

Sport England Position Statement

Appeal Ref: APP/M0655/W/17/3178530
Application ref 2016/28492
Peel Hall, Warrington

I have provided a position statement on behalf of Sport England for the statutory and non-statutory (advisory) sports provision elements of the Peel Hall proposal.

Statutory – Loss of Playing Field at Mill Lane

There will be a loss of 3.2ha of playing field land and pitches at Mill Lane, to the east of the appeal site as a result of the proposed housing development. As of 2019 and confirmed within the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (2019), the playing field accommodated 2 adult football pitches and 1 7v7 junior football pitch. There are no ancillary facilities present on the existing playing field site.

To mitigate the loss the development includes a replacement area of playing field equal to 3.2ha to the north of Windermere Ave/Radley Common Playing Field which will provide two full size football pitches and a 7v7 junior football pitch. The intention is to use the replacement playing field to the north of Radley Common to provide an extension to the existing, albeit disused, Radley Common Playing Field. Improvements to the existing Radley Common Playing Field are proposed that will see the creation of an adult 11v11 football pitch and a youth 9v9 pitch, along with a community building and changing rooms. The combined Radley Common and replacement playing field land would create a "Sports Hub". The improvements to Radley Common Playing Field are to accommodate the additional demand for sport arising from the housing development and discussed in more detail later in this position statement.

It is important the replacement playing field and Radley Common pitch and ancillary facility improvements are designed and constructed to meet the design requirements of Sport England and the Football Foundation; conditions are required to ensure all sports facilities are designed and constructed to meet those standards. The ongoing sustainability of the "sports hub" to meet local sports demand is critical. Sport England will require a Management and Maintenance Scheme to be provided that covers the combined playing field site. It is important the pitches are maintained to a good standard across the hub to meet local demand, and it is likely the Council will require a maintenance contribution to ensure that happens.

The mitigation which will be located on land to the north of the existing Radley Common playing fields, is acceptable subject to the following documents being submitted either by condition or s106 agreement. These were agreed and put forward as part of the 2018 appeal and I have included the wording of the relevant conditions as an aid and indication where amendments are required:

1. An Agronomy Report and Pitch Specifications - this should apply to the replacement playing field land to the north of Radley Common and the improvements to Radley Common to ensure the same quality of pitch provision is secured across the "sports hub". This condition needs to be reworded to include the improvements to Radley Common once the level of provision is agreed by submission of the Sports Strategy (see point 4 below).

27) Prior to any reserved matters application for development of the Mill Lane playing fields being submitted the following documents shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority:

- a) An Agronomy Report containing a detailed assessment of ground conditions (including drainage and topography) of the land proposed for the replacement playing field, which identifies all constraints that could affect playing field quality; and
- b) Based on the results of the assessment to be carried out pursuant to a) above, a detailed scheme which ensures that the playing field will be provided to the Football Association's Performance Quality Standards. The scheme shall include a written specification and detailed plans of soils structure, proposed drainage, cultivation and other operations associated with grass and sports turf establishment and a programme of implementation.

The approved scheme shall be completed prior to the commencement of any development of the existing Mill Lane playing fields. The replacement playing field land shall thereafter be made available and maintained in accordance with the scheme.

2. Management and Maintenance Scheme across the "sports hub" – contained within the draft s106 Fourth Schedule para 2.8 to 2.13 although this relates to the transfer of the land to the Council and does not require a Scheme to be submitted. The requirement for a Scheme should be included.
3. A phasing plan that ensures the existing playing field at Mill Lane will remain available for use until the replacement playing field has been implemented – this is considered in part by proposed condition 27 (see point 1 above) but the requirement for a phasing plan that specifically shows this is not set out in any condition or s106 clause that I can find.
4. Sports Strategy – the additional demand for sport element is indicative at this stage. Appendix C of the Inspectors Report contained a requirement for a Sports Strategy, condition 21. This condition should be retained to ensure the additional demand for sport requirements can be met and implemented.

21) Prior to any reserved matters application being submitted, a Sports Strategy (the Strategy) shall be submitted for written approval by the local planning authority. The Strategy shall apply to the planned improvements at Windermere Avenue/ Radley Common shown indicatively on drawing 1820-28 Rev J and include details of the strategic need for and sporting benefits of each pitch type and ancillary facility. Based upon the agreed findings of the Strategy a scale plan(s) shall subsequently be submitted to the local planning authority for written approval showing the location and dimensions of each sports facility and pitch. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved Strategy and scale plan(s).

5. Design and layout of the community building and changing rooms – contained within the draft s106 Fourth Schedule para 2.14 to 2.15 but should be amended to include reference to the Football Foundation Changing Accommodation Guidance

Conclusion

Should the above be secured as part of any subsequent planning approval Sport England has no objection as it meets the requirements of paragraph 97 of the NPPF and the following exception to Sport England Playing Fields Policy:

“E4 - 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.”*

S106 Sports Provision

There are a number of discrepancies within the current draft s106 agreement where clarity is required:

- Part 1 (Definitions and interpretations) – “Sports Pitches” p.25 refers to a maximum of 3 adult pitches and 1 youth pitch (9v9) but Third Schedule Plans – Plan 3 “Indicative Sports and Recreation Provision” shows 2 adult 11v11 and 1 junior 7v7 on the replacement playing field area, which is consistent with the mitigation agreed. However, the Plan shows 1 adult 11v11 and 1 youth 9v9 football pitches on the Radley Common playing field site. The total amount of pitches proposed is inconsistent with the definition which states a maximum of 4 pitches whereas the agreed position of 5 pitches is shown on Plan 3. The definition needs to be altered to bring it in line with Plan 3. However, the requirement for a Sports Strategy (required by condition 21) to address the additional demand for sport requirement may result in an amendment to the provision cited within the s106 and that should be reflected within the s106.
- Part 1 (Definitions and Interpretations) – The replacement playing field and pitches has been combined with the overall Public Open Space requirement. Neither the Public Open Space (p.21) or Replacement Playing Fields (p.22) definitions provide clarity on what is required to mitigate the loss of existing playing field and what is required to meet the additional demand for sport. Sport England suggest separating out the definitions to provide clarity and proposes the following wording, or variation of:

Replacement Playing Fields – 3.2ha of playing field land to be provided and accommodate 2 adult 11v11 and 1 junior 7v7 football pitches located to the north of Radley Common as shown on the Sports and Recreation Provision Plan.

Playing Field Improvements – Improvement of Radley Common to accommodate pitch provision, and community building with changing rooms in accordance with the Sport Strategy and shown on the Indicative Sports and Recreation Provision Plan. The final sport facility mix should be informed by a Sports Strategy required by condition 21 of the planning approval.

- Fourth Schedule para 2.4 – this clause appears to be at odds with proposed condition 27. Condition 27 states “The approved scheme shall be completed prior to the commencement of any development of the existing Mill Lane playing fields.” Whereas para 2.4 cites a different approach i.e. the owner shall not occupy more than 500 dwellings until the Replacement Playing Fields are complete. Clarification is required through this clause and a phasing plan that ensures the Mill Lane playing fields are not developed until the replacement playing fields are implemented in accordance with proposed condition 27.

Non-statutory – additional demand for sport generated from the housing development

The occupiers of new development, especially residential, will generate demand for sporting provision. The existing provision within an area may not be able to accommodate this increased demand without exacerbating existing and/or predicted future deficiencies. Therefore, Sport England considers that new developments should contribute towards meeting the demand that they generate through the provision of on-site facilities and/or providing additional capacity off-site. The level and nature of any provision should be informed by a robust evidence base such as an up to date Sports Facilities Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy or other relevant needs assessment. In this case Warrington has recently updated their Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and this has been used to help inform this response. In accordance with Section 8 of the NPPF, Sport England seeks to ensure that the development meets any new sports facility needs arising as a result of the development.

The evidence provided by the applicant presents a very confused picture because the requirement for additional capacity to meet demand generated by the development has been combined with the requirement to mitigate the loss of playing field. The applicant needs to clearly present, in separate categories, the mitigation proposal and the additional demand proposal.

To try and assist all parties I have used Sport England’s strategic planning tools to help estimate the additional demand for sport and converted that demand into sport facility requirements with indicative costs. The outputs from the Sports Facility Calculator (swimming pools and sports halls) Playing Pitch Calculator (Pitches/Changing Rooms) and a comparison between the 2018 and 2020 position are summarised here in the table below:

Outputs	2018	2020	Difference
Data demand estimate based on	Warrington PPS 2016	Warrington PPS 2019	Football: Number of teams increased between 2016 (445) and 2019 (456) but number of pitches declined (254 to 229) so reduced supply to meet demand over the 3 year period
Current Population (Borough wide)	ONS 2014 Mid-Year Estimates 206,428	ONS 2017 Mid Year Estimates 209,704	Population increase of 3,276
Additional demand population	2,760	2,760	No change as number of dwellings proposed has not changed
Total natural turf pitch requirements to meet additional demand (during the peak period)	2.72	3.56	Increase of 1 pitch (rounded up)
Capital Cost	£221,806	£262,613	+£40,807
Lifecycle Cost	£47,422	£55,347	+£7,925
Year Capital and Lifecycle Costs based	2 nd Quarter 2016	2 nd Quarter 2019	N/A

(1) Changing Rooms Capital Cost	Not included	4.06 £670,317	N/A
(2) Artificial Grass Pitch (to meet a training need)	Not included	0.19 £173,324	The original intention was to include a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch on the Radley Common site. No agreement could be reached with the appellant and the requirement was removed. However, demand data indicates a contribution towards an offsite Artificial Grass Pitch is required to meet additional training demand. This contribution could be in the form of match funding for a priority project set out in the Warrington Local Football Facility Plan and/or Playing Pitch Strategy Action Plan.
Swimming pool	£476,943	Not included	Although evidence from the Council's Indoor Sports Facility Strategy and Sport England's Facilities Planning Model pointed towards a need to create capacity in the current pool stock the Council took the decision the on-site community building/changing facility meets that indoor requirement.
Sports Halls	Not included	Not included	There is sufficient spare capacity in existing sports halls to take the additional demand.

^[1] The 2016 Playing Pitch Calculator only estimated the demand for natural turf pitches used for matchplay during the peak period. Since then Sport England has refined the Calculator to include training demand across the week, and the requirement for changing rooms based on peak period demand.

^[2] The 2016 Playing Pitch Calculator did not include artificial grass pitches to meet a training demand. Instead the Playing Pitch Strategy was used to help inform artificial grass pitch shortages and requirements.

The table above shows:

1. There is an additional requirement for one extra natural turf pitch to meet demand since 2018.
2. The requirement for changing rooms is consistent with what has been proposed, although it should be noted consultation with the Football Foundation is required to ensure the number of changing rooms are sufficient for all 5 proposed pitches.
3. The need for additional capacity for an Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) has been quantified since 2018. This does not require the appellant to fund a full sized AGP but indicates a contribution is required towards an off-site AGP. The contribution could go towards match funding a priority project set out in the Warrington Local Football Facility Plan (2019) and/or Playing Pitch Strategy Action Plan (2019).
4. There is clear demand for access to swimming pools that current provision cannot meet. However, I understand this element was discounted in 2018 in favour of supporting on-site outdoor sport and community facilities.

Although the additional demand for sport has been quantified with indicative costs associated with providing new/improved facilities, the Council will need to determine how best to accommodate that additional demand. Using the relevant Sports Needs Assessments, they should provide an indication of:

- Whether existing facilities within the Analysis Area have spare capacity and can accommodate the additional demand; or
- Improvements to existing facilities are required to build in capacity to accommodate the additional demand; or
- A contribution towards planned new provision is required.

The above information should be used as the starting point to inform the Sports Strategy required by draft condition 27.

Please note, it is not Sport England's role to establish how best to accommodate the additional demand, that should be for the Council and appellant to agree using their own local knowledge and relevant sport Needs Assessments. Sport England have used strategic planning tools cited above to estimate the additional demand for sport to provide a starting point for negotiations.

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Sport England