

Wokingham Borough Council

FAO:

By email only

20th May 2025

Planning Practice Guidance: Non-statutory consultees

Paragraph 022 Reference ID: 15-022-20140306

Application Reference: 250517

Site: Land Off Basingstoke Road To the south and west of Spencer's Wood, Sinfield Wokingham RG7 1DT

Proposal: Outline planning permission is sought with all matters reserved for future determination, save for the means of access via Basingstoke Road, for: up to 420 dwellings (Use Class C3), an 80 bed care home (Use Class C2), 1ha of employment land (Use Class E(g), primary school (Use Class F1), local centre (Use Classes E(a), (b), (c), (f)), GP Surgery (Use Class E(e), sports pitch and changing facility, public open space, SANG provision and associated infrastructure.

Sport England Reference: PA/25/SE/WON/70662

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above proposal.

Sport England – Non Statutory Role and Policy

The Government, within their Planning Practice Guidance (Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Section) advises Local Planning Authorities to consult Sport England on a wide range of applications. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space#open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities>

This application falls within the scope of the above guidance as it relates to: *a residential development of 300 dwellings or more and the creation of a site for one or more playing pitches.*

Sport England assesses this type of application in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and against its own planning objectives, which are Protect - To protect the right opportunities in the right places; Enhance - To enhance opportunities through better use of existing provision; Provide - To provide new opportunities to meet the needs of current and future generations. Further information on the objectives and Sport England's wider planning guidance can be found on its website:

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

The occupiers of new development, especially residential, will generate demand for sporting provision. The existing provision within an area may not be able to accommodate this increased demand without exacerbating existing and/or predicted future deficiencies. Therefore, Sport England considers that new developments should contribute towards meeting the demand that they generate through the provision of on-site facilities and/or providing additional capacity off-site. The level and nature of any provision should be informed by a robust evidence base such as an up to date Sports Facilities Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy or other relevant needs assessment.

The Proposal and Assessment against Sport England's Objectives and the NPPF

We welcome the inclusion of our Active Design principles in the development of the masterplan for Spencer's Wood.

Consideration should be given of creating an activity hub https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/designing-for-physical-activity-activity-hubs.pdf?VersionId=fTq_THi4etbWfiVAfU_rY.d9lNbg3l_D to support Grovelands Country Park.

Wokingham Borough Council, (WBC) has an update to Playing Pitch Strategy and an Indoor Built Facilities Strategy which are referred to in the *Spencer's Wood, Wokingham Sport and Leisure Strategy*, (SWWSLS), which forms part of the of the planning submission.

As part of our assessment, we have consulted with several of the sports national governing bodies: The Lawn Tennis Association, (LTA), England Hockey, (EH), the Rugby Football Union, (RFU), England and Wales Cricket Board/Berkshire Cricket Foundation, ECB/BCF and Berks and Bucks Football Association/the Football Foundation (BBFA/FF). We are setting out their responses below, and if appropriate verbatim:

LTA: Are supportive of the tennis summary in SWWSLS which reflects their discussions with the consultants, and would encourage off-site contributions as suggested on pages 30,36, 39, 40 and 41.

EH: supports an off-site contribution towards the support of local hockey provision, as suggested on pages 23, 30, 40 and 41 of the SWWSLS.

RFU: supports an off-site contribution towards supporting local rugby provision as suggested on pages 29, 40 and 41 of the SWWSLS.

ECB/BCF: supports onsite provision towards supporting local cricket need as suggested on pages 29, 40 and 41 of the SWWSLS.

BBFA/FF:

The reflection of the current position – as set out in the application's Sport and Leisure Strategy – is very much supported, however caution is advised on any reflections from the PPS relating to future demand as this likely needs to be revised by the authority's PPS to reflect actual participation levels now being evidenced through affiliation figures.

The use of Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator (PPC) to assess the new demand which will be generated by this development is supported. The overall

summary in table 6.2 of the Sport and Leisure Strategy is helpful, however we would query the following commentary:

- “Impacts of development are not significant”
- “Informal kick-about space could meet this need” [for youth and mini football pitches]

The proposal creates new demand for facilities for which there is an existing deficit, and therefore we would view this as a significant factor. Whilst informal space is helpful for recreational activity, the supply and demand analysis undertaken relates to affiliated football which could not be met via informal kick-about space and therefore formal pitch provision is required to align with the identified need.

The statements relating to 3G provision in terms of benefitting the overall development and grass pitch needs, and adding value, are welcome. Whilst the PPC provides an overall need across pitch types, in some circumstances, increased 3G provision can reduce grass pitch requirements as it is able to support both training and matchplay demand. Local circumstances should therefore influence what is the best outcome for the local community the facilities would serve.

The Design and Access Statement refers to the following:

- Multifunctional open space with pavilion / playing fields and play areas.
- Inclusion of a 3G pitch within the school site with associated parking and changing facilities.

Plans for the scale, location and design of these facilities could not be found with sufficient detail to understand if/how these respond to the level of demand generated, and the existing deficits of such provisions locally. Given the need to ensure sufficient space is allocated for delivery of these facilities, it would be useful to understand the size of the proposed 3G FTP and sports pitches, and the ancillary facilities supporting them.

Notably, we're aware of aspirations locally for development of 3G provision in proximity to the development – at High Copse. Therefore off-site contributions for the 3G element of demand could be worth exploration if this project were to be developed further prior to development at Spencer's Wood.

It is appreciated that the detailed technical information and specification would follow at a later stage, at which point we would be happy to provide further assistance. These would need to follow the FA Guide to 3G Football Turf Pitches, the FA Guide to Floodlights, and published pavilion recommendations (<https://footballfoundation.org.uk/changing-pavilion-design-key-considerations>), as well as Sport England's Natural Turf for Sport guidance – to ensure their suitability to meet the identified needs.

We support BBFA/FF about considering off-site contributions for the 3G element because Sport England have a concern that any sports provision included on an education site will not have a comprehensive inclusive use due the restrictions of access during the day due to requirements of safeguarding issues. This affects stay at home parents, unemployed, homeworkers, people with disabilities unable to work and retired people.

We also have a concern about the lack of detail of the on-site sports provision, this can be addressed by condition/or set out in the S106 Agreement. Sport England would happy to advise on the wording of the S106 Agreement to ensure that if the sports

facilities are not delivered till many years after the date of the application's approval, they will still meet the relevant sporting requirements.

Any on-site cricket provision would need to meet the relevant ECB guidance at the time of construction.

The SWWSLS addresses both the indoor and outdoor sports requirements as it references our Sports Facility calculator and playing pitch calculator. We welcome the commitment to provide sports provision for the new residents; however, it would have been helpful if there was a stronger link between the SWWSLS and the *Draft Heads of Terms for a Section 106 Agreement* set out in section 6 in the planning statement.

Looking at the scheme holistically, subject to the follow through on commitment to the off and onsite sports provision, there is a lot to commend this project.

Sport England's Position

Sport England does not object to this application, as it is considered to meet Objective *Provide* as set out above.

Sport England would like to review the details of the off-site contributions proposed when they are available as well as the details of the on-site sports provision.

Sport England recommends, based on our assessment, that if the Council is minded to approve the application, the following planning conditions should be imposed, if they are not to form part of the Section 106 Agreement.

1.

(a) No development of the playing fields shall commence 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 – e.g. before first occupation of the educational establishment]. 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, National Governing Bodies for Sport. Particular attention is drawn to 'Natural Turf for Sport', (Sport England, 2025 or subsequent revision)

2. No development of the sports pavilion and 3G artificial grass pitch shall commence until their details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority [after consultation with Sport England]. The Sports pavilion and 3G 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 **.*

3. Within 6 months of completion of the artificial grass pitch, 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 **

4. Within 3 months of the work starting to create the sports facilities, a community use agreement prepared in consultation with Sport England has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and a copy of the completed approved agreement has been provided to the Local Planning Authority. The agreement shall apply to outdoor sports facilities, changing and car parking and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review. The development shall not be used otherwise than in strict compliance with the approved agreement."

*Reason: To secure well managed safe community access to the sports facility/facilities, to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport and to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

If you wish to amend the wording of the recommended condition(s) or use another mechanism in lieu of the condition(s), please discuss the details with the undersigned. Sport England does not object to amendments to conditions, provided they achieve the same outcome, and we are involved in any amendments.

The absence of an objection to this application, in the context of the Town and Country Planning Act, cannot be taken as formal support or consent from Sport England or any National Governing Body of Sport to any related funding application, or as may be required by virtue of any pre-existing funding agreement.

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.

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

Yours sincerely,

Bob

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