

WD/2021/0594/MEA: Hindsland Application: Danescroft (FREOF V Willingdon) LLP:

OUTLINE APPLICATION WITH ALL MATTERS RESERVED EXCEPT FOR ACCESS (EXCLUDING INTERNAL ESTATE ROADS BEYOND THE ACCESS TO SERVE THE MEDICAL CENTRE PLOT) FOR DEMOLITION OF EXISTING VACANT DWELLING AND ERECTION OF UP TO 180 NO. DWELLINGS AND MEDICAL CENTRE TOGETHER WITH ALL PARKING, SERVICING AND ON-SITE OPEN SPACE.

Sports Planning

There is a previous private playing field use with 4.62ha of useable playing field area. The last use as a playing field was in the 2001/02 season.

Sport England agree that, as it is over 5 years since it was last used as a playing field, they are non-statutory consultees. Sport England objects to the application on the basis of its policies and NPPF 97, as this Hindsland application makes no on-site re-provision for the replacement of the former playing fields that would be lost as a result of the proposed development. Sport England states that *"In making our representation we recognise that the application site was previously part of a larger application site ... and a recent application for the remaining part of the larger area (Morning Mill Farm, WD/2021/0174/MEA) makes provision ... for new playing fields that might if the sites were still linked, be considered to meet exception E4 of our policy. However as the sites are now separated we have not been able to take that provision into account in assessing this proposal"*.

The Inspector at the previous Mornings Mill Farm Appeal (APP/C1435/193230484) found no fault in the levels of provision of open space (including pitches).

The submitted but not determined Mornings Mill Farm application (WD/2021/0174/MEA) continues to plan for 4.6ha of playing pitches, so it may be considered that, subject to this application delivering the pitches, Sport England's Exceptions Policy and NPPF 97 would effectively both be met.

The relevant evidence base for the consideration of this application (WD/2021/0594/MEA) is the Wealden Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment (2018) which addressed the balance in supply and demand for pitch sports up to 2028 and identified the priorities for investment. This report was produced with the direct involvement of Sport England, Wealden DC and the sports pitch national governing bodies. It was formally signed off by each of the parties.

The Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment noted that the Hindlands site was disused but not developed. It was explicitly excluded from the 'supply' of pitches considered to be available for community use (para 5.6, page 31). The table on page 82 of the report summarises the balance in supply and demand for football up to 2028 for the Polegate, Willingdon and Jevington sub area. The conclusion is that the existing facilities are coping with the current demand, but by 2028 the following additional pitches will be required: 0.5 adult pitch, 0.3 youth pitch, 0.1 mini pitch. The recommendation (p82) was that this new provision *"should be collocated on a large sportspark type venue"*.

All of the new sub-area football demand can be met by the proposed pitches at the Mornings Mill Farm site at 4.6 ha. There is additionally the consented playing field space of 2.5 ha at Brodericksland together with a pavilion. These schemes together have the potential to become the "sportspark", meeting the 2018 report recommendations.

In relation to cricket provision up to 2028, the table on page 118 of the Wealden Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment (2018) for the Polegate, Willington and Jevington sub area states:

The potential increase in the demand for pitches resulting from population changes is likely to be absorbed by the existing stock of cricket facilities (Huggetts Lane, Jevington Recreation Ground, Polegate War Memorial Ground), although the increase in demand would aggravate already heavy use at Huggetts Lane and Polegate War Memorial grounds, and justify some qualitative improvements to existing provision.

The investment priorities for cricket are therefore into the existing sites.

Investment proposals for rugby and hockey in the 2018 report is recommended into the existing sites used by clubs.

Wealden Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment (2018) gives no recommendations or actions for the Hindsland site, and there is no justification for its retention in relation to sporting needs according to the adopted relevant strategy.

Policy WCS13 Green Infrastructure states:

.....Development proposals will not be permitted which would result in the loss of existing open space unless alternative and suitable provision is made that is accessible, of good quality and value to its users, in an appropriate location, at an appropriate scale and nature and would positively contribute to the overall network of green space. All new residential development will be required to contribute to the green infrastructure network and where appropriate to make provision for new or enhancement of existing open space. Where the scale of development would be too small to make on-site provision, as is the case here, the Council will seek developer contributions either towards the improvement of existing open spaces or towards the provision of open space elsewhere.

To best meet Policy WCS13, it is therefore proposed that a s106 agreement includes the provision of off-site contributions to either the new pitches and ancillary facilities at Mornings Mill Farm/Brodericksland which can be used to help deliver the envisaged sports park, or to other priority sites as identified in the Wealden Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment (2018). These contributions will be calculated using Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator based on up to 180 dwellings proposed.

In summary, the former playing fields at Hindsland which have not been used for almost 20 years, may be replaced within the Mornings Mill Farm application (WD/2021/0174/MEA), and some new playing field space is also already consented at Brodericksland. It is noted that the Hindsland application is also providing the land, that otherwise might be planned for housing, for the medical centre. It is considered that, in the planning balance, the provision of an off-site contribution to sport in line with the Wealden Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment (2018), the provision of land for the medical centre, and the significant provision of housing, including affordable housing, outweigh any detriment due to the on-site loss of former playing fields that were last used about 20 years ago.