

Rochdale MBC

FAO: Majid Mir

By email only

1st July 2026

**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 ball strike information from the applicant in relation to the above application.

Summary

Sport England **maintains its objection** to this application as it is not considered to fully meet any of the Exceptions to our Playing Fields Policy – particularly Exception 3 – 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:

- *Provision of a Ball Strike Assessment – Undertaken by a suitably qualified and recognised contractor*

Additional information

- *'Preliminary Ball Strike Assessment' June 2026 by Northern Design (Oldham)*

Sport England – statutory consultee role and policy

As previously set out.

The proposal and impact on playing field

As previously set out.

Assessment against Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and NPPF

As previously set out.

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 addition information, Sport England has consulted with the Football Foundation and their response is summarised as follows: –

Football Foundation (FF):

- *The ball strike assessment appears to have been produced by North Design Partnership, an architect. This organisation is not recognised by FF as a known and independent sports specialist and has not utilised or applied a recognised analysis model to determine the trajectory, distance and subsequent risk. The conclusion to recommend a 6-10m fence system is too broad and a fence as high as 10m could pose an amenity impact which may not be considered suitable or potentially required if 6m turns out could be sufficient.*
- *FF recommends that the applicant enlists a recognised contractor to undertake a new ball strike risk assessment. The applicant could seek support from Labosport, a prominent independent sports test house that works directly with the England and Wales Cricket Board and the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA).*
- *The LPA should consider the future potential for floodlighting in future. (Previous comment)*

Sport England's position

The proposed has been considered under Exception 3 of Sport England's Playing Field Policy in that:

'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.'*

It is not always possible for Exception 3 to be applied to proposals for non-sporting uses on parts of playing field at a site's periphery, however, in this case, the circumstances indicate that the area of land to which the application relates, has never had any direct purpose in supporting the sporting use of the site. Indeed the current pitch layout has created an area which could not practically be accessed and used for ancillary football purposes. As such Sport England can consider the proposal under Exception 3.

The Football Foundation have raised concerns as to whether the proposal would prevent an alternative pitch layout which could support the Club's ambitions to achieve high status in the National League System. The applicant has previously provided sufficient details to satisfy the Football Foundation that this could still be done. However, they have indicated that the Club has a desire to lay an AGP on the site and the Council may wish to consider the future potential for any resulting sports lighting and noise impacts on the proposed dwelling in their recommendation.

It is noted that the latest ball strike risk assessment has not been undertaken with the level of technical scrutiny that is required and the Football Foundation, they cannot agree to the broad recommendations and have advised that a revised Ball Strike Assessment be undertaken by a suitably qualified contractor.

Given the above, there are still details in relation to ball strike regarding the existing pitch that need to be addressed. As such Sport England's **maintains a statutory objection** to the application because currently it is not considered to fully 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

- *Provision of a ball strike assessment based on the existing pitch use – undertaken by a suitably qualified and recognised contractor*

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).

Further information should be forwarded to planning.north@sportengland.org

Yours sincerely

Pauline Shearer MSc BA Hons MRTPI

Planning Manager

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