

Education Funding Agency  
33 Greycoat Street  
London  
SW1P 2QF

04 September 2014

Our Ref: NW/OD/2014/37210/

Dear Mr Buchanan,

**Re: Pre-Application Advice**  
**App Ref: Option A (L9-)006 Rev P1**  
**Site: SADDLEWORTH SCHOOL, High Street, Oldham, OL3 6BU OL3 6BU**  
**Proposal: Replacement school redeveloping the existing site**

### Summary

Based on the text description the scheme has potential to meet exception E3 of our playing field policy. Conditions would be needed to ensure continuity of sporting use during the construction period is maintained and possibly requiring reinstatement of sport facilities. The drawing describing Option A, however, does not show that E3 is met.

### Full Response

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.

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. Government planning policy and the policies of Sport England have recognised the importance of such activities to the social and economic well-being of the country.

The scheme described as Option A proposes to rebuild the school on the existing site in Uppermill. The existing school site includes a range of external and internal sports facilities including:

- Sand based, floodlit artificial grass pitch (AGP)
- Grass football pitch
- Two number netball courts / MUGAs
- 4-court sports hall

The external sports facilities are arranged along the eastern edge of the site. Aerial photographs show the artificial grass pitch having markings for football and rounders. The pitch is available for community use both during and outside of term time (weekday evenings and weekends). The sports hall is also available for community use inside and outside of term time (weekday evenings and Saturday morning).

Option A shows that the existing external sports facilities would be unaffected by the proposed new buildings. However, on closer inspection there do appear to be some differences between the existing layout drawing L(9-)003 Rev P1 and the Option A drawing L(9-)006 Rev P1. For example, on Option A the northern MUGA appears closer to the grass football pitch, there is less land to the north of the grass football pitch, two trees overhang the north east corner of the pitch, trees along the western edge of the pitch overlap the playing area etc.

Banking is also shown south of the grass football pitch which appears to extend up to the goal line of the pitch. The runoffs surrounding a football pitch need to be level with the pitch.

In terms of internal sports facilities, the existing sports hall would be retained and a new changing block and activity studio erected alongside it.

Based on the text description (ie that existing external sports facilities are retained) then the scheme would appear to meet the requirements of E3 of our playing field policy which states that:

**The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any playing pitch (including the maintenance of**

**adequate safety margins), a reduction in the size of the playing areas of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting/ancillary facilities on the site.**

However, the Option A drawing does not demonstrate E3 would be met as the grass pitch would not be fit for purpose due to banking, overhanging trees etc. I suspect these are indicative or the result of drafting inconsistencies, but it is necessary to point this out.

Assuming the external sports facilities would be retained as they are at present, there would be the need for planning conditions. These would seek to ensure that any temporary classrooms, storage compounds etc. were not located on pitches, MUGAs etc, or if they were then reinstatement would be needed following completion of the works. In the case of grass pitches, the works would need to be informed by a scheme prepared by a sports turf specialist to ensure that the reinstated playing field would be of equivalent quality to what is there at present.

A condition would also be needed requiring a scheme to be submitted to ensure continuity of sporting use during the works period (ie showing what off site facilities would be used to meet the sporting needs).

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

Yours sincerely

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**Planning Manager**

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