

APPENDIX

WELWYN HATFIELD LOCAL PLAN (2013-32)- EXAMINATION

Matter 6: Settlement Policies

SADM 26 New Dwellings in Hatfield – HS9: Land at Howe Dell

Question 41: Is the permanent loss of these playing fields justified and in accordance with local and national policy that seeks to promote and maintain areas of open space?

Roy Warren
Planning Manager
Sport England
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Sport Park, 3 Oakwood Drive, Loughborough, Leics, LE11 3QF

25th March 2018

10th November 2017

For the attention of J Pagdin

Dear Mrs. Pagdin,

**App Ref: 6/2017/1641/MAJ - Onslow St Audreys School, Old Rectory Drive, Hatfield,
AL10 8AB (Sport England Ref: E/WH/2017/46505/S)**

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

Summary: Sport England raises **no objection** to this application as a statutory consultee, subject to 7 planning conditions (or section 106 agreement provisions where appropriate) being imposed relating to the following matters as set out in this response:

- Sports Facility Phasing & Delivery
- Sports Hall Design Specifications
- Artificial Grass Pitch Design Specifications
- Artificial Grass Pitch Certification
- Games Court Refurbishment Details
- Portable Cricket Wicket Details
- Community Use Agreement;

Advisory comments are made on hours of use/sports lighting and noise impact in relation to the artificial grass pitch.

COMMENTS MADE AS A STATUTORY CONSULTEE

Sport England –Statutory Role and Policy

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 2015 (Statutory Instrument 2015 No. 595). The consultation with Sport England is therefore a statutory requirement.

Sport England has considered the application in the light of the National Planning Policy Framework (particularly Para 74) and Sport England's policy on planning applications affecting playing fields 'A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England' (see link below):

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, unless one or more of the five exceptions stated in its policy apply.

The Proposal and Impact on Playing Field

In summary, the planning application is for a major proposal at Onslow St Audrey School which has two distinct but related elements. The first element is for school related development to facilitate a 1 form of entry expansion to the school that will include a science/teaching block, sports hall, a floodlit artificial grass pitch (AGP), refurbished tennis courts, an informal hard play area and additional car and cycle parking. All of these proposals would be located to the south of the school buildings on part of the playing fields. The second element involves the redevelopment of the games courts and hard play areas to the north of the school buildings and a playing field area to the east of the school buildings for 87 dwellings which is proposed to substantially fund the delivery of the proposed school development. As confirmed in the submitted Open Space & Sports Assessment, the cumulative impact of both the school and residential elements of the development would result in the loss of over 1.2 hectares (12,000 sq.m) of the school's existing natural turf playing field area and hard play areas.

Assessment against Sport England Policy

Exception E5

A substantial part of the planning application relates to the provision of new indoor and outdoor sports facilities on the existing school playing field. It therefore needs to be considered against exception E5 of the above policy, which states:

- 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.

I have therefore assessed the proposals against the above policy to determine whether the proposals meet exception E5. The submitted Open Space & Sports Assessment (supplemented by a letter from the applicant's agent dated 20th October 2017) sets out the sports related benefits of the proposals and an assessment of the impact on existing sports facilities in detail. The following assessment summarises the key considerations.

Sports Development Benefits

The key potential sports development benefits of the proposed development are considered to be as follows:

Sports Hall: A new four (badminton) court sports hall would provide a modern indoor sports facility for meeting the Onslow St Audrey School's current and future curricular and extra-curricular PE and sport needs. At present, the school only has access to a dated 1950s gym in the main school building which was not designed for meeting the school's current indoor sports needs and has a number of deficiencies including its size which would not be suitable for meeting the dimensions required for many of the most common indoor sports and its design which would not meet current sports hall design guidance. Furthermore, the gym would not have the capacity to meet the requirements of an expanded school. The sports hall would provide a modern fit for purpose sports hall which would address all of the existing deficiencies and allow the school to use it for a wide range of sports and physical activities including badminton, netball, basketball and cricket practice, many of which cannot be satisfactorily delivered at present.

The facility would be made available for community use outside of school hours and has been designed as a 'community sports hall' with dimensions of 34.5 x 20 metres meeting Sport England guidance rather than a standard school sports hall (33 x 18 metres) that would meet the Education & Skills Funding Agency guidance. The significance is that the slightly larger size of a community sports hall allows sports governing body requirements for court sizes and run-off areas to be met which allows a much wider range of sports to be played to club competition level by community users compared to a school sports hall and would also be more suitable for inter/intra schools competitions. This in turn increases the potential of a facility to meet unmet local community needs. In this regard, Welwyn Hatfield Council's Sports Facility Strategy (2012) assessed community sports facility needs in the area and in response, identified a need for 2-3 additional sports halls to be provided in the district by 2026 to meet future needs. While a new sports hall with community access has recently been provided at nearby Bishops Hatfield Girls School to help meet part of this identified need, an additional sports hall on the Onslow St Audrey School site would offer potential to meet the remaining part of this need. Furthermore, recent consultation with the following sports governing bodies has identified the following specific needs in the area

- Badminton England: Local badminton clubs have been unable to expand due to court availability in the area which has also prevented new clubs being set up. Furthermore, the Community Badminton Network have been petitioning for a badminton specific centre in the area for a long time. Badminton clubs have experienced difficulties booking courts at the Hertfordshire Sports Village and Hatfield Leisure Centre while the courts at the Birchwood Leisure Centre are of poorer quality. Welwyn Hatfield is currently a priority area for Badminton England and the new sports hall would be an ideal location for satellite club activity as well as the potential for the development of a new Junior Club.
- England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB): There are no other indoor cricket facilities at the other sports centres in Hatfield, apart from the Hertfordshire Sports Village, so this would be very welcome and help to meet local demand for indoor cricket facilities subject to the proposal meeting the ECB's technical specifications for indoor cricket facilities in terms of suitable lighting, flooring and nets.

It is also understood that the Hertfordshire Netball Association have expressed an interest in using the sports hall for meeting local netball needs and the Hertfordshire County FA have advocated that the hall be designed for futsal use to help meet local needs. This proposal would therefore respond positively to an identified local need for additional community sports hall provision and would offer potential to help address some specific needs in the area.

Changing Facilities: The new changing facilities would be superior to the school's existing changing rooms and be suitable for meeting both the school's and the community's needs for indoor and outdoor sports which would help encourage participation in sport by students and community users.

Artificial Grass Pitch: The artificial grass pitch (AGP) with a 3G surface supported by fencing and sports lighting would offer potential to significantly improve the delivery of curricular and extra-curricular sport at the school by providing an all weather pitch that could be used continuously throughout the year and intensively due to its synthetic surface and sports lighting. The school does not have an AGP and the natural turf playing field like most school playing fields will not be fully available throughout the year due to surface conditions and carrying capacity limitations. The AGP would address these constraints and due to its multi-pitch layout could be used for 5v5, 7v7 and 9v9 football matches. While designed principally for football use, the AGP could also be used for a range of other sports and physical activities. Issues associated with matches/training or lessons being cancelled or curtailed due to weather or surface conditions would be substantially addressed by the facility.

In terms of community needs, the Welwyn Hatfield Council's Sports Facility Strategy identified current and/or future junior and mini football pitch deficiencies in the district together with a future need for 2 floodlit full size 3G AGPs. While the recent provision of a 3G AGP at Monks Walk School in Welwyn Garden City has helped meet part of this need, the provision of a further 3G AGP would contribute towards meeting the outstanding need for additional natural turf and 3G pitch needs that were identified. Recent consultation with the Hertfordshire County FA has identified that the facility could help meet unmet local needs for community football matches and training in the Hatfield area. However, it would

be essential that the facility meets the FA's design guidance and is designed to meet the FIFA Quality standard to allow football matches to take place on it. The facility would therefore offer the potential to make a significant contribution to meet local community football facility needs.

- **Games Courts:** The school's existing games courts are in a poor state of repair and have not been used for many years since Howe Dell Primary School which used the courts relocated. As part of the proposals, the courts would be refurbished to address the quality of the surfacing and fencing in order to bring them back into use. The refurbished courts would replace the school's existing games courts to the north of the site which have qualitative deficiencies and the refurbished courts would be designed so that they could be used for netball, tennis and basketball. The refurbished courts would be expected to be superior in quality to the ones that they would replace. While not floodlit, the courts would be made available for community use outside of school hours like the other sports facilities. In terms of community needs, the Welwyn Hatfield Council's Sports Facility Strategy prioritised investment into existing facilities with a focus on integrating netball and tennis into any upgraded MUGA facilities in order to help meet community needs. I have consulted the Lawn Tennis Association who have advised that community access to the refurbished courts would be welcomed for meeting local tennis needs and would help sustain the courts in the long term in relation to maintenance.

Community Use: All of the new sports facilities would be made available for community use as part of the proposals and a formal community use agreement is proposed by the school to secure this in practice. The proposals for the new vehicular access and additional car parking adjoining the sports hall would help facilitate community access. While some of the school's existing football pitches have some limited community use, the scope for community access to the school's existing sports facilities is very restricted by the range and quality of facilities that are currently available. The new facilities would collectively provide the opportunity to create a dual use sports complex with a range of facilities that would offer the potential to address several identified local community sports facility needs as set out above.

Impact on Playing Field

In relation to the impact on the playing field, the development would have a significant impact as around 0.76 hectares of playing fields and 0.46 ha of games courts and informal hard play areas would be lost to the proposed residential development. In addition, a further playing field area of around 0.90 hectares would be lost to the sports hall, AGP, informal hard play, science/teaching block and car park to the south of the school buildings. However, the loss is proposed to be mitigated by the following measures:

Artificial Grass Pitch: As set out above, the AGP would be superior in quality to the natural turf field that it would be sited on and would have a significantly greater carrying capacity due to its artificial all weather surface and sports lighting. It could be used for a range of pitch sports and be made available for community use to meet local needs. As well as a 9v9 football pitch, it could also be used for a 7v7 pitch and three 5v5 pitches due to the proposed pitch markings. While it would technically result in the loss of around 0.57 ha of natural turf playing field area, it would be significantly superior in quality and flexibility to the area it would be sited on in terms of its potential for pitch use;

Refurbished Games Courts and Replacement Informal Hard Play: The disused games courts would be refurbished as set out above and would replace the games courts to the north of the site which have surface quality deficiencies which restrict their use especially during adverse weather conditions. They are also used partly for car parking and are overlooked by adjoining houses. The refurbished courts would provide a superior facility that would be designed for meeting a range of court based sports and would well located on the site in relation to the new sports facilities which would help facilitate their community use. The refurbished courts would not be used for parking or be overlooked. The informal play areas that would be lost to the north of the site would also be replaced with new informal play areas that are more suitable for meeting the school's needs to the south of the school buildings.

Revised Playing Pitch Layout: As shown by the submitted playing pitch layout, the two existing senior football pitches, running track and training grids could be retained through revising the playing pitch layout on the remaining playing field area to the south of the school site. The existing 9v9 football pitch would be replaced by the 3G AGP which would provide a 9v9 pitch suitable for match use. A redundant artificial cricket strip which has not been used for at least 7 years would be displaced. However, it is proposed that this be mitigated by the introduction of a portable roll-out cricket mat that could be sited on the playing field during the summer period and the sports hall being designed for cricket use.

Off-site Provision: As part of the proposals to expand the school, a formal agreement is being completed between Hertfordshire County Council and St Albans Rugby Club to allow the school to access the rugby and football pitches on the rugby club's site so that the school has access to further natural turf pitches if they require them. As the rugby club's pitches will not be required for club use during the school day this would be a suitable arrangement;

Community Use: As set out above, all of the school's new and enhanced outdoor sports facilities would be made available for community use outside of school hours to help meet local facility needs and this would be formalised through a community use agreement. At present, the range and quality of outdoor sports facilities available on the school site restricts the potential for substantive community use.

Conclusions and Recommendation

In view of the above assessment, I am satisfied that the proposed sports hall and AGP elements of the proposed development would accord with exception E5 of our policy as the sport related benefits of these new facilities would be considered to clearly outweigh the impact that these facilities would have on the playing field. I am also satisfied that the proposals for residential development on the games court and informal hard play areas to the north of the site would meet exception E4 of our policy as the areas that would be lost would be replaced with superior facilities as part of the development. The refurbished games courts and new informal hard play areas would have a minimal impact on the playing field as they would make use of a redundant games court or use areas of playing field adjoining the existing school buildings that are unsuitable at present for potential pitch use due to the constraints imposed by the buildings and fencing (i.e. would meet exception E3 of our playing fields policy anyway). The proposals for

additional car parking and vehicular access on the west side of the playing field would be considered to accord with exception E2 as they would be ancillary to the use of the playing fields and the new sports facilities, and would be required to facilitate community use of the sports facilities.

The proposal for residential development on the eastern part of the school's playing fields would not accord with any of the exceptions to Sport England's playing fields policy when considered in isolation. It is acknowledged that the residential development has been proposed to fund the majority of the new school developments including the proposed sports facilities. While 'enabling development' of this kind can be an effective way of delivering new and enhanced sports facilities, there is no provision for this type of proposal within Sport England's playing fields policy. The same applies in relation to Government planning policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Para. 74) which closely mirrors Sport England's policy. The 'enabling development' rationale would therefore not allow this element of the proposed development to accord with our playing fields policy. However, despite this general policy approach, every development proposal is considered by Sport England on its merits to assess whether there are exceptional circumstances that exist that would justify a departure to our policy being made. In this regard, the applicant has positively engaged with Sport England at pre-application stage and during the determination of the planning application with a view to developing a mitigation package that would accord with our policy or at least justify a departure being made from it. The proposals that have been made in the planning application for new or enhanced sports facility provision have been responsive to advice provided by Sport England on how the potential school and community benefits could be maximised. As set out above, the sport related school and community benefits of the development are considered to be significant and a range of measures have been introduced to mitigate playing field impact including that associated with the residential development. In addition to the benefits of the scheme and the mitigation proposals outlined above, the following considerations are also relevant to my assessment of this proposal:

- The area of the playing field that would be disposed of has not been marked out for playing pitches for several years and has a steep gradient around its periphery which reduces the quality of this area in terms of potential pitch use;
- The area of playing field that would be disposed of residential would be surplus to the school's playing field requirements. Section 77 approval from the Department for Education has been granted for the disposal of the playing field on the basis of it being surplus to educational needs;
- All of the existing playing pitches on the school site would be maintained and there would be no impact on formal community use of the playing field.
- The sports governing bodies that I have consulted have not raised objection to the loss of part of the playing field subject to the new sports facilities and mitigation being implemented;
- The site has been allocated for residential in the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan Submission document (policy SADM26) that is currently the subject of a public examination. While

there is no certainty that the allocation will remain in the plan following the independent Inspector's examination of the plan, the principle of developing the playing field area for residential is supported by the Council and as the local plan has now reached an advanced stage there is a strong possibility that the allocation will be maintained in the plan following the examination. If the allocation is maintained in the adopted version of the local plan following the examination, the principle of developing it for residential will have been established and it would then be difficult for the Council or statutory bodies to justify resisting the principle of developing this area.

On the basis of the above considerations, and the sport related benefits and playing field mitigation package outlined above, I am satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist to justify a departure from our playing fields policy on this occasion in relation to the residential element of the development.

In view of the above assessment, I am therefore satisfied that the majority of the development proposals would accord with either exceptions E2, E3, E4 or E5 of our playing fields policy as set out above and that a departure from the policy could be made to justify not objecting to the residential development on the playing field to the east of the site. This being the case, Sport England **does not wish to raise an objection to this application as a statutory consultee, subject to the following conditions** being attached to the decision notice should the local planning authority be minded to approve the application:

- **Sports Facility Phasing and Delivery**: Any planning permission should safeguard against the playing fields and games courts being lost to residential without some certainty that the sports facilities that comprise the playing field mitigation package, and which would be 'enabled' by the residential development, would be delivered within an acceptable timescale. A section 106 agreement or a planning condition should therefore make provision for the sports facilities (sports hall, artificial grass pitch and refurbished games court area together with the supporting vehicular access and car parking) to be completed and operational within 18 months of construction commencing on the site (unless agreed in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with Sport England). This approach is considered acceptable by the applicant as set out in the applicant's agent's letter dated 20th October 2017. While it may be considered unlikely that a potential scenario would arise where the residential development is completed and occupied and the school facilities are either not implemented or are only partially implemented, any planning permission should make provision for this scenario to be avoided and a section 106 agreement or planning condition offers the potential to help safeguard against this. Linked to this, it may be necessary for the Council to impose a separate planning condition requiring the details of the detailed phasing and delivery programme for the construction of the overall development to be submitted and approved as a pre-commencement requirement as well for other planning reasons. Sport England has published a schedule of model planning conditions on our website <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-applications/>. The Council may wish to use the wording of model condition 4 to develop a planning condition or section 106 agreement provision to address this matter.

- **Sports Hall Design Specifications:** As the technical specifications for the sports hall are not available at this stage, details should be submitted and approved prior to construction of the sports hall to ensure that they are appropriate for the sports that are proposed to take place in the hall. The condition should specifically require details to be provided of the specifications for the flooring, lighting, cricket nets and court markings. This is justified to ensure that the facility is fit for purpose for meeting school and community needs and to help ensure that it delivers the benefits to sport that would help mitigate the loss of the playing field. The England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) have specifically requested such a condition to help ensure that the detailed specifications meet the ECB's <https://www.ecb.co.uk/be-involved/club-support/club-facility-management/surface-types> and Sport England's <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/sports-halls/> technical guidance. **It is requested that the following condition and informative** which is based on model condition 9 of Sport England's model conditions schedule is imposed:

"No development of the sports hall hereby approved shall commence until details of the specifications of the sports hall including flooring, lighting, court markings and cricket nets have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority [after consultation with Sport England]. The sports hall 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: The applicant is advised that the design and layout of the sports hall should comply with the relevant industry Technical Design Guidance, including guidance published by Sport England, National Governing Bodies for Sport. Particular attention is drawn to Sport England's 'Sports Halls: Design and Layout (2013) and Floors for Indoor Sports (2007) and the ECB's Indoor Sports Halls with Cricket Provision (TS3)'

- **Artificial Grass Pitch Design Specifications:** As the full design specifications for the AGP are not available at this stage, details will need to be submitted prior to commencement of development of the AGP to demonstrate that the detailed design is fit for purpose and meets the Football Association's design guidance. While the indicative specification details (such as the pitch layout and line markings) provided in support of the planning application are acceptable in terms of demonstrating that a fit for purpose facility could be provided in principle, they do not provide the necessary detail of matters which have not been finalised such as surface, line marking and fencing technical specifications. Such details may change between now and construction contract being awarded in any case. The design specifications should include details of the specification of at least the 3G surface, fencing and line markings. This is justified to ensure that the design of the facility is fit for purpose in practice and does deliver the benefits to sport identified above which mitigate the impact on the playing field. Furthermore, the Football Association has requested that such detail be secured to ensure that the detailed design of the facilities will be acceptable. The applicant is requested to discuss the design specifications with the Football Foundation/Herts County FA before submitting details to discharge this condition. It is requested that the following condition and informative be imposed on any planning permission to address this matter (which is based condition 9 of our model conditions schedule):

**SPORT ENGLAND'S FORMAL RESPONSE TO PLANNING APPLICATION RI
6/2017/1641/MAJ**

"No development of the artificial grass pitch hereby approved shall commence until details of the design and layout of the artificial grass pitch including the surface specification, fencing specification and line markings have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England. 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 **.*

Informative: The applicant is advised that the design and layout of the artificial grass pitch should comply with the relevant industry Technical Design Guidance, including guidance published by Sport England, National Governing Bodies for Sport. Particular attention is drawn to the Football Association's Guide to 3G Football Turf Pitches Design Principles and Layouts <http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/player/facility-development-and-technical-guidance>.

- **Artificial Grass Pitch Certification:** A condition requiring the submission and approval by the local planning authority (in consultation with Sport England) of certification that the artificial grass pitch has met the FIFA Quality standard or equivalent International Artificial Turf Standard (IATS). This is justified because AGPs can only be sanctioned for community football match use where the pitch has been tested to meet FIFA's recommended FIFA Quality performance quality accreditation, further details of which are on FIFA's website <http://football-technology.fifa.com/en/media-tiles/fifa-quality-programme-for-football-turf/>. Without this, the AGP could not be used for community football matches which would diminish the benefits offered by the proposal. The applicant has confirmed that the facility will be designed and maintained to meet these technical requirements but this cannot be confirmed in practice unless appropriate testing of the completed pitch takes place which certifies this. As a pitch can only be tested for certification when it is completed, it would not be possible to request the information to be provided at planning application or pre-commencement stages which is why it cannot be combined with the above design specifications condition. Following meeting the test, the facility will need to be registered on the FA's Register of Football Turf Pitches <http://3g.thefa.me.uk/> to enable it to be sanctioned for FA affiliated community football match use. The Football Foundation/Herts County FA can provide further advice to the applicant upon request. It is requested that the following condition and informative be imposed to address this matter (which is based condition 9b of our model conditions schedule) :

"Use of the artificial grass pitch shall not commence until:

(a) certification that the Artificial Grass Pitch hereby permitted has met the FIFA Quality accreditation or equivalent International Artificial Turf Standard (IATS); and

(b) confirmation that the facility has been registered on the Football Association's Register of Football Turf Pitches; and

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 **.*

Informative: The applicant is advised that the pitch should be tested every three years by an accredited testing laboratory in order to achieve and maintain FIFA Quality accreditation."

- **Games Court Refurbishment:** A condition and associated informative requiring details of proposals for refurbishing the redundant games court area such as the details of surfacing replacement/repair, line markings, fencing etc and the timescales for implementation of the refurbishment works. As no detail is available at this stage of the refurbishment works, these details will need to be submitted to demonstrate that the works are acceptable in practice in order to help mitigate the loss of the existing games court area and to demonstrate the sports related benefits of the proposals outlined above will be delivered in practice. The scope and nature of the improvements should be informed by a an assessment (survey/feasibility study) undertaken by a sports surface specialist and options for improvements should be discussed with Sport England before being formally submitted. The following planning condition is recommended to address this requirement (which is based on condition 10a of our model conditions schedule):

(a) No refurbishment of the games court area 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 the quality of the games courts be undertaken (including surfacing, fencing and, line markings) to identify constraints which affect facility quality; and

(ii) Based on the results of this assessment to be carried out pursuant to (i) above of this condition, a detailed scheme to ensure that the games courts will be improved to an acceptable quality including an implementation programme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Sport England.

(b) The approved scheme shall be carried out in full and in accordance with the approved programme of implementation.

*Reason: To ensure that the games courts are improved in practice to an adequate standard and is fit for purpose and to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

Informative: The applicant is advised that the design and layout of the refurbished games courts should comply with the relevant industry Technical Design Guidance, including guidance published by Sport England, National Governing Bodies for Sport. Particular attention is drawn to: Sport England's Artificial Surfaces for Outdoor Sports' guidance note (2013), England Netball's 'Performance Requirements for Indoor Surfaces guidance note <https://englandnetball.co.uk/make-the-game/facilities-information/> and the LTA's Porous Macadam Tennis Courts guidance notes <https://www.lta.org.uk/venue-management/facilities-advice/>

- **Portable Cricket Mat Design Specifications:** A condition requiring details of the portable cricket mat to be submitted and approved. While it has been indicated that a portable roll-out cricket mat would be provided to address the loss of the existing artificial wicket strip, the technical specification for the mat is not available at this stage. The submission and approval of the specification for the cricket mat is required to demonstrate that an

acceptable proposal will be delivered in practice that is fit for purpose in order to ensure that the school can continue to satisfactorily deliver outdoor cricket training as part of the PE curriculum. A condition that I would recommend is:

Prior to first occupation of the sports hall hereby permitted, details of the design and layout of portable cricket mat shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

*Reason: To ensure the cricket mat is fit for purpose and sustainable to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

- **Community Use Agreement:** A condition requiring a community use agreement for the school's sports facilities to be submitted and approved by the local planning authority (in consultation with Sport England) prior to first occupation of the sports hall in order to ensure that community access to the sports facilities is secured in practice. A community use agreement sets out a school's policy and arrangements for community use of its sports facilities and covers matters such as hours of use, types of bookings accepted, restrictions on community use etc. The agreement is usually between a school and the relevant local authority (i.e. Welwyn Hatfield Council) but other bodies can be parties such as sports governing bodies and the Hertfordshire Sports Partnership. Sport England regularly secures the completion of such agreements through planning conditions on planning permissions for school developments. Such a condition is justified to avoid a scenario where community access (outside of school hours) to the proposed facilities does not take place (or is significantly restricted) following the implementation of the proposed development and to ensure that the community use arrangements are safe and well managed. Without suitable community access being secured over a long term period in practice, one of the principal sports development benefits of the proposals which mitigates the impact of the development on the playing field would not be realised. Furthermore, securing community access to the facility would help deliver the Council's Sports Facility Strategy priorities. A community use agreement also provides clarity and formalisation with respect to community access arrangements for all parties. Community use agreement templates, examples of completed agreements and further advice can be provided upon request although advice should be sought from both Welwyn Hatfield Council and Sport England before an agreement is prepared. For information, Sport England's guidance for schools on preparing for and delivering community use is available at <http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/use-our-school/>. The following condition is requested to be imposed to address this which is based on model condition 16 of our conditions schedule:

“No occupation shall commence of the sports hall hereby permitted 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 sports hall, artificial grass pitch, games courts, playing fields and supporting ancillary facilities and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by non-educational establishment users, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review, and anything else which the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Sport England considers necessary in order to secure the

effective community use of the facilities. The development shall not be used at any time other 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 conditions or use another mechanism in lieu of the conditions, 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. If your Council decides not to attach the above conditions, Sport England would wish to raise an objection to this application. Should the local planning authority be minded to approve this application without the above conditions, then given Sport England's subsequent objection and in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009, the application should be referred to the Secretary of State via the National Planning Casework Unit.

COMMENTS MADE AS A NON-STATUTORY CONSULTEE

As a non-statutory consultee, without prejudice to our position as a statutory consultee set out above, Sport England would wish to make comments on the following issues:

Artificial Grass Pitch Hours of Use and Sports Lighting:

The proposal for the AGP to include sports lighting is welcomed and considered essential as this will offer significant sports development benefits in terms of facilitating use by the community during peak periods as well as extra-curricular use by the school. Without sports lighting, it would not be possible for the facility to meet the needs that it has been designed to address and the potential for securing revenue from community use to support its long term maintenance would be prejudiced.

While Sport England would not as a statutory consultee require a planning condition to be imposed relating to the hours of use of the artificial grass pitch and its lighting, it is acknowledged that the Council may wish to impose such a condition in order to address potential impact on residential amenity or the environment. If planning permission is granted, it is recommended that any condition that may be imposed by the Council relating to the hours of use of the lighting and the use of the AGP is not overly restrictive. In this regard, it is advised that peak community use of AGPs on similar sites usually extends until 10.00 on weekday evenings. If the Council wishes to impose a planning condition restricting the hours of use of the AGP or its floodlighting, consideration should be given to using condition 14 from our model conditions schedule <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-applications/>. It should be noted that if the Council sought to remove the proposed sports lighting or impose

significant restrictions on the hours of use of the AGP or its lighting in the evenings this may affect our position on the planning application as a statutory consultee as the potential community benefits which mitigate the impact of the overall development on the playing field would be diminished. If such an approach is to be taken it is requested that Sport England be advised before the planning application is determined to provide an opportunity to review our position on the planning application.

If the proposed lighting scheme is material to the assessment of the planning application, I would recommend that consideration be given to Sport England's 'Artificial Sports Lighting' guidance note (2012) www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/artificial-sports-facilities/ . If the full details of the lighting scheme have not been submitted with the application it is advocated that an appropriate condition is imposed to require the details to be submitted and approved. Condition 13 from our model conditions schedule may assist in this regard.

Artificial Grass Pitch Noise Impact

It is noted that an acoustics assessment has been prepared for the artificial grass pitch which is welcomed in principle although I am not in a position to make informed comments on its content. If noise generated from the use of the AGP is an issue in the determination of the planning application, Sport England has published a guidance note on the planning implications of AGP acoustics. This is intended to aid in developing a more consistent approach when assessing the noise associated with AGP use and to provide some rules of thumb when assessing noise impact. It is recommended that this guidance is considered to inform the assessment of noise impact as it has been tailored to assist with the consideration of this issue. This can be downloaded from our website at <http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/artificial-sports-surfaces/>.

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

We would like to be notified in advance of the publication of the committee agendas, report(s) and committee date(s). We would be grateful if you would advise us of the outcome of the applications by sending us a copy of the decision notice.

Sport England would be happy to discuss this response with the Council if applicable. If the planning application is approved, the applicant is recommended to engage Sport England as soon as possible on the preparation of details that are needed to meet the requirements of planning conditions set out above in order to minimise the potential for delays at a later date.

If you would like any further information or advice please contact me at the address below.

Yours sincerely,

Roy Warren

Planning Manager

T: [REDACTED]
M: [REDACTED]
F: [REDACTED]
E: [REDACTED]

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