

17th November 2025

Headteacher
Mrs C. A. Dean B.A. (Hons), NPQH

Dear Planning Officer,

I am writing on behalf of The Stonehenge School regarding planning application ref - **17/05583/DP**, specifically Condition 15, which relates to the ongoing maintenance of the Sport England natural turf pitch. Alongside this letter, we are submitting a discharge application in respect of this condition.

Condition 15 requires the pitch to be maintained in accordance with SAPCA (Sports and Play Construction Association) specifications, as detailed in the accompanying maintenance manual. The maintenance plan originally specified for the natural turf pitch at The Stonehenge School will present significant and unforeseen practical and financial challenges.

Below, we have outlined the maintenance activities we are able to retain, as well as those we propose to omit, with an explanation for each.

Maintenance Items to Be Retained (as per Manual):

Mowing

We are able to retain the mowing regime as specified, using existing equipment. This is essential for maintaining playability.

Overseeding

We will continue overseeding as required to ensure a dense and resilient playing surface.

Harrowing

Harrowing will be undertaken in line with the manual to support surface levelling and sward health.

Aeration / Spiking

We can continue with regular aeration using the standard spiking equipment available to us.

Rolling

Rolling will be retained to help maintain an even and safe surface.

Weed Control

We remain committed to appropriate weed control measures to preserve pitch quality and player safety.

Maintenance Items Proposed for Omission (with Rationale)

Cut and Collect

This requires a specialised box mower and the removal/disposal of clippings. Such equipment is not



available on site, and the operational demands are disproportionate for a community-managed facility. Routine mowing without collection is sufficient for maintaining surface quality.

Fertilising

The manual requires fertiliser application under the supervision of a qualified agronomist. Securing this expertise and purchasing appropriate products imposes a significant ongoing cost. The pitch can remain safe and playable without specialist agronomic input.

Deep Aeration / Verti-Draining

This procedure requires specialist machinery and agronomist oversight. The combined cost is beyond the site's maintenance budget. Standard aeration, which we will retain, is sufficient for the pitch's level of use.

Watering / Irrigation

The water volume required to meet the specification exceeds the site's capacity, and no suitable supply or irrigation infrastructure exists. Installing such infrastructure would be financially prohibitive and environmentally unsustainable.

Top Dressing

Top dressing is a costly activity requiring significant material quantities and specialist equipment. Given resource constraints, this is not financially viable. The pitch can be safely maintained without annual top dressing.

Topping Up and Settlement

This also involves considerable material and labour costs. Given community-level usage and a limited budget, this intervention is not feasible.

Pesticide Application

Pesticide use carries substantial regulatory, training, and storage responsibilities. Given the associated risks and the limited need for chemical intervention, we propose omitting pesticide use and continuing with mechanical and cultural practices instead.

Summary

The proposed amendments reflect practical limitations, health and safety considerations, and financial sustainability. Importantly, all core maintenance activities necessary to keep the pitch safe, usable, and fit for purpose are being retained. We believe this balanced approach meets the intent of Condition 15 while aligning with the realistic operational capabilities of a community facility.

We trust this provides clear justification for the proposed amendments and supports the discharge of the condition. Please let us know if further information or clarification is needed.

Additional Context

1. Financial Impact

Maintaining the pitch to full SAPCA standards is estimated to cost over **£40,000 per year**, which is not achievable within the school's existing budget.

2. Lack of Specialist Contractors

Despite extensive efforts, we have been unable to secure a contractor willing to undertake maintenance to the required specification, due to the complexity and intensity of the schedule.



3. **Pitch Limitations**

Owing to site constraints, the pitch is not full-sized and cannot host formal fixtures. It is therefore used only for informal and curriculum-based activities.

4. **Impact on General Use**

Strict adherence to SAPCA standards would require restricting access to the pitch to preserve its condition. This would prevent use during break times and informal recreation, and would necessitate fencing or other control measures—further increasing costs and diminishing the pitch's value to students.

5. **Offsite Additional Space**

The school benefit from a 22 acre field which is a 5-10 minute walking distance from the school and an area where full fixtures can be played.

Given these factors, we wish to confirm that although the pitch has been constructed in full accordance with the planning specification, we seek a more sustainable maintenance arrangement that ensures safety and fitness for purpose while reflecting its actual use and the resources available.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Wakeham
School Business Manager

