity Gain Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (see further details below at the Notes Section) and implemented in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure the development delivers a net gain off site which satisfies paragraph 14 (2) of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and which is in accordance with the biodiversity information submitted with the planning application.

4. Notwithstanding the submitted details, prior to any above ground works, a landscape/habitat management and monitoring plan, including long-term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The landscape shall thereafter be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved plan.

REASON: To ensure the proper long-term management and maintenance of the landscaped areas in the interests of visual amenity and biodiversity enhancements.

5. During the construction period, all trees to be retained shall be protected in accordance with British Standard BS 5837:2012 or any subsequent amendment to British Standard.

REASON: To protect trees/hedging of landscape and visual amenity value on an adjacent to the site or those likely to be affected by the proposed developed hereby approved.

6. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in strict accordance with the recommendations and precautionary working methods detailed within the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (dated 20th January 2026 and prepared by arbtech).

The two bird nesting boxes, located approximately 3m above ground level where they will be sheltered from prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight, shall be installed before the development is first brought into use and retained thereafter.

REASON: In the interest of biodiversity and to enhance nesting opportunities for species of conservation concern and reduce the impact of development.

7. No development shall take place, including any works of clearance, until a Construction Method Statement including site plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. It shall provide for:

- i) The parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors
- ii) The loading and unloading of plant and materials
- iii) The storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development
- iv) Wheel washing facilities and means of mechanical road sweeping
- v) Measures to control the emissions of dust and dirt during the development
- vi) A scheme for recycling/ disposing of waste resulting from clearance and construction works
- vii) Details of working hours
- viii) Measures to ensure that construction and delivery vehicles do not impede access to neighbouring properties.

REASON: In the interest of highway safety.

8. Prior to first use of the development hereby approved, a scheme for secure, covered cycle storage for at least 5 bicycles shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The cycle storage shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme and thereafter retained.

REASON: To support sustainable forms of transport.

9. No part of the development hereby approved shall be used until all the highway improvement works to the site access on Northcote Road have been constructed and completed in accordance with a scheme that shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Works shall include, but not be exclusive to, the construction of the amended access to an appropriate standard, including a minimum

width of 5.5m, dropped kerbs across the full width with taper kerbs at both ends, delineation of the extent of the public highway network by flush set kerbs along the back of the footway and a street lighting assessment.

REASON: In the interest of highway safety.

10. Notwithstanding the submitted details, a minimum of 52 adequately sized car parking spaces and associated manoeuvring space shall be provided, marked out and signed in accordance with a scheme which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The car parking shall be made available in accordance with the approved scheme prior to first use of the approved development and thereafter retained.

REASON: In the interest of highway safety and to ensure that adequate levels of parking and manoeuvring are provided on the site.

11. Use of the development shall not commence until:
 - a) Certification that the Artificial Grass Pitch hereby permitted has met FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf – FIFA Quality or equivalent International Artificial Turf Standard (IMS) and
 - b) Confirmation that the facility has been registered on the Football Association's Register of Football Turf Pitches have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure the development is fit for purposes and sustainable, provides sporting benefits.

12. No development hereby permitted shall be brought into use until the sustainable drainage scheme for the site has been completed in accordance with the drainage scheme as identified in the Surface Water Strategy dated February 2026 and prepared by SEA Consulting Engineers.

REASON: In order to reduce the risk of flooding.

13. The development hereby approved shall only be used between the hours of 08:00 – 22:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 – 18:00 Saturday and Sunday, including bank holidays, with the floodlights switched off no later than 15 minutes after the permitted hours.

REASON: In order to protect the amenities of existing residents.

INFORMATIVES

1. Due to the presence of low strength Devensian Till below depths of 0.8m below ground level across the site, it is advised that verification testing (boreholes with SPTs/ dynamic probing) be completed at each floodlight position prior to design and construction to confirm required foundation depths.
2. The grant of planning permission will require the applicant to enter into an appropriate legal agreement (Section 278), with Lancashire County Council as the Highway Authority prior to the start of any development. For the avoidance of doubt works shall include, but not be

exclusive to, the construction of the amended access to an appropriate standard, including a minimum width of 5.5m, dropped kerbs across the full width with taper kerbs at both ends, delineation of the extent of the public highway network by flush set kerbs along the back of the footway and a street lighting assessment. The applicant should contact the county council for further information by telephoning the Development Control Section (Area East) on 0300 123 6780 or by email on developeras@lancashire.gov.uk , in the first instance to ascertain the details of such an agreement and the information to be provided, quoting the relevant planning application reference number.

3. Under Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991, as amended by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, there is a legal requirement to obtain consent from Lancashire County Council, as Lead Local Flood Authority, prior to undertaking certain works on ordinary watercourses. This applies to permanent and temporary works, including repairs and maintenance, whether the watercourse is open or culverted (piped or enclosed). This requirement applies regardless of any planning permission. Further guidance, policies, application checklist, and pro-forma are available at: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/flooding/ordinary-watercourse-regulation/>

4. Statutory Biodiversity Condition

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition "(the biodiversity gain condition)" that development may not begin unless:

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the local planning authority, and
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements listed in the legislation are considered to apply.

The biodiversity gain plan must include:

- (a) information about the steps taken or to be taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the onsite habitat and any other habitat;
- (b) the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat;
- (c) the post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat;
- (d) any registered offsite biodiversity gain allocated to the development and the biodiversity and the biodiversity value of that gain in relation to the development;
- (e) any biodiversity credits purchased for the development; and
- (f) such other matters as the Secretary of State may by regulations specify.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Planning Application - Ribbles Valley Borough Council](#)