

BLACON NEIGHBOURHOOD ALLIANCE
The Designated Neighbourhood Forum for Blacon

BASIC CONDITIONS STATEMENT FOR THE BLACON COMMUNITY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2025 – 2040

SUBMISSION VERSION: OCTOBER 2025

1. Introduction

1.1 For the Blacon Community Neighbourhood Plan (BCNP) to be approved by the local planning authority it must meet some 'basic conditions':

- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the plan
- the making of the plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
- the making of the plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority
- the making of the plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, retained EU obligations
- prescribed conditions are met in relation to the plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the plan proposal

2. National Policy

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains a number of policies to which the BCNP has had regard:

Policy BLACON1

Community Uses

2.2 For **§96 and §98**, the BNA and BCT are committed to providing local people with a community-based, accessible place to serve as a focal point for Blacon. The creation of a Hub would help reduce isolation and loneliness and would welcome all sectors of the community and build social capital, in an inclusive environment which aims to improve their physical and mental wellbeing. They know that many local groups and organisations that will be able to offer support at the Hub, principally through sport, and ensure that they meet their needs.

2.3 Shortly before the submission of the BCNP and NDO, 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.

Sports & Recreation Uses

2.4 Sport England is a statutory consultee and considers proposals affecting playing fields in light of §104 and against its own playing fields policy, which states:

‘Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of:

- *all or any part of a playing field, or*
- *land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or*
- *land allocated for use as a playing field*

unless, in the judgement of Sport England, the development as a whole meets with one or more of five specific exceptions.

2.5 The fifth of those is the most relevant to BLACON1 and states: *‘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’.*

It assesses the potential benefit of any new or extended sports facility by taking into account whether the facility:

meets an identified local or strategic need, e.g. as set out in a local authority and/or a sports national governing body strategy (rather than duplicating existing provision)

- the 2021 CWaC Playing Pitch Strategy noted the Cairns Crescent youth and mini pitches were of poor quality and recommended improvements to quality through enhanced maintenance – in practice this can only be brought about through a proper investment in the hub
- community surveys show the proposal will complement existing sports provision with indoor sports uses of a type, mix and cost that would be configured by a local community-led organisation to address affordability and accessibility issues with some existing provision
- with most sports uses in Blacon being charged for by public or private operators, some households are effectively excluded from accessing them either by cost or availability; in this case the proposal is intended to provide an alternative to charged for services, not a duplication of an existing public service

fully secures sport-related benefits for the local community

- the policy requires the hub building is used only for a mix of sports and community uses and that the two full size sports pitches are retained (per their existing dimensions)
- the policy allows for the substitute provision of an indoor 5v5 football rather than a like-for-like outdoor replacement, which is acceptable to the football clubs that operate from the site

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the policy cannot require the re-provision of the mini sports pitch at the High School as this is already a planning condition that has not yet been implemented, but the proposal has encouraged the school to consider making that provision • the policy requires proposals to be community-led, i.e. only implemented and operated by a community-led organisation that meets the NPPF definition – this will ensure the provision is accessible and affordable to local residents, schools, and community groups, and is highly responsive to local needs
<p>helps to meet identified sports development priorities</p> <p>complies with relevant Sport England and national governing bodies of sport design guidance</p> <p>improves the delivery of sport and physical education on school sites</p> <p>is accessible by alternative transport modes to the car</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal is bottom-up, community driven by an understanding of the barriers to accessing affordable indoor sports provision like dance and boxing • the policy requires the two full size sports pitches are retained (per their existing dimensions) and that their repositioning is the minimum necessary • the policy requires that the hub building includes changing rooms that meet the required standards to replace the existing facilities • the drainage improvements for the whole scheme will include addressing surface water flooding that has increasingly reduced the time the pitches are playable • the proposal has encouraged Blacon High School to complete the implementation of its approved site redevelopment plan with five new football pitches (1 11x11, 9x9 and three 5x5) on site, which is less than 400m from this site – the location alongside but not exclusive to the school will replace and improve the quality of the existing pitch on this site – the provision of the three 5x5 pitches will more than compensate for the loss of the outdoor pitch at Cairns Crescent • Blacon Youth Football Club is liaising with Avenue Services, which owns land at Queen Elizabeth Field on the other side of Blacon, to reinstate a 9x9 football pitch that has not been used for many years – the Football Club has committed to managing the new facility alongside its other school-based sites • the location is highly accessible for walking, cycling and bus services connecting it with all of Blacon • the policy requires that there is cycle parking on site and that its access is safe and well-lit for pedestrians

It requires proposals to demonstrate that the loss of any area of playing field will not have an unacceptable impact on the current and potential playing pitch provision on the site by showing that:

the proposed facility clearly meets an identified local or strategic need

it would result in the main user being able to meet their own minimum requirements for playing pitches

other users would not be displaced without equivalent replacement provision

it would not materially reduce the capability and flexibility of the playing field to provide for a range of sports and playing pitches

the area of playing field is insignificant in meeting local or strategic sporting needs

- the football clubs that operate the site have both enthusiastically supported the proposal which fits with their ambitions – the investment in the whole site, including new changing room and support facilities will significantly improve their clubs
- the two football clubs that operate from the site have both offered their full support for the proposal, which will improve and complement their pitches elsewhere in Blacon (see Consultation Statement)
- the mini pitch is a marginal feature of the site as it is only occasionally used by the clubs – the alternative provision of an indoor 5v5 space in the Hub will more than compensate and again is supported by the football clubs – although this is not a policy proposal and is not being argued as a replacement of the existing facility, three new outdoor 5v5 pitches will be delivered by the school nearby that will be accessible to all, not just the school
- the 5x5 pitch is marginal to the current use of the site – its description in the 2025 Playing Pitch Strategy is inaccurate as confirmed by the support of the football clubs – the new Hub multi-use spaces will not only meet the known needs of existing sports communities (e.g. boxing and dance) but is very likely to generate new demand from the community for other sports, e.g. basketball, which its community ownership and management will be far more likely to be attuned to than a conventional, remote commercial or public sector provider
- the main focus of pitch provision at Cairns Crescent has always been the 11x11 and 9x9 pitches – the mini pitch is of a poor quality and there will be better locations for that provision (at the school) and the clubs consider a new 5x5 indoor provision will be a valuable addition to their range of pitches in Blacon.

2.6 As a result, it is considered that this exception test is met. The direct loss of the mini playing pitch to enable the provision of the Hub building is first mitigated by the alternative indoor provision in the Hub, then by the new pitches to be created at the school, and finally is outweighed by the significant improvement to the overall

development of sport in Blacon. The proposal will modernise the existing sports use of the land and meet unmet needs for accessible and affordable sports and community facilities in Blacon. A new community-led development trust has been established to bring forward this and other projects in Blacon in the coming years.

2.7 As a result, it is considered the policy has had regard to national policy, both as expressed by NPPF §104 and by the policies of Sport England.

Flood Risk (inc. the Sequential Test)

2.8 In respect of managing the low to medium surface water flood risk in a small number of locations around the edge of the site, the sequential test has been applied in line with §172. Since the Use Class Order 2020, the development supported by the policy will change the use of part of the land from F2 outdoor sports and recreation use to an E(d) indoor sports, recreation and fitness use. The remaining, larger part of the site will stay in its F2 use and will not be developed.

2.9 Part of the land to be developed for the Hub building and car park is shown on the latest Flood Risk maps to be at a low to medium surface water flood risk but all the land lies in Flood Zone 1 (see Map A). A small area of the defined building zone has only a low flood risk; a part of the site indicated for car parking use for the building is at a medium flood risk. Although the policy only defines a building zone and indicates where the car parking use may be, subject to further detailed design, it is unlikely the parking area could avoid including the land at medium flood risk. It is therefore prudent to consider any alternative suitable and available sites.



Plan F: Surface Water Flood Map

2.10 With the intention that this community-led development must serve the local community of Blacon, and especially the southern half of Blacon, then only land in that same area could be considered as a genuine alternative. Moreover, part of the rationale for the Hub is the replacement and improvement of sports and youth club facilities that already occupy the Cairns Crescent site.

2.11 In which case, any alternative site must be capable of accommodating the Hub and its parking. It must also either be large enough to include two new full size football pitches or be close enough to the Cairns Crescent pitches for there to be only a very short walking distance from the changing rooms to those pitches.

2.12 The only possible land that could have met those tests is the open land at Blacon High School off Melbourne Road; even then it would be a 300m walk to the Cairns Crescent pitches. The land was made available by the School for the BNA to consider for this purpose and therefore formed part of the Feasibility Study. However, the Study concluded that, although the School's offer was well intended, a combination of legal constraints would make it very difficult for BNA to secure in practice.

2.13 As a result, the policy proposal passes the sequential test. Furthermore, the development proposal presents an ideal opportunity to address how surface water flooding is managed across the whole site for the foreseeable future.

Town Centre Uses

2.14 It is considered that the provisions of **§91** in respect of managing 'main town centre uses' are not engaged. The policy requires that the main use of the Hub building shall fall under Class E(d) of the Use Class Order 2020, i.e. 'indoor sports' but with other community uses (Class F2) outside of sports use hours. The policy also makes it clear that its benefit only extends to a community-led organisation, as defined by the NPPF. In which case, the proposed use of the land is not considered to fall within the 'health and fitness' description of 'main town centre uses' in the NPPF Glossary or of the adopted Local Plan.

Policy BLACON2

2.15 In identifying the Community Facilities in Blacon to which the adopted Local Plan provisions apply for protecting against unnecessary loss and for encouraging improvements, the policy is in line with **§96** and **§98**.

Policy BLACON3

2.16 In defining Western Avenue as a Local Retail Centre the policy is consistent with **§96** in promoting 'social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other'. It also plans positively for the provision and use of shared spaces and community facilities such as local shops in line with **§98**.

Policy BLACON4

2.17 The policy identifies a number of Local Green Spaces using the tests set out in §107. Their designation individually and collectively is considered consistent with the local planning of sustainable development, per §106, as Blacon is unlikely to be assessed in a future Local Plan as suitable for significant infill development, and there remain opportunities for such development elsewhere in the area. The policy wording is consistent with that of §108 in respect of engaging Green Belt policy provisions.

2.18 In conclusion the policies are all considered to have had regard to national policy.

3. Sustainable Development

3.1 The four policies are intended to collectively have significant, positive social effects by increasing access to affordable, community-led sports and other community facilities and services and green spaces across the local community.

3.2 Policies BLACON1 and BLACON3 may have positive economic effects in an area of higher relative unemployment by sustaining and creating new jobs in operating the new Hub facilities and in encouraging more local retail development respectively.

3.3 Policy BLACON4 will have a positive environmental effect in protecting cherished local green spaces and Policy BLACON1 should lead to the better management of localised surface water flooding on the site.

3.4 In conclusion the policies are all considered to contribute positively to the achievement of sustainable development.

4. Strategic Policy

4.1 The following policies of the adopted CWaC Local Plan are relevant in the assessment of the BCNP. They comprise both strategic and non-strategic policies of Parts One and Two of the Local Plan:

- STRAT1 Sustainable development
- STRAT10 Transport and accessibility
- STRAT11 Infrastructure
- SOC5 Health and well-being
- SOC6 Open space, sport and recreation
- ENV1 Flood risk and water management
- ENV6 High quality design and sustainable construction
- DM2 Impact on residential amenity
- DM3 Design, character and visual amenity
- DM4 Sustainable construction
- DM29 Health impacts of new development

- DM36 Provision for Sport and Recreation
- DM39 Cultural and Community Facilities
- DM40 Development and flood risk
- DM41 Sustainable drainage systems
- DM43 Water quality, supply and treatment
- T5 Parking and access

STRAT1

4.2 STRAT1 sets out the underlying ‘sustainable development principles’ of the Plan, including supporting *“regeneration in the most deprived areas of the borough and ensur(ing) those reliant on non-car modes of transport can access jobs and services”*.

4.3 The Hub site in Policy BLACON1 is located at the heart of the southern half of Blacon, which is one of the most deprived areas of the Borough. The significant upgrade in local sports and community facilities and services, delivered by a community-led organisation aimed at addressing local needs within walking distance of most who live there, is very much in line with this principle.

4.4 The Western Avenue Local Retail Centre of Policy BLACON3 is intended to secure the future of this important cluster of retail and local services within walking distance of almost every resident in the southern half of Blacon.

STRAT10

4.5 Policy STRAT10 requires that *“development ... should ... reduce carbon emissions from transport ... (and) improve accessibility to jobs and key services which help support greater equality of opportunity”*. It goes on to state that, *“in order to minimise the need for travel, proposals for new development should be located so as they are accessible to local services and facilities by a range of transport modes”*.

4.6 It also states that:

“New development will be required to demonstrate that:

- *Additional traffic can be accommodated safely and satisfactorily within the existing, or proposed, highway network*
- *Satisfactory arrangements can be made to accommodate the additional traffic before the development is brought into use*
- *Appropriate provision is made for access to public transport and other alternative means of transport to the car*
- *Measures have been incorporated to improve physical accessibility and remove barriers to mobility, especially for disabled and older people. The safety of all road users should be taken into account in the design and layout of new developments.”*

4.7 The Hub site is located 200m from the Western Avenue Local Retail Centre of shops and services at the heart of the southern half of Blacon. Approx. 75% of all

residents of Blacon, and more than 95% of those in its southern half (below the former railway line), live within an 800m (15 minute) walking distance. The 1/1A Chester – Blacon high frequency, circular bus service runs along Melbourne Road with stops 30m – 50m from the site. Every resident of Blacon lives within a 5 minute walk of bus stops along the route.

4.8 The use of the site for sports has evolved over more than 80 years. At peak times on seasonal weekends it can be very busy with some use of the surrounding streets for on-street parking, but still a majority of users arrive on foot or by bike. However, there is currently no co-ordination of activities or active traffic or parking management at those times, which will change once this new scheme is operational.

4.9 The proposals of the other three policies are all intended to secure the future of community facilities, local services and green spaces within walking distance of the local community.

STRAT11 and DM39

4.10 Policy STRAT11 states that, *“the Council will support the provision of appropriate new infrastructure ... (and) measures to protect, enhance or improve access to existing facilities, services and amenities that contribute to the quality of life of residents provision of additional facilities, services and infrastructure to meet identified needs ... in locations that are appropriate and accessible”*.

4.11 Policy DM39 then states: *“Proposals for new or improved community facilities and local services within urban areas, key service centres and local service centres will be supported where they are of an appropriate scale to serve the local community. It goes on to state that, “the Council will support neighbourhood plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders that seek to plan for new community facilities”*.

4.12 Whilst principally providing permanent homes to various sporting organisations, the Hub of BLACON1 will provide co-located supporting community uses which will ensure the building can be self-sufficient in terms of funding, generating adequate income from supplementary community, recreation and leisure activities, commonplace in many sports venues which require a multifunctional approach to be sustainable.

4.13 The existing football clubs, the youth club and children’s play area uses will all be significantly improved, delivered and operated by a community-led organisation, the BCT. The Hub and repositioning of the pitches will increase the efficient use of the space on the site and replace buildings that can no longer meet modern user needs and the poor quality play area will also be upgraded as part of the project.

4.14 The proposals of the other three policies are all intended to secure the future of local infrastructure within walking distance of the local community.

SOC5 and DM29

4.15 Policy SOC5 states, *“proposals will be supported that ... provide new or improved health facilities across the borough, particularly in areas of recognised need ... promote safe and accessible environments and developments with good access by walking, cycling and public transport ... (and) support opportunities to widen and strengthen the borough’s ... sport, recreation and leisure offer”*.

4.16 Policy DM29 then states, *“Development proposals should take every reasonable opportunity to promote and positively contribute to the health of the borough”*.

4.17 The Hub of Policy BLACON1 will meet all of these policy objectives and requirements by creating a community-led sports and community use to meet gaps in local need in one of the most deprived areas of the Borough. It is expected the success of the scheme will increase participation in active sports in Blacon across a wide range of age groups and genders.

4.18 It will complement other, primarily commercial provision of sports and leisure uses provided elsewhere in Blacon but with a community-led, non-profit focus to maximise access for local people and to fine-tune how provision is delivered to meet local needs.

4.19 Again, all three of the other policies should continue to enable the local community to access local facilities, services and spaces that will have the biproduct of promoting health and well-being.

SOC6 and DM36

4.20 Policy SOC 6 states that, *“the Council will seek to protect, manage and enhance existing open spaces, sport and recreation facilities ... Proposals will be supported that ...improve the quality and quantity of accessible open space, sport and recreation facilities in the local area”*.

4.21 It goes on to state that, *“proposals on existing open space, sport and recreation facilities will only be permitted where ... equivalent or better replacement quality and quantity open space, sport or recreation facilities will be provided in a suitable location”*.

4.22 Policy DM36 states that, *“provision of new sport and recreation facilities will be supported in line with the priorities of the Draft Sports Facilities Strategy, subject to relevant development plan policies”*.

4.23 This matter has been addressed in full in Section 2 of this Statement in relation to how policies SOC6 and DM36 refine national policy as expressed in the NPPF (§104) and as interpreted by Sport England in its policy and guidance. It is therefore not repeated here.

4.24 However there is the matter of how general conformity is defined for the purpose of assessing Policy BLACON1. Policy SOC6 has two parts: one relating to existing uses and the other to new facilities. Both parts comprise three elements: open space, sports and recreation. Policy BLACON1 requires the Hub building to accommodate

sports uses and to retain the two main outdoor pitches and to replace the children's play area, if these become necessary. Only the marginal, least used and valued and poorer quality smaller pitch may be lost in order to accommodate the building.

4.25 There will therefore be no material loss of open space and the existing sports and recreational uses will be retained and enhanced. The football clubs have made it clear they would much prefer to operate the two main pitches and have access to modern changing room, kitchen and storage facilities in the Hub and to its indoor 5x5 space than retain the existing small pitch. There should therefore be no doubt that the policy meets with any definition of 'general conformity' with Policy SOC6 alone, let alone the Neighbourhood Plan as a whole.

4.26 Policy BLACON4 seeks to protect from harmful development some of Blacon's most precious spaces. They include the majority of the Cairns Crescent site on BLACON1, within which the sports pitches area lie.

ENV1 and DM40

4.27 Policy ENV1 states that, *"All development must follow the sequential approach to determining the suitability of land for development, directing new development to areas at the lowest risk of flooding."*

4.28 Policy DM40 then states that, *"Where a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment is required ... this will be expected to demonstrate whether a proposed development is likely to be affected by current or future flooding (including effects of climate change) from any source"*.

4.29 A sequential test has been undertaken for Policy BLACON1 and its analysis and conclusions are set out earlier in this Statement.

ENV6

4.30 Policy ENV6 states that, *"Development should ... achieve a sense of place through appropriate layout and design, provide high quality public realm ... ensure ease of movement and legibility, with priority for pedestrians and cyclists, promote safe, secure environments and access routes ... provide for the sustainable management of waste ... incorporate energy efficiency measures and provide for renewable energy generation either on site or through carbon offsetting measures ... mitigate and adapt to the predicted effects of climate change (and meet applicable nationally described standards for design and construction"*.

4.31 Policy BLACON1 requires that proposals for the Hub scheme do not significantly increase the effects on local amenity than the current sports uses. The indicative masterplan shows how the new building may best be located on the south-west part of the site. In this case, the defined developable area within which the building will be located lies far enough behind the rear of the residential properties that front onto Melbourne Road and Western Avenue and adjoin the site boundary to avoid the

potential for overlooking. In any event, there is a line of mature trees within the site boundary with those properties that already effectively screen the site – this can be bolstered with additional planting as part of the landscape scheme.

4.32 It is an important objective to minimise noise and light disturbance for local residents. Although the sports use pre-dates much of the surrounding residential area, and therefore residents will have known about and become familiar with its busiest periods, the policy requires that the building specification and operating plan are designed to ensure that no significant additional noise or light harm will arise from the scheme.

Other Policies

4.33 As noted above, it is not considered that the nature of the use or of the community-led operation of the Hub of Policy BLACON1 meet the definition of a 'health and fitness centre' in respect of 'main town centre uses', hence policies ECON2 and DM14 are not engaged.

4.34 The site does not lie within any type of archaeological notification area, notably the designated Chester & Boughton Area of Archaeological Importance, and nor does the Cheshire Historic Environment Record indicate any potential archaeological interest. Policy DM50 is therefore not engaged.

4.35 In conclusion the policies of the BCNP as a whole are considered to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted development plan.

5. Retained EU Obligations

5.1 In its screening of the BCNP in accordance with the Habitats Regulations, CWaC determined that no international habitat sites would be affected by the proposals of the Plan.

5.2 Of the other European directives, such as the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC), Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC) or the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), none are considered to apply to the particular circumstances of the Plan given the scope and intention of its policies.