

Horsham District Council

FAO: Ms N Pettifer

By email only

12th August 2025

Planning Practice Guidance: Non-statutory consultees

Paragraph 022 Reference ID: 15-022-20140306

Application Reference: DC/23/0406

Site: Land To The West of Ashington C of E School Park Lane Ashington West Sussex

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 180 dwellings, all-weather sport pitch, sports pavilion and allotments; with associated access, landscaping, open space and infrastructure (amended plans)

Sport England Reference: PA/23/SE/HO/65140

Dear Nicola,

Thank you for re-consulting Sport England on the above proposal.

We have reviewed the amended drawings for the playing field which is now a 3G artificial grass pitch* (AGP), dwg: 06200089-BEL-SL-01 Rev G. and for the pavilion: dwg: 062009-PAV-P1 rev D. (*We believe the proposal is not a Multi-Use Games Area, (MUGA) but rather a 3G AGP).

We're supportive of the change from grass pitches to a 3G – there's a need locally – but we need more detail on design and specification to ensure this is properly designed and fully compliant (including a requirement for the pitch to be tested and placed on the register). Equally, an understanding of the management plan is needed to make sure the pitch meets the need.

We have consulted with Sussex Football Association/ The Football Foundation, (SFA/FF) and are setting out their comments verbatim below:

The previous proposed pitch layout for this development is as below, showing two youth 11v11 pitches proposed adjacent to a sports pavilion. We understand the below layout to be the plan supported by Sport England's most recent comments.

A revised configuration has subsequently been submitted (dated on the planning portal as received 18/06/2025) which shows a 100m x 64m "MUGA" pitch, as below.

Whilst this revision represents a reduction in the overall quantity of pitches to be provided, the inclusion of an artificial pitch – if appropriately designed to comply with design guidance and tested (and placed on the FA 3G Pitch Register) to

ensure it can be utilised to support matchplay – would offer sufficient benefit to overall capacity to outweigh the reduced quantity.

Notably, The Horsham Local Football Facility Plan identifies a current shortfall of five 3G pitches, with a future additional demand of four 3G pitches based on both participation and population growth over the next five years.

With the ongoing housing development in the Ashington area this site is welcomed for a new 3G pitch. Ashington FC, a one-star England Football Accredited club have affiliated 16 teams, nine are mixed youth, two adult male and five female youth teams, leaving them just one team from two-star accreditation and we anticipate demand within the club and local area will continue to rise.

Presently there is insufficient detail provided on the design and specification to confirm the required compliance to guide will be the case. As such, we recommend that detailed designs for the proposed artificial pitch are submitted to achieve this. Our general design guidance is as follows.

The 3G AGP design should follow The FA Guide to Football Turf Pitch Design Principles and Layouts. Notably 100 x 64m (plus 3m run-offs) with shock pads installed to assist with the retention of rubber infill.

- 1. Recessed fencing – We recommend that the fencing is recessed to allow for safe and easy goal storage.*
- 2. Fence height – The FA recommend the perimeter fence height on all sides of the 3G AGP is 4.5m.*
- 3. Safety run-off area - A minimum safety run off 3m should be provided from all pitch perimeter lines that must be free from obstructions at all times.*
- 4. Spectator area – A dedicated hard standing area for spectators should be provided within the perimeter fence. A 1.1m high spectator barrier should be installed to ensure that spectators can view the 3G playing area from this hard standing area which is separate from the 3G area.*
- 5. Line marking – We recommend that over-marking is made to allow for different formats of football (e.g. 5v5, 7v7, 9v9 and 11v11). Over-marking should adhere to The FA Guide to Football Turf Pitch Design Principles and Layouts.*
- 6. Infill retention - measures should be taken to manage and minimise the loss of infill from the playing surface. BSI Standards, working with the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN), have developed a Technical Report describing the procedures that should be used to control infill migration. Design measures and procedures to control infill migration include:*
 - 1. Fitting containment barriers on a pitch's perimeter fencing.*
 - 2. Installing decontamination grates and boot cleaning brushes at all player and vehicle entrance gates.*
 - 3. Ensuring all stormwater drains around a pitch have suitable microfilters to capture any infill being carried by surface run-off, etc.*
 - 4. Keeping a dedicated maintenance brush within the boundaries of the pitch, so it cannot carry infill into the surrounding environment.*
 - 5. Thoroughly removing any infill from maintenance tractors, etc. before they leave the pitch.*
 - 6. FIFA, World Rugby and the International Hockey Federation (FIH) have all included the recommendations of CEN into their certification programmes for artificial grass pitches. Contractors building fields that require certification should therefore include the measures within their designs.*

Presently there is not detail on proposed sports lighting, which is an essential requirement for a 3G pitch. Detailed sports lighting plans should be submitted which comply with the FA Guide to Floodlighting.

Having reviewed the proposed ancillary facility, this is considered to be excessive to support a single 3G FTP. We would provide the following recommendations to revise the current proposal. The guidance below is aligned to our published guidance on pavilion design recommendations (available at <https://footballfoundation.org.uk/changing-pavilion-design-key-considerations>).

1. Four changing rooms are not required for a single pitch. We would recommend two team changing rooms to support use of the 3G FTP. This would present a more sustainable model for this facility. Changing rooms should provide 18sqm open changing space, a WC, and four showers (in cubicles, open showers must be avoided). Care should be taken to ensure the design avoids sight lines into the changing area.

2. Two officials' changing rooms should be provided. Each should provide 6sqm open changing space, plus a WC and shower.

3. Currently the officials and teams share the same corridor out to the pitches. We'd recommend separate routes if possible, which would appear possible by officials accessing their changing areas via a door to the external wall of the building.

4. Currently, two storage areas are proposed – one within the main pavilion, and one adjacent to the pitch. As the 3G FTP would provide recesses for goal storage, plus a maintenance equipment storage container (if designed as per published guidance), the separate storage facility seems excessive – however if consultation had indicated this is a requirement, perhaps the facility within the pavilion itself could be extended to consolidate the storage into one area.

Notably, a welcome element of the current design is the inclusion of independent WCs from the changing rooms (which is appropriate, as other users should not be required to access WCs in team changing rooms) and the inclusion of a social space with kitchen. It appears the kitchen has been designed with an externally facing serving hatch facing toward the pitch, which is also welcome and can be a positive feature to improve user experience (and support income generation to help sustain the site).

Given the management and operation of artificial pitch provision differs significantly from that of natural grass pitches, we would welcome detail of the proposed management plan (we note this was previously recommended within Sport England's last response relating to grass provision, and would advise this continues to be of significant importance to ensure sustainable operation that meets identified strategic needs locally). We would also encourage engagement with Sussex FA to consider key potential users and support the development of a programme of use which meets key strategic needs and delivers a sustainable model for the site.

Sport England is supportive of SFA/FF comments. There is a need for greater detail on the proposal 3G AGP and there is a need to include sports lighting in order to meet the community needs for the use of the 3G AGP.

Whilst most of the issues raised can be covered by conditions, it is important that the applicants engage with SFA/FF to understand what there are actually offering to the community and the implications of managing and maintaining a 3G AGP. We would strongly advise that the applicants and proposed end users sit down with SFA/FF work these things through.

We do wonder if there is a need to have 4 team changing rooms. Perhaps this can be discussed with SFA/FF?

There should be an environmental sustainability strategy for the building which could include use of PV, ground or air source heat pumps, rainwater harvesting – could be used in the allotments. The car parking could have covered parking bays with PV on the roof.

NB if PV is used a battery store will be required. Bicycle storage and charging for bikes, scooters and cars should be allowed for.

Consideration should be given to moving the Leap closer to the pavilion's café seating area.

If the number of team changing rooms were to be reduced the club room could be enlarged and more storage could be provided to accommodate other uses, such as short mat bowling, yoga, dance group, which would also bring additional revenue.

It is good practise to have an external disabled WC with RADAR key access, and to have 2 WCs per changing room.

As the building will be remote we would suggest built in lintol security shutters similar to these: https://www.buildingcentre.co.uk/product_finder/search-20/roller-shutter-lintels

Sport England would be happy to have a Teams call with the applicants, SFA, FF and yourself to discuss our various comments above.

Sport England's Position

Sport England offers its support for this this application, as it is considered to meet Objective *Provide*.

Sport England recommends, based on our assessment, that if the Council is minded to approve the application, the following planning conditions should be imposed.

1. No development shall commence until details of the design and layout of artificial grass pitch, including sports lighting and the infill containment for the have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority [after consultation with Sport England]. The artificial grass pitch shall not be constructed other than in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: To ensure the development is fit for purpose and sustainable and to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

2. Within 3 months of the of work commencing on the artificial grass pitch, a community use agreement prepared in consultation with Sport England has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and a copy of the completed approved agreement has been provided to the Local Planning Authority. The agreement shall apply to outdoor sports facilities, changing and car parking and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by clubs/individuals, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review. The development shall not be used otherwise than in strict compliance with the approved agreement."

*Reason: To secure well managed safe community access to the sports facility/facilities, to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport and to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

3. Within 6 months of completion, a Management and Maintenance Scheme for the facility including management responsibilities, a maintenance schedule and a mechanism for review shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England. This shall include measures to ensure the replacement of the Artificial Grass Pitch within the manufacture's specified period. It should also include the required testing to comply with FIFA Quality certification. The measures set out in the approved scheme shall be complied with in full, with effect from commencement of use of the 3G artificial grass pitch.

*Reason: To ensure that a new facility is capable of being managed and maintained to deliver a facility which is fit for purpose, sustainable and to ensure sufficient benefit of the development to sport and to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

Reason: To ensure that new facility is capable of being managed and maintained to deliver a playing field which is fit for purpose, sustainable and to ensure sufficient benefit of the development to sport (National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) para 104) and to accord with LP Policy **

If you wish to amend the wording of the recommended condition(s) or use another mechanism in lieu of the condition(s), please discuss the details with the undersigned. Sport England does not object to amendments to conditions, provided they achieve the same outcome, and we are involved in any amendments.

The absence of an objection to this application, in the context of the Town and Country Planning Act, cannot be taken as formal support or consent from Sport England or any National Governing Body of Sport to any related funding application, or as may be required by virtue of any pre-existing funding agreement.

If this application is to be presented to a Planning Committee, we would like to be notified in advance of the publication of any committee agenda(s), report(s) and committee date(s). Please notify Sport England of the outcome of the planning application.

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

Yours sincerely,

Bob

Bob Sharples RIBA ARB MRTPI
Principal Planning Manager - South Team Planning & Active Environments

[Redacted signature block]

cc J Hall Esq. FF
P Saunders Esq. SFA