Adur and Worthing Borough Council

FAO: Peter Barnett

By email only

17.11.2026

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

Application Reference: PA/26/SE/AAW/75410
Site: SIR ROBERT WOODARD ACADEMY, 44 UPPER BOUNDSTONE LANE, SOMPTING BN15 9QZ
Proposal: Removal of 1 no. tarmac surface netball / tennis court and the provision of 2 no. porous tarmac surface padel courts with canopy over and court floodlights
Sport England Reference: PA/26/SE/AAW/75410

Dear Peter,

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

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 policy HC7, and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy, which is presented within our 'Playing Fields Policy and Guidance Document': www.sportengland.org/playingfieldspolicy (summary of exceptions annexed to this letter).

The Proposal and its Impact on the playing field

The proposal is to remove one of the tennis/netball courts at the school and provide two lit `Padel` courts with a canopy. The padel courts will be built beyond the hard court boundary and extend into the playing field by 3.5 metres. Three of the existing four netball/tennis courts will be retained.

There is a lack of information in the application to demonstrate how the existing netball/tennis courts are being used by the school and for community use? It is understood that the courts are open for community bookings. A four court MUGA which has floodlights, is a significant asset to the community and provides opportunities for league matches and coaching sessions.

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Loughborough,
Leicestershire, LE11 3QF

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Assessment against the NPPF and Sport England's Playing Fields Policy

Sport England have assessed this application against exception 5 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy which states:

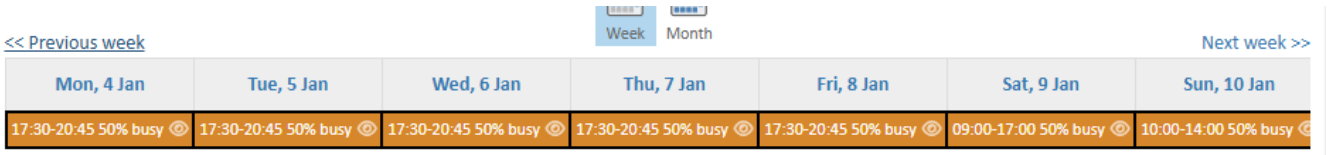
The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field.

The application has also been assessed against NPPF Policy HC7 (1) (d) which states:

The development is for alternative open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

When assessing against Exception 5 of our policy, Sport England considers how the application has demonstrated that the new padel courts will meet an identified local or strategic need. There is a lack of information in the application to demonstrate the strategic need of the padel courts, however the facility is on a school premise and it offers an improvement of sport and physical education opportunities on the school site. Sport England would like to see further information that the proposal meets the bullets set out in paragraph 74 of Section 6.5 in our Playing Fields Policy showing the 'benefit to sport' of the proposed padel courts.

It is understood that the site is open for community use and from looking at the existing bookings on the school site, all of the courts are booked out in the new year. This is shown below in the image from the school website:



Sport England would like to see further information through a schedule of use of how the existing netball/tennis courts are being used by both after school programmes and through community use. It is important that existing users may not be displaced due to the proposed development of padel courts. Paragraph 75 of our playing fields policy should be reviewed and the points met in order to meet with Exception 5.

National Governing Body Comments

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Sport England have consulted with the relevant National Governing Bodies for Sport (NGB's) who provide their advice on applications. Please see the response from both the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and England Netball below:

England Netball

- We are not currently aware of any formal community use taking place at this site. However, the facility provides an important resource for the school, supporting the delivery of curriculum PE netball as well as extra-curricular netball clubs and activities.
- There is a growing trend for padel courts to be developed on existing netball courts, which is resulting in the incremental loss of the existing stock of netball provision. While we recognise the value of introducing new sporting opportunities, this should not be at the expense of established facilities where alternative locations may be available. In this instance, we object to the loss of the existing netball court, particularly as there appears to be potential to accommodate the proposed padel provision elsewhere within the school site. The existing courts provide important capacity for curriculum PE and extra-curricular school netball, and the loss of one of the four courts would represent a 25% reduction in netball court provision at the site. We would therefore encourage the applicant to explore alternative locations for the padel courts that would enable the new provision to be delivered without reducing the existing netball court stock. This would support the development of additional sporting opportunities while safeguarding established provision for netball.

Lawn Tennis Association

- The LTA are not aware of any public use or what the public use journey looks like currently, or any community use agreements.
- Given no tennis courts in Lancing / Sompting – any loss of courts here would be detrimental. The LTA do not support to loss of tennis courts for padel – given that the LTA is governing body if both sport we wish to see the sports and facilities grow alongside one another. At this stage a conversation would be welcomed of how the courts can be better managed and used for the benefit of the community. Placing new Padel courts in the land adjacent to the tennis / netball facilitate would be a preferred solution to realise the potential of the school to meet community use and participation aims.
- There is need for Padel is this area currently. This is the context of course of a growing number of conversations in the UK more broadly as the sport continues to grow. As more facilities are built the gap between demand and supply will inevitably narrow. It would be welcomed to talk in more detail about the origins and aims for this project with the school, and share our knowledge on the

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landscape of padel and the variety of operational model and approaches to take when considering building new padel courts.

Sport England's Position

Given the above, Sport England raises a **holding objection** to the application because there is further information required to ensure the application accords with exception 5 of our policy and policy HC7 of the NPPF.

To review our holding objection, Sport England would like further clarification on the following points:

1. What is the current schedule of use for the existing tennis/netball courts. Are there existing users that will be displaced due to the proposed padel courts?
2. Have alternative locations been considered on the site for the delivery of two padel courts which would not lose existing sports provision.
3. How will the padel courts be management to open up all of the facilities for community use?

Sport England would strongly recommend that the applicant are in touch with the Lawn Tennis Association and England Netball to better understand the impact this development will have on the existing site and what provision is needed for the school and wider community.

Their details are listed below:

LTA: James.Deem@LTA.org.uk
England Netball: Anna Macdonell - facility.development@englandnetball.co.uk

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

Yours sincerely,



Emma Cunnington MRTPI
Planning Manager
E: emma.cunnington@sportengland.org
T: 07717348515

SportPark, 3 Oakwood Drive
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Leicestershire, LE11 3QF

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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

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