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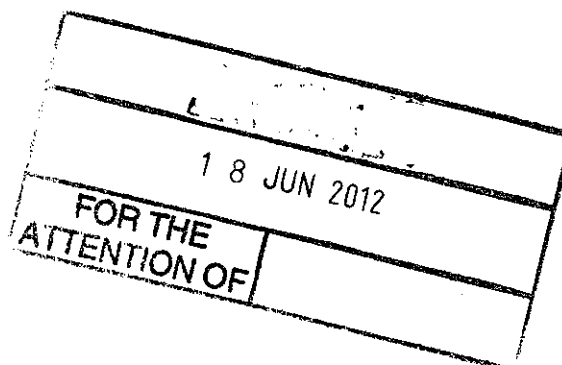
Graeme Thorpe
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
CLITHEROE
BB7 2RA

18 June 2012

Our Ref: NW/RV/2012/28690/S

Dear Mr Thorpe

Application Number: 3/2012/0361
Site Address: Blackburn Rovers FC & Athletic plc Senior Training
Brockhall Village Old Langho BB6 8FA
Proposal: Proposed installation of synthetic pitch surface to pitch
5 together with erection of 5m high perimeter rebound
fence and 15m high floodlighting columns.



Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

It is understood that the site forms part of, or constitutes a playing field as defined in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (Statutory Instrument 2010 No.2184), in that it is on land that has been used as a playing field within the last five years, and the field encompasses at least one playing pitch of 0.2 ha or more, or that it is on land that allocated for the use as a playing field in a development plan or in proposals for such a plan or its alteration or replacement.

Sport England has therefore considered the application in the light of its playing fields policy. The aim of this policy is to ensure that there is an adequate supply of quality pitches to satisfy the current and estimated future demand for pitch sports within the area. The policy seeks to protect all parts of the playing field from development and not just those which, for the time being, are laid out as pitches. The Policy states that:



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"Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of, all or any part of a playing field, or land last used as a playing field or allocated for use as a playing field in an adopted or draft deposit local plan, unless, in the judgement of Sport England, one of the Specific circumstances applies."

Reason: Development which would lead to the loss of all or part of a playing field, or which would prejudice its use, should not normally be permitted because it would permanently reduce the opportunities for participation in sporting activities. Government planning policy and the policies of Sport England have recognised the importance of such activities to the social and economic well-being of the country.

The proposal is for a 3G rubber crumb Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) on the site of an existing grass football pitch. As Sport England's statutory remit is to protect natural grass playing field from inappropriate development the proposal must meet the following exception to the Playing Field Policy, which is replicated in paragraph 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework:

E5 - Replacement of equivalent sports facilities (indoor/outdoor)

The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields

The site is the venue for the senior Blackburn Rovers Football squad and is not a community based facility nor does it cater for any other sport other than football. The AGP will replicate the use of the existing grass pitch and will not impact on any other user or sport. The artificial surface will enable the club to train for longer periods and for that reason can be considered to be of sufficient benefit to sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field.

There is very little information submitted with the planning application as to whether the club allow any managed community or school use of the football facilities. Although there are 4 AGP's within Ribble Valley only one is available to the community. Sport England would like to take this opportunity to encourage the Club to consider putting in place a formalised community use agreement that would see the AGP being made available to local schools and /or local football teams who are in desperate need of access to AGP's such as this to develop football. This type of agreement could be undertaken by establishing club/schools links which the Football Association and Sport England encourage as part of grassroots football development.

This being the case, Sport England **does not wish to raise an objection** to this application



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The absence of an objection to this application in the context of the Town and Country Planning Acts, does not in any way commit Sport England's or any National Governing Body of Sport's support for any related application for grant funding.

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 the undersigned at the address below.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Pudge
Planning Manager

Tel: 07747 763534
e-mail: fiona.pudge@sportengland.org