

Thank you for reconsulting Sport England on the above application.

Sport England notes the further and amended details/plans in respect of the proposed pipeline development and associated works. Our comments relate to the impact on Havant Rugby Club and the playing field site at Hooks Lane.

Sport England notes that the proposed amended layout plans shows that in order to reduce the impacts on the adjacent school (St Thomas More Primary School), the temporary haul road and pipeline is being moved further east leading to further encroachment onto the western section of the playing field at Havant RFC. This will further reduce the ability to mark out pitch no. 4 as shown on the plans. Sport England notes that the agent asserts that this area is only used for training and not matches. Sport England would ask for confirmation on this by the rugby club. Sport England has not received additional comments from the RFU.

Nevertheless, even if this is the case, the training pitch (pitch no.4) makes a highly important contribution to meeting rugby needs and plays a crucial role in taking pressure off the main natural turf pitches so that quality is retained. The reduction in the size of the training area is likely to result in transferring training activity onto the already heavily-used main pitches. Sport England notes that the council has recently refreshed its Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). This clearly identifies capacity issues at the site and identifies that the existing pitches are heavily overplayed by 18 match equivalent sessions. To give context, Sport England considers that this is a very significant amount of overplay. The PPS goes on to recommend investment in pitch quality; maintenance and management to increase the carrying capacity of the existing pitches including through drainage improvements. However, such is the level of overplay this alone is not sufficient to address the issues experienced at the site. The PPS also recommends securing access to additional off-site rugby compliant Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) provision to meet current as well as future needs. On this basis, Sport England considers that protection and retention of existing pitch provision is paramount and that even temporary loss of existing provision is likely to exacerbate already very significant overplay issues at the site likely to result in further qualitative issues.

On that basis, there is a clear case for providing additional suitable alternative playing or training arrangements during the works. The preparation of a "pitch strategy" is referred to, as is purchasing additional slots on the existing rugby compliant AGP at the site to mitigate the temporary loss of playing field area. However, no specific details have been provided. It would be helpful if more detail can be provided including engagement with ourselves, the RFU and the rugby club to ensure it meets their needs.

Sport England also asks whether a specialist sports turf contractor/agronomist has been engaged to assess the likely impacts on the playing field from the works as well as a proposed reinstatement scheme of works to ensure that the playing field is returned to a state which is fit for purpose for sport within a reasonable timescale?

Sport England considers that Havant RFC makes a valid point about the extent of the order limits (the red line boundary). Specifically, that the order limits extend across a significant

proportion of the site and are not limited to the pipeline route. The proposed layout plans are intended and are effectively indicative. Sport England wishes to understand how planning certainty can be secured in relation to the proposed pipeline route and associated works to ensure that the scheme cannot be amended to route the pipeline and works across the playing field should permission be granted?

In light of the above, Sport England wishes to sustain its objection, as we consider none of the exceptions in our playing fields policy or paragraph 103 in the NPPF are met. Sport England is keen to discuss this further with the agent and the local planning authority to address these issues and find a way forward.

Yours sincerely,

Owen Neal
Planning Manager