



Rother District Local Plan 2025 – 2042

Playing Pitch Strategy Background Paper

Regulation 19 Version – October 2026

Contents

1	Introduction.....	3
2	Planning Policy Framework	4
3	Consultation and Engagement.....	5
	Joint working with Hastings Borough Council	5
	Engagement with Sport England and National Governing Bodies	5
4	Stage E Review	7
	Progress on the Stage E Review	7
	Next steps for the Stage E Review	8
5	Conclusion and Next Steps	9

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This background paper explains the status of the Hastings and Rother Playing Pitch and Built Facilities Strategy 2023-2039 (PPBFS), the work undertaken by Rother District Council (RDC) and Hastings Borough Council (HBC) to refresh that evidence base through the Stage E review process, and how this evidence has informed preparation of the emerging Rother Local Plan. It also explains why the Stage E review has not been fully completed prior to publication of the Regulation 19 Local Plan and the further work that is underway.
- 1.2 The PPBFS (2023) was jointly prepared by RDC and HBC and adopted in July 2023. It forms part of the evidence base supporting both authorities' Local Plans and provides the strategic assessment of playing pitch provision and future needs across Hastings and Rother. The strategy was prepared in accordance with Sport England guidance and identified that implementation would continue through Stage E of the PPS process, which comprises the application, delivery, monitoring and updating of the strategy over time. The PPBFS (2023) specifically envisaged ongoing review of the Action Plan by the Steering Group to ensure that the evidence base remains robust and up to date.
- 1.3 Although a full Stage E review has not been completed before publication of this Regulation 19 Local Plan, significant work has been undertaken jointly by RDC, HBC, Sport England and relevant National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to refresh the evidence base and monitor progress against the PPBFS (2023).

2 Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1 National planning policy requires planning policies to be informed by robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for sports and recreation facilities. The adopted PPBFS (2023) provides that evidence base for Hastings and Rother and remains the most recent formally adopted assessment of playing pitch needs within the plan area.
- 2.2 Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) methodology recognises that strategies should remain "live" documents, with Stage E providing the mechanism through which evidence is reviewed, updated and monitored. The Stage E process is therefore not the preparation of an entirely new strategy, but a review and refresh of the existing adopted PPBFS (2023).
- 2.3 The PPBFS (2023) remains current and continues to provide an appropriate evidence base for plan-making. This position has been confirmed through ongoing engagement with Sport England, which has advised that the strategy remains up-to-date and that completing a Stage E review with full NGB involvement is preferable to producing an update solely to meet Local Plan timescales.

3 Consultation and Engagement

Joint working with Hastings Borough Council

- 3.1 The PPBFS (2023) covers a shared functional geography extending across both local authority areas and was prepared jointly by RDC and HBC. Accordingly, the Stage E review has also been undertaken jointly.
- 3.2 Through 2025 and 2026 officers from both authorities have met regularly to coordinate evidence gathering, review progress against the PPS Action Plan, liaise with Sport England and engage with relevant NGBs. This work has included preparation of shared evidence, coordinated data requests and joint consideration of infrastructure needs arising from emerging Local Plans.
- 3.3 A joint meeting of officers from RDC, HBC and Sport England in May 2026 agreed a programme of work including NGB consultation, data collection, preparation of PPS updates and future Statements of Common Ground. The meeting specifically confirmed that the PPS would continue to form part of a shared evidence base supporting both authorities' Local Plans.

Engagement with Sport England and National Governing Bodies

- 3.4 Significant work has been undertaken with Sport England and relevant sporting organisations to obtain updated participation and facility information. Meetings have been held across 2025 and 2026 to facilitate this work. The purpose of this work was to:
- Gather updated participation information;
 - Identify emerging facility requirements;
 - Understand investment priorities;
 - Refresh PPS evidence; and
 - Align the PPS review with both emerging Local Plans.
- 3.5 The Stage E review process has also included:
- Review of the PPBFS (2023) Action Plan;
 - Collection of updated facility information;

- Review of available (limited) participation trends;
- Identification of funding opportunities;
- Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator modelling;
- Preparation of evidence updates supporting both Local Plans.

4 Stage E Review

Progress on the Stage E Review

- 4.1 Since adoption of the PPBFS (2023), monitoring and review work has been completed.
- 4.2 RDC and HBC have prepared reviews of the PPBFS (2023) Action Plan in Summer 2025 and Summer 2026, including sharing the action plan reviews with NGBs for additional input. The reviews assessed the delivery of identified projects, recorded changes in facility provision, identified new opportunities and considered emerging requirements across both authority areas. The reviews demonstrated that actions identified in the PPBFS (2023) have progressed and assists in providing an updated understanding of provision and demand.
- 4.3 To support the Stage E Review, Hastings Borough Council undertook additional engagement with local facility operators and sports clubs to gather up-to-date local intelligence regarding facility provision, participation trends, infrastructure pressures, opportunities and future priorities. This local insight is reflected in the revised Action Plan.
- 4.4 RDC and HBC have also continued to update evidence using Sport England tools. This includes use of the Sport England Playing Pitch Calculator during Summer 2026 to assess future demand arising from planned growth and population change. Updated calculations were produced to assist understanding of future requirements and infrastructure needs, in consultation with Sport England.
- 4.5 The partial completion of the Stage E review has captured information on:
- Overall increase in participation, notably with growth in womens, girls, and disabled players participation in sport;
 - Emerging facility pressures due to changing and increasing participation patterns;
 - Funding opportunities through various funding initiatives;
 - Potential facility improvements and rationalisation required to meet the changing participation patterns.

Next steps for the Stage E Review

- 4.6 Notwithstanding the work undertaken, RDC and HBC have not been able to complete the full Stage E review before publication of the respective Regulation 19 Local Plans.
- 4.7 The principal reason has been the difficulty in obtaining complete and up-to-date information from all relevant NGBs within the proposed timescale. Some NGBs rely on volunteers to collate and provide this data. This can lead to delays due to the volunteers limited availability and experience in providing this data. Participation data is collected using different methodologies and reporting cycles across sports, meaning that information becomes available at different points throughout the year. Affiliation data is only fully available following completion of seasonal registrations, meaning that data is strongest for winter sports in the Autumn, whilst summer sport participation information is strongest during the Summer.
- 4.8 Stage E review meetings held across Summer 2026 identified outstanding data gaps and resulted in further requests to sporting bodies for updated information. Additional follow-up work has subsequently been required to secure submissions and verify data.
- 4.9 A meeting between RDC, HBC and Sport England in September 2026 considered the progress made with the review and the remaining outstanding work. Sport England advised that it would not be possible to complete the Stage E process before the commencement of either authority's Regulation 19 consultation and confirmed that:
- The PPBFS (2023) remains current;
 - The work undertaken to date represents meaningful progress towards a review;
 - The review should be completed thoroughly with full NGB involvement rather than hastening the work to meet immediate timescales; and
 - Sport England is satisfied with the progress made to date.

5 Conclusion and Next Steps

- 5.1 The adopted Hastings and Rother Playing Pitch and Built Facilities Strategy 2023-2039 remains the principal current strategic evidence base for playing pitch provision across Hastings and Rother. Since its adoption, RDC and HBC have undertaken substantial work to refresh and monitor the PPBFS (2023) through the Stage E review process, working closely with Sport England, sporting governing bodies and other stakeholders.
- 5.2 While the full Stage E refresh has not been completed prior to Regulation 19 publication of the submission versions of the respective local authorities Local Plans, significant progress has been achieved. The delay primarily reflects the practical challenges associated with obtaining complete and verified data from all relevant sporting bodies and aligning evidence gathering with sporting reporting cycles.
- 5.3 The Council will continue to work jointly with HBC, Sport England and NGBs following Regulation 19, to complete the remaining elements of the Stage E review. The completed review will provide a refreshed evidence base to support implementation of the Local Plan and future infrastructure planning across the district.



Rother District Council

Town Hall

London Road

Bexhill-on-Sea

East Sussex

TN39 3JX