

Bury MBC

FAO: Jennie Townsend

By email only

30/10/2023

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

Application Reference: 70078

Site: Woodbank Primary School

Proposal: Provision of a new SEN classroom unit

Sport England Reference: 65877

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 99, 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 entails an SEN classroom and an associated enclosed play area on Woodbank Primary School's playing field land. The area of playing field land has been marked out for a variety of sports including athletics and rounders, whilst it would appear that the area is utilised for football with a number of moveable posts being present (see below Google Earth images). The proposal would result in the

loss of playing field land which will result in the intensification of sporting activities on the remaining playing field land.



Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

The proposed development is not an indoor/outdoor sports facility nor an ancillary facility supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field. As such, Sport England Exception Policies E2 and E5 are not relevant considerations to the assessment of the proposal. The development would also result in the loss of playing field land which is capable of accommodating a pitch with no replacement provision proposed, as such the proposal would not accord with Sport England Exception Policies E3 and E4.

The submitted Design and Access Statement notes there will be a loss of playing field land though it is stated that the location of the new facility has been selected to ensure that the scheme does not negatively impact on the school's ability to deliver a full and comprehensive selection of physical activities. The main focus of these being towards the northeast side of the site which includes a fully lined football pitch as well as areas for other sports including track and field.

Whilst noting the above statement, the applicant has not demonstrated compliance with Sport England Exception Policy E1 or NPPF paragraph 99a. This is due to no robust and up-to-date assessment being submitted demonstrating that there is an excess of playing field provision (for both curricular and wider community need) 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.

It should be noted that the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), which is currently being updated, highlights that there are shortfalls in pitch provision within the authority. The emerging PPS based on the initial data gathering results also suggests that there is a shortfall in demand for mini soccer 5v5, 7v7 and 9v9 pitches within the Bury area and this highlights the potential need for the playing field site to be retained.

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 99 of the NPPF.

Potential to overcome the statutory objection

Sport England would encourage the applicant to consider alternative locations for the proposed development which would not result in the loss of land capable of forming part of a pitch/utilised for sport.

One such potential location could be the area indicated in the below Google Earth Imagery, which has the potential to meet Sport England Exception Policy 3 due to the existing development impacting on ability to mark out a pitch.



Determining the application

Should the local planning authority be minded to approve this application contrary to Sport England's statutory objection, then the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2021 requires the application to be referred to the Secretary of State, via the National Planning Casework Unit.

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).

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

Yours sincerely,

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Planning Manager

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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

