

Mr Michael Cole
c/o West Northamptonshire Development
Corporation
Cliftonville House
Bedford Road
Northampton
NN4 7NR

Our Ref : EM/NRC/2006/10683/S

19 March 2007

Dear Michael

Application No: WN/2006/0154
Proposals: Residential Development and Access – Outline Application
Location: Former Parklands Middle School site, Devon Way, Northampton

This is Sport England's revised response to the above planning application. The proposals affect playing fields and falls into Partnership Area 7 of Northampton.

Sport England objects to development that would lead to the loss of playing fields unless one or more of the following exceptions is met:

- E1: There is a proven excess of provision in the area
- E2: The use is ancillary to the playing field
- E3: The site is incapable of forming part of a pitch
- E4: Equivalent or better replacement facilities will be provided elsewhere
- E5: An alternative sports use is proposed, outweighing the loss

Northampton Playing Pitch Strategy 2005

In Partnership Area 7, the Playing Pitch Strategy identified deficits (2004) in pitches of:

- 5.1 x junior pitches
- 2.4 x mini soccer pitches

There were small identified surpluses in adult rugby and football pitches, as well as a substantial surplus of cricket pitches. The Playing Pitch Strategy commented that this did not take account of the fact that at the time the assessment was undertaken, nine adult pitches at the Racecourse were not in use, but were anticipated to be brought back into use in 2005 – 2006, which would lead to a significant surplus helping to alleviate deficits in neighbouring area. It is not clear if this has, in fact, taken place; and if not, why that might be so.

The Strategy also commented that junior football development at the Parklands (public) site was limited by the need to upgrade the changing facilities; but that community use of the new STP at Northampton School for Girls should provide for additional usage.

The Northampton Learning Partnership Proposals

In Partnership Area 7, the Northampton Schools reorganisation would provide community access to:

- 13 x senior grass pitches
- 3 x all-weather pitches (at Unity College and Beckett School as well as that at NSG)
- 2 x mini pitches, including one at the new Parklands Primary School

The schools reorganisation would therefore make an important contribution to pitch provision in the area. This would be likely to lead to a significant surplus (14) of adult pitches based on 2004 figures, and also in 2021(13). A small deficit in junior pitch provision of 2 would occur based on 2004 figures, rising to a deficit of 3 in 2021; though there would appear to be potential for this to be addressed by reorganisation and reallocation of a small proportion of the current senior pitches for junior use.

Conclusions

In terms of the need for pitches in this Partnership area, when the contribution of the Northampton Learning Partnership proposals are taken in to account, it appears that there would be a significant overall surplus even if the former Parklands Middle School playing fields were redeveloped; and even though it appears that not all of the nine previously unused Racecourse pitches have been brought back into use.

On the other hand, a specific deficit in junior pitches in Partnership Area 7 would remain. Although it should be possible to reallocate some senior pitches to address this – given the large surplus – it is recognised that this Partnership Area already helps to offset deficits in other areas. Furthermore, although the County Council has indicated that community use of the school playing fields has never been formally secured, representations of local people indicate that use by local clubs has occurred over a period of time; and that there is demand for junior pitches.

Given this combination of circumstances, Sport England considers that despite the apparent overall pitch surplus, the site should continue to make some contribution to junior pitch provision and use in the area, both on the application site itself, and by improving the quality of the existing public facility adjacent.

There will also be a need to make provision for open space to serve the new residents, which is already partly addressed by the retention of the woodland.

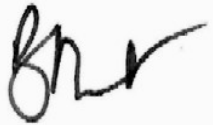
Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that if planning permission is granted for this application, it is made subject to planning conditions and a planning obligation securing:

- the retention of an area for the creation of a junior pitch – in a location that is optimal for integration with the adjacent public Parklands site; and
- a financial contribution that would meet a significant proportion of the costs involved in improving the changing facilities at the adjacent public Parklands site
- open space to serve the new residents of the housing development

I would be grateful if you would advise me of the outcome of the application by sending me a copy of the decision notice.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BH', is enclosed in a light grey rectangular box.

Ben Hunt

On behalf of Sport England

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