

Subject: 2021/93674 Partial redevelopment of Greenhead college including demolition, erection of 2 and 4 storey buildings, reconfiguration of parking and access arrangements and associated external works
Date: 19 October 2021 16:29:29

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

Sport England –Statutory Role and Policy

It is understood that the proposal prejudices the use, or leads to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field or has been used as a playing field in the last five years, as defined in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (Statutory Instrument 2015 No. 595). The consultation with Sport England is therefore a statutory requirement.

Sport England has considered the application in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (in particular Para. 97), and against its own playing fields policy, which states:

‘Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of:

- all or any part of a playing field, or
- land which has been used as a playing field and 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.’

Sport England’s Playing Fields Policy and Guidance document can be viewed via the below link:
https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport#playing_fields_policy

The Proposal and Impact on Playing Field

Having reviewed aerial photos of the site and the planning permission granted in 2006 (ref 2006/62/95249/W2) Sport England is satisfied that the playing field at this site is made up of both the synthetic pitch and the courts immediately to its north. Both facilities are served by a detached changing room building immediately to the west.

The proposed plans show a replacement floodlit AGP of reduced dimensions, re-orientated and repositioned. Land to the south and west is taken up with car parking with the changing rooms reprovided within the proposed infill buildings. The two MUGA courts are not reprovided.

Assessment against Sport England Policy

This application relates to the loss of existing playing fields and/or the provision of replacement playing fields. It therefore needs to be considered against exception 4 of the above policy, which states:

‘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.’

The playing field area reduces by over 50% between the existing and proposed layouts, and as a result the proposal cannot meet [the quantitative test of] playing field policy exception 4. Such a scenario would normally result in a statutory objection from Sport England, but there instances where a proposal can demonstrate an overall gain for sport which outweighs playing field policy.

In this respect, the applicant is proposing to offer the proposed AGP for community use along with the off-site playing pitches at Highfields Road. The current AGP was permitted with an hours of use condition which effectively precluded community use of the facility. Advances in floodlighting technology which significantly reduce light spill and an acoustic fence enclosing the sides of the AGP which face outwards mean that the AGP is proposed to have hours of use for evenings and weekends which are conducive to community use. Sport England engaged with England Hockey as part of its consideration of the proposal. It advised;

Whilst the AGP is not big enough for Hockey match play we are aware that the College has a link with Huddersfield Dragons HC. We would like to see community use of this site for Hockey Heroes/Junior sessions to encourage greater numbers engaged in the sport across Huddersfield. We understand that the College plays its Hockey at Lockwood Park and has enquired about Storthes Hall when it is resurfaced in the near future.

A Gen2 surface would accommodate a number of sports use and recreational use by students. We would expect to see the facility open until 9pm Mon-Fri and 6pm Sat-Sun to allow for sessions to take place and for the site to maximise use from the surrounding community.

With regard to the off-site grass pitches at Highfields Road, the site contains two adult football pitches and one rugby league pitch. The Kirklees Playing Pitch Strategy highlights shortfalls across football and rugby league pitch capacity and so making these pitches available for community use will be a significant addition to pitch supply in Huddersfield.

Conclusions and Recommendation

Whilst the proposal is not considered to meet playing field policy – exception 4, Sport England has **no objection** to the proposal as the proposed community use offer by the applicant is considered to be significant benefit to sport. Sport England's 'no objection' response is subject to the imposition of the following condition:

Use of the development shall not commence until 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 proposed artificial grass pitch and off-site playing pitches and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by non-college users, 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 facilities, to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport.

Informative: Guidance on preparing Community Use Agreements is available from Sport England. <http://www.sportengland.org/planningapplications/> For artificial grass pitches it is recommended that you seek guidance from the Football Association/England Hockey/Rugby Football Union on pitch construction when determining the community use hours the artificial pitch can accommodate

If you wish to amend the wording of the recommended condition, or use another mechanism in lieu of the condition, 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.

Sport England would also like to be notified of the outcome of the application through the receipt of a copy of the decision notice.

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 you would like any further information or advice please contact me at the address below.

Yours sincerely,

Dave McGuire

Planning Manager

M: 07795283218

F: 01509 233 192

E: Dave.McGuire@sportengland.org

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