

Wokingham Borough Council

FAO:

By email

7th January 2025

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

Application Reference: 242913

Site: Berks County Sports Club Sonning Lane Sonning Wokingham RG4 6ST

Proposal: Full application for proposed erection of 3no. covered padel tennis courts and 3no. outdoor tennis courts with associated flood lighting, parking and club huts.

Sport England Reference: PA/25/SE/WON/69592

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 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. A summary of the exceptions is provided in the annex to this response.

The Proposal

The proposal is to create 3 padel courts on an existing 4 court tennis area. The proposal will lead to the reduction of a single tennis court. Two of the remaining tennis courts along with the padel courts are to be sports lit.

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

We have assessed the submission and have consulted with the Lawn Tennis Association, (LTA), which is the national governing body for both Padel and Tennis.

They have confirmed that they support the proposal and have asked that the remaining tennis court is sports lit as well.

We too would support the sports lighting of the remaining tennis court. If this is not possible at this time, we would encourage the applicants to put the cabling in at this time so that it would not be so expensive in the future or disruptive should the lighting to the 3rd court come forward in the future.

Sport England believes the introduction of padel tennis to the site and the introduction of sports lighting to two of the tennis courts will create the opportunities to increase participation at the site and continue to make the site finically sustainable.

Sport England is content that the proposal meets our planning policy exception E2 which states:

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.

Sport England's Position

Given the above, Sport England raises **no objection** to the application because it is considered to accord with exception 2 of our Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 103 of the NPPF.

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

Please note that this response relates to Sport England's planning function only. It is not associated with our funding role or any grant application/award that may relate to the site.

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

Yours sincerely,

Bob

Bob Sharples RIBA ARB MRTPI

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cc H Ash Esq. LTA

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