

From: Stuart Morgans <Stuart.Morgans@sportengland.org>
Sent: 26 June 2023 15:33
To: Planning Folder
Cc: Ged McDougall; Martin Collier; andrew.wadsworth
Subject: FAO : Joseph Fleetwood - Sport England Response - 23/00522/FUL - Temporary change of use of ground floor to classrooms at Ratby Sports Club, Ratby, LE6 0LE

Dear Joseph,

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

Sport England – Statutory Role and Policy

It is understood that the proposal prejudices the use, or leads to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field or has been used as a playing field in the last five years, 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 light of the National Planning Policy Framework (particularly Para 99) and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy, which is presented within its 'Playing Fields Policy and Guidance Document': https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport#playing_fields_policy

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/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

The proposal involves what is described as a temporary change of use of the ground floor of the existing pavilion to classrooms for educational use (Class F1). The supporting statement explains the following:

- The pavilion building is currently unoccupied and unused. The pavilion needs investment but funding is not currently available to undertake the work (para 4.2)
- An application is intended to be submitted shortly for a temporary changing room facility on the wider site for use for cricket (para 4.2)
- The application will allow for some use of the pavilion for classrooms on the ground floor only for a temporary period to allow investment into the whole of the pavilion so that it can then be used for its intended purpose (para 4.3)
- The proposed use is solely for the ground floor, and requires no internal amendments to be able to function for its dual intended use education purpose and its changing room facility purpose in the evenings and weekends (para 4.4)
- The use would provide 4 classrooms and would use the existing w/c's. This would be between the hours of 08:30-17:30 Monday to Friday, with no education use at weekends or bank holidays. The pavilion can also run as a changing room facility in the evenings and weekends, without any disruption (para 4.5)

The submitted layout plan provides limited detail on the existing and proposed internal layout of the building. Whilst the plans do show the general arrangement of internal rooms, there is a lack of detail to show how the changing rooms are or would be fitted out for use as changing rooms, including details of the benches, showers etc. For the proposed plans, its not clear what (if any) furniture (desks, chairs etc), fixtures or fittings would be required to be installed to facilitate the use as classrooms. No information is provided to explain and demonstrate whether & how the furniture and equipment etc would be packed away and stored to allow the continued use of the changing rooms as changing rooms during weekday

evenings and weekends. How would the fixtures and fittings for use for sport (changing room benches, showers etc) be sustained so as to avoid any damage whilst being used as classrooms?

Whilst described as a temporary dual use of the ground floor only, it is not clear the length of temporary consent being sought? Linked to this is a lack of clarity to the statement that the temporary use would allow for investment into finishing the pavilion for its original intended purpose.

Background

Sport England are aware that planning consent has previously been obtained for four temporary mobile classrooms for educational use, play area and 2.1 metre high fencing and gates on another part of the wider playing field site under application 21/00691/FUL. Sport England were consulted where we advised that the proposal would meet with Exception E3 of our Playing Fields Policy and therefore that we had no objection to raise. We did comment that as this proposal was temporary we had no objection to the mobile classrooms, and that we would likely raise objection if any future developments were to impact on or prejudice the use of the playing field area. We note that the planning consent includes condition 2 that "The approved mobile classrooms shall be removed, the educational use shall cease and the land restored to its former condition by no later than 31st March 2025".

It would help to clarify if the current proposal is therefore intended to replace the 4 temporary mobile classrooms so that this part of the site can be returned to ancillary car parking, or whether the intention is to seek to retain these buildings in addition to the temporary change of use of the pavilion? Can this be clarified please?

Assessment against Sport England Policy/NPPF

The temporary change of use of the ground floor to a dual use for education and changing rooms would not result in the loss of playing fields. However, we are concerned that this could potentially prejudice the use of the playing field by constraining the use of the pavilion as changing rooms.

The wider playing field site contains both pitches for cricket and football. Sport England have consulted with both the ECB and Football Foundation whose comments are summarised below:

ECB

The ECB comment that the changing rooms are not used by the cricket club as they are not in a suitable condition currently. The ECB would seek an explanation for how they would revert back for use as changing rooms and how the proposed change of use would bring about a benefit to the use of the site for sport.

Football Foundation

The Football Foundation comment that there is an existing football club that use the site including the pitches to the south and south west, however they don't use the pavilion currently as this is unfinished. They comment that in their view it would be extremely difficult for dual use as classrooms and changing rooms and therefore they wish to raise objection. They comment that the site user is a relatively large and expanding club and would wish to see the pavilion completed.

Sport England notes the above comments and has taken them into account in providing this response. Sport England has sought to assess the application against our Playing Fields Policy and Guidance.

The playing fields are known to be in active use for football and cricket. The applicant references the need for usable changing rooms for cricket, and although there is reference to a separate proposal for some temporary changing room provision, we are not aware of what is to be proposed. Notwithstanding this point, there is no case being made that the changing rooms are surplus to requirements for the use for sport, indeed the applicant suggests the intention would be for a dual use. As set out, we do have concerns about how this might work in practice as there is a lack of detail. As such, we do not consider that Exception E1 would be met.

It would seem that there is no direct relationship between the use of the ground floor of the building as classrooms to the use of the playing fields sport; if there is this is not explained. The proposed education use would therefore not meet Exception E2 as it is not an ancillary use to the principal use of the site as playing field.

As set out above, whilst Exception E3 could apply, the criteria is clear that this must not result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site (4th bullet), and for the reasons explained above, we do have concerns that the practical use as classrooms may not be compatible with the use of the ground floor as changing rooms. As it stands, there is insufficient information to demonstrate that Exception E3 would be met.

Exception E4 does not apply since there is no proposal to replace the changing rooms, the proposal is for a dual use of the changing rooms as classrooms.

Exception E5 does not apply since the use of the ground floor as classrooms is not an indoor facility for sport.

Conclusion

In light of the above, Sport England **objects** to the application because it is not considered to accord with any of the exceptions to Sport England's Playing Fields Policy or with Paragraph 99 of the NPPF. If the applicant wishes to provide further information or a rebuttal to comment on the comments provided, please re-consult Sport England so that we may advise further.

If this application is to be presented to a Planning Committee, we would like to be notified in advance of the publication of any committee agendas, report(s) and committee date(s). We would be grateful if you would advise us of the outcome of the application by sending us a copy of the decision notice.

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

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Morgans

Principal Planning Manager, North Team

T: 020 7273 1700

M: 07810180561

F: 01509 233 192

E: Stuart.Morgans@sportengland.org



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