

Eastleigh Borough Council

FAO: Rachael Morris

By email only

15th April 2024

Application Reference: F/24/96865

Site: WIDE LANE SPORTS GROUND, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON SPORTS GROUND, SO50 5PE

Proposal: Erection of floodlighting and associated development

Sport England Reference: PA/24/SE/ET/66994

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 paragraph 103, 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 proposed erection of sports lighting and associated development will support access and use of the 2no. artificial grass pitches (AGPs) and associated works granted permission under F/23/95045. One of the AGPs was for football while the other facility was dual use (both rugby and football).

Sport England is supportive of the proposal for permanent sports lighting as it will enable the use of the AGP facilities to be maximised including for community use. Sport England has consulted with the relevant national governing bodies for sport,

the FA/Football Foundation and the RFU, and we have received the following comments.

The FA/Football Foundation comments that the Lighting Impact Report details that the proposed installation is compliant with The FA Guide to Floodlighting (average maintained level of >200lux, with uniformity >0.60) and therefore technically compliant.

The FA/FF note that the following comments are included within the planning statement:

“The justification for the installation of the new AGPs (as set out in application F/23/95045) relates to meeting demand from both University and community teams, especially during the winter months when the previous grass pitches would be waterlogged and unusable... For the development of the new AGPs to be successful and generate the anticipated benefits, the pitches will require lighting. The lighting will facilitate the use of the pitches for extended hours...”

The FF accepts that the installation of lighting (also referenced within the original planning application (F/23/95045) for the artificial pitches) will result in intensified use of the site.

The RFU welcomes the intent to construct permanent lighting for the AGPs in order to realise the full potential of the site.

The RFU comments that the emerging Eastleigh Borough Council PPS suggests that at least three local rugby clubs (Eastleigh RFC, Trojans FC and Locksheath Pumas RFC) are in need of additional midweek training capacity that could potentially be partially/fully addressed by this scheme. Further to local usage the transport links and location of the site central to Hampshire could potentially create a partial solution to wider match play congestion issues across the county (see design note below).

The RFU comments that the applicant is advised that the scheme should be constructed in line with the RFU Floodlight Installation & Management Guide, with particular reference to the recommended LUX and uniformity levels. With reference to the ‘Lighting Impact Report & Overspill Readings’ document, p3 makes an assumption that the most likely rugby usage will be for training. Given the pitch dimensions support the use of the surface for match play the RFU suggests that the applicant consider the potential for floodlit match play, and the associated implications on LUX and uniformity levels.

Assessment against Sport England’s Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

Sport England considers that the proposal will not adversely impact the playing field or pitches at the site. Conversely, the proposal will increase opportunities for the 2no.

AGP facilities to be used by both the university and other community clubs/groups/programmes. On that basis, Sport England considers that the application is capable of meeting our E2 exception. This 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.*

Sport England's Position

Given the above, Sport England raises **no objection** to the application because it is considered to accord with exception 2 of our Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 103 of the NPPF.

Please note that this response relates to Sport England's planning function only. It is not associated with our funding role or any grant application/award that may relate to the site.

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

Yours sincerely,

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