
A Planning Statement

to accompany an application by Places Leisure Limited for the
construction of 4 x covered padel courts at;

**Places Leisure
Passfield Avenue
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO50 9NL**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement on town planning policy matters accompanies an application to Eastleigh Borough Council for full planning permission for the construction of 4 x covered padel courts in the grounds of Places Leisure, Passfield Avenue, Eastleigh.
- 1.2 Padel is the UK's fastest growing sport and demand for facilities is growing exponentially as more and more people take up the game. Padel is a fast paced, accessible and social sport. It can be enjoyed by people of all ages, making it a great family activity. It is also easy to learn and play for beginners.

2.0 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 Places Leisure, the former Fleming Park Leisure Centre is situated towards the western edge of Eastleigh and just to the south of Chandlers Ford. The site is bound by residential properties to the east (Passfield Avenue) and south (Nightingale Avenue/Magpie Lane), by Fleming Park parkland to the west and to the north by the Holiday Inn. The centre is a modern purpose-built leisure centre providing, inter alia, pools, gyms, studios, sports hall, squash courts, soft play, indoor cycling studio, an injury clinic and meeting rooms. It is set in parkland with bowling greens, floodlit all weather pitches and play facilities, and an extensive area of informal open space that was formerly a golf course. It serves the whole Borough and areas beyond. Paragraph 2.37 of the Local Plan describes the centre thus;

"The new Places Leisure Eastleigh opened in November 2017. This is one of the biggest leisure developments in the south and provides larger and better sports and recreation facilities than the previous Fleming Park Leisure Centre."

- 2.2 The site of the proposed padel courts lies to the north of the main leisure centre buildings and to the south and west of the car park. It is thus surrounded on three sides either by existing built form or by hardsurfaced car parking. To the west is currently an informal grassed recreation area beyond which is Fleming Park.

3.0 THE APPLICATION

- 3.1 Full planning permission is sought for the construction of 4 x covered padel courts. Each court measures 10 metres in width x 20 metres in length. Each court is enclosed by a combination of transparent tempered glazing and steel weld-mesh. The four courts would be covered by a single canopy structure measuring 44m x 28m to allow all weather use but that canopy is open sided on all four sides. The roof is partly curved in shape, polytunnel style, and will have a maximum height of 9.5 metres and eaves height of 6.5 metres. Integrated high level lighting will be provided within the curved roof such that there would be no direct line of sight to the light fittings. Those fittings would be specialist type directed downwards to minimise light spillage.

- 3.2 Further information is provided in the Design and Access Statement, Lighting Design Statement, Flood Risk Assessment and Bio-Diversity Net Gain Assessments which accompany the application.

4.0 POLICIES

National Policy – The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 4.1 Paragraph 96 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places and beautiful buildings which, inter alia, enable and support healthy lifestyles through, for example, the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, **sports facilities**, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling. Paragraph 97 asks that decision makers plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, **sports venues**, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.
- 4.2 Paragraph 102 states that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change.
- 4.3 Paragraph 193 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new development can be integrated effectively with community facilities (such as places of worship, pubs, music venues and sports clubs).

The Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036.

- 4.4 The Local Plan proposals map confirms the subject site as being within an Existing Recreation, Allotment and Open Space Facility designation wherein local plan **Policy DM32** requires that the loss of existing or allocated recreation and open space facilities, including those identified on the policies map, are only likely to be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Moreover, development ancillary to the recreational use may be permitted on recreation sites provided that it does not adversely affect land forming part of, or capable of forming part of, a playing pitch/court/green. The policy is supported by an acknowledgement that an important part of the Borough Council's health strategy is to promote healthy living, including engagement in physical activity. The Council therefore considers the provision and protection of recreation and open space facilities to be an essential part of its vision and strategy for the communities of the Borough. Sports pitches, sports facilities, parks and amenity open space contribute substantially to the quality of life in and around urban areas. The Council therefore seeks to protect all existing recreation facilities and open spaces unless they are demonstrated to be surplus to requirements.

- 4.5 Paragraph 5.147 of the local plan acknowledges that; *“Sports pitches, sports facilities, parks and amenity open space contribute substantially to the quality of life in and around urban areas”*. To that end, and with respect to proposals for new provision of sports and recreation facilities **Policy DM34** states that;

“The provision, extension or enhancement of public and private recreation and open space facilities or uses including those identified in policy DM32 above will be permitted provided that:

- a. they accord with the general development criteria and the biodiversity, and heritage policies of this Local Plan;*
- b. in the countryside:*
 - i. new buildings will be limited to those ancillary to and essential for the use of the land for outdoor sport and recreation; and*
 - ii. development should not involve structures, floodlighting or activities that cause urbanisation or detract from rural character;*
- c. they contribute to the management of, and where possible enhance the countryside and urban open spaces. The Council may require a legal agreement to ensure that land is managed to maintain or enhance its agricultural and/or landscape value and/or biodiversity interest; and;*
- d. they are readily accessible to those they are intended to serve by means of transport other than the private car, and accord with the transport and parking policies of this Local Plan”.*

- 4.6 At a broader scale, **Policy DM1** sets out general criteria for all new development and expects, inter alia, that all development proposals take full and proper account of the context of the site including the character, appearance and land uses of the locality or neighbourhood, and be compatible with adjoining uses and be well integrated with these in terms of mass, scale, materials, layout, density, design and siting, both in itself and in relation to adjoining buildings, spaces and views..

- 4.7 **Policy DM13** relates to transport and requires that all new development must have safe and convenient access to the highway network and make provision for access to, and by, other transport modes including public transport and cycle and pedestrian routes as appropriate.

- 4.8 **Policy DM5** relates to managing flood risk and requires that development should not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and should incorporate sustainable Drainage Systems wherever feasible.

4.9 **Policy DM11** relates to nature conservation and expects that, inter alia, development proposals recognise the impacts of climate change, assist in achieving national, county and local biodiversity targets and can so demonstrate by the associated submission of robust habitat and species surveys.

4.10 The following section of this statement will demonstrate that the policy aspirations reviewed above have all been taken into account in the evolution of the proposed development. As a consequence, the proposal is well-considered proposals, fully justified and has only acceptable impacts.

5.0 EVALUATION

The Principle

5.1 The proposed development falls within an area specifically designated for the provision of additional leisure and recreational facilities. It will sit alongside and complement the wide range of other sports and activities already available on the site and in the immediately adjacent leisure centre and thus improves services within an existing community facility. The proposal is supported by policies DM32 and DM34 LP32 and LP9E of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036 which seek to support the development of new leisure facilities in locations such as this.

5.2 Moreover the conditional tests of policy DM34 are all demonstrably met in that; a) they accord with the general development criteria and the biodiversity, and heritage policies of the Local Plan, b) the site is not in the countryside where additional criteria apply, c) it will contribute to an enhancement of an urban open space, and d) the facility, along with the adjacent and existing recreational facilities, are readily accessible to those they are intended to serve by means of transport other than the private car, and accord with the transport and parking policies of the Local Plan.

5.3 No existing sports pitches would be lost to facilitate this proposal and extensive areas of sports pitches and informal grass recreation land will remain to the west of the proposed courts.

5.4 Overall, this additional facility is located in a perfect position to both enhance the range/breadth of sports provision at the leisure centre whilst also taking advantage of the excellent accessibility credentials of the existing facilities. It will be positively beneficial and thus also acceptable in principle in policy terms.

Design, Character and Appearance

5.5. The relevant requirements of Local Plan policy DM1 expect that proposals take full and proper account of the context of the site including the character, appearance and land uses of the locality or neighbourhood, and be compatible with adjoining uses and be well integrated with these in terms of mass, scale, materials, layout, density, design and siting. The context for this proposal is of course the leisure centre buildings and the associated

outdoor courts and pitches, many of which are similarly semi-enclosed associated, and the extensive car parking areas which are adjacent.

- 5.6 For the most part design follows function. The courts have to be enclosed by a combination of tempered glass and steel weldmesh. The cover is also similarly functional – though its open sided character provides views through and thus has little by way of visual impact. Nonetheless, the quality of materials will be high and the courts are exactly the type of structure that one might expect to see in a location aimed specifically at the provision of recreational facilities.

- 5.7 In this context the proposed design is entirely appropriate and the requirements of local plan policy DM1 are met

Amenity

- 5.8 The proposed courts will be surrounded on three sides by existing leisure centre car parking and by open sports pitches to the fourth side and are thus sufficiently distant from any surrounding residential properties to avoid impacting amenities in any way. Glimpses of the court's shelter might be possible from the front of dwellings on the opposite side of Passfield Avenue but at a distance of circa 100m and with a large intervening car park there can be no adverse impact. The proposed structures are also lesser and thus subservient to the much larger leisure centre building adjacent.

- 5.9 There will be no material impacts on the amenities of any residential dwellings surrounding the site.

Highways/Parking

- 5.10 The proposed courts will complement existing facilities at the leisure centre. Levels of parking provision are already good at the leisure centre and additional demand for spaces resulting from this proposal is considered to be limited due to excellent accessibility by foot and cycle and public transport.

- 5.11 At maximum use/capacity the 4 courts could accommodate 16 players, many of whom will share vehicles if driving. In light thereof, current levels of parking provision are considered to be more than sufficient to cater for this new facility and no additional spaces are required or proposed. This is in line with the aspirations of local plan policy Policy DM13.

Trees and Ecology

- 5.12 The site of the proposed courts is flat to the eye and devoid of any landscape features of any wider significance.

- 5.13 The site has been subject of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which has in turn informed a Bio-Diversity Net Gain Assessment which is submitted alongside the application. The assessment makes recommendations that will result in a 17.4% net gain in biodiversity. These include the provision of an area of mixed scrub to be created in the northern portion

of the site comprised of an even mix of Hazel, Yew, Blackthorn and Hawthorn and native hedgerows to be created to the north of the site bordering the section of mixed scrub and to the south of the site contained within the area of other neutral grassland. Collectively these measures ensure compliance with local plan policy DM11.

Flooding

- 5.14 The application is accompanied and supported by a Flood Risk Assessment which demonstrates that the site lies in flood zone 1 and thus has a low probability of flooding from rivers or the sea. The site is shown to be outside of the modelled flood extent for all modelled events. The FRA also presents a drainage strategy prepared in accordance with the principles set out in the NPPF. All surface water run off is to be contained on site. Surface water will be directed into the gravel sub-base located beneath the padel courts.
- 5.15 The measures will ensure compliance with local plan policy DM5.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The statement above has demonstrated that the proposed padel courts will make a positive contribution to the range of sports and recreational facilities at Eastleigh Leisure Centre which is precisely in line with the aspirations of long-standing planning policy at both national and local levels. The location of the new courts at the leisure centre allows associated benefits from its multi-use facilities and greater accessibility than would otherwise be the case.
- 6.2 The facility will have no adverse impacts, no effect on nearby residential amenities and no impacts on the day to day operations of the leisure centre other than consolidating demand for the services and facilities it provides.
- 6.3 This is a 'good news' proposal which complies with relevant policies, enhances the attractiveness of the borough and should be supported accordingly.