Kirklees Council

FAO: Joshua Merriman

By email only

Date: 5th August 2026

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

Application Reference: 2026/62/91638/W
Site: Amateur Rugby League Clubhouse, Newsome Panthers JARLFC, Hall Bower Lane, Newsome, Huddersfield, HD4 6RN
Proposal: Demolition of existing clubhouse and erection of new clubhouse, ancillary works including additional carparking and improvements to site access
Sport England Reference: PA/26/Y/CD/72996

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

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 104, 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. The exceptions are provided in the Annex to this response.

The proposal and impact on playing field

The proposal involves the demolition of the existing clubhouse and the erection of a replacement clubhouse, together with additional parking, access improvements and associated Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) landscaping measures. The development serves the playing field used by Newsome Panthers ARLFC and Berry Brow FC and is situated adjacent to a playing field used by Hall Bower Cricket Club.



2025 Google aerial image showing a playing field with evidence of rugby league and cricket activity

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

Sport England's policy to protect playing fields covers the entire playing field site and not just the areas currently marked out with a pitch. This is because playing field is seen as a resource for pitches to be marked out on, pitches to be changed from one pitch sport type to another to meet new demand, or to allow areas of the playing field to rest from over play. It also allows the potential for non-pitch sports such as athletics to be marked out. If it had been Government's intention that planning policy should protect just pitches and not playing field, then The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order could have been readily drafted in that manner to make it specifically clear.

Playing field policy is a restrictive policy based on a presumption against any development which results in the loss of playing field (in whole or part) or

prejudices its use. As such, for development not to encounter an objection from Sport England it must be shown to be of a form covered by one of the exceptions (to the presumption against) set out in the Annex.

As part of the assessment of this consultation, Sport England has sought the views of the relevant National Governing Body of Sport who act as Sport England's technical advisors in respect of their sport and their sport facilities.
The comments received have been summarised as follows:

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB):

- The ECB need further clarification about ball strike risk and what mitigations need to be put in place.
- The assessment has been done at a recreational level but should be done at a professional level given the club play in the 2nd tier of the ECB Huddersfield Premier League. The assessment appears to have only covered the open social area next to the new pavilion, but should cover the new building as well. Once the new report has been done at the correct level and covering the whole new building, a new plan should then be produced matching the ball strike assessment findings. The rugby club will also need to ensure there is a management and maintenance plan in place for the mitigation.
- Whilst it can't be brought up as a requirement of this specific planning application, I would also like to point out the significant ball strike risk of spectators watching rugby on the main pitch when there is a game of cricket on. This is only a small hit and spectators will have their backs to the cricket.

Football Foundation (FF):

- Plans appear to show that our previous comments in relation to floor plans have not been addressed; particularly with only one referees room and recommendation for cubicle showers.
- As this is predominantly a rugby site, we understand that this takes priority, but access to compliant changing and match officials rooms for the football teams playing at the site would be welcomed.

Rugby Football League (RFL):

- The club has remained in dialogue with the RFL about this project. The RFL are supportive of the club's ambitions to grow and expand the ancillary provision at the site, as without this they will struggle to cater for the increased demand they are experiencing across age groups.
- The club's existing ancillary provision is outdated, in need of repair and improvement and doesn't comply with RFL recommendations for changing provision. The club doesn't have the ability within the existing buildings to

provide refreshments which is part of the requirements to compete at certain levels of the game.

- This development will result in ancillary provision which is compliant with RFL guidelines regards changing room size, number of changing rooms, officials changing and social space. The development will also provide an indoor training area capable of facilitating a wrestle room and gym for training to take place. This will allow the club to still keep teams and members active during periods where the pitches are requiring some rest or they are at capacity.
- The RFL would like to see an additional door put in to block sight lines into the changing rooms, and perhaps the door entering the WC within the changing rooms could be repositioned so as to prevent any occurrences where those entering the changing room might look directly into the WC. The RFL typically expect there to be minimum 2 WC's and 1 basin for a changing room of this size, especially as there are only one set of toilets elsewhere in the building which would be accessed by spectators and non-playing personnel. A consideration as to how additional toilet provision for players can be provided within the design would be welcomed. Unsure whether having the only entrance to the kitchen being via the bar is the most preferable layout option. A store room adjoining the Social Space would make sense to house tables, chairs etc. First Aid room is missing, we would want to see this installed and fitted with running water and disabled access possible.
- It appears the project is compliant with the BNG requirement of 10% and providing the proposed planting and landscaping doesn't encroach onto playing field area (including 3m run off as is standard in Rugby League) then we wouldn't object to the proposals from the applicant, although we would encourage them to explore as many layout options as possible to ensure the site remains versatile for use as playing pitches.
- The importance of ball strike is certainly considered by the applicant for this proposal, however it should be considered that there is already a clubhouse in-situ where no ball stop netting is in place, and the risk of spectators being situated close to the playing field already takes place. Therefore we feel this application should be assessed on any new risk being posed as a result of the development, rather than the application for expansion of clubhouse being mobilised as a method to address an ongoing risk associated with cricket that hasn't been mitigated up to this point. The ball strike assessment conducted by Labosport clearly states 'there is no existing mitigation at this facility' and it doesn't appear as though the perimeter of the newly proposed development encroaches much closer to the cricket pitch than currently located storage containers. We do recognise however that usage of the area will change and as a result feel it is a positive inclusion by the applicant to take on board the recommendations from the Labosport assessment in their proposals. It should also be noted, that the boundary to the North East corner of the cricket pitch doesn't have any ball stop netting despite this being used as a

car park and in similar proximity to the square of the proposed development.
- It is proposed that football will use the Rugby League pitches for their activity when Rugby League is out of season and/or with usage being rotated across the 3 pitches accordingly. The applicant has been encouraged to provide a revised pitch layout to reflect this.
- The RFL have been informed the ground source heat pump is intended to be located under the car park.

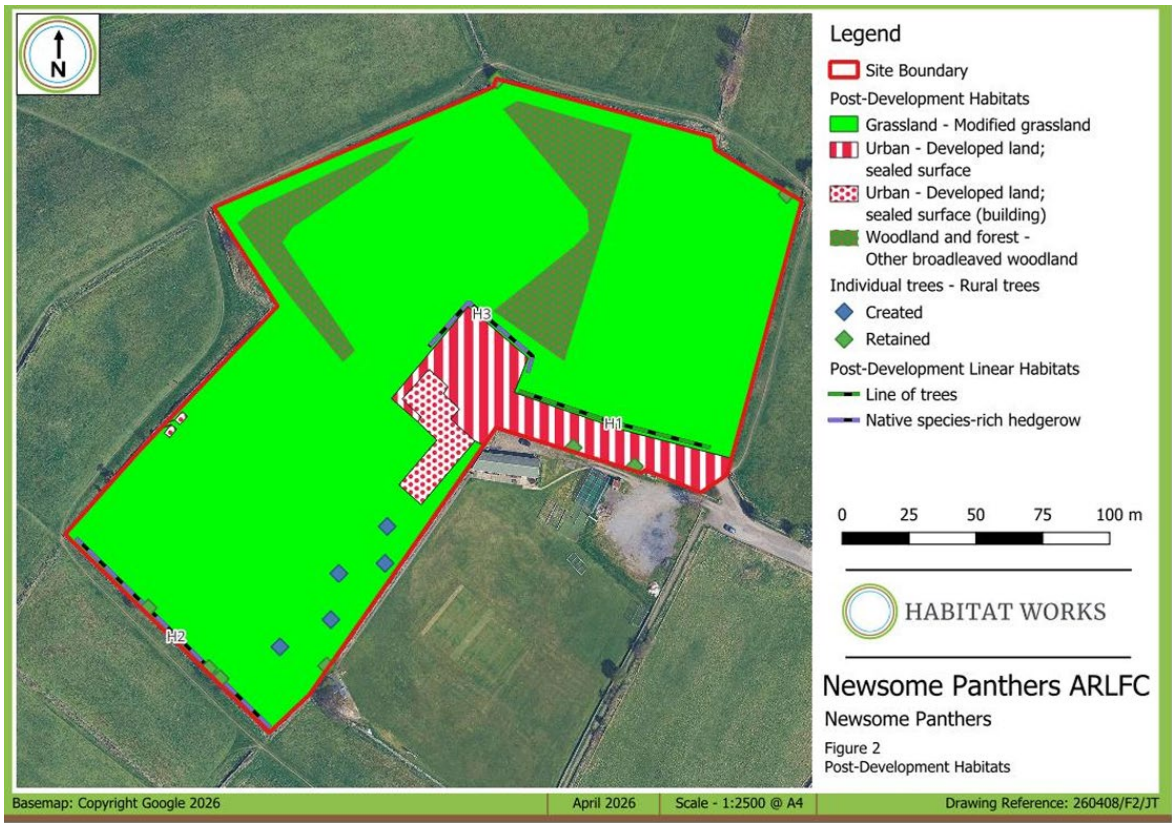
After reviewing the proposal, Sport England consider policy exception 2 to be the most pertinent.

Sport England generally supports the provision of new or enhanced ancillary facilities. They can play an important role in helping people to become and stay active as well as improving the use and viability of the playing field for sport. Along with enhancing the experience for existing users, they can make use of the playing field a more attractive proposition for potential new users.

Facilities should be of an appropriate scale and comply with relevant Sport England and national governing bodies of sport design guidance. They should have no significant detrimental impact on the principal use of the site as a playing field and its ability to accommodate playing pitches. This includes the need to maintain and/or provide appropriate safety margins and run-off areas around pitches in line with Sport England and national governing body guidance.

With the above in mind Sport England are of the opinion that the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on the playing field's ability to accommodate a wide range of playing pitches primarily due to the proposed landscaping measures associated with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

With the above in mind, Sport England considers that the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on the playing field's ability to accommodate a range of playing pitches, primarily due to the proposed Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) landscaping measures. The proposed planting is located within the playing field and would reduce the site's flexibility to accommodate existing and future pitch layouts. As Sport England's Playing Fields Policy protects the playing field as a whole, any BNG proposals should accord with Sport England's Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance document: BNG implementation on Playing Fields.



Proposed landscaping measures affecting the playing field

The submitted site layout plan appears to show rugby league pitches. However, it does not identify the required pitch safety run-off areas and no sports lighting is indicated. Furthermore, the two pitches located to the north do not appear to be accurately represented when compared with available aerial imagery. The site layout plan also fails to show football pitch markings and associated safety run-off areas, preventing a full assessment of the suitability and functionality of the proposed playing field layout in relation to the proposal.

The proposed location of the ground source heat pump infrastructure should be clearly illustrated on the submitted plans. If any part of the ground source heat pump system is proposed beneath retained grass playing field areas, a sports turf agronomist's report should be provided to demonstrate that the installation would not adversely affect pitch drainage, surface quality or the long-term use of the playing field.

Therefore, Sport England is not satisfied that the proposed pavilion building, car parking, ancillary facilities and associated Biodiversity Net Gain landscaping would not prejudice the current or future sporting use of the playing field.

Sport England welcomes the submission of a cricket ball strike risk assessment. However, noting the ECB's concerns, Sport England recommends that the assessment be reviewed and updated in consultation with the ECB (contact details have been provided to the applicant previously) to ensure that the level of ball strike risk is clearly identified and appropriately addressed.

The proposed site plan should clearly indicate the location of any ball strike mitigation measures within the red line boundary, including any proposed ball stop fencing or netting. Detailed elevation, section and specification drawings should also be provided to demonstrate the design, appearance and construction of the proposed ball stop mitigation system, including details of how it will be securely installed. In addition, information regarding the management, inspection and ongoing maintenance of the ball stop mitigation system should be submitted. However, these details could alternatively be secured through an appropriately worded planning condition.

With regard to the proposed design of the pavilion building, Sport England advises that the floor plans are revised to address the matters raised by the RFL and FF, which were also identified during the pre-application stage.

Sport England recommends that the applicant liaises directly with the RFL and the FF (contact details have been provided to the applicant previously) to agree any necessary amendments before revised plans are submitted. This will help ensure that the pavilion design is fit for purpose and capable of meeting the operational requirements of the proposed sporting uses.

In light of the above, Sport England is not satisfied that the proposal accords with policy exception 2 of the Playing Fields Policy.

Sport England's position

Given the above, Sport England raises a **statutory objection** to the application because it is not considered to accord with any of the exceptions to our Playing Fields Policy or paragraph 104 of the NPPF.

Determining the application

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 agendas, report(s) and committee date(s).

Sport England would welcome the opportunity to review amended plans and supporting information that address the matters set out in this response. However, so that there is a formal audit trail and so that workload commitments can be effectively managed, Sport England would kindly request that any additional information is submitted to Planning.North@sportengland.org and not the Planning Manager directly.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Carroll
Planning Manager

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