

Mr M Peacock
Welwyn Hatfield District Council
Council Offices
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
AL8 6BX

01 July 2015

Our Ref: E/WH/2015/40173/N

Dear Mr Peacock

Application Reference: S6/2015/1342/PP
Site Address: Land North East King George V Playing Fields,
Northaw Road East, Cuffley EN6 4LU
Proposal: Outline Planning Application for residential
development of up to 121 dwellings, associated
infrastructure and a change of use from
agricultural land to an extension of the King
George V playing field at Land to the north east
of King George V Playing Fields, Northaw Road
East

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

Summary: Sport England is supportive of the principle of the change of use of agricultural land to an extension of King George V Playing Fields to meet the additional sports facility needs generated by the proposed development. A planning obligation should make provision for securing this land and a financial contribution towards the enhancement of sports facilities at the King George V Playing Fields site.

The site is not considered to form part of, or constitute an existing playing field as defined in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (Statutory Instrument 2010 No.2184), therefore Sport England has considered this a **non-statutory** consultation.

Introduction

Sport England has assessed the application in the light of its Planning for Sport Aims and Objectives Guide (2013) www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/aims-and-objectives/ which is consistent with the NPPF. Objective 3 of this guide relates to ensuring that the provision of facilities and opportunities for sport and

recreation meets the needs of the local community. The occupiers of any 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 be required to contribute towards meeting the demand 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 Facility Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy or other relevant needs assessment.

The proposal is principally for a residential development of up to 121 dwellings and includes two parcels of land, one for the residential development and a second separate parcel which is proposed for extending the nearby King George V Playing Fields. The playing field extension is intended to help meet the additional sports facility needs generated by the proposed development and meet a need identified by local community stakeholders for additional playing pitches. In this context, I would wish to make the following comments on particular sport related aspects of the planning application:

Outdoor Sports Facilities

The development proposes an extension of 0.63 hectares to King George V Playing Fields which is close to the application site and a financial contribution towards enhancements to the playing fields.

In terms of assessing the adequacy of outdoor sports provision proposed in major new residential development, in accordance with Government policy (paragraph 73 of the NPPF) it is expected that new provision to meet the needs generated by such development should be based on robust and up-to-date assessment of needs. Such assessments would usually incorporate quantitative standards of provision or alternative approaches to calculating provision which would inform the scale of provision required to be made by new development.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council has prepared a robust Sports Facility Study (2011) which was supplemented with a Sports Facility Strategy (2012) that has identified deficiencies in existing outdoor sports provision within the Borough, especially playing pitches. The study includes a detailed assessment of outdoor sports facility needs and has proposed a standard for the provision of outdoor sports facilities of 1.35 ha per 1000 population. The Council's Planning Obligations SPD (2012) seeks outdoor sports facility provision to be made in new residential development in accordance with policy OS2 of the adopted local plan.

This SPD and the Sports Facilities Study (which provides its evidence base) are therefore considered to provide an appropriate basis for assessing how the proposed development should address the additional outdoor sports facility needs that it generates. Applying the Council's recommended standards to the development

would generate a need for approximately 0.40 ha of outdoor sports facility provision on the basis of applying an occupancy ratio of 2.5 persons per dwelling to 121 dwellings. The proposal to provide 0.63 ha would therefore meet this standard.

In principle, the proposal to provide an extension to King George V Playing Fields would be a positive response to the Council's evidence base and planning policies. Extending Cuffley's main outdoor sports facility would be a more appropriate response than seeking to provide any new provision within the residential development site given the limited scope for providing a standalone sustainable facility that would be responsive to local needs. Sport England is therefore **supportive in principle** of the proposals.

In addition to changing the use of the agricultural land to playing fields it is also proposed that a financial contribution would be made towards enhancing the facilities at King George V Playing Fields although there are no details provided about this. It is also unclear what is intended for the area of extended playing field i.e., would it be prepared as a new natural turf playing pitch, would be used for another outdoor sports facility, would it be used for new or replacement ancillary facilities etc. Sport England would not want to be prescriptive about what the extended playing field area is used for or what the financial contribution is used for. However, I have consulted the Football Association for their views and based on their local knowledge of football facility needs in the Cuffley area their preference would be for the King George Playing Field to be extended and for a small floodlit artificial grass pitch to be located on this site. This would complement the grass pitches already provided and offer Cuffley Football Club and the wider community with an all weather training facility that would respond to local needs (the football club have already identified a need for this facility).

In this context, the Council is **requested to consider the following matters** when determining the planning application:

- Ideally, the proposed use of the extended playing field should be confirmed before the application is determined to ensure that an appropriate financial contribution is secured towards the delivery of the project. A feasibility study for the proposed project (e.g. a sports turf consultant's (agronomist) report if natural turf playing pitches are proposed) should be undertaken to inform the costs of a project. An appropriate financial contribution can then be informed by this. The contribution should be secured as part of a planning obligation;
- Provision should be made for securing the extended playing field site into the control of Cuffley Parish Council or another appropriate body in order to ensure security of tenure over a long term period for the community e.g. a freehold transfer. This should be secured through a planning obligation;
- A co-ordinated approach should be taken with the proposal for residential development to the north of Northaw Road East that is the subject of an undetermined planning application (Ref: S6/2014/1697/PP) as it is understood

that a financial contribution may also be secured from this development towards enhancing King George V Playing Fields if planning permission is forthcoming. Collectively, the two developments could fund a potentially significant project (e.g. a small artificial grass pitch) that would help meet local needs so it will be important that opportunities are taken to pool contributions if applicable;

- As well as a contribution towards capital projects, a contribution towards the long term maintenance of the King George V Playing Fields should also be secured. This is justified because if new playing field provision was to be directly provided by the applicant within the proposed residential development, a maintenance contribution towards open space maintenance would usually be secured. The same principle should therefore apply to the extended playing field.

Indoor Sports Provision

An estimated additional population of up to around 303 people generated by the proposed development (based on 121 dwellings with an occupancy ratio of 2.5) will create additional demand for indoor sports facilities such as sports halls, swimming pools, health and fitness suites etc. It is therefore essential that the development makes appropriate provision for meeting these needs to avoid further pressure being placed on existing local facilities which may already be at capacity. The evidence base and policy context for residential developments making provision for indoor sports facilities is similar to outdoor sport in terms of the NPPF and Welwyn Hatfield Council's Sports Facilities Study & Strategy and the Planning Obligations SPD. In particular, the study identified a need for additional sports halls to meet future needs and for investment in swimming pool provision.

Sport England's Sports Facility Calculator is an established strategic planning tool which provides an estimate of the demand for community sports facilities for any given population, based on the local population profile. Demand is expressed in terms of swimming pools, sports halls etc. and in terms of the cost of providing the facility (allowing for regional variations in building costs). This tool can estimate how much additional demand for sports facilities a new housing development will generate and quantify the contribution (at current prices) that should be sought from developers. As an estimate, based on an increase in the residential population of 303 people, the residential population of the proposed development is estimated to generate a need equivalent to 2% of a 25m swimming pool, 2% of a four court sports hall and 2% of an indoor bowls rink. The cost of providing these facilities at April 2014 would in total be £119,770. If the local planning authority or applicant wished to perform their own calculation or find out more about the Sports Facility Calculator, it can be downloaded from our website at <http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/sports-facility-calculator/> . Alternatively, I would be happy to provide further advice in this regard.

I hope that these comments can be given full consideration when a decision is made. I would be happy to discuss these comments with the local planning authority and/or



Creating a sporting habit for life

the applicant as the application progresses. Please contact me if you have any queries.

We would be grateful if you would advise us of the outcome of the application by forwarding a copy of the decision notice.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Warren".

Roy Warren
Planning Manager

Tel: 020 7273 1831

Email: Roy.Warren@sportengland.org