

From: Rodney Emery [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 January 2026 01:30

To: Alex Howard [REDACTED]

Subject: Planning Application 25/01830/FP Highfield All-Weather Pitch

Dear Alex

My position remains that loss of green belt open grass play area used for general pupil breaktime use and wellbeing is unacceptable and that Highfield School is not a suitable site for a commercial venture of this nature. Continued lack of clarity in the proposal suggests the applicant does not understand the issues involved and so is not a viable commercial operator. I ask you to recognise that Issue 5 of the Design and Access with Planning Statement fails to tackle concerns raised by previous issues and is ambiguous.

Hours of Use

Despite previous requests for clarification, I am still unclear what hours and days are requested/planned for community/commercial use of the facility. It is now difficult not to see the ambiguous statements as intentional. Operational hours are defined as Monday to Friday 08.00 to 17.00 and Saturday 09.00 to 13.00 but additional statements appear to show intended commercial use outside of those hours and days. How should we interpret:

- “Some football activities would also take place during the spring and summer catering for football training, development activities, summer clubs.” What hours and days are proposed?
 - o Are these Saturdays only as assumed by the Transport Assessment?
 - o Are these the operational hours defined above? If so, why aren’t they recognised as worst case in the Transport Assessment?
 - o Are they much greater hours?
- “External sporting activities will take place on weekends only”.
 - o Are these the “some football activities” highlighted above or are they major competitions and events indicated but not quantified in previous issues of the document? If the latter what numbers of attendees are planned and why has analysis not been included in the Transport Assessment. Major traffic problems would be inevitable
 - o What numbers of days and hours are planned?
 - o Does “weekends” introduce Saturday afternoons and Sundays which have been excluded from operational hours?

- “The main periods of community use will follow the football league season (typically during autumn and winter seasons throughout September to May)” is misleading particularly as use is has previously been stated as not limited to football. Surely holiday periods particularly summer holidays are likely high community use. Again, why is this not included as worst case in plans?

Should we believe instead the Noise Management Plan which says:

- “With site operations permitted until 20:15 weekdays, 18:15 Saturdays and 16:15 Sundays”

Can we please have a single unambiguous definition of use throughout the year and Travel and Transportation and Noise documents which reflect actual worst case.

Consultation

At no time has the applicant consulted with the local community and there has been no attempt to reflect the many traffic concerns of Highfield residents in the Transportation Plan. No evidence is presented of discussions with possible community users or even parents of the school’s pupils. The applicant now requests go ahead without adequate Sport England consultation (“It is requested that the Community Use Agreement, conditioned by Sport England, would be a pre-first use condition rather than a pre-commencement condition to allow the school time to develop the CUA in conjunction with Sport England.”) This is unreasonable. The period before the application was submitted and the 6 months since has provided ample opportunity to work with Sport England. This is a significant and necessary input to a business plan (see below).

I request that you refuse the applicants request to delay the Community Use Agreement with Sport England.

The school has recently distributed letters to parents requesting they send letters in support of the proposal. This will extend the distortion of for-and-against statistics already brought about by multiple teacher letters. Parents are asked to vote for rather than express an opinion. The major loss of grassed area has not been explained to them. What parent or teacher will risk the disapproval of the Head by voting against?

Please recognise the distortion of for-and-against statistics resulting from multiple votes from the applicant and parents requested to support rather than judge

Change of Use

As highlighted by many objectors in July, there is a change of use of the field and car park from educational to commercial. Commercial use of the pitch is the primary driver of the severity and numbers of days and hours of its disruption to neighbours and to local traffic. It is unclear whether the aim is to use educational land to maximise income

for the Scholars Education Trust, a private company limited by guarantee, or to merely provide adequate funding to maintain the facility.

If maintenance only what level of community use is essential? The Design and Access Planning Statement makes it clear that external body and community use is essential to manage and maintain the facility. The document states:

- “Maintenance budgets to renovate, refurbish, and replace the facility at end of its functional life will be allocated accordingly. Income collected from community hire will be put towards a sinking fund to cover all operating costs, thereby ensuring financial sustainability,”
- “The club will ensure the AGP generates sufficient income to cover all running costs, including staffing for maintenance and management.”

Letters from school staff supporting the application have highlighted the school’s failure throughout the past 10 years to maintain the grassed area now planned as the site of the All-Weather Pitch as a football pitch. It is not even marked out for use in dry weather so we assume no provision is available for the all-weather pitch. Without community user funding we must expect the pitch to be neglected so that:

- Failure to fund staff to manage commercial use will greatly increase the risk of user abuse of the facility and uncontrolled nuisance problems
- failure to fund maintenance will cause environment issues from the deteriorating artificial pitch

If maximising profit is the aim, should we expect progressively greater hours of use and numbers of special events?

I echo the comments of Mr Young, 5 Highfield, in requesting that a business plan be made available before further consideration of the application.

Summary

After 6 months and numerous prompts from objectors the applicant has failed to provide clear and consistent data for its application to be assessed. I ask you to require:

- **a single unambiguous definition of use throughout the year for community and other users.**
- **A complete set of consistent documentation with genuine worst-case analysis**
- **no delays to Sport England consultation should the application be granted**
- **a business plan clearly defining project aims and viability**

Yours sincerely

Rod Emery

43 Highfield

SG6 3PY