

Horsham District Council

FAO: Alice Johnson

By email only

7th September 2026

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

Application Reference: DC/26/1089

Site: COLLYERS (COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER), 82 HURST ROAD, RH12 2EJ

Proposal: Phased development of a Technology Centre consisting of two buildings, associated landscaping, and reconfigured access and parking.

Sport England Reference: PA/26/SE/HO/74767

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

Summary

Statutory consultee role

Sport England raises **an objection** to this application as it is not considered to accord with Policy HC7 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) or any of the exceptions to our Playing Fields Policy.

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 policy HC7, and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy, which is presented within our 'Playing Fields Policy and Guidance Document': www.sportengland.org/playingfieldspolicy (summary of exceptions annexed to this letter).

The Proposal and its Impact on the playing field

The existing playing field at the site measures approximately 4ha and encompasses a hard surface MUGA as well as a variety of playing pitches. This pitch layout has varied over time and season but at its maximum has included a senior youth/full size rugby pitch; 2no. youth 11 x 11 football pitches; and 3no. mini-soccer pitches. There is also large car park in the south of the site.

The proposed development would result in the loss of this car park with the construction of the new technology centre. The relocated car park will be sited on the playing field on the eastern side of the site and will result in the loss of playing field land amounting to approximately 0.5ha. The proposed pitch layout plan shows winter sports pitches; the summer pitch layout plan is not provided. The proposed pitch layout plan sets out that there is no net loss of pitch provision and that the existing quantum of playing pitches can continue to be accommodated. However, Sport England considers that these pitches are more severely constrained with less scope to move and relocate or reconfigure pitches.

Sport England notes that consideration was given to formalising community access and use of the playing field/sports facilities through a community use agreement. However, the planning statement makes clear that the school considered this an inappropriate measure in light of the pitch quality issues and the current level of use at the site.

Sport England considers that the Horsham District Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) dating back to 2018 is now out of date and cannot be relied upon as a robust and up to date assessment of playing pitch needs. Sport England therefore gives this evidence base no weight in its assessment of the application.

Sport England has consulted the national governing bodies for sport and we have received the following comments.

The Football Foundation on behalf of the FA comments that the site accommodates multiple pitches; including a rugby pitch, two youth 11v11 pitches (91 x 55m) and three 5v5 pitches (marked at 37 x 22m, which is smaller than recommended dimensions but above the permitted minimum dimensions). Notably, although the existing site plan indicates overlapping pitch boundaries, satellite imagery of the site shows the 11v11 and rugby pitches have separation of 6m and 8m, therefore avoiding overlapping run-off areas. The proposed site plan provides football pitches as existing dimensions, and therefore the repositioning of the pitches is welcome. There are however several points which need to be addressed to ensure there is no detrimental impact.

- Run-offs are not shown to the small-sided pitches. Notably, the northernmost pitch appears to be marked immediately adjacent to a hard-standing area, with no run-off. This is not an acceptable location and poses a safety risk to participants. The Foundation would recommend reviewing

layout and exploring whether both this pitch and the adjacent 11v11 could move further West to accommodate run-offs.

- Whilst the existing plan shows conflicting run-offs, it does appear the site can and does accommodate pitches without conflicting run-offs (image below) and therefore the Foundation would recommend revision to ensure consistency between the plans and site conditions.

The RFU comments that the layout of the repositioned rugby pitch should conform to World Rugby Law 1. With reference to run-off areas, if World Rugby Law 1 cannot be achieved, the operator should follow the guidance in the RFU Essential Guidance note.

The RFU understands that Collyers College utilises the RFU 365 Artificial Grass Pitch at Horsham RUFC. It would be useful to understand whether this is correct and to what level (exporting demand) if this is the case. The RFU is currently working with Horsham RUFC to build additional floodlit capacity on site to cater for highlighted increasing demand. Any implications from the development at the college that increases / adds demand to the community site would need consideration to ensure that the current capacity issues were not exacerbated.

Assessment against the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy

Sport England considers that no replacement playing field provision is proposed and there are no benefits to sport arising from the proposal which may mitigate the loss of playing field land amounting to approximately 0.5ha.

In respect of policy HC7 (c) of the NPPF, whilst the development is for public service infrastructure, the resulting loss would not be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and/or quality. Sport England therefore considers that the proposal is not in accordance with policy HC7 of the NPPF.

We do not consider that any of the exceptions to our playing fields policy apply in this case, and Sport England is unable to support the application.

Sport England's Position

Given the above, Sport England raises an **objection** to the application because it is not considered to accord with policy HC7 of the NPPF or any of the exceptions to our Playing Fields Policy.

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

Yours sincerely,

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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