Dear Mr Johnson,

App Ref: Y/5/2013/5012
Site: Salhouse VC Primary School, Cheyney Avenue, Salhouse, Norfolk NR13 6RJ
Proposal: Removal of existing modular classroom and erection of a permanent pavilion

Thank you for consulting Sport England on the above application.

It is understood that the site forms part of, or constitutes a playing field as defined in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (Statutory Instrument 2010 No. 2184), in that it is on land that has been used as a playing field within the last five years, and the field encompasses at least one playing pitch of 0.2 ha or more, or that it is on land that allocated for the use as a playing field in a development plan or in proposals for such a plan or its alteration or replacement.

Sport England has therefore considered the application in the light of its playing fields policy. The aim of this policy is to ensure that there is an adequate supply of quality pitches to satisfy the current and estimated future demand for pitch sports within the area. The policy seeks to protect all parts of the playing field from development and not just those which, for the time being, are laid out as pitches. The Policy states that:

“Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of, all or any part of a playing field, or land last used as a playing field or allocated for use as a playing field in an adopted or draft deposit local plan, unless, in the judgement of Sport England, one of the Specific circumstances applies.”

Reason; Development which would lead to the loss of all or part of a playing field, or which would prejudice its use, should not normally be permitted because it would permanently reduce the opportunities for participation in sporting activities.
The proposal relates to the erection of a permanent pavilion on the playing field at the above primary school, to provide a multi-use room, toilets, kitchen, store and office. The building will cover a floor area of 125m² and will be sited in the north-west corner of the playing field. An existing mobile classroom, measuring approximately 50m² will be removed following the completion of the proposed pavilion. The primary purpose of the pavilion would appear to be educational in nature (it does not include changing facilities, for example, to serve the playing fields).

The school playing field usually contains a mini-soccer pitch with an approximate size of 48m x 30m. The position of this pitch is not indicated on the submitted plans, but the enclosed extract from Google Earth indicates its position in 2007.

It is clear from this extract that the pitch will need to be re-positioned to allow the pavilion to be sited as indicated on the submitted plan. However, the submitted plans have failed to indicate either (a) the current position of this pitch, or (b) the proposed location of the pitch following the siting of the pavilion.

A further extract from Google Earth dated 2003 indicates two pitches marked out on the site (copy enclosed). Sport England would argue that the siting of this pavilion would make it impossible to site two pitches of comparable sizes on the playing field following the siting of the pavilion.

Consequently, it is not considered that the proposal can be accurately assessed against the above policy.

Sport England are particularly concerned because it is not clear whether a pitch of similar dimensions (48m x 30m) can be satisfactorily sited on the remaining playing field (including minimum safety run-offs of 3metres around the pitch), given the restricted overall size of the playing field and the constraint of the existing play equipment to the south of the proposed pavilion.

At present therefore, Sport England considers that the proposal will have a detrimental impact on the playing field at the above site, including sports pitch provision, and would not meet any of the exceptions identified in the above policy. It is considered that the application fails to demonstrate how the proposal will meet the above policy requirements.

We would urge the applicants to consider alternative locations for the pavilion within this site which would not have the same detrimental impact on playing field provision at this site. For example, the land to the south of the school buildings/hard play area.

Government planning policy (NPPF Para’s. 73-74) and the policies of Sport England have recognised the importance of such activities to the social and economic well-being of the country.
In light of the above, Sport England objects to the proposal because it is not considered to accord with any of the exceptions in Sport England’s playing fields policy.

We would therefore be grateful if the above views can be given full consideration when a decision is made.

Should your Council be minded to grant planning permission for the development contrary to the above recommendation then in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009, and the DCLG letter of 10 March 2011, the application must be referred to the National Planning Casework Unit.

For the avoidance of doubt, and in accordance with Circular 02/09, Sport England is objecting on the following grounds:

(i) that there is a deficiency in the provision of playing fields in the area of the local authority concerned;
(ii) that the proposed development would result in a deficiency in the provision of playing fields in the area of the local authority concerned;

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

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

Yours sincerely,

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