

From: Planning@horsham.gov.uk <Planning@horsham.gov.uk>
Sent: 24 March 2026 10:41:30 UTC+00:00
To: "Planning" <planning@horsham.gov.uk>
Subject: Comments for Planning Application DC/26/0322
Categories: Comments Received

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application comments have been made. A summary of the comments is provided below.

Comments were submitted at 24/03/2026 10:41 AM.

Application Summary

Address:	Steyning Grammar Upper School Shooting Field Steyning West Sussex BN44 3RX
Proposal:	Part-demolition of existing teaching buildings, MUGAs and all-weather pitch. Construction of replacement 2-storey and 3-storey teaching buildings, flood-lit all-weather pitch and hard surfaced sports courts, with associated access, parking, landscaping and infrastructure.
Case Officer:	Matthew Porter

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Address:	133 Offington Drive Worthing
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Comments Details

Commenter Type:	Consultee
Stance:	Customer objects to the Planning Application
Reasons for comment:	- Design - Loss of General Amenity - Other
Comments:	1. Introduction & Interest South Downs Hockey Club is a volunteer run community club serving juniors, adults, and social players. We train and host matches at Steyning Grammar School, which is our only viable

local venue. We therefore have a direct and significant interest in this application and its impact on community sport.

2. Summary of Objection

We object to this application because it:

- Removes a hockey suitable, multi sport pitch before any equivalent replacement is provided
- Fails Sport England's Playing Fields Policy, including Exceptions 1, 3 and 4
- Eliminates community access to hockey for several years with no interim provision
- Introduces material environmental risks, including microplastics pollution and poor long term sustainability of rubber crumb 3G surfaces
- This proposal directly contradicts the district's strategic assessment of need as outlined in Horsham's Local Playing Pitch Strategy 2018-2031

We request refusal unless a like for like, hockey suitable, multi sport astro is delivered before the current pitch is lost.

3. Non Compliance with Sport England's Policy (Material Planning Harm)

- Exception 4 - Replacement before Loss

The existing hockey suitable multi sport pitch would be removed in/around August 2026, with the replacement not delivered until much later. Sport England requires replacement before loss and of equivalent or better quality, quantity, suitability and accessibility. A football only 3G is not equivalent and not suitable for hockey.

- Exception 3 - Loss of Sporting Provision

Replacing a multi sport surface with a single sport 3G reduces total community sporting capacity and removes access to hockey entirely for several seasons. This is a clear loss of a community facility, a recognised material planning harm.

- Exception 1 - No Surplus Provision

There is no spare hockey suitable provision in the catchment area. The existing pitch at [site] is the only accessible surface for multiple clubs. No evidence of surplus capacity has been presented.

- Community Access Guidance

Sport England's guidance states that developments must not prejudice community access. The proposal creates a multi year gap in provision, which directly harms participation and public amenity.

4. Local Playing Pitch Strategy Evidence

The Playing Pitch Strategy 2018-2031 identifies a shortage of hockey suitable AGPs and recognises the existing surface as essential for meeting both school and community demand. 4. It emphasises that any loss of multi sport artificial grass pitches would worsen an already limited and pressured supply, underscoring the strategic harm caused by this proposal.

5. Environmental & Future Proofing Concerns

- Microplastics & Pollution Risks

Rubber crumb 3G pitches release microplastics and chemical leachates, presenting risks to local ecosystems, drainage, and public health.

- EU Regulation (EU) 2023/2055 - Microplastics Restriction

This regulation bans the sale of rubber crumb infill from 2031, following an eight year transition period. Installing a surface type already being phased out across Europe is not future proof, creates maintenance risks, and locks the school and community into an environmentally unsustainable choice.

6. Impact on South Downs Hockey Club Members

- Participation decline - Hockey training and competition would stop locally for several years, increasing the risk that players (especially juniors) stop participating.

- Travel barriers - Distance, cost and availability at alternative venues create access barriers, particularly for young people, women and girls, and lower income families.

- Threat to club viability - Loss of a local pitch jeopardises coaching pathways, junior development, volunteer retention, and the club's ability to fulfil league fixtures.

These impacts are real and immediate and compound the policy failures described above.

7. What Would Make the Scheme Acceptable

South Downs Hockey Club requests refusal unless the application is changed to guarantee:

- Replacement first (phasing requirement)

No demolition or pitch closure until a hockey suitable, multi sport replacement is built, tested, and open for community use.

- Like for like or better equivalence

The replacement must be fully hockey suitable, with appropriate shockpad, surface type, dimensions, run offs, lighting, fencing, and ancillary facilities.

- A Community Use Agreement

Securing community access, bookable hours, and fair pricing for the lifetime of the facility.

- Environmental safeguards

A commitment to avoid rubber crumb infill, and the use of run off mitigation and design measures aligned to national best practice.

8. Conclusion

This application, as submitted, fails to comply with Sport England's Playing Fields Policy, removes an established community facility without a suitable replacement, and introduces significant environmental and future compliance risks and is inconsistent with the Local Playing Pitch Strategy 2018-2031, which identifies the existing pitch as essential to meeting district wide hockey and community sport demand, and emphasises the need to protect multi sport AGPs from loss.

On behalf of our members, volunteers, and the wider community, South Downs Hockey Club respectfully requests that this application be refused unless it includes a hockey suitable, multi sport replacement pitch delivered before any loss of the existing facility.

Regards,
Chairman of South Downs Hockey Club

Kind regards

Telephone:

Email: planning@horsham.gov.uk



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