

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0301
Valid 31/05/2021

DRAYCOTT SPORTS CENTRE
LTD CRESSWELL LANE
DRAYCOTT IN THE MOORS

**CONVERT TWO EXISTING
TENNIS COURTS TO FORM TWO
COVERED PADEL TENNIS
COURTS AND ONE MINI TENNIS
PRACTICE AREA WITH
ADDITIONAL PARKING SPACES
AND USING EXISTING ACCESS
FROM ROAD.**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of development (Green Belt)
- Design and visual impact;
- Highways;
- Environmental Health;
- Neighbour amenity;
- Drainage.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

An existing sports centre occupying a roadside location within the Draycott in the Moors area. The site includes a clubhouse, indoor and outdoor tennis courts and a parking area. Existing structures (buildings and floodlight columns) can be seen from the roadside. Roadside boundaries are mainly marked by hedgerows and there is an existing, well-used, vehicular access.

PROPOSAL

The application is accompanied by a Design, Access and Planning Statement. Section 1 of the document provides the following information regarding the proposal and an explanation of what Padel is.

This Design and Access statement has been submitted in support of the planning application for the proposed padel tennis courts with canopy at Draycott Sports Centre. The application is for two padel tennis courts within the grounds of an existing sports facility. The proposal seeks to locate the new courts on an area currently used for floodlit tennis. The adjacent area will be resurfaced to form a mini tennis kidszone and additional parking. This is to enable the club to support the development of an additional new racquet sport. It will increase the overall leisure opportunities on offer for the local community. The proposal is functional in scale and type. The acceptability of the proposal reflects the current use of the land as a racquet sport facility where it will be appropriately positioned on existing courts.

Padel

Padel is commonly described as the fastest growing sport in the world and increasingly being called the fastest growing sport in the UK. Padel is a discipline of tennis and was recently recognised by Sport England. The sport is governed by the LTA and is developing rapidly and growing in popularity across the UK. Padel is easy to learn and popular with women and men

and played by people of all ages and abilities. It contributes to a healthy lifestyle and is very sociable being played as doubles. The padel courts will be available to members and non-members. Local schools will be offered regular opportunities for children to come and try this new sport.

In addition to the construction of the Padel building and the outside court, the application proposes additional parking spaces and the use of a second vehicular access.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

SS1	Development Principles
SS10	Other Rural Areas Strategy
SD1	Sustainable Use of Resources
E4	Tourism and Cultural Development
DC1	Design Considerations
DC3	Landscape and Settlement Setting
C2	Sport, Recreation and Open Space
T1	Development and Sustainable Transport
Appendix 2	Parking Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance

1. Design Principles for Development in the Staffordshire Moorlands

Supplementary planning Document

1. Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide

National Planning Policy Framework

Including sections;

- 2: Achieving sustainable development
- 6: Building a strong, competitive economy
- 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9: Promoting sustainable transport
- 12: Achieving well-designed places
- 13: Protecting Green Belt land

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

78/05271/OLDDC	Proposed extensions to Draycott Sports Centre Approved
79/06738/OLDDC	Car park with two vehicular accesses. Approved.
80/08892/OLDDC	Construction of two tennis courts. Approved
01/00755/FUL	Construction of pitched roofs. Approved.
04/01468/FUL	Indoor tennis courts and formation of lounge, toilets and disabled facilities. Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice. Expired.

Neighbour consultation period. Expired.

Public Comments: No representations received during the statutory consultation period.

Draycott in the Moors Parish Council: No objections to the application.

Environmental Health: No objections subject to conditions.

Staffordshire County Council Highways: No objections subject to conditions.

Severn Trent Water: No objections subject to conditions and advisory notes regarding sewers.

Sport England: The proposal entails the conversion of two existing tennis courts to form two covered padel tennis courts and one mini tennis practice area with additional parking spaces and using existing access from road at Draycott Sports Centre Ltd. The proposal would result in the loss of two full size tennis courts which according to the Playing Pitch Strategy & Action Plan 2017 (PPS) were identified as good. The PPS identified that there was spare capacity at the site due to the provision of indoor courts to accommodate future demand expressed by the Club. Further to this it was identified that all non-club courts had spare capacity with focus on the latter being the improving the standard of current courts rather than increasing the number of courts.

Sport England consulted the LTA with regard to the proposal but no comments were received. However, it is noted that the Council's Parks and Leisure Team have commented on the proposal highlighting that the demand for tennis in the area is relatively low in comparison to the number of courts available so there will not be a big impact on availability in the area. The comments continue that due to the padel courts being covered it enable a greater opportunity for play then existing courts which can only be utilised during fair weather. It also acknowledge that the provision of padel courts and small junior courts, will provide further possibilities for the tennis club to provide wider opportunities for physical activity and for the facility to be more attractive to local residents, local school and community groups. The inclusion of some disability car parking is also stated as being useful for attracting a key target group into the game.

On the basis of the above Sport England considers that the application is consistent with the following policy objective enhance with the proposal introducing a different form of tennis provision which is covered, this would help increase physical activity at the site with the tennis offer being increased and the hours of participation also increasing.

This being the case, Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to this application.

As an update to my response dated 02/07/21 I can confirm that the LTA have now provided the below comments to Sport England.....“The club has identified a need from its members to diversify their courts and we are planning to work with them to activate local park courts to enable a pathway from the wider population to access the club. Padel is a good stepping stone for many people who have not played tennis or have to build fitness and movement to do so. The club is planning to link with community groups (older people, disability and health related) to encourage play and the youth programme is growing so they will have good access for 3-

12 years on the mini courts. The club are successful and have grown membership, they are community focused and we think these developments will further support this.”

The above comments from the LTA reaffirms Sport England's position that the proposal will enhance the facility offer at the site introducing a different form of tennis provision, which would help increase physical activity at the site with the tennis offer being increased and the hours of participation also increasing.

Conservation Officer (SMDC): Setting of St. Margaret's Church has been assessed and there will be no detrimental impact.

Parks and Leisure (SMDC): Dear Planning, Thank you for forwarding the plans for the proposed development on land at Draycott Sports Centre Ltd Cresswell Lane, Draycott In The Moors. The following information provides more detailed comments regarding the opportunities relating to the Staffordshire Moorlands physical activity and sports strategy “Towards an Active Staffordshire Moorlands” 2017. The proposal would mean the loss of two full size tennis courts which according to the Playing Pitch Strategy & Action Plan 2017 were identified as good. The demand for tennis in the area however is relatively low in comparison to the number of courts available so we would not see there being a big impact on availability in the area. The Playing Pitch Strategy suggested that all none club courts had spare capacity, and therefore the focus should be on improving the standard of the current courts to an adequate standard rather than increasing the number of courts.

The proposal of two new paddle courts to replace these would provide an excellent an opportunity to increase the levels of physical activity in the area. The existing two courts would service a maximum of 8 people at a time for the duration of the matches and can only be used in fair weather whereas paddle tennis would allow for additional opportunities for physical activity as is played per hour. Paddle tennis lends itself to being an introduction to the full tennis game as well as being a sport in its own right and is therefore likely to encourage more people of all ages into the game.

The proposal for the smaller Junior court is likely to attract more children into the game but will also be suitable for the older population, or those wishing to play slightly less energetic game. The project lends itself to further possibilities for the club to provide wider opportunities, which would not only be more attractive to local residents but could also create more interest for use by local schools and community groups. The wider engagement programme supports our own strategic aims offering more multisport use and increasing participation and physical activity.

The Sports Centre is set off a busy country lane so car parking is important to keep the road outside the club free from traffic. The proposal also includes some disability parking which is useful for attracting a key target group into the game. In addition to cars however they may need to consider attracting more people by alternative forms of transport so the addition of a cycle parking if it did not already exist at the site, may be included as a recommendation.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The application site is located within the Green Belt. NPPF paragraph 149 is clear that Local Planning Authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt unless the proposed building features within the exceptions list. Whilst buildings for outdoor sport and recreation are listed but a Padel building, which is for indoor sport, is not referenced therefore the application proposes inappropriate Green Belt development. The NPPF states that Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and

should not be approved except in very special circumstances and, that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Design and visual impact

There are no objections to the design of the building in its own right. It is a functional sports building, examples of which can be seen countrywide and constructed using a variety of materials which adds design interest to the structure. The specific canopy colour can be secured by condition.

The Padel building will result in visual impact beyond the application site. The very nature of the structure means that the building would have to have a height not dissimilar to a two-storey dwelling. During the course of considering the application, the height of the padel has been reduced by 2m, its current proposed height (9.8m) is now similar to padel buildings which have previously benefitted from consent (albeit not within the Staffordshire Moorlands area). The application site is readily visible from the road and the padel building would be a visually obvious development. In its favour are the range of building materials which add interest and the ability to condition the canopy cover. The building will be positioned as far away from the roadside boundary as is possible in this particular location and notably will be positioned alongside the existing sports hall building. The applicant/architect has included the existing sports hall building on the plans to show that the padel will not be dissimilar in height and that the new development will clearly be seen in the context of the existing structure. It is also noted that the existing sports hall occupies a much larger footprint.

There are no design or visual impact objections to the laying out of the parking or the creation of the mini-court, these features lie within the established grounds and will not be visually intrusive, simply re-using existing land within the site.

Highways

The plans do not show any proposals to alter the existing and well-used vehicular access. The scheme does involve the creation of a second parking area with access to be taken from an existing (but appears to be currently unused) access gate a little further to the south of the main access. The County Highways officer has no objections to the scheme, simply requesting conditions including securing visibility splays, provision of the parking facilities prior to first use of the padel, gradient of access and dimensions of access crossing.

Environmental Health (Including neighbour amenity)

No objections in terms of any environmental health matters (including neighbour amenity impact). The closest neighbouring dwellings are on the opposite side of the road to the sports club, due to the separation distances involved there would not be any overbearing relationship between the new building and surrounding dwellings. Environmental Health officers comment that *'from a noise perspective this is a relatively like for like development, there are existing courts in place so noise should not significantly increase as a result of this development. There is no record of noise complaint against this premises in the previous 6 years to application.'* EH comment that there have been no instances of complaint within the last 6 years regarding floodlighting. It is noted that the padel building will include the use of floodlights, but EH accept that lighting will be lower (in brightness) due to the fabric surrounding the court. It is noted there are no objections from the nearest residential neighbours or the Parish Council and EH recommend a condition for the use of the artificial lighting between the hours specified by the applicant. Hours are 08:00-22:00, 7 days a week (including Bank Holidays). A Construction and Environmental Method Statement is also to be sought via condition (applicant/agent has confirmed acceptance of pre-commencement conditions). No neighbour representations have been received during the statutory consultation period.

Drainage

No drainage related objections. Severn Trent Water recommend foul and surface water details prior to the commencement of works and completion of the approved details prior to first use of the development.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

In accordance with the details set out above, there are no objections to the application in terms of design, highways, environmental health, neighbour amenity or drainage. The consideration is then whether the applicant has demonstrated 'very special circumstances' in order for the application to succeed. The Design, Access and Planning Statement clearly sets out the case for the development including a section dealing with 'very special circumstances.' It is a fact that Draycott Sports Centre is a well-established and well-used community facility. The development would be confined to land which already forms part of the sport complex curtilage. The scheme is simply proposing a development which would improve sports facilities whilst providing sufficient parking space to support the scheme. The applicant provides a very compelling case which is supported by Sport England, the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and the council's Parks and Leisure department. It is recognised that there will be openness impact by the very presence of the building and the creation of the parking area, however the building has been reduced in size, commensurate with other similar padel developments, materials can be controlled by condition and the building would be sited close to the existing sports hall and viewed within its context. There is demonstrable sport/health related community benefit which is clearly explained from parties in addition to just the applicants.

For the reasons outlined above, the proposal is classed as inappropriate Green Belt development but any harm by reason of inappropriateness (and any other harm) is clearly outweighed by the site circumstances and the health and community benefits which will be brought by approval of the scheme.

There are no other technical reasons for refusal and the scheme complies with local plan policies in all other respects. In the absence of material considerations to indicated otherwise it is recommended for approval.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Conditional approval.

Case Officer: Lisa Jackson

Recommendation Date: 12.04.2022

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council