

Appendix 9: Sports England criteria for assessing applications for or affecting sports and community facilities

Sport England is a **statutory consultee** on planning applications affecting playing field land (as set out in SI2010/2184 (The Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010)).

This includes development which:

- i. is likely to prejudice the use, or lead to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field; or
- ii. is on land which has been
 - (a) used as a playing field at anytime in the 5 years before the making of the relevant application and which remains undeveloped; or
 - (b) allocated for use as a playing field in a development plan or in proposals for such a plan or its alteration or replacement; or
- iii. involves the replacement of the grass surface of a playing pitch on a playing field with an artificial, man-made or composite surface.

The requirement to consult Sport England covers all playing field land, regardless of ownership and all pitches (of 0.2ha or more) regardless of their surface (i.e. natural and artificial grass pitches). Sport England will assess any planning application affecting playing field land against its **Planning Policy Statement: A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England**.

‘Playing field’ means the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch. The reference to ‘the whole of a site’ applies to all areas of a playing field not just those which happen, for the time being, to be laid out as pitches.

‘Playing pitch’ means a delineated area which, together with any runoff, is of 0.2 hectares or more and which is used for football, American football, rugby, cricket, hockey, lacrosse, rounders, baseball, softball, Australian football, Gaelic football, shinty, hurling, polo or cycle polo.

This policy states that: *Sport England will 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 last used as a playing field or land allocated for use as a playing field in an adopted or draft deposit plan, unless, in the judgement of Sport England, specific circumstances apply.*

The five specific circumstances are:

E1: A carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Sport England that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.

E2: The proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields, and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use.

E3: The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins), a reduction in the size of the playing areas of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting/ancillary facilities on the site.

E4: The playing field or playing fields, which would be lost as a result of the proposed development, would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development.

E5: The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of artificial sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields. Sport England's policy statement is in line with the requirements of the NPPF (para 74) in relation to the protection of sports facilities.

Where a local planning authority is minded to grant planning permission for an application, despite receiving an objection from Sport England, then the requirements of the Government's Circular 02/2009 may apply. This Circular instructs local planning authorities to notify the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government of an application if the land is owned by a local authority or used by an educational establishment (currently or within the five years prior to receiving the application), and where Sport England has objected due to a current or resulting deficiency of playing field land in the area or because the replacement to be provided is inadequate. The requirement is set out in The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009 and DCLG letter to Chief Planning Officers dated 10th March 2011. Where deemed appropriate Sport England will seek comments from the relevant National Governing Bodies of Sport to help inform its assessment of an application.

