

From: [Bob Sharples](#)
To: [Catchside, Emily - Oxfordshire County Council](#)
Cc: [Anderson, Carmella](#); [Joseph Hall](#)
Subject: App Ref: R3.0138/21 - A linear site comprising a corridor between the A34 Milton Interchange OX14 3EG - Sport England Ref: PA/21/SE/OCC/60166
Date: 24 November 2022 15:44:35

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Dear Emily,

Thank you for re-consulting Sport England on the above application with additional information, in particular Appendix T: *Playing Field Response*. I have reviewed this document and I am satisfied that the application is a non-statutory planning application for Sport England.

Sport England – Non Statutory Role and Policy

Sport England assesses this type of application in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and against its own planning objectives, which are Protect - To protect the right opportunities in the right places; Enhance - To enhance opportunities through better use of existing provision; Provide - To provide new opportunities to meet the needs of current and future generations. Further information on the objectives and Sport England's wider planning guidance can be found on its website: <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/planning-for-sport>

The Proposal and Assessment

The proposal is for the dualling of the A4130 carriageway (A4130 Widening) from the Milton Gate Junction eastwards, including the construction of three roundabouts; - A road bridge over the Great Western Mainline (Didcot Science Bridge) and realignment of the A4130 north east of the proposed road bridge including the relocation of a lagoon; - Construction of a new road between Didcot and Culham (Didcot to Culham River Crossing) including the construction of three roundabouts, a road bridge over the Appleford railway sidings and road bridge over the River Thames; - Construction of a new road between the B4015 and A415 (Clifton Hampden bypass), including the provision of one roundabout and associated junctions; and - Controlled crossings, footways and cycleways, landscaping, lighting, noise barriers and sustainable drainage systems. This will result in the loss of an adult football pitch.

Assessment

There is only one part of the scheme which Sport England has concerns with, and it is identified on map 6, which results in the loss of former playing field. For clarity this can be found on pages 1 and 2 of Appendix T. All other elements/areas of the planning application, Sport England has no comments to make.

The current Vale of White Horse Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) is considered by all to be out of date and a new one was recently commissioned and is due to be completed in August 2023.

I have consulted the County Football Association/Football Foundation (FA/FF) and have included their comments below:

Whilst the pitch at this site is not currently in use, the previous PPS for the authority highlighted feedback from clubs which identified access to both grass and artificial pitches being an issue.

No additional artificial pitches or grass pitch sites have been developed to address the previously-identified challenges, and team numbers for football have grown significantly in the intervening years. It is therefore anticipated that previously identified shortfalls are likely to have worsened.

A new PPS is in the early stages of development, and therefore there is no evidence base currently in the authority to suggest there is a surplus of playing fields (either current, or disused/lapsed sites) and therefore the potential loss of this site is a concern.

The emerging PPS will identify the current position of supply/demand in the authority, and could provide an opportunity to consider future use of this site for football and/or other sports uses. Notably, the adjacent playing field previously hosted cricket, and therefore could be reinstated, or the site provided as a whole for football if continuing shortfalls are identified. It is generally recognised that sites with multiple pitches (and particularly those with both summer and winter sports) can be operated more sustainably than smaller single pitch sites – which is what would be left if this application is approved.

In summary, approval of this application would remove the ability for this site to be brought back into use, particularly if the PPS maintains a need to protect or provide additional grass pitches.

I note the comments in Appendix T put forward by AECOM who is acting on behalf of the applicants, but I do not consider this element application to meet our planning policy exception E1 due to the age of the PPS and comments made by the FA/FF.

Conclusion

Sport England considers that the application conflicts with Objective *Protect* in that it results in the loss of a full-size football pitch

In light of the above and the lack of evidence of any exceptional circumstances Sport England objects to the application.

Sport England will reconsider its position if the playing field lost was to be replaced elsewhere which would meet our planning policy exception E4.

If this application is to be presented to a Planning Committee, Sport England would like to be notified in advance of the meeting date(s) and the publication of any agenda(s) and report(s). Sport England would also like to be notified of the outcome of the application through the receipt of a copy of the decision notice.

If you would like any further information or advice please contact me at the address below.

Yours sincerely,

Bob

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