

BLACON NEIGHBOURHOOD ALLIANCE
The Designated Neighbourhood Forum for Blacon

BLACON COMMUNITY NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT ORDER

SUBMISSION VERSION: OCTOBER 2025

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

WHAT IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT ORDER?

1.1 A Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO) grants planning permission for the type of development described in the NDO, which can be subject to planning conditions and limitations like a permission obtained using a planning application.

1.2 Unlike a planning application, an NDO is independently examined before being approved by the local planning authority to go to a referendum vote of the local community. The NDO is 'made' and planning permission is granted if there is a majority 'yes' vote. Before a scheme can be implemented any planning conditions attached to the NDO must be discharged by the local planning authority, and any other licenses or approvals would need to be obtained, again in the normal way.

1.3 An NDO can only be prepared by a 'qualifying body' such as the Blacon Neighbourhood Alliance (BNA) per Section 61E(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). Once completed it is the job of the local planning authority to organise the examination and referendum. The qualifying body does not necessarily have to implement the NDO itself; this can be done by anyone with a control of the land.

THE BLACON COMMUNITY NDO

1.4 This NDO is intended to implement Policy BLACON1 of the Blacon Community Neighbourhood Plan (BCNP) which supports proposals to create a new Sports & Community Hub on part of the existing sports ground at Cairns Crescent.

1.5 The newly formed charity, the Blacon Community Development Trust (BCT), will take responsibility for obtaining control of the land and all the necessary permissions and for fundraising to develop the buildings. Its Trustees have worked closely with the BNA to ensure that the BCNP policy and the NDO will enable it to deliver a successful development scheme.

1.6 Shortly before the submission of the NDO (and BCNP), the Government announced the inclusion of the Blacon South ward in its second phase of the Pride in Place Programme. This will invest up to £20 million in delivering a good range of local amenities and high-quality physical infrastructure. The endowment-style funding will include revenue to support managing and delivering investment projects. The BNA and Blacon Community Trust (BCT) will look to work with CWaC and the new Neighbourhood Board to make this a success for Blacon.

1.7 This is a final draft version of the NDO for submission to the local planning authority (LPA), Cheshire West & Chester (CWaC), to arrange its examination. Alongside the draft BCNP, a draft NDO was consulted on in accordance with the Regulations in spring 2025. The BNA and BCT have reviewed the comments made on the drafts and have made some modification to improve the accuracy and clarity of the final documents.

1.8 The idea for improving access to sports and community facilities in Blacon have evolved over a number of years as a result of the local community wanting to improve access to affordable sports uses and to fill gaps in local provision. The proposed scheme is the result of a Feasibility Study commissioned by the BNA in October 2024 to test where and how these needs could be met. The design proposals and a technical description of the NDO and its planning conditions are set out separately.

1.9 More information on how the BNA has engaged the community in shaping the proposals and on how the proposals fit with national and local planning policy is set out in the separate Basic Conditions and Consultation Statements.

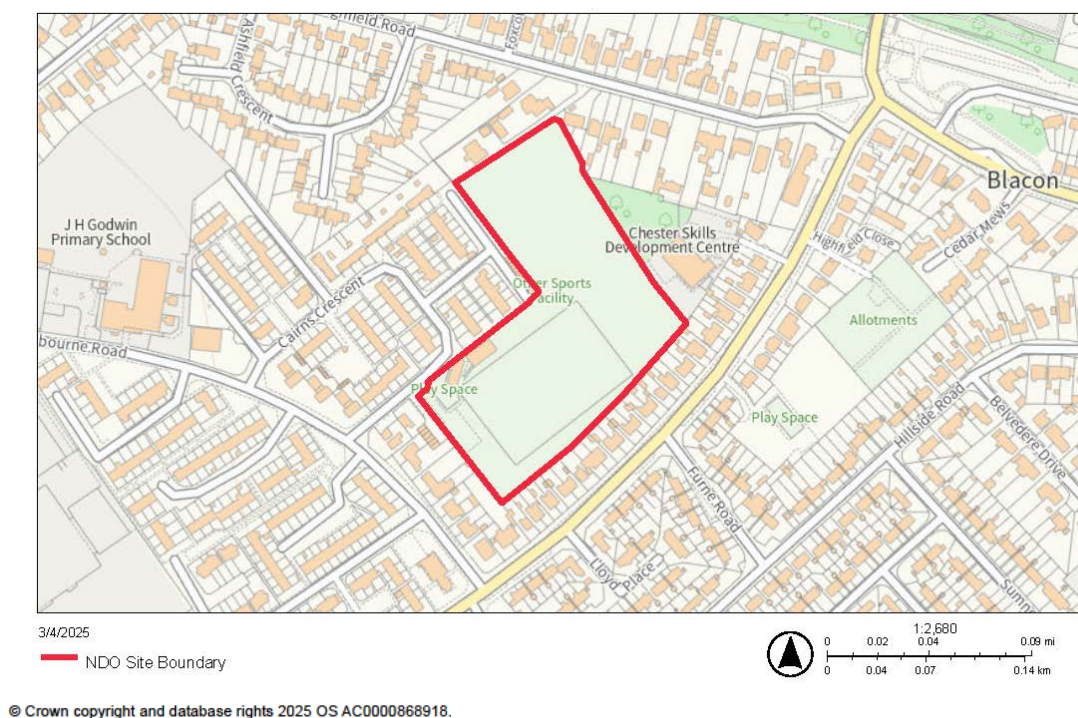
2. THE ORDER & PLANNING CONDITIONS

THE ORDER

2.1 The description of the NDO is as follows:

The erection of a single storey building of up to 3,120 sq.m. floorspace on land off Cairns Crescent, Blacon, comprising Class E(d) indoor sports and recreation and F2(b) community uses, with ancillary works, the demolition of existing buildings and structures, the repositioning of existing sports pitches, the provision of car and cycle parking, the reprovision of a new children's play area, with vehicle, cycling and pedestrian access as existing.

2.2 A Location Plan showing the land to which the NDO applies with a red line is below.



Plan A: Location Plan

2.3 More details on the schemes proposals, including plans, are provided in the Design Proposals & Plans.

2.4 The approved plans comprise:

- Plan A - Location plan
- Plan B - Site plan
- Plan C - Site layout
- Plan D - Building Zone plan

PLANNING CONDITIONS

2.5 It is proposed that the making of the NDO will be subject to the discharge of planning conditions covering the following matters:

1. Details of the appearance, layout and scale of the development approved to be submitted for approval prior to commencement.
2. Development to be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings.
3. Development to be carried out within prescribed time limit.
4. Details of a construction management plan prior to commencement.
5. Details of a scheme of drainage prior to commencement, including a surface water flood risk mitigation scheme and a scheme for the drainage of the playing field to be specified by a qualified sports turf consultant.
6. Submission of a report assessing the value of ecology and trees and proposals for mitigating any harmful effects for approval prior to commencement.
7. Changing room and toilet facilities to be provided to Football Foundation standards.
8. Details of external facing materials to be used in the building to be submitted prior to commencement.
9. Submission of a preliminary BREEAM assessment showing a rating of at least 'excellent' OR a preliminary BREEAM assessment showing a rating of at least 'very good' and supported by technical or financial justification as to why a rating of 'excellent' cannot be achieved.
10. Submission of final BREEAM assessment and completion certification showing the agreed rating has been achieved.
11. Details of a scheme of lighting prior to occupation.
12. Details of a travel plan prior to occupation.
13. Laying out of the playing pitches in accordance with a scheme that has been approved in accordance with Sport England's Natural Turf for Sports Guidance and the FA's Guide to Pitch and Goalpost Dimensions.
14. Car parking to be made available prior to occupation.
15. Restrictions on hours of use.
16. Any café use to be ancillary to the use of the site as a sports and community facility.
17. Details of a community use agreement for the outdoor pitches and indoor facilities including the multi-use sports hall and kitchen/ change / toilet facilities informed by Sport England's model CUA template and giving priority to the existing football clubs, Blacon Youth FC and Waggon and Horses FC.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY & BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

2.6 Blacon lies outside the CWaC Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) chargeable area and so the development permitted by the NDO will not be liable for CIL.

2.7 Proposals permitted by an NDO are exempt from the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements of the Environment Act 2021 by way of Section 17(a)(i) of Part 2 of Schedule 7A of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

3. DESIGN PROPOSALS & PLANS

The Site

3.1 The sports ground off Cairns Crescent has a gross site area of 7.4 hectares and lies 200m from the local centre at Western Avenue/Melbourne Road. It was laid out for that purpose along with the surrounding residential area in the 1950s and has an established outdoor sports and recreation use (Class F2). It is owned by CWaC and leased to Avenue Services Ltd.



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Plan B: Site Plan

3.2 The site is the home to Blacon Youth Football Club and more recently the Waggon & Horses Football Club, which runs men's teams. Blacon Youth was established in 1964 and has a long-standing history in the local football community. It is a community-based club that provides footballing opportunities for players of all ages and abilities. The clubs intend to merge and are ambitious in wanting to improve the quality and capacity of the facilities at Cairns Crescent.



3.3 There are two single storey buildings on the western corner of the site (of a total of approx. 330 sq.m. gross internal floorspace) that are used by the club and a youth club. Both are many years old and although functional they do not meet the needs or ambitions of their users. There is a children's play space (of approx. 300 sq.m.) close to the site entrance, which again is functional but not of a high quality. The site has two frontages onto Cairns Crescent: one with an existing vehicle and pedestrian access adjacent to the play space; the other adjoins a rear parking and garage area.

3.4 The site is 'L' shaped with a marked out full size football pitch on each leg, with a smaller junior pitch informally marked out in the corner. An unsurfaced car park area serves the site near the entrance. The site is surrounded by residential properties with rear garden boundaries on all sides, apart from a short boundary in its eastern corner with a CWaC property (a former skills centre).

3.5 There are some trees and hedges on the site boundary with the neighbouring residential properties, which are otherwise made up of garden fencing or railings (on the southern boundary with the rear parking area behind properties on Melbourne Road). Parts of the site are subject to surface water flooding, rendering one or more of the pitches unusable during the season. There is no floodlighting.

The Proposal

Introduction

3.6 Although the NDO is being submitted by the BNA it is intended that the BCT will take forward, deliver and operate the Hub project once it has been made. The BCT meets the definition of a community-led organisation that is required to benefit from the support of Policy BLACON1 of the submitted BCNP.

3.7 The BNA/BCT are using the NDO to seek the equivalent of an outline planning permission with all matters reserved. That permission will enable the BCT to secure the funding necessary to bring forward a detailed proposal for the building, both in terms of the technical details and of its preferred operating model. It has not been possible to secure the scale of 'at-risk', pre-planning funding that would be necessary to submit a detailed proposal.

3.8 The NDO Regulations make no distinction between 'outline' and 'full' planning permission, nor provision for 'reserved matters' for proposals submitted in outline. However, planning conditions can be attached to an NDO and here it is proposed that those conditions also cover all the necessary matters that have been reserved by CWaC for later approval. In some respects, this NDO also resembles a Permission in Principle (PiP) application whereby it seeks approval to the main land use and scale of the proposals, leaving all other matters to a technical details consent application.

3.9 The intent is the same as both an outline application or PiP: that the permission granted by the NDO will provide prospective funding bodies with the confidence that the main land use and development parameters have been established, within which a detailed proposal can be brought forward for approval. The BNA/BCT do not consider that the allocation policy in the BCNP alone would suffice for this purpose.

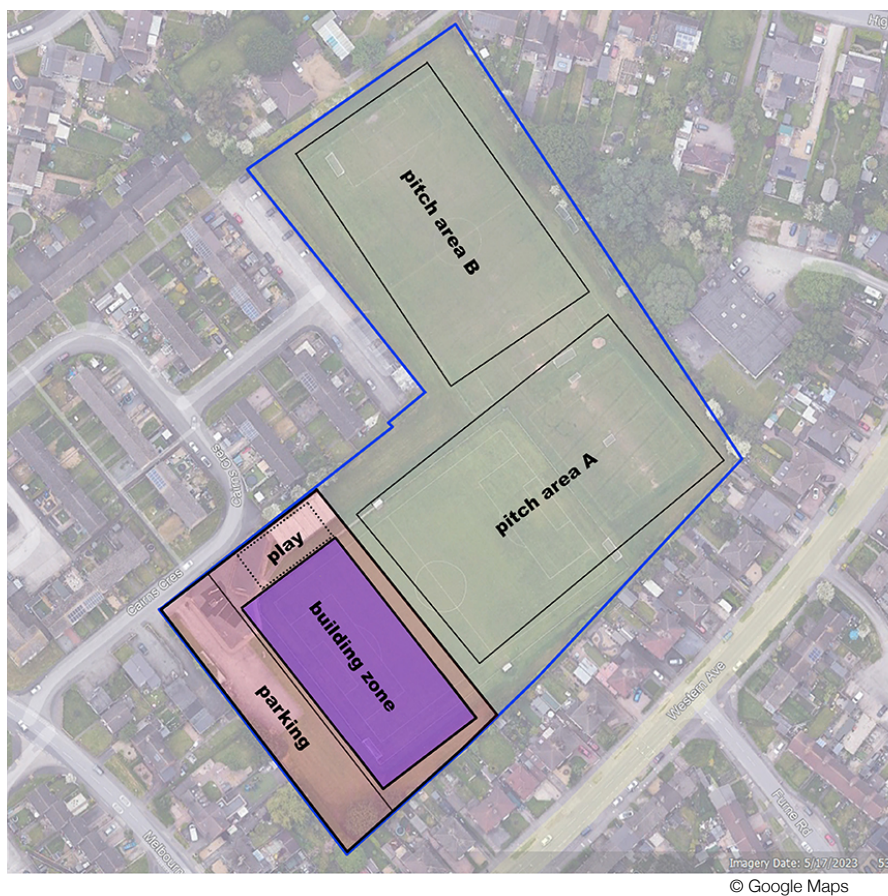
3.10 The BNA chose to use an NDO to secure planning permission rather than an outline planning application for three reasons. Firstly, it could only secure the funding from the Government's Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme in 2024 to propose an NDO and not a planning application. Secondly, it wants to show the scale of community support to future funders through the referendum provisions of an NDO. And thirdly, an NDO allows for more flexibility in the type and level of detail of information to be provided than a planning application, as the national and local validation requirements do not apply. This has made the NDO an affordable option for the BNA to pursue to de-risk the project.

3.11 Importantly now, the project will provide the community with a firm proposal to enable the speedy delivery of the Pride in Place Programme funding from 2027. The mix of capital and revenue funding over 10 years should favour this kind of project.

Proposal

3.12 The proposal divides the site into two parts:

- a Developable Area comprising the erection of a new building of up to 3,120 sq.m. (40m x 78m) for a mix of both Class E(d) indoor sports and recreation uses and Class F2 community uses in accordance with the provisions of Policy BLACON1.
- A Non-Developable Area of land that lies within a proposed Local Green Space (Policy BLACON4 of the BCNP) on which it is proposed to re-position the two main pitches: Pitch Area A is moved 40m NE and Pitch Area B is moved 5m NW (see also Plan C). 16 The existing 7x7 pitch in the NE corner of the site will be removed to enable this repositioning.



Plan C: Site Layout Plan

3.13 The Developable Area comprising the building, its car parking area and a replacement children's play area will be up to 6,300 sq.m. (65m x 97m) located on the SW area of the site as shown on Plan C. Within that Area there is:

- a fixed Building Zone within which the building must be located, allowing for a 4m wide space between the Zone and the Non-Developable Area;
- land for up to 64 car parking spaces;
- land for a children's play area up to 460 sq.m.; and

- the necessary access and external circulation space for servicing and cycle parking.

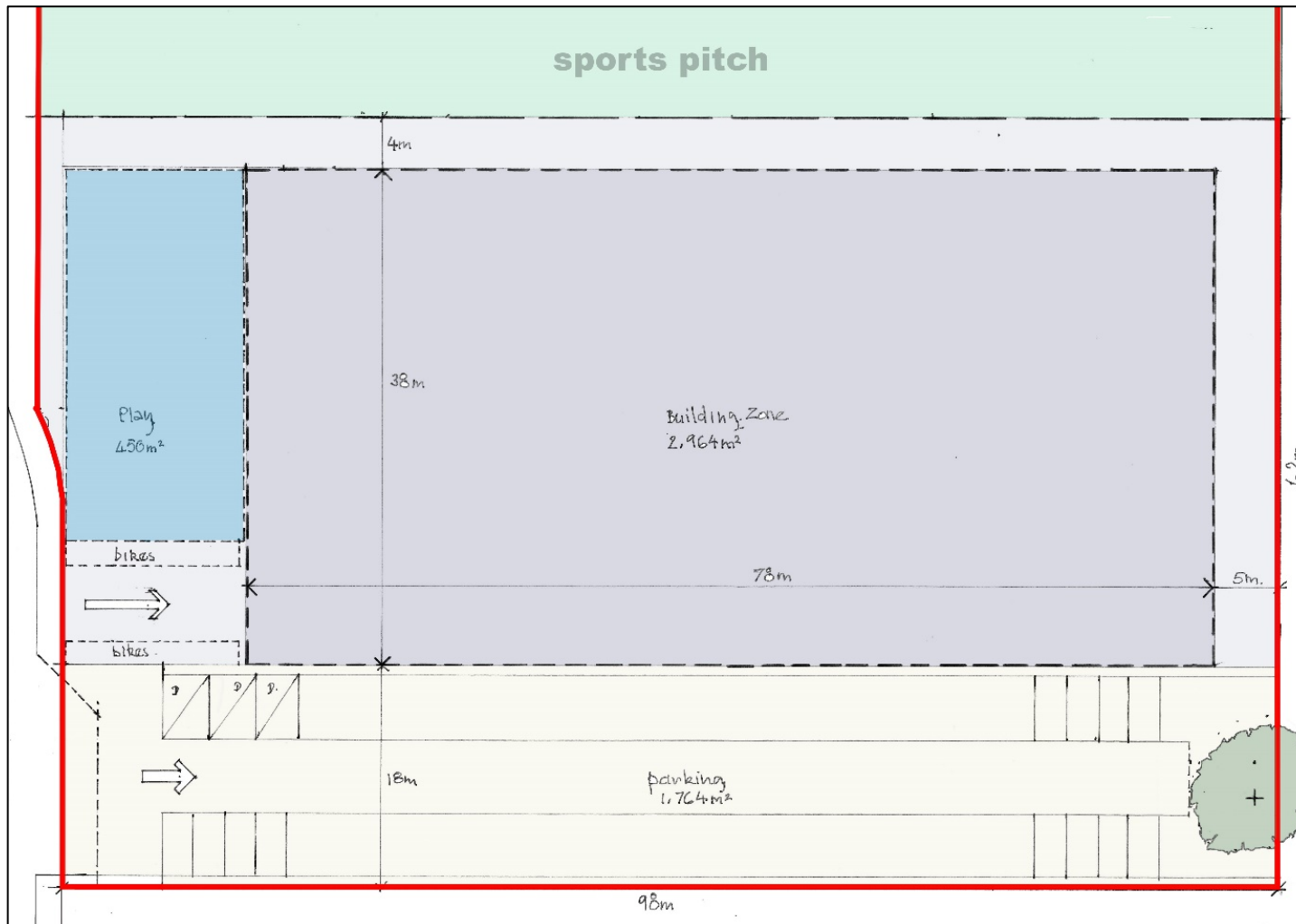
3.14 The building will allow for the mix of sports and community uses in the way its operating hours are designed, rather than in the division of internal floorspace for dedicated uses. That space will be designed to be sufficiently flexible to allow for both uses to occupy the building at different times and occasionally together, but it is expected the majority of its opening hours will be for the sports uses.

3.15 The erection of the building will require the demolition of the existing pavilion and youth club buildings and the minor repositioning of the two main football pitches on the remainder of the site. The youth club building space will be re-provided in the community use hours of the Hub; the pavilion building space will be re-provided by a dedicated changing room area as well as a kitchen and café area that will serve all the Hub uses.

3.16 In repositioning the pitches, further work will be undertaken as part of a drainage scheme across the site to tackle pockets of moderate surface water flooding and to allow for two 7 v 7 and one 9 v 9 occasional pitches to be created within each main pitch. There will be no other development on that land.

3.17 The proposal will also require the relocation of the existing children's play area at the site entrance that may be up to 50% larger than the existing facility within a more secure setting overlooked by the building. The new play space will be replaced as part of the main scheme but it will need to be closed during the construction period.

3.18 More detail on the proposed overall configuration and maximum dimensions of the fixed Building Zone is shown on Plan D. In due course, if BCT determines that a small building can meet the essential requirements of the BCNP policy in terms of the use of the Hub, then it must still fit within the Zone but require fewer car parking spaces.



Plan D: Building Zone Plan

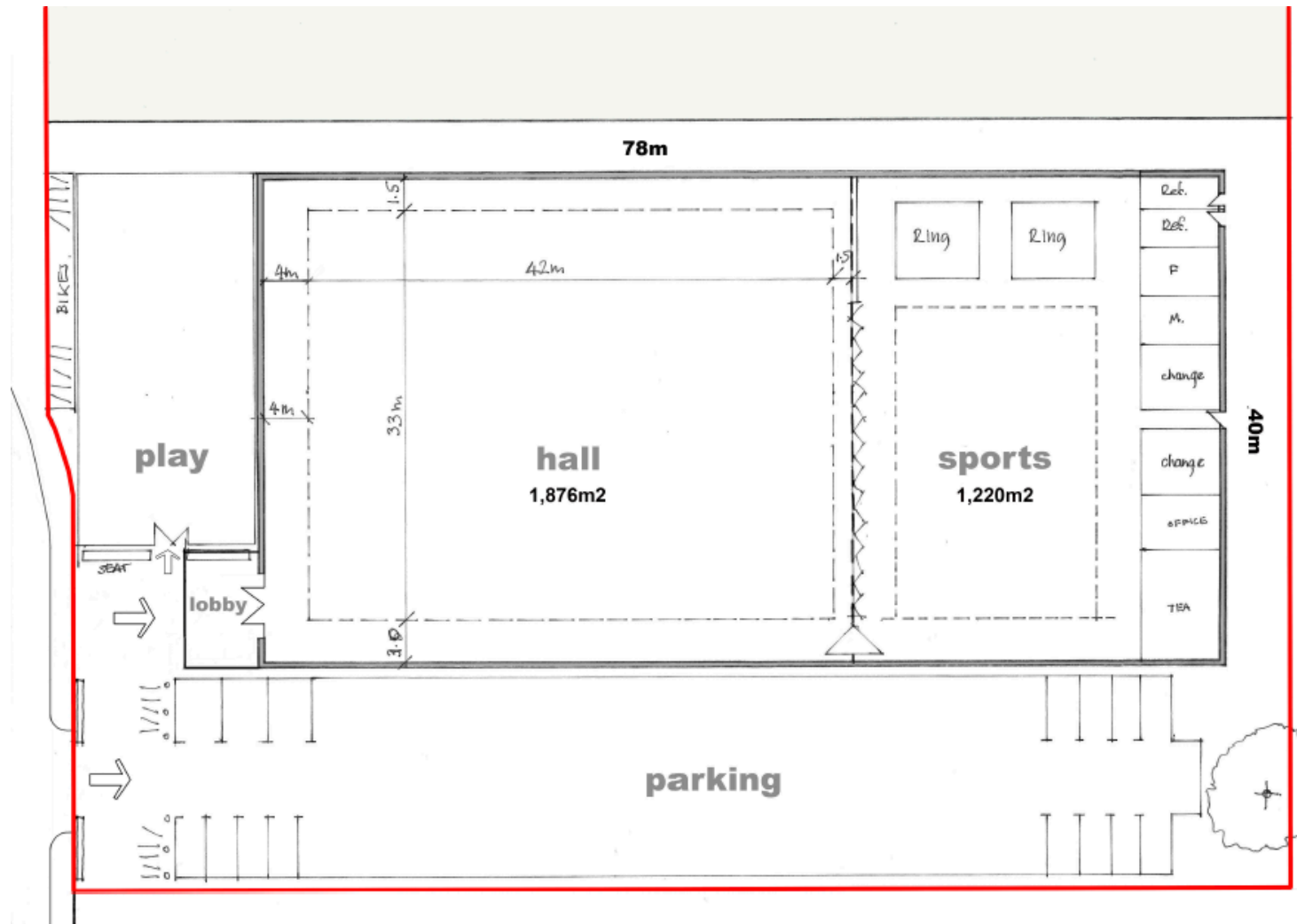
3.19 The Concept Building Layout Plan (see Plan E) illustrates how a building of the maximum size permissible within the parameters of the Building Zone may be located and sub-divided. It is not a fixed proposal but instead is intended to show one way in which the requirements of Policy BLACON1 can be met. For that reason, Plan E is not a plan for approval per §2.4 of the NDO. BCT will prepare a detailed proposal to discharge the conditions of this NDO once it has finalised its operating model and funding plan.

3.20 In the example shown, the building is in two parts that are configured to be used independently or together:

- A multi-use Hall area of 47.5m x 40m (1,876 sq.m.) capable of accommodating a range of sports and community uses including a 5-a-side football pitch and the youth club.
- A multi-use Sports area of 40m x 30.5m (1,220 sq.m.) with fixed provision for boxing including two rings and a flexible sports activity area. It will also provide replacement modern football changing facilities for the football clubs within a 6m wide services strip along the SE elevation with direct access to the pitches – that same strip will also accommodate space for toilets, a kitchen, an office and equipment storage space.

3.21 The Hall space will be large enough and of a maximum building height of 8.1m to accommodate a wide range of indoor sports uses with potential partitioning of the space for multiple uses. Importantly, it will offer up to five times more space for the youth club than its current buildings, which may encourage other community clubs and uses to want to use the building. The Sports space can be configured in a number of ways to enable easy access from the Hall to the services strip without disrupting sports users.

3.22 The parking area has capacity for 64 spaces allowing for the retention of an existing tree and disabled spaces. This achieves approx. 50% of the maximum standard set out in the Parking Standards SPD for a building of 3,120 sq.m. floorspace which is the maximum set out in the parameters. The layout provides for cycle spaces set out in proximity to the entrance to meet the minimum standard.



Plan E: Concept Building Layout

SuDS Strategy

3.23 In respect of managing surface water flood risk, a sustainable drainage strategy of the proposal will seek to improve the current situation. This is shown on the Environment Agency Surface Water Flood mapping (see Plan F), with some small pockets of land around the perimeter of the site being at low or medium risk.

3.24 The existing impermeable surfaces in Building Zone area totals approx. 1,300 sq.m.. The proposed building with a roof area of up to 3,120 sq.m. will create additional run off that will need to be addressed through the SuDS design. The strategy will therefore include the design of the drainage of the realigned football pitches, with the use of rainwater harvesting from the scheme for irrigation.



Plan F: Surface Water Flood Map

3.25 The drainage scheme design will include access, parking and play areas as permeable surfaces only; the use of onsite attenuation as part of the design of the parking area; and water conservation through rainwater harvesting for pitch irrigation.

3.26 The detailed design work cannot be undertaken until the building design, and extent of pitch realignment, have been agreed. It has therefore been conditioned.

4. EVIDENCE BASE

4.1 The main evidence to support the NDO is the Blacon Sports & Community Hubs Feasibility Study commissioned by the BNA in autumn 2024 from its consultants, ONH, and funded by the Government's Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme.

4.2 The Study looked at a number of options for delivering sports and community buildings on land at Blacon High School off Melbourne Road and/or on the sports ground off Cairns Crescent. It assessed the key technical, policy and legal constraints at each site and worked up a brief for the types of uses and building space (internal and external) for which there was a demand by the local community.

4.3 In preparing the Study, ONH and BNA engaged with the landowners/tenants and with other important stakeholders like CWaC and Sport England. Their insights and feedback have been gratefully received and have been helpful in finalising both the Neighbourhood Plan policies and the NDO.

4.4 A copy of the report is published separately.