

Wokingham Borough Council

FAO:

By email only

24th July 2025

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

Application Reference: 250832

Site: Pavilion House Mole Road Sindlesham Wokingham RG41 5DU

Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use of the existing pavilion and sports changing facilities to provide an assembly hall and office facilities, with the erection of a single storey infill extension, changes to fenestration and addition of 2 no. canopy roofs.

Sport England Reference: PA/25/SE/WON/71243

Dear Sir/madam

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 104, 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

The proposal is for the change of us from a sports pavilion to an assembly hall and office facilities, with the erection of a single storey infill extension, changes to fenestration and addition of 2 no. canopy roofs.

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

As the playing fields are used for football we have consulted with Berks and Buck County Football Association/ the Football Association, (BBFA/FF) to understand the impact of the loss of the changing facilities.

We are setting out part of their response verbatim as it has a significant bearing on our assessment:

Bearwood Recreation Ground has three youth pitches (1 x Youth 11 v 11, 1 x 9 v 9, and 1 x 5 v 5). The site is exclusively used by Winnersh Rangers who are an accredited club and have a total of 15 teams.

The club have confirmed that they do not use the changing facilities, which is often the case in youth football, but have confirmed they do still require storage and toilet facilities.

The PPS currently rates these changing facilities as poor, and whilst has confirmed the need to keep and maintain the grass pitches does not reference the changing facilities.

Bearwood Recreation Ground has been highlighted as a potential option for a 3G pitch in the future, although no discussions have taken place on this. The removal of these changing rooms could pose a challenge to delivery of a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch, with the need for such facilities to be reinstated, however – as the current facilities would not be compliant for adult football, and owing to the continued lack of usage of the changing facilities currently for youth football - we do not object to these being re-purposed on the basis they are not currently providing functional space.

We would want to ensure that toilet facilities continue to be made available for football users, and that suitable storage for goals and the club's equipment remains on the site so as not to prejudice the current use of the football pitches.

We have also had a follow up conversation with BBFA who have informed us that there is toilet provision and storage facilities for the football club in another building on the site.

Given that there will be no negative impact on the current football provision on site, it is Sport England's opinion that the proposal will meet our planning policy exception 3.

Sport England's position

Given the above, Sport England raises **no objection** to the application because it is considered to accord with exception 3 of our Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 104 of the NPPF.

Please notify Sport England of the outcome of the planning application.

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

Yours sincerely,

Bob

Bob Sharples RIBA ARB MRTPI
Principal Planning Manager - South Team Planning & Active Environments

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cc J Wood Esq. BBFA
J Hall Esq. FF

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