Adur and Worthing Borough Council

FAO: Peter Barnett

By email only

27.10.2026

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

Application Reference: AWDM/1130/26
Site: MONKS RECREATION GROUND, CRABTREE LANE BN15 9PP
Proposal: Erection of three outdoor padel courts with enclosure, floodlights, shipping container for use as ancillary administrative building and associated works
Sport England Reference: PA/26/SE/AAW/75223

Dear Peter,

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

Summary

Sport England submits a **holding objection** to this application as there is information required to understand the impact on the existing football pitches and whether these can still be accommodated on site.

We may reconsider this position following the submission of a pitch layout plan along with an understanding of the current use of the natural turf pitches by the Lancing FC and other football clubs in the area.

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).

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The proposal and impact on playing field

The proposal is to deliver three outdoor padel courts with flood lighting and an ancillary facility at Monks Recreation Ground. The existing use of the recreation ground is for football. The natural grass area of the ground can accommodate two full size football pitches (100x64m plus 3m run-off area) and two junior sizes pitches (55x37m plus 3m run-off area) as shown in the image below from 2015. It appears that the location of the proposed padel courts may have a direct impact on the potential to layout a full-size football pitch on the east side of the site.



NGB Comments

Sport England have consulted with the relevant National Governing Bodies for Sport (NGB's) who act as our technical advisors for certain applications. In this case, we have consulted with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and Football Foundation (FF). Their comments are summarised below:

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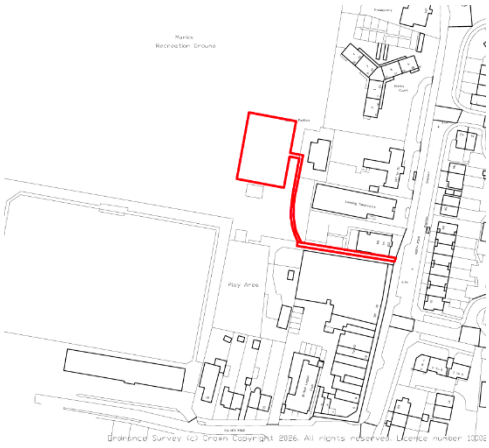
LTA:

- This is an area where tennis and padel demand may arise.
- The rationale is that Lancing / Sompting is a large strategic gap in tennis and padel facilities overall so any additions are broadly welcome.
- If Padel at Lancing Manor gets built then still be demand for further courts in this area.



- There are some risks to consider overall to raise, that Padel in this kind of 'open sites' doesn't have a large precedent, and is exposed to risks from lack of close management and possible anti-social behaviour.
- There are likely additional factors to consider in a build of this type e.g. access control system for out of hours, fencing layout and design, walk to court from parking, pedestrian entrances.
- There is an argument, pending land availability of course, this site would be better suited to building two tennis courts where this is much more precedent in how to operate in these kind of green spaces – e.g. nearby Buckingham Park.
- Any padel courts must be built in accordance with LTA guidance: https://www.lta.org.uk/siteassets/padel/lta-padel-court-construction-guidance-note-2025.pdf

Football Foundation on behalf of the County FA

The site accommodates established football provision and is used by Lancing FC, with the latest PitchPower assessment identifying the pitches as being of high and advanced quality.

The Adur & Worthing Playing Pitch Strategy identifies ongoing demand for football facilities and highlights the importance of protecting existing provision to support

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current and future participation. Whilst the proposed padel courts do not appear to result in the direct loss of a football pitch, insufficient information has been provided to determine whether appropriate pitch run-off areas will be maintained.

From the submitted plans, the Football Foundation has been unable to clearly confirm that a minimum 3m run-off area will be retained between the proposed padel courts and the existing football pitches, as identified through Pitch Finder guidance. The Football Foundation requires further dimensioned plans and supporting documentation demonstrating that a safe 3m run-off area will be maintained and that the development will not prejudice the safe use, capacity, or ongoing operation of the football pitches.

The Football Foundation would also welcome investment from any additional revenue generated by the padel facility towards improved toilet provision on site that would be compatible for all users on site, which has been supported by the County FA as a priority need for football users.

The Football Foundation object to current proposal plans however would be supportive in principle of padel provision on site subject to the above.

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.

The Playing Pitch Strategy for Adur and Worthing Council has not been updated since 2019 and is now considered out-of-date, therefore Sport England cannot use this evidence base to review this application. It is known that the site is well used

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by the Lancing FC and Sussex FA. The site has been marked out by several pitches for many years and have been moved regularly due to wear and tear of the turf. Allowing flexibility on the site to move pitches ensures the ability to protect the playing fields for continued use.

Sport England understands from the LTA comments that there is a strategic need for padel in the area and it is a sport which can benefit a variety of ages and abilities in the community. The Planning Statement also notes that the proposed courts will target the mid-market demographic and will offer an affordable rate which is welcomed by both Sport England and the LTA.

Sport England accepts that the proposal meets with Section 6.5, paragraph 74 of our Playing Fields Policy, however further information needs to be provided to understand how the proposals will not have an unacceptable impact on the current or potential playing pitch provision on the site. Information on this can be found in paragraph 75.

Sport England's position

Given the above, Sport England raises a holding objection to the application as there is insufficient information provided to ensure two full size football pitches and two junior pitches can still be accommodated on the site to meet the needs of the community for football. In addition, Sport England would like to understand the current use of the site for football.

Sport England will review this application, once the above information has been provided.

If you would like any further information or advice, please 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

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