

Wiltshire Council

FAO: Georgina Wright

By email

24th March 2026

**Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England)
Order 2015**

Application Reference: PL/2026/00589

Site: SARUM ACADEMY, WESTWOOD ROAD, SP2 9HS

Proposal: Hybrid application for a 10FE (Form Entry) school: full planning permission is sought for the works required to expand the school to 8FE, and outline planning permission (for access, scale and layout, with all other matters reserved e.g. internal layout, appearance and landscaping) is sought for the works to further expand the school from 8FE to 10FE.

Sport England Reference: PA/26/SW/WSH/73259

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

Summary

Statutory consultee role

Sport England raises **no objection** to this application as it is considered to meet exception 5 of our Playing Fields Policy and to accord with Paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), subject to conditions.

Sport England – Statutory consultee role and policy

We understand that you have consulted us as a statutory consultee in line with the above Order. Therefore, we have considered the application in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in particular paragraph 104, and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy, which is presented within our 'Playing Fields Policy and Guidance Document': 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, or
- land which has been used as a playing field land remains undeveloped, or
- land allocated for use as a playing field

unless, in the judgement of Sport England the development as a whole meets with one or more of five specific exceptions. A summary of the exceptions is provided in the annex to this response.

Pre-application advice

Sport England has been engaged at pre-application stage. We responded positively to the proposal indicating that we would be unlikely to object on the basis that any subsequent application would be capable of meeting the E5 exception in our playing fields policy and paragraph 104 of the NPPF.

The Proposal and its Impact on the playing field

The Sarum Academy site is a large site comprising the following range of sports facilities:

- a full size 11 x 11 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP).
- 4no. hardsurface MUGA/courts.
- 2no. separate areas of playing field. A smaller playing field area in the north and a larger playing field area in the south. Both appear to be used for different pitch sports as well as athletics.
- Indoor sports facilities including a sports hall.

Sport England notes that the proposals include the phased development of the school to provide an 8-form entry school as well as the potential to grow to a 10-form entry school.

Sport England notes that the plans include the construction of a new '2G' AGP facility which is fenced and floodlit to accommodate hockey and tennis on the northernmost natural turf pitch playing field. This would result in the loss of that natural turf playing pitch. There is also the provision of a new indoor sports/fitness building to replace the 6th form building.

The growth of the school to 10 form entry would require the provision of a new playing field area to the north of the existing school, marked out as a senior/adult football pitch (106m x 70m) and car parking.

Sport England has consulted the national governing bodies for sport, and we have received the following comments.

The Football Foundation (FF) on behalf of the FA comments that there is currently a deficit of natural grass pitches (NGPs) in the area, with only 7v7 pitches and 5v5 pitches being met. Therefore, any loss of NGPs needs to be seriously considered and implications fully mitigated. Wiltshire FA (WFA) also commented that they are aware the NGPs are currently not offered for community use however, given the shortfall of pitches in the area, WFA would welcome a conversation over the NGPs being open for community use to help alleviate some of this need.

The FF comments that there doesn't appear to be any agronomist reports demonstrating the quality of the land where the new football pitch is proposed. The Football Foundation (FF) highly recommend an agronomist report as well as an independent document demonstrating the installation of the new NGPs, based on the agronomist report. This is very important given the proposed location for new NGPs appears to be unused land. The FF comments that football has an identified need for additional pitches in the area and having community access to this site would support the local community teams needs of additional pitches at the weekend.

England Hockey (EH) comments that they would be supportive of the development of a full size (91.4m x 55.0m) 2G (sand-dressed) artificial grass pitch (AGP) at the site, recognising the important role such a facility could play in supporting the growth of hockey within local state schools and in meeting the needs of Salisbury Hockey Club.

Following the club's loss of access to the pitch at The Burgate School, after its conversion to a 3G surface in 2023, the club has experienced ongoing challenges in securing suitable facilities within a reasonable travelling distance of the existing AGP at South Wiltshire Sports Club. The proposed location of the new 2G pitch would offer a practical and well-related option for members, allowing activities to be coordinated across both sites. This proximity would also help support the continued use of the club's existing clubhouse facilities, including post-match hospitality and social activities, which remain an important part of the club's operation and community offer.

In order to confirm the suitability of the proposed AGP for hockey use, EH would welcome further information regarding the detailed specification of the pitch. In particular, clarification would be helpful in relation to the following:

- **Pitch dimensions:** EH would require a minimum playing area of **91.4m x 55m** to support competitive match play.

- **Line markings and run-offs:** Details of the proposed markings and surrounding run-off areas.
- **Perimeter fencing:** Confirmation of the fencing type and proposed fence heights.
- **Pitch infrastructure:** Whether recessed units will be included to support a range of pitch furniture (e.g. goals, team benches, etc.).
- **Sports Lighting specification:** Confirmation of the proposed lighting levels. EH would require a minimum average illumination of 350 lux to support competitive hockey. The submitted information references six lighting masts; clarification would be welcomed as to why a six-mast arrangement has been selected rather than the more typical eight-mast configuration for hockey-suitable AGPs.
- **Community use:** Information on the anticipated community use hours for the facility.

In addition, further clarification would be welcomed regarding the additional changing facilities proposed as part of Phase 3. Specifically, it would be helpful to understand whether the scale and layout of these facilities would provide sufficient capacity to accommodate both indoor and outdoor sporting demand should the new AGP be delivered and made available for community use.

Overall, EH would welcome the opportunity to review further details to confirm that the facility would be suitable for hockey. EH would also strongly recommend that the provision of a community use agreement be secured as a condition of planning, to ensure that the pitch is accessible to local clubs and the wider community.

The RFU comments that they are not aware of any existing community rugby use at the site nor any curricular/extracurricular rugby programme, however, the expansion of the Academy presents an opportunity to offer a rugby programme and/or to connect with the local community rugby clubs (Salisbury RFC and Wheatsheaf Cabin Crew RFC). If a new football pitch is to be delivered to the Northern Playing Field, could the existing Southern Playing Field now accommodate a rugby pitch?

Sport England notes the comments from the national governing bodies for sport and agrees that further details will be needed in relation to the design; specification and layout of both the proposed '2G' AGP and the new natural turf playing field/pitch, including how they comply with national governing body recommended design guidance. A specialist sports turf agronomist should be appointed to undertake a ground conditions assessment of the land to be

prepared as playing field/sports pitch(es) to identify any constraints, including drainage, which could affect the use of the land as playing field.

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

Sport England considers that the relevant exception in this case is the E5 exception in our playing fields policy. This states:

- *The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.*

Sport England is satisfied that the proposed 2G AGP with fencing and floodlighting combined with the improved ancillary provision has the potential to have community benefits for hockey in the area. That said, further details are required on the design; specification and layout of the AGP to demonstrate compliance with design guidance. Similarly, further details on the design and specification of the proposed new playing pitch/field area are also needed,

Sport England's Position

Sport England raises **no objection** to the application because it is considered to accord with exception 5 of our Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 104 of the NPPF.

The absence of an objection is subject to the following conditions being secured should the local planning authority (LPA) resolve to approve the application:

1. No development shall commence until details of the design and layout of the Artificial Grass Pitch / MUGA including sports lighting have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England. The Artificial Grass Pitch / MUGA 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 / MUGA including sports lighting should comply with the relevant industry Technical Design Guidance, including guidance published by Sport England, National Governing Bodies for Sport.

2. Use of the Artificial Grass Pitch/MUGA development shall not commence 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 Artificial Grass Pitch / MUGA and ancillary facilities and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by non-educational establishment users, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review. The development shall not be used otherwise 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 **.*

Informative: Guidance on preparing Community Use Agreements is available from Sport England.

<http://www.sportengland.org/planningapplications/> For artificial grass pitches it is recommended that you seek guidance from England Hockey on pitch construction when determining the community use hours the artificial pitch can accommodate.

3. No development of the new playing field/pitch(es) shall commence until the following documents have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England:
 - a. A detailed assessment of ground conditions (including drainage and topography) of the land proposed for the new playing field/pitch(es) which identifies constraints which could adversely affect playing field quality; and
 - (i) Where the results of the assessment to be carried out pursuant to (a) above identify constraints which could adversely affect playing field quality, a detailed scheme to address any such constraints. The scheme shall include a written specification of the proposed soils structure, proposed drainage, cultivation and other operations associated with grass and sports turf establishment and a programme of implementation.
 - (ii) The approved scheme shall be carried out in full and in accordance with the approved programme of implementation [or other specified time frame – e.g. before first occupation of the educational establishment]. The land shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the scheme and made available for playing field use in accordance with the scheme.

*Reason: To ensure that the playing field is prepared to an adequate standard and is fit for purpose and to accord with Development Plan Policy **.*

Informative: The applicant is advised that the scheme should comply with the relevant industry Technical Guidance, including guidance published by Sport England, National Governing Bodies for Sport. Particular attention is drawn to 'Natural Turf for Sport', (Sport England, 2025).

If the LPA is minded to approve the application without imposing the above conditions then Sport England objects to the application as it is not considered to accord with any of the exceptions to our Playing Fields Policy or paragraph 104 of the NPPF.

Should the local planning authority be minded to approve this application without the above conditions, then given Sport England's subsequent objection the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2024 requires the application to be referred to the Secretary of State via the Planning Casework Unit.

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 agenda(s), report(s) and committee date(s). Please notify Sport England of the outcome of the planning application.

If you would like any further information or advice, please contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,

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Annex

The Five Exceptions to Sport England's Playing Fields Policy

Exception 1

A robust and up-to-date assessment has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of Sport England, that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, which will remain the case should the development be permitted, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.

Exception 2

The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field, and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.

Exception 3

The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

- reduce the size of any playing pitch;
- result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
- reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
- result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site;
- or
- prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.

Exception 4

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.

Exception 5

The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.

The full 'Playing Fields Policy and Guidance Document' is available to view at:

www.sportengland.org/playingfieldspolicy