

PLANNING COMMITTEE

19th June 2025

Planning Application 25/00162/FUL

Proposed padel tennis courts and ancillary accommodation

Redditch Cricket Hockey and Rugby Club, Bromsgrove Road, Batchley, B97 4SP

Applicant: A Ainge: All Things Padel Limited
Ward: Batchley and Brockhill Ward

(see additional papers for site plan)

The case officer of this application is Steven Edden, Principal Planning Officer (DM), who can be contacted on Tel: 01527 548474 Email: steve.edden@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk for more information.

Site Description

The site forms part of the Redditch Cricket, Hockey and Rugby Club, Batchley. Access is via Bromsgrove Road to the south where there is a large tarmac parking area which can accommodate approximately 80 vehicles.

The site is rectangular in shape occupying an area of approximately 1600 sqm (50m in length x 32m in width).

The proposed development would be located to the western edge of the (wider) site with residential dwellings 14 to 16 Willow Way further to the west. To the south is an existing Cricket pitch with pavilion building backing on to houses in Bromsgrove Road. Further to the north and east is a Multi-Use Games Area. Immediately to the east are existing Cricket practice nets. Adjoining the south-west corner of the site is an existing pétanque/boule pit.

The site comprises an area of Primarily Open Space as designated in the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 and has previously been used for Rugby purposes.

Proposal Description

Permission is sought for 4no. Padel tennis courts together with supporting accommodation in the form of two shipping containers. Container 1 would accommodate a ladies and gents toilet, disabled toilet with separate changing facilities. Container 2 would be used as an on-site office. The containers, which would each measure 6m x 2.4m are proposed to be located to the south side of the application site.

Each Padel Court would be enclosed / formed in a lightweight steel frame with glazed walls and mesh over panels to the end walls and side return panels. The glazing would be 3 metres high with the over panels being 1 metre high giving a total height to the end

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walls and side returns of 4 metres. The courts are proposed to be uncovered and each would have a (standard) internal playing area of 20x10m with a synthetic playing surface.

Each Padel court would have a floodlight column on each of its four corners and the top of the floodlights would be 6 metres above the court surface providing an illuminance of 300 lux (E_{av}) with 0.5 uniformity at ground level in accordance with Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) guidance.

Hours of operation are stated to be from 7.00am till 10.00pm daily.

Padel, which originated in Mexico is similar to squash but played with a solid racquet made of a composite material without strings and is played casually with regular tennis balls. The game of Padel has recently boomed in popularity and is considered to be one of the fastest-growing sports in the UK.

Relevant Policies:

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4

Policy 1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy 13: Primarily Open Space

Policy 39: Built Environment

Policy 40: High Quality Design and Safer Communities

Policy 43: Leisure, Tourism and Abbey Stadium

Others

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

Redditch High Quality Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Relevant Planning History

None directly relevant to application

Consultations

Worcestershire County Council – Highway Authority

No objection

RBC Leisure Services

Comments summarised as follows:

The application would increase light pollution in the area as well as increased sustained noise pollution given how close the facility is to housing.

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Whilst there is a need for Padel provision in the town we do not believe this site to be ideal for such a use. The town has a tennis club which seems to be a more appropriate location for the Padel proposals.

North Worcestershire Water Management

No objections subject to the imposition of a surface water drainage strategy (condition) being imposed on any consent.

Sport England

No objections raised. The application is considered to accord with exception 5 of Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and paragraph 104 of the NPPF.

Worcestershire Regulatory Services: Noise

Noise from padel courts is currently a hot topic in the acoustics world in terms of how to assess the noise generated and determine the likely impact at the nearest sensitive receptors. Given the proximity of the proposed four padel courts to the nearby residential dwellings in Willow Way, I consider that noise from ball impacts, and potentially raised voices, would have a significant adverse impact at these nearby residential dwellings. I do not consider that there is any scope for practical noise mitigation measures that would make the proposal acceptable. I therefore do not support the application in terms of noise impacts.

Worcestershire Regulatory Services: Light Pollution

At 6m tall, the proposed external floodlighting may adversely impact the nearby residential receptors in Willow Way. The applicant should therefore propose light shields to prevent light spill adversely impacting the residents in Willow Way and submit full details for further comment.

Public Consultation Response

One representation received objecting to the application for the following summarised reasons:

- Light pollution from the floodlighting would lead to sleep deprivation for people who have to leave early in the morning to go to work
- Noise from the facility would be unacceptable
- Alternative locations should be considered

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Background

The application site and the wider sports facilities provided within this area of open space is owned by Redditch Borough Council. The land is currently operated by Redditch Cricket Hockey and Rugby Club who benefit from a long-term lease to operate given by Redditch Borough Council. In applying for planning permission, the applicant, 'All Things Padel Limited' have served notice on the owner of the site (the Council), as confirmed to your officers by the RBC Property Services team.

Discussions which have taken place between RBC Property Services and your officers since the application was lodged with the Council indicate that no 'pre-application discussions' have taken place between the applicant and the Council. Notwithstanding this, and reservations received via the Councils Leisure Services Team (summarised earlier in this report), Members are tasked with determining the acceptability or not of this application in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise as set out under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

As an application submitted on land within the ownership of the Council, such applications are required to be determined by the Planning Committee and fall outside the scheme of delegation to Officers.

Assessment of Proposal

Principle of development

The site is designated as Primarily Open Space in the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4. As such, Policy 13 would apply.

Policy 13 comments that: *"Open space will be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced to improve quality, value, multifunctionality and accessibility. In order to maintain the levels of open space provision in the Borough, proposals which would result in the total or partial loss of Primarily Open Space will not normally be granted planning permission unless it can be demonstrated that the need for development outweighs the value of the land as an open area."*

In this case, the proposal retains the existing Class F2(c) (Local Community: Place for outdoor sport or recreation) use on the site through providing further facilities for outdoor sport and recreation. As such, your officers have not identified any conflicts with Policy 13. It should be noted that Sport England have been consulted and raise no objections to the application.

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Policy 43 (A): Leisure, tourism and culture, comments under 43.2 that Leisure, tourism and culture proposals, including new build, extensions or additions to existing facilities will be promoted and supported where:

- i. the proposal is located in places that are sustainable and accessible by a choice of transport modes, principally Redditch Town Centre and/or where additional visitor numbers can be accommodated without detriment to the local economy and environment; and*
- ii. they support sustainable tourism or leisure developments and benefit the economy of the Borough and enhance community facilities.*

Worcestershire County Highways have raised no objection to the application and your officers consider that the application would generally accord with Policy 43 of the Local Plan.

Impact upon residential amenity

Paragraph 198 of the NPPF (December 2024) states that:

Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;*
- b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and*
- c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation*

Paragraph 6.3.14 of the Council High Quality Design SPD reflects the above, commenting that the effects of noise and lighting on nearby dwellings should be taken into account in detailed site and design planning.

Noise

Paragraph 4.2.53 of the SPD states that ‘*disturbance caused by noise may potentially be an issue where neighbouring uses and associated patterns of activity are dissimilar*’.

WRS have carefully examined the proposals with respect to potential noise disturbance to the nearest sensitive receptors (those residential occupiers in closest proximity to the site). Given the proximity of the proposed four padel courts to the nearby residential dwellings in Willow Way, WRS consider that noise from ball impacts, and potentially

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raised voices, would have a significant adverse impact upon occupiers of the nearest dwellings in Willow Way. It is important to note that no acoustic surveys / assessments have been carried out. Notwithstanding this, Regulatory Services experience of dealing with similar proposals elsewhere within Worcestershire have led them to consider that there is no scope for practical noise mitigation measures that would make the proposal acceptable. As such, WRS do not support the application in terms of noise impacts.

Whilst it is appreciated that some noise disturbance arises from the use of the clubs car parking area immediately to the south, and in particular from the (more distant) Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) which was in operation at the time of your officers visit to the site, the relative tranquillity of the site's surroundings could at the same time be appreciated.

The sounds attributed to the games being played within the MUGA in relation to the ambient noise of the area were noted.

It is not in question that the Club is a well-established, local asset, with a presumption of some level of noise emanating. It is also however generally understood that the game of padel on purpose-built courts can create more noise than tennis and potentially other sports played at the Club.

Discussions with WRS suggest that the ball bouncing off the (padel) bat has a very specific, acute sound which is clearly audible over other background noise. Your officers have noted that no acoustic assessment has accompanied the application and that WRS do not support the application in terms of noise impacts.

In conclusion, no evidence has been advanced to demonstrate that noise impacts arising from such a use in this location would be acceptable in terms of their impact on existing residential amenities.

Lighting

It is also important to ensure that impacts arising from light pollution do not materially harm the residential amenities currently enjoyed by occupiers of nearby dwellings.

The Borough Councils adopted High Quality Design SPD under 4.2.55 states that:

'the type of lighting selected should be relevant to the local context, character and use of the area and minimise the impact of light pollution as well as being as energy efficient as possible'

At 6m tall, your officers agree with WRS in that the proposed external floodlighting columns have the potential to adversely impact the nearby residential occupiers in Willow Way. WRS recommend the use of light shields to prevent light spill adversely impacting the residents in Willow Way and that full details should be submitted for further comment. No such details have been advanced at the time of writing. The use of planning conditions to limit hours of operation could be examined in more detail if any details

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submitted to WRS and the Council were deemed to be acceptable, but as it stands, as per the comments with respect to potential noise disturbance, no evidence has been advanced to demonstrate that impacts arising from light pollution would be acceptable in terms of their impact on existing residential amenities.

Other matters

No highway safety implications or specific drainage concerns have been identified which could not be overcome via conditions to be attached to any consent.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding your officers findings with respect to the principle of the development, highway safety and drainage matters, considering your officers observations during site visits and based on the application submission, it has not been satisfactorily shown that the proposed development would not have a detrimental effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings with particular regard to disturbance from noise. The application cannot therefore be supported.

RECOMMENDATION:

That having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, planning permission be REFUSED for the following reason:

Reason for Refusal

- 1) No evidence has been advanced to demonstrate that impacts arising from the proposed operation of the development, having regard to its closeness to existing residential uses would not cause detriment to the amenities currently enjoyed by the occupiers of nearby residents by reason, in particular to noise disturbance. The proposals would be contrary to the advice contained within Paragraph 198 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024, Policy 1 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 (January 2017) and the provisions of the Councils High Quality Design SPD, adopted June 2019

Procedural matters

This application is being reported to the Planning Committee because the application site falls within the ownership of Redditch Borough Council. As such the application falls outside the scheme of delegation to Officers.