

# Playing Fields Policy and Guidance - Summary of Changes

This document provides a summary of the changes between Sport England's previous 'Planning Policy Statement: A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England' and its current 'Playing Fields Policy and Guidance' document.

## Summary of Changes:

1. Some text amendments have been made to the wording of the policy and five exceptions (tracked changed versions highlighting the amendments are provided below).
2. All previous website guidance supporting the previous document, including responses to frequently asked questions, has been brought together into the current document.
3. The format of the current document has moved to a question and answer style in line with Government's Planning Practice Guidance.
4. Definitions for several key terms used in the policy and exceptions, along with Sport England's interpretation of them have been added. These include 'a delineated area', 'prejudice the use', 'land which has been used as a playing field' and 'management arrangements'.
5. Detail has been added on the protection afforded to playing fields by Government planning policy, guidance and strategies.
6. Text has been added to indicate how Sport England's playing fields policy relates to Government planning policy on the protection of playing fields within the National Planning Policy Framework.
7. Text has been added to highlight Sport England's wider work with the planning system and the role of the playing fields policy in supporting its planning aim and objectives.
8. Additional detail has been provided on consulting Sport England, including highlighting the importance of early engagement and the information Sport England recommends is provided to enable it to adequately assess an application.
9. Additional information is provided on the detail required to ensure adequate replacement playing field land will be provided under Exception 4 e.g. on the quality, deliverability and management of the proposed replacement provision.
10. Text has been added to clarify and highlight key messages, including:
  - a. that Sport England applies the policy to all playing field land regardless of current levels of use and ownership type;
  - b. the weight that should be afforded to Sport England's comments;
  - c. that assessments prepared for the purposes of gaining the consent of the Secretary of State for Education for the disposal or change of use of school playing field land do not provide adequate assessments to meet Exception 1;
  - d. that replacement provision required to meet with Exception 4 does not include intensifying the use of existing playing fields;
  - e. that Exception 4 allows for the replacement of a natural grass pitch with an artificial grass pitch.
  - f. that enabling development does not meet with Exception 5 i.e. to raise capital to fund new sports facilities on another part of the site.

## Tracked changes to the policy and exceptions text

### Policy

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 which has been last used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, in an adopted or
- land allocated for use as a playing field ~~draft deposit local plan,~~

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

### Exception 1

A robust and up to date carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of Sport England, that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment, which will remain the case should the development be permitted, and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.

### Exception 2

The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting ~~to~~ the principal use of the site as a playing field ~~or playing fields~~, and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or adversely affect their use.

### Exception 3

The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, ~~or forming~~ part of, a playing pitch, and does not:

- reduce the size of any playing pitch;
- result in the ~~loss of or~~ inability to make use of any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
- ~~a reduce~~ tion in the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate size of the playing areas of any playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
- result in ~~or~~ the loss of any other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; ~~or;~~
- prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.

### Exception 4

The area of playing field ~~or playing fields, which would to~~ be lost as a result of the proposed development will ~~would~~ be replaced, prior to the commencement of development, by a new area of playing field or playing fields:

- ~~of an~~ equivalent or better quality, and
- of equivalent or greater quantity, and
- in a suitable location, and
- subject to equivalent or better accessibility and management arrangements, ~~prior to the commencement of development.~~

### Exception 5

The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor ~~sports~~ 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 ~~or playing fields~~.