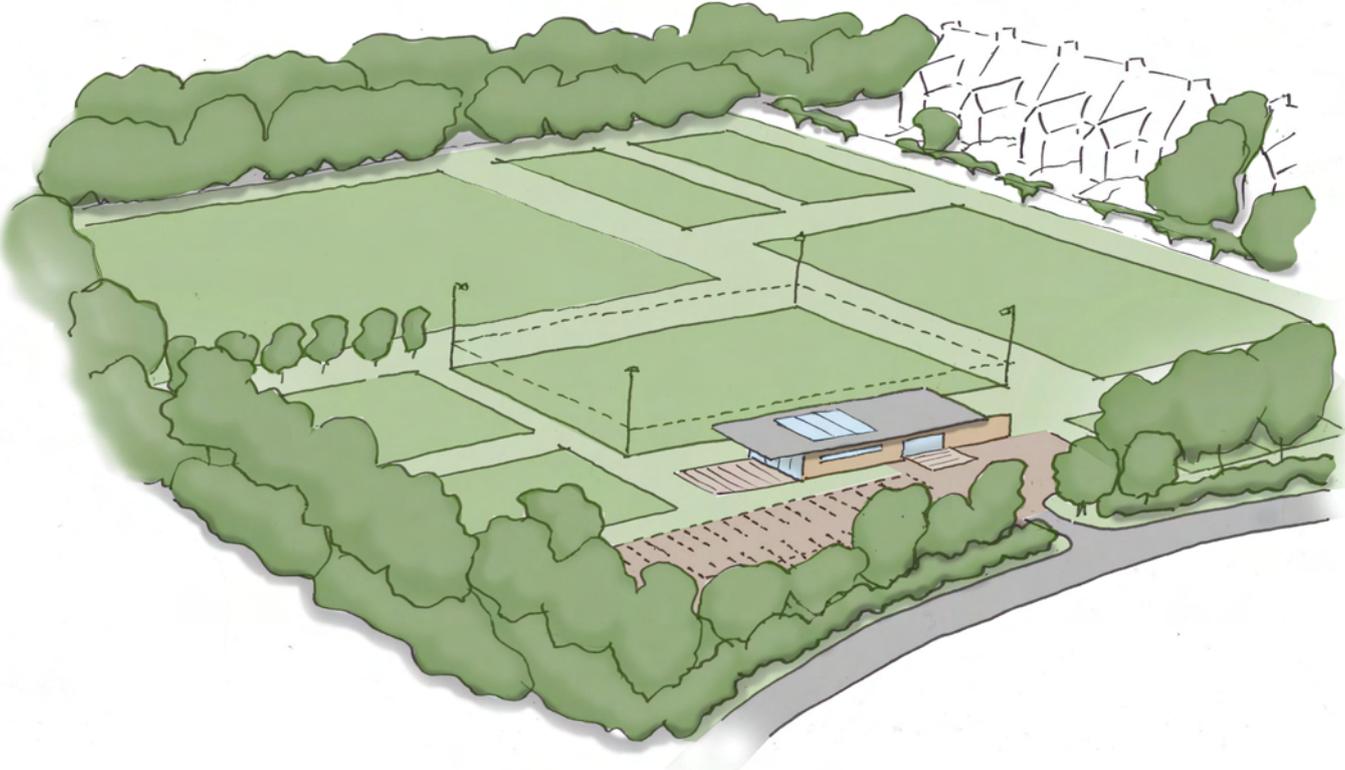


Selecting the Right Artificial Surface

for Hockey, Football, Rugby League and Rugby Union



Foreword

This new guidance and policy statement for selecting the appropriate artificial sport surface has been jointly developed by the national governing bodies (NGBs) of Hockey, Football, Rugby Union and Rugby League in conjunction with the Football Foundation and Sport England.

Following the publication in August 2009 of England Hockey Board's updated policy¹ on the use of long pile 3G pitches², which allowed accredited long pile turf pitches to be used for some competitive games, there was a real opportunity for the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to come together to develop joint guidance. This should ensure that any available investment for artificial grass pitches is used in the most effective and strategic way to meet the needs of their sports. All the governing bodies agreed that the playing surfaces of artificial grass pitches (AGPs)³ should be selected on the basis of clearly articulated needs and a strong evidence base. A joint working group was set up consisting of the NGBs, the Football Foundation and Sport England, to develop this guidance.

The group believes that this guidance should be used by everyone involved with AGPs from

planners and consultants, to schools and universities as well as clubs and local authorities. In particular, the group is aware of the investment opportunities provided by major education-led capital programmes and believe that this guidance will help ensure that the correct surfaces are selected and that maximum benefit is achieved especially where there is any loss of playing fields⁴.

This new guidance is fully supported by all members of the working group who intend to continue to work together to ensure that this guidance is used when any decisions are made with regard to selecting artificial surfaces for new pitches or replacing the playing surface of existing facilities.

The members of the 'AGP Working Group' are:

England Hockey Board (EHB)

Football Association (FA)

Football Foundation (FF)

Rugby Football Union (RFU)

Rugby Football League (RFL)

Sport England (SE)

“*Getting as many people as possible to give sport a try is one of my top priorities so it's important that new facilities are multi-use and accessible. As a keen hockey player and a fan of football and rugby I'm pleased to see them all working together to ensure that, where appropriate, artificial pitches are more versatile.*”

Hugh Robertson MP
Minister for Sport and the Olympics

¹ England Hockey Policy Long Pile Turf Pitches (3G), 1 August 2009.
<http://www.englishockey.co.uk/page.asp?section=75§ionTitle=Facilities>

² Third Generation (3G) Pitches consist of long synthetic fibres infilled with a combination of rubber and / or sand granules specific to the performance characteristics required for individual sports.

³ Note: To avoid the current confusion in terminology, the members of the working group have agreed to use in the future the consistent term Artificial Grass Pitch or AGP to describe the range of facilities often also described as Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) or Synthetic Turf Pitch (STP). For consistency the terms AGP and 'artificial' are used throughout this document.

⁴ For further information on the potential loss of playing fields please refer to: A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England Policy on planning applications for development on playing fields.
<http://www.sportengland.org/playingfields>

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Introduction

This guidance note has been developed by Sport England, the England Hockey Board, the Football Association, the Football Foundation, the Rugby Football League and the Rugby Football Union and is intended to provide a simple, consistent, agreed methodology and approach to selecting the right type of artificial grass surface for playing hockey, football, rugby union and rugby league. This guidance is not about the detailed technical requirements as these are covered in depth in the published guidance of the governing bodies, Sport England and The Football Foundation ⁵.

The technological advances in artificial grass in recent years has led to the widespread use of artificial grass surfaces for training and competitive play in rugby league, football, hockey and rugby union. Selecting the right surface can be very confusing as each sport has its own specific performance requirements and subsequent testing criteria, and the picture is further complicated by the wide range of different artificial grass products that have specialised playing characteristics.

It is not possible to provide a surface that can meet the needs of all sports therefore, it is essential that the right artificial grass surface is selected to maximise the benefit from the investment and minimise the impact of any loss of playing field which would result from the pitch construction ⁶.

This document sets out why, when and how the guidance should be used and by who, as well as signposting users to other relevant tools and guidance that complement and support this guidance.

Why is the guidance required?

The working group have identified there is currently no clear guidance or common approach to the selection of surfaces for AGPs and this has led, in some cases to the incorrect selection of surfaces in particular as a result of:

- A lack of understanding of the wide range and relative importance of the factors that need to be considered when selecting an AGP playing surface ⁷
- Confusing and misleading statements by a few suppliers and installers of AGP surfaces either in misunderstanding what is required or in extreme cases 'pressure selling' of their particular product

- Cost driven decisions where the cheapest installation is accepted believing that 'it will do' as it is artificial grass and therefore suitable for all sports only to find that the use of the pitch is significantly limited due to safety and sport specific criteria.

Sports facilities on school sites

The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Academies programmes are making significant investment into new and upgraded AGPs, and therefore the BSF investment provides a real opportunity to deliver the right AGPs in the right places. It is the intention of the working group that the methodology advocated in this document is used to inform the selection of AGPs on school sites to ensure maximum benefit is gained for the school and the community by selecting the most appropriate surfaces for the site.

Replacement of existing natural turf pitches

To comply with Sport England Playing Field Policy it is necessary, whenever there is a loss of a playing pitch, to make the strategic case for the new pitch and its surface. One important consideration is whether the current pitch is used for competitive games and whether the new pitch surface will be able to continue accommodating these. The guidance in this document will help users to decide and then present their case to the local planning authority as well as to Sport England in their remit as statutory consultees.

Change of AGP playing surface

There are now many AGPs where the playing surface needs replacing. In some cases it may be appropriate to consider installing a different playing surface to meet the local and strategic need. However, it is very important that the type of playing surface is not changed without proper consideration i.e. by using this methodology. It is also not recommended to change a surface type just to meet the requirements of a particular funding programme, unless this methodology has been followed and the alternative surface identified as an appropriate decision. In some cases, for example where Sport England funding has been involved, it should be noted that it is very unlikely that funders will agree to a change in surface type unless this methodology has been followed and the proposed surface for the AGP approved.

⁵ See Appendix 3

⁶ See Sport England Playing Field Policy E5 and Planning Bulletin 8.

⁷ Note: Whilst reference is made to the playing 'surface', this also includes the overall construction including shock pad etc required to achieve the specified performance criteria.

Who should use this guidance?

This guidance has been developed to help a wide range of users to make decisions strategically and site specific with a consistent approach and methodology. Listed below are some examples of who might use the guidance and how:

- The national and regional facility officers of the FA, RFU, RFL and EHB will use this methodology to develop and implement facility strategies with partners
- Local Authorities, Planning Authorities, Town Councils, Parish Councils who are developing strategies and local policy and investment priorities
- Local authority education departments who are developing playing field strategies as part of their 'readiness to deliver' for BSF or other major educational capital investment
- PE and Sport Stakeholder Groups who are supporting the Local Education Partnership (LEP) and local authority with deciding where AGPs should be located and what surface category is the most appropriate
- Higher and Further Education (HE and FE) establishments who are considering developing / improving AGPs on their sites
- Sports clubs who are considering developing / improving an AGP
- Consultants who are providing support with developing playing field, playing pitch and facility strategies, as well as providing advice on specific projects
- AGP suppliers and contractors who are advising potential customers on the most appropriate surface for their projects.
- The Private Sector who are making significant investments into AGPs.

Relationship to other technical guidance

This document is not intended to provide technical guidance as this is covered in greater detail elsewhere. However, it is based on the assumption that the detailed guidance available from the organisations listed below⁸ will be followed, as doing so is critical to the long term success and safe performance of any AGP:

- England Hockey Board
- Football Association
- Football Foundation
- Rugby Football League
- Rugby Football Union
- Sport England.

Relationship to other strategic planning guidance

This document complements the existing guidance on developing playing pitch strategies included in Sport England's guidance 'Towards a Level Playing Field'⁹ as well as the methodology set out in 'Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG17'¹⁰. Currently, both documents do not include guidance on AGPs and therefore it is recommended that the methodology included in this document is adopted when considering AGPs.

Strategic Planning Tools

The NGB and Sport England's planning tools (Active Places and Active Places Power¹¹) are available to help provide information on the supply and demand for AGPs. In addition, different scenarios of AGP provision can be tested by using the Facilities Planning Model¹². All of these tools are designed to help inform decision making; they are not intended to provide the answer. There are many factors that need to be considered and these are set out in the Methodology.

⁸ See Appendix 3

⁹ See http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/planning_tools_and_guidance.aspx

¹⁰ http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/planning_tools_and_guidance/planning_kitbag/planning_contributions/ppg17/ppg17_companion.aspx

¹¹ <http://www.activeplacespower.com/>

¹² See http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/planning_tools_and_guidance.aspx

Methodology

How should this guidance be used?

To decide which surface is the most appropriate there is a clear 4 step process to be followed. These steps apply whether the proposal is to consider a specific site or area wide analysis. If the study is for a specific site, it is still essential that the analysis starts at the first step and then moves on to consider if the site has been identified in any strategies as a priority for a particular sport. Once this is undertaken, it will help inform steps 3 and 4.

This methodology requires formal input from NGBs and other key stakeholders involved. Its ultimate success is dependent upon decisions

being based on informed discussion and agreement between these parties. The methodology should be used to form the basis for gathering the necessary information and enable the relative importance of each sport to be established at each site or sites.

The 4 step process below in Figure 1 gives users a clear indication of the steps required and Table 1 overleaf provides the detailed process to follow and the information required; where the information can be found as well as who can help provide the information. All users are advised to consider and address all of the questions raised in Table 1, which can be downloaded from Sport England's website¹³.

The 4 Step Process



Figure 1: The 4 Step Process - The questions that need to be asked when gathering the information required to decide what surface type should be selected at different sites or at an individual location.

¹³ Table 1 can be downloaded at http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_planning/planning_tools_and_guidance.aspx

Table 1: Who can help with providing the answers and where can the information be found?

| STEP 1 SUPPLY AND DEMAND ISSUES? | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| The Question/ task | Key Issues to be considered | Who can provide help and support? | Where is the information likely to be found? |
| <p>What are the issues of Supply and Demand that need to be addressed?</p> <p>(This should include considering the quality and surface of existing facilities as well as the surface type of proposed new facilities)</p> | <p>Supply</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What pitches are currently available and where are they located? • What type of surface do the pitches have? • What size are the pitches? Do they meet the recommended dimensions for the relevant sports? • What is the quality and life expectancy of these pitches? • Availability of pitches? <p>Demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the existing pitches currently used? By who, for what and when? • Are people having to travel unreasonable distances to use the pitches and why? • Will the site be a Development Area for any of the sports? <p>Unmet Demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team generation rates • Development plans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chief Officers ○ Planning Officers ○ Leisure Officers • Local Sports Trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sports development team ○ Facility management team • NGB local / regional officers • County Sports Partnerships • PE & Sport Stakeholder groups • Local sports clubs • Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School managers ○ Local league secretaries ○ Sport England's local office | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local facility registers / local facility audit • Current facility strategies • Current sports development / leisure strategies • Recent playing pitch strategies • Recent surveys • Active Places database • BSF Strategy for Change documents. • Current NGB Strategies/database • Club Development Plans • Facility Planning Model National assessments. • Local area data - NGB |

STEP 2

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS?

| The Question/ task | Key Issues to be considered | Who can provide help and support? | Where is the information likely to be found? |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>Has the site or sites been identified as a priority for a specific sport?</p> <p>(For example is the site to be developed as a 'Centre of Excellence' for a particular sport?)</p> | <p>Sport Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have particular sports been identified as a priority for pitch use and why?• Are there any long term realistic plans and aspirations for the sport or local clubs that need to be considered? <p>Site Specific Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there particular sites that have been identified for particular sports use and why?• Are there any long term realistic plans and aspirations for the site / sites? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NGB local / regional officers• Local Authority officers<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ planning○ sports development team○ sports facility management team• Local Sports Trust<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Sports development team○ Facility management team• County Sports Partnerships• PE & Sport Stakeholder groups• Local sports clubs• Other<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Sport England local Planning Teams | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NGB facility strategies and NGB sub-regional facility strategies / reports• Current local authority facility strategies• Current sports development / leisure strategies• Recent playing pitch strategies• Recent surveys• FPM local scenario assessments• BSF Strategy for Change documents• Club Development Plans |

STEP 3 TYPE/LEVEL OF USE?

| The Question/ task | Key Issues to be considered | Who can provide help and support? | Where is the information likely to be found? |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p>What type of use is proposed for the pitch by each sport?</p> <p>(Competition / Education / Training)</p> | <p>For each sport identify the type of use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition • Education • Training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authority officers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ sports development team ○ sports facility management team • Local Sports Trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sports development team ○ Facility management team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current local authority facility strategies • Current sports development / leisure strategies • Recent surveys / consultation |
| <p>What standard of use is proposed for the pitch by each sport?</p> <p>(Recreation / Inter School / Local / Regional / National / International)</p> | <p>For each sport identify the standard of use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casual/Recreational • Inter school • Local • Regional • National • International | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGB local/regional officers • County Sports Partnerships • PE & Sport Stakeholder groups • Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local league secretaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSF Strategy for Change documents • Current NGB Strategies / reports • Club Development Plans • League records |
| | <p>Is a full size pitch required?</p> | | |

STEP 4 HOW MUCH USE?

| The Question/ task | Key Issues to be considered | Who can provide help and support? | Where is the information likely to be found? |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p>How much use will there be for each 'Type' and 'Standard' of play for each sport?</p> <p>(Percentage use / total hours)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When will the sport use above take place on the proposed pitch/ pitches? • What is the total amount of use in hours? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authority officers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sports development team ○ Sports facility management team • Local Sports Trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sports development team ○ Facility management team • NGB local/regional officers • County Sports Partnerships • School management • Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • League fixture requirements • Business plans |

What surface choices are there?

There are 6 preferred categories¹⁴ of AGPs recognised by the governing bodies and these are set out in Appendix 1. Users are strongly recommended to refer to further detailed information that is available from each of the NGBs on their preferred surfaces. Each of these surface categories have their own playing characteristics making them more suitable for some sports than others and in some cases not suitable at all for specific sports. The table in Appendix 1 is intended to indicate the suitability of each of the surface categories for each of the sports and where appropriate, the level of use. In addition, the table identifies the relevant performance standard that the surface must achieve.

Prioritisation: The Decision

Once all of the 4 steps have been completed and the information gathered, it is necessary to analyse the information and to identify which sport is the priority in terms of influencing the surface category. There is no simple mathematical formula that will provide the answer as to which is the priority sport. However, in most cases the answer can be arrived at by using common sense and discussing the case for each sport at a working group consisting of the relevant governing bodies and key stakeholders.

The information gathered at Steps 3 and 4 provides the key factors in making any decision, with Step 3 being the most important i.e. a sport played at a higher competitive level will have more specific requirements for the playing surface. Where the level of use is similar, then the amount of use will be the deciding factor.

¹⁴ See Appendix 1 for the 6 preferred categories

Conclusion

All the governing bodies involved in the development of this document believe that AGPs have a crucial role to play in the development of their sport and the importance of any plans being discussed with them at an early stage. This will enable them to provide appropriate guidance before any significant costs are incurred.

This guidance provides the methodology for all stakeholders to research, check, challenge and be certain that the surface they choose is right for the sport and for the community. It offers the opportunity for cross functional working between NGBs, LA's and other stakeholders which is of paramount importance if sport is to capitalise on the opportunities available.

The document offers a starting point to a process which, if followed correctly, will lead to greater communication between sports and stakeholders ensuring that we can look forward to a future of the right sustainable facilities in the right places for the right reasons.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Categories of Artificial Grass Pitches

Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms

Appendix 3: References

Appendix 1: Categories of Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs)

| Pitch type | Rubber crumb type | | | Sand type | | Water type |
|------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|---|---|
| Category | Long Pile 3G (65mm with shock pad) | Long Pile 3G ¹ (55-60mm) | Short Pile 3G ¹ (40mm) | Sand Filled ¹ | Sand Dressed ¹ | Water based ¹ |
| Comments on sports surfaces | Rugby surface | Preferred football surface | Acceptable surface for some competitive football and hockey | Acceptable surface for competitive hockey and suitable for football training | Preferred surface for competitive hockey and suitable for football training | High level competitive hockey and suitable for football training if pitch irrigated |
| Sport | | | | | | |
| Hockey | ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ | ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ² | ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ² | ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ² | ● ● ● ● ● ● ² |
| Rugby League | ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ³ | ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ³ | ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ⁴ | ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ⁵ | ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ⁵ | ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ⁵ |
| Rugby Union | ● ● ● ● ● ● ⁶ | ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ⁷ | ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ⁵ | ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ⁵ | ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ⁵ | ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ⁵ |
| Football | ● ● ● ● ● ● ⁸ | ● ● ● ● ● ● ⁸ | ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ⁸ | ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ⁹ | ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ⁹ | ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ⁹ |
| Key | ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Not suitable for use ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Surface for modified games/training on but not suitable for serious training / competition ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ Surface for training/recreational use ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ Surface for training and for some competition ● ● ● ● ○ ○ Surface for competition and training ● ● ● ● ● ○ Surface for competition and training (regional / national) ● ● ● ● ● ● Surface for high level competition/training (national/international) | | | ¹ Shockpad optional: often needed to meet appropriate performance requirements ² Surface must comply with FIH Standard (insitu tested) ³ RFL currently evaluating surface standard - see their website for latest information ⁴ No full contact ⁵ Can only be used for Tag and Touch Rugby / Handling skills ⁶ Surface must comply with IRB type 22 with enhanced HIC requirement ⁷ RFU currently evaluating surface standard - see their website for latest information ⁸ Surface must comply with FIFA 1 star or IATS equivalent approval required ⁹ Surface must comply with BSEN 15330-1 (2007) | | |
| Note: | All users should refer to the individual NGB guidance, available on line, for specific information on the preferred categories | | | | | |

Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms

| | |
|------------------|---|
| AGP: | Artificial Grass Pitch |
| ATP: | Artificial Turf Pitch |
| BSF: | Building Schools for the Future |
| CSP: | County Sports Partnership |
| FPM: | Facilities Planning Model |
| MUGA: | Multi-Use Games Area |
| NGB: | National Governing Body |
| PPG17: | Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation |
| STP: | Synthetic Turf Pitch |
| 3G Pitch: | Third Generation (3G) Pitches consist of long synthetic fibres infilled with a combination of rubber and / or sand granules specific to the performance characteristics required for individual sports. |

Appendix 3: References

- European Standards:**
- BS EN 15330 Part 1 (2007) & Part 2 (2008) 'Surfaces for Sports Areas - Synthetic turf and needle-punched surfaces primarily designed for outdoor use. ([BSI online http://www.bsigroup.com/](http://www.bsigroup.com/)).
- Hockey:**
- FIH Handbook of Performance Requirements for synthetic Turf Pitches
 - England Hockey Policy Long Pile Turf Pitches (3G), 1 August 2009
- Football**
- FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf Handbook of Requirements www.fifa.com
 - International Turf Standard (IATS)
FIFA guides to Football Turf developments
<http://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/developing/pitchequipment/footballturf/documents/index.html>
 - FA Guidelines to AGPs
FA Artificial Pitch Guideline
http://www.thefa.com/GetIntoFootball/Facilities/Artificial_Pitches
 - Floodlighting
FIFA Guide to Artificial Lighting of Football Pitches
www.fifa.com
- Rugby League**
- IRB Regulation 22
- Rugby Union:**
- IRB Regulation 22
http://www.irb.com/mm/document/lawsregs/regulations/04/21/57/42157_pdf.pdf
- SAPCA**
- Code of Practice for the Construction and Maintenance of Synthetic Turf Pitches.
www.sapca.org.uk
- Sport England:**
- Artificial Surfaces for Outdoor Sport Technical Guidance Note
 - Active Places
 - Active Places Power
 - Facilities Planning Model

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Alternative Languages and Formats:

This document can be provided in alternative languages, or alternative formats such as large print, Braille, tape and on disk upon request. Call the Sport England switchboard on 08458 508 508 for more details

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| | |
|----------------------|--|
| England Hockey Board | Rugby Football League |
| Football Association | Rugby Football Union |
| Football Foundation | The Sports and Play Construction Association |

Disclaimer:

Amendments, alterations and updates to this document may take place from time to time. When using Sport England Guidance you should always download the documents at the time of use in order to ensure that you are referring to the most up-to-date information.

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