



Creating a sporting habit for life

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Our Ref: SE/CL/2015/38562/N

Dear Jenny

**Application No:** 14/02121/OUT  
**Site Address:** Proposed Himley Village, North West Bicester, Middleton Stoney Road, Bicester, Oxfordshire  
**Proposal:** Development to provide up to 1,700 residential dwellings (Class C3), a retirement village (Class C2), flexible commercial floorspace (Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1 and C1), social and community facilities (Class D1), land to accommodate one energy centre and land to accommodate one new primary school (up to 2FE) (Class D1). Such development to include provision of strategic landscape, provision of new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access routes, infrastructure and other operations (including demolition of farm buildings on Middleton Stoney Road)

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

The site is not considered to form part of, or constitute a playing field as defined in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (Statutory Instrument 2010 No.2184). Therefore, Sport England is not a statutory consultee in relation to this application.

It is understood that Sport England has been consulted because the proposed development involves (i) the creation of a site for one or more playing pitches and (ii) a residential development of more than 300 dwellings. This accords with advice contained in the Government's Planning Practice Guidance, which can be viewed at <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities/>.

Sport England assesses this type of proposal in line with its planning objectives and with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The focus of these objectives is that a planned approach to the provision of facilities and opportunities for sport is necessary in order to meet the needs of local communities. 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 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 Facility Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy or other relevant needs assessment.

This requirement is supported by the NPPF, which states:

*“To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:*

- *Plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses, and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments...*
- *Ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.”* (Paragraph 70)

The application is not considered in isolation, but alongside three other applications (14/01384/OUT, 14/01641/OUT and 14/01675/OUT) containing proposals for North West Bicester and a draft Supplementary Planning Document, on which Sport England provided comments in a letter dated 23 January 2015.

The application seeks outline planning permission for the development described above. The principle of the development is to be considered at this stage. All other matters are reserved.

The application is accompanied by a Landscape Parameter Plan 3 (drawing numbered FHA621L01P), a Land Use Parameter Plan 4 (drawing numbered 592-PL-103 Rev A), and an Illustrative Masterplan (drawing numbered 592-SK-026). These drawings show a primary school with its own playing field near the centre of the site and a separate, larger area of land laid out as playing fields on the northern edge of the site. Generally, the plans accord with the Masterplan Framework (drawing numbered BIMP6 01 rev A) contained in the draft North West Bicester Supplementary Planning Document (p.62).

The application contains a supporting Planning Statement, which includes in the description of the proposals:

- “Provision of land for a new two form entry primary school (up to 2,750 sqm GIA) with an aspiration for a farm school with an emphasis on local horticulture”
- “New open space including a central village green, informal pitches and play areas which will be incorporated into a new landscaped green infrastructure network”.

It is unclear what is meant by the term “informal pitches”. Playing pitches need to be properly constructed and formally laid out in order to be fit for purpose for sport.

The Planning Statement also sets out Draft Heads of Terms for a s106 Agreement. It is noted that, in combination with the related applications, the s106 will include

- “Provision of land to provide for primary education;
- Provision of land for community facilities and/or financial contribution;
- Provision of sporting facilities and/or financial contribution;
- Provisions in relation to the management and maintenance of open space and playspace”.

The time that the sports facilities will be delivered, in relation to a specific phase of the development, is not stated. However, a potential phasing scenario is set out in the Design and Access Statement (p.190) indicating that the community playing fields will be provided in the first phase of the development.

The Design and Access Statement appears to contain an error on the Open Space Strategy and Allocation plan on p.108, where the land at the northern edge of the site is annotated “School playing fields/School playground”. On the Play Strategy and Allocation plan on p.111, the same area of land is annotated “community playing fields”. Sport England has proceeded on the basis that the latter is correct.

Sport England has not published guidance of its own on the specific amount of playing fields required to meet the needs of schools. However, it is aware that the Department for Education has issued guidance in various building bulletins. Sport England understands that Building Bulletin 103 is likely to be the most relevant in this particular case. Please see:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/324056/BB103\\_Area\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_Mainstream\\_Schools\\_CORRECTED\\_25\\_06\\_14.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/324056/BB103_Area_Guidelines_for_Mainstream_Schools_CORRECTED_25_06_14.pdf).

It will be necessary for the local planning authority to refer to these guidelines in order to be satisfied that the correct amount of playing fields is included in the proposal for the school.

The application makes no reference to an up to date Sports Facility Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy or other relevant needs assessment to justify the amount of land that is proposed to be provided for outdoor sport.

Sport England has consulted the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for the main pitch sports (football, cricket, rugby and hockey) as well as for tennis. The following comments have been received from the Football Association and from England Hockey.

#### Football Association

The Football Association has advised that there is a lack of playing and training facilities for football clubs in Bicester. There is an identified need for additional grass pitches and ideally the provision of a floodlit 3G artificial grass pitch. From the information provided in the application it is unclear how the proposal would deliver the provision of facilities to meet the needs of football in Bicester. There is a strong desire to see senior level football return to the town. The Bicester Sports Association site at Oxford Road is the only facility capable of accommodating this, but the site is in decline and their other site, at Chesterton, does not have planning permission for floodlights or sufficient parking. Consideration needs to be given to where such a site could be developed and how it could be delivered, in order to secure the long term sustainable future for the game in the town.

#### England Hockey

England Hockey has advised that Bicester Hockey Club has almost reached full capacity at its current single pitch facility. The club is growing at around 17% per annum and, with the number of new housing developments in the area, access to additional facilities is needed. It has been suggested that a new sand dressed artificial grass pitch with pavilion would be provided as part of the Graven Hill development, but this has not been confirmed. The development of a new 3G artificial grass pitch in the locality would have the potential to create additional capacity for hockey on the existing pitch at Cooper School, by removing some of the existing football activity, but for greater club growth a new facility is required.

While other NGBs did not respond to the consultation, it should not be assumed that there is no requirement to make provision for cricket, rugby or tennis.

Sport England would encourage the local planning authority to undertake a robust and up-to-date assessment of needs in accordance with paragraph 73 of the NPPF. Guidance on assessing needs and opportunities and preparing a playing pitch strategy can be found on Sport England's website at:

<http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/>. It will then be possible (most likely at the reserved matters stage) to determine the correct amount of playing field land to be provided and number and size of pitches to be provided for each sport.

Sport England considers it necessary for the Council to secure contributions to both sports pitches and built facilities to meet the increased demand generated by the additional population. Sport England's Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) is a sophisticated planning tool which helps to estimate the level of demand for key community sports facilities created by a given population. The SFC has been created by Sport England to help local planning authorities quantify how much additional demand for the key community sports facilities (swimming pools, sports halls and synthetic turf pitches), is generated by populations of new growth, development and regeneration areas. It uses information that Sport England has gathered on who uses facilities and applies this to the actual population profile of the local area. This ensures that the calculation is sensitive to the needs of the people who live there. Further information on the SFC can be found at:

<http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/sports-facility-calculator/>.

The proposed development appears to be consistent with the draft North West Bicester Supplementary Planning Document. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal has the potential to meet Objective 3 of Sport England's Land Use Planning Policy Statement, 'Planning for Sport Aims and Objectives'. That is to say:

"To ensure that new sports facilities are planned for and provided in a positive and integrated way and that opportunities for new facilities are identified to meet current and future demands for sporting participation."

**No objection is raised to the proposed development subject to use of the following conditions**, if the Council is minded to grant planning permission.

1. No development shall commence until details for the phasing of the development, including the provision of the [named playing field/sports facility], have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority [after consultation with Sport England]. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory quantity, quality and accessibility of sports facility provision for the occupiers of the proposed development and to accord with Development Plan Policy \*\*.

2. No development shall commence until details of the design and layout of the sports facilities have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority [after consultation with Sport England]. The sports facilities shall not be constructed other than substantially in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the development is fit for purpose and sustainable and to accord with Development Plan Policy \*\*.

Informative: The applicant is advised that the design and layout of the sports facilities should comply with the relevant industry Technical Design Guidance, including guidance published by Sport England and the National Governing Bodies for Sport. Further information can be found at: <http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/>.

3. The playing field/s and pitch/es shall be constructed and laid out in accordance with the [planning application \*, Section \* and Drawing No. \*\*] and with the standards and methodologies set out in the guidance note "Natural Turf for Sport" (Sport England, 2011), and shall be made available for use before first use or occupation [or other specified timeframe] of the development [or specified part of the development/] hereby permitted.

Reason: To ensure the quality of pitches is satisfactory and they are available for use before development (or agreed timescale) and to accord with Development Plan Policy \*\*.

Thank you once again for consulting Sport England. We would be grateful if you would advise us of the outcome of the application by forwarding a copy of the decision notice in due course.

Yours sincerely

*Raymond Cole*

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