



Sport England's Playing Fields Policy - 'A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England'

Policy Exception E5:

'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'.

When assessing an application against this policy exception Sport England is likely to require information which helps to answer the following questions:

- What is the impact on the existing playing field land in terms of the number of pitches the site can accommodate and their capacity?
- There will be the same number of pitches, but with a much-increased capacity. For training purposes, by having multiple groups playing across the pitch, there would be many more people on the pitch at any one time and that, due to the surface and the lighting, the pitch would be in use for more hours a day than the grass pitch.
- Will all existing users of the playing field land still be adequately accommodated within the site?
- Yes, as there is no reduction in the number of pitches but an increase in their capacity both in terms of numbers of people on the pitches at any one time and the amount of time that the artificial pitch can be used throughout the year.
- What is the view of the sport's national governing bodies whose playing pitch provision may be adversely affected?
- The Club was dealing with Lee Boyer, the Head of Facilities and Investment at Lancashire FA but he has been furloughed. However, Lancashire FA have indicated that there is a demand for 3G pitches in the area. In view of these unusual circumstances, the Club has had further discussions with Peter Fletcher in the Council's Sports and Leisure Department who has said that, although there is no formal pitch strategy document in place, Lancashire FA have put together a document that identifies a requirement for 4.7 3G pitches and has earmarked the Langho/Whalley area to accommodate some of this provision.
- Is the playing field land proposed for development of a particularly high quality or of particular importance to the development of sport in the local area?
- The new pitch will replace an existing poor-quality grass pitch that requires improvement if it is to accommodate all the club's teams. It makes sense to replace this with a higher capacity 3G pitch rather than a new grass pitch.
- Is there evidence that the proposed facility has been carefully located to minimize any adverse impact on the playing field land? For example, has an assessment of alternative sites been undertaken?
- Yes, the club can only consider land over which they have some control. They did consider their other site at Northcote Road, but the Borough Council's Sports Officers preferred this main site.
- Will the proposed facility help to meet an identified sporting need i.e. as set out in a needs assessment or Playing Pitch/Sports Facility Strategy?
- Yes the club is certain that the proposed 3G pitch will meet an identified sporting need but, as accepted by Daniel Green of the Football Foundation, Ribble Valley does not have a PPS that would provide the required evidence base, and this is not the club's fault.
- Does the proposed facility help to deliver the plans and strategies of the relevant sport's national governing bodies and does the application have their support?
- Yes. The Club is aware of the desire of the National Bodies to keep grass pitches but, due to the weather and other factors, grass pitches can't generally cope with more than 1 game a day, which is not sufficient even to accommodate the club's own 7 teams, not counting the use by schools and other clubs referred to elsewhere in this document.
- Will the proposed facility duplicate any existing provision within the local catchment area?

- No as there are no existing 3G pitches in the vicinity of the site, the nearest being the Council's own pitches at Edisford Road in Clitheroe.
- Does the proposed facility meet with Sport England's and the relevant sports national governing body design guidance?
- Yes. Sport England and the Football Foundation have agreed that they would be willing to ensure compliance with these standards through a condition on the planning permission, but we will be submitting to the Council separately, prior to the determination of the application, an outline specification of the construction of the new pitch, prepared by the company that will construct the pitch. We trust that this will allow the Council (and the consultee Sports Bodies) to structure any questions that they might have on the structure of the new pitch.
- Will the proposed facility be available for use by the local community? Will this use be secured and managed on a formal basis i.e. through the development and implementation of a community use agreement?
- The community use of the pitch will be by the local clubs and leagues that the Club already works with when hiring out their existing smaller artificial pitch.
- Does the design of the proposed facility allow for adequate storage, changing provision and access to allow for community use?
- Yes. The existing facilities will be used, and they are adequate to allow for community use.
- Is the proposed facility supported by the existing and potential future users of the site e.g. local sports clubs?
- Yes. We are aware that 6 letters of support for the application have been sent to the Council by the appropriate persons from local schools, junior football associations and individual clubs. The Club is also aware that St Augustine's RC High School in Billington is also highly supportive of the application and we will try to get a supporting letter from that School submitted to the Council as soon as possible and prior to the determination of the application.
- Is there evidence that the proposed facility will be linked into the wider sports development network? Will a sports development plan be produced and implemented for the facility?
- The club currently has 28 teams including girls teams from under 7 to under 18; boys teams from under 7 to under 18; three senior men's teams; and an open age ladies team, and they are looking to build upon this through a Sports Development Plan (if the Council requires more information on this, please let us know and we will seek to provide whatever additional information the Council requires)
- Has the applicant consulted the County Sports Partnership, Community Sports Network and relevant sport's national governing bodies in the preparation of the planning application?
- Yes. The difficulties in respect of consultation have been referred to above, but we consider that the best input that the club has been able to obtain is that from the Council's own officer, Peter Fletcher, who appears to confirm that the proposal would accord with the informal strategy currently being worked upon by the Lancashire FA.
- For applications on school sites, is there evidence that the proposed facility will lead to an increase in PE in the curriculum and the development, or further development, of after school sports clubs and school club links?
- This point is not applicable to this proposed development.
- Are appropriate arrangements proposed to ensure the long term maintenance of the facility?
- Yes. The Club has been running for 50 years, over which time it has successfully maintained four grass pitches using club funds. The same funds would be used in the future to maintain the remaining grass pitches, the existing small artificial pitch and the full sized 3G pitch that is the subject of this current planning application.
- Is there evidence to suggest that the sporting benefits that will arise from the proposed development are unlikely to be obtained in any other way in the foreseeable future?
- Yes. The benefits are that more games will be able to be played on better surfaces and with a reduction in the distances that will need to be travelled by the various users of the Club's pitches. Evidence of these benefits is provided by the letters of support for the proposal from the appropriate representatives of local leagues, clubs and schools as referred to above.

For Artificial Grass Pitches (AGP) and Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) Sport England may require information to help answer the following additional questions:

- What is the sporting rationale behind the choice of surface proposed and what sports and activities is it envisaged the facility will accommodate?
- Football & the rationale is to allow more games and training at the site.
- How will the provision of the facility benefit the current sporting users of the playing field land (e.g. school and club use)?
- By reducing travelling time and distance and allowing more matches and training.
- Will the provision of the facility help to enhance the quality of the remaining playing field land e.g. by moving training activity off a grass playing pitch and onto the artificial surface?
- Yes. The use of the artificial pitch, especially for training purposes, will significantly reduce the wear and tear on the remaining grass pitches allowing these to be kept in much better condition for matches.
- Is sports lighting proposed and is it likely that its use will be restricted due to the proximity of residential properties or sensitive areas (e.g. Green Belt or Conservation Areas)?
- Yes. The site is not Green Belt or Conservation Area, and the club will accept reasonable restrictions on the times of use due to the proximity of residential properties.
- To ensure the long term benefit of the facility will a sinking fund be established to ensure the appropriate replacement of the artificial surface and/or sports lighting?
- It will be replaced using club funds.

For further information on Sport England's role in assessing and commenting on planning applications please visit:

www.sportengland.org/planningapplications