

Rochdale MBC

FAO: Anna Hayes

By email

17th October 2025

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

Application Reference: 25/00929/FUL

Site: Rochdale Sports Club, Bridgefold Road, OL11 5BX

**Proposal: Construction of 6 padel tennis courts (4 covered, 2 uncovered) and
new clubhouse building with changing facilities, café and raised terrace area.
Creation of new parking spaces and associated boundary treatments.**

Sport England Reference: PA/25/NW/RO/71870

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

Summary

Statutory consultee role

Sport England raises **no objection** to this application as it is considered to meet exception E3 of our Playing Fields Policy and to accord with Paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

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 104, 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 proposal relates to the construction of a new padel tennis facility within the existing grounds of the sports club, on an area of the playing field to the east of the existing cricket pitch and also east of the access track that is situated to the east of the pitch.

The proposal is to construct 6 padel tennis courts, 4 of which would be covered and two uncovered courts together with various associated social facilities, stores etc.

The plans and design and access statement refer to provision of a 3m high fence topped with a 3 metre high ball stop netting to provide protection from cricket balls being struck towards the padel facility.

The design and access statement makes reference to Rochdale Padel club having committed £15k annually to provide free access for schools and community groups, covering a combination of court time, coaching sessions, equipment hire and use of facilities for council-organised activities.

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

In this case the most relevant Exception Criteria are Exceptions E3 and E5 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy (see annex). Exceptions 1 and 4 are not relevant in this case, and whilst some ancillary facilities are proposed, Exception E2 is at best only relevant in part.

Sport England have consulted with the ECB and Football Foundation who comment as follows:

ECB:

- *The site is home to Rochdale CC who have 3 senior teams and numerous junior teams*
- *Given the proximity of the padel courts and clubhouse to the cricket ground a ball strike risk assessment should be undertaken. If the assessment shows mitigation is required, details of the mitigation together with details of how it would be managed and maintained.*

Football Foundation:

- *The site is used for football by Get Together After Serving CIC FC, which has 4 teams playing onsite - 2 open age male teams and 2x 9v9 teams at U11 and U12. There are two football pitches, marked to the north west of the site.*
- *The proposal does not appear to directly affect the onsite football provision, nor the existing ancillary provision for football which is housed within the main sports club building. It does not appear to propose that any of the new facilities would be accessed for football, though works to the main car park to create more spaces would be beneficial to football users.*

We have also consulted with LTA, England Squash and England Lacrosse though no comments have been received.

Sport England notes these comments and would advise that we have no objection in principle to the siting of the padel courts which do not result in the loss of any playing pitches nor impact on the capacity to provide playing pitches. The area of land that is proposed to be utilised is beyond the boundary of the cricket pitch.

We note the comments of the ECB making the case for the applicant to undertake a ball strike assessment. The application makes provision for the installation of ball stop netting on the western side of the courts, and whilst this may well prove to be an effective mitigation proposal, Sport England are unable to comment on this in the absence of such an assessment being submitted. Notwithstanding this, we see this as a matter for the sports club to manage to ensure that the use of the cricket pitch is not unduly impacted by the proposed development. As such, we would advise that the ECB's advice is shared with the applicant who can consider further in the event that planning permission is granted for the proposal.

Whilst the application proposal also has the potential to meet Exception E5 of Sport England's playing fields policy, there is insufficient information provided to demonstrate the need for and benefits of providing the proposed padel facility in this location, and so, based upon the submitted information we are unable to advise that the proposal would also meet Exception E5.

Sport England's Position

Given the above, Sport England raises **no objection** to the application because it is considered to accord with exception E3 of our Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 104 of the NPPF.

If this application is to be presented to a Planning Committee, we would like to be notified in advance of the publication of any committee agenda(s), report(s) and committee date(s). Please notify Sport England of the outcome of the planning application.

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