

Ribble Valley Borough Council

FAO: Maya Cullen

By email

27 April 2026

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

Application Reference: 3/2026/0295

Site: MARDALE PLAYING FIELDS, MARDALE PAVILLION MARDALE ROAD PR3 3EU

Proposal: Proposed synthetic turf pitch including fencing, spectator areas, storage areas and floodlighting.

Sport England Reference: PA/26/NW/RV/73761

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

The Proposal and its Impact on the playing field

It is proposed to add a new artificial grass pitch on playing field land at the above site. The Council has an up-to-date Ribble Valley Playing Pitch Strategy (2024). This confirms that the site is used for football and that there are issues with pitch quality. The PPS confirms that the Football Foundation and County Football

Association will work with the Council to determine whether an artificial pitch on the site is feasible. Sport England also provided pre-application advice to the applicant. It was confirmed that this project is supported by the Football Foundation.

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

Sport England considers that this proposal supports the principal use of the site as a playing field and meets exception 5 of our Playing Fields Policy (see Annex). This is because the site is used for football and the project is recorded in the PPS. Sport England considers there is sufficient benefit to sport to meet exception 5.

Further details are required to be submitted via planning condition. Planning conditions are proposed as follows:

- No development shall commence until further details of the design and layout of the artificial pitch to include details of the construction and materials used including sub base, shockpad, infill type and surface pile have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England. The artificial 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 **.*

Informative (artificial grass pitches – football only). The applicant is advised that the pitch should be tested in accordance with The FA standard code of rules and be registered on the FA Register for 3G Football Turf Pitches.

Informative (artificial grass pitches football only) – The applicant is advised that for any football match play to take place the pitch should be built in accordance with FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf – FIFA Quality or International Match Standard (IMS) as a minimum.

- Use of the artificial pitch shall not commence until:
 - (a) certification that the Artificial Grass Pitch hereby permitted has met FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf – FIFA Quality or equivalent International Artificial Turf Standard (IMS) and
 - (b) confirmation that the facility has been registered on the Football Association's Register of Football Turf Pitches have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

*Reason: To ensure the development is fit for purpose and sustainable, provides sporting benefits and to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

- No development shall commence until details of containment barriers and microfilters for stormwater drains for the containment of infill are submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The construction of the barriers shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: to minimise the loss of infill from the playing surface

Use of the development should not commence until a scheme setting out measures to prevent infill leaving the pitch at all player and vehicle entrance gates is submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme shall be complied with after the commencement of use of the development.

Reason: to minimise the loss of infill from the playing surface

Informative; Measures should be taken to manage and minimise the loss of infill from the playing surface. BSI Standards, working with the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN), have developed a Technical Report describing the procedures that should be used to control infill migration. FIFA, World Rugby and the International Hockey Federation (FIH) have all included the recommendations of CEN into their certification programmes for artificial grass pitches. Contractors building pitches that require certification should therefore include the measures within their designs. For further information on the design of 3G pitches please access the FA Guide to 3Gs, which can be found online or contact the Football Foundation/FA for further advice.

- Before the artificial pitch is brought into use, 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. For Artificial Grass Pitches this should include measures to ensure the replacement of the Artificial Grass Pitch within a specified period. The measures set out in the approved scheme shall be complied with in full, with effect from commencement of use of the artificial 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 **.*

Community Use

- Use of the development shall not commence until 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 the artificial pitch and ancillary facilities and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by non-members, 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 **.*

Informative: Guidance on preparing Community Use Agreements is available from Sport

England. <http://www.sportengland.org/planningapplications/> For artificial grass pitches it is recommended that you seek guidance from the Football Association on pitch construction when determining the community use hours the artificial pitch can accommodate.

Lighting

- The [named playing field/sports facility] and its associated sports lighting shall not be used outside the hours of:
 - [8 a.m.] and [10 p.m.] Monday to Friday;
 - [8 a.m.] and [10 p.m.] on Saturday; and
 - [8 a.m.] and [8 p.m.] on Sunday [and public holidays].

*Reason: To balance illuminating the [playing field/sports facility] for maximum use and benefit to sport with the interest of amenity and sustainability and to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

Biodiversity net gain

The applicant has provided a BNG report. This appears to recommend (page 6/7) that BNG may be including on-site through tree planting or the creation of modified grassland within the site. When plans for how BNG is to be accommodated on the site are made available, please can these also be shared with Sport England as we may wish to amend our response if this will result in a loss of playing field. Sport England has produced the following design guidance to support applicants with navigating BNG.

<https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/planning-sport/our-planning-role-guidance-and-tools/BNG>

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.

Sport England's Position

Given the above, Sport England raises **no objection** to the application because it is considered to accord with exception 5 of our Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 104 of the NPPF.

If the LPA is minded to approve the application without imposing the above conditions then Sport England objects to the application as it is not considered to

accord with any of the exceptions to our Playing Fields Policy or paragraph 104 of the NPPF.

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

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,

Vicky Aston
Planning Manager



CC: – Paul Ashton/Elizabeth Owusu-Darko – Football Foundation
Lee Boyer – Lancashire Football Association

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