

Ribble Valley Borough Council
FAO: Ms M Cullen
By email

15th June 2026

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

Application Reference: Application 3/2026/0375

Site: Playing Field Edisford Road Clitheroe BB7 3LA

Proposal: Proposed synthetic turf pitch, including fencing, acoustic barrier, floodlighting, access path, toilet block and ancillary equipment.

Sport England Reference: PA/26/NW/RV/74134

Dear Maya,

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

Summary

Sport England raises **no objection** to this application as it is considered to meet exception 5 of our Playing Fields Policy and to accord with Paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), subject to conditions set out below:

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

The proposal is for a sports lit 3G Artificial grass Pitch,(AGP), toilet block and ancillary facilities. This will result in the loss of approximately 0.8 hectares of playing field.

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

It should be noted that artificial grass pitches (AGPs), have a limited life and require significant maintenance to keep them in a playable condition. Because the top surface or carpet as it is commonly referred to has to be replaced approximately every 10 years there must be a sinking fund created to ensure this happens. A grass pitch does not need a sinking fund, and in reality, the maintenance is very light compared to an AGP. This should be conditioned.

Sport consulted with Lancashire Football Association/the Football Association. Their comments which are helpful to assessing the application are set out below:

This is an FF project progressed through our 3G framework. This is an Installation of a new FA guideline 11v11 Synthetic Turf Pitch (STP) sized 91 x 55m with additional FA recommended 3m safety run off, with associated features.

FF notes a small error with the design and access statement highlighting the pitch will have 2x 9v9 however FF follows the other information submitted as the correct layout with only 1x 9v9 configuration due to the size of the pitch being 91x55.

Demand wise:

Ribble Valley Borough Council has an up-to-date Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS, 2024) and Local Football Facilities Plan (LFFP, April 2025), both of which evidence a clear shortfall in accessible 3G FTP provision across the borough.

The PPS identifies 232 affiliated teams (season 2023/24), equating to a requirement for six full-size 11v11 3G FTPs.

There are currently three full-size 3G FTPs and three small-sided 3G FTPs within the borough. However: Two of the full-size pitches are unavailable for community use. One small-sided (Bowland High School) lacks floodlighting, limiting midweek and peak-time access. As a result, effective community access to 3G provision is severely constrained.

Of the full-size 3Gs:

Blackburn Rovers (Brockhall Training Ground) has no community use, Clitheroe Royal Grammar School is unavailable for community use. Ribble Valley 3G at Edisford Sports Complex is the only full-size pitch available to community football and is at capacity.

The PPS identifies a borough-wide shortfall of 5.25 full-size 11v11 3G FTPs, with geographic deficits as follows: Clitheroe area: 1.0, Longridge area: 0.5, Northern Parishes: 0.75, Southern Parishes: 2.75 and Whalley area: 0.25.

These shortfalls are reflected within the LFFP project list, which identifies a lack of suitable and deliverable sites in several areas, including Longridge, Northern Parishes and Whalley, where no 3G FTP provision currently exists.

Edisford Sports Centre is prioritised within the PPS as a suitable site to address the identified shortfall of one 11v11 3G FTP in the Clitheroe area, while also contributing capacity towards the wider deficit across the Southern Parishes.

Sport England is satisfied that there is a strategic need for a sports lit 3G AGP, therefore there is a need to ensure that the AGP is kept to appropriate playing standards. This can be done via a condition.

There is a concern that the drainage system is not showing any interceptors to prevent the 3G infill migrating into the environment. This needs to be addressed via condition.

There is also a concern that the bio-diversity net gain requirements have not fully been addressed. There is mention in the BNG report about the BNG being provided off-site. The Design and Access Statement, on page 23 suggest a condition to provide a BNG plan prior to work starting on site:

This permission will require the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan before development is begun.

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7 A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Sport England is uncomfortable with the proposed wording as it could allow BNG on the existing and have a negative impact on the remaining playing fields. We have suggested amendments to the condition below.

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.

The absence of an objection is subject to the following conditions being imposed should the local planning authority (LPA) resolve to approve the application

1. No development shall commence until details of the design and layout of surface water drainage details for the artificial grass pitch, to prevent the infill materials entering the natural environment have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority [after consultation with Sport England]. The surface water drainage system for the 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 **.*

2. Within 6 months of practical completion:

(a) certification that the Artificial Grass Pitch hereby permitted has met FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf – FIFA Quality 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 **.*

3. Within 6 months of completion, 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 and include measures for the recycling of the carpet which was removed. It should also include the required on going 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. No Developments shall commence until the location and type of Bio-diversity Net Gain has been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England.

*Reason: To ensure the development is fit for purpose, does not have a negative impact on playing fields, sustainable and to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

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.

[Delete if the 2024 Direction does not apply] Should the local planning authority be minded to approve this application without the above condition(s), then given Sport England's subsequent objection the Town and Country Planning (Consultation)

(England) Direction 2024 requires the application to be referred to the Secretary of State via the Planning Casework Unit.

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

Yours sincerely,

Bob

Bob Sharples RIBA ARB MRTPI

Principal Planning Manager - South Team Planning & Active Environments

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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