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Cumberland Council

Letter by email only

Date: 28 October 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
Application Reference: 4/26/2315/0F1
Proposal: Erection of building for use as sports changing facility and stores.
Site: HENSINGHAM AMATEUR RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB
Sport England Reference: PA/26/NW/CU/75312

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above planning application.

Sport England – statutory consultee role and policy

We understand that you have consulted Sport England as a statutory consultee in accordance 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 seeks permission for a new changing facility and storage building at Hensingham Amateur Rugby League Football Club:

SportPark, 3 Oakwood Drive
Loughborough,
Leicestershire, LE11 3QF

Registered address: Loughborough, SportPark, 3 Oakwood Drive, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3QF

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The Views of the National Governing Bodies for Sport

As part of the assessment of this consultation, Sport England has sought the views of the following National Governing Bodies for Sport. These Governing Bodies act as Sport England's technical advisors in respect of their sport and their sport facilities.

The comments of the Rugby Football League (RFL) are summarised as follows:

- *The proposal appears to sit outside the perimeter of the pitch and pitch barrier therefore we don't perceive the construction to impact the playing field or perimeter.*
- *The proposal appears to be acceptable from a design guidance point of view, other than the showers appearing to be open plan on Drawing 01. Standard practice for community sport now is that showers are cubicles particularly where a key principle underpinning the proposal is to encourage participation by women and girls*
- *Given our knowledge of the poor draining capacity of the playing pitch, we would want to seek assurances that there will be no detrimental impact on the playing surface either during construction or as a result of the development having taken place. The drainage strategy clearly references the poor drainage capacity of the surface and so it is hoped the proposed strategy is adequate to service the development and that there will be no additional run off of water onto the playing surface which would further compound issues already faced at the site.*

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- *If there is any impact to the playing pitch during the construction, then we would expect it is made good prior to the club looking to use it again for rugby activities.*

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

Sport England considers developments of this nature, which support the principal use of a site as a playing field, against Policy Exception 2 of the Playing Fields Policy, which states:

> *'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.'*

The submitted plans show that the proposal will be located outside the pitch and its safety margin. The RFL have commented that they don't perceive the proposal to impact the playing field or perimeter.

The RFL have provided some comments in respect of the design of the showers. They have also highlighted the need to ensure there is no detrimental impact on the playing surface during construction or following completion of the development. Sport England considers that these matters can be addressed and clarified by bringing them to the attention of the applicant.

Sport England uses the planning system as an opportunity to enhance the design of sport facilities. Sport England would not wish to see the applicant go to the expense of erecting facilities, which due to their current design, may create problems for the club or result in additional costs to make further alterations after it is constructed. The current design may also impact upon the ability to seek grant funding, if it does not accord with design guidance (these comments are made without prejudice to any decision that a grant funding body may make).

Sport England would be grateful if a copy of our comments can be forwarded to the applicant so that they can consider amending the design in accordance with the recommendations raised by the RFL above. Sport England would encourage the applicant to enter into direct discussions with the RFL, so that they can address any issues raised by the RFL, and the contact is: tom.little@rfl.co.uk

Notwithstanding the above, as the site of the proposal does not negatively impact on the pitches and is an ancillary facility to support the use of the playing field,

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having assessed the application, Sport England is satisfied that this element of the proposed development meets Exception E2 of our playing fields policy.

The development would support the ongoing use of the playing field through the provision of improved ancillary accommodation.

Sport England's position

Given the above assessment, Sport England raises **no objection** to the application as the proposal constitutes ancillary development supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field and accords with Exception 2 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and Policy HC7 of the NPPF.

The absence of an objection to this application, in the context of the Town and Country Planning Act, cannot be taken as formal support or consent from Sport England or any National Governing Body of Sport to any related funding application, or as may be required by virtue of any pre-existing funding agreement.

Yours faithfully,



Richard Fordham BA(Hons), DipTP, MTP, MRTPI, AIPROW
Planning Manager

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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