

Havant Borough Council

FAO: Narinder Lakhan

By email only

23rd July 2024

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

Application Reference: APP/24/00405

Site: HAVANT RFC (HOOKS LANE), HOOKS LANE GROUND CLUBHOUSE FRASER ROAD
PO9 3EJ

Proposal: Hybrid application seeking:

- 1) Full permission for development of new pipelines to transfer water from Bedhampton Springs to fill the reservoir in the winter and draw it off to treat and supply when needed in the summer, comprising: construction of two predominantly underground pipes in tunnels linking the reservoir with the existing pumping station at Bedhampton with associated infrastructure including: emergency drawdown discharge structure at Hermitage Stream; construction of eight access shafts; upgrades to existing culverts close to shafts five, six and eight to manage flood risk; washout and air valve chambers (typically below ground), new plant at Bedhampton Pumping Station, modifications to Bedhampton 2 operational building and permanent diversion of Footpath 34 at Bedhampton Pumping Station.
- 2) Outline application for an associated underground cross-connection chamber and above ground kiosk at the reservoir site with vehicular accesses for maintenance. An Environmental Statement has been submitted with the application under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017

Sport England Reference: PA/24/SE/HV/68086

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

Summary

Sport England **objects** to this application as it is not considered to meet any of the exceptions to our Playing Fields Policy or to accord with paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

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 103, 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

Sport England considers that the proposed new pipelines and associated works will affect playing field land at Havant Rugby Football Club (HRFC). Sport England and the RFU (as the national governing body for rugby) has engaged with the agent at pre-application stage with the aim of seeking to reduce the impact of the proposal on the playing field site and minimising the disruption to the rugby club and their activities. Sport England considers that this has pre-application engagement has helped to shape the submitted plans and we welcome the approach by the agent to support this.

Whilst steps have been taken to minimise the impact and the disruption to the rugby club, there is still an impact on the playing field site.

Sport England has consulted with the RFU to seek their views on the proposals, and we have received the following comments.

The RFU comments that the Hooks Lane site, home to Havant RFC, is heavily over played as identified in the Havant Borough Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). In the context of this application any loss of playing field/space throughout the construction phase and as a result of the completed scheme would exacerbate the overplay issue and require mitigation to maintain the existing level of pitch provision.

The RFU adds that the supporting information asserts that the rugby club can accommodate the temporary loss of Pitch no.4 (as shown on the applicant's plans) and the area to the west of the club house (known as Dingley Dell) with minimal impact on its activities.

However, the RFU considers that the operation of club activity, especially during peak hours, will be significantly affected and will require managed programming to ensure there is no disruption to the club's rugby activities. The RFU considers that to ensure that no activity will have to be moved off site, the club will effectively need to purchase additional hours on the existing rugby compliant Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) which will come at an additional cost to the club. The RFU wishes to seek confirmation that the agent/applicant has considered this additional cost as part of the mitigation strategy.

The RFU further comments that the plans shows 3no. manholes remaining at ground level which, when applying the recommended 5m run-off, would prejudice the use of approx. 30-40 sqm of Dingley Dell (area to the west of the club house) on completion of the scheme. The suggestion at pre-app was that the manholes should be situated below ground level and covered to ensure no loss of pitch provision – the RFU requests confirmation of this as part of the mitigation strategy.

The RFU identifies that the plans aren't that clear in relation to the location of the air vents. Can the applicant please confirm the accurate positioning of the vents in relation to the run/off areas? Pitches should be marked out in line with World Rugby Law 1.

The RFU requests that the reinstatement work for the pitches as well as the schedule is reviewed and agreed by an independent agronomist. This would include an assessment of the existing condition of the site to ensure that any reinstatement work brings the site back to at least the existing quality.

Sport England notes that the proposed landscape reinstatement plan appears to include proposed new and translocated tree planting on the playing field in the north west and north east corners of the site. This appears to encroach onto the playing field. Sport England does not support such an approach however.

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

Sport England considers that the relevant exception in our playing fields policy is the E3 exception. E3 states that:

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.*

Sport England welcomes the progress that has been made during the pre-application stage to address some of the issues that have been raised to reduce the impact on the playing field.

There still remain issues however, and we would like further information in response to the RFU's comments, including:

- How the club are going to continue to maintain their existing level of activity given the impact on Pitch 4 and the training area known as the Dingley Dell? It is not appropriate to displace usage onto remaining pitches if these are already overplayed and usage is above the carrying capacity of the natural turf pitches. In this case additional slots will need to be acquired on the rugby compliant AGP.
- Confirmation that the run/off areas around the pitches will not be compromised by manholes and air vents, ie permanent infrastructure associated with the pipeline scheme.

It would have been helpful if a specialist sports turf agronomist had been engaged to assess the ground conditions and prepare a reinstatement scheme of works. However, Sport England is satisfied that this could be secured by condition.

We do not support the proposed translocation and/or new tree planting on the principal playing field area as this encroaches onto usable playing field.

Sport England does not consider that the E3 exception has been satisfactorily met.

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.

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 2024 requires the application to be referred to the Secretary of State, via the National Planning Casework Unit.

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

Yours sincerely,

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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