



THE HODDESDON SOCIETY

Charity No 234800

RESPONSE FROM THE HODDESDON SOCIETY RE PROPOSED PADEL COURT, BROXBOURNE SPORTS CLUB (REF 07/21/0480/F)

Policy ORC1 of the Local Plan provides that proposals for new leisure/sports facilities which meet a community need will be supported in principle, subject to their design and location, having regard to, among other things, *“the impact of the facilities on local residents in terms of environmental quality and general disturbance”*. We object to these proposals because the applicant has not provided sufficient information to enable the Council to understand the impacts on local residents and the sensitive local environment.

The proposed structure backs on to a number of houses and will be visible from a large distance, including from the New River path and the Broxbourne recreation ground (and so is adjacent to a conservation area). It is proposed that the Padel Court be used from 8am to 10pm, year round. The application states that there will be LED lighting contained under the canopy roof, so the impact of the lighting on residents will need to be considered, and there will also be a need to consider the increased noise associated with this proposal. Our comments on all three elements are set out below.

Visual impact

The structure proposed is high (8.25m), and likely to be visible from a considerable distance, in an area characterised by low rise residential buildings surrounded by natural spaces (the New River path and the Broxbourne recreation ground).

It will clearly be visible from the New River path. In the section of the Local Plan relating to the New River Conservation Area, we welcome paragraph 15.5, which notes that *“the Council now wishes to explore the potential for a much more extensive conservation area along the course of the New River, the intention being to recognise and provide an appropriate level of protection to the historic artefacts along it. As the first stage of such a designation, the Council proposes to carry out a conservation area appraisal along the length of the New River within the Borough.”* Paragraph 15.5 notes that Policy HE1 (which confirms that the Council will seek to ensure that developments not only avoids harm but also improves the setting of the historic environment) is relevant here.

There has been no attempt in the application to show what the visual impact would be to local residents and from the sensitive New River path. However, the nature of the structure proposed means that it will rise above and stand out from its surroundings.

Lighting

Section 28 of the Local Plan deals with lighting. Policy EQ3(I) states that proposals for development including new lighting will be considered against the following criteria (a) the need for the lighting, (b) whether there would be an unacceptable adverse impact upon the amenity of residents, highway users, and biodiversity, and (c) whether the necessary steps have been undertaken to reduce lighting overspill and pollution. Policy EQ3(II) states what information applications should include (including light angles, the design and spread of lights, strength of luminance, etc).

Further, paragraph 28.16 of the Local Plan says that “*applications should refer to Sport England’s Artificial Sports Lighting Guide for advice on lighting for sports facilities and the guidelines set out in the Institute of Lighting Engineer’s Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light*”.

Sport England’s Artificial Sports Lighting Guide notes that the Planning Authority “*will require evidence that the possible effects of the proposed lighting on the neighbours and the surrounding landscape, whether rural or urban, have been considered and are acceptable*”. It also suggests that local consultation be undertaken at an early stage (residents’ responses suggest they have not been consulted). From page 30, the Artificial Sports Lighting Guide deals with the potential impacts on residents and the environment (which, given the proximity to the New River, an important nocturnal habitat, is significant).

In this case, there has been no attempt in the application to explain what the impact would be on residents and biodiversity (the impact on the New River habitats) and so it is not possible to know whether any consideration has been given to this aspect, or what the impact will be on residents and the natural environment.

We hope that the Council will require further and sufficient information to be provided, including lighting overspill diagrams.

Noise

Padel courts are known to be particularly noisy; no data has been provided by the applicant, but it is understood that 68 – 70 dB in peak hours can be reached). The SAPCA Code of Practice for the Construction of Padel Courts, which has been produced in consultation with the LTA (the national governing body for padel) contains guidance for padel court planning ([CoP for padel courts v3_040321.pdf \(sapca.org.uk\)](https://www.sapca.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/CoP_for_padel_courts_v3_040321.pdf)). It says (at 1.1.2) that:

“Careful consideration for the proposed location of the padel courts should be given in relation to the impact of noise on adjacent residential properties. If a residential property is within 30.0m of the padel court, then it is advisable that a formal noise assessment is undertaken by a specialist consultant prior to making a planning application. Based on the findings of this report, mitigation measures may be required within the scheme design, such as acoustic fencing or barriers to reduce the travel of sound down to an acceptable level. It may even be a requirement from the Planning Authority to move the court to a more appropriate location. In some contentious locations adjacent to residential properties, planning authorities may stipulate a planning condition that a further noise assessment is carried out once the court is in use”

Policy EQ4 sets out the Council’s policy on noise. Developments which emit noise levels noticeably above background levels on a consistent or consistently periodic basis “*should be sited away from noise sensitive land uses including residential accommodation*”. If this is unavoidable, the Council will consider the listed criteria in EQ4(II). Paragraph 28.21 of the Local Plan requires applicants to submit a noise impact assessment at the time of validation of an application providing details on the level of noise and the mitigation measures proposed.

No noise impact assessment has been submitted and no other information has been presented which would enable the Council to understand the effect of the proposal on residents or the local amenity. This is particularly important given the nature of the proposed facility, the proximity to residential properties and the New River.

The Hoddesdon Society
25 May 2021