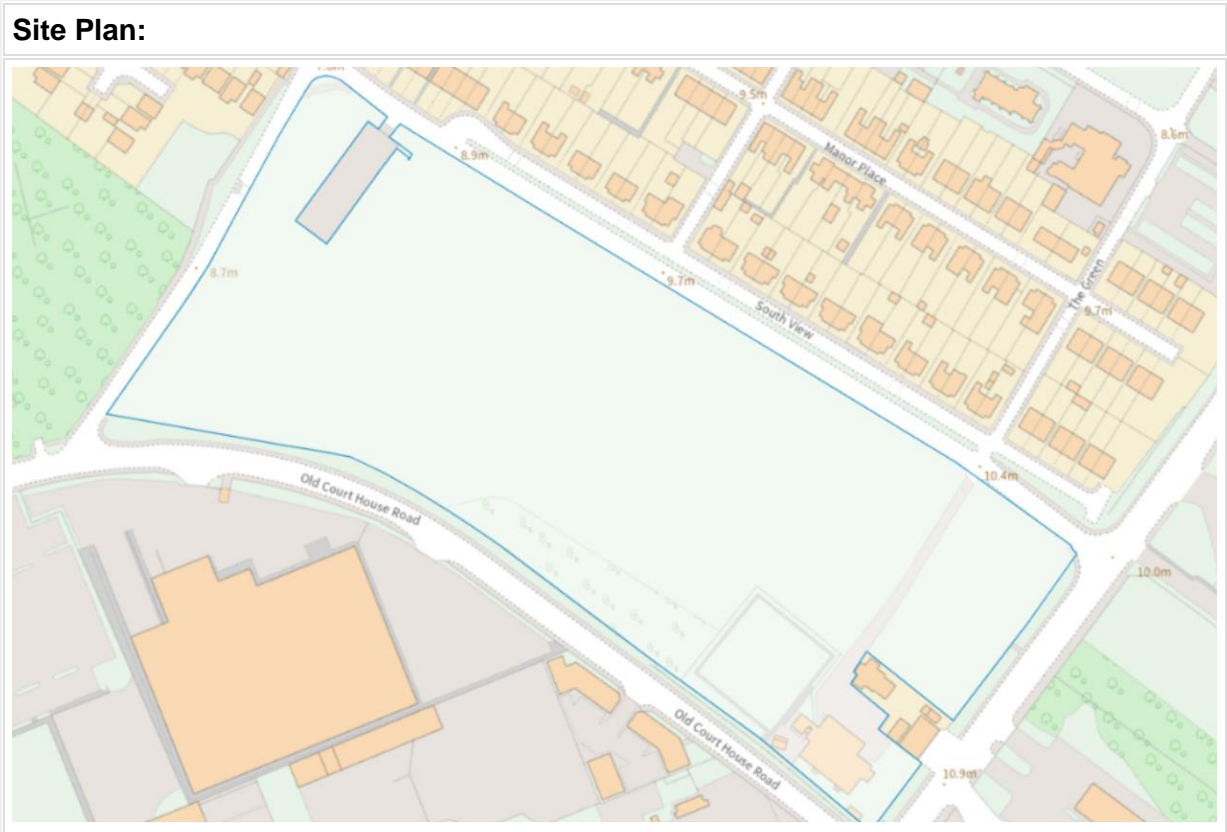


Planning Committee	7 November 2024
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Reference:	PS Development Code	Case Officer:	Ward:
APP/23/00334	Q06 - Other Major Developments	Mr C Heather	Bromborough

Location:	Land At Pool Lane Bromborough Pool, Wirral,
Proposal:	Refurbishment of existing building for use as a Sports Club including changing rooms, removal of a recent extension and alterations to windows and doors. Creation of two new football pitches, car parking, vehicle gate, pedestrian access, signage, hard and soft landscaping, and associated works.
Applicant:	Aurora 2 Limited and Euro Property Investments
Agent:	Rachel Jones (Avison Young)

Reason for referral to Planning Committee	Requested to be heard at Planning Committee by Cllr Bird regardless of the recommendation.
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1. Development Plan designation:	Sports Ground Bromborough Pool Conservation Area
2. Planning History:	<p>November 1992: Planning permission (ref: APP/92/06424) <u>granted</u> for “Construction of 2 dug-out shelters for team managers and trainers”.</p> <p>October 1998: Planning permission (ref: APP/98/05838) <u>granted</u> for “Construction of new carriageway, footways and car park”.</p> <p>December 2005: Planning permission (ref: APP/05/07345) <u>refused</u> for “Erection of container adjacent to bowling green”. The reason for refusal was:</p> <p><i>The proposed development would form a visually obtrusive feature by reason of its size, siting and design which the Local Planning Authority considers would be detrimental to the general character of the street scene. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the requirements of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan Policy CH2 (Development affecting Conservation Areas) and CH22 (Development affecting Bromborough Pool Conservation Area).</i></p> <p>March 2015: Planning permission (ref: APP/15/00154) <u>granted</u> for “Relocation of one adult pitch, creation of 2 junior pitches and clubhouse”.</p> <p>April 2015: Planning permission (ref: APP/15/00246) <u>granted</u> for “Creation of car park at Price's Sports Ground, Bromborough Pool, Wirral”.</p> <p>February 2016: Planning permission (ref: APP/16/00045) <u>granted</u> for “Erection of a changing room in an alternative position to that previously approved application APP/15/00154 at Price's Sports Ground, Bromborough Pool, Wirral”.</p> <p>Although located elsewhere within Wirral the following applications are relevant and provide context to this planning application:</p> <p><u>Former Octel Sports and Social Club Bridle Road, Bromborough, Wirral, CH62 6AR</u></p> <p>April 2023: Planning application (ref: APP/23/00324) <u>submitted</u> for “Full planning application for the demolition of existing buildings and structures and the erection of 104 dwellings with associated garages, means of access, car parking, landscaping, open space and ancillary site infrastructure.”</p> <p>At the time of writing this application has not yet been determined.</p>

	<p><u>Birkenhead School Sports Ground, Noctorum Road, Noctorum, Wirral, CH43 9UQ</u></p> <p>June 2023: Planning application (ref: OUT/23/00478) <u>refused</u> for “The demolition of the existing pavilion and erection of up to 33 dwellings and associated infrastructure. All matters are reserved except for access”. There were four reasons for refusal although only one directly related to playing fields:</p> <p><i>The playing pitches are not surplus to requirement and the proposed mitigation package is inadequate to compensate for the loss of the existing Noctorum Playing Field. This loss will not be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality, and the proposal is therefore contrary to Wirral Unitary Development Plan Policy RE6 and GR1, National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 99 and Sport England’s playing fields policy.</i></p> <p>A subsequent appeal was dismissed in <i>August 2024</i>.</p>
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3. Summary of Representations and Consultations Received:

<p>3.1 Ward Member Comments</p>	<p>Cllr Bird – Noted opportunities for children, young people and families across Bromborough, New Ferry and Port Sunlight. Also noted concerns of local residents about noise, disturbance, traffic, parking, access for dog walkers, impact on wildlife, biodiversity net gain and conservation area. No additional provision made for bus services, cycling facilities or walking access. Request for the application to be taken out of delegation.</p> <p>Cllr Molyneux – Largely supportive of bringing the sports club and playing pitches back into use. This would provide a much needed home for Bromborough and Eastham Rangers Football Club and a space for healthy and productive activity for adults and young people in Bromborough Pool, Bromborough, Port Sunlight and New Ferry. Hedge and tree planting would encourage wildlife.</p> <p>Cllr Gilchrist – Question raised about the progress of the proposal and the relationship of the Site to the Octel site.</p>
<p>3.2 Summary of Representations</p>	<p>Having regard to the Council Guidance on Publicity for Applications and the Statement of Community Involvement 64 notifications were sent to adjoining properties. At the time of writing this report 65 representations have been received from 62 persons. Of those, 4 indicated they were in support, and one indicated their response was neutral, with the remainder raising objections. In addition, a Site Notice was posted, and a Press Notice was published.</p> <p>The issues raised are summarised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of Development

- Objections
 - Loss of green space and disruption to residents who currently use the field for a variety of activities and have a right of way across the land.
 - Not a viable alternative to the loss of sports facilities at the Octel site. Not clear who will maintain the pitches.
 - The Site is within the Green Belt.
- Support
 - Need for additional pitches here and across the Wirral, and renovation of exiting clubhouse would provide a community asset.
- Design and conservation: Objections -
 - Concern about impact on conservation area and listed buildings.
 - Concern about signage, materials including windows within the clubhouse.
 - The area has a rural nature which the proposal would not reflect.
- Neighbouring amenity: Objections -
 - Loss of outlook and privacy.
 - Noise from sports pitches and clubhouse.
 - Increase in anti-social behaviour and litter.
 - Damage to cars from footballs.
 - Air pollution from vehicles and smoking / vaping.
 - Lack of precision on when the pitches would be used.
 - Impact on persons with autism (Autism Together site nearby) who currently use the land for walking.
 - Disruption from lighting.
- Highways and transportation: Objections -
 - Insufficient parking for additional traffic would exacerbate existing parking problems.
 - Lack of figures on traffic generation and assumptions about number of vehicles that can park along South View and the proportion of people who will drive.
 - Road surface on South View is poor and will get worse due to additional traffic.
 - Not sufficient space for a bus or emergency vehicles to pass parked cars on South View.
 - Impact on highway safety, including from footballs.
 - Traffic on Allport Lane and Bridle Road.
- Trees, landscaping and public realm
 - Objections:
 - Loss of trees unacceptable.
 - Changes to landscaping inadequate.
 - Support:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase in trees and shrubs would increase biodiversity. ● Ecology: Objections - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disruption to wildlife, including foxes, breeding birds and insects on the Site and to ecologically designated sites nearby. ○ Loss of rare plant species. ● Flood risk and drainage: Objection - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Part of the site regularly gets waterlogged. ● Other matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Object to large fencing around the site. ○ Grass will be replaced by astroturf after the planning permission is obtained. ○ Nothing to prevent floodlights being erected and the hours being extended. ○ Cages will be very near to busy road. ○ Access for those with disabilities not considered. ○ Shortage of schools, doctors, dentists and other amenities in the area. ○ Would like bins added to the field. ○ Proposal would attract undesirable people into the community. ● Non-material considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Residents pay for the upkeep of the land. ○ The landowner has signed a legal agreement preventing it being changed in any way. ○ Will lower house prices.
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	<p>Consultations</p> <p>Conservation Concern raised about the location of the car parking. The position of the proposed car park would result in the loss of open space resulting in less than substantial harm, and consequently would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. Despite not being part of the application it has been considered if the car parking could be relocated to address this, and this is explored in the report below.</p> <p>Parks and Open Spaces No comments received.</p> <p>Environmental Health No objections raised.</p> <p>Highways and Transportation</p>
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	<p>No objections subject to a condition on cycle parking.</p> <p>Local Lead Flood Authority No objections subject to the imposition of conditions on drainage. In addition, an informative is suggested.</p> <p>Trees No objections subject to the imposition of conditions requiring trees to be protected during construction and accordance with the Arboricultural Method Statement submitted with the planning application.</p> <p>Sport England An objection has been raised as the proposal is not considered to meet the exceptions of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy or paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).</p> <p>Wirral Wildlife No objections subject to conditions.</p> <p>Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) Conditions required including a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), terrestrial mammals, bats, and biodiversity net gain, and archaeology.</p> <p>Historic England Resolved not to offer advice.</p> <p>Bromborough Pool Conservation Trust Concerns raised about the design impact of the car park, the wider impact on the Conservation Area, traffic generation, and the future plans for the football club proposing to operate from the site.</p>
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4. Site and Surroundings	
4.1	<p>Price's Field (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') is an area of land bounded by South View to the north, Dock Road South to the east, Old Court House Road to the south and Pool Lane to the west. It measures approximately 4.37ha. In the south-eastern corner of the Site is an existing clubhouse / community centre with hardstanding around it used as car parking. There is also South Cottage, a residential property. Both are accessed from South View with a road dissecting Price's Field. There is a car body repair centre adjacent to South Cottage, but this is not included within the Site. There is an area of car parking accessed from South View near to the junction with Pool Lane: this falls outside of the red line as it is within different ownership. The Site is predominantly grass, with trees around the edges. The existing clubhouse / community centre is adjacent to an existing bowling green. South View is an unadopted road.</p>
4.2	<p>It is understood that Heygarth United used the playing field until approximately 2013 which had fencing surrounding the pitch and spectator shelters that were removed in 2014. The planning</p>

	application submitted in January 2015 and determined in March 2015 (ref: APP/15/00154) included a photograph of pitches and goalposts laid out.
4.3	Price's Field has a gentle slope upwards from north-west to south-east. Given the size of the Site this is barely perceptible when visiting the Site.
4.4	The Site is allocated within the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (2000) (hereafter referred to as the 'UDP') as a <i>Sports Ground</i> with the exception of the existing clubhouse / community centre and the hardstanding around, which falls outside of the allocation. The draft Local Plan proposes that the Site is allocated as an <i>Urban Open Space</i> , but the boundary has been slightly altered compared to the UDP, with the bowling green removed from the draft allocation.
4.5	The Site is within the Bromborough Pool Conservation Area that extends west to include the area of woodland, and north to include the residential houses and cricket pitch. To the north and north-west are residential properties. Beyond this there are employment and industrial areas, which extend to the east immediately beyond Dock Road South and south along Old Court House Road. Within the UDP the land to the east, south and west is designated as a <i>Primarily Industrial Area</i> , although some of this is to be reallocated for residential use within the emerging Wirral Local Plan. The existing residential to the north is shown as <i>Primarily Residential Area</i> .
4.6	There are no listed buildings on the Site or adjacent sites but there are several on Manor Place and York Street to the north. In addition, the land to the west is Bromborough Court House moated site and fishponds, which is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) on the Site or on adjacent land.
4.7	The site is at very low risk of flooding from rivers or the sea, and a low risk from surface water flooding. In addition, flooding from groundwater or reservoirs is unlikely.

5. Proposed Development	
5.1	The proposal is to mark out two grass football pitches to be used for junior football, broadly within the centre of the Site. One pitch would be 100 yards by 60 yards (91.44m by 54.86m) and suitable for 11 versus 11 football. The other would be 80 yards by 50 yards (73.15m by 45.72) suitable for 9 versus 9 football. Each pitch would have a runoff area of an additional 6 yards around it. This equates to a total area for each pitch of 97m by 30.4m and 78.6m by 51.2m respectively. These dimensions are based on Sport England guidance. The applicant has indicated this would include goal posts and shelters, but no specific details have been provided. No floodlighting is proposed. Works would involve soil improvement and installation of drainage runs to improve the permeability of the near surface soils. Specifically, this includes levelling / regrading works, pipe drainage, slit drainage, topsoil preparation, seeding and pitch

	<p>establishment. There is an area identified as being for dog walking on the western side of the Site, which represents approximately a fifth of the Site.</p>
5.2	<p>The existing social club would be altered to incorporate changing facilities. As existing the building includes a dance hall, bar, games room, office and ancillary rooms. The proposal would remove an existing extension to the building, which is adjacent to the existing bowling green, reducing the area of the building from 498sqm to 463sqm. The layout would be reconfigured to provide separate changing rooms for the home and away teams, and the officials. Ancillary toilet, kitchen and storage facilities would be provided. A function room with bar and kitchen would occupy much of the remainder of the building.</p>
5.3	<p>Vehicle access would be via the existing access point from South View. An area of car parking is proposed to the west of the access road, constructed using Grasscrete, with the main entrance and exit near to South View. This would provide for 41 car parking spaces and is designed to restrict vehicles using the full length of the existing access road unless it is to access the existing South Cottage or for disabled visitors to the social club. A gate would restrict access. Space for 12 cycles is provided. There would be a pedestrian path running along the west of the proposed car park towards the social club that is intended to direct pedestrians away from South Cottage, but this results in it partially passing across the existing bowling green. For the purposes of the assessment in Section 8, references to the car park includes both the vehicle access to the car park and the proposed pedestrian path where it adjoins the car park.</p>
5.4	<p>Hedge and tree planting is proposed around the Site. This includes new hedges near to the proposed car parking and to the west of the larger pitch, which demarcates the area for sports from the area identified for dog walking. Trees would be planted near the northern boundary of the Site adjacent to South View, and this would be 8 trees of medium size. A short section of existing hedge around the existing bowling green would be removed to create space for the pedestrian path from the proposed car parking to the social club.</p>
5.5	<p>An existing container near to the boundary of the Site and Old Court House Road is to be replaced.</p>

6. Development Plan	
6.1	<p>Under the provisions of section 70(2) Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the provisions of the NPPF (paragraph 2) applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.</p> <p>The statutory development plan at present consists of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP adopted February 2000 and saved by Direction of the Secretary State on 18 September 2007) and the</p>

	<p>Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton (adopted 18 July 2013).</p>
<p>6.2</p>	<p>The following Wirral Unitary Development Plan 2000 Policies are relevant to the determination of this planning application:</p> <p>Part 1 Strategic Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URN1 Development and Urban Regeneration • REC1 Principles for Sport and Recreation • CH01 The Protection of Heritage • NCO1 Principles for Nature Conservation • LAN1 Principles for Landscape • TRT1 Provision for Public Transport • TRT3 Transport and the Environment • WAT1 Fluvial and Tidal Flooding • WAT2 Protection of the Water Environment <p>Part 2 Detailed Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GR5 Landscaping and New Development • GR7 Trees and New Development • RE1 Criteria for Urban Recreation Facilities • RE6 Sports Grounds for Protection from Development • RE10 Criteria for Community Centres and Facilities • CH1 Development Affecting Listed Buildings and Structures • CH2 Development Affecting Conservation Areas • CH22 Bromborough Pool Conservation Area • CH24 Development Affecting Scheduled Ancient Monuments • NC1 The Protection of Sites of International Importance for Nature Conservation • NC2 Sites of International Importance for Nature Conservation • NC3 The Protection of Sites of National Importance for Nature Conservation • NC4 Sites of National Importance for Nature Conservation • NC5 The Protection of Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation • NC6 Sites of Biological Importance • NC7 Species Protection • TR9 Requirements for Off-Street Parking • TR12 Requirements for Cycle Parking • TR13 Requirements for Disabled Access • WA5 Protecting Surface Waters • PO3 Noise
<p>6.3</p>	<p>The Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton (adopted 18th July 2013) is also applicable. Relevant policies are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WM8 Waste Prevention and Resource Management • WM9 Sustainable Waste Management Design and Layout for New Development

7. Other Material Planning Considerations

7.1

Consideration has been given to Section 70 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that requires the Council as Local Planning Authority to give special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2023). Relevant sections are:

- Achieving sustainable development;
- Decision-making;
- Promoting healthy and safe communities;
- Promoting sustainable transport;
- Making effective use of land;
- Achieving well-designed and beautiful places;
- Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change;
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment;
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

7.2

The Emerging Wirral Local Plan (WLP)

Wirral Borough Council has submitted the Wirral Local Plan 2021-2037 (hereafter referred to as the 'Local Plan') for examination.

On the 21 March 2022 full council approved publication of the Draft Local Plan Under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 before submission to the Secretary of State. The plan was published in May 2022 and representations were available to be submitted until 25th July 2022. The Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on the 26th October 2022. The local plan and supporting evidence base can be viewed online at www.wirral.gov.uk/lpexam

On 4th March 2024 the Council received the post-hearing note prepared by the Planning Inspectors appointed to carry out the examination into the Wirral Local Plan. The note sets out the Inspectors view on certain matters and what should now be done. It should be read as the Inspectors initial thinking and is without prejudice to any findings they may ultimately come to. The Inspectors' view is that the Plan, as submitted, is unsound. Their view is also that the Plan may be capable of being made sound via main modifications. The modifications required to make the Plan sound were published by the Council for public comment on 25 September 2024. For the purposes of decision making, the post-hearing note and the publication of the modifications do not change the status of the emerging Local Plan. The Plan is however at an advanced stage and weight may be given to relevant policies in the emerging Plan in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 48 of the National Planning Policy Framework, as set out in the officer report.

In attaching weight to individual policies, paragraph 48 of the NPPF is relevant as it states:

“Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and

the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).”

The following emerging plan policies are relevant to the determination of this planning application:

- WS 1.3 Infrastructure
- WS 1.4 Flooding and Drainage
- WS 5.1 Green and Blue Infrastructure Networks
- WS 5.4 Ecological Networks
- WS 5.7 Maintenance of Green Infrastructure and Open Space Provision
- WS 6.1 Placemaking Principles
- WS 7.1 Design Principles
- WS 7.2 Privacy and Amenity
- WS 7.3 Agent of Change
- WS 7.4 Parking
- WS 9.2 Accessibility and Sustainable Transport
- WS 9.3 Servicing Development
- WS 9.4 Impact on Networks
- WS 10.5 Community, Sport, Leisure and Cultural Facilities
- WS 10.6 Open Space
- WP 4.1 Conservation Areas: Bromborough Pool
- WD 1.1 Landscaping proposals
- WD 1.2 Trees
- WD 2.1 Protecting Heritage Assets
- WD 2.2 Conservation Areas
- WD 2.3 Archaeological Assets
- WD 3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- WD 4.2 Flood Risk
- WD 4.3 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Natural Water Management
- WD 14 Pollution and Risk

At the present time, the Wirral Local Plan is a Material Consideration and can be afforded weight in the decision-making process with those policies that are not subject to main modifications or where the changes are minor being afforded greater weight.

7.3	<p>SPD4 – Parking Standards (June 2007)</p> <p>Bromborough Pool Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2009)</p> <p>SPG36 – Bromborough Pool Village Conservation Area</p> <p>Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy 2020-2030 (hereafter referred to as The Tree Strategy)</p>
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8.1 Assessment	
8.1.1	<p>The application has been assessed against development plan policies, national planning policy and guidance, and other material planning considerations and the advice of statutory consultees. The key planning issues raised by the proposal include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of Development / Land Use; • Design, heritage and archaeology; • Neighbouring Amenity; • Highways and Transportation; • Trees and landscaping; • Ecology and biodiversity; • Flood risk and drainage.

8.2 Context / background	
8.2.1	<p><u>Octel Sports and Social Club</u></p> <p>The planning application (ref: APP/23/00324) at the Octel Sports and Social Club (hereafter referred to as 'the Octel site') is highlighted as context as there is a connection between the Site and the application for 104 houses on the Octel site. The current proposals at the Site are intended by the applicant to serve as mitigation for the loss of the sporting facilities at the Octel site and it is understood that there is limited prospect of the proposed development coming forward independently of the housing at the Octel site.</p>
8.2.2	<p>The planning application for housing at the Octel site remains under consideration at the time of writing and the merits of the proposed development at Price's field in the context of whether it comprises a suitable replacement sporting facility are considered as part of the assessment of that planning application. The assessment of this planning application is solely focused on the planning considerations of the proposed development on its own merits.</p>
8.2.3	<p><u>Bromborough and Eastham Junior Football Club (BEJFC)</u></p> <p>The proposal is for the Site to become the new home for BEJFC, who were former users of the Octel Sports Club. BEJFC were formed in 2015 as a not-for-profit organisation and provide football for over 600 boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 16. Thirty-one of their teams are registered in junior football leagues. BEJFC is an</p>

	accredited FA Wildcat centre, which is designed to encourage girls to participate in physical activity. BEJFC has set out their vision to be to provide young children with a safe and welcoming environment where they can learn football and make friends whilst having fun.
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8.3 Principle of Development	
8.3.1	<p><u>Planning History</u></p> <p>The planning history identifies how the Council has considered the use of the Site previously. In 1992 (ref: APP/92/06424) two dug out shelters were approved for managers and trainers on the southern side of the Site. The application confirmed Price's Field was in use as a sports ground at the time (which was several years before the current UDP was adopted).</p>
8.3.2	<p>In 2005 an application for a container measuring 37.2sqm adjacent to the bowling green was refused (ref: APP/05/07345) due to its size, siting and design in the context of the Bromborough Pool Conservation Area. The container was to be positioned immediately to the west of the bowling green.</p>
8.3.3	<p>In 2015 planning permission (APP/15/00154) was granted for the relocation of one adult pitch and two junior pitches in the central part of the Site. There was also a 1.1m high boundary fence proposed around the pitches. A clubhouse measuring 117sqm was approved in the north-east of the Site, adjacent to the existing car parking. This was to include changing facilities for home and away teams and officials, as well as a store and disabled toilet, but it was not constructed. A parallel application (ref: APP/15/00246) was for the creation of a new car park in the north-east corner of Price's Field near to the existing car parking and accessed from Pool Lane. It was also not constructed but would have accommodated 30 cars and measured 758sqm. A subsequent application (ref: APP/16/00045) relocated the clubhouse, but it remained in the north-east of the Site. Collectively, these applications were intended to accommodate Eastham Football Club which was located at Queen Elizabeth Dock due to the loss of that existing pitch on land allocated for port use (and not listed as a sports ground to be protected from development within policy RE6). The conclusion was that this represented a betterment for the club due to the new facilities and a secure tenure for the club.</p>
8.3.4	<p><u>Planning policy and legislation</u></p> <p>The proposals map for the UDP allocates the land as a <i>Sports Ground</i> with the exception of the clubhouse and associated hardstanding. The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 defines a playing field as "...the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch" and a playing pitch is defined as "...a delineated area which, together with any run-off area, is of 0.2 hectares or more, and</p>

	<p>which is used for..." a range of sports which includes football, rugby, cricket, and hockey. It was clear during site visits (the most recent in April 2024) that the Site has not been formally used for sports for some time, and there are no pitches currently marked out. Representations (as well as observations during site visits) indicate that the Site is used by residents to walk across or to walk dogs. It is logical that people would use the field for some form of recreation or exercise as there is no physical barrier to entry to the Site, even though this has not been occurring when the Site has been visited. However, given the allocation of the Site and the recent history it is considered that the Site has been a sports ground for many years. This means that the proposal is not considered to be a change of use to sports facilities. Currently, no permission is required to mark out playing fields for football (or a range of other sports) and to use them without restrictions on how much it is used, who uses it or when it can be used. This affects how several of the issues raised in representations are considered in the sections below.</p>
8.3.5	<p>The land shown as <i>Sports Ground</i> on the proposals map for the UDP is considered to be an existing facility, whereas the facilities within the existing building (primarily changing facilities) would be new facilities to support the <i>Sports Ground</i>. The car parking facilities are to support sport and recreation, albeit the link is less strong than the changing facilities and that the car parking could theoretically be used by people not engaged in sporting activities, such as by visiting the function room within the existing building or just accessing the land.</p>
8.3.6	<p>Policy REC1 of the UDP seeks to focus new facilities for sport and recreation towards the existing urban area and to where they are easily accessible by public transport. Existing facilities will be safeguarded where they are considered to be of Wirral wide importance for sport. Policy RE1 provides criteria for <i>new</i> facilities for sport and recreation within the urban area. This includes that design implications (siting, scale and visual impact of buildings and structures) are appropriate, that proposals do not give rise to noise and other disturbance to residential properties, and that adequate access and parking is provided. These issues are all assessed in sections on <i>Design, Neighbouring Amenity, and Highways and Transportation</i>.</p>
8.3.7	<p>Policy RE6 identifies <i>Sports Grounds</i> that are to be protected from development, and Price's Sports Ground is specifically listed, which reflects its allocation.</p>
8.3.8	<p>Policy RE10 provides criteria for community centres and facilities, such as small scale, non-residential facilities providing for uses such as meeting rooms, youth centres, play groups and other similar used by the local community. The criteria are very similar to those listed in policy RE1 and are assessed in more detail in sections below.</p>
8.3.9	<p>Draft Policy WS 5.1 of the Wirral Local Plan requires developments to contribute to high quality, coherent and resilient networks of blue and green infrastructure. Existing green infrastructure will be protected. Enhancing the quality, accessibility and functionality of</p>

	spaces will be supported. This could include social gains and measurable biodiversity net gains.
8.3.10	<p>Draft policy WS 10.6 concerns Open Space, and the Site is identified as <i>Urban Open Space</i> with a typology of <i>Amenity Greenspace and Urban Sports Facility</i>. Development that would be incompatible with the continued use and benefits of open space or for sports and recreation will not be permitted unless criteria are met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the proposal is for ancillary development or for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use for visitors, sport or play that would support the continued use of the site for public amenity, sport or recreation; and/ or 2. appropriate provision would still be made in line with the standards for open space set out within this Local Plan or in line with the requirements identified in an approved strategic assessment for the provision of the type of facility to be lost; and 3. an up-to-date needs assessment demonstrates that the site is surplus to requirements for any alternative identified open space or recreational purpose. <p>In addition, the loss of grass sports pitches and facilities for outdoor sport or children’s play will not be permitted unless replaced by equal or better provision of an alternative site.</p>
8.3.11	<p>Paragraph 103 of the NPPF advises that “Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:</p> <p>(a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.</p>
8.3.12	<p><u>Sport England</u></p> <p>As the proposals affect land allocated for use as a playing field in the UDP Sport England has been consulted and has provided comments.</p>
8.3.13	<p>Initially, Sports England issued a holding objection, citing insufficient information to allow for a substantive response. Specifically, there was a request for information around the proposal at the Octel site and its relationship with the Proposed Development. There was also a request for clarification on why the existing car park at South View is not included within the Site, and how the level of car parking proposed has been arrived at instead of encouraging alternative modes of transport.</p>

8.3.14	Following receipt of additional information Sport England formally objected to the proposed development on the basis it does not meet Exception 2 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy (hereafter referred to as 'the PFP') or paragraph 103 of the NPPF.
8.3.15	<p>The PFP seeks to oppose the granting of planning permission for any development that would result in the loss of, or prejudice the use of all or part of a playing field, land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or land allocated for use as a playing field, unless the development meets at least one of five specific exceptions which are summarised as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A robust and up-to-date assessment has 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. 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. 3. The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 part of a playing field and any of its playing pitches. 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 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.
8.3.16	Sport England has identified that the definition of playing field includes the whole of a site and not just the land that is laid out as pitches. This is because other parts of a site are a resource for pitches which may be needed now or in the future, or that pitches

	<p>may need to be changed from one sport to another, or to allow land to be unused after a period of overuse. Hence, Sport England has considered that the existing bowling green and parking areas are part of the site to be considered. Sport England also identified that the social club and playing field are not in active use and that there are no details on why this is the case. In any event this does not change their legal status as playing field. Historic imagery suggests there were two football pitches previously marked out, and that they were last used circa 2012 (although the applicant's own information cites 2013 and another planning application shows the pitches in place in 2015).</p>
8.3.17	<p>Sport England raised concerns about the proposed parking and pedestrian pathway, including the potential for overspill parking in the eastern part of the Site. Sport England identified the car parking as needing to be considered under Exception 2 of the PFP, confirming that it is ancillary facilities to support the principal use of the Site as a playing field. Sport England considers the land where the parking and pathway would be to be capable of forming a playing pitch, and so the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the playing field and would compromise its capacity and flexibility to accommodate playing pitches. It was reiterated by Sport England that it is not clear why the existing parking provision in the north-east of Price's Field is not included within the red line, or why the hardstanding around the social club is not capable of providing more parking. Queries were raised about why the parking could not be moved further to the east of the Site or why the number of spaces cannot be reduced. A further concern was raised about the impact of the pedestrian pathway on the existing bowling green. The conclusion was that this aspect of the proposed development does not accord with Exception 2 of the PFP.</p>
8.3.18	<p>Sport England identified the changes to the social club as also needing to be assessed against Exception 2 of the PFP, as the building would be an ancillary feature to support the use of the playing field. However, there has been no objection raised to what is proposed in respect of this building.</p>
8.3.19	<p>Sport England is supportive of works to reinstate and improve existing playing pitches where there is no adverse impact on the overall functionality of the wider playing field site. Citing the planning permission granted in 2015 for the relocation of one adult pitch and the creation of 2 junior pitches and a clubhouse (ref: APP/15/00154) Sport England acknowledges they did not object to this. However, they also noted that this was not accepted by Sport England as a replacement for Eastham Lock Sports Ground, and that the proposal was for one adult pitch and two junior pitches. Concern was raised about limited information to be able to make a full and informed judgement. Regarding the agronomy assessment the Football Foundation were consulted and identified several issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Performance Quality Standard (PQS) assessment shows the playing field to meet Sport England guidance for natural turf pitches on most points, but did not meet the PQS criteria for sward length, thatch depth, evenness or pH value. In addition,

	<p>water infiltration rate was not tested. However, the issues are typically maintenance-led and could potentially be resolved through regular and robust maintenance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because these issues can be remedied through maintenance the proposed works are not appropriate mitigation for the loss of another playing field site. • Potential for water to drain into a ditch highlights the need for consent from the Environment Agency and the Council. Without this there is a possibility that the drainage scheme may not be deliverable. • Maintenance-led solutions should be evident before consideration of sports pitch drainage installation. • The pitches could be brought into use as quality pitches suitable for grassroots level football for a lesser cost than what is proposed, and the scale of works specification is overestimated and consequently over costed.
8.3.20	<p>Sport England further went on to query the decision to only improve the drainage of 2 proposed pitches rather than the wider playing field. This would limit the flexibility of the playing field to accommodate other pitches should the proposed pitches be overused because of increased demand. Wider drainage works would allow for pitches to be rested. Sport England highlighted the concern by the Football Foundation of the deliverability of the drainage if dependent on consent from the Environment Agency and the Council.</p>
8.3.21	<p>A further concern was identified that the applicant's documents included indicative recommendations and no detailed scheme of works or schedule of maintenance. There were limited details on design specification of the pitch and required ground levelling works. Sport England also has concerns about who will be responsible for ongoing maintenance of the pitches.</p>
8.3.22	<p>For these reasons Sport England has concluded that they are unable to provide a full and informed judgement on the acceptability of the proposed reinstated pitches.</p>
8.3.23	<p>Therefore, there is an objection from Sport England to the current proposal but the objection could potentially be overcome by relocating the car parking and reducing the parking numbers on the playing field, repositioning the pedestrian pathway, providing clarification on the drainage (including consents from the Environment Agency and the Council), and further clarification on maintenance and community use.</p>
8.3.24	<p><u>Discussion</u></p> <p>Sport England's objection is considered very significant, but it has been considered very carefully. The inspector who determined the recent appeal decision at Birkenhead School identified an objection from Sports England to be given "...great or considerable weight unless there are cogent and compelling reasons not to" (paragraph 11). There is a distinction between the current proposal and Birkenhead School in that the former has been assessed by Sport</p>

	<p>England against the Exception 2 of the PFP and the latter was Exception 4. Nevertheless, that does not change the strategic message about how to consider Sport England's objection.</p>
8.3.25	<p>The Council's <i>Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan</i> (July 2021) identifies the Site as being lapsed but suitable for at least two adult pitches. Sport England has not agreed that it is lapsed. There is a recommendation to bring the site back into use to accommodate displaced demand from other sites. The aim is stated as being "Protect", "Enhance", and "Provide". The future priorities are listed as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explore feasibility to bring back into use. 2) Retain/allocate site as strategic reserve. 3) Use as open space to meet local needs. <p>Therefore, there is an ongoing desire to protect and improve Price's Field, with a broader range of activities than just sport.</p>
8.3.26	<p>The alterations to the layout of the existing social club are considered very positive. They would add facilities which would improve opportunities for sporting activity and make it more likely that people can participate in sport in conjunction with the proposed marking out of pitches. There would remain an area available for functions and so there is not an obvious downside to the changes to the building when considered in isolation. Sport England has supported this element of the proposed development.</p>
8.3.27	<p>Sport England has provided advice on how their objection could be overcome and this forms the structure of the remainder of this discussion.</p>
8.3.28	<p>Firstly, Sport England seeks the relocation of the proposed parking area on to land that is not capable of forming a playing pitch. With the suggestion that this could involve the use and expansion of the existing parking area in the northwest of the Site. The proposed car parking would cover an area in excess of 1,300sqm, which is significant. This includes a pedestrian path down one side which is considered alongside the car parking. Although the playing field as a whole is large, the area lost could be used as part of a sports pitch. The site layout shows a potential future overspill parking but that is not part of the current proposal.</p>
8.3.29	<p>The current area of car parking on the Site is adjacent to the area shown as being for dog walking and is also characterised by some mature trees and some scrubby grassland. Sport England's document <i>Playing Fields Policy and Guidance</i> (March 2018) provides guidance on proposals affecting playing fields. It identifies that although car parking can be considered as ancillary to the principal use of a playing field (paragraph 53) it is not one of the examples of facilities given in paragraph 52.</p>
8.3.30	<p>A key consideration is the advice in paragraph 6 of the guidance. In respect of the definition of a playing field there is to be no</p>

	differentiation between different type of ownership, whether that be public, private or educational.
8.3.31	The existing car parking is shown to be outside of the red line boundary, and it is understood that it is in separate ownership to the Site. However, based on paragraph 6 this is not considered sufficient to justify the loss of playing field in order to accommodate additional car parking. The number of car parking spaces provided is discussed in the subsequent section on <i>Highways and Transportation</i> , but even if the car park was to be reduced in size so that it catered for the anticipated minimum number of vehicles it would still take up a considerable area of the playing field, potentially in excess of 900sqm.
8.3.32	Notwithstanding ownership, it has been considered how the existing car park could be extended, and this would require some careful consideration to trees and ecological habitat but there appears scope to do so. This would have a lesser impact on the land capable of being used as playing field. Even if it could not be extended it could allow for a much smaller new car parking area.
8.3.33	It is acknowledged that the location of the existing car parking is much further from the existing social club, but it is not so great than someone could not walk from one to the other.
8.3.34	Secondly, Sport England are seeking the proposed pedestrian pathway to be repositioned to not impact on the playing field and bowling green. The impact on the section of the pathway adjoining the car park is included above.
8.3.35	The bowling green would be impacted on by the proposed development, with a small section of it being affected by the proposed path from the car park to the social club. The draft proposals map to accompany the draft Local Plan excludes the bowling green from the <i>Urban Open Space</i> allocation that covers Price's Field. The evidence base for the draft Local Plan includes the <i>Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy Assessment Report</i> and <i>Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan</i> (both July 2021). Within these documents Price's Field is identified as being poor quality (which is logically a result of it not being in use), and that provision of bowling greens across the borough is considered sufficient. Research done by the case officer suggests that a bowling green should form a square with sides between 30m and 40m. The existing bowling green is not a perfect square, and the proposal would make it more of a rectangle than a square. However, it would remain approximately 34m at its narrowest point, which is reasonable. The approach taken by the applicant is clumsy in its positioning of the path, but there is potential to explore via condition if a more detailed plan can be provided which potentially has a different route. No one would be prejudiced by this, and a path could still be provided away from South Cottage that leaves more of the bowling green unaltered. For these reasons it is not considered appropriate to refuse the planning application based on the impact on the bowling green. This is deviating from Sports England advice, which is not to say that Sport England is incorrect as based on current adopted policy they are not. The direction of travel in

	<p>planning policy and the potential to amend the layout via condition is considered sufficient to improve this.</p>
8.3.35	<p>Thirdly, Sport England requested further clarification on the proposed pitch drainage works and the need for necessary consents from the Environment Agency and the Council to drain into a ditch.</p>
8.3.36	<p>Since the planning application was submitted the applicant has provided an agronomy assessment by MKH (dated 19 March 2024). The concerns raised about it by the Football Foundation are identified above. One of the two main concerns is that many of the existing problems with the condition of the Site could be remedied now via maintenance. They do not require the provision of car parking or improvements to the clubhouse to occur.</p>
8.3.37	<p>The other main concern is that further consents may be required from the Environment Agency and the Council. This has been explored further and the applicant is proposing infiltration as the method of dealing with surface water and not drainage to the nearby ditch. If this were to change the LLFA would need to be involved, but the Environment Agency would not. In any event the LLFA has not identified a reason why this form of drainage could not be possible. Sport England has been notified of this. Hence, limited weight is given to this particular criticism of the proposal. However, the limit to the extent of the proposed drainage beneath the two proposed pitches does undermine the positive benefits it can achieve with the drainage under most of the Site remaining as it is now.</p>
8.3.38	<p>Fourthly, Sport England require further clarification of ongoing management, maintenance, tenure and community use of the pitches. The intention is for BEJFC to use the Site, which is positive given the work they do in the community. A Community Use Agreement (CUA) could provide further details on this. The agronomy assessment includes costings to do the initial work but there will be ongoing costs associated with the maintenance, and it is not clear how achievable they are in the short, medium and long term.</p>
8.3.39	<p>The recent appeal at Noctorum School included extensive discussion around maintenance. Even though this was more in terms of Exception 4 than Exception 2 it is still considered reasonable to explore this. After all, in the event of an approval there is a worst-case scenario where the car parking is provided (to the detriment of the playing field) but the playing field cannot be maintained going forward.</p>
8.3.40	<p>Consideration has been given to the <i>Mapledurham</i> judgement (December 2018). However, the circumstances were different with this being a new school on existing playing fields. The judgement concerned the interpretation of relevant NPPF policies on playing fields and the weight to be given to emerging policy. It also responded to a challenge that alternative sites have not been properly considered and that there was a breach of delegated authority.</p>

8.3.41	There is confidence that existing policy and guidance has been interpreted correctly. It is noted that the reference to emerging policy has slightly watered down the protection given to the bowling green, even if it remains strong for the playing fields as a whole.
8.3.42	The point around alternative sites differs between <i>Mapledurham</i> and the Site, as the facilities proposed are to serve the playing fields, despite the concerns raised about them. Clearly car parking has to be on or near the Site and so a discussion of alternative sites is more limited.
8.3.43	The applicant did submit a Briefing Note including examples of developments on playing fields across the country but including an application at Glenavon Road in Wirral (APP/18/00522). These examples have been reviewed and none are considered to be so similar to the proposed development and the Site that they are directly comparable.
8.3.44	Therefore, bringing these factors together there are concerns about the impact on the playing field. The loss of playing field to create car parking and the uncertainties around the creation, maintenance and management of the two pitches results in the proposal being contrary to planning policy and guidance. This conclusion balances the quantitative loss of the playing fields alongside the qualitative improvements which are proposed and has sought to balance them which is considered to be an approach in accordance with the <i>Mapledurham</i> judgement.

8.4 Design, Heritage and Archaeology	
8.4.1	Policy CHO1 seeks to protect heritage assets. Policy CH2 is specific to Conservation Areas and requires development to preserve or enhance the distinctive characteristics of the designated area, the layout and design of the area and the character and setting of period buildings and other elements. Policy CH22 is specific to Bromborough Pool Conservation Area. It states the principal objectives for the area to (<i>inter alia</i>) preserve the open aspect of land providing an important separation function from surrounding modern industrial uses. In addition, policy CH22 notes the priority of retaining the primarily open aspect of land used as playing fields fronting South View.

8.4.2	<p>Draft policy WS 6.1 identifies the principles for placemaking, and draft policy WS 7.1 provides generic design principles. Part C of draft policy WP 4.1 is specific to Bromborough Pool Conservation Area, identifying that proposals will be supported where they preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a mid-19th Century housing area, retain the pattern and detail of windows. It retains the aim from CH22 of preserving or enhancing the open aspect of land providing an important separation function from surrounding modern industrial uses. In addition, preservation or enhancement of buildings of architectural importance is identified, with the social club being specifically referenced. The need to preserve or enhance the significance of the Scheduled Ancient Monument is also identified. Draft policy WD 1.1 seeks suitable landscaping to contribute positively to visual amenity and integrate with landscape character and local distinctiveness. Hard surfacing should be permeable.</p>
8.4.3	<p>Draft policy WD 2.1 is specific to heritage assets and the need to preserve or enhance the historic environment. Draft policy WD 2.2 is specific to Conservation Areas. Draft policy WD 2.3 concerns archaeology and seeks opportunities to better understand and record non-designated archaeological sites of local interest will be supported.</p>
8.4.4	<p>There is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) to the west of the proposed development site, which is the site of an 11th Century moated manor house, although the designation comprises part of the moat, a surviving fishpond and the site of a former fishpond. Historic England were consulted on this but resolved not to comment. The SAM designation extends to the western side of Pool Lane. The distance from the SAM to the proposed pitches and other alterations is considered sufficient to ensure that the impact is minimal. The nearest part of the SAM would remain opposite a green and open area proposed as the dog walking area. This judgement is also based on the nature of the proposed development and the existing use of the Site, with the proposals being characteristic of the lawful use of the Site.</p>
8.4.5	<p>The Site is within the Bromborough Pool Conservation Area, which was designated in 1984 and is centred around the historic Price's Candle Factory and the housing built for the factory workers. The existing social club building was historically a hospital. Price's Field has at various times been used as allotments and sports facilities. There are no objections to the alterations to the existing social club, and the removal of the unsympathetic extension is a tangible positive alteration that would reveal more of the original building. A condition could be imposed to require the applicant to carry out a programme of historic building investigation. The applicant has indicated that windows will be refurbished where possible and where replaced would be like-for-like. Some of the existing windows are timber and others uPVC. The Council would prefer timber throughout, but this is only considered reasonable where the windows are to be replaced rather than refurbished. The applicant has agreed to a condition requiring further details of this, which would have been imposed had there not been concerns about the proposed development.</p>

8.4.6	<p>The proposed pitches are also considered reflective of the character of the land, which has been an area of green open space to complement the buildings at the heart of the designation, and goalposts and shelters are characteristic of sports fields. A condition could require the detailed appearance of the shelters. The additional tree and hedge planting would retain the level of visual permeability across the Site.</p>
8.4.7	<p>The car park is more complex. The use of 'Grasscrete' is preferable to tarmac and is reversible. However, there would be a loss of open land resulting in a degree of harm that would be less than substantial. The proposed hedges would lessen the visible impact from some vantage points, but cars would remain visible unless higher hedges are provided (and this would affect the openness of the land further). There would be a public benefit to the car park as it would be available for general use. Individuals or small groups wanting to use Price's Field independently of organised events could use the car park, although they can currently park on South View and so the benefit is relatively minor in this regard. The value of the car park is for larger events and managing vehicles to ensure there is no detrimental impact on the public highway. This would be relevant for events at the social club as well as organised sporting events. There is acknowledged to be a public benefit arising from the sports pitches being available again by BEJFC and more generally, alongside the improved changing room facilities. Both could improve health and well-being. The re-use of the building as a community facility is also a public benefit, as is the improvements to biodiversity (discussed in Section 8.8 below). However, these benefits are not considered to override the harm to the Conservation Area. The Conservation Officer has suggested the car park would be better suited to the east between the existing access road and Dock Road South. This would keep the larger of the fields open and undeveloped and as such result in a lesser degree of harm. However, this is not what is proposed and could raise issues with the amenity of South Lodge which are discussed in section 8.5. Hence, it is not considered a straightforward amendment to the scheme that could overcome concerns.</p>
8.4.8	<p>The pathway from the car park to the social club would cut through the existing bowling green but is a relatively modest addition in conservation terms that would largely be concealed behind hedges until it meets the existing hardstanding. The principle of the gate proposed adjacent to South Cottage is considered acceptable and would also be a modest addition that would not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the conservation area. A condition could require a detailed drawing.</p>

8.4.9	A container is proposed to replace an existing dilapidated container (which has clearly been in place for many years) which would be placed near to the boundary with Old Court House Road. This part of the Site features some trees and thick vegetation which would reduce visibility of it. It is important to acknowledge that in 2005 a container adjacent to the bowling green was refused based on the impact on the conservation area. It is not possible to know what the level of vegetation was in 2005, but it seems likely that it would have been less than now, which may have led to the refusal. In any event, there is comfort that the replacement container would not be obtrusive and could be treated to be an appropriate colour so that it blends into the green backdrop.
8.4.10	Objections have been raised in representations to signage. The proposed elevations of the existing social club show some indicative signage for <i>BEJFC</i> . The drawings do not allow sufficient detail of letter sizes to be able to determine whether advertisement consent is required. There is currently signage on the building and there is not an in-principle objection to future signage, as this has always been a non-residential building. Advertisement consent is a separate regime, and the applicant would need to apply for this separately.
8.4.11	In conclusion, the level of harm for the car park is greater than a potential other option which is not currently part of the proposal, and which the Council is not encouraging, and would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. This is balanced against the positive benefits to the Conservation Area of the improvements to the existing social building, and the landscaping proposed. The proposed gate, potential shelters, goalposts, drainage and replacement container are acceptable but neutral. The positive and neutral elements are not considered to outweigh the harm caused by the car park. This is explored in more detail in the wider Planning Balance section. Moving the location or reducing the size of the car park has impacts on the amenity of South Cottage or the potential for overspill parking beyond the Site.

8.5 Neighbouring Amenity	
8.5.1	Policy PO1 requires the Local Planning Authority to be satisfied that developments do not cause harm or nuisance to neighbouring uses, the natural environment or general amenity. Policy PO3 reflects policy PO1 but is specific to noise. Draft policy WS 7.2 requires developments to take account of the amenity of neighbours, including daylight, overlooking and loss of privacy, noise, light, and air quality.
8.5.2	Objections have been raised about the impact on neighbouring properties. The residential properties which could be affected are those fronting on to South View and South Cottage adjacent to the clubhouse.
8.5.3	Bringing the clubhouse back into use would generate some noise when compared to the currently vacant building that has been characteristic of recent years. However, there is nothing to prevent the current building being used now and so it is not considered

	<p>reasonable to object to the principle of disruption to South Cottage from the building. It is understood the car parking has been positioned to reduce the potential noise from the proposed car park disturbing the residents of South Cottage. There is an area identified as potential overspill, but this is indicative of what could be provided later rather than being part of the proposal. If the existing car parking were to be flipped so that it is on the other side of the existing vehicle access it would extend very near to South Cottage, which would impact this property in terms of noise and disturbance as well as visual amenity. There would be some concern about this.</p>
8.5.4	<p>The key consideration is that the proposal is not a change of use of the grassed area: it has been designated as a sports ground since at least 2000, and the most recent photographic evidence of a pitch being marked out is from 2015. Hence, there is no control via the planning system to prevent the grass being mowed, pitches marked out to be used at any time of the day or night. In practice, using the pitches once it is dark is far less likely as there is no lighting now and none is proposed. An objection correctly notes that there would be greater opportunities to use the Site when days are longer, but this is an existing theoretical possibility. There would be nothing to prevent people other than those associated with BEJFC from using the pitches as there is no barrier to prevent access, nor would the Council want this. It is the recent lack of maintenance that has prevented the Site being used as a sports ground that is considered to be the aberration and not the principle of using the land for sports.</p>
8.5.5	<p>It is clear that sporting activities create noise and so there would be some noise as a result of the newly marked out pitches being used, as there would have been when they were used in the past. The position of the pitches has been moved towards the middle of Price's Field, which would be nearly 50m from the nearest residential properties on South View, which reduces the potential for noise and for footballs hitting cars (although this remains possible).</p>
8.5.6	<p>Objections cite potential for litter, swearing, drinking alcohol and fighting, but the intention is for BEJFC to manage their activities. Anti-social behaviour cannot be completely ruled out, but this applies to any sporting or non-sporting activity and is not considered to be a reason for the proposal to not be supported. The proposal would bring more people to Price's Field and the social club building so providing natural surveillance and by some measures reducing the potential for crime. Overall, the impact is considered neutral.</p>
8.5.7	<p>There would be a very minor change to the outlook from nearby houses on South View with the car parking and structures associated with the pitches. The outlook would remain as a substantial area of grass, and the additional landscape has the potential to improve the outlook. Privacy would not be detrimentally affected, as even though the proposal could logically increase usage of Price's Field the proposal would not allow for persons to look into residential properties any more than they can now.</p>
8.5.8	<p>Concerns have been raised about air pollution from the vehicles using the proposed car park. It is not expected that pollution would be any greater than from other car park, and there is an acceptable</p>

	distance from it to nearby properties. A further suggestion was that air pollution would be affected by people vaping, but the impact would be negligible.
8.5.9	The area to the west of the Site is shown on the proposed block plan as being designated for dog walking. In practice there is nothing to restrict dog walking to this part of the Site, or to restrict other activities taking place within this area. It does demonstrate that a substantial part of the Site would not be marked out as pitches and so the Site as a whole can serve multiple functions. This is relevant to the concern raised about the ability of persons with Autism to continue to use the land, and access would remain for everyone.
8.5.10	The works to construct the proposed development could be completed without significant impact on neighbouring properties.
8.5.11	A concern about the impact on the mental health of residents has been raised, which is considered to have been addressed above in determining that the impacts on neighbouring properties would be acceptable.

8.6 Highways and Transportation	
8.6.1	Policy TRT1 of the UDP requires development to make best use of existing transport facilities. Policy TRT3 seeks to reduce unnecessary traffic in environmentally sensitive or primarily residential areas, consider parking and servicing arrangements, meeting the needs of cyclists and disabled people, and minimising the need for travel generally. Policies TR9, TR12 and TR13 provide more detail on off-street parking, cycle parking and disabled access.
8.6.2	Draft policies WS 9., 9.3 and 9.4 set out the approach to transport. Accessibility and sustainable transport should be considered, and development proposals should incorporate measures to improve accessibility, connectivity and ease of movement. Development proposals should also be easily accessible to sustainable transport options and be designed and laid out to give priority to walking, cycling and public transport. Development should also demonstrate that the impact on the efficient operation of the highway and wider transport network will not be severe or create hazardous highway conditions.
8.6.3	No objections have been raised by the Council's Transportation and Highways Officers. Concerns have been raised by neighbouring properties and the Bromborough Pool Conservation Committee.
8.6.4	The main issue is the impact of the proposed car parking. The development is supported by a Transport Statement (TS) which contains the anticipated trip rates and vehicles numbers that the sports pitches could generate at any one time. The methodology used is considered robust: it assumes that the two pitches are used at the same time at maximum occupancy (11-a-side and 9-a-side). In reality, the pitches are just as likely to be used in a staggered arrangement to maximise use of the changing room facilities. The methodology also assumes an appropriate numbers of referees and

	spectators. A car occupancy of 2 persons per vehicle is also assumed.
8.6.5	The TA uses these assumptions to produce a car park accumulation study which shows that there is adequate car parking proposed. Realistically most people visiting the Site will be using cars, as public transport is an option but is not so convenient that it is expected to be heavily used. This equates to approximately 28 vehicle arrivals in the hour prior to the matches and 28 vehicle departures after the matches. This is not anticipated to result in an unacceptable level of congestion on South View or nearby roads, as it is below the proposed 41 spaces.
8.6.6	It is not possible to guarantee that there will not be occasions when more than 41 spaces are required to cater for visitors to the Site, and events at the social club could generate more vehicles (albeit this can theoretically happen now without the need for planning permission and with a fraction of the parking proposed). Currently, South View (which is unadopted) provides unrestricted parking for vehicles and these will not impact on residential parking requirements as all the houses served from South View are accessed from a dedicated parallel service road. Hence, when overspill parking is required, there would be an impact on existing residents, but it is expected to be reasonable and only to occur at certain times. If vehicles do park on South View (as they are permitted to now) there is considered to be adequate width remaining for vehicles (including buses and emergency vehicles) to use South View. South View is straight and provides long views for pedestrians to see oncoming vehicles, which would ensure that highway safety remains acceptable and that the bus can still be hailed.
8.6.7	Based on the parking accumulation study the size of the car park could be reduced and theoretically accommodate the modelled needs. However, it is considered sensible to allow some flexibility, and any additional spaces over and above 28 reduces the potential for overspill and the magnitude of it when it occurs.
8.6.8	Provision is made for two disabled spaces near the entrance of the social club and three spaces are shown as being reserved for the resident of South Cottage within the existing hardstanding. This is supported.
8.6.9	Notwithstanding Sport England's position outlined above about the existing car parking to the north-east of the Site, its lack of availability for use can theoretically be considered differently when assessing the proposal purely in terms of transport impacts. The size of the proposed car park has been designed to realistically manage the parking impact on South View and nearby roads whilst ensuring that it is not larger than it needs to be most of the time.
8.6.10	An objection has identified the road surface on South View as being poor, and that additional traffic would exacerbate this. There is a degree of agreement with this, but the proposal would primarily increase the number of cars rather than larger (and heavier) vehicles. Given where the access road to the Site is, it is likely that most of the additional traffic will be using the relatively short section of South

	View from Dock Road South to the access road than the full length of South View.
8.6.11	Servicing to the facility can be carried out from the private access road from South View as this has an appropriate turning head and the car park access is also to be constructed from this access so there is no requirement for any highway approvals as the land is private.
8.6.12	Provision is made for a bicycle shelter containing 12 spaces. A high proportion of users of the sports pitches are likely to be below driver age and so this provision is important. Specific details of the storage can be provided via a suitably worded condition, and they would need to be installed prior to the sports pitches being operational.
8.6.13	An objection notes the potential for footballs to impact on traffic, and it is possible that misplaced footballs could find their way on to South View. However, the distance from the pitches to South View is reasonable and moving the pitches further to the south would increase the chances of footballs affecting Old Court House Road. Hence, the risks are considered to be appropriately balanced.
8.6.14	The works to construct the proposed development could be completed without significant impact on the highway network.
8.6.15	Overall, the proposal would have transport impacts but the intention is to manage them as best as possible. It is possible there will be times when there is overspill parking which leads to a degree of inconvenience to neighbouring properties as they seek to use South View. However, this is expected to be limited to when the pitches are being used, or when certain events take place at the social club, which will be at limited times.
8.6.16	Two objections noted the potential impact on traffic of Allport Road and Bridle Road in Bromborough. It appears that these objections relate to the Octel development referred to in the <i>Planning History</i> section above. The objections were made in respect of <i>this</i> planning application, and so need to be acknowledged. However, it is clear that the proposals at Price's Field would have little or no direct impact on either Allport Road or Bridle Road.
8.6.17	Finally, there is a discussion around the precise positioning of the proposed car parking within the <i>Principle of Development</i> and <i>Neighbouring Amenity</i> section.

8.7 Trees and Landscaping	
8.7.1	Adopted policy GR5 requires landscape proposals to be submitted before planning permission is granted, and for landscaping to be appropriate in terms of (<i>inter alia</i>) species mix, height, and visual impact. Policy GR7 requires that the impact on trees is considered. Draft policy WD 1.1 reflects policy GR7.
8.7.2	The proposal would result in the loss of two existing trees, but neither are considered to be high quality. There would be additional trees

	planted along the northern side of the Site. Currently, there are trees alongside South View, but there are some gaps where trees have had to be felled over time. The proposal would fill in some of these gaps, which is positive. A condition would be imposed to require these trees to be provided.
8.7.3	Hedging is proposed around the Site. This would define the area of the pitches and the land around them and demarcate them from the dog walking area on the western side of Price's Field and the proposed car parking area. Comments have been made around the impact of the car parking on the Conservation Area and mitigating these impacts using the hedging. The precise height and form of the hedging can be determined in a submission to discharge a planning condition.
8.7.4	Overall, there would be a net increase in trees and hedges which is supported.

8.8 Ecology and biodiversity	
8.8.1	Policy NC01 requires proposals to not adversely affect the integrity of sites designated for nature conservation. Policies NC1, NC3 and NC5 cover sites of international, national and local importance. Development which would have an adverse effect on wildlife species protected by law according to policy NC7. These policies are proposed to be superseded by draft policy WD 3 in the Local Plan.
8.8.2	The Site is slightly more than 0.5km from the Mersey Estuary SPA and the Mersey Estuary Ramsar site, but there are no pathways that could result in significant effects on these sites.
8.8.3	Various reports and surveys have been provided to support the application and they have been provided to MEAS to assess. There is no evidence of Great Crested Newts on the Site. There is potential for badgers and hedgehogs as the existing habitat is suitable, and a suitable condition on reasonable avoidance measures during construction would address this. There is also potential for breeding birds to be present on the Site and certain works should not be carried out within the breeding bird season. A Construction Environmental Management Plan could be provided by condition to incorporate all measures required to protect the species referred to above.
8.8.4	Information submitted on bats indicated a low potential for bat roosts within the buildings on the Site, but with two trees having moderate bat roosting potential. The two trees are both shown to be removed due to their condition. Bat emergence and re-emergence surveys were carried out by the applicant and provided. No evidence of roosting bats was found in the main building. Surveys of the two affected trees showed low levels of bat activity and no evidence of roosting bats. However, as the surveys took place near the end of the surveying season it is considered appropriate to seek confirmation that the trees do not qualify as potential maternity roost, and a Precautionary Method of Working Statement can be provided

	via condition rather than needing to be provided prior to determination. Information has been provided on security lighting around the building and how to ensure that there is not a detrimental impact on bats, and a condition could secure this.
8.8.5	A landscaping and ecological management plan has also been provided and has been deemed by MEAS to be acceptable. A condition could be imposed to ensure that the measures within it are implemented in practice.
8.8.6	The planning application was submitted before the formal requirement to demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). However, the applicant did submit some information in regard to this, proposing retention of grassland and scrub and the planting of two native hedgerows and eight medium sized trees. This demonstrates BNG of 10.57% in terms of habitat units and 61.88 hedgerow units. This is acceptable.

8.9 Flood risk and Drainage	
8.9.1	Policy WAT1 of the UDP requires that planning permission will only be granted which would not be at risk from fluvial or tidal flooding, or which would not increase the risk of other land. Policy WA2 requires that developments should not lead to a significant increase in surface water run-off from the area. Draft Policy 4.2 would replace these policies once the Local Plan is adopted.
8.9.2	The site is at very low risk of flooding from rivers or the sea. In addition, flooding from groundwater or reservoirs is unlikely. There is an area of the Site which is vulnerable to surface water flooding.
8.9.3	The alterations to the existing building would not materially alter drainage. The car parking is proposed to be constructed of Grasscrete which is permeable and would ensure that drainage is acceptable.
8.9.4	However, of most significance is the proposed drainage underneath the proposed pitches. This would not cover the entire Site but is nevertheless an inherent improvement on the current situation. Even if the drainage is not properly maintained over time it is still seen as a positive aspect of the proposed development.

8.10 Other Matters	
8.10.1	In terms of physical accessibility concern has been raised that access for those with disabilities has not been considered. A ramp is proposed for the altered building following the removal of the existing extension, and the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations would need to be abided by.
8.10.2	An objection has been received citing large fencing around the Site, and there is concern about cages near to a busy road. Neither fencing nor cages are part of the current proposal. Permitted development rights do exist to provide a fence if the landowner wished to use them.

	There is also a suggestion that the grass would be replaced by astroturf in future, but this in itself would require planning permission so the Council as Local Planning Authority would retain control over this.
8.10.3	There is a concern that house prices would be lowered by the proposed development, but this is not a material consideration within the planning system.
8.10.4	There is a suggestion that floodlights could be provided, and the hours of operation could be extended. Planning permission would be required for floodlights, and at that point hours of operation and the impact on neighbouring properties would be assessed. There is a request for bins to be added to the field: This is not part of the current proposal but there would be no objection to this if the applicant agreed to provide them.
8.10.5	There is not considered to be any risk from contaminated land created by the proposed development.
8.10.6	An objection notes a shortage of schools, doctor, dentists and other amenities in the area. The proposed development would not increase the residential population nearby, so would lead to more pressure on local services or amenities.
8.10.7	Finally, an objection suggested the proposal would attract undesirable people into the area. Any specific concerns around this would need to be addressed to the police.

9.0 Summary of Decision (Planning Balance)	
9.1	Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Having regards to the individual merits of this application this recommendation has been made having regards to the relevant Policies and Proposals in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (Adopted February 2000), Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton and all relevant material considerations including national policy advice and the emerging Local Plan. In reaching this decision the Local Planning Authority has considered the following: -
9.2	There is support for bringing the pitches back into use and the improvements to the existing social club, which would improve opportunities for sport but also have wider community benefits by making the existing building available as a community facility again. The proposal would provide a home for BEJFC which is also supported. There is qualified support for additional drainage to improve the quality of the pitches which is welcomed in principle even though there are some concerns about deliverability and

	<p>maintenance into the future. The tree and hedge planting, and the potential improvements to ecology and a biodiversity net gain, are also acknowledged and supported.</p>
9.3	<p>However, there is an in-principle objection to the loss of playing field land to form car parking without the area of the playing fields being replaced elsewhere. It has been considered if this can be addressed by reductions in the size of the car park or a different location being utilised but no solution has been identified that would completely address Sport England's concerns, and in any event the current proposal needs to be determined based on the current application and drawings. The Council is reflecting the recent appeal decision at Birkenhead School Sports Ground, giving the objection from Sport England substantial weight.</p>
9.4	<p>There is an additional impact of the car parking on the significance of the Bromborough Pool Conservation Area, which is considered to cause less than substantial harm that is not outweighed by the benefits of the car parking or the wider development. To move the car parking could address a concern about the impact on the Bromborough Pool Conservation Area but could in turn create an issue for the residents at South Cottage. A reduced area of car parking could resolve this but increase the pressure on on-street parking, but this is not what is currently proposed. The Council gives great weight to the conservation of designated heritage assets.</p>
9.5	<p>Overall, the benefits of the proposed development are not considered sufficient to outweigh the harm caused by the proposed development, and refusal is recommended.</p>

10.0 Recommended Decision:	
10.1	Refuse

Recommended Reasons for Refusal:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposed development, due to the location and size of the proposed car parking, adjoining path and associated access would result in the loss of playing field land with no proposal to replace that playing field land in terms of equivalent or better quantity and quality in a suitable location, which adversely affects the quantity of playing pitches on the site and their ability to be effectively used. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies REC1 and RE6 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan, draft policy WS10.6 of the submission draft Local Plan, Paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and Guidance (March 2018). 2. The proposed development, due to the location, size and layout of the proposed car parking and associated access causes less than substantial harm to the significance of the Bromborough Pool Conservation Area. This harm is not outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies CH01, CH2 and CH22 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan, and draft policies WP 4.1, WD 2.1, WD 2.2 of the submission draft Local Plan.

Last Comments By:	15-05-2024
Expiry Date:	30-04-2024