Horsham District Council

FAO: Steve Astles

By email

12 June 2025

Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
Application Reference: DC/25/0740
Site: Nuthurst Cricket Club, Mannings Heath, RH13 6JX
Proposal: New base for an astroturf surface with a retractable cricket net.
Sport England Reference: PA/25/SE/HO/70821

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

Summary

Statutory consultee role
Sport England raises **no objection** to this application as it is considered to meet exception 2 of our Playing Fields Policy and to accord with Paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Sport England – Statutory consultee role and policy

We understand that you have consulted us as a statutory consultee in line with the above Order. Therefore, we have considered the application in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in particular paragraph 99, and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy, which is presented within our 'Playing Fields Policy and Guidance Document':
www.sportengland.org/playingfieldspolicy

Sport England's policy is to oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or prejudice the use of:

- all or any part of a playing field, or
- land which has been used as a playing field land 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. A summary of the exceptions is provided in the annex to this response.

The Proposal and its Impact on the playing field

The proposal is for the installation of a new concrete base over which astroturf will be laid and movable cricket nets used. Sport England is unable to advise if this arrangement is appropriate however we understand that it is similar to the existing net area base that is to be removed, and the natural turf restored. The outfield of the cricket square appears to be quite a bit shorter than the ECB recommended minimum senior boundary of 45.72m plus 2.74m clear safety run off and the base would be sited within that distance of the square. However, if the base and astroturf is precisely level with the surrounding natural turf then at the distance proposed, there should be no significant safety concerns.

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

Proposals of this type are assessed against exception 2 of our policy that is, *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*'.

While there is a degree of concern as noted above, due to the overall constrained nature of the site, the base will facilitate the use of moveable nets that would support the principal use of the site as playing field.

Sport England's Position

Given the above, Sport England raises **no objection** to the application because it is considered to accord with exception 2 of our Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 99 of the NPPF.

(Consultation) (England) Direction 2021 requires the application to be referred to the Secretary of State via the National Planning Casework Unit.

If you would like any further information or advice, please contact the undersigned.

Please advise Sport England on the outcome of this planning application.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Edwards
Planning Manager

She/her

[redacted]

Annex

The Five Exceptions to Sport England's Playing Fields Policy

Exception 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.

Exception 2
The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field, and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.

Exception 3
The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

- reduce the size of any playing pitch;
- result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
- reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
- result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; or
- prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.

Exception 4
The area of playing field to be lost as a result of the proposed development will be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new area of playing field:

- of equivalent or better quality, and
- of equivalent or greater quantity, and
- in a suitable location, and
- subject to equivalent or better accessibility and management arrangements.

Exception 5
The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.

The full 'Playing Fields Policy and Guidance Document' is available to view at:
www.sportengland.org/playingfieldspolicy