

Mid Sussex District Council

FAO: Stephen Ashdown

By email only

11 January 2024

**Application Reference:** DM/23/2866

**Site:** Land East of Ansty Way, Cuckfield Bypass, Cuckfield, Haywards Heath

**Proposal:** New garden community comprising up to 1,450 homes, primary school, SEND school, health hub, sports facilities including AW Hockey pitches and tennis centre, etc

**Sport England Reference:** PA/24/SE/MX/66268

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

### **Sport England – Non-statutory consultee role**

The Government, within their Planning Practice Guidance (Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Section) advises Local Planning Authorities to consult Sport England on a wide range of applications. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-greenspace#open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities>

This application falls within the scope of the above guidance as it relates to major residential development of over 300 dwellings and the creation of new playing pitches.

Sport England assesses this type of application in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and against its own planning objectives, which are:

Protect – To protect the right opportunities in the right places;

Enhance – To enhance opportunities through better use of existing provision;

Provide – To provide new opportunities to meet the needs of current and future generations.

Further information on the objectives and Sport England's wider planning guidance can be found on its website: [www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport](http://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport)

The occupiers of new development, especially residential, will generate demand for sporting provision. The existing provision within an area may not be able to accommodate this increased demand without exacerbating existing and/or predicted future deficiencies. Therefore, Sport England considers that new developments should contribute towards meeting the demand that they generate through the provision of on-site facilities and/or providing additional capacity off-

site.

The level and nature of any provision should be informed by a robust evidence base such as an up-to-date Sports Facilities Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy or other relevant needs assessment. The Council's evidence base is however significantly out of date\* and Sport England would strongly recommend that it is updated as soon as possible to inform the strategic developments including this one, that are being brought forward or promoted within the district.

### **The Proposal and Assessment against Sport England's Objectives and the NPPF**

The population of the proposed development is estimated to be 3668 (paragraph 1.1.2 of the Sport Statement)

#### Outdoor Sports

In terms of sport, the development proposes in summary,

- Delivery of an on-site Sports Hub comprising hockey pitches, outdoor tennis/netball courts and covered padel courts. The Hub would also provide an opportunity for delivery of indoor tennis courts subject to additional LTA funding.
- Community use of the sports pitches to be delivered at the new schools to be built as part of the proposed development. Access would be secured via Community Use Agreements.
- Off-site investment to improve the condition and Carrying Capacity of pitches at Beech Farm Field.

In assessing the proposal, I have consulted with the relevant National Governing Bodies (NGBs).

The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and England Netball support the proposals.

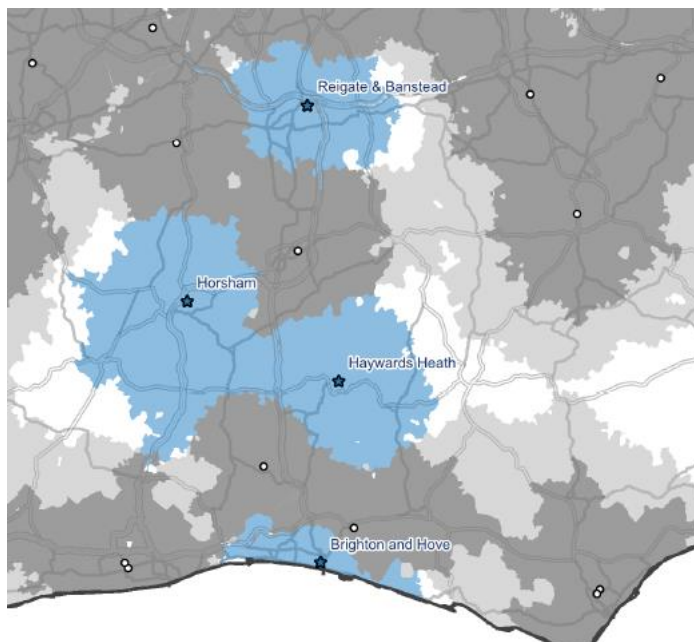
England Netball has commented that it has engaged with the applicant and is supportive of netball courts being included within the proposed facility mix, preferably as a combination of indoor and outdoor courts shared with tennis.

The LTA has commented that the proposed location (Haywards Heath) has been identified as a target location for indoor tennis, see map below, due to the lack of indoor tennis courts in Mid Sussex. The LTA's priority in this location would be to deliver covered tennis and padel, with the facility operated on a pay and play basis. The LTA understands that any potential housing development will financially support the delivery of the majority of facilities, but that indoor tennis would be an additional cost. Due to the strategic nature of the location, the LTA would, subject to

the necessary approvals of the business case and operating model, support the allocation of LTA loan funding to secure the delivery of indoor tennis.

The inclusion of outdoor floodlit tennis is also of local importance due to the limited playing opportunities in the local area compared to demand. The closest club in Cuckfield has 3 unlit tennis courts and 200 members alongside a thriving pay and play offer. The LTA says the club have recently been advised that they are unable to secure planning for the provision of floodlights.

Additionally, there are 2 additional community tennis facilities in Haywards Heath (Beech Hurst Gardens and Haywards Heath LTC) which would also benefit from accessing all year round facilities as neither have floodlights so therefore have limited playing opportunities.



The Football Foundation has commented that a population of the scale proposed will generate a significant demand for additional football pitches. It has run Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator (PPC) based on the district's out of date Playing Pitch Strategy 2015 (PPS) \* and a new population of 3,335, less than the applicant's estimate. This results in a demand for 2.83 additional natural grass football pitches at a current cost (Sport England Facilities Costs 2023 Q2) of £231,107, lifecycle cost of £48,618 and associated changing room capital cost of £306,198. Sport England would not normally recommend the use of the PPC where the PPS is out of date as the model relies on up to date team data. However, it is probable that the PPC underestimates rather than over-estimates the demand that will be generated by the proposal.

The FF considers that given the demand for a multi pitch facility arising directly from a population of this size in Mid Sussex, that it would be more appropriate for new

pitches to be provided within the development and within the sports hub. It queries if the demand generated can be met by improvements at the applicant's Beech Farm Fields site and if the off-site contribution proposed would be commensurate with the PPC figures.

Furthermore, the FF questions the justification for improvements at Beech Farm Fields beyond the applicant's existing control of the site. The FF and Sussex FA consider that if the demand generated cannot be accommodated on the application site, that the site for mitigation selected should at least be identified within the Mid Sussex Local Football Facility Plan (LPPF) prepared by the FF/FA in consultation with the Council [Mid Sussex Executive summary \(footballfoundation.org.uk\)](https://www.mid-sussex.gov.uk/mid-sussex-executive-summary).

Sussex FA has proposed Whiteman's Green, being identified for improvement in the LPPF and also being slightly closer to the application site meaning the site would potentially be used by the new residents.

In addition, the PPC run by the FF identifies that the proposed development would generate a demand for 0.15 full size 3G Artificial Grass Pitches at a current cost of £176,193. The FF considers that a financial contribution of this amount should be secured towards off site provision in the local area.

No comments have been received from the other NGBs, namely England Hockey, the Rugby Football Union (RFU) and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to date, however, in addition to the hockey pitches proposed, the development may generate additional local demands for pitches to support these sports arising from the growth in population proposed.

In summary for outdoor sports therefore, and in light of the lack of an up to date evidence base, Sport England is supportive of the proposed on-site sports facilities at the sports hub but would recommend that the Council seeks to incorporate indoor provision for tennis and netball as identified by the NGBs and that further consideration is given to satisfactorily meeting the additional demand for football and other pitch sports that will be generated by the development. In that regard, while it is noted that there may be further sports pitches provided at the proposed primary and SEND schools that could be secured for community use, there is no current detail of what might be provided, and it is unlikely that any pitches would be suitable for senior community use. At this stage therefore, any potential provision here has not been assessed further. If adequate sports pitch provision cannot be made within the application site, then further justification should be sought for the improvement of Beech Farm Fields and a costed feasibility assessment for its improvement. Ideally, if off-site provision is the only solution, this should be improvement of an identified priority site such as Whiteman's Green.

All on-site sports facilities including ancillary accommodation and any off-site improvements to existing sites as way of mitigation, should be constructed in

accordance with Sport England and relevant NGB design guidance and community use agreements should be secured for each facility providing sport facilities.

It is recommended that these requirements are fully secured by condition or within a s.106 legal obligation should the LPA be minded to grant outline planning permission. Sport England's model conditions are recommended to be used <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/sport-england-model-planning-conditions-march-2017-published-version.doc?UwwdbsvkUJPCLiEW7kZo9nDztdKYX29h>

### Indoor Sports

In addition to outdoor sports, the development will generate demand for additional sports facilities. No indication is given that these will be accommodated within the development site.

You may be aware that Sport England's Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) can help to provide an indication of the likely demand that will be generated by a development for certain facility types. The SFC indicates that a population of 3668 in this local authority area will generate a demand for 1.02 sports hall courts at a current cost of £818,975, 0.75 swimming pool lanes at a cost of £911,701 and 0.07 indoor bowls rinks at £31,508, a total cost of £1,762,184. The full SFC report is attached for information. It is recommended that financial contributions towards the provision of new and / or enhancement of existing facilities are secured to mitigate this increased demand.

In the absence of any contribution currently towards indoor sports provision, Sport England is unable to support the proposal currently.

### **Active Design**

Sport England, in conjunction with Active Travel England and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) 'Active Design' (updated May 2023, a guide to planning new developments that create the right environment to help people get more active, more often in the interests of health and wellbeing. The guidance sets out ten key principles for ensuring new developments incorporate opportunities for people to take part in sport and physical activity. The Active Design principles are aimed at contributing towards the Government's desire for the planning system to promote healthy communities through good urban design. Sport England would commend the use of the guidance in the master planning process for new residential developments. The document can be downloaded via the following link:

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design>

## **Conclusion**

In light of the above, while there are some positive aspects to the proposed scheme relating to tennis, netball and hockey, Sport England is unable to fully support this proposal currently and therefore, we **object** to the application as it is currently presented.

Further detail is required to address the matters raised within this response and we would be very happy then to review our response.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if any further advice is required.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Edwards MRTPI  
**Planning Manager**

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