

Rochdale MBC

FAO: Majid Mir

By email only

11th April 2025

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

Application Reference: 23/00693/OUT

Site: BELLFIELD MILL LANE (ROCHDALE SACRED HEART), BELFIELD MILL LANE OL16 2UB

**Proposal: Outline application (including access and layout) for the erection of
1no' detached dwelling**

Sport England Reference: PA/23/NW/RO/65846

Thank you for consulting Sport England with regard to the additional information for the above application.

Summary

Sport England **maintains its objection** to this application as it is not considered to meet any of the exceptions to our Playing Fields Policy or to accord with paragraphs 104 and 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

We may reconsider this position should amended/additional details be provided to address the following points:

- *A demonstration that any potential requirement of Rochdale Sacred Heart FC can be met*
- *Provision of a Ball Strike Assessment*

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. The exceptions are provided in the Annex to this response.

The proposal and impact on playing field

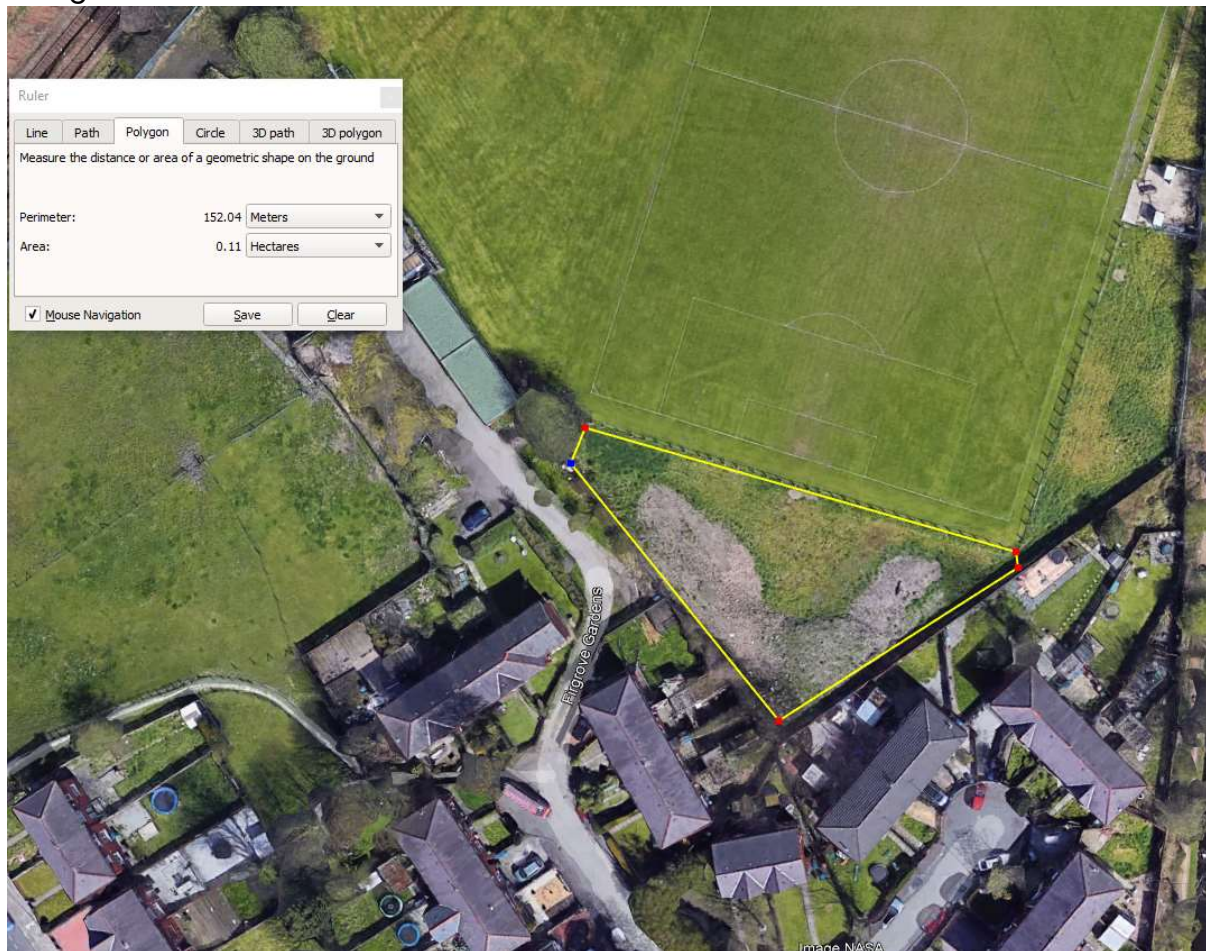
The proposal is on a triangular are of land on an existing playing field which contains a 95m x 60m natural turf football pitch. The whole of the playing field measures 1.38ha in total as shown below:

Google Extract:



The proposal will result in the loss of the area of playing field to the south which is a total of 0.11ha:

Google Extract:



In addition, the proposal introduces residential development on the existing playing field and will result in non-sporting uses being located closer to the existing football pitch area. Paragraph 200 of the NPPF states that 'Existing businesses and facilities should not have unreasonable restrictions placed on them as a result of development permitted after they were established.' Insufficient information has been provided to enable a complete assessment of the impact of the residential development on the use of the football pitch and as such the proposal fails to meet NPPF paragraph 200 requirements.

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

Exception 1: Does not apply, it is not demonstrated that the playing field containing the football pitch is not needed.

Exception 2: Does not apply, the proposal is for residential and is not for a use supporting principal sporting use of the playing field.

Exception 3: Has the potential to apply – see below.

Exception 4: No re-provision of the lost 0.11 of playing field has been presented.

Exception 5: Does not apply, proposal is for residential and not for a sporting use.

Consultation with National Governing Body's for Sport

Sport England has a memorandum of understanding with the pitch sport National Governing Bodies and consults with them on planning proposals. On this occasion, in relation to the submitted additional information, Sport England has previously consulted with the Football Foundation and their response to the submitted additional information is summarised as follows: –

Football Foundation:

- *Although the application site is not used for any football purposes at the moment the adjacent pitch is used by an FA affiliated club.*
- *Rochdale Sacred Heart FC is made up of 11 teams across Rochdale Sacred Heart Seniors and Rochdale Sacred Heart Tigers (Youth). Lancashire FA data from the 22/23 season shows that 1 youth and 2 adult teams use this site. The Rochdale Sacred Heart first team play at the site and are members of the Manchester Football League Premier Division – a regional feeder league to the NLS.*
- *Site is too small to facilitate laying out a football pitch but could provide supporting facilities should the club progress beyond their current National League System position to Step 6. For example for spectators/a stand.*
- *There is a realistic possibility that the club could progress to Step 6 given their regional feeder league.*
- *The new changing pavilion at the site was built in 2015, and FF (via Football Stadium Improvement Fund, now Premier League Stadium Fund) contributed £50k towards the project. At the time, this scheme could fund clubs at step 7 / regional feeder league.*
- *The FF will need assurances that the proposal will not compromise the future potential ambitions of the club.*
- *A Noise Risk and Ball Strike Risk Assessment would be required.*

Sport England's position

Given the above, the latest submitted information does not alter Sport England's previous objection and we need to **maintain a statutory objection** to the application because currently the proposal will use playing field land which could be used by the Rochdale Sacred Heart should they gain promotion to Step 6 of the NLS and which would be compromised by the proposal.

A noise assessment has been submitted and as Sport England do have the expertise to comment on its content, we defer to the Local Authority's noise expert and their view of the suitability of any proposed mitigation.

As such, it is not considered to accord with any of the exceptions to Sport England's Playing Fields Policy or paragraphs 104 or 200 of the NPPF.

Potential to overcome the statutory objection

- *Demonstration that the proposal can be accommodated without prejudice to the future promotion ambitions of Rochdale Sacred Heart FC.*

- *Provision of a ball strike assessment on the basis of the above.*

Determining the application

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 agendas, report(s) and committee date(s).

If you would like any further information or advice, please forward to planning.north@sportengland.org

Yours sincerely

Kind Regards

Pauline Shearer MSc BA Hons MRTPI

Planning Manager

M: 07833215549

E: Pauline.Shearer@sportengland.org

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