Horsham District Council

FAO: Alice Johnson

By email

23 October 2024

Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

Application Reference: DC/24/1495
Site: Southwater Sports Club, RH13 9BT
Proposal: Erection of four 20m wide ball stop nets with poles to football pitches
Sport England Reference: PA/24/SE/HO/68925

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 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), subject to clarification that the proposed poles and netting will be set clearly behind the 3m clear safety run off area required from the pitch perimeter line.

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 103, 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 demountable poles and safety netting to be sited behind the four goal areas of the two community pitches. The netting will help to reduce the risk of potential ball strike to users of the adjoining public area and will therefore serve to protect the use of the pitches. However, the block plan shows the installations at the back of the 3m run off area. Sport England would seek clarification that no part encroaches into the 3m area beyond the pitch perimeter line that should remain clear of obstruction.

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

Subject to that clarification, the proposal would accord with exception two of our playing field policy as it would support the principal use of the playing field for football.

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 103 of the NPPF.

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

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]
Planning Manager

[redacted]

[redacted]
[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