

App Ref: APP/22/00837 - THE COWPLAIN SCHOOL, HART PLAIN AVENUE PO8
8RY - Sport England Ref: PA/22/SE/HV/62844

Dear Mr Christie,

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application for the erection of a 64 bed care home (within Use Class C2) and 6no. dwellings (within Use Class C3) with associated works including access, parking and landscaping.

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 (particularly Para 99) and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy, which is presented within its 'Playing Fields Policy and Guidance Document':

https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport#playing_fields_policy

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/part of a playing field, unless one or more of the five exceptions stated in its policy apply.

The Proposal and Impact on Playing Field

The proposal has been subject to pre-application advice from Sport England at an earlier stage. In summary, Sport England considered that the proposed development could be supported subject to further details being provided on a number of matters, namely: supporting technical information on the quality of the playing field/natural turf pitches and their improvement; updated information on community use of the athletics track; and the school's appetite to enter into a community use agreement to provide security of use to community groups/clubs that access and use the school's sports facilities. On this basis, Sport England would be able to consider the proposal has sporting benefits which outweigh the harm caused by the loss of playing field.

Turning to the planning application, the proposed care home development will be located on playing field land resulting in the loss of playing field land in the north east section of the playing field. It would appear that this area has been partially used for sport as indicated by the athletics track markings as well as for football. Based on satellite aerial imagery, it is possible to see a small sided football pitch marked out in 2019 measuring approximately 51m x 31m which would be affected and at least partially lost as a result of the proposal. Further to the south there also appears to be a non-turf cricket pitch, although the cricket boundary to the south of the artificial wicket is very much compromised by the presence of the artificial grass pitch (AGP) and the hard-surface tennis courts.

Sport England notes that the site is well used for community football and plays an important role in meeting the borough's football needs.

Sport England has consulted the national governing bodies and we have received the following comments from the Football Foundation on behalf of the FA.

The Football Foundation and Hampshire FA are supportive in principle of the qualitative improvements to the pitches at Cowplain School should the identified section of playing field be lost to the development, however, more information would be required to review this proposal fully. Specifically:

The Planning Supporting Statement referenced a separate application submitted in parallel to this application. The Foundation have been unable to locate this application and request that this is shared with the Foundation to allow a review of the proposed drainage works.

The Pitch Assessment Report identifies ongoing maintenance costs associated with maintaining the pitches at the required standard and ensuring the drainage system continues to function for the benefit of the pitches. The Foundation requires confirmation of what costs will be covered by the applicant to support the ongoing function of the installed drainage system.

The Foundation requests that a condition is agreed committing to the ongoing maintenance of the pitches to a good standard, and that a community use agreement (CUA) is secured for the grass pitches at the school (or amendment to the existing CUA in place for the Artificial Grass Pitch), to ensure ongoing community benefit from the improvements made to the pitches.

Sport England supports the points raised by the Football Foundation above and considers that more detail is needed into the pitch quality improvements/drainage especially if separate planning permission may be required, as well as the long term and ongoing maintenance plan. Although, we consider the latter can be addressed through a suitable planning condition.

Sport England is satisfied that there is no longer any community use of the site for athletics with the club now using alternative facilities.

Furthermore, although Sport England's remit does not extend to amenity issues eg noise impacts, Sport England wishes to ask whether the acoustic/noise assessment takes account of the artificial grass pitch (AGP) and the pattern of usage. We cannot see any reference to the AGP within the submitted noise assessment. Sport England has produced guidance to support stakeholders consider the noise impacts from AGPs:

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport/artificial-grass-pitches-acoustics-planning-implications>.

Sport England also wishes to ask whether any ball stop netting or fencing has been considered to protect against balls from entering the grounds of the care home?

Assessment against Sport England Policy/NPPF

Sport England considers that the proposal has the potential provide sporting benefits which outweigh the harm caused by the loss of playing field. However, further details are required in relation to:

- The proposed pitch quality improvements/drainage including its planning status;
- Ongoing maintenance and management arrangements to ensure the pitch improvements are maximised and remain fit for purpose;
- School's intention to enter into a community use agreement, to provide improved security of access to community users.

Conclusion

In light of the above, Sport England **objects** to the application because it is not considered to accord with any of the exceptions to Sport England's Playing Fields Policy or with Paragraph 99 of the NPPF.

However, once we have received additional information satisfactorily addressing the matters above then we will be very happy to reconsider our position and hope that we can move to removing our objection.

Should the local planning authority be minded to grant planning permission for the proposal, contrary to Sport England's objection then in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2021, the application should be referred to the Secretary of State, via the 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). We would be grateful if you would advise us of the outcome of the application by sending us a copy of the decision notice.

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

Yours sincerely,

Owen Neal

Planning Manager

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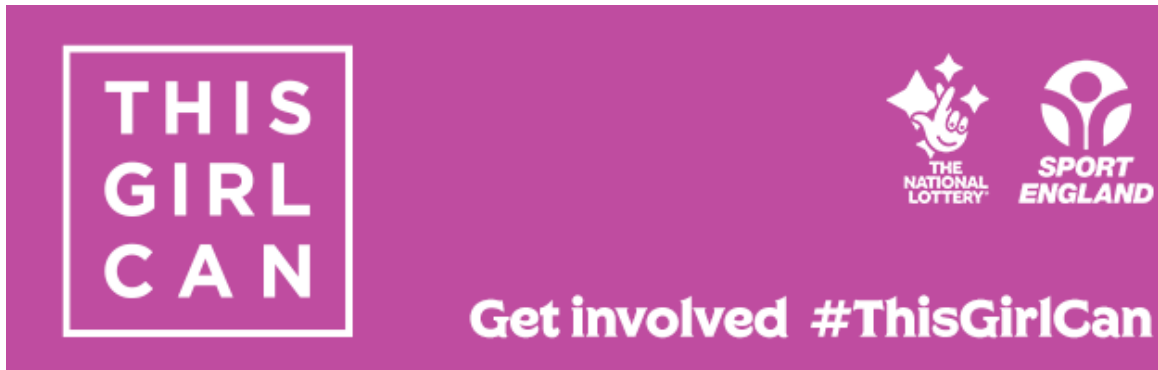
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