

Sport recreation and Section 106 mitigation

Pirton Sports and Social Club (PSSC) objects to the application (Gladman) in its present form because it does not clearly identify, justify or secure the sport and recreation provision necessary to mitigate the additional demand generated by up to 130 dwellings.

The applicant's Playing Pitch Calculator identifies additional demand for football, cricket and associated changing provision. The application also identifies an off-site requirement for equipped play. However, the proposed Heads of Terms refer only generally to "offsite sports provision". They do not identify:

- the facilities or projects to be provided;
- where they would be located;
- whether provision would take the form of land, works or financial contributions;
- the value and purpose of each contribution;
- the organisations responsible for delivery;
- the delivery and payment triggers;
- arrangements for public access, ownership, management and maintenance; or
- how the proposals relate to the needs and priorities identified in NHDC's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy.

The reference to off-site sports provision also appears to assume that the development's needs will be met elsewhere, without any submitted assessment explaining who determined this approach, what alternatives were considered or why provision within the application site was discounted.

This is particularly concerning because the nearest established facility, Pirton Recreation Ground, is already physically constrained. It contains four physical football pitches, with a fifth youth pitch overmarked on the principal adult pitch, alongside cricket and other recreation uses. NHDC's own evidence identifies the adult football pitch and cricket square as overplayed and assigns the site's football and cricket actions a high priority. There is no available space within the Recreation Ground for another properly configured full-size football pitch without displacing or conflicting with existing uses.

An undefined off-site contribution would not, by itself, provide the additional land or capacity needed to accommodate the development's impact. Nor should the existing Recreation Ground simply be expected to absorb further demand through more intensive use of pitches that are already constrained and overplayed.

In contrast, the application site appears to provide the last realistic opportunity to secure additional recreation land close to the existing Recreation Ground and Pavilion. The PSSC with the support of the Parish Council considers that the development should safeguard sufficient suitable land for an additional full-size floodlit grass football pitch, with appropriate drainage, safety margins, supporting infrastructure, parking and access. A safe connection should be provided to the existing Pavilion, which already contains modern changing rooms and toilets. The land and supporting infrastructure should also be planned so that a future upgrade to an appropriate artificial surface is not unnecessarily precluded.

The application does not demonstrate that this opportunity has been properly assessed. If the proposed housing, drainage, landscaping and open-space parameters are approved without safeguarding the necessary land, the opportunity may be permanently lost. We therefore consider it premature to approve the application or finalise its planning obligations while the form and location of the required sports mitigation remain unresolved.

The PSSC has prepared the **Pirton Recreation Ground and Pavilion Sport and Leisure Investment Strategy**, submitted alongside this representation and available as a separate submission titled "Pirton Recreation Ground and Pavilion Sport and Leisure Investment Strategy". The strategy:

- documents the existing use and capacity constraints at the Recreation Ground and Pavilion;
- assesses the additional demands and opportunities arising from this application and application 25/02064/OP;
- identifies a prioritised programme of football, cricket, play, multi-sport, parking, access and community-recreation projects;
- distinguishes between provision sought within the development and proportionate improvements to existing facilities;
- explains how the projects would create additional usable capacity; and
- sets out the further feasibility, design, costing and apportionment work required before individual obligations are finalised.

The strategy is not a request for development to remedy every existing deficiency. Each obligation must remain necessary, directly related to the relevant development and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind. It does, however, demonstrate that there is a credible local programme against which the development's calculated requirements should be assessed before contributions are allocated elsewhere.

The PSSC requests that, before the application is determined or the Section 106 agreement is completed, NHDC should:

1. require the applicant to provide a clear and consolidated schedule of all proposed sport, play and recreation obligations;
2. explain the evidential basis for treating the sports requirement as off site, including who proposed or accepted that approach and why on-site provision has not been identified;
3. undertake, or require the applicant to undertake, a feasibility and options assessment for securing recreation land and delivering a full-size floodlit grass football pitch within the development;
4. safeguard sufficient land, access, parking, drainage, services and connections through the outline parameters and subsequent reserved-matters process;
5. assess the local projects identified in the accompanying investment strategy before directing any relevant contribution to facilities elsewhere;
6. consult Pirton Parish Council as landowner, PSSC as Pavilion operator, the relevant sports clubs, Sport England and appropriate governing bodies before the sports obligations are finalised; and
7. include clear project purposes, specifications, financial amounts or delivery duties, triggers, indexation, community-use requirements and long-term management arrangements in the Section 106 agreement.

Until these matters have been addressed, the application does not demonstrate that its effects on local sport and recreation can be adequately mitigated.