

# Bench Mark Designs

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## **Design and Access Statement**

*Proposed New Padel Courts at Littleborough Cricket Club*

### **Project**

Convert an existing tennis court, plus an adjacent hard standing area, into a pair of covered Padel Courts.

## Site Description and Background

Acting on behalf of Denhurst Trading Ltd, we are submitting this application for the erection of two Padel Courts, on an unused Tennis Court to the East of Littleborough Cricket Club.

Please see photograph below which illustrates the location of the application site in red.



Currently, within the Surrounding site area there are:

- Littleborough Cricket Club
- Cricket Practice Nets
- 2 Football Pitches (Full Size)
- 2 Football Pitches (Half Size)
- A Cricket Club House; and Multifunctional Bar
- A Skate Park
- 2 Bowling Greens

In relation to the wider site context, the site is situated to the North side of Littleborough. The area surrounding the site comprises mostly open areas with mix of different types of residential dwellings all at a considerable distance from the proposal.

The purpose of this Planning Statement is to address relevant considerations relating to the erection of the padel tennis structures on site.

### **Planning History (recent)**

In 2012 the removal of the adjacent tennis court to the proposed site was approved for conversion to non-turf practice nets. In 2016 the conversion of an outbuilding to residential use was approved with conditions. Those planning conditions were submitted and agreed in 2017, this is according to the Rochdale Council's online planning records.

### **Proposed Development**

Padel tennis is a racquet sport that is essentially a mix between squash and tennis with the court area being around one third the size of a standard tennis court. The court is surrounded by walls of glass and metallic mesh. During the game the ball can be played off the glass walls like squash. Padel tennis is more accessible to those whose level of fitness, agility or skill makes conventional tennis or squash overly challenging and difficult to play. Given its attraction to a wider audience, it is also a social sport for those that play.

Padel tennis therefore offers significant general health and well-being benefits. This should be seen as a significant benefit of the proposal adding to facilities in Littleborough to encourage a healthy and active lifestyle and all the benefits that brings. Padel tennis is a fast-growing sport across Europe and in the UK, and it is well known people are willing to travel to play it.

The plans provided with this application have been listed below for ease:

- |    |                                                                     |             |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. | Location Plan                                                       | A/53-PL-01  |
| 2. | Layout Plan Existing                                                | A/53-PL-02  |
| 3. | Nets Plan Existing                                                  | A/53-PL-03  |
| 4. | Nets Elevations Existing                                            | A/53-PL-04  |
| 5. | Layout Plan Proposed                                                | A/53-PL-05  |
| 6. | Courts Plan Proposed.                                               | A/53-PL-06  |
| 7. | Courts Elevations Proposed.                                         | A/53-PL-07A |
| 8. | Lighting Details – UK, 8. LED SAMSUNG Spec Sheet and Fittings Sheet |             |

The proposal relates to the erection of two padel courts on the northeast corner of the existing tennis court area. The site is fully fenced and secure there are nearby toilet and changing facilities that have recently been refurbished and available to be used with this proposed development.

The double padel court will measure 20m x 10m x 9.5m, the second a single s court 20m x 5m x 9.5m, the playing surfaces will be a fibre grass construction. The courts are entirely enclosed, at the end walls plus the returns will be a 4m wall with a canopy over each. The visible side walls will be 3m high, depending on the visual access the walls will vary from solid reinforced glass and rigid wire mesh panels, see proposed elevations. The canopy is a lightweight, white obscure woven man-made material that is waterproof but lets light into the contained space.

Each court will have its own lighting, 8no light fittings on 4no lighting posts each 6m high, with LED angled fittings to direct light down into the court. The lighting and level of illumination is set out in the DIALux lighting design documents.

## Planning Policy

### National Planning Policy

At national level the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in August 2026, replacing the previous version. The NPPF sets out the governments guidance for policy making and decision making for England and how these are expected to be applied. As in section 16. Promoting healthy communities.

Within the NPPF is set a core land use planning principles that should underpin decision making and which planning should achieve. As in accordance with section 16 of the NPPF, for decision-taking, this means the Planning of healthy communities. Thus approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.

#### HC1: Planning for healthy communities

To promote the creation of healthy and inclusive places, and the provision, retention and enhancement of appropriate community facilities and public service infrastructure, development plans should, at the most appropriate level:

- a. Be informed by an understanding of any existing deficits in the availability of community facilities and public service infrastructure, and additional requirements expected over the plan period, arising from proposed development and wider changes in the local population and public service provision. In doing so, they should take into account both quantitative and qualitative aspects of provision, identified local health needs and opportunities to reduce inequalities through the availability of facilities.
- b. Set out the facilities and contributions expected from development, including as part of allocations for major development involving the provision of housing;
- c. Allocate land specifically for community facilities and public service infrastructure where it is appropriate to do so, and assess whether any land is suitable for designation as Local Green Space in accordance with policy HC2;
- d. Set local standards for the **provision of different types of recreational land and facilities, including for play, sport, informal recreation** and allotments. In doing so plans should draw upon relevant national standards and best practice, tailoring these as necessary to local circumstances and evidence. Policies for play and informal recreation should aim to secure a connected network of high quality, inclusive and accessible opportunities as part of the wider network of green space provision, secured through both on-site provision in conjunction with land allocated for development and through other contributions and investment; and
- e. Identify wider opportunities to promote good health, prevent ill-health, reduce health inequalities and support social interaction through their spatial strategy and land allocations, including through policies for strengthening town centres, locating development where it will support walking, wheeling and cycling and promoting mixed- use developments.

## **HC4: Proposals for new and improved community facilities, public service infrastructure and development providing public health benefits**

1. Substantial weight should be given to the benefits where:
  - a. New or improved public service infrastructure or community facilities would be provided; and
  - b. Development proposals would make a demonstrable contribution towards promoting good health, preventing ill-health, reducing health inequalities or supporting social interaction in the local community (such as, but not limited to, the provision of new recreation facilities, meeting places and opportunities to grow or purchase healthier food).

### **Planning Assessment**

#### **Principle of the proposed development**

The application site was formerly used as a tennis court and consequently has been used for sporting activities in the past. The 'principle' of the use of the site for sporting activity is therefore established.

The proposal aims to convert the tennis court and hard standing space into two padel courts, without reducing the ability to use the previous adjacent tennis court to continue as practice nets. As highlighted earlier, Padel Tennis is experiencing a rapid growth in popularity given the wide appeal it has in terms of ages and the level of fitness required to play sport and therefore wider reaching health benefits it can provide to participants.

Considering the existing use of the application site and wider sports club site, along with supporting facilities including changing rooms/showers and nearby clubhouse facilities, it is considered the 'principle' of the proposed use is acceptable in this location.

In relation to the 'location' of the proposed development, highlights the preferred location of 'main town centre uses' as being within existing centres. Main town centre uses includes leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses such as cinemas, restaurants, drive-throughs, health & fitness centres, bars and pubs, nightclubs, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls. Such uses differ from typical outdoor sport and recreation uses such as tennis, hockey and outdoor padel tennis which require outdoor court facilities as is the case with the application proposals.

Notwithstanding the above, the application site is located within the defined Littleborough boundary and therefore falls within its defined main 'centre' within its district.

The proposed padel tennis will form part of the wider leisure offer at the Littleborough C C, improving choice of sporting activities at the club. The site is accessible by choice of transport mode with good bus services operating along Calderbrook Road (250m away less than 10 Mins Walking) from the sports club. Surrounding residential areas are also within easy walking distance.

Considering the above, we consider the proposals to be in an appropriate location for the form of leisure use provided and would help deliver more sustainable and healthy local communities in Littleborough and the wider Rochdale area, in accordance with relevant development plan policies.

The proposal will improve facilities at the club and enhance the diversity of sport available at the club which will in turn be of benefit to the community. It should also be clarified that the tennis court within the application site is currently derelict and has been for some years.

We therefore conclude the 'principle' of development is acceptable on site.

### **Design and amenity impact of the development**

The proposed development is located within the existing Littleborough CC, with several different types of sports pitches established around the wider site, for example, the football pitches to the northeast and east of the site.

The materials used within the construction of the two padel tennis court enclosures are to be a combination of mesh infill aluminium fencing and 10-12mm tempered glass panels. This is an appropriate use for an outdoor sports pitch, particularly in this location where the use of materials for the existing parking arrangement to the north is an area of hardstanding.

The proposed materials would be appropriate for the Sports Club location with the plans showing a design and scale that is proportionate to the host development and fits comfortably within the character of the wider area.

The proposed structures of the padel tennis courts are located towards the northeastern boundary of the Complex which neighbours open sports ground the residential properties along (2 to 12) Redland Close. The courts would be located within an existing sports club, and they would be used within usual operating hours.

The proposed development is not considered intrusive on residential amenity of the residential properties with the nearest proposed court 85 to 90m away from the nearest sensitive receptors at (2 to 12) Redland Close, having no associated structures proposed.

The height of the glazed panels and metal mesh panels around the padel tennis courts will only result in an overall visible height of 3m, most with the mesh or glazed panels. Given the limited height of the enclosures and proximity to residential properties off site, there will be no adverse impact on residential amenity of nearby properties with its views to and from the properties.

Neither would material harm arise in the context of lighting impacts. The proposed padel tennis courts would be set away from the residential boundary and whilst having some directional floodlights on the edge of the courts, they would be diminished and with no glare as within the canopy area thus giving a pale flared look from a distance. This should not impact on the rear façade of the existing residential properties at 90m from the site.

The proposed development is considered appropriate in design, scale, and character for this location within a wider sports facility.

In addition, we consider the proposed design of the courts and associated enclosure would be in keeping with the general character of the area as a sports club. We conclude the proposal would satisfy the design criteria for sporting venues.

### **Transport Considerations**

The site is in a sustainable location being near existing public transport routes with bus services operating along Calderbrook Road (250m away less than 3 Mins Walking) connecting to the wider Littleborough centre location of the railway station, approximately 900m away. (less than 10 Mins Walking) The location of the sports club near surrounding residential areas also would enable those using the facilities to walk or cycle to the site.

Existing car parking to the West of the cricket club and to the side of the clubhouse serves the variety of sporting activities that take place on the wider site throughout each week. The existing level of car parking provision is considered appropriate to continue to serve the club with the conversion of the derelict tennis court to padel courts.

## Conclusions

This Planning Statement is submitted in support of a planning application for the erection of two padel tennis courts on the existing unused tennis court at Littleborough Cricket Club.

Our assessment above concludes the development is appropriate within the application site and it would not materially conflict with relevant policies in the adopted development plan for the area. The proposal will deliver several benefits including general health benefits in providing a facility that would be more accessible to a broader range of people encouraging others a healthier lifestyle.

