

Wokingham Borough Council

FAO:

By email only

16th November 2024

Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 37-003-20140306

Application Reference: 242696

Site: Hogwood Farm Sheerlands Road Arborfield Wokingham RG40 4QY

Proposal: Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2014/2179 (as varied by 181194, dated 14/11/2018) The Reserved Matters comprise details of sports pitches, sports pavilion, allotments, car parking and play areas; along with associated landscaping, highways and drainage infrastructure. Details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered

Sport England Reference: PA/24/SE/WON/69072

Dear Sir/madam,

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

In terms of the submitted reserved matters, Sport England would like to make the following representations/observations/comments:

We have consulted with Bucks and Berks County Football Association/ the Football Foundation, (BBCFA/FF), who have made the following observations:

Strategic Need

A new Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) for Wokingham was completed in 2023 and is understood to be progressing to adoption by the authority. Although not formally adopted, it highlights a shortfall of adult grass pitches as well as shortfalls of 3G AGP (Artificial Grass Pitch) provision, therefore additional provision is welcomed.

Grass Pitch Proposals

The development of new grass pitch provision should be complemented by a feasibility and construction specification, prepared by a suitably qualified sports turf consultant/agronomist. This is crucial to ensure pitches are provided to a suitable design and specification, and provide good quality, safe and effective provision to meet identified needs.

3G Pitch

There is an identified overall deficit of 8 3G AGPs in the Wokingham authority, and therefore there is significant demand for new facilities. The plan does not yet provide clarity on the detail of the proposed pitch, therefore further information is provided

to detail the design and specification (including detailing the base/construction, drainage, surface type/system, detailed designs showing access points, goal recesses, a fencing plan, infill retention measures and sports lighting specification).

This should provide the overall dimensions of the facility, as well as the marked pitch dimensions (including any small-sided pitch markings). The scale appears to confirm both pitches are provided to 100m x 64m dimensions, which are the recommended dimensions for adult 11v11 pitches, however confirmation of all pitch dimensions, including the additional 3m run-off required on all sides, would be welcome.

Pavilion

Changing area for open age football should be 18m² (excluding toilet, shower and lobby areas) and should include en-suite toilet and showers. Four showers should be provided and a minimum of 1 self-contained WC. For this proposal, the changing is provided at 16m² and is therefore below the recommended dimensions. Furthermore, although a sufficient number of showers are provided, they are currently open plan – which should be avoided. We would request the proposal is revised to provide cubicle showers.

Although a lobby is included within the designs, there are currently sight lines into the changing areas when both doors are open. We would recommend the use of staggered lobbies, or privacy screening, to remove the sight lines.

Shared lobbies between team changing rooms should also be avoided.

We would recommend inclusion of a serving hatch (in place of the window) from the kitchen, to allow spectators to be served refreshments directly adjacent to pitches without requiring access via the club room.

Finally, a single officials' changing room is provided. We would recommend two, to allow mixed-gendered changing. Alternatively, the accessible WC could be utilised as an additional officials' changing room if required, however would require inclusion of an accessible shower.

As the site currently only has 1 AGP and 1 Adult Grass Pitch, one pair of changing rooms should suffice and could therefore comfortably allow for the above revisions.

An alternative approach could also be to have a standardised set of changing room for open age football, alongside a smaller set 12m².

Sport England is supportive of the strategic need for the AGP, pavilion and for grass pitch. We could not find any details showing the pavilion – We assume that the Sports Pavilion details will be dealt with under a separate application. We would recommend the applicants take on board what BBCFA/FF has written above.

To that we would add the need for the building to be environmentally sustainable in its design.

We note that this application is for Details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale to be considered, so the issues around the pavilion will need to be addressed in a future application.

Because the Artificial Grass Pitch and natural grass pitch fall into the landscape element of the RM the following comments are important to ensure that these elements are fit for purpose.

It is disappointing that there are no details on the construction of the grass pitch – this should be conditioned.

It should be noted that artificial grass pitches (AGPs), have a limited life and require significant maintenance to keep them in a playable condition. Because the top surface or carpet as it is commonly referred to has to be replaced approximately every 10 years there must be a sinking fund created to ensure this happens. A grass pitch does not need a sinking fund, and in reality, the maintenance is very light compared to an AGP.

There is also a need to ensure that the infill is kept within the pitch area and does not leach into the natural environment. Which BBCFA/FF have raised above. There is also a need to ensure that the carpet is recycled at the end of its life.

It is disappointing the applicants' agents do not refer to the need for a sinking fund or maintenance programme. These can be conditioned.

It is disappointing the application lacks most of the standard information associated with 3G AGPs. However, there is a proven strategic need for the AGP and the issues we have raised can be conditioned.

Sport England Position:

In light of the above, Sport England considers the details submitted to be satisfactory and raises no objection to this application, subject to the following conditions:

1. No development shall commence until details of the design and layout of infill containment for the artificial grass pitch have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority [after consultation with Sport England]. The artificial grass pitch shall not be constructed other than in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: To ensure the development is fit for purpose and sustainable and to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

2. Within 6 months of completion, a Management and Maintenance Scheme for the facility including management responsibilities, a maintenance schedule and a mechanism for review shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England. This shall include measures to ensure the replacement of the Artificial Grass Pitch within the manufacture's specified period. It should also include the required testing to comply with FIFA Quality certification. The measures set out in the approved scheme shall be complied with in full, with effect from commencement of use of the 3G artificial grass pitch.

*Reason: To ensure that a new facility is capable of being managed and maintained to deliver a facility which is fit for purpose, sustainable and to ensure sufficient benefit of the development to sport and to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

3. (a) No development shall commence [or other specified time period] until the following documents have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England:

- (i) A detailed assessment of ground conditions (including drainage and topography) of the land proposed for the playing field which identifies constraints which could adversely affect playing field quality; and
- (ii) Where the results of the assessment to be carried out pursuant to (i) above identify constraints which could adversely affect playing field quality, a detailed scheme to address any such constraints. The scheme shall include a written specification of the proposed soils structure, proposed drainage, cultivation and other operations associated with grass and sports turf establishment and a programme of implementation.

(b) The approved scheme shall be carried out in full and in accordance with the approved programme of implementation [or other specified time frame]. The land shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the scheme and made available for playing field use in accordance with the scheme.

*Reason: To ensure that the playing field is prepared to an adequate standard and is fit for purpose and to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

Informative: The applicant is advised that the scheme should comply with the relevant industry Technical Guidance, including guidance published by Sport England. Particular attention is drawn to 'Natural Turf for Sport', (Sport England, 2011) or subsequent reiteration therefore of.

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

If you would like any further information or advice, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Bob

Bob Sharples RIBA ARB MRTPI

Principal Planning Manager - South Team Planning & Active Environments

E: bob.sharples@sportengland.org

T: 07830 315030

cc J Hall Esq. FF
J Wood Esq. BBCFA
G Goudie Esq. FF