

David Lloyd Hampton Open Space Assessment

David Lloyd Leisure Ltd

13 December 2024

LICHFIELDS

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 On behalf of David Lloyd Leisure Ltd (David Lloyd), Lichfields have been instructed to submit a planning application for the conversion of the existing tennis courts to padel courts with associated lighting and canopies and the removal of the existing tennis floodlighting and fencing at David Lloyd Hampton, Staines Road, Hampton, TW2 5JD.

1.2 This assessment considers the impacts of the proposals on the designated Metropolitan Open Land where the site is located. This document should be read alongside the following documents and drawings submitted with this application:

- Cover Letter - prepared by Lichfields;
- Planning Application Form, prepared by Lichfields;
- Completed CIL form, prepared by Lichfields;
- Site Location Plan (A-PL-001 P01), prepared by HCD Architects;
- Existing Site Plan (A-PL-002 P01), prepared by HCD Architects;
- Proposed Site Plan (A-PL-003 P01), prepared by HCD Architects;
- Padel Court Plan and Elevations (A-PL-010 P01), prepared by HCD Architects;
- Padel Court Plan and Elevation with Canopy (A-PL-011 P01) , prepared by HCD Architects;
- Design and Access Statement, prepared by HCD Architects; and
- Flood Risk Assessment and Checklist, prepared by Willis Hazel Engineering.

2.0 **Proposed Development**

- 2.1 This application seeks planning permission for the conversion of the existing tennis courts to padel courts with associated lighting and canopies and removal of existing tennis floodlighting and fencing. Further details of the development are set out in the Design and Access Statement and planning drawings.
- 2.2 The proposals comprise the replacement of 3 no. existing tennis courts with 6 no. padel courts, 3 of these having a padel court cover. The padel courts are designed in line with sporting industry standards and feature a pillars type structure, anti-injury mesh infill panels and 10mm approved glass resulting in attractive and minimalist aesthetics. The playing surface uses artificial grass.
- 2.3 The canopy is a solid galvanized steel posted structure with a high tech polycarbonate roof covering held in aluminium extrusions, ensuring that the weather will be kept at bay throughout the year. The canopy structure is designed to have a minimal footprint and allows the maximum amount of light.
- 2.4 There are 4no. 240W LED projectors provided per court to evenly light the space, which offer a large reduction in energy use when compared to traditional halide lamps, with longer life and greater eco-efficiency. The lighting columns measure 6.2 metres in height.
- 2.5 Detailed plans prepared by HCD Architects accompany this planning application. Information regarding design and materials can be found in the Design and Access Statement, also produced by HCD Architects, submitted alongside this planning application.

Padel Tennis

What is ‘Padel Tennis’?

- 2.6 Padel Tennis (Padel) is a form of tennis that is easy to play, fun and extremely sociable.
- 2.7 It is played mainly in a doubles format on an enclosed court about a third of the size of a tennis court. The enclosures are transparent which allows spectating.
- 2.8 The rules are broadly the same as tennis, although you serve underhand and the walls are used as part of the game, with the ball allowed to bounce off them.
- 2.9 The reduced court size and ability to play off the walls enables players with reduced mobility to participate as there is less court space to cover.
- 2.10 Padel can be played in groups of mixed ages and abilities, as it is not power dominant. For this reason, several generations can be engaged in a single game and the sport presents the opportunity for a wider reach and longevity of play than many other racquet-led sports, notably tennis. Participants are also less likely to suffer impact or other stress related injuries.
- 2.11 One of the fastest growing sports across continental Europe, Padel has gained increasing popularity over recent years, with over six million people currently playing in Spain. The sport is a good entry route into lawn tennis, as well as being suitable for former lawn tennis players no-longer able to cover the court area of lawn tennis.

2.12 As of November 2020, there are around 6,000 active Padel players across Britain across 114 Padel courts at 59 clubs. However, this number is set to grow substantially over the coming years.

Padel in the UK

2.13 In 1992, the British Paddle Association was formed by a group of passionate British expats seeking to compete in the 1992 World Paddle Championships. Since then, the sport has seen slow, but steady growth throughout Britain.

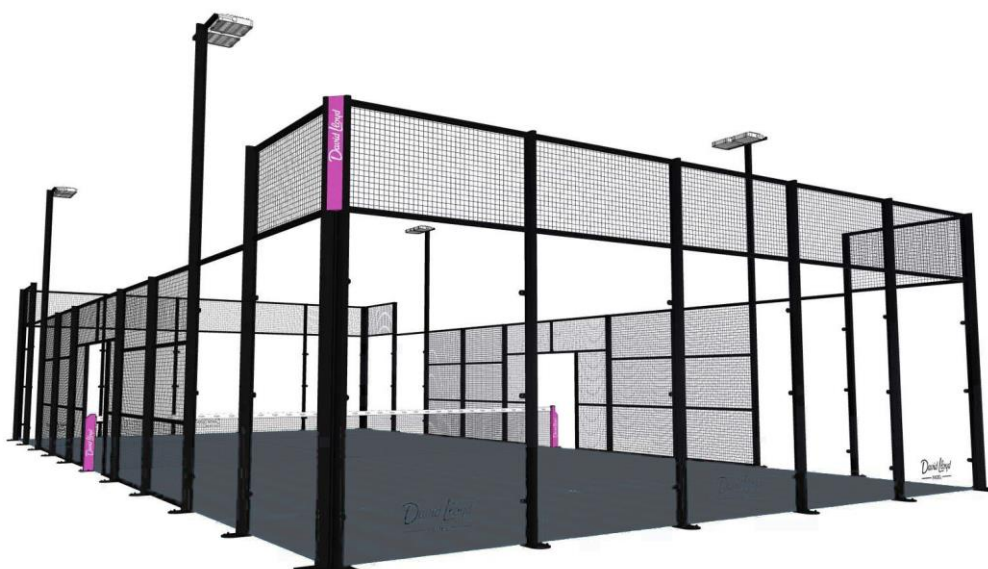
2.14 In 2019 the LTA, recognising the linked benefits of Padel with tennis and the opportunity for inclusion of ‘all generation growth’, announced it was to integrate British Padel into the organisation’s day-to-day operations.

2.15 At the end of 2020 there were around 6,000 active Padel players across the UK. There are also currently 114 Padel courts in Britain at 59 clubs. This number, with the support of the LTA and David Lloyd, as the premier racquets Club in the UK, is set to grow substantially over the coming years.

2.16 In November 2020 the LTA was confirmed as the national governing body for Padel and as part of its Padel Development Plan it is looking to have 400 Padel courts in place across Great Britain by 2023. As part of this initiative, David Lloyd is seeking to integrate Padel into all of its new Clubs and is presently working across its portfolio to identify opportunities to retrofit Padel Tennis courts.

2.17 A 3D visual of the proposed padel courts has been provided below and further details are shown within the submitted Design and Access Statement, prepared by HCD Architects.

Figure 2.1 Padel Court 3D Visual



Source: David Lloyd / HCD Architects

3.0 **Planning Policy Context**

3.1 This section sets out the relevant planning policies within the adopted Development Plan which are relevant to the Open Space Assessment relating to the proposals on the site.

3.2 As shown in Figure 3.1, part of the existing David Lloyd Club to the south and the application site area is located within the Metropolitan Open Land (shaded green). The application red line boundary is shown highlighted in red and the adjacent Public Open Space is shown by the green stripes below.

Figure 3.1



Source: LBRUT Interactive Policies Map (2018)

NPPF

3.3 Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belt, with the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

3.4 The NPPF notes that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt/MOL and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

3.5 A limited range of uses and buildings with the Green Belt/MOL are considered to be acceptable and these include appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt/MOL and not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

- 3.6 The NPPF also provides an exception for limited infilling or redeveloped brownfield / previously developed sites which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt/MOL than the existing development.
- 3.7 It is noted that ‘very special circumstances’ will only exist if 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.

London Plan

- 3.8 Policy S5 of the London Plan states that existing sports and recreational land (including playing fields) and facilities for sports and recreation should be retained unless the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use. The policy also notes that where facilities are proposed on existing open space, Boroughs should consider these in light of policies on protecting open space (including Policy G3 Metropolitan Open Land) and the borough’s own assessment of needs and opportunities for sports facilities, and the potential impact that the development will have.
- 3.9 Policy G3 notes that Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) is afforded the same status and level of protection as Green Belt and should be protected from inappropriate development in accordance with national planning policy tests that apply to the Green Belt.

LB Richmond Upon Thames Local Plan (2018)

- 3.10 Policy LP13 of the Local Plan outlines the Council’s approach to Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and Local Green Space and confirms that:
- “A. The borough’s Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will be protected and retained in predominately open use. Inappropriate development will be refused unless ‘very special circumstances’ can be demonstrated that clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land.*
- Appropriate uses within Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land include public and private open spaces and playing fields, open recreation and sport, biodiversity including rivers and bodies of water and open community uses including allotments and cemeteries. Development will be supported if it is appropriate and helps secure the objectives of improving the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land.*
- B. It will be recognised that there may be exceptional cases where inappropriate development, such as small scale structures for essential utility infrastructure, may be acceptable.*
- C. Improvement and enhancement of the openness and character of the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land and measures to reduce visual impacts will be encouraged where appropriate.”*
- 3.11 Policy LP28 (Social and Community Infrastructure) states that proposals for new or extensions to existing social and community infrastructure will be supported where it provides for an identified need; is of a high quality and inclusive design providing access for

all; and where practicable is provided in multi-use, flexible and adaptable buildings or co-located with other social infrastructure uses which increases public access.

- 3.12 Policy LP30 (Health and Wellbeing) notes that planning, at all levels, can play a crucial role in creating environments that enhance people's health and wellbeing and the Council promotes and supports healthy and active lifestyles and measures to reduce health inequalities.
- 3.13 Policy LP31 (Public Open Space, Play Space, Sport and Recreation) states that public open space, children's and young people's play facilities as well as formal and informal sports grounds and playing fields will be protected, and where possible enhanced. Improvements of existing facilities and spaces, including their openness and character and their accessibility and linkages, will be encouraged.

LB Richmond upon Thames Indoor Sports Facility Needs Assessment (2015)

- 3.14 An assessment of the formal indoor sports need in LB Richmond upon Thames was undertaken in 2015, with the aim to provide a detailed assessment of current provision of indoor sports facilities, identifying outstanding needs and gaps in provision.
- 3.15 The Assessment confirms there are no dedicated indoor tennis only facilities in the Borough. There are three indoor tennis courts at St Mary's University in Teddington, however these are part of a multi-use area and the courts are in a hall marked out for a number of other sports and the floor surface is generic not tennis specific.
- 3.16 Orleans School sports hall is also used for multi-purpose by Twickenham Lawn Tennis Club for winter training with juniors. The clubs outdoor facilities and clubhouse are located on the neighbouring site.
- 3.17 The lack of indoor tennis provisions has resulted to local residents travelling to adjacent Boroughs (approximately 20 minute drive time). This includes the LTA National Tennis Centre at Roehampton.
- 3.18 There is no reference in the Assessment to padel tennis provision or padel courts within the Borough.

4.0 **Open Space Assessment and Conclusion**

- 4.1 This section considers the proposals against the overarching development plan policy context for the site, notably its location within the Metropolitan Open Land.
- 4.2 It is noted that the application site is located in an urban developed context where there is housing, schools, and small scale retail and restaurants, as well as the existing David Lloyd club itself which is a significant building with extensive external hard surfaced areas in terms of the tennis courts themselves, which are enclosed with floodlighting and the car park.
- 4.3 This application includes the replacement of existing tennis courts with padel tennis courts which continues the approved use and outdoor sport /recreation facility on the site. As such, the proposed padel courts would continue to comprise external sports facilities on the existing health and racquets club. The proposals do not aim to increase the number of members but are simply seeking to improve member experience and tennis playing opportunities for pre-existing members.
- 4.4 In accordance with the MOL designation on the site, only half (3no.) of the proposed courts would include a canopy structure which would not be fully enclosed and would allow open views across the site, highlighting the very limited impact on the MOL.
- 4.5 The proposed padel courts are of a scale which would not be detrimental to the openness and appearance of the MOL, as the scale and height of the proposals against the background of the much larger existing David Lloyd building, will be relatively smaller and less visible. The proposals therefore will aim to preserve the openness of the MOL whilst ensuring there is no conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 4.6 Furthermore, it is noted that the London Plan confirms that Boroughs should support developments which increase or enhance sports and recreation facilities in areas where there is an acute need or/and could further increase sports participation opportunities for both adults and children.
- 4.7 It is considered that the proposed development would remain in accordance with national, regional and local planning policy, in seeking to make most efficient use of land, create sustainable development and by maximising the use of the existing facilities whilst supporting business and member participation without having any adverse impacts on visual amenity within the MOL.
- 4.8 The proposals would not be considered be harmful to the MOL and would provide improvements to the existing sporting facilities which would meet the exception within Paragraph 154 of the NPPF for the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation.

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