

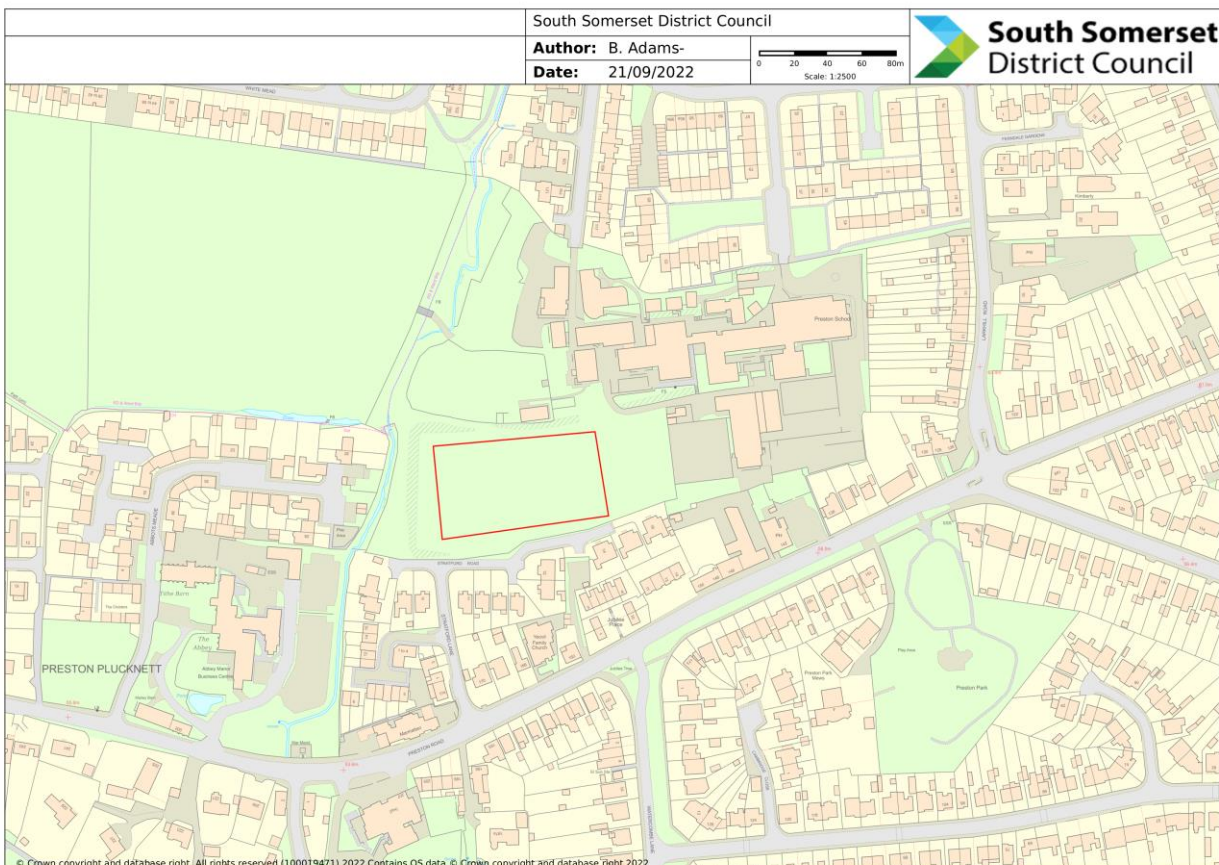
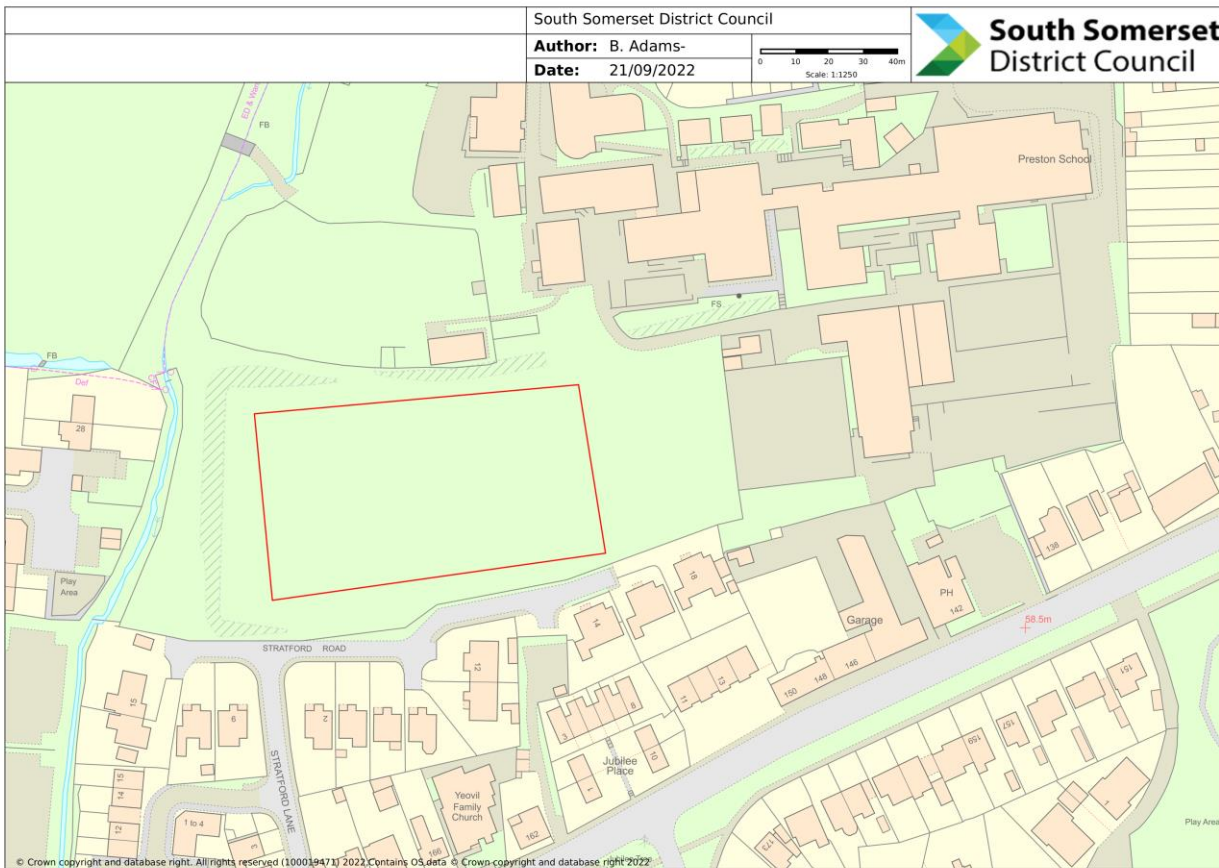
Officer Report On Planning Application: 22/01610/FUL

Proposal :	The construction of a new Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with perimeter fencing.
Site Address:	Preston School A Business And Enterprise Academy , Monks Dale, Yeovil, Somerset, BA21 3JD
Parish:	Yeovil
YEOVIL SUMMERLANDS Ward (SSDC Member)	Cllr J Clark Cllr W Read Cllr P Lock
Recommending Case Officer:	Debbie Redding (Specialist) Tel: 01935 462348 Email: debbie.redding@southsomerset.gov.uk
Target date :	15th August 2022
Applicant :	Preston School Academy
Agent: (no agent if blank)	Notts Sport Ltd Bridge Farm Holt Lane Lutterworth LE17 5NJ United Kingdom
Application Type :	Minor Other less than 1,000 sq.m or 1ha

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

This application is reported to the Committee due to the officer recommendation being contrary to the objection raised by Sport England as a statutory consultee.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL



Preston School is located towards the centre of Yeovil within the development area as defined in the South Somerset Local Plan. The school campus is set within residential development on all sides, with the main vehicle access being off Monks Dale. The school site includes a large area of grass sports pitches to the west of the site and a smaller pitch on the southern boundary adjacent to Stratford Road and Shrewsbury Road. This boundary has a hedgerow and fencing that screens the school from residential properties.

It is the smaller grass pitch that is proposed to be replaced with an Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) which will include the following: -

- o AGP with underlying base construction marked with various pitch layouts;
- o 4.5m mesh fencing to enclose the AGP with associated rubber infill mitigation;
- o Hard standing path to provide access to/from the AGP.

The current grass pitch is used by the school within usual school hours (0900 and 1500) with some after school activities, but at present it is not used by the local community outside of school hours. Inclement weather leaves the grass pitch unusable for periods of the winter months which restricts PE activities at the school. The proposed AGP will allow sports to be played more frequently, regardless of weather conditions.

The AGP will have a long pile 3G surface which is preferable for football but could also be used for rugby training and other sports. The school also aims to include some local community use of the pitch outside of school hours. The hours of use would be limited to reduce any impact on residents and no sports lighting is proposed.

The application is supported by: -

- o Design and Access Statement
- o Ground Investigation Report
- o Drainage Strategy
- o Transport Statement

RECENT HISTORY

18/03716/FUL - The erection of rear extension to existing ASD base building and relocation of external air source heat pumps and enclosure to the front elevation of the building. Permitted with conditions 04/02/2019

18/03037/FUL - Alterations and refurbishment of existing toilets and the erection of a new extension to provide extra toilet facilities. Permitted with conditions 16/11/2018

18/02978/OUT - Outline application for the erection of a hall extension. Permitted with conditions 12/12/2018

17/03654/FUL - The retention of Elliott temporary classroom unit. Permitted with conditions 01/11/2017

13/01477/FUL - The creation of an all-weather sports pitch with fencing and floodlighting, the levelling and re-orientation of existing football pitch using spoil from all-weather pitch excavations and associated works.

Refused 10/09/2013. Appeal dismissed 14/07/2014

POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), and Paragraphs 2, 11, and 12 of the NPPF indicate it is a matter of law that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purposes of determining current applications the local planning authority considers that the adopted development plan comprises the policies of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 (adopted March 2015).

SD1 Sustainable Development
SS1 Settlement Strategy
HW3 Protection of Play Spaces and Youth Provision
TA5 Transport Impact of new Development
TA6 Parking Standards
EQ1 Addressing Climate Change in South Somerset
EQ2 General Development

National Planning Policy Framework 2019

Chapter 2 Achieving Sustainable Development
Chapter 4 Decision Making
Chapter 8 Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities
Chapter 9 Promoting Sustainable Transport
Chapter 14 Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change
Chapter 12 Achieving Well-Designed Places
Chapter 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Planning Policy Guidance

South Somerset Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (April 2017)
Somerset County Council Parking Strategy (March 2012)

REPRESENTATIONS

52 responses have been received.

23 Letters of support include the following: -

- o Fantastic opportunity for school and community giving young people access to high-quality all-weather pitch,
- o Allow students to engage in sport all year round,
- o Long awaited facility,
- o Hugely beneficial - will support wellbeing and fitness,
- o Increasing facilities for the community can only be positive,
- o Will allow a variety of sports throughout the year to the benefit of young people,
- o Schools are noisy and this pitch will not increase noise levels disadvantaging neighbours.

26 Letters of objection raise the following concerns: -

- o Lack of maintenance of fencing allows short cut access to the school site,
- o Noise disturbance - particularly outside school hours, no noise assessment provided,
- o Light pollution especially evenings and weekends,
- o Damage to landscape character,
- o Already have hard surface area at the school and other facilities in the area,
- o Parking not adequate at the school site,
- o Use of access gate in Stratford Road would cause parking problems,
- o Anti-social behaviour and bad language,
- o Balls come over fence already and hit cars,
- o The pitch could not operate in the winter without lighting, an application will be submitted at a later date,
- o Same concerns as previous application and appeal,
- o Grass pitch already available,
- o Not needed in this area,
- o Insufficient space between the pitch and the boundary hedge for pupils during break times, or for maintenance,
- o No provision made for maintenance or storage buildings.

3 letters also make the following comments: -

- o What is the height of the fence,
- o Use outside school hours needs careful managing,
- o Noted that this application does not include lighting but if it did more information would be needed.

CONSULTATIONS

Yeovil Town Council :

INITIAL COMMENT - Support

FOLLOWING SUBMISSION OF AMENDED PLANS OF FENCING AND PITCH MARKINGS

Thank you for consulting Yeovil Town Council in respect of the amendments to the above application. The Details have been circulated to the Ward Members and they are happy with the response from the school and the amendments proposed to the fencing and line marking, which should not affect any properties close by. The concern from Sport England regarding the cost of running the pitch is not a planning concern and it is noted that the school will be liaising with Sport England with regard to this.

Therefore, they support the amended application.

Highway Authority :

Standing advice applies.

SDDC Strategic Planning :

The Leisure service is supportive of the principle of dual use sports facilities as they provide access to sustainable sport and leisure opportunities within local communities. Preston Academies provide important community sports facilities within Yeovil and in general we are keen to support and encourage the improvement of dual use facilities where there is clear community benefit and need.

Loss of Play pitch:

This application will loss existing playing space within the school, which is stated that it is not fit for purpose all year round.

The NPPF states:

Paragraph 99 Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields should not be built on unless:

An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or

1. The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quality in a suitable location or
2. The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.
3. Any loss of pitches will be out weighted by the addition of a new AGP pitch which overall will allow greater use all year round.

The changes to pitch layout would not make the development contrary to the NPPF.

South Somerset District Council HW1 and HW3

Healthier communities and leisure facilities deliver all year round use which is what the AGP is trying to promote - all year round use.

The South Somerset Play Pitch Strategy 2017 -2028 shows that school currently use Yeovil Recreation Centre for AGP for Hockey and that they would like their own AGP.

The main use will be for Football and Rugby, but other sports pitches can be adopted to meet the curriculums needs.

There is no lighting being installed as the usage is for the school during the week and then open to the public at weekends and term times.

I would recommend that no conditions are included to restrict competitions to be played at the facility as this could be valuable for the community sports club.

Sport England :

Sport England - Statutory Role and Policy

It is understood that the proposal prejudices the use, or leads to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field or has been used as a playing field, therefore the consultation with Sport England is a statutory requirement. Sport England has considered the application in light of the National Planning Policy Framework (particularly Para 99) and against its own playing fields policy, which states:

'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:

- o all or any part of a playing field, or
- o land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or
- o land allocated for use as a playing field

unless, in the judgement of Sport England, the development as a whole meets with one or more of five specific exceptions.'

The Proposal and Impact on Playing Field

The 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (3G AGP) located on existing playing field land affecting summer sports uses predominantly including athletics and rounders. A grass hockey pitch is shown in a 2010 Google Earth aerial image. England Hockey raise no objection to the proposal.

The proposed AGP would have limited community use weekends and Bank Holidays. Due to the lack of sports lighting there would be no community use in the weekday evenings. Sports lighting is integral to a number of sports facilities as this will enable them to accommodate higher levels of use and considerably extend the hours of use outside the summer months. This would also generate much needed third party income for ongoing maintenance.

The proposal is clearly a school sports facility meeting a localised educational need. It does not meet a strategic need for the wider community.

The design has issues of non-compliance from a NGB community sport delivery view as highlighted in the Football Foundation (FF) response.

Some sports require a grass surface and once grass is lost the chances of the land ever returning to grass are extremely remote. Artificial surfaces do not necessarily provide a direct replacement for grass pitch use as they only make a limited contribution to competitive grass pitch sports use. They are expensive to provide and require a significant revenue support. It is necessary to allocate significant budgets for on-going maintenance requirements. In addition, a year on year sinking fund is required to ensure facilities are replaced when they are "worn out". We require confirmation that the 3G facility will be satisfactorily maintained and that a sinking fund is established.

In summary, Sport England raise concerns over the 3G AGP proposal as set out.

Football Foundation

The Football Foundation (FF) on behalf of The FA advise that the South Somerset Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) devised in July 2020, suggests that there is a longer term need for a 3G FTP in the Yeovil area (The LFFP being a 10-year delivery plan). The site is identified as a one of two options for a potential project for the South Sub-Area.

However, as the proposed project does not include sports lighting this couldn't be supported via any grant aid (via The Football Foundation), so there is an assumption that this will be self-financed and predominately used for educational use. The information provided suggests that there would be some weekend use for community football, therefore the following should be taken into consideration:

- o A community use agreement (CUA) is agreed with Sport England and Somerset FA in line with the intended usage levels of the facility.
- o The CUA should detail an affordable pricing policy for the local area and should distinguish the difference from training to match play by having a dedicated match play pricing structure broken down for the different match options - i.e., 5v5, 7v7 etc. The match prices should be comparable to grass pitches in order to encourage the use of 3Gs for matches.

The Planning Statement indicates community usage will only be available on Saturday & Sunday (plus bank hols). This will have limited value to the community and grassroots football.

Furthermore, as it is not a full size 3G FTP (100m by 64m) this again limits the value of the facility to the community, particularly for the benefit of adult grassroots football. Pitch markings include 5v5 and 7v7 but no 9v9 marking which would be key for school use. The Football Foundation is not supportive of the proposal in its current form.

More information would be required to review this proposal fully including:

- o Clarity on the pitch marking given that there is no 9v9 markings
- o Will the 3G be on The FA 3G Register? The likely bookings on a Saturday / Sunday would be matches.
- o How is the School proposing to replace the carpet in 10 years' time with limited community use for income to support? The Football Foundation recommend £25K per annum for a full size 3G pitch and this should be index linked.
- o What is the proposed pricing structure proposed for use (training / matches), nothing provided?
- o There is no recessed fencing to allow for safe and easy goal storage which the FF would recommend.
- o Nor is there a spectator area; a dedicated hard standing area for spectators should be provided within the perimeter fence. A 1.1m high spectator barrier should be installed to ensure that spectators can view the 3G playing area from this hard standing area which is separate from the 3G area.
- o With regards to fence height, the FA recommend the perimeter fence height on all sides of the 3G AGP is 4.5m. The fencing appears to be 3 metres rather than the standard 4.5 metres. What is the rationale for this?

Conclusion

Given the above, Sport England objects to the application because it is not considered to accord with any of the exceptions to our Playing Fields Policy, in particular exception 5 (E5). or paragraph 99 of the NPPF. We would welcome further information from the applicant that might address concerns in this response.

Should the local planning authority be minded to grant planning permission for the proposal, contrary to Sport England's objection then in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2021, the application should be referred to the Secretary of State, via the Planning Casework Unit.

CONSIDERATIONS

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The existing grass playing field has been used by the school for outdoor sports for many years and the benefit of an artificial grass pitch (AGP) is noted in that it would allow increased use during inclement weather during the winter months. No change of use of the site is proposed.

However, the loss of the existing grass pitch without satisfactory community benefit has raised objection from Sport England as seen in their comments above. The artificial pitch would be detrimental to some summer sports use and without the benefit of sports lighting evening use in the winter months is limited. Sport England comment that community use is necessary to provide funding for future maintenance without which the long-term retention of the pitch may not be guaranteed. However, Sport England has stated exceptions in their policy guidance of which the following is relevant to this application:-

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.

In this case whilst a full-size pitch with sport lighting is acknowledged as being required in the area to meet community need, at this school site such provision could have other adverse impacts. Although this part of the school site is not big enough to accommodate a full size pitch the larger playing fields to the west of the site include an 11-a-side pitch and two 9-a-side pitches and provision for athletics, cricket and rounders in the summer. The pitch as proposed would be of benefit to the school and would have some limited community use and it would retain the use of the land for sport. Although the existing grass pitch would be lost, this proposal as submitted can be considered as an exception to Sport England's policy guidance.

The NPPF also seeks to protect open space, sports and recreational land and states that it should not be developed unless the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use. As above a similar exception could be made as the proposal would result in some benefit albeit not the full benefit of a full-sized pitch with sport lighting available for intensive community use.

SCALE AND DESIGN

The visual impact of the proposed pitch is screened from neighbouring residential properties by existing hedging and the proposed mesh fencing is powder coated green and as such is similar to other fencing on the school site. The surface of the pitch itself has a similar appearance to natural grass although has a variety of coloured line markings. Therefore, the visual impact would be acceptable.

During the progress of the application amended plans have been submitted to show additional line markings and increased height of the fencing in response to comments made by Sport England/Football Foundation. The line marking now includes match pitches for U13/U14 - 11 v 11, U11/U12 - 9 v 9, U9/U10 - 7 v 7 and four U7/U8 - 5 v 5: plus 4 small training pitches. Although desirable to serve the local community there is insufficient space for a full-size pitch within this part of the school site. The fence height is now 4.5m and a spectator area included.

These details address the concerns raised by Sport England and the Football Foundation and would provide acceptable sporting facilities.

HIGHWAYS ACCESS AND PARKING

This application is supported by a Transport Statement and as was the case at the time of the previous application for artificial sports pitch no highway issues are raised with regard to the existing access arrangements to the site which are not proposed to be altered.

The previous refusal included a reason regarding inadequate parking on the school site at peak times of regular evening events. The proposed hours of use for this application are unlikely to cause such problems and any major events should be controlled and managed by the school. It is also noted that the sports centre at the school is not currently open to the public. A car parking survey submitted shows that 90 spaces are available on site and that whilst these are well used during the day this use drop noticeably outside school hours and therefore adequate

parking spaces would be available if required in the evenings and at weekends. The school also has numberplate recognition and a programmable security gate which would allow access to be controlled outside school hours

Cycle parking is available on the site, there are good pedestrian links and bus stops close to the site, as such the site is accessible using alternative more sustainable modes of transport other than private vehicles.

A construction traffic management plan could be conditioned to provide management and control over construction traffic access to the site and measures to reduce the impact on the surrounding highway network and neighbouring properties. The existing School Travel Plan should also be updated to take account of the use of the AGP.

Overall, the findings of the transport statement are accepted and there are no objections to the proposal on highway safety grounds.

RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

Representations from neighbours raise concern regarding noise disturbance and light pollution and in particular make reference to the previous refused application. This application is however in a different location which does not back onto neighbours' gardens as was the case previously with residential properties distanced from the pitch by a road and screened by hedging. The proposed AGP is smaller which prevents use for an adult pitch, does not include lighting and the hours of use are limited. On weekdays use would be by the school until 6pm as is the case with the existing sports pitch. Community use would be at weekends 9am - 6pm on Saturdays and 9am - 4pm on Sundays and bank holidays.

The hours of use can be controlled by condition and as such the development would not lead to unacceptable noise levels and as no lighting is proposed no light pollution would result. Any future proposal would need to be considered on its merits at that time.

DRAINAGE

The site is not in an area of flood risk nor in a groundwater protection zone. No sewers cross the site and initial trial pits have shown the site viable for soakaways. It is noted that the existing grass pitch is not formally drained.

The drainage strategy submitted identifies the need for attenuation storage to ensure greenfield runoff rates are not exceeded and that flood risk elsewhere is not increased.

This is generally acceptable and full details can be required by condition.

CONCLUSION

The proposed artificial grass pitch would meet overall planning aims to enable and support healthy lifestyles, including sports facilities. Planning policy also seeks to protect sports fields but as an exception does allow development that is for alternative sports provision. In this case although the existing grass pitch will be lost, the proposed artificial grass pitch will provide enhanced facilities for the school and some limited community use.

Concerns over funding and future maintenance are also raised, but the school has responded

to say that funds are available for construction and will be put aside for future maintenance.

The objection from Sport England is noted, and as a statutory consultee this must be given considerable weight and only departed from for good reason. It is also acknowledged that a full-sized artificial pitch with sports lighting and greater community use is needed in the Yeovil area. However, it is not considered that this is achievable at this site and the benefits of the pitch as proposed are acceptable to make an exception against Sport England's objection.

The siting, scale and appearance of the proposed artificial grass sports pitch is acceptable in that it would be appropriate within the existing school grounds, would respect the character of the area and would no cause demonstrable harm to residential amenity. This is subject to restriction on the hours of use and that no sports lighting is provided. The proposal would be of benefit to the school in providing a sports pitch able to be used in all weathers and would provide some use for the benefit of the community.

The proposal is therefore in accordance with national and local planning policy including the aims and objectives of Policies HW3, EQ2, TA5 and TA6 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-28) and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

RECOMMENDATION

In accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2021, this application should be referred to the Secretary of State, via the Planning Casework Unit, with the Local Planning Authority recommendation that planning permission is granted subject to appropriate conditions.

01. The siting, scale and appearance of the proposed artificial grass sports pitch is acceptable in that it would be appropriate within the existing school grounds, would respects the character of the area and would no cause demonstrable harm to residential amenity. This is subject to restriction on the hours of use and that no sports lighting is provided. The proposal would be of benefit to the school in providing a sports pitch able to be used in all weathers and would provide some use for the benefit of the community.

The proposal is therefore in accordance with national and local planning policy including the aims and objectives of Policies HW3, EQ2, TA5 and TA6 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-28) and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:

01. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

02. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans reference:
Location Plan NSPSA001

Fencing Plan - NSPSA004 Rev E
Line Marking Plan - NSPSA005 Rev C
Cross Section NSPSA007 Rev C

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests .

03. The Artificial Grass Pitch hereby approved shall not be used except between the hours of :-
09:00 and 18:00 hours Mondays to Fridays;
09:00 and 18:00 hours Saturdays; and
09:00 and 16:00 Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Reason: To minimise any potential nuisance and disturbance to neighbours and the surrounding area.

04. No sports lighting or other external lighting shall be installed at the Artificial Grass Pitch hereby approved without the prior written agreement of the Local Planning Authority and planning permission if required.

Reason: To minimise any potential nuisance and disturbance to neighbours and the surrounding area.

05. Prior to the Artificial Grass Pitch hereby permitted first coming into use a Community Use Agreement shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and shall be implemented as approved thereafter.

Reason: To ensure to provision of satisfactory benefit to the community

06. Prior to the Artificial Grass Pitch hereby permitted first coming into use a Community Use Agreement shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and shall be implemented as approved thereafter.

Reason: To ensure to provision of satisfactory benefit to the community.

07. Prior to commencement of development hereby approved a Construction Traffic Management Plan and programme of works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall include construction vehicle details (number, size, type and frequency of movement), vehicular routes, delivery hours and contractors' arrangements (compound, storage, parking, turning, surfacing, drainage and wheel wash facilities). The development shall thereafter be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved Construction Traffic Management Plan.

Reason: In the interests of road safety and the amenity of nearby residents.

08. Prior to the Artificial Grass Pitch hereby permitted first coming into use a revised School Travel Plan to include reference to the Artificial Grass Pitch hereby approved shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The School Travel Plan shall be implemented as approved thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of road safety and the amenity of nearby residents, and to promote sustainable transport.

09. Prior to the commencement of development details of surface water drainage schemes for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented prior to the completion of the development.

Reason: To ensure adequate facilities are provided in the interests of flooding and pollution.