

Wiltshire Council

FAO: Jonathan James

By email

19th May 2026

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

Application Reference: PL/2026/01809

**Site: MEADS OF MELKSHAM COMMUNITY FOOTBALL STADIUM, MELKSHAM
FOOTBALL AND... SN12 7GU**

**Proposal: To enable the area of land known as Melksham Rugby and Football
clubs, to hold Music Events and festivals**

Sport England Reference: PA/26/SW/WSH/73806

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 broadly meet exception 3 of our Playing Fields Policy and to accord with Paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), subject to condition.

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.

The Proposal and its Impact on the playing field

The application will enable the holding of temporary music events and festivals (approx. 1-4 days) with a build and break down phase. This will involve temporary structures including bars; stages and marquees and other associated structures. These structures and associated works will be installed on the playing field/pitches at the site, albeit for temporary periods.

Sport England notes that the site is well-used for both rugby and football and we have therefore sought comments from the respective national governing bodies for sport, the RFU and FA/Football Foundation. We have received the following comments.

The Football Foundation on behalf of the FA comments that the only concern over this proposal is the impact it may have on the current community pitches. It is recommended that a Pitch power assessment is performed both prior and after use. If any remediations are required, it should not fall to the football club to address. The Football Foundation comments that the applicant considers the need to repair any issues with the pitches once the events are completed and that the events do not impact the use of the pitches throughout the season.

The RFU comments that the proposed arena and car parking will be sited on the Melksham RFC pitches which will impact quality both during and after the festival. To safeguard pitch quality, the RFU would expect to see an independent pitch report completed prior to the festival and once the festival has been completed – any remedial works should be funded by the applicant and completed within an agreed timescale. This could be secured through a planning condition and/or monies held in an escrow account.

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

Sport England considers that the proposal may bring benefits to the sports club through being able to generate additional income which in turn could be invested into sport. Sport England does not oppose the principle of diversifying the offer on the site; however, this should not be at the expense of the quality of the sports

provision. There is a risk that if not appropriately managed the proposal's impact could lead to qualitative issues with the playing field/pitches which are used by both the football and rugby clubs.

Sport England considers that the proposal needs to be assessed against the E3 exception in our playing fields policy. This states:

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.*

Sport England considers that the proposal could broadly meet the above exception subject to a suitably worded condition which requires an assessment of the impact of the development on the playing pitches/field by a sports turf agronomist or contractor; and that subject to the outcomes of that assessment, the implementation of remediation works to ensure that the playing field is brought back to its original condition. The timing of this condition needs thought as we would wish to ensure that any remediation works to the playing field/pitches are completed before the start of the football and rugby seasons to avoid any disruption to fixtures and training activity.

Sport England's Position

Given the above, Sport England raises **no objection** to the application because it is considered to accord with exception 3 of our Playing Fields Policy. The absence of an objection is **subject to the following condition** being secured should the local planning authority (LPA) resolve to approve the application:

- *Prior to the installation of any temporary structures and works associated with the development, a scheme for the removal of the temporary structures and works and the reinstatement of the playing field should be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority after consultation with Sport England. The scheme must be in accordance with Sport England guidance "Natural Turf for Sport" (2025) and must ensure that*

the temporary structures and works are removed and the affected playing field land reinstated within 1 month of the cessation of use of the development hereby permitted. Following the commencement of development hereby permitted the approved scheme shall be complied with in full.

Reason: To ensure the site is restored to a condition fit for purpose and to accord with Local Plan Policy xxx.

Informative: Sport England recommends use of a suitably qualified specialist sports turf agronomist or contractor to assess the impact/damage to the playing pitches/field and identify an appropriate reinstatement scheme to remediate the land.

If the LPA is minded to approve the application without securing the above condition, then Sport England objects to the application as it is not considered to accord with exception 3 to our Playing Fields Policy.

If you wish to amend the wording of the condition or use another mechanism in lieu of the condition, please contact us to discuss. Sport England does not object to amendments to conditions, provided they achieve the same outcome, and we are involved in any amendments.

Yours sincerely,

Owen Neal (MRTPI)

Planning Manager

E: owen.neal@sportengland.org

T: 07788396293

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