



23 March 2026

Dear Head of Planning,

I am writing to provide clarification on the existing Planning Policy framework in place in relation to the protection of playing fields and other sports facilities. This letter reminds Planning Authorities of the relevant policies set out in Planning Policy Wales and the Development Management Manual that may need to be considered when assessing development proposals that may affect existing sports clubs and pitches.

In some cases where new development has been consented and built adjacent to cricket pitches or golf clubs statutory nuisance complaints either due to ball strikes or noise from clubhouses has occurred. This has resulted in significant costs to the clubs to put in place mitigation measures potentially affecting their future viability.

Planning Policy Wales (available at: [Planning policy Wales | GOV.WALES](#)) sets out the national policy framework guiding land use, including the protection of playing fields, recreational facilities, and other community assets. The importance of recreational facilities to the health, well-being and social development of communities is highlighted in Paragraph 4.5 of PPW.

Paragraph 3.55 of Planning Policy Wales identifies that developing sensitive uses on previously developed land should be achieved without placing unnecessary constraints on adjacent existing businesses and activities which require that particular location. In such circumstances the agent of change principle will be a relevant consideration.

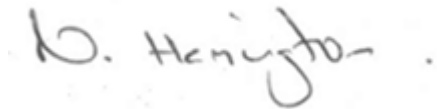
The agent of change principle says that a business or person responsible for introducing a change is responsible for managing that change. In the context of developing adjacent to sports pitches or playing fields, this means a developer would have to ensure that solutions to prevent physical ingress into their site, or noise from nearby pre-existing infrastructure such as club houses, can be found and implemented as part of the development.

Therefore, in accordance with the agent of change principal Planning Authorities should seek to ensure that any potential developments located near sports pitches, recreational facilities or similar uses, prioritise design and mitigation measures to avoid conflict between land uses.

Schedule 4 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2016 [The Order] identifies that where development is proposed which is likely to prejudice the use, or lead to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field then planning authorities must consult The Sports Council for Wales (known as Sports Wales).

The Order defines a playing field as the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch, and a "playing pitch" means a delineated area which, together with any run-off area, is of 0.2 hectares or more, and which is used for association football, American football, rugby, cricket, hockey, lacrosse, rounders, baseball, softball, Australian football, Gaelic football, shinty, hurling, polo or cycle polo.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. Hemington", followed by a period.

Neil Hemington
Prif Gynllunydd, Y Gyfarwyddiaeth Gynllunio
Chief Planner, Planning Directorate