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YEARS



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Dorset

Dorset CPRE

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Open consultation - Reforms to the statutory consultee system

This response is submitted by the Dorset Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). Much of our work involves interacting with the local planning system, we actively engage with both Dorset Council and BCP Council. Our response focusses on the proposed reforms to key statutory consultees namely removal of Sport England and the Gardens Trust 's Statutory Consultee Status and changes to Natural England's remit.

Dorset CPRE strongly object to the proposed removal of Statutory Consultee Status from Sport England and the Gardens Trust. Access to Greenspace, be it in the form of sports pitches/playing fields or cherished parks and gardens has never been more important. We are concerned that the removal of these two consultees is indicative of a devaluing by the Government of the important contributions that Greenspace makes to communities, local economies and the environment.

Sport England

We welcome the Government's commitment to retain Sport England as a specific plan-making consultation body for the new plan making system. However, in our opinion it is essential that they remain as Statutory Consultees and are consulted whenever anyone wants to build on a playing field. Playing fields are vital infrastructure providing many benefits including physical health, mental wellbeing and social cohesiveness to name but a few. Weakening Sports England's role risks reducing the protection they can provide in ensuring that our communities have access to these vital facilities.

Retaining Sport England as Statutory Consultees will not only ensure that they are able to step in to ensure that viable playing fields are not built on but will also enable them to track and monitor the number of playing fields that remain available to communities across the nation.

The consultation asks for feedback in Question 4 regarding the definition of what should constitute substantial loss of a playing field. Whilst we do not support any loss of a playing field, the definition requires further thought and detail, a 10% loss of, for example a multi-pitch playing field will have less impact than a 10% loss of a single pitch playing field which would have the effect of rendering the facility in-operable.

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The Campaign to Protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

The Gardens Trust

The inclusion of the Gardens Trust as Statutory Consultees in relation to development affecting any registered park or garden is vital in ensuring that precious historic parks and gardens are protected from the impact of inappropriate development. Evidence provided by the government does not support their argument that waiting for responses from the Gardens Trust hinders the planning application decision making process, with 90% of responses given within the 21 day deadline.

The demoting of The Gardens Trust to having the same consultee status as an amenity body is not supported, particularly the suggestion that The Gardens Trust would not be notified of applications outside the boundary of the park or garden that impact the wider setting. Indeed, such applications can have a significant impact on a Historic Park or Garden not only in terms of impacting on its context and aesthetic but also a knock-on economic impact resulting from reduced visitor numbers. It is essential, therefore that The Gardens Trust is notified of development proposals in the vicinity of a Historic Park or Garden. Information provided by the Gardens Trust indicates that a significant proportion of their responses relate to setting and impact of new development on parks and garden.