

Planning And Regulation

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Naomi Reynard
Senior Planning Officer
North Herts District Council

Your ref 24/02889/FP
Our ref 25/00019/CONSUL
Contact Rebecca Elliott
Email rebecca.elliott@stevenage.gov.uk

Date 9 May 2025

By email

Dear Naomi,

Application No	24/02889/FP
Proposal	Residential development of 281 dwellings and associated roads, parking, realignment of Back Lane, drainage, landscaping, open space, servicing facilities and associated works.
Location	Land At Roundwood, Back Lane, Graveley, Hertfordshire

I refer to your consultation request dated 10 January 2025 with regards to the above development proposal on land bordering the Borough of Stevenage. This letter is specifically in response to the request of S106 contributions for services within the area of Stevenage Borough Council. Comments relating specifically to the residential proposal will be provided separately.

On behalf of the Council, please see below our comments in relation to s.106 obligations for the above referenced development. These are largely unchanged from the representation made by my colleague James Chettleburgh on 18 July 2024, save for the number of dwellings being proposed having been reduced to 281, instead of 292.

Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities

The evidence base and policy context with regards to sporting facilities are as follows:

- The adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011-2031).
- The North Hertfordshire Developer Contributions SPD (2023).
- North Hertfordshire District Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (2018).
- The adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2011-2031).
- The Stevenage Borough Council Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2012).
- The Stevenage Borough Council Developer Contributions SPD (2021).

The proposed development does not comprise of any dedicated on-site provision for indoor or outdoor sport facility. In addition, the applicants Planning Statement sets out that outdoor sport would be dealt with via an off-site financial contribution.

Following a review of North Herts Council Developer Contribution SPD, it recommends Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator and Facility Calculator should be used for identifying the relevant demands for indoor and outdoor sport. Consideration is also given to North Herts Council Playing Pitch Strategy which is applied to the Playing Pitch Calculator.

It has been identified by Sport England that the estimated population of the development would be 674 persons, at an average of 2.4 persons per dwelling. Looking firstly at outdoor sport, the output data identifies the relevant demand for adult & youth football pitches, mini soccer pitches, rugby union & league pitches, cricket pitches, artificial sand-based grass pitches (hockey) and artificial 3G grass pitches (football). The calculation also identifies the estimated total demand for changing room provision which is required to support the use of pitch demand for each relevant sport. A detailed review of Sport England's own calculations identifies that there is not sufficient demand to be able to justify on-site provision for an entire pitch. We consider these assumptions to be reasonable and therefore, residents of this development are likely to use existing facilities within Stevenage.

Taking into consideration of the above, Stevenage Borough Council as Local Planning Authority has been co-ordinating with Sport England and the Council's Leisure and Sports teams to identify how financial contributions secured from this development could be best used to mitigate its impact on indoor and outdoor sports facilities.

Outdoor Sports

Following detailed discussions with Sport England, they have advised that the overall capital cost of meeting the demand of the development with regards to playing pitches would be **£199,077** while the total capital costs for changing rooms would be **£291,323**. The financial obligations as identified by Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator are set out in detail more below:

Improvement to St. Nicholas Park, Hampson Park and Canterbury Park pitches

Stevenage Borough Council would remain committed to utilising the financial obligations of **£71,217** (Adult football - £22,393, Youth Football - £39,189 and Mini Soccer - £9,635) towards improving the quality and playability of the football pitches with the provision of improved standards of maintenance of these pitches. (These costings are based on July 2024. Unfortunately, up to date costs were not available at the time of drafting this response).

Improvements to Hockey pitches and changing room facilities.

The Nobel School, Mobbsbury Way, Stevenage now provides the only hockey pitch in Stevenage and where Stevenage Hockey Club play matches. Therefore, and based on the information from Sport England who also work with England Hockey, a financial contribution of **£22,267** would be ringfenced towards the costs of replacing the artificial carpet when it reaches the end of its lifespan as the school are not able to fund this and the facility will not be capable of meeting current or future needs.

In regard to Changing Room facilities, a financial contribution of **£9,249** would go towards the ongoing maintenance of the existing facilities at Nobel School.

Improvements to Cricket pitches and changing room facilities

The adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2011 – 2031) under Policy HO2 specifically requires land to accommodate a new cricket facility as part of the West Stevenage residential development. The evidence base for this requirement is set out in Stevenage Borough Council's Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (2015). A copy of the Sports Facility Assessment can be found in the link below:

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/evidential-studies/community-facilities/sports-facility-assessment-and-strategy-summary.pdf>

In addition to the above, a Cricket Assessment was also undertaken in 2021 by Nortoft Planning to inform the West of Stevenage cricket requirements which identified a need to provide an artificial wicket (non-turf pitch). In addition, this assessment identified the need to improve the practice nets and improve the clubhouse at Stevenage Cricket Club. A copy of

the Cricket Assessment can be found on the Council's Public Access for Planning Applications (Planning Reference: 21/00356/FPM) on the link below:

<https://publicaccess.stevenage.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=QR6P75PH09R00>

The Council would therefore recommend the financial contribution of **£28,865** as a proportionate financial contribution which would go towards the delivery of an artificial wicket at West Stevenage as well as the improvement of the practice nets at Stevenage Cricket Club. With regards to the financial contribution of **£32,931** for changing room facilities, this would go towards improving the relevant changing room facilities at Stevenage Cricket Club.

Improvements to the Rugby Pitches and changing room facilities.

A financial contribution of **£18,766** (Rugby Union - £17,200 & Rugby League - £1,566) would go towards the maintenance and improvements of the existing rugby pitches located at the existing Stevenage Town Rugby Football Club (RFC) on North Road or equivalent Club grounds should they relocate from their existing premises. This is because Stevenage Town Rugby Football Club (RFC) is the only dedicated facility for Rugby in the town.

In addition to the above, a financial contribution of **£45,204** (Rugby Union - £40,976 & Rugby League - £4,228) would go towards the improvement of the changing room facilities located at the existing Stevenage Town Rugby Football Club (RFC) on North Road or equivalent Club grounds should they relocate from their existing premises.

PlayZones

Towards the delivery of up to 4 PlayZones comprising the construction of 3G pitches to potentially located at Hampson Park, King George V Playing Fields, Shephalbury Park and St. Nicholas Park.

Up to date costs have not been calculated at present, but based on the LPA's comments from July 2024 the costs range from £235,000 to refurbish pitches and to construct new pitches is £275,000 as advised by the Football Foundation. Based on initial costings for 3 PlayZone projects (1 refurbishment and 2 new builds*), the total construction costs would be approximately £785,000.00 of which the Council will be required to fund 25%. This equates to £196,250.00. Based on quotes from 2024, The Football Foundation Grant Value will be in the region of £588,750.00 or 75% of the total cost.

The Council has secured £102,000.00 of S.106 funding to date towards the delivery of these PlayZone projects. However, this leaves a financial shortfall of **£94,250.00**. As such, the Council would seek a financial contribution of **£57,962** (3G pitch capital cost) towards the delivery of these PlayZones.

We note the calculated cost of Outdoor Tennis Courts at **£10,266** based on Sport England's response. There are no planned works for tennis facilities in Stevenage at this time to attach this to.

* The Council is looking at the provision of up to 4 PlayZones following the request of Councillors. This could increase the overall build costs / additional funding the Council would need to secure in order to deliver these projects.

Changing Rooms – Football and 3G

The Council is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of its existing pavilion / changing room facilities for the geographical area of Stevenage. This review includes a proposed refurbishment and upgrade of existing changing room facilities which would include Ridlins, King George V Playing Fields and Shephalbury Park. Therefore, A financial contribution of **£183,960** (Adult Football - £82,446 & Youth Football £101,514) would go towards refurbishment and upgrading of these existing changing room facilities.

In addition, a financial contribution of **£19,978** would also go towards changing rooms at Ridlins which includes a 3G pitch as well as, but not limited to King George V Playing Fields (new PlayZone), St. Nicholas Park (new PlayZone) and Shephalbury Park (new PlayZone).

Indoor Sport

With regards to the Sports Facility Calculator (SFC), this indicates that the development would generate a demand of 0.04 sports halls (**£132,152**) and 0.03 swimming pools (**£159,805**). Stevenage Borough Council considers the financial obligations would go towards the delivery of a new wet and dry leisure facility which would be located within Stevenage Town Centre as defined by Policy TC7: Marshgate Major Opportunity Area of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2011-2031). A link to the Local Plan is set out below:

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/stevenage-borough-local-plan/stevenage-borough-local-plan.pdf>.

With regards to the cost of delivering the new wet and dry leisure facility, the estimated costs as outlined in the Council's IDP (2022) is £40m. For reference, a copy of the IDP can be viewed in the link below:

[Infrastructure Delivery Plan - September 2024](#)

CIL receipts are not expected to be large enough to fully fund any significant infrastructure projects, and so the Council will use its CIL receipts to “top up” the funding gaps for individual projects (which includes the new wet and dry facility) once S.106 contributions and other funding streams have been secured. This is set out in further detail in the Council's IFS Statement issued in December 2024:

[Infrastructure Funding Statement - December 2024](#)

Given the above, the Council has also been seeking S.106 financial contributions in order to help fund the delivery of a new wet and dry facility. To date, the total money retained at the end of reported year regarding S.106 obligations from various developments is set out as follows (See IFS December 2024):

Infrastructure	Remaining
Children's Playspace, Outdoor Sports Facilities / Open Space	£113,379.63
Biodiversity Net Gain	£89,459.42
Gardening Club/Replacement Trees	£8,075.63
Parking/Car Club Contribution	£35,811.44
Transport/Miscellaneous	£34,519.01
Public Transport Improvement Contribution	£74,617.77
Employment Programmes	£16,250.00
Monitoring	£21,452.50
NHS GP Surgeries	£73,291.22

The new Leisure Hub (wet and dry facility) will be funded by a mixture of CIL, S.106 financial obligations and other sources of funding secured by the Council (E.g. Towns Fund and borrowing). The Council has a project for the Sports and Leisure Centre which it is looking to bring forward for planning permission post elections and potentially look to start delivery from January 2026. However, the Council is seeking to secure obligations where it can in order to close any shortfalls in overall funding with the project. A planning application for this facility is due around June 2025, with works hoped to start by Jan 2026.

Further information can be seen at [Sports & Leisure Centre - Stevenage Even Better : Stevenage Even Better](#).

Furthermore, in respect of the Leisure Hub, it is not proposal to re-locate the Bowls Club into the Leisure Centre and so the calculated **£5,411** stated in Sport England's response is not currently a sum that can be allocated to a current scheme in Stevenage.

Justification under Regulation 122

In respect of Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended in 2019), the planning obligations sought from this proposal are:

(i) Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

The proposal is a full application for a residential development of 292 dwellings. It is estimated that the population generated by the development would be up to 701 based on a typical dwelling occupancy ratio of 2.4 persons per dwelling. This additional population will generate additional demand for sports facilities. If this demand is not adequately met then it will place additional pressure on existing sports facilities, thereby exacerbating existing deficiencies in facility provision.

As no facilities are provided on-site relating to indoor and outdoor sporting facilities, the development will likely place additional pressures on existing indoor and outdoor sporting facilities within Stevenage rather than the North Hertfordshire settlements. This is down to the functional relationship between the development site and the existing urban area of Stevenage along with a lack of investment opportunities within North Hertfordshire.

Therefore, the financial obligations would help to mitigate the developments impact on the indoor and outdoor sporting facilities which are located within the urban area of Stevenage. By securing these obligations, it would make the development acceptable in planning terms.

(ii) Directly related to the development.

The occupiers of the residential development will place an additional impact upon existing and future indoor and outdoor sport facilities within Stevenage. The financial contributions which would be sought are to go towards the relevant sporting facilities based on the size, type and tenure of the individual dwellings of this development. The contributions would go towards the relevant services and facilities serving the locality of the proposed development and therefore, directly benefit future occupiers of the development.

(iii) Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

The financial contributions have been calculated according to the size, type and tenure of each individual dwelling unit which form part of the proposed development.

If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me. Alternatively, Roy Warren at Sport England has also advised he would be happy to assist yourselves with any queries you may have as well.

Yours sincerely,

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Rebecca Elliott

Team Leader – Development Management

For and on behalf of the Assistant Director, Planning & Regulation