

Alterations to two tennis court to provide two Padel courts at Holcombe Brook Sports and Tennis Club, Hazel Hall Lane, Ramsbottom, Bury, BL0 9FS.

Planning Statement



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Prepared by Hartley Planning and Development Associates Ltd

The proposed development

Padel tennis is the fastest-growing sport in the world - it's a fast-paced, social sport that's easy to pick up. It can be played by anyone and everyone, no matter what age or ability.

There are very few Padel courts in the North West, with the nearest club over 12 miles away in Manchester city centre and no other courts within a 20 mile radius.

If approval is granted, the Padel courts would be available to the public as pay to play without having to be a club member to make the courts accessible to all in the local community.

The application is to convert an existing tennis court to the new format. It involves the alteration to the existing tennis court boundary fencing to include, as shown on the submitted plans, a galvanised steel frame with a mesh covering and a fabric mesh top and incorporating toughened glass end rebound panels. It remains an outside facility.

The submitted plans show, for illustrative purposes only, floodlighting, as approved under application ref: 69774 on 11 October 2023. No changes to the approved floodlighting are proposed

The tennis club is in the Green .

The Main Issues

The main issues are (i) whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt , having regard to relevant development plan policies, the Framework and the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt; (ii) the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the area, and (iii) whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations so as to amount to very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

Whether inappropriate development

The Greater Manchester Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document (2024) (JDP) states: -

‘The beneficial use of the Green Belt will be enhanced where this can be achieved without harm to its openness, permanence or ability to serve its five purposes. In particular, the enhancement of its green infrastructure functions will be encouraged, such as improved public access and habitat restoration, helping to deliver environmental and social benefits for our residents and providing the high quality green spaces that will support economic growth’.

The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (the Framework) notes that ‘a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt’.

However, paragraph 154 permits as exceptions:

b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

– not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development;

or

– not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

NB The latest version of the Framework, now the subject of public consultation until September 2024, replaces paragraph ‘g’ above as follows: -

*g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would ‘**not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt**’*

The proposed rewording is a material planning consideration, albeit that it can only yet be given limited weight.

the site plan for the tennis club as originally approved under application ref 53247.

Paragraph 155 also permits as an exception

b) engineering operations

The proposed changes would be within the site plan for the tennis club as originally approved under application ref 53247. As such there would be no change of use from the sporting use of the land.

It would meet the various exceptions to Green Belt policy including engineering operations and the replacement fencing would *'nor cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt'*.

As such it would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. No harm would be caused to openness or to any of the purposes of the Green Belt. There would be no conflict with the Green Belt requirements of the Framework, and it would accord with the terms of the JDP.

Character and appearance

The fencing would assimilate with the existing and remaining tennis court boundaries, while there would be no change to the approved floodlighting.

Very special circumstances

As detailed above, the development would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Even if this was not to be the case, there are a number of very special circumstances which would outweigh any perceived harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness. These are as follows: -

- The grant of planning permission would support a growing tennis membership and ensure that the club remains competitive and viable going forward.
- It would encourage more sport to be played thereby promoting greater health, fitness and wellbeing for the residents of Bury. In this regard, there would be direct accordance with paragraph 92 (c) of the Framework which states that planning decisions should *'enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops,*

access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling'.

- The tennis club needs to be as attractive as possible for existing and future members, particularly in the winter and autumn months when the weather is inclement, as it has to compete with indoor tennis and now associated paddle facilities in other administrative areas More people playing tennis and paddle locally means less travel further afield and hence there would be environmental sustainability benefits arising from the approval of planning permission.

Conclusion

The proposals would not amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. No harm would be caused to the purposes of the Green Belt, or to the character and appearance of the area. There are several very special circumstances to consider that would justify the grant of planning permission.