



Design, Access & Planning Statement

UPGRADE AT PRESTWICK TENNIS & FITNESS

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Design and Access Statement for Padel at Prestwick Tennis & Fitness

1. Introduction

This design and access statement has been submitted in support of the planning application for the proposed padel tennis courts with canopy at Prestwick Tennis and Fitness Centre. The application is for two padel tennis courts within the grounds of an existing sports facility. The proposal seeks to locate the new courts on an area currently used for outdoor tennis. The adjacent area will be resurfaced to form two reconfigured floodlit tennis courts with an artificial clay surface. This is to enable the club to support the development of an additional new racquet sport. It will increase the overall leisure opportunities on offer for the local community. The proposal is functional in scale and type. The acceptability of the proposal reflects the current use of the land as a racquet sport facility where it will be appropriately positioned on existing courts.

Padel

Padel is commonly described as the fastest growing sport in the world and increasingly being called the fastest growing sport in the UK. Padel is a discipline of tennis and was recently recognised by **sportscotland**. The sport is governed by the LTA and is developing rapidly and growing in popularity across the UK. Padel is easy to learn and popular with women and men and played by people of all ages and abilities. It contributes to a healthy lifestyle and is very sociable being played as doubles. The padel courts will be available to members and non-members. Local schools will be offered regular opportunities for children to come and try this new sport.

2. Site Analysis

The application site lies within the existing sports club grounds which features a mix of community facilities including indoor and outdoor tennis with associated clubhouse facilities, parking and ancillary storage.

The proposed location for padel tennis is indicated on the plan below and has been selected to sit on the existing tennis courts. These courts are currently in poor condition and reflect the lower demand for outdoor tennis which is adversely affected by weather. The development site is less than 0.1 Ha in total.

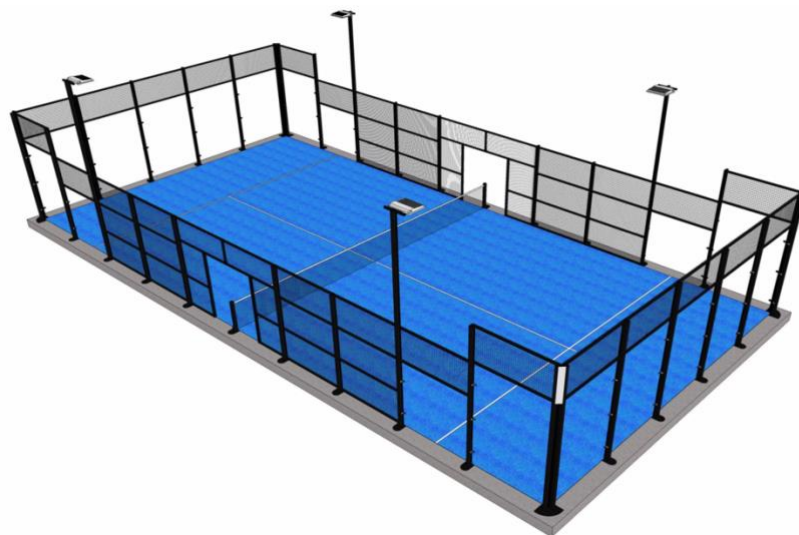
The canopy structure is set back from the road to co-locate next to the existing tennis hall to reduce the visual impact of the new courts. The existing indoor tennis building is significantly larger than the proposed canopy structure.



2. Design Proposal

The padel courts are designed in accordance with LTA and SAPCA guidance to meet the needs of the sport. Each court is 20m x 10m and is enclosed by metal posts which are infilled with clear toughened glass and metal open mesh panels. This creates a light and airy outdoor feel to the courts. The proposal is for black powder coated metalwork. The surface is covered in artificial grass which is a typical tennis court surface and would be blue in colour. Standard tennis fencing typically ranges from 3m to 3.8m high and the padel court structure is a maximum of 4m high. Existing tennis floodlight columns are typically 8m high and the padel columns are significantly lower at 6m high. The padel tennis courts will replace existing tennis courts to create two covered outdoor padel tennis courts and two floodlit tennis courts. This results in an overall increase in potential usage.

Typical Court diagram (without canopy for clarity)



The canopy structure (not shown) is designed to comply with LTA guidance on heights which have been selected to allow uninterrupted play in all weathers. The canopy fabric can be green or white in colour. A double layer canopy roof is proposed which limits light spillage through the canopy.

The canopy has open sides that allow for good ventilation into the courts which makes it a safe covid friendly covered outdoor space that can be used for other community groups like kids clubs, dance and yoga or wet weather provision for junior tennis coaching.

4. Access

The court access is via an automated wi-fi controlled gate system. This can be accessed by anyone via online booking and so play on the courts is not restricted only to club members. The community access element is a key part of the ethos of the development.

The SmartAccess gate also provides automatic control of the low energy LED floodlights which go on and off in line with bookings to ensure a managed low energy system.

The main access gate into the padel courts is wheelchair accessible and the access route from car park to the courts is also navigable by a wheelchair user with disabled parking nearby.

5. Landscaping

Existing trees and shrubs will all be retained on site and there is no impact on existing trees. Some low level planting may be done around the court to enhance the visual impact of the courts.

6. Heritage

There is no impact on any heritage assets in the area.

7. Planning Matters

With an increased emphasis on providing public health benefits through planning, there is a push to increase sport and recreation facilities to promote health and wellbeing through the planning process. By providing a canopy over these courts it will encourage all year round use, as well as ensuring that the availability of sport and recreation facilities remains constant all year round in order to meet demand. The wider benefits of this proposal are discussed under Very Special Circumstances below.

The proposal would allow all year round use of the Padel courts, providing an all-weather facility for local schools, the club members and the wider community.

There is clear evidence from other padel sites in the UK on the positive impact that covered outdoor courts provides with Thistle Padel club in Edinburgh increasing activity by 300% when they covered padel courts two years ago.

Visual Impact

The canopy provides a roof covering to give weather protection with the lower sections of the elevations being open with glass or mesh fence panels allowing light through the structure and giving an airy outdoor environment to play in. The tensile fabric is stretched over a lightweight aluminium or steel frame which is galvanised.

The height of the canopy is determined by the structural requirements of the roof profile and has been designed to give the minimum clear height required for uninterrupted play. The eaves height is 6.5m which means the playing area headroom starts at this level; this is only 500mm above the minimum height required by the LTA for padel court headroom; and it is considered that the proposed design is the minimum height needed to play the sport while complying with LTA facility guidance.

Neighbours

Residential neighbours will not be negatively impacted by this proposal. The site forms part of the existing club grounds and therefore is an appropriate use in this area. The site is located

close to the existing indoor tennis hall and there is parking provision within the site to accommodate the proposed use.

Benefits of this proposal

- Padel is growing quickly across much of Europe and it is expected to grow at over 70% per annum over the next 5 years, according to the LTA, the governing body overseeing the sport in the UK. In November 2020, **sportscotland** recognised padel as an official sport in the UK. Padel is now one of the fastest growing sports in the UK.
- Padel will be particularly attractive to families, allowing inter-generational games. It is easy to play, fun and good for general fitness. Padel is an inclusive game allowing players of all ages and abilities to participate.
- There is a significant undersupply of suitable venues for this sport in Scotland with the nearest courts being in Stevenston around 16 miles away. The next nearest court is in Bridge of Allan around 70 miles from Prestwick.
- The provision of covered courts means that padel tennis can be more available to the local community in any weather throughout the whole of the year.
- The repurposing of the tennis courts with covered padel tennis courts reuses existing club land to provide a facility which is not currently available in the community. It is considered that this is a positive material consideration.
- As stated above the provision of covered courts offers increased availability to play this sport which is important in leading the fight against unhealthy lifestyles.
- The availability of courts for the community to play is increased when the courts are covered and this increases the potential for a healthier community. The provision of a new and inclusive sport which is progressive and moving with the times will reinvigorate sports provision in this area and support a healthier community
- The proposal helps to build the capacity of the centre and the proposed development not only enhances the existing facilities at the centre but will help to attract and retain people and get more people active.
- The facility is a multi-use covered outdoor space that in addition to padel can host other activities and is a suitable environment for the very young or older participants by providing some shelter from inclement weather thereby encouraging people to participate on a more regular basis.
- In terms of Inclusion and Inter-generational activities :
 - Padel is open to all, can be played by mixed sex and mixed age groups and enjoyed by everyone. It does not have the same history as other sports so perceptions about being elitist or exclusive do not apply and so the sport appeals to a broad range of participants from all backgrounds.
- Two covered padel courts will allow the venue to host LTA year GB Seniors Tour events throughout the year which require covered courts.
- The LTA have offered their support for the development which contributes to the national facility strategy to develop padel facilities across the UK.
- If the courts are not covered the development is unlikely to go ahead as it is not viable without a canopy.

9. Conclusion

The provision of padel tennis will add to the facilities available to the local community and provide access to a new sport that is increasingly popular in the UK. This will be the first such facility in the Prestwick area and will offer all year access to a fun and healthy activity and provide a positive impact on the area.

Without the canopy the padel courts will be underused and only be available for part of the year. The proposal provides positive benefits with additional sports provision in the community and creating a high level venue for sports competition which will further support the future of the centre and the wider economy.

The repurposing of the courts within the existing tennis facility to add covered padel tennis courts offers an improved facility with a broader range of activities to encourage the community in taking more exercise without encroaching on any land beyond the boundary of the existing club.

It will enhance the existing sports facilities at the centre which will help to support their continued growth and sustainability and ensure the future of the centre.

It is considered that this proposal is suitable and appropriate in this location.